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Lake of Lotus

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January 2006

Meaning of Near-Death
Experiences

Increasing Life and Prosperity
by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



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Content



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过去数十年，科学发展迅速，人类的生活水平不断提高，财富与智识也相应增长，因此有一种意见认为，在二十一世纪，宗教的影响力将逐渐式微。但实际的情况是，佛教在世界各地广泛弘传，无论是南传佛教、汉传佛教，以至藏传佛教，都在蓬勃发展。

进入二十一世纪，科技发达，资讯高速运行，超越了地域的界限，也令人类变得冷漠。生活质素的提升让人迷失，资讯的发达让人疏离，我们的烦恼与痛苦，也如现代科技般高速增长。

佛教的教义，其根本目的就是教导众生彻底解脱。这种解脱，既包括生活的身、心方面，也包括生死轮回的方面。而《莲花海》的宗旨，正秉持佛陀以「解脱为首」的根本精神，从智解中明智慧，在修行里证菩提，引领广大信众，重新认识生命的价值与意义，从而掌握修学佛法的方向与重心。

《莲花海》创刊号，内容精彩，同时包括了中、英文文章，今期更刊载藏文版之〈放生之道〉，好让不同国籍的人士都能分享佛法的宝库。本刊编辑委员会全寅衷诚祝愿，广大信众福慧同增，善妙吉祥！

编辑委员会

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The Inaugural Message

Yeshe Thaye



The publication of “Lake of Lotus” not only reflects the crystallized hard works and dedications of many volunteers, but it also shows the kind-hearted aspirations and sincere blessings for all.

If this publication can help to bring about the awareness, concern and resonance from the wider audience, in such a way that they can deeply feel that Buddhism is more than just a religion, that the symbol of “Buddhism” represents the wisdom and truth that transcends all kinds of limitations, and that they will understand **the urgency and necessity of learning this wisdom and truth**, then its vision and mission would have been fully accomplished.

“All kinds of boundaries and bindings are created for mankind’s own usage, which at first glance seem to be necessary and smart; yet in actuality, this is an ignorance that hinders the elevation of mankind’s own capabilities and wisdom.”

All kinds of religion, including the various sects within a religion itself, possess certain degree of Universalism, and yet they also possess their own strengths and shortcomings. In the face of truth and reality, all religions will have different roles and functions to play at various levels. **If we can have a deep and insightful understanding on the completeness and transcendence of truth, then we will develop the wisdom on the complementarity and acceptance of all religions.** This wisdom, which transcends all hindrances and limitations, will help to swiftly elevate the capabilities of all mankind.

We sincerely pray that this publication can share the elevation of this wisdom with you all and thus fulfill its mission.



From the depth of our hearts, we are most grateful to our most beloved Root Teacher Kyabje Chadrang Dorje Rinpoche for bestowing upon us the Tibetan name of this journal “Tsopema” in his own handwriting. Here, we would most sincerely dedicate this to the health and longevity of Rinpoche in order that His Holiness will unceasingly uphold the Victory Banner in the ten directions, and to turn the Wheel of the Holy Dharma of Nyingmapa for the benefits of all our motherly sentient beings.

Tashi delek !





INCREASING LIFE AND PROSPERITY

A Method For Freeing Lives

By Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

Translated by Erik Pema Kunsang

*Homage to the Guru and Transcendent Free Conqueror,
Lord Boundless Life(Buddha Amitayus).*

The accomplished master Ngagi Wangchuk Drakpa said:

*By saving the lives of birds, fish, and deer,
Or thieves, snakes and others to be killed,
Your present life will be extended,
Even though it would otherwise be short.*

As indicated by the above statement, all the sutras and tantras teach that freeing the lives of sentient beings who are certain to be killed is supreme among all types of longevity practices. This can also be established through intelligent reasoning. For this reason and because freeing lives brings immeasurable benefits, all sensible people should increase their efforts to free lives.

Generally speaking, this means, with a noble frame of mind, to primarily free the lives of the animals in your own possession. Additionally, refrain from killing them yourself or selling them to others. Instead, nurture them in peace. By merely doing so, while dedicating the roots of virtue and making aspirations (for their benefit), you will have fulfilled this present purpose and it is therefore permissible not to perform any other specific ceremony.

If you prefer to perform a slightly more elaborate version in accordance with place, occasion, and degree of detail, then you can do so as found in several instructions from the Early Translations, such as making the [animal] a support for a Dharma protector and so forth. Or, if you wish to perform more detailed versions of the utterance of auspiciousness, dedication and aspirations, it would be excellent if you combine this with a special time such as the Miracle Month (the 1st month), the eighth day, or the new or full moon.



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If the primary purpose is to extend someone's lifespan, then perform this at sunrise at the conducive time of the 'ascending life-planet'. In any case, place those whose lives are to be freed in front of you and say three times:

In the Buddha, the Dharma and the supreme assembly I take refuge until enlightenment.
By the merit of generosity and so forth,
May I attain buddhahood for the welfare of all beings,
May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness.
May they be free of suffering and the cause of suffering.
May they not be apart from the sublime happiness that is free of suffering.
May they remain in the great equanimity free from bias and partiality.

Thus contemplate the four immeasurables. If you like, you can chant the names of the buddhas and their particular dharani mantras. To repeat these many times will bring immense benefit, such as sowing the seed of liberation in the mind-stream of the animals. If you are unable to do that much, then say:

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Boundless Light, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Unshakable, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Jewel Crest, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Renowned King of Splendor, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Jewel, Moon and Lotus Adorned King of Knowledge, Brilliance and Eloquence, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Flawless Pure Gold, Jewel Light, Master of Courageous Conduct, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Sorrowless Eminent Splendor, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Dharma Expounding Melodious Ocean, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Dharma Ocean Higher Knowledge Displayed Through Eminent Insight, I salute you.

Transcendent Free Conqueror, Thus Gone, Foe Destroyer, Truly and Perfectly Awakened Buddha Supreme Healer King of Lapis Light, I salute you

Then chant:

Om mani peme hung hrih, namo ratna trayaya, namo bhagavate akshyobhyaya, tathagataya, arhate samyak sambuddhaya, Tahyatha, om kamkani kamkani, rotsani rotsani, trotani trotani, trasani trasani, pratihana pratihana, sarva karma parampara, nime sarva satva naftas soha, Namo ratna trayaya, namah arya jñana sagara baitsana bhyuha rajaya, Tathagataya, arhate samyak sambuddhaya, Namah sarva tathagatebhyah arhatabhyah samyak sambuddhebhyah, Namah arya avalokiteshvaraya bodhisattvaya mahasattvaya mahakarunikaya, Tadyata om dhara dhara dhiri dhiri dhuru dhuru itte bitte tsale tsale pratsale pratsale kusume kusuma bare ilimili tsiti dvala mapanaya soha

Repeat this with a clear and loud voice. Then hold flowers in your hand, and say:

In the sky before me is the Guru indivisible from the Transcendent Free Conqueror Buddha Boundless Light encircled by an ocean-like assembly of the precious objects of refuge, including the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, and the devas and rishis accomplished in truthful speech. They are vividly present and their melodious voices utter auspicious wishes. The immense rain of flowers they shower down increases and extends further and further the life-span and merit, splendor and prosperity, wisdom and virtues, of myself and all sentient beings headed by the benefactor.

All those who are reborn as animals are presently freed from the fear of untimely death and live peacefully under the protection of the Three Jewels. Ultimately, when the seed of liberation ripens within their stream of being, they are invested with the fortune of quickly attaining enlightenment.

Then, while imagining this, say:

Like the mighty royal crest of the victory banner,
Sublime deity adorning these practitioners'

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heads,
Bestowing upon them the supreme accomplishment,
Glorious and eminent guru, may your auspiciousness be present.

Unexcelled teacher, precious Buddha,
Unexcelled protector, precious sacred Dharma,
Unexcelled guide, precious Sangha;
May the auspiciousness of the refuge objects, the Three Jewels, be present.

Boundless Life, the primary guide of this world,
Who overcomes all types of untimely death,
Protector of all unprotected and suffering beings,
May the auspiciousness of Buddha Amitayus be present.

After you have chanted whatever verses of auspiciousness you know, then say:

The strength of giving truly exalts the Buddha.
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of giving.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect giving also increase.

The strength of ethics truly exalts the Buddha.
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of ethics.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect patience also increase.

The strength of patience truly exalts the Buddha,
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of patience.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect patience also increase.

The strength of perseverance truly exalts the Buddha.
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of perseverance.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect perseverance also increase.

The strength of concentration truly exalts the Buddha.
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of concentration.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect concentration also increase.

The strength of insight truly exalts the Buddha.
The Lion of Men has realized the strength of insight.
When entering the city of compassion,
May the life-span of perfect insight also increase.

Om namo bhagavate, aparimita ayurjñana subinishcha
tatejo rajaya, tathagataya, arhate samyak sambuddhaya,
Tadyata, om punye punye mahapunye aparimita punye,
aparimita punye jñana sambharo pachite,

Om sarva samskara pari shuddha dharma tegagana
samudgate svabhava vishuddhe mahanaya parivare svaha.

*Utter this as many time as you can while scattering flowers.
Then say:*

As implied by the virtuous roots of doing this, may the virtuous roots gathered throughout the three times make the Buddha's teachings prosper and bring forth immense virtuous goodness in the world.

May all sublime people upholding the Dharma live long and steadfast and may their activities flourish.

May I and all sentient beings, headed by this benefactor, have increased life-span and merit, splendor, prosperity, and wisdom.

May these animals too be freed from the fears of samsara and the lower realms, and soon attain the precious state of enlightenment.

Having formed these thoughts, with one-pointed resolve then say:

By this virtue may all beings
Perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom,
And may they attain the sacred two kayas
Resulting from this merit and wisdom.

By this virtue may all attain omniscience.
Having defeated the enemy, wrongdoing,
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death,

From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.

In all our lives, wherever we take rebirth,
May we never be separate from the Three Jewels.

May we always venerate them,
And receive their blessings.

May the precious mind of enlightenment
Arise in those it has not arisen.
Where it has arisen, may it not wane,
But increase further and further.

As the single source of benefit and well-being,
May the teachings remain for a long time,
And may the life-span of the people who uphold these teachings,
Be steadfast like the banner of victory.

May the world have peace and delightful years,
May crops be bountiful and cattle increase,
May the source of every peace and goodness be present,
And may all wishes be fulfilled.

In this very life as well
May all types of unfavorable conditions subside,
May we have long life, good health, and prosperity,
And attain enduring happiness.

By the strength of this powerful merit
In this life may the benefactors,
Along with their following accomplish their aims,
Be free of obstacles, have the best of luck,
And fulfill their spiritual wishes.



In this way make dedication and aspirations. Then say:

By the blessings of the supreme Buddha, eminent and unexcelled,

The victorious sun of truth,

May the harmful foes of maras and obstructors subside
So that the auspiciousness of constant splendor is present day and night.

By the blessings of the Dharma of the unconditioned nature, eminent and unexcelled,

The sacred Dharma's nectar of truth,

May the painful foes of the five poisonous emotions subside,
So that the auspiciousness of constant splendor is present day and night.

By the blessings of the Sangha's qualities, blazing in precious brilliance,

The truly beneficial deeds of the conqueror's offspring,

May the flaws of misdeeds be removed and may goodness increase,
So that the auspiciousness of constant splendor is present day and night.

Having uttered these and other suitable verses of auspiciousness, say:

Enjoyment of the splendor of immortal life,

Intelligence and discerning insight,

Whatever splendor and wealth of samsara and nirvana there may be,

May their auspiciousness be spontaneously present.

May merit increase and flourish like the lofty king of mountains,

May great fame spread throughout the sky,

May there be long life, good health and spontaneous benefit for others,

And may the auspiciousness of an ocean of eminent qualities be present.

May this place have peace and happiness morning and night,

May the midday as well be peaceful and happy,

May there peace and happiness every day and night,

And may the auspiciousness of the Three Jewels be present.

Om yedharma hetu prabhava hetun teken
tathagato haya wadet tekeñchayo nirodha
ewam vadi maha shramana svaha

Uttering this, make peace and goodness by strewing flowers. If you prefer, some other texts for longevity practice mention that one can "make the sun and moon marks on the forehead of those whose lives you have freed so that they will henceforth not be killed." In this way, it is taught that drawing the design of the sun and moon with butter on their foreheads creates the auspicious coincidence for their life-span being equal to the sun and moon. It is also taught that giving a few of the choicest cattle with white marks the name "Lucky" (Tib. Tashi, Skt. Mangala), creates the auspicious coincidence for luck and good fortune. Do so accordingly.

Furthermore, if you refrain from using traps, fishing nets or the like, in order to save the lives of birds, fish and deer, do so while including the above-mentioned bodhichitta resolve, as well as the dedications and aspirations. By combining this with smoke offering (lhasang) and so forth, the benefits will be immeasurable, as exemplified by freeing lives.

In particular, in the area where you do so many auspicious signs will appear, such as seasonal rainfall, and prosperous crops and cattle. In his Jewel Garland, the noble Nagarjuna says:

Sensible people should always
Place food, water and plant oil,
Or heaps of grains,
At the entrance to an ant nest.

Accordingly, giving food to ants, clean food to fish, or medicine to the sick, throwing a feast for children, or giving food and drink to birds and the destitute, all these should be embraced with the skillful means of the bodhichitta resolve and sincere dedications and aspirations. If you do so, it will become a cause for averting death, increasing prosperity and, ultimately, great enlightenment. Since this is easy to do, involves minor hardship and brings immense benefit, all intelligent people should, in various ways, persevere in these skillful means for gathering the accumulations.

In order to benefit both myself and others, this was written by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, someone who is devoted to the Bodhisattva Pitaka, motivated by pure intentions. May this be a cause for the lives of the sublime upholders of the teachings to last for a hundred aeons, for all sentient beings to be liberated from the fears of untimely death, and for their imminent attainment of the state of the Buddha of Boundless Life. Sarva mangalam.

At the command of H.H. Chadril Rinpoche, a great bodhisattva who truly embodies the virtues mentioned here, this was translated by Erik Pema Kunsang and edited by Marcia Binder Schmidt and Michael Tweed. Proofread and reprinted by Idan in 2003.

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Permission was granted by H.H. Chadril Rinpoche for the reprint of this.



The Meaning of Near-Death Experience (1)

by **Pema Lhadren**

translated by **Simon S.H. Tang**



Most of the people who have gone through the “near-death experiences”, and were lucky to have survived those experiences, would deeply realize “the truth of life”. Such kind of experience has changed their lives thereafter. No matter what sorts of things did they possess in the past, whether it be their attitudes, ways of treating others or in handling things, their values, or their stubbornness and insistence on certain issues, all have undergone drastic changes.

The “near-death experience” can change one’s whole life, which is, indeed, the influence of “death” upon “life”. Besides this, is there any other influence of “death” on other aspects / levels? Is it necessary for us to realize this?

The annual number of deaths in China is estimated to be around 8.25 million (published figures by China in 2003). Then, how about that for the entire world? Just think about this, and then you will start to realize that death is not only the inevitable path that everyone has to go through, but that it happens regularly, and is a matter of close relation with our own lives. Indeed, it is the most important and crucial subject matter of life itself.

Everybody has his/her friends, relatives and loved ones. The quantitative aspect of this huge concentric layers of emotional ties and relationships is so large that it is capable of forming a network. If one of the persons in this network happened to pass away, then your emotions, as well as that of all those who are related to the person, would be triggered. Hence, if one can calculate the global figure of deaths, together with all those people who are related, the figure would be extremely alarming. This, indeed, shows that the figure of people being affected by death is of astronomical scale. The number of people being shocked, hurt or knocked down by death is beyond calculation, and those who are in need of counseling services are all around us.

Therefore, to learn the wisdom of death, to let oneself possess the right attitude in managing death, and even to know how to transform death into the momentum of a new life is an urgent subject matter for helping oneself and others. Whether it be the truth of life or the meaning of existence, whether it be that one’s life would elapse empty-handed, or simply a waste of time and effort to tread on the path of life, and whether one would simply die for nothing worthwhile, and so on, all the key issues of which will bring to bear upon this important subject matter.

For the popular topic of “life education” nowadays, if it does not include the wisdom





and the methods in managing death, then it cannot be considered as a complete education, and will thus remain to have shortcomings and inadequacies. If so, to a large extent, it will be a kind of education that is short-sighted and not thorough and comprehensive enough, and so it will be hard to fulfill the profound significance of the term “life”.

The ancient Chinese sage Zhuang Zhou had mentioned that “if one can manage one’s life well, then it would be possible for one to manage one’s death well”. So, in fact, what is the internal relationship in between “life” and “death”?

According to the realized truth that was depicted by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, “death” does not represent the end of everything. Being rotten in the physical body does not represent the extinction of the spiritual body. The so-called “reincarnations of life” is just like the endless turning of a wheel, such that the ‘mind’ does not stop its existence, but instead it will continue to rely upon another physical substance for its continuation of existence in life. This sort of untied entanglements is simply because of our tight grip of life itself. The consequence of this unyielding grip of life will only lead to endless pains and sufferings. The continuous existence of life is equivalent to continuous reincarnations.

Do you want to end this? There is only one method, that is, to train oneself on how to release the grip of one’s life while we are still alive. This sort of training on the release of both body and mind is called by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni as “Dharma practice”. It is the same idea as what Zhuang Zhou had said about managing one’s life well. Indeed, this is the influence of “life” on “death”.

During one’s lifetime, if one can actively face the reality of life, realize it, learn how to

manage it and eventually to master life skillfully and light-heartedly, without further entanglements and reincarnations, then this kind of managing one’s life well is exactly the meaning of “the truth of life”.

One should not be disrespectful for the possession of one’s life, but instead one should vigorously develop the dynamics of life and to ignite the flame of life to its fullest, in order that one can be liberated from the bondage of reincarnations, which acts as a turning wheel, and thus no longer be trapped in the endless and helpless cycle of death and rebirth. This kind of wisdom, which is as bright as light itself, is exactly “the truth of life”.

Is “life and death” really like this? Are there any concrete and substantial examples that can illustrate this so that we can peep at it in order to realize the truth behind it? We could try to reveal its significance from those survivors who have gone through the “near-death experiences”, in order that our wisdom in the understanding of life could be elevated as a result.



The Wheel of Life and Death in Tibetan Buddhism



NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES (NDE)

The so-called “near-death experience” (abbreviated as NDE) refers to the experiences of a person who has approached the verge of death, due to either accident or sickness, which ordinary people will have no way to imagine the “after-death” experience, as well as the thereafter symptoms of the “recovery of life after death”. Although the “near-death experiences” take place in different kinds of people, yet, marvelously, there are many common features among them. The fact is that the existence of “near-death experiences” has been recognized in both the East and the West since ancient times. This kind of recognition creates many folk legends, myths and bizarre stories.

Some people believe that the “near-death experience” proves that when one has passed away, even though the physical body has rotten and died, the spiritual body (which is more commonly known as the “soul”) continues to exist. However, there are also those people who think that the so-called “near-death experience” is only a special type of illusion created by the fading functions of the brain, and that it is not an adequate evidence to prove the continuation and existence of the spiritual body after death. Due to the fact that a person who is in the state of “near-death” is not yet really dead, the so-called “experience after death” remains to be controversial.

As a matter of fact, are there any factual descriptions or research findings that can provide reasonable explanations in unfolding the “puzzle of life and death”, as well as elaborations on the reasons for the formation of “near-death experiences” in between the domains of religions and

sciences? Furthermore, are those explanations capable of resolving the points of arguments from both sides? In fact, the answer to this is affirmative.

For more than a thousand years ago, Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, has elaborated in details on the kind of phenomena that will appear after one’s death in “The Tibetan Book of the Dead”. Furthermore, he had listed out the causes and resolutions in the esoteric teachings for practical training and on the saving of the dead. If modern scientific terminologies and explanations can be complemented by both the disclosed and undisclosed esoteric teachings, not only the “puzzle of life and death” could be revealed, but then even the cause of “near-death experience”, as well as its points of arguments, could have solid and real answers.

Before the quoting of religious explanations, we can, first of all, employ a comparative analysis of logical reasoning on the scientific research findings, statements from survivors of “near-death experiences”, and various other related research findings, in order to help us in unfolding the outer layers of the mysterious mask of the “puzzle of life and death”.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

In the early seventies, such American scientists and scholars as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody and others have already pioneered on the earnest research of “near-death experiences” and focused their specializations on this important subject matter. No matter what categories do they belong, whether they be

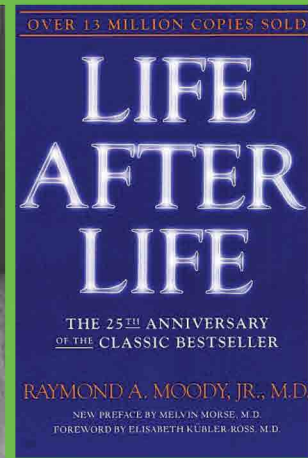
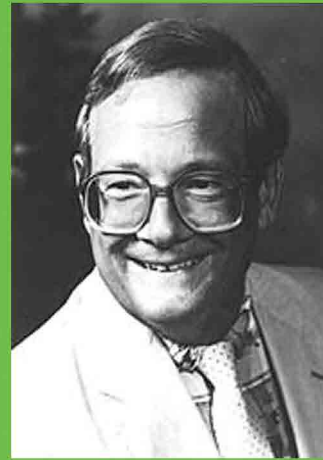




psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, neural-physiologists, religious leaders, cultural anthropologists and philosophers, etc., all of them have paid great attention and are most concerned about the “near-death experiences”. Furthermore, scholarly articles of research findings have been published and international research institutions have been formed. This sort of research atmosphere has extended and spread across to other European countries such as in Britain, France and Northern Europe.

As far as publications are concerned, such scientific research works as “Reflections on Life after Life” by Dr. Raymond Moody, and “The Instant of Death” by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross were the early pieces of work. Thereafter, “Life at Death” and “Heading Toward OMEGA” by Kenneth Ring; “Recollections of Death” by an American cardiologist Michael B. Sabom; “Return from Death” by a British psychologist Margot Grey; “Full Circle: The Near-Death Experience and Beyond” by Barbara Harris Whitfield; “Coming Back to Life” by Phyllis M.H. Atwater; “Death: The Final Stage of Growth” and other recent works by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross; another work of “The Light Beyond” by Dr. Raymond Moody; and “The Eternal Journey” by two American physicians Craig Lundahl and Harold A. Widdison in which is recorded the “illusions” that many terminal cancer patients had seen. As for periodicals on “near-death experiences”, there is a special journal on “near-death experience” research, entitled “the Journal of Near-Death Studies”, which is edited by Bruce Greyson, M.D., Carlson Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, U.S.A.

It was the book “Life after Life” by Dr. Raymond Moody, published in 1975, which first coined the term of “Near-Death Experience” and used it as a proper noun, while Dr. Raymond Moody was the first person in the world who published his research findings for



the public and thus introduced the term “near-death experience”. His work has thus attracted a wide attention and response from the general public. Thereafter, the books that were written by Kenneth Ring and Michael B. Somber, basing upon a wide range of collection and analysis of data through scientific methods, were highly recognized by the scientific community. This kind of recognition has thus made the public know that the existence of “near-death experience” is, indeed, a fact beyond doubt.

The International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS) at the University of Connecticut is currently the most active research centre in the field of “near-death experiences”. There are thousands of reports by researchers and personal oral statements of survivors of “near-death experiences” stored in this centre, and thus making it a treasure-house of the subject matter for researchers.

In 1990, the first international conference on “near-death experiences” was held at Georgetown University, Washington D.C., USA, with over three hundred researchers and survivors of “near-death experiences” participating from thirteen countries.



SPECIAL COMMON FEATURES OF NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

1. Order and items of “near-death experiences”:
 - (1) Detachment from the body: feeling the spiritual body has left its physical body;
 - (2) Entering into darkness, just like inside a tunnel;
 - (3) Seeing lights;
 - (4) Entering into the world of lights;
 - (5) Review of one’s past life;
 - (6) Meeting with relatives and friends, who might be either passed away or still alive, deities or Buddhas. Some may encounter horrible scenes;
 - (7) Re-entering into one’s own physical body.
2. The changes in one’s own body and capabilities after having gone through the “near-death experience” :
 - (1) Sensitivity towards sounds;
 - (2) Sensitivity towards lights;
 - (3) Changes in the neural-sensory system;
 - (4) Changes in brain activities;
 - (5) Increase in physiological energies;
 - (6) Increase in spiritual strengths;
 - (7) The occurrence of supernatural powers.

According to the book ‘Life at Death’ by Kenneth Ring, its research findings have discovered that the “near-death experiences” that were experienced by the survivors have nothing to do with one’s gender, social status or economic class, race, marital status, religion, or whether they have any prior knowledge about “near-death experiences”. In other words, “near-death experiences” could happen to anybody.

Yet, the kinds of methods or formats that led one to the “near-death” situations would have a direct influence on the items that one would experience in the “near-death experiences”. Causes leading to “near-death” situations are most likely to be either sickness, accident or committing suicide. The “near-death experiences” induced by sickness would most likely go through all the items, with those “near-death experiences” resulting from accidents would most likely go through the review of one’s past life, while those “near-death experiences” that were the results of committing suicide would most likely not being able to see any light, nor enter into a world of light, nor meet with deities or Buddhas.

Even more so, research findings have further discovered that the concrete contents of “near-death experiences” would have great variations due to the cultural differences of different persons. For instance, Americans and Indians, even though they might have similar experiences of lights or the encountering of some deities, yet their contents and their feelings at that very moment would differ greatly from each other.





POINTS OF ARGUMENTS ABOUT NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

Due to the two afore-mentioned conditions, contemporary researchers of “near-death experiences” still have difficulties in trying to explain the reasons behind this phenomenon scientifically, and thus leading to various arguments. In short, their points of arguments are as follows:

1. Even though “near-death experiences” are actually found to have existed, could it be the case that those items being experienced are just illusions that were created due to the lack of oxygen in the brain? Is it simply a “phenomenon which had happened within the brain”, and not really meant to be some kind of detachment of the spiritual body with its own independent existence from the physical body? But then, why is it possible that some survivors of “near-death experiences” could tell the facts that had happened while they were still in the periods of coma?
2. The characteristic of “dreams” is that the scenes might change suddenly, which is quite similar to that of “near-death experiences”. However, in the case of “reality”, the change of scenes should go through a gradual process, and not a sudden change. Could it, then, prove that the “near-death experience” is merely a kind of “dream”, and not really a fact in “reality”? If it is not a “dream”, then why do the scenes change so suddenly in “near-death experiences”?
3. On the one hand, if our abilities of thinking, seeing, hearing and sensing must have to rely upon the brain, yet on the other hand, if those people who have gone

through the “near-death experiences” could really feel the independent existence of the spiritual body leaving the physical body while possessing the afore-mentioned abilities, then does it mean that the brain is really not necessary for possessing such kinds of abilities? This seems to be rather contradictory to the reality as we saw it, and if so, does this prove that the so-called “near-death experience” is nothing more than just an illusion?

4. “Near-death experiences” ought to be within the domain of the “world after death”, since those survivors of “near-death experiences” could see their relatives and friends who had previously passed away. But, then, why is it possible for them to be able to see living people of this world at the same time? Again, can this be just another proof that the so-called “near-death experience” is some kind of an illusion that was generated by strong desires? Or, is it possible that certain abilities of the spiritual body are stronger than the physical body in such a way that the beings of the two different realms (both of this “living world” and the “world after death”) can be seen simultaneously?
5. The concrete contents of the items of the “near-death experiences” could have great variations due to the cultural differences of different persons. Again, can this be another proof that the so-called “near-death experience” is merely an illusion that was created by the varying activities of an individuals’ either conscious or sub-conscious mind? Even though the concrete contents of the items of the “near-death experience” may vary greatly, why is it, then, that the survivors of the “near-death experiences” have marvelously gone through similar items?



Hence, is it possible for one to analyze the above-mentioned arguments purely in scientific terms? Then, after transcending the limits of science, what sorts of attitude, knowledge and wisdom should be adopted in order to realize, analyze and resolve these disputes so as to highlight “the truth of life”?

In the forthcoming issues of the “Lake of Lotus”, stories of various survivors of “near-death experiences” will be related, with both scientific and supra-scientific analyses to be introduced as suggested possible solutions to the afore-mentioned problems. Hopefully, in this way, we do want to share with you, our readers, the kind of knowledge and wisdom so induced. Wishing you all to have developed increasing wisdom and outstanding vision, while accumulating auspicious merits! 🌸

The Truth of Life

Death and dying is an important lesson for life.

“If one can manage one's life well, then it would be possible for one to manage one's death well”

During one's lifetime, if one can actively face the reality of life, realize it, learn how to manage it and eventually to master life skillfully and light-heartedly, without further entanglements and reincarnations, then this kind of managing one's life well is exactly the meaning of “the truth of life”.



This is a large stone statue of the Lord Buddha entering into maha-parinirvana.

The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (1)

By Pema Lhadren
translated by Simon S.H. Tang



Many people think that if one can only work hard, one will be able to acquire fame and fortune. This kind of attitude is being considered to be a truth in itself and as a virtue. As a matter of fact, continuous exhausted works would merely weaken one's ability to think and one's sharp sensitivity. Diligence is not the only factor for one to become successful. What one needs to know in order to become successful is: how to think, and to find a way to accomplish the works in a time- and energy-saving manner.

If one accomplishes a task through a wise and efficient way, a rapid advancement could readily be created. Where there is an advancement, there is definitely a success. For every person who wants to become successful, this recognition is very crucial indeed. In order to quickly reach one's destination, we human beings had invented motor vehicles which caused a great leap of advancement in our civilization. This was some kind of a success! Our continuous pursuit in this same line of thinking helped to further invent the aircrafts. Thus, successes can re-occur along this path of "wisdom thinking".

"Wisdom thinking" is "to get the job done by employing a method of spending the least amount of time and effort, in order to

attain its success". This kind of "wisdom thinking" can direct and guide us like a compass in the human sea, thus showing us the right direction and the correct path, and further inducing a prompt and accurate way to achieve success during our life course, in order to attain the desired outcome and the final destination.

Similarly, how can we apply the same rationale towards our practicing of the Dharma? Thus, if a Dharma practitioner wants to make some achievements in one's own "Dharma practice" so as to attain realization, the mere practicing of the Dharma through hard works without break would not help, but this can only be done by wisely selecting the core and the methods of "Dharma practice". It is only when certain effort is endeavored with the right direction and towards the main point that the efficacy of this effort could then be exhibited. It is only then that one's "Dharma practice" would attain achievements.

Think about it: if the core of one's "Dharma practice" is not in the "training of one's mind", it will surely contradict the truth of Buddhism, the basic tenet of which is that "everything comes from the mind", then no matter how hard you try, you would only go down the path that will further deviate from the original destination, and will never be

able to reach there. Hence, if the method of one's "Dharma practice" is not correct, then the harder you try, the more mistakes you will commit. Isn't it true that you are just getting the opposite result of what you had intended to attain from the very beginning?

Therefore, it is a wisdom for us to make a habit of pausing, once in a while, to think through our situations, thus helping us to upgrade our own capabilities. In the course of one's life, regardless of work, study, Dharma practice and even interpersonal relationships, "diligence" is one of the most important ingredients for success that cannot be omitted, and is also an excellent character to be possessed. However, if you want to upgrade the quality, efficiency and the speed of one's success, then you must give more time to thinking. No matter what you do and what you see, you should ask the question "why?"

If you are able to develop this habit of thinking, your wisdom will unceasingly flow, and the horizons of your thinking will also expand unceasingly. In this way, successes of high efficiency will certainly occur. Have you ever thought of this before: why does a huge elephant that weights over a thousand kilograms can be tied up to a small pole by only a short piece of chain? Why is it possible?

In India or Thailand, elephant tamers start to tie up the elephant with an iron chain onto a concrete or steel pillar while it was still in its infancy. No matter how hard the small elephant tries to struggle, there is no way for it to get loose. Gradually, the small elephant gets used to it and so it no longer struggles. When the elephant grows up and becomes big and strong, it would no longer try even though it can now easily break the chain.



The logic of thinking behind the small elephant is that "numerous failures imply never to succeed", and then this kind of thinking becomes habituated, being formative during its growth process, and finally it never wants to try again. Even though the elephant continues to grow only in its bodily make-up, its mind ceases to develop further. As a result, it is unable to break away from the self-created bindings of its own thoughts. Even though it is extremely powerful, it fails to overcome the illusive and formless bindings of thoughts.

As a human being, being considered as the most intelligent animal among all living creatures in this world, would you tease the elephant for its stupidity? However, if you are informed by the Buddhist teachings that you are as equally ignorant as the elephant because of the bindings of your own thoughts, that you are and have been reincarnated perpetually all along without the slightest ability to decide on your own fate, and that you have been used to it of being tortured in this kind of repeated cyclic existence without any advancement at all, then would you be willing to stop your daily pace of living for a moment and start thinking about this question? Because of its lack of thinking, the elephant was not able to observe the kind of changes, which had occurred in terms of its ability and the environmental factors, that could have rewritten the law of success and failure.

In the eyes of the Lord Buddha, there is not much difference between us and the elephants. Due to the advancement of our time, the Buddhist teachings are able to be spread across the world, regardless of the distance. Your knowledge and vision excel those of the past generations. So, would you care for the fact of trying to untie yourself from those bindings of this cyclic existence of reincarnations? Besides developing the art of thinking as a habit, which is a crucial factor for success, there are two other essential points that must be added to the order of thinking. **The first one is direction and the second one is speed. In all circumstances, direction is much more important than speed. Without direction, speed becomes meaningless.**

Why there are people who can always be able to render excellent results of high efficiency and high quality in their works? And then, why there are those who are always busy all day long but without any achievements? The key to this is that for those highly efficient people, they would like to think through and analyze the situations at the very beginning, in order to set for the right target and direction. Once the positioning of the right direction has been fixed, the person will focus and concentrate all his / her energy to dash for the direction without going astray. As a result, the odds of success are extremely high, the speed of reaching the destination is extremely fast and the quality is amazingly good. It is because a person of high efficiency must be **"focusing one's mind and attention at the very destination, without being distracted by other things"**.

Let us take a look. Those people who are very busy all day long but without any achievements are most likely to be those who are in lack of direction and focus.

Furthermore, they are the people who would like to change their minds quite readily and constantly. They always waste their precious energy and time in other insignificant matters that are deviating away from the right direction. In order to avoid making the mistake of deviating from the right direction, there is a very simple way to fix it by always asking oneself two questions:

1. What is the aim and objective as my main target?
2. Whether the kind of things that I am doing now is contributing towards achieving my target or not?

Similarly, in order to increase the speed of achieving one's own target, there is also a simple way by always asking oneself two questions:

1. If all of the things that I am doing now are conducive for achieving the objective, and if I want to set them into priorities, which then will be the most significant one?
2. Though some of the items are conducive for achieving the objective, but given that I have only limited time and energy that are insufficient to allocate for all those items, then should I give up some of those items that are of lower priorities?



The right direction for “Dharma practice” is always to “train one’s mind”. As for the speed, one must first go through a deep thinking and analysis, taking into consideration of what might be the most suitable method for one to practice in terms of speed expectancy. There is an appropriate reference for you on the teachings of the “Nine Yanas”, which was addressed in an essay entitled “An Introduction to Guru Padmasambhava, the Founder of Tibetan Buddhism” published in this current issue of the “Lake of Lotus”.

If there is no positive and correct attitude to form its foundation, thinking itself could be rather dangerous. The thinker might allow himself to go astray by simply justifying the means to achieve his / her end, and thus ending up in going beyond the threshold of no return. For instance, in the practice of Vajrayana, if a person merely concentrates on the format of practice with an attitude of aiming for quick achievement, but disregards the important direction of “mind-training”, then his / her endeavors would become in vain. Even worse, he / she might end up in a dangerous situation.

In selecting one’s own methods, a practitioner must need to take into consideration his / her real practical

circumstances. For example, one must pay special attention to one’s own capability, interest, expectation and all the costs that one is ready to pay for. **One has to be faithful to one’s own ideal and to restrain oneself from the desire “to flow with the tide”.** In order to reach the goal, one needs to upgrade and elevate one’s own capability and to strive for it. In other words, one has to alter one’s previous lifestyle and one’s own attitude, and these are the prices that one has to pay for. All those desires that are in direct violation to one’s own “mind-training” must also be abandoned, and those are also the prices that one has to pay for as well! If one does not have an adequate way of thinking and psychological preparation in this regard, the chances of failure would be very high.

Indeed, to a very great extent, both **successes and failures actually depend on whether one has the wisdom of knowing “what to adopt and what to abandon”.** In order to realize the wisdom in question, certainly there are some methods that need to be mastered. In the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, we will further share them with you , our readers. Wishing you all to have increased both your wisdom and merits! 🌸

Spark of Wisdom:

- 1 What is the aim and objective as my main target?**
- 2 Whether the kind of things that I am doing now is contributing towards achieving my target or not?**



EPILOGUE



The Buddhist teachings are meticulous and profound, while its methods of practice are practical and achievable. Nevertheless, the teachings are as abstruse and comprehensive as an ocean such that it is not an easy task for one to even just trying to grasp its contents in a concise and accurate manner. Therefore, our Association aims to help reveal the abstruse meanings of the Buddhist teachings in such a way that it can be easily understood by the general public through the distribution of CDs and VCDs, either free of charge or with a cost.

Though we have limited resources and capabilities, we still humbly wish, with a sincerity of heart, to publish this bimonthly journal of the “Lake of Lotus”, in order that the essence of the Buddhist teachings can be spread and popularized. We earnestly hope that the readers will help with your meritorious deeds by supporting this publication of the “Lake of Lotus”, through subscriptions and donations, as well as in our various projects in the preaching of Buddhism, so as to sow the seed of meritorious cause in benefiting all our motherly sentient beings.

For donations of HKD300 or above, our Association will repay the kindness of each donator by sending a piece of “**Auspicious Cloth with the Lord Buddha’ s Footprints**” (28 in. X 33 in.) as a souvenir, which has been duly consecrated by our Root Teacher Kyabje Chadral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche. These will be sent out on a “first-come-first-served” basis as long as our stock last. (Our Association is a recognized charity organization under the HKSAR Government. All donation receipts can be used as evidence for tax exemption purpose.)

In commemorating this launching of the “Lake of Lotus”, three different items of souvenirs will be available for **free distribution** to the general public as follows:

- (A) A Sticker of “Kalachakra”, which has been consecrated by our Root Teacher Kyabje Chadral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche;
- (B) A VCD on the Consecration Ceremony of our Association; and
- (C) A VCD on the teachings of “the Five Preliminaries” as transmitted by Kyabje Sangye Tsering Rinpoche (in Tibetan and Chinese only).

All the above-mentioned three items will be given to our readers free of charge on a “first-come-first-served” basis as long as our stock last. Please fill in the following form and send it back to us no later than 28th February 2006 .

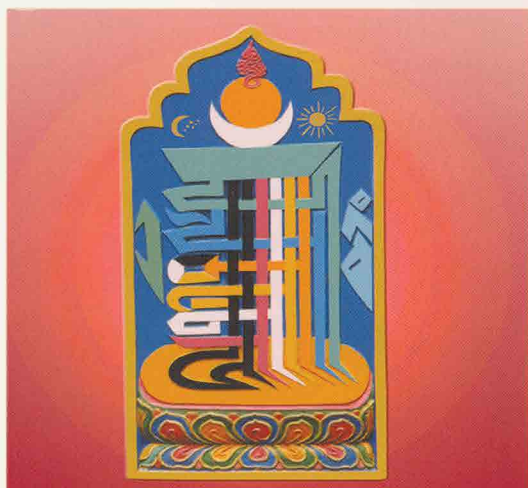


Photo of “Kalachakra”:

“Kalachakra” is the Wheel of Time. It covers the past, the present and the future. It is not fixed and not in accord with the cycle of existence and the twelve elements of causes and conditions. This sticker of “Kalachakra” has been written in Sanskrit for the protections of different kinds of invasions from inauspicious celestial bodies, evil spirits, and other worldly demons of all kinds. It also helps to expel and protect from various obstacles and hindrances, and in avoiding various kinds of misfortune. It is a mascot of auspiciousness.

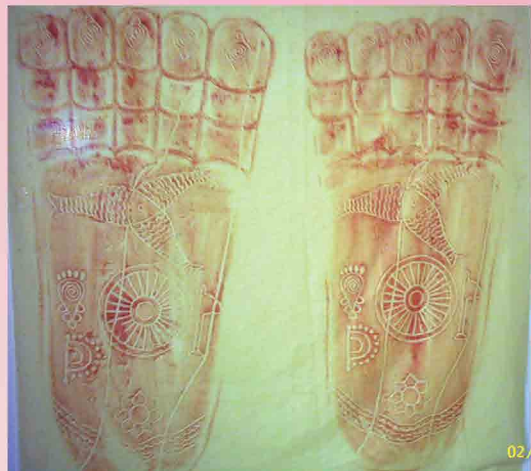


Photo of the cloth with footprint of the Lord Buddha:
The “Auspicious Cloth with the Lord Buddha’s Footprints” is a replica of the footprints of the Lord Buddha adjacent to the ‘Vajra-Seat’ at Bodhgaya, the sacred place where the Lord Buddha attained the supreme perfect enlightenment. This is of extremely precious value, which has been consecrated by our Root Teacher Kyabje Chadrak Sangye Dorje Rinpoche.



Method of payment:

- ☐ Please fill in the following form with a crossed cheque payable to “Dudjom Buddhist Association International Limited” and send it to 4/F, Federal Centre, 77 Sheung On Street, Chaiwan, Hong Kong; OR
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After which, please send the deposit slip and the filled-in form to our address, or fax them to 31571144.
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