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Lake of Lotus

蓮 花 海

Bimonthly

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Scenes of Being Greeted by Kith and Kin at the "Moment of Death"

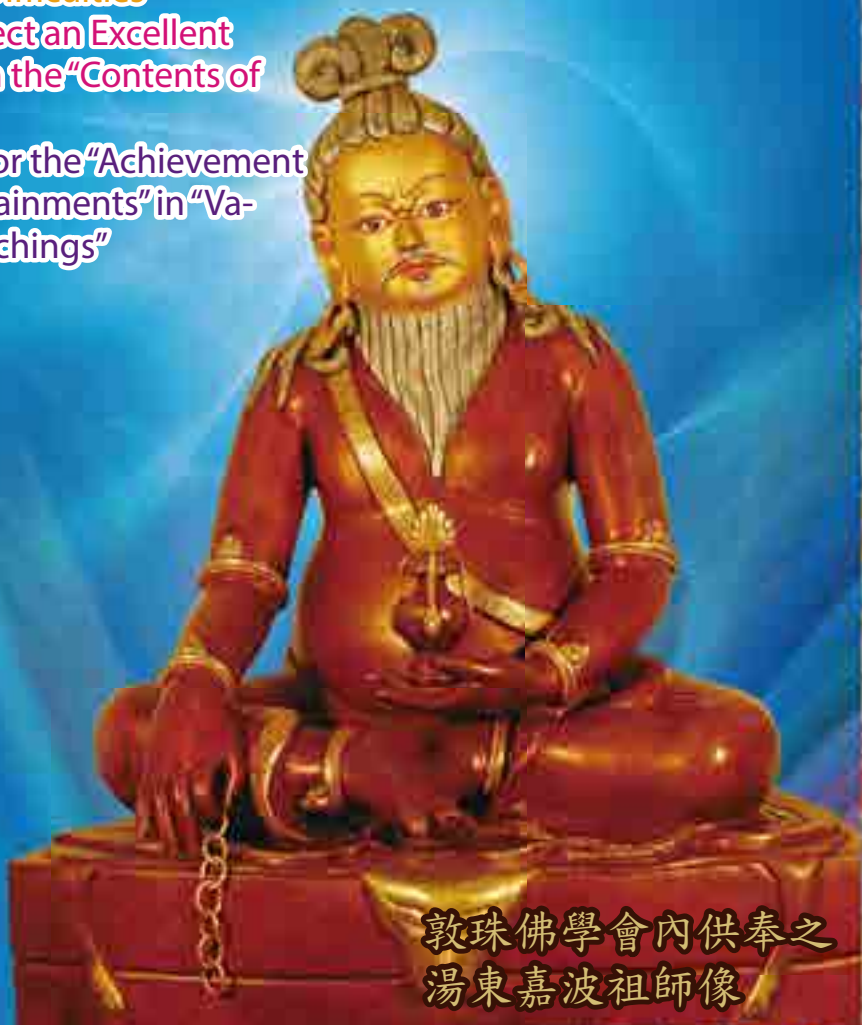
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Various Reasons on the Formation of Different Scenes at the "Moment of Death"

How to Find "Key Positions" in Resolving Difficulties

How to Select an Excellent "Guru" from the "Contents of Teachings"

Principles for the "Achievement of Swift Attainments" in "Vajrayana Teachings"



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English Version

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*by His Holiness' Humble Disciples Yeshe
 Thaye & Pema Lhadren*

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The Contemporary Mahasiddha with Many Prophecies --- **Our Lord of Refuge, His Holiness Chadrak Gyendun Rinpoche (16)**

by His Holiness' Humble Disciples Yeshe Thaye & Pema Lhadren



Namo Gurubhya!

We bow down at the Lotus Feet of our most beloved **Lord of Refuge**, the precious **Wish-fulfilling Gem!**

Palden Tsa'wai Lama Channo!

Glorious Root Guru, please pay heed to us, and bless us with your **Body, Speech and Mind!**

Emaho!

How wonderful and marvelous! With such an exceptional and rare opportunity to hear such a story!

Concluding Remarks (2)

The example of His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche is a most vivid one that anyone should follow. For one's own sake, one should discard the very "mentality of deceiving oneself and others". Only then, will one have the strong will-power and determination to diligently practice the Holy Dharma at any moment. Even though one might not be able to attain full enlightenment (Buddhahood), but at least one must strive to be liberated from this cyclic existence, **otherwise it will be too late if one feels remorseful in the future!**

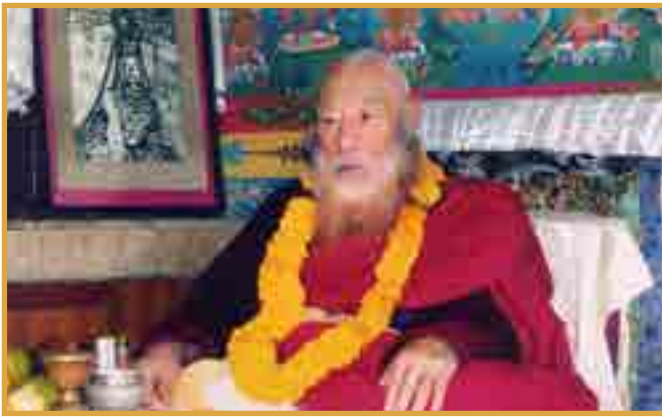
In the biography of Jetsun Milarepa, there are a few verses which remind us of the ultimate aims of Dharma practice:-

If the lineage of my guru's teachings is impure,
What benefits will I have to receive initiations from him?

If my mind cannot be merged with the Dharma,
What benefits will I have to hold texts and sadhanas in my hands?

If I do not discard the worldly dharmas,
What benefits will I have to do visualizations from instructions?

If my three actions cannot be merged with the Dharma,
What benefits will I have to recite mantras and sadhanas?



His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche

Beautiful sunshine, like lovely breeze , shines upon shady minds,
Nectars like rivers flow to nourish all sentient beings,
Compassionate activities call upon countless burnt beings,
The appearance of the dorje and the ringing of the bell wake up those dreamlike beings,
Dare to say: there are no better words to describe him in this world,
Cannot fully repay his kindness, and thus continues to be karmically connected,
Sincerely pray for the health and longevity of the Holy Saint!

The life story of His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche is like a mirror in reflecting and pointing out our mistakes and wrongdoings so that we can start correcting them. Furthermore, His Holiness' words and deeds, which are so truthful, trustworthy and solid, have set an example for us in directing and guiding us onto the true Path of Liberation.

All through his life, His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche has always maintained his style of a vagabond recluse and has attained his great realizations, and has thus proven the importance of renunciation in Theravada teachings. His Holiness' great compassion and wisdom in the great activities of benefiting the world has proven the essential nature of "altruistic enlightened mind" (bodhicitta) in Mahayana teachings. His Holiness' skillful means in spreading the glorious and precious Holy Dharma, again, has proven the significance of skillful means on the sublime and profound path of Vajrayana teachings, the epitome of all teachings.

In redirecting the misguided ship of sentient beings back to the right track, during this Degenerate Age, His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche has shown us the real paradigm of integrating the Three Yanas (of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana) and their essences in His genuine Dharma practice, thus giving us a true and clear picture of the quintessence of the Holy Dharma! We sincerely pray and hope that this wonderful life story of His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche will call upon and enlighten all sentient beings to go for the Path of Liberation and Enlightenment. Lastly, we sincerely request one hundred times that His Holiness compassionately consider us, all pitiful beings deeply entwined with the five degenerations, that His Body of Enlightenment remain spontaneously present, and that He unceasingly turn the Wheel of the Holy Dharma!

Furthermore, because of His boundless wisdom and compassion, His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche has lent His greatest support and trust on me (Yeshe Thaye) by authorizing me as the lineage-holder of Ven. Lama Sonam Chokyi Gyaltsan (Guru Lau Yui-che), the Chinese Spiritual Representative of His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche II in the Far East (please refer to the Authorization Letters written by His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche himself in the Inaugural Issue of the "Light of Lotus" and the 5th Issue of the "Lake of Lotus"). At the same time, His Holiness has been so kind and compassionate to both of us, in accepting us as His most humble and devoted servants and disciples, by bestowing upon us the most precious teachings and oral transmissions of Dzogchen and other important teachings from both the Longchen Nyingthig and the Dudjom Tersar Lineages. His Holiness' continuous support and help has further enabled us to run smoothly the "Dudjom Buddhist Association (International)" and its Dharma activities.

Those readers who are now holding and reading both journals of the "Light of Lotus" and the "Lake of Lotus" should give their heartfelt vote of thanks to His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche, for without His help and support these journals would not have been materialized, in order that the stainless right and correct Holy Dharma can be spread in the world! If there are any slightest merits to be gained from these journals and the association, these are all due to the great kindness and compassion of His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche, and so we sincerely ask you all to dedicate all these merits for the great health and longevity of His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche! However, if there are any mistakes, these are all our own faults, due to the ignorance, stupidity and incapability on our

part, and that we have to confess to His Holiness and ask for His forgiveness, never to forsake us, now and in the future!

**A prayer of supplication to His Holiness
Chadral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche**

Empowered as Regent by sublime Spiritual Masters,
Holder of their Transmissions, you impartially work for others' benefits,
Hidden yogi, perfect renunciate, Master of Great Perfection (Dzogchen),
Venerable Sangye Dorje, to you I pray!

**A Long-life prayer for His Holiness Chadral
Sangye Dorje Rinpoche (1)**

May the power and blessings of the ocean of the undeceiving Three Roots
Make the Lotus Feet of the Lord of the Dance, Sangye Dorje,
Long remain unshakeable and firm,
And His work for the great aims of the Teaching and Beings expand limitlessly.

**A Long-life prayer for His Holiness Chadral
Sangye Dorje Rinpoche (2)**

By the compassion the power of aspirations of the Guru of Uddiyana
(Guru Padmasambhava) and his retinue (twenty-five close disciples),
Intentionally born as you, **Sangye Dorje**, the great Hero,
May your Lotus Feet be firm for hundreds of aeons,
Any may your great waves of taming beings and of enlightened activities expand and flourish!
(Written by His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche himself at the request of Wangchen Palmo.)

With the extreme kind permission of our noble Spiritual Master, we have written this short life story of the activities and qualities of our Lord of Refuge on



His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche

the basis of what we have seen and heard, which is just like a drop of water in the ocean. If there are any mistakes on this work, we sincerely ask for Rinpoche's forgiveness of our sins. And if there are any slightest merits to be gained from this, these are totally dedicated to the health and longevity of His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche which is our most sincere wish! We earnestly offer our own longevity to our Noble and Holy Master, and pray that His Holiness will mercifully accept this for the sake of all pitiful sentient beings in the Samsaric ocean of sufferings. For those of us who are His Holiness' most humble and devoted disciples, this short account expresses His Holiness' true nature, which serves as a seed of faith and devotion, and we pray that this will be meaningful and beneficial to all our motherly sentient beings, as limitless as the sky!



SARVA MANGALAM !



His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche



The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death : The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (21)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren
Translated by Simon S.H. Tang

The “Third Party” Who Appeared at the “Moment of Death”

The scenes at the “moment of death” refer to the scenes encountered by a dying person who gives an account of it before one’s death. In the last chapter, the **abominable settings** encountered by some Near-Death Experience (NDE) survivors had been elaborated in details. The cause of their arising, to a great extent, **mainly comes from the projections and influences of the “mind”, which derived from the individual’s “karmic forces”**. For the **abominable settings** being encountered at the “moment of death”, their arising **mainly comes from the influences on the “Separation of the Four Elements”**.

As a matter of fact, are **all** these scenes at the “moment of death” **just being “hallucinations”**, without any slightest authenticity of their own? Is there any other **objective evidence** in proving that some of the scenes at the “moment of death”, especially those which are **either neutral or delightful**, do have their own authenticity and meaning?

Case 22

Here we do have a case in point, about Ms Onodera Chizuko of Niiza-shi, Saitama-ken in Japan, which is a good one for our further exploration. She remembered her father had said upon his death: “I see the field covered with beautiful flowers. There is a boat **waiting for me** and somebody has come to **fetch me**.” Inside the patient ward, there was also her three-years’ old sister who kept on crying and said: “An auntie whom I don’t know has come in and is sitting beside Dad. It is terrible! It is horrible!” **However, other people in the room could not see anything.**

What is the scientific explanation of such phenomena that the “mental images”, particularly those involving the appearance of a “third party”, that were captured by a dying person, as well as by other people? Western researchers Ulysses and Harald Lutherson had conducted on-site interviews of people on their verge of death, as well as their family members. Their concluded confirmation disclosed that, at the “moment of death”, the dying persons often had seen characters who did not belong to this world. They named this as the phenomenon of ‘apparition’, meaning the

“appearance of the spirits”. In Japan, this term was translated as “Reishi” (霊姿 れいし).

This phenomenon is quite common. However, in general, it is merely seen by the dying persons and not the bystanders. Therefore, this phenomenon is considered merely as a **projected image by one’s own subjectivity**, which is a kind of “hallucination”, and not an objectively-existing fact. It is the same kind of situations as the “abominable scenes”, appearing under the influences on the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’, and are all classified as “hallucinations”. On the one hand, the “hallucinations”, due to the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’, arise under the influences of the **objectively-existing external factors**. On the other hand, those “hallucinations” that appear at the “moment of death” with the appearance of a “third party”, which could not be seen by bystanders, would thus be attributed to the influences of the **subjective internal factors** (please refer to the detailed explanations on the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’ in the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issues 8 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

In the above-mentioned case, there was a three-years-old girl who had also seen the same images simultaneously as the dying person. What sort of phenomenon was it? In psychology, besides the “hallucinations” that, which could only be seen by that particular person, had arisen due to one’s own “subjectivity”, there are **some common “hallucinations” which are communal to a group of people who share the same imagination such that they would experience the same common “illusory” phenomena**. Dr. Carl Becker, Professor of Comparative Thought and Medical Ethics at Kyoto University, Japan, is an expert in the intellectual history of Buddhism, as well as a



researcher on the “near-death experiences”. He has pointed out that this kind of phenomenon is probably a kind of **“inter-subjective dream”**.

Professor Carl Becker himself also had this sort of experiences for a number of times. At one time, he was in the same bedroom with his younger brother. He dreamt of a setting that he was strolling along the seaside with his brother in a sunset evening. He grabbed hold a crab and was about to fool around with it. His younger brother said: “Don’t do that! Don’t do that to the poor crab!” After a short while of debate, he finally released it back to the sea. In the next morning, he told his younger brother about this dream. And his younger brother replied that he had also made the same dream. In checking on the minute details of it, even in each and every single word of their dialogues, they found these were **all identical**, and thus **proving that they had the same dream of the same settings**.

Professor Becker also found out that such kind of a phenomenon also occurred to him with other people of having no kinship relationship with him. He had a similar experience with a long-time roommate. They had dreamt of a scene together at the same time at a Japanese judo ring, and they were kicking against each other. He kicked hard on his friend’s chest, and then both of them awoke from the dream. His friend got out of his bed, gripped hold of his chest, and complained: “It really hurts!” In checking on the minute details of the dream afterwards, even in each and every phrase of their dialogues, they found them all to be identical. It again proved that they had gone through the same setting at the same time. **Scenes in dreams certainly are untrue, but they can be some kind of a “communally-generated hallucination”**.

Professor Charles Taylor, a religious studies scholar at the University of California at Davis, specialized in research on the **“altered states of consciousness”**. He has discovered that twins, or couples who are spiritually very intimately-closed, often make the same dreams. Psychologist Carl Jung deemed that **human beings have a kind of communal exchange of the “unconscious”, known as the “collective unconscious”**. Ordinary people, like us, would also have the kind of “collective memory”, which is an element inside our “consciousness” of having the power of influence. These two kinds of communal exchanges of the “collectivity” would, **from multiple facets, affect the human thinking patterns and the images being captured**.

From the religious standpoint, it is only “Buddhism” which could clearly and legitimately explain these kinds of phenomena. Long time ago, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had already elaborated all the phenomena in the universe are arising due to the “inter-

dependent co-origination of causes and conditions”, that is, a phenomenon which is formed by the joint projection from the “internal **main cause** with **auxiliary conditions** of the external environments”. Through the communal exchanges of both their “consciousness” and their “sub-consciousness”, living beings could **simultaneously snap** the same kind of images, which is known as the phenomenon of “**everything comes from the mind**” (please refer to the DVD on “Everything Comes From the Mind”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association).

As such, all phenomena will not perpetually exist. **When the “combinations and permutations of causes and conditions” are dispersed, the phenomenon will annihilate.** Through the communal exchanges of “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”, living beings could **simultaneously capture** the same scenes. However, due to the personal “subjective” differentiation, the images would then become scenes which could only be seen by that particular person. For instance, mentally-ill patients, or those people who meditate on special themes, etc. If the “subjective” differentiation of a **group** is brought in, the images would then be changed accordingly to special scenes which could only be seen by that **particular group** of people. For example, the “Buddha-fields” or “Pure Lands” that had been developed by the various Buddhas; the different “spiritual realms” formed by sentient beings who are having similar “consciousness” and “karma” (**The “six realms”: heavenly beings, human beings, asura, animals, hungry ghosts and beings in hell**). These are the multiple phenomena of Mother Nature being knitted together by both the “particularistic” (individual) and “universalistic” (communal) characteristics of the “mind”. Hence, they **can never exist perpetually**. The composing items of the “causes” and “conditions” under the various “combinations and permutations of causes and conditions” are continuously **ever-changing and transforming themselves**. (“Karmic forces” are “tractions”. **The “Web or Network of karmic forces”: due to the virtuous and non-virtuous behaviors in past countless lifetimes, a mutually-intertwining and influencing connection between the “mental strengths” of both oneself and others has been formed. This mutually-affecting network of tractions is known as the “Web or Network of karmic forces”. Please refer to the VCD on the “The Inconceivable Law of Karma”, published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).**

All existing things in the whole universe are not just one single indivisible conglomeration, but consist of a pile of “combinations and permutations”, which could be further sub-divided into atoms, molecules, particles, neutrons and protons, etc. Even if as minute as the “nano” (very small) scale, it is still a pile of components, which can be further sub-divided into existence in the form of “light”, and until a throughout decomposition

of it into the final state of “Emptiness” (or “**Shunyata**” in Sanskrit). Therefore, **the universal existences could merely be said to be of a temporary “phenomena”**. Their existences totally rely upon the “matchings of causes and conditions”, and their annihilations due to the “dissipations of causes and conditions”.

Since “everything is created by the mind”, and all existences are the illusions of the “mind”, the scenes arising at the “moment of death” are also **identified as “illusions”**. When “all things are being considered as illusions”, then does it mean that they can be ignored and there is no need for further exploration? Even though these are only “temporary phenomena”, and cannot be sustained forever, would it then be feasible to help the further **spiritual elevation of mankind**, through comprehension and exploration, to **reach a state of “awakening”**, so as to detach and disengage oneself from those “illusions created by the mind”, so as to **enter into the perpetual state of “Nirvana”**? (“Nirvana”: to evade from the control of all tractions (“karmic forces”) – liberation, and thus dissolve into the “unified oneness” of the Dharma realm). Whether the appearance of a “third party” in the scenes at the “moment of death” is a kind of “communally-created illusion”? Or whether “those images that are being mutually seen in a scene”, which is not simply a “dream-like illusion”, would represent something that is going to happen?

As a matter of fact, most of the sentient beings are still living under the conditions of **mutual towing and influencing** on each other. Even for the Dharma practitioners, they still cannot be in total command of “Emptiness” (or “**Shunyata**” in Sanskrit), in order to be free from those drafting and influencing. Hence, one **must have to seriously and squarely face these really-existing phenomena**, like what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had done in thoroughly portraying the details of the “posthumous world”. Indeed, **this kind of attitude would be the right attitude in learning about Buddhism**, which is also **the attitude of a Dharma practitioner who has wisdom and awareness**, rather than that of pretending to be morally-superior and stuck-up, but then inside its core, it becomes pure “empty talks”, “talk-show” type of “metaphysics” and “ignorance”.

“Emptiness” (or “**Shunyata**” in Sanskrit) **does not mean the averting of everything, but instead it should take up everything**. In order to precisely and thoroughly comprehend the genuineness and illusiveness of the “scenes at the moment of death”, one must first have to realize the reasons of the causes and backgrounds of those scenes. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that the arising of all things is due to the matching of “main causes” and “auxiliary conditions”. Then, **what are the “main cause” and “auxiliary conditions”**

of the “scenes at the moment of death”? In having comprehended and commanded the knowledge, it would be much easier for one to realize the genuineness and illusiveness of the “scenes at the moment of death”. In that, whether the appearance of a “third party” during the “scenes at the moment of death” is true or not? And what would be its “objective” for its appearance? The answers to these questions will be able to help people to understand and realize, accept and even make use of it for the “spiritual elevation” of mankind.

Various Reasons on the Formation of Different Scenes at the “Moment of Death”

According to the variations on the “main cause” and the “auxiliary conditions” of the “scenes at the moment of death”, these can be largely classified in the following ways:

1. The “Separation of the Four Elements” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”, including all kinds of memories) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’ in the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death”.
2. The “Endorphins Inside the Brain” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the “endorphins inside the brain” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death”.
3. The “Karmic Forces” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the “karmic forces” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death”. This can be further classified into the following two kinds:
 - i) **Wholesome Ones** – arising from: (a) virtuous retributions; and (b) the efforts of one’s Dharma practice.
 - ii) **Unwholesome Ones** – arising from: (a) vicious retributions; and (b) the forces of karmic creditors in seeking compensations on one’s karmic debts.

Detailed Explanations

1. “Scenes at the moment of death” formed by internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness” in conjoining with the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’ of the external circumstances --

Don’t be afraid. These kinds of hallucinations are usually abominable, but it does not mean that the deceased person would be transmigrated to evil realms. This sort of natural phenomena would also happen to even well-versed senior Dharma practitioners. In order to deal with the situations at the “Bardo of Dying”, a Dharma practitioner should have “affirmative and clear cognitions” of them in conjunction with the unique “up-to-the-point” skills of “Vajrayana teachings”, then the plight can be resolved. Detailed analysis of the initial phase of the “Bardo of Dying” had already been elaborated in the last chapter. A concise analysis of the later phases in the “Bardo of Dying” had also been taught at the Lesson 9 of ‘The Knacks at the Moment of Death and the Essences of Salvation’ for the Course on the ‘Practices of Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings’. The special “up-to-the-point” Dharma practices that are uniquely available in “Vajrayana teachings”, and the detailed analysis of the later phases in the “Bardo of Dying”, should be taught by a qualified “Guru” with relevant practical experiences (please refer to the annotation).

There are lots of examples of such nature about the “scenes at the moment of death”. Those with records in history include such documents as the ‘Past Accounts of the Twenty-Five Samaya-Rooted Congregation’, in which there was a case about the ‘Pure Land School’ of Buddhism, which was mentioned in Chapter 8 on ‘The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences’. After the teachings of the ‘Pure Land School’ of Buddhism were propagated to Japan, a famous Japanese monk named Gensin had authored a book called ‘The Essentials of Rebirths’, in which detailed descriptions on both the scenes of “Hell and the Ultimate-Rejoicing World” were mentioned. It also provided guidance on how to help dying people at their death beds. These methods included:

1. Put a statue or painting of the Buddha Amitabha in front of the dying patient’s bed.
2. Tie a piece of ‘five-colour threads’ onto the hand of the Buddha statue, and the other end to be held by the dying person.
3. Ask the “dying person” to concentrate on the ‘white subtle light spot’ at the center of the forehead of the Buddha Amitabha statue, and

then focus on chanting the 'Holy Name of the Buddha Amitabha'.

4. With other people helping to chant the 'Holy Name of the Buddha Amitabha' beside his/her death bed.

During that time, a group of the upper class elites in the Japanese society had formed an organization, headed by Monk Gensin, and was known as the "Society of the Twenty-Five 'Samaya Congregation' on Buddha-Chanting". There were a total of twenty-five members in their group. On the fifteenth day of each month, they would gather together for the chanting of the "Buddha's Holy Name" overnight. If there was any members passing away, other members would go to help with the chanting of the "Buddha's Holy Name". At one time, there was a member who was dying, and in order to provide a suitable venue for both chanting and caring, a lodging was specially built for him known as the 'Rebirth House'. There were at least two members tending after him around the clock. Ever since, whenever there was a member going to die, other members would render mutual assistance. The special point was that members would keep on asking the "dying person" as to what he/she had seen during his/her dying experiences, and the "dying person" would then honestly answer them. Those scenes described were then recorded accordingly, and so a collection of the articles was later published for future generations, under the name of the 'Past Accounts of the Twenty-Five Samaya-Rooted Congregation'.

The outcomes were extremely shocking because some of the members proclaimed that they "only saw a stretch of darkness, and nothing else". Some other members "had seen the Hell". Some reported "being besieged by fire". Some said "being burnt to charcoal by great flames". Some proclaimed "being embraced by light, and saw the Buddha Amitabha coming to fetch them". For the twenty-five members, the outcomes were not only quite different from one person to another, but they tended to be more on the "dismal" rather than the "rejoicing" experiences. These examples had fully illustrated the impacts created by the 'Separation of the Four elements' which is so prevalent to all dying beings, including those who had put in great efforts in their Dharma practices. The relevant scenes all pertained to the experiences of "sufferings" and the four elements of "earth, water, fire and wind", while the visualization on the Buddha Amitabha coming to fetch them is an extremely auspicious scene. Yet, how does it arise?

2. "Scenes at the moment of death" formed by internal "consciousness" and "sub-consciousness" in conjoining with the 'Endorphins of the Brain' of the external circumstances --

In 1975, scientists had discovered that there are certain substances in the human brains which have the same function as anaesthetic drugs. Up till now, more than 20 kinds of these substances had been found. The most famous one is "endorphins", which is a kind of 'endogenous morphine', which is the morphine generated inside the body. Its structure and function is very close to morphine, and yet they are not exactly the same. The efficaciousness of the "endorphins in the brain" is about 10 times stronger than that of morphine. When a person is shocked, pressurized, or under anoxia, "endorphins inside the brain" would then be secreted within the body. Researches had discovered that, before a dying person's breaths cease, the level of "endorphins" would increase in such a way that the dying person would gain "a moment of analgesia and an uprising sense of relief". According to the survey on the "end of life setting", as conducted by Mr. Inone Katsuya of the "Research Institute of Social Security" in Japan, from a population of 1075 dying aged people, he found that out of which about 70.6% of them were showing signs of "peacefulness" in their facial expressions while passing away. Even though many of them were terminal cancer patients who might have severe pains and sufferings before death, 69.2% of them still showed signs of "peacefulness" in their facial expressions upon dying.

Case 23

Here is a case from some of the studies. A 48 year-old anonymous lady in Gunma-ken, Japan recalled the setting when her mother died of cancer five years ago. She had been hospitalized for four months before she died, and was in excruciating sufferings. Once the pains were so severe and intense that her mother gripped hold her hand and cried, "Kill me!" Yet, at the moment of her death, she looked so calm and peaceful as if like a Bodhisattva. Before her mother passing away, she kept on telling the "scenes at the moment of death". For example, she mentioned: "There is a person in white clothes standing outside in the corridor. He has been guarding me, and so you should go out and express our thankfulness to him!" All of a sudden, she might voice out loudly by saying: "Oh, so beautiful! Fantastic! So many flowers!"

Case 24

Another case was about a 47-years-old lady by the

name of Sugimoto Fasae, who lived in Sagami-hara-shi, Kanagawa-ken of Japan. She recalled the scene when her 76-years-old grandmother passed away, her whole family surrounded her bed and yelled aloud: "Mom, mom, add it up!" Her grandma was at her last gasp and said: "Don't call me anymore. A lot of white butterflies are flying around, and flowers are blossoming everywhere. I want to go there. But then I was brought back when you called me. So, don't call me anymore." Not long after, her grandma passed away.

Though an individual might have seen some good scenes, there is no need to get excited too early. Hallucinations induced by "endorphins within the brain" are usually good, but that does not mean that the deceased person is about to transmigrate into a good realm. These natural phenomena would also happen to those people who are not Dharma practitioners, or even for those evil people of great sins. A Dharma practitioner could apply the "affirmative and clear cognitions" on the "Bardo of Dying", in conjunction with the unique "up-to-the-point" skills of "Vajrayana teachings", so as to help and elevate oneself in having actual rebirth to a "Pure Land" or the "Buddha-field", or even to "attain Buddhahood".

All in all, "scenes at the moment of death" that have been derived from the 'Separation of the Four Elements' with somatic sufferings are bound to be abominable illusions. If these illusions arose only from one's own body, without any involvement of the other "auxiliary conditions", such as the "assaulting forces of the karmic creditors" and other "karmic forces", then it would simply be uni-directional "self-arising hallucination", and thus the unanimity of the scene could be easily sustained. The time of sustaining would last longer because the process on the 'Separation of the Four Elements' takes a relatively longer period of time.

The "scenes at the moment of death" are bound to be pleasant illusions if they are induced by "endorphins within the brain" that have been released temporarily due to somatic pains and under pressure; especially the "endorphins within the brain" that were temporarily released on the verge of death, since the pleasant sensations that were created by "endorphins within the brain" are more vivid and more inconceivable than the effects being induced by "LSD". Yet, its duration would be rather short. If this kind of illusion comes endogenously within one's own body, without the involvement of other "auxiliary conditions", such as the "protective forces from karmic debtors" and other "karmic forces", which also belongs to an uni-directional "self-arising hallucination", and so the unanimity of the scenes could be easily sustained. Yet, the duration of which is rather short, since the efficaciousness of the



"endorphins within the brain" would dissipate quickly.

However, if the "auxiliary conditions" on the "scenes at the moment of death" involve other "karmic forces", then either a "bi-directional" or a "multi-directional" mutually-activated situation would be formed. Regardless of whether the "scenes at the moment of death" are good or bad, they would change at any moment, and will vary constantly according to the final outcomes of the wrestling of the energies between the "assaulting forces of karmic creditors" and the "protective forces of karmic debtors". The winning or losing of the direction is ever-changing, and so the goodness or badness of the outcome is also uncertain. Some of the cases could precisely prove that not all of the "scenes at the moment of death" are hallucinations.

Case 25

A little boy by the name Harry died on November 2 at a spot 14 miles from Asprey. Another boy named David died on November 3 in Asprey. About one hour before David's death, he sat up in bed, and pointed to the lower deck of his bed and said, "Little Harry has come to find me."

Case 26

A nurse had seen two apparitions standing beside the bed of her friend, who was on the verge of death in a hospital ward. She recognized that the two apparitions were both closed friends of her friend, and both of them had died the year before. Her friend had said earlier, "How come it all turned into darkness? I can see nothing!" But when the two apparitions appeared, her friend could recognize them at once. She showed a bright smile on her face, happily stretched her hands over to them and said, "Oh! You have now come to

fetch me! Great, because I am very exhausted.” The two apparitions also **reached out each of their hands to her.**

Case 27

Moreover, J. Moore, a tenor vocalist, said before his death: “Mom is coming! Mom, are you coming to see me? No need, no need, I am coming right away. Mom, just wait a moment, I am coming right away. Immediately!” (All the above-mentioned three cases were taken from the same book called ‘Paranormal Experience and Survival of Death’, written by Professor Carl B. Becker)

Since the “purely individual hallucinations” interact with the “collective tractions (karmic forces)”, and so the two **mutually intertwined** to form the “scenes at the moment of death”, and the “posthumous world”, thus making the majority of the people could not understand the abstruseness behind them. As a matter of fact, the contention of what the Buddhist teachings had proclaimed that ‘everything is created by the mind’ is unanimous, and has no contradiction or conflict with what some scientists had proposed (saying that the “scenes at the moment of death” and the “near-death experiences” are kinds of “illusions”). Yet, the “scenes at the moment of death” and “near-death experiences” are both not constrained only to “uni-directional illusions”, but can be illusions of “bi-directional or multi-directional ones as well. In fact, everything in our real life situation is the same, and of the same basic principle. The only difference between life and death merely lies in their spaces of existence and realms which are not the same. The so-called “hallucinations or illusions” are merely that they could not exist “perpetually”. As for their temporary existences, their durations could either be long or short. For the moment when the “hallucination” still exists and has not yet disappeared, sentient beings still feel that they are very real, and thus could not detach themselves from it. Taking dreams as an example, when most of the people have not yet awakened from their sleep, don’t they take them seriously as if those illusions are real in dealing with them? Therefore, instead of insisting to reject the factuality of the various phenomena on the “scenes at the moment of death”, “near-death experiences”, and “posthumous world” as just being “illusory” ones, **wouldn’t it be better for us to elaborate them meticulously for our “effective application”, like what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had done?**

Scenes of Being Greeted by Kith and Kin at the “Moment of Death”

3. “Scenes at the moment of death” formed by internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness” in

conjoining with the ‘Karmic Forces’ of the external circumstances --

- (i) Wholesome Ones

(a) Virtuous Retributions

At the moment of one’s end of life, it is the “critical juncture” for the most significant period of great transformation for all sentient beings. For those sentient beings, whose kith and kin in the spiritual domains have not yet been transmigrated and **being held up in the human world** may want to repay their gratitude to the deceased person, and so they would come forth to render a helping hand. However, whether this kind of assistance is **beneficial or harmful** to the deceased person? It will have to depend upon **their knowledge about the “posthumous world” and their abilities** for those sentient beings who are seeking for the retributions of their gratitude. Before the dying person ceases one’s breaths, those sentient beings, who are waiting to pay for their retributions, are getting ready to bring the deceased person to a place where they are familiar with. The dying person, with good retributions, is supposed to be able to transmigrate into a better place, or that if one knows how to practice the Holy Dharma so as to liberate oneself upon the occurrence of the **internal brightness**, then this should be just fine. However, the sentient beings who are coming forth for their retributions of gratitude might usually end up in committing some “bad deeds with good intentions”. They could not wait to grab the deceased and take him/her away in a hasty manner that might have **disturbed** the normal process of **the deceased.**

Case 28

There is a case of a “near-death experience” which is of the same nature as mentioned. A “near-death experience” (NDE) survivor was brought to a place by his uncle, who had earlier committed suicide. His uncle lived there and it was like a refugee camp, **squalid and the atmosphere was filled with negativity.** His uncle said that this was already the best place that he could find. This NDE survivor followed his uncle all the way **because he was concerned** about the conditions of his uncle who died of suicide. After a long and winding journey, he did not know how he could be able to leave the place. If it were not the case that he had “not met his fate”, such that he was able to be “revived from the dead”, he **would not know what to do about it.** The aforesaid case is relatively a fine ending. The worst and most worrisome scenario is this: that a lot of karmic creditors might make use of the illusory nature of the spiritual domains, by pretending them to be the kith and kin of the deceased person, and come forth to fetch him. Without any precautions, the deceased

person would then be brought along to extremely adverse “spiritual domains”, where the poor soul would have no way to get away and be badly abused. **This kind of situation is the most common and the most efficacious trap in the spiritual domains.**

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had alerted people in this world, in the **Chapter 8 on the ‘Praises of the Yamaraja and His Followers’ of “The Sutra of the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva’s Vows”**, by saying the following verses: “When benevolent persons of ‘Jambudvipa’ (this world) are going to die, hundreds and thousands of evil spirits will turn into the same semblances as their parents or relatives, so as to lead and guide them to be a part of their evil horde (i.e., hell, hungry ghosts, animals). It will be even more difficult for those who had already done many wicked deeds before to get away from evil.”

This natural situation is the **intertwining results of the “karmic forces”**, induced by the sentient beings due to their attachment to the passions of “gratitude, resentment, love or enmity”, and their “mental strengths” were derived from such crisscrossing melancholy. A factual reflection of the sentient beings such as their “taking revenge by all means unscrupulously, and making use of any available source of power or setting in order to achieve their purposes”. “For passions, firm attachment to sentiments, regardless of the costs”. All these are occurring prevalently across the whole universe. In the above-mentioned case of Ms Onodera Chizuko, her three-years-old sister had seen a horrible “third party” who, being invisible to the rest of the others, kept waiting beside the dying person. Together with another afore-stated case of the nurse, both are very vivid examples. Upon investigations by relevant scholars and scientists, it has shown that these are, indeed, very common phenomena.

It was not the intention of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni at all to threaten sentient beings, who are about to die, by not responding to those greetings of their dead kith and kin, such that they would not die in peace. Nor did the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni want to scare the sentient beings for their involvements with virtuous deeds, as he had said that **even benevolent persons** would also have to face this same situation. The real reason behind this was because the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, being the genuine interpreter and practitioner of the “true reality”, had deeply realized the evolutionary process of the whole universe, as well as the different situations of all sentient beings. In order to elevate the alertness of sentient beings at the “critical moments” so as to protect themselves, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had chosen to inform them everything in a “straight-forward and honest” manner, and not like those contemporary Buddhist preachers who avert this topic, and make up excuses

to reject the expositions on the “posthumous world”. These preachers are certainly ignorant about the “posthumous world” themselves. In order to disguise their own “ignorance”, they have no other alternative but to avert the issue altogether, or try to say something like this: “fear of nothing if a person is peaceful in one’s mind, entering into voidness and passing away without any attachment, then all the problems would be resolved automatically”. All of these are “self-comforting words” filled with only “empty contexts” without any substance. Such kind of a “strategy of an ostrich” is to put one’s head into the sand dome, and not facing the reality of things, would it **really be better** than what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said in a “straight-forward and open” manner?

Someone had said: “Since ‘everything is created by the mind’, and so if adopting those **‘Sutras of Partial Revelations’** (compromised the real teachings and not revealing the ultimate truth), as preached by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, then an individual might retain the scenes of the “posthumous world” in one’s mind, and as such won’t it be difficult to enter into ‘Emptiness’? If one does not have the cognition of Hell in one’s “mind”, then the Hell realm would not have existed. However, if the cognition of Hell is kept in one’s “mind”, then Hell realm would then exist. Therefore, there is no need to understand the “posthumous mode for the operation of life” in one’s Dharma practice (please refer to the detailed explanations on “Emptiness” in the DVD on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, published by the **Dudjom Buddhist Association**).

These arguments sound somewhat reasonable on the surface, but they, indeed, **do not conform to the true reality of things**. Furthermore, **these are neither wise nor pragmatic**. Among all mankind in this whole wide world, **those who can truly and correctly understand and fully realize the state of “Emptiness” (or “Shunyata” in Sanskrit), can wholly concentrate on the genuine state of “Emptiness”, and have it well commanded in such a way that they would not have to enter into the “posthumous world”, are no more than ten persons**. In other words, the majority of the people would enter into the “posthumous world” after their deaths, and since they have no idea about the mode of operation for a posthumous life, neither do they know how to carry out the Dharma practice in dealing with this kind of situation, and so this is an **extremely risky kind of “ignorance”**. In thwarting their followers to gain this kind of know-how is a kind of “ignorance” in **“deceiving oneself and others”**. In rejecting the dissemination of such kind of know-how is a kind of **selfish “ignorance”**.

“Karmic forces” are not “uni-directional”, but instead are “omni-directional” (please refer to the DVD on “The

Inconceivable Law of Karma”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association) in nature. In other words, if you are unable to enter into the correct “Emptiness” (or “Shunyata” in Sanskrit), which is free from all kinds of assaults, then it would be very difficult for one to get away from the harassments of all the karmic creditors since countless lifetimes. Even though you have no cognition of the Hell realm in your “mind”, you still cannot stop your own “karmic forces” from drafting you into the Hell realm. **The context of “everything is created by the mind” is true, but the problem lies in the fact that you cannot enter into the correct “Emptiness” (or “Shunyata” in Sanskrit) in which all “the causative notions of dualistic contradictions” can be ceased.** Once you have entered into the “posthumous world” after your death, you might be able to transmigrate into a good “spiritual domain”, with the aid of the **correct cognition on the “posthumous world” and the spiritual strength derived from the relevant “up-to-the-point” Dharma practices.** However, if a person does not even know these basic ideas and principles, which means that he does not even understand the true meanings of the “Buddhist teachings”. One might have over-estimated oneself, and with the smattering of Buddhist teachings, one might end up in **impeding** the others’ opportunities.

Thus Guru Padmasambhava, the Founder of Tibetan Buddhism, had proclaimed that the **“Bardo Teachings”** (“Bardo” means the transitional period, and thus “Bardo Teachings” refer to the teachings for the intermediate period during the posthumous world) is, indeed, a “most profound esoteric Dharma practice” for the salvation of all sentient beings. The **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”** is also an internationally renowned Buddhist text of guidance about the pathway towards death and rebirth. It contains the “profound cognitions and training on the mode of operations of the posthumous lives” and relevant practices to deal with those situations. This is, indeed, an important “pragmatic attitude” of **having courage in facing the reality.** Mastering the knowledge would prepare oneself to enter into **the correct “Emptiness” (or “Shunyata” in Sanskrit),** since the text includes teachings on “Emptiness” in the format of “Neither Existence Nor Voidness” (please refer to the DVD on ““Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association), as well as some other important elements in the teachings of ‘Dzogchen’ (Great Perfection).

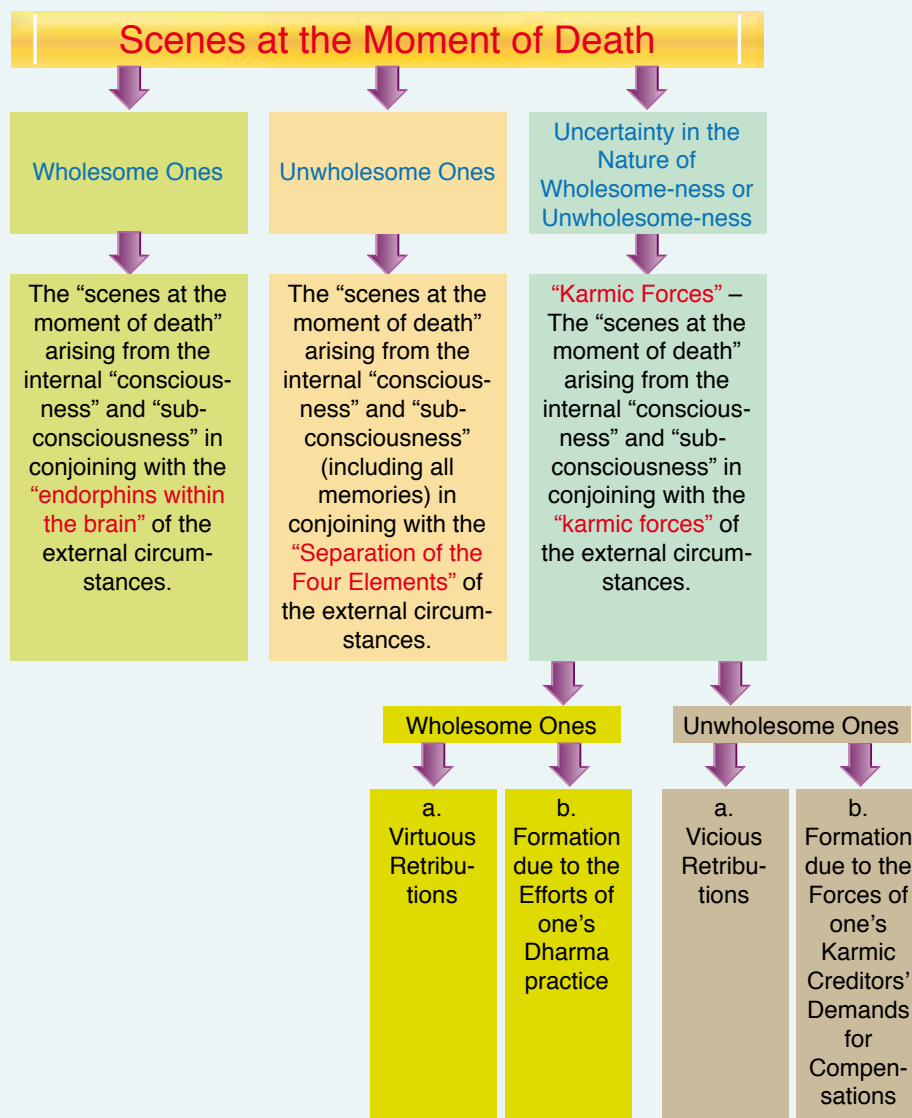
The logic is very simple. Sun Tzu’s **“The Art of War”** has proclaimed that: “Knowing both the enemy and oneself, one will be able to fight a hundred battles with hundred victories”. When all the sentient beings have to inevitably enter into the “posthumous world”, **why not getting oneself cognitively prepared for it as soon as possible?** When so many kith and kin are coming

to fetch you, and even Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are also coming fetch you as well, **how would you be able to differentiate the real from the false? How would you deal with them? Could you really afford to enter into the correct absolute “Emptiness”?** There are pragmatic teachings in the **“esoteric Buddhism”,** which are missing in the “exoteric Buddhism”. Why should one reject these kinds of teachings and do not respect them? And why can’t one accept them for the sake of the well-beings of all sentient beings? This sort of rejection originates either from the “partisan conflict” of “fighting for congregations and donations”, or simply from **a selfish and hypocritical attitude on the neglect of concern for the genuine well-beings of all sentient beings.**

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said: “The issue of life and death is most important, and impermanence comes so swiftly.” The main goal and objective of one’s study and practice of the Buddhist teachings is to end the “cycle of karmic existence on life and death” (or **“Samsara” in Sanskrit),** and for one’s liberation from the constraints of this countless “cycle of karmic existence on life and death”, and not **narrowly and short-sightedly** only aiming for some happiness in one’s “daily living” while still alive. The key of success in ending this “cycle of karmic existence on life and death” (or **“Samsara” in Sanskrit)** lies in the study of how to master and deal with “death” and the “posthumous world” while one is still alive. **Otherwise, how can one “transcend from death”?** **“Facing death”** is an extremely important issue, and is also **an inevitable key factor to be confronted with** in one’s Dharma practices (please refer to the article about the mastering of the “Key Points” in the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

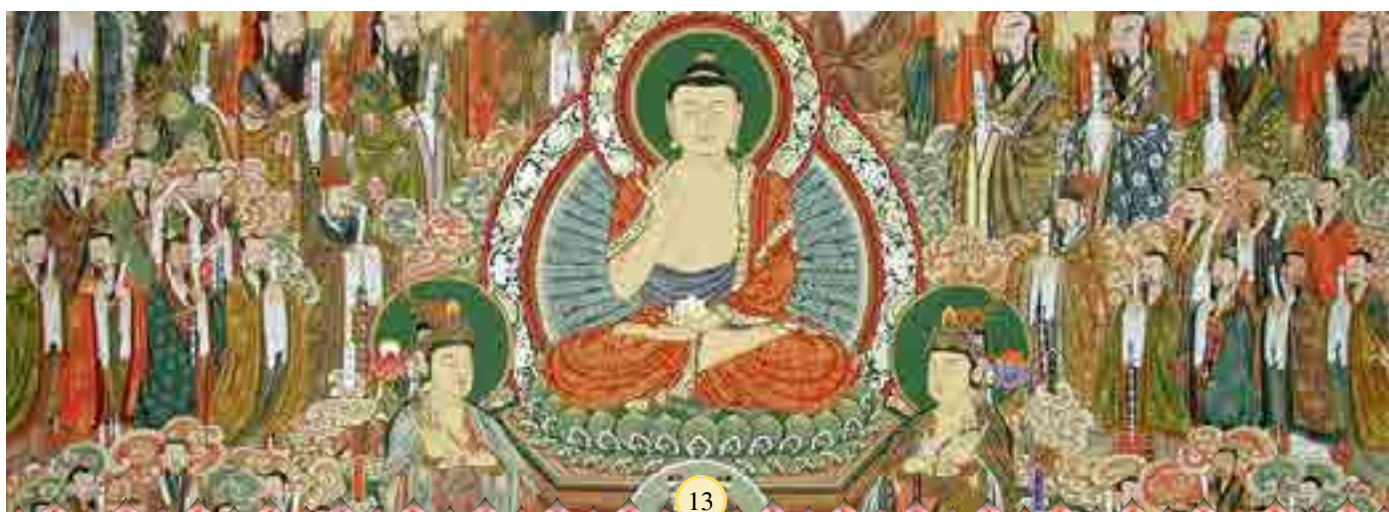
According to the record in the articles of the aforementioned **“Past Accounts of the Twenty-Five Samaya-Rooted Congregation”**, there were only a very few Dharma practitioners who could successfully visualize the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to come forth and fetch them. **What are their reasons of success?** How about those **adverse** “scenes at the moment of death”, due to evil retributions and the forces of karmic creditors’ demands for compensations, being formed? In fact, what are the conditions required in the methods of Dharma practice, so that they would be “up-to-the-point training” for one’s “spiritual elevation”? There are so many ways in “training for one’s spiritual elevation”, and so how to choose among them in order to cope with the different stages?(To be Continued). 🏹

Scenes at the Moment of Death



(Remarks:

- (1) Detailed analysis and teachings on the later stages of the “Bardo of Dying”, the “Bardo of Dharmata” and the “Bardo of Rebirth”, would only be transmitted to the members of the “Fruit Yana” of the Dudjom Buddhist Association, in the higher levels of “group training”, upon approval on the suitability of each individual.
- (2) The newly-released book on “The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (1) has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meanings of the Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 1 to 10).



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The Truth of Life
“Near-Death Experiences” (NDEs)
History of Research on “Near-Death Experiences”
Special Common Features of “Near-Death Experiences”
Points of Arguments About “Near-Death Experiences”

Issue 2

The “Energy Thread” Between Life and Death
The Profound Secrets of the “Energy Thread”
Five “Supernatural Powers”

Issue 3

The Mystery of “Light”
The Mysteries on the “Entrance and Exit Doors” of Life and Death
The Origin on the Linkage of Life and Death

Issue 4

The “Almighty Light” at the Moment of Death
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Issue 5

Reasons for the Generation of the “Light of Life and Death”
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Issue 6

“Omniscience” and “Flash Foreword”
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Issue 7

“Near-Death Experience” is Beyond Doubt
The “Near-Death Experience” of the Unification with “God”
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Real “Death”: A “Highly Risky Turning Point” of Life

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The Phase of Separation between the “Physical Body” and the “Spiritual Body”
The Phase for the Exposure of the “primordial Nature”
“Transitional Period” and the Phase of Standby for

Rebirth

Shocking Revelations: Scenes Before Death

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One Out of Seven “Near-Death Experiences” is Negative
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The Crisscrossing Effects of Projections from “Main Force” and “External Forces”
The Crisscrossing Effects of the “Karmic Networks”
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The Abstruseness of the “Scenes at the Moment of Death”
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The Application of Wisdom

The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (21)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren
Translated by Amy W.F. Chow

Excerpt of Last Issue The Skills in the Setting-up of "Plans"

The primary condition for "success" is the setting-up of an "objective" (please refer to Issue 2 of the "Lake of Lotus"). In the setting-up of an objective with regards to one's preference, capability and ideal, to be supplemented with the skills in the setting-up of an "objective" (please refer to Issue 3 of the "Lake of Lotus"), a blueprint of grandeur for the ideal of one's life has more or less been drawn up. Then, what is the next step to proceed in order to ensure success "in achieving the objective"?

The next step is to draw up a detailed and concrete "plan" which is also strategic and efficient in nature. To work out a series of "plans" for the major, medium-term and small objectives is like the building up of a network of interconnected highways which would eventually lead to "success". In designing the numerous "plans", attention must be paid to the following items:

1. **Complementarity and the Enhancement of Effectiveness:** The links between "plans" should have compatible, complementary and interdependent effects....(please refer to Issue 4 of the "Lake of Lotus").
2. **A thorough elimination process to decide what to "adopt and abandon":** Irrespective of working out

major, medium-term and small "plans", there must be a process to prioritize and eliminate with regards to some designated elements and conditions. A thorough elimination process to determine what to "adopt and abandon"

Designated Elements & Conditions in Determining What to "Adopt and Abandon"

- (i) **Importance:** To what extent would the "plan" help in achieving the "objective"? To what extent would this "objective", in which one is prepared to achieve, help in achieving the major objective"?..... (please refer to Issue 5 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (ii) **The Price to be Paid:** Life is short and limited. All the resources that you presently possess could be lost at any moment. One must clearly understand the characteristics of the "Combination of Resources" and its relations with Destiny in one's own life before making any changes, to realize the price that one has to pay for the different "plans", and then go through the processes of elimination and deployment in order to "adopt and abandon" in these various "plans". In this way, this

would enable the limited resources to become “ever-renewing, inexhaustible and of unusual value for money” within a limited framework of time and space (please refer to Issue 6 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (iii) **Strength and Weakness:** Every person has his/her own strengths, merits, skills, as well as his/her weaknesses and the Achilles’ heel (weakest point). In order to achieve success of any “objective” or of any “plan”, one must be very clear of one’s own strengths and weaknesses; and then through various skillful arrangements, try to complement and make use of one’s strengths and weaknesses in **designing the contents and procedures of the “plans”**. This is an “important strategy” in eliminating and deploying the “plans”, and thus should not be underestimated (please refer to Issue 7 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (iv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (1):** In drawing up any “plan”, one must take into account the “planning of time”. The “principles for the usages and wastages of time” must be clear, and have to be linked up with the effectiveness of the “plan”. Hence, **time should be spent on those “plans” which are most effective and can bring the highest rate of return**. One should prioritize one’s different “plans” according to the long or short durations of time used and their relative effectiveness. “Plans” that require one to put in a lot of time and effort, but with low rates of return and low effectiveness, should be scrapped. One should refine and improve one’s “plans” by making reference to the “principles for the usages and wastages of time”. This is a **major direction** in the selecting, eliminating and refining process of one’s “plans” (please refer to Issue 8 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (v) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (2):** Due to the simple fact that one has only very limited time and energy in one’s lifetime, and if one’s own objective is either to be “liberated from the cycle of transmigration” (known as “Samsara” in Sanskrit), or to attain “full enlightenment” (“Buddhahood”) within this very life, then your “planning of time” and the “principles for the usages and wastages of time” for this life will become one of the critical points in determining whether you would succeed or fail. Hence one must be **very cautious and rational** about this. If your

objective is “to be reborn into the Buddha’s Pure Land” within this lifetime, then you would have had **greater flexibility in the handling of your “planning of time”** and the “principles for the usages and wastages of time”, but they still should **not be neglected**. Hence, what will be the most wise and effective way in the “planning of time” for one’s life while one is on the path for Dharma practice?.....(please refer to Issue 9 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (vi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (3):** Does it mean that if one is unable to undergo “long-term retreat”, one would not be able to achieve the “objective” to become “liberated from Samsara or in attaining Buddhahood within this lifetime”? If you want to know the answer, please answer the following three questions first and to know about the “three essential factors” in the application of Buddhist teaching in our “Daily Living” (please refer to Issue 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (vii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (4): Wrong “Planning of Time”:** It is no easy matter at all for one to be able to master the keys to success of “Dharma Practices” in one’s “daily living” in order to have achievements, as well as to be able to achieve the “objective” of becoming “liberated from Samsara or in attaining Buddhahood within this lifetime”. Even if one does possess the three best conditions (please refer to Issue 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”), it will still be unavoidable that one can fall prey and become lost again in this “tidal sea of sorrow in Samsara”, as one goes through this **undulated waves of ever-changing life cycle**. If one tries not to fall again, and instead wants to further consolidate upon one’s own foundation, one of the best methods is to **merge one’s own “Dharma practices” into one’s “daily living”** so as to ensure one’s mastering of the “Planning of Time”.

No matter in the setting of what kinds of “plans”, one has to try and predict what would be the outcomes that would be brought upon you by this “plan”? What will be the side-effects and how many? One always hopes for the best but be prepared for the worst. Many a Dharma practitioners, when planning the times for their “Dharma practices”, will tend to **take care of one but then lose hold of the others**, making it more contradictory,

and also more confusing, for one's own "daily living", and thus ending in the **loss of what to "adopt and abandon"**. (please refer to the Issue 11 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(viii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (5): The "Planning of Time" in One's "Daily Living" (1) -- Linking up by the Main Theme, and Getting Through the Sequences of Events:** How can the "planning of time" in one's "daily living" be **designed** so as to avoid the various wrong doings? How should we practice the "Holy Dharma" so as to make the "effectiveness of Dharma practices during meditation" be linked up and **steadily sustained** with that in "post-meditation daily living" so as to further it and let it become **fully "developed"**? If one wants the "success" to be speed up, how should it be planned so as to **remove those obstacles** that will hinder the "effectiveness"? How can the **sequence** of incidents to be traced out of those confusions, and the **key positions** to be found in solving the problems? How can a consensus be reached between one's "cognitions" and "reality" so that the **"contradictions" can be resolved?** How can the **"devotion, pure state of mind and dedication"** of Dharma practices "during meditation" be linked up and be sustained with that in the "post-meditation daily living" with a **correct "state of mind"**?(please refer to the Issue 12 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(ix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (6): The Skilful Usages of the "Main Theme" and the "Sequences of Events":** The **"cardinal mentality" is the major key in deciding on all things**, and so the **"planning of one's Dharma practices"** in one's "daily living" has to use the "cardinal mentality" as the "main theme" to link up the "static states of Dharma practices" with the "dynamic states of Dharma practices", by connecting their "common points" so as to get through the rigid dichotomy in one's "planning of time," and thus opening and tidying up the disordered "sequences of events" in order to synergize the contradictions of these two and to make them to become complementary to each other, while using the "cardinal mentality" as the basis all through. This is, indeed, the **"main points of planning"** for one's Dharma practices in "daily living". Yet, how one focuses on the **"cardinal mentality" and the "planning of time"** would become the **main key points for one's "successes and/or**

failures".....(please refer to the Issue 13 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(x) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (7): Flexibility in the Using of One's "Mentality" for One's Dharma Practice:** While practicing the Dharma during the undulated waves of "daily living", one can hardly sustain one's "meditational power" and the **degree of the steadiness** of one's "Dharma practice" by **relying solely on "Emptiness"**. In order to be able to continuously enhance and elevate one's Dharma practice in "daily living", one must have to **adopt "Emptiness" as the unchanging and everlasting "cardinal mentality"**. One further needs to flexibly make use of the "three main essential points" of one's Dharma practice in "daily living" so as to **train one's own "mind"** in addressing the problems of one's "daily living", as well as to transform one's "emotions and feelings" in becoming the "driving force for one's Dharma practice" (please refer to the Issue 14 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (8): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (1):** In the undulated journey in the course of one's lifetime, it is **unavoidable** that one would meet with many adversities. If you encounter these adversities and could not handle them properly, they would become the **obstacles** to all of your plans and objectives. Regardless of what "time and effectiveness" that you may have, they would be **completely** disturbed and delayed, and would hardly function properly. Thus, when one can skillfully adopt the strategy of getting through the obstacles by linking up the "Main Theme and the Sequences of Events",



and when one has set up the principles for choosing one's "Cardinal Mentality" and also for the "Three Essential Factors" within one's "mind", one should at the same time follow the criteria for one's "Dharma practices in times of adversities" as the procedures for handling the situations (please refer to the Issue 15 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (9): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (2): Among the criteria for "Dharma Practices in times of Adversities", one should pay attention and adhere to the following procedures: 1) to alienate from one's role; 2) to remain calm; 3) to analyze accurately; 4) to act within one's own capacities – this can be regarded as the "time planning for one's Dharma practice during adversities"; 5) to take advantage of the different circumstances; 6) to learn from one's own experiences; and 7) to elevate one's own awareness, with particular reference to 3) to analyze accurately (please refer to the Issue 16 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xiii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (10): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (3): In times of favorable circumstances, it would be easy for one to achieve success regardless of what one does. One would naturally be successful without having to wait for the right opportunities, neither does one have to make any planning. This is because this will be the time for the arrival of the "achieved rewards". The good deeds that you have accumulated in the past are the best planning for the "achieved rewards." However, in times of adversities, no matter what one does, one would have encountered many obstacles and have one's head badly battered. If one simply goes along naturally, it would lead one to a dead end. This is because, in times of adversities, it is the time for the coming of one's retributions due to one's past bad deeds. If one does not remain calm, wait for the right opportunity, and plan appropriately, it would be difficult for one to get out from the plight. The question, then, is when will be the best time to get out from the plight? And what would be considered as the appropriate planning (please refer to the Issue 17 of the "Lake of Lotus")?

(xiv) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (11):

Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (4) – Making use of the Circumstances: The characteristics for being in adversities are that one would be beset with difficulties and will be unable to cope with the situations. If one has to make use of the circumstances of that particular situation and time so as to break through the obstacles is basically an extremely difficult matter to achieve. Since it is all that difficult, the conditions that one would have to consider in order to complement the whole situation would be particularly even more so. There is an old Chinese saying that "Hero makes the trend of his time, and the trend of the time makes its own Hero". After all, 'the trend of the time and the environment' together is one of the major elements for one's success and failure. Hence, it is also a necessary element for one to get out from the plight by making use of the circumstances to break away from adversities. If one is to make use of the circumstances, one would adopt one of the following situations: (1) to quietly wait for the favourable circumstances to arise; (2) to make use of the existing circumstances; and (3) to build up favourable circumstances (please refer to the Issue 18 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xv) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (12): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities"(5) -- Learn One's Lessons from Past Experiences: Failure is not necessarily a miserable thing. It can only be said as a blueprint which reflects on a series of merits and weaknesses. If one can learn one's lessons well from past experiences in finding out the "reasons for one's failures, as well as the personal behavioral formulae that led to such failures", one's "wisdom of self-enhancement" will be elevated by applying proper remedies to revise these extremely concealed and improper formulae, this would help to bring about one's success in the next occasion. During this process of "self-enhancement", it would enable one to live more happily and to have a direction, to have more meanings and values, and to be more proactive. In this way, what one would regard as failures have, in fact, now been changed into successes, and have brought about the essential elements for one's future successes. The "state of invincibility" is the most lonely and painful experience. Too many successes

and for too long will only make one to lose one's sense of direction, and to easily lose oneself in one's own "ego". As such, one would not be able to find out and revise the poor formulae, and oneself would thus be easily bogged down in the mire of having too much "self-pride" and strong "arrogance" within one's own "ego", never being able to see the real world in its totality. In this regard, such kind of continuous successes can only be said to be an extremely big failure (please refer to the Issue 19 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xvi) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (13): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (6) – Enhancing One's Awareness: Many a times the formation of one's mistakes and failures are due to the inadequacy of one's own "awareness". The biggest drawback was one's own failure lied in not "being aware" of what and where had gone wrong in one's own "behavioral formulae". This would result in one's repeating, or even expanding, of one's mistakes and failures endlessly. Being faulty or carelessness for a short while is not the main cause for one's mistakes and failures. The main and real cause is the existence of deviations and defects in both the consciousness and the subconscious of one's own "behavioral formulae". This would lead to a chain of wrong behaviors, which would form an orbit which would lead to further failures, and that one would find it hard to depart from it. Along with this orbit of failures, it would further extend to many more faults and carelessness, and the end result would be more and greater failures. Hence, to "enhance one's awareness" is not only to elevate one's attentiveness, such that the frequency of one's making mistakes due to carelessness would be reduced, but the more important aspect is whether to have the ability for one's "self-reflection", for observing the minute details, and to carefully find out the deviations and defects in one's own

"behavioral formulae" (please refer to the Issue 20 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xvii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (14):

Simplifying the Complexities, Finding the Keys

Due to the fact that one's life span is temporary and impermanent, and so when one design and draw up a plan for one's own Dharma practice, one should need to include the "factor of time and effectiveness", all the more, as the primary important point for one's consideration. Apart from having the "right mindset and criteria" in handling periods of "adversities or prosperities" so that one would be able to "master the factor of time" more accurately and to have an edge, what other principles that one should need to pay attention to?

No matter what kinds of the "planning of time" that one has, they are bound to have both strengths and weaknesses. It is unavoidable that there will be some faults. However, the appropriate "planning of time" should be able to reduce or lighten all kinds of faults, and be able to speed up the process in the showing of "success". An appropriate "planning of time" must make use of the following principles in its design:

1. Linking up by the Main Theme, and Getting Through the Sequences of Events - target: daily living before one's death (please refer to Issues 12 to 20 of the "Lake of Lotus");
2. Simplifying the Complexities, Finding the Keys - target: the wrestling ground of energies after one's death;
3. Differentiation on the Order of Importance, Proper Handling of the Interferences - target: the wrestling ground of energies after one's death.



The first principle has already been described in details in the various sections of the different chapters. Before we start to explore upon the second principle, let us first go through the following table which summarizes the main contents of the different chapters. One would then be able to take a bird's eye view to review those important points and key factors that have been discussed before.

Procedures in Having "Success" in Dharma Practice

Setting-up of "Objectives" for Dharma Practice :
With Regards to One's Preferences, Capacities and Ideals

Design of "Plans" for Dharma Practice :
Drawing Up of Detailed and Concrete "Plans" Which Are Strategic and Efficient in Nature

Criteria in Drawing Up Numerous "Plans"

Saving One's Capabilities and the Wastage of Time

Elimination of Various "Plans" – Elements and Conditions for Thorough Elimination Process in Deciding What to "Adopt and Abandon"

Complementarity and the Enhancement of Effectiveness -- the Links Between "Plans" Should Have Compatible, Complementary and Interdependent Effects

Importance -- To Prioritize the "Plans" According to Their Importance in Achieving the "Ultimate Objective"

The Price to be Paid -- Whether it is Worth the Efforts Spent?

Strengths and Weaknesses -- Whether They Would Complement and Make Use of One's Strengths and Weaknesses

The Factors of Time and Effectiveness -- Prioritize "Plans" According to the Long or/and Short Durations of Time Used and Their Relative Effectiveness

Planning and Evaluation of the "Factors of Time and Effectiveness"

Criteria for the "Planning of Time" for Dharma Practice

Criteria for the "Evaluation of Effectiveness" for Dharma Practice

Mutually-interrelated

1. The "Planning of Time" and the "Criteria for the Usages and Wastages of Time" must be Directly Consistent With the "Objective" -- For example, hope to "attain Buddhahood by this body", or to "attain Buddhahood within this lifetime", or not to set any time limits for achieving the objective

1. Use similar length of time to assess the effectiveness of various plans

2. Different abilities to match with different planning of time -- For example, to choose either long-term retreats or short-term retreats

2. Use similar abilities to assess the effectiveness of various plan

3. Different environment to match with different planning of time -- For example, the different kinds of Dharma practices with their "planning of time", whether during retreats, or in daily life, in times of adversities or prosperities, or in the spiritual realm after one's death

3. Use similar environment to assess the effectiveness of various plans

4. During planning to reduce as far as possible the contradiction and inadequacies amid the planning of time -- For example:
a. Linking up by the Main Theme and Getting Through the Sequence of Events
b. Simplifying the complexities, finding the keys
c. Differentiate the order of importance, properly handled the interferences

4. To assess the effectiveness of the "plans" by considering the following elements: whether the "main theme" of the "plan" is clear and effective, whether the key positions of the "plan" could be shown, and whether the "order of importance" of the "plan" is clear enough or not, and how to handle interferences

Different Environments for Dharma Practice

Static States of Dharma practice

Dynamic States of Dharma practice

Dharma practice during retreats

Dharma practice during meditation

Dharma practice in Daily Life

Dharma practice at Times of Prosperities

Dharma practice at Times of Adversities

Dharma practice in the Spiritual Realm after one's death

Try both long-term and short-term retreats

Be persistent and consistent in one's Dharma practice

Train oneself to become static amidst the dynamic states

Avoid the "transformation of good fortunes to bad ones via pride"

To train and strengthen one's mind through the "seven methods"

To train one's own "adaptability"

1. Use the "Cardinal Mentality" to link different environments, and in getting through the sequence of events
2. Through cognition of the all-rounded environments, try to learn and train the flexible methods in dealing with them

How to Find “Key Positions” in Resolving Difficulties

The complexities and ever-changing circumstances of things would usually make sentient beings to feel scared or troubled. Due to this factor, most of the sentient beings would not be able to elevate or enhance their wisdom during the evolvments of things and events. Unfortunately, the reality is that we all live amidst the complexities and changes of things and events. If we do not learn to use the correct methods to deal with them during our lifetimes, we would be “at a loss and in an awful mess” when we have to face the “wrestling ground of energies in the spiritual realm” after our death, as the speed of evolution on things and events would be nine times quicker than that while we live. We would most likely to be reborn mistakenly in a poor environment.

Hence, one should build up in one’s daily life the mindset of “not fearing and not getting annoyed” for the complex issues, and this should be the primary condition for one’s training of the mind. When one does not have a non-resistant mindset, one would then be able to learn some skills and techniques in order to face and handle these complex issues. With these skills and techniques, one would be able to plan more smoothly the “factors of time and effectiveness” of various “plans”. The characteristics for complex issues are that they are “complicated, numerous and confusing”, and with thousands of intricacies that one would not know where to get started. For things which are easy to handle, their characteristics are: “orderly, can differentiate the order of importance, with the important points and key positions to be clearly seen”. Hence, when one has to face or deal with these complex issues, the skills would be:

1. to simplify these complex issues;
2. to find out the keys of these issues.

The methods for “simplifying the complex issues” are to try to turn them into “tables with quantifiable data, to present them orderly and to condense them”. For example, twenty chapters of “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” have already been published and their contents are variegated in scope. The quickest method in enabling one to understand the interrelations amongst the various chapters, as well as to master the essences of their contents would be to turn them into some kind of a table, as what we

have done here. This is, indeed, an extremely speedy method to “simplify complex issues”.

When you overview the above-listed table, you will find that your mind has, all of a sudden, become clearer. Regardless of how complicated those issues may be, one would be able to grasp many important points inside one’s palm in a split second. Having mastered the holistic interrelations of these complex issues, the next step is to find out the “key position” (or the “crux”) of the whole issue. This is because the “key position” is usually the “entry point” for dealing with difficult and complex issues, as well as the “cutting point” in approaching the issues by “evading their seriousness while dwelling on their trifles” through the “leveraging of moving thousand catties of heavy objects with only four ounces of efforts”.

What, then, is this “key position”? How can one find out the “key position”? The vision of the wise ones is normally very sharp, and their way of looking at things is usually to first “simplify the complex issues”, and then to find out the “key position”. Hence, they can, within a very short period of time, “extract the headlines and bring up the chief points” in analyzing the issues, and to be “right up to the point” in just one go. The reason is simply because they can identify the different characteristics as revealed from the “key position”.

The meaning of the “key position” refers to the “connecting points among issues and events, their turning points, the core for solving them, as well as their common points”. The situation is just like the article of “Pao Ding Dismember An Ox”, as written by the Chinese famous philosopher Zhuang Zi. The section on the description of how to slaughter an ox is marvelous. In order to enable our readers to comprehend its profound meaning, the plain Chinese version of this part of the article is cited below for easy understanding:

“One day, Pao Ding (the butcher) was invited to the home of Wen Wei Guan to slaughter a head of ox. Pao Ding was seen holding the ox with his hands, his shoulder leaning onto the ox, with his legs stepping upon the ox, while propping up the ox with his knees, and he was unusually adept in his action. When he pierced the butcher’s knife into the body of the ox, the sound of the flaying of the skins and muscles with the tendons and bones complemented the actions of Pao Ding in using the knife. It was in such a great harmony that it was so beautiful and wonderful. His



actions in slaughtering the ox were like dancing to the music of “Sang Lin” during the “times of Shang Tang”, while the sound from dismembering the ox also matched with the “Yao” music of “Jing Shou”.

Wen Wei Guan, who was standing aside looking at his actions, was struck with admiration that he could not help but applauded, “Oh, it is so marvelous! How come that your skill in the slaughtering of an ox is so superior?”

After hearing the question, Pao Ding hastily put down the butcher’s knife and said to Wen Wei Guan, “When I do things, I like to probe into the laws of things, because this would be more superior than the usual kinds of techniques and skills. When I first learned to slaughter an ox, I did not understand the body structure of it. What I saw before me were only huge heads of oxen. After I had accumulated three years of experience in the slaughtering of oxen, I came to have a complete understanding on the body structures of oxen. Now, when I looked at an ox before me, it was no longer a complete head of ox, but instead there are many spare parts which could be dismantled! Now that I had slaughtered so many oxen, I only need to use my heart to feel the ox without having to see it with my eyes. I know very well where I can put my knife in and where I could not. As I know the natural structure of the ox, I could skillfully pierce directly into the gaps connecting the muscles and the bones. To make use of these gaps would not bring any damage to my butcher’s knife. I would not forcibly confront the parts connecting the muscles and bones, not to mention the twisted big bones.

Usually, in using a knife to cut the meats, a skillful cook would normally need to change his knife once

a year. Those many workers in the kitchen, who used their knives to crack the bones, would need to change their knife every month. I had used this knife for over 19 years, and had used it to slaughter no less than one thousand oxen. However, the edge of it is still as sharp as if it has just been sharpened by a stone. Why is it so? This was because there was a gap in between the joints of the bones of the ox. The edge of the knife is very thin. When I used the point of the knife, which was extremely thin, to pierce into the gap of the bones of the ox, the gap would naturally be quite spacious and more than adequate for what I need to do. Hence, though this knife had been used for over 19 years, it is still like a new knife which has just been sharpened.

Despite this, when I met with areas where the muscles and bones crisscrossed, I would normally find it hard to get started. At this time, I would be particularly cautious, with my eyes wide open, and slow in my actions with only light force. Only when I had found the “key position”, I would put my knife into the ox in one stroke, and the ox would then be cut open like soils spreading onto the ground. After I had slaughtered an ox, and stood up with the knife looking around me, I could not help but felt satisfied as my ideal situation had now been fulfilled, and my whole body would feel delightful. I would then clean up my knife and put it back to the sheath, until it would be used again the next time around.”

Wen Wei Guan, after hearing what Pao Ding had said, nodded his head as if he had realized the meaning and said, “Good! After hearing your golden advice, I have learnt many of the principles in cultivating the heart and nurturing the culture.”

There are laws and rules that govern the operations and formations of all things and events in the whole universe. The fact that scientists could discover the numerous laws is because they had observed those various processes and rules on the evolution of secular things and events. Similarly, the fact that philosophers can describe the different philosophical discourses in details is because they had kept on observing the various process and rules on the evolution of secular things and events before they came to realize those philosophies behind them. The reasons that the wise persons and the excellent scientists can handle things of their expertise and specialism with ease and proficiency are the results of their relying on their observations, trials and errors, and familiarization on those various processes and rules on the evolution of secular things and events. If one has to find the “entry point” or the “key position” of a difficult issue

that needs to be tackled, one must first learn how to “observe” before one learns how to “get into the details” of things and events.

The above-mentioned story on “Pao Ding Dismember an Ox” is an excellent example. Then, what needs to be “observed”? That is, to observe:

1. The “turning point” in the evolutionary processes of things and events – why there is a need for the “turning”? What are their reasons? What are the strengths and weaknesses before and after the “turning”? Whether the “turning point” is the “weakest point”?
2. The structures of things and events with their “connecting point” – How many “connecting points” are there? Which of the “connecting points” is the strongest one? Which of the “connecting points” is the weakest one? What are the structures, natures and qualities of these “connecting points”?

Why is it that one has to “observe” all these factors? This is because the “turning points” and the “connecting points” are at the time periods when things and events are in the processes of being “disintegrated or partially disintegrated” or of “re-construction”. When things are being “disintegrated or partially disintegrated”, it means that things and events are changing “from strong to weak”; while things and events that are being “re-constructed” mean that they are “starting from zero”, which is the time when things and events have not yet been shaped or consolidated. Hence, the “turning points” and “connecting points” of things and events are usually the “weakest points”, that “they are



at the times of being changed”, as well as the “critical moment of changing either for the better or for the worse”.

Similarly, for the structures of things and events, there are bound to be areas which are of the strongest, as well as that of the weakest. There must be a “connecting point” between the different strong areas. Otherwise, things and events could hardly have the “flexibility”, and thus could hardly “be formed”. Hence, the “connecting points” are the “key positions” for the disintegration of the whole “formation”.

How to Select an Excellent “Guru” from the “Contents of Teachings”

In the story of the “Pao Ding Dismember an Ox”, when the butcher first learned how to slaughter an ox, due to the fact that he did not understand the whole bodily structure of the ox, what he saw before him was but a head of huge ox. This showed that he did not know “where to get started”, because he had not yet “observed” the inner parts of the ox, and so his focal point could only be on the “whole piece”.

After he had accumulated three years of experience in the slaughtering of an ox, he had a complete understanding on the structure of the ox. When he looked at the ox again, what appeared before him was no longer a head of ox, but the many spare parts which could be dismantled! This is a kind of phenomenon for being able to “observe in details”. Hence, when a wise person, or a “Guru” with “realizations”, explained things which are of his specialism, such as the Buddhist teachings or the practical experiences of Dharma practice, one could be able to explain them in a “clear and orderly manner, to get into the details and be meticulous, and to master the key position of the important points”.

To find a good “Guru” who can guide one in one’s Dharma practice, one would only have to look at how he or she interprets the Buddhist teachings and teaches the practical experiences of Dharma practice, as to see “whether the explanations are easy to understand, with a clear and orderly way, in great details and be meticulous; whether he or she has mastered the key position of the important points; and whether the explanations are totally in line with the Buddhist teachings”, and so on. With all these answers, one would be able to know whether one is a good “Guru” or not. The interpretations of the Buddhist

teachings does not fully depend upon “one’s skills and techniques in speaking, nor one’s ability in the expressions of words”, simply because all these can only be regarded as having some kinds of skills and techniques, which can hardly be considered as having the “real abilities, sturdy knowledge and practical experiences” on the study and practice of Buddhism.

The meaning for having the “real abilities, sturdy knowledge and practical experiences” is that the person has really got an intimate knowledge on the subject matter after having “observed in details”, and be able to clearly explain the “real connotations” of the Buddhist teachings and the practical experiences of Dharma practice, as if one is “enumerating one’s family treasures”. In this way, one would use real and close explanations to interpret and would not just be the “memorizing” of “jargons” in the Buddhist teachings. Those who only know how to “memorize” the Buddhist teachings without the full understanding of their “connotations”, or only partially understand the Buddhist teachings, would be “very vague and ambiguous, and explain in a rigid manner” when interpreting the Buddhist teachings or the practical experiences of Dharma practice. This is simply because they themselves do not really understand the true meanings of what they are talking about. Their explanations are just like taking you “out to the gardens and then walking in circles”. They may “memorize” quite a few Buddhist “jargons” in order to show others that they are knowledgeable about Buddhism, but in fact they are just trying to give a gloss of their respectability.

Hence, for those people who try to explain the Buddhist teachings or the practical experiences of Dharma practice in an “unclear manner”, who cannot teach the important “spiritual guidance”, but can only memorize from the “Buddhist sutras or ritual texts” without any explanations, or else those explanations are “not up-to-the-point but pretend to be too deep to fathom” as if full of the so-called “Zen” taste, etc., they, in fact, do not really understand the Buddhist teachings, nor do they really know about the practical experiences of the Dharma practice. This is because they do not even know where the “key positions” for the Buddhist teachings and the practical experiences of Dharma practice lie. Like the butcher in the story of “Pao Ding Dismember an Ox”, who is an expert with “real abilities, sturdy knowledge and practical experiences” in dismembering an ox. When he slaughtered an ox, he was so skillful and at ease as if he was just like dancing. He had a “clear and complete knowledge” on any parts and minute details of the whole head of ox as if he just “read it through his palm”. He would not be

muddling through, neither would he have to pretend himself to be an “expert of profound knowledge” in doing so.

The butcher said, “Now that I had slaughtered so many oxen, I only need to use my heart to feel the ox without having to see it with my eyes. I know very well where I can put my knife in and where I could not. As I know the natural structure of the ox, I could skillfully pierce directly into the gaps connecting the muscles and the bones. To make use of these gaps would not bring any damage to my butcher’s knife. I would not forcibly confront the parts connecting the muscles and bones, not to mention the twisted big bones.”

This has shown us that this butcher was so “extremely proficient” in his professional skills to the point of “natural perfection”. To use one’s “heart” to feel without having to use one’s eyes to see is an “extremely high level of intuition”. When the “heart” and the “thing” fuse together as one piece, constituting a harmonious whole like Emptiness without any obstacles, which follows Nature without any grasping. Such a level is exactly the requirement for one’s practical training of the “Yidam and Mandala” in “Vajrayana” teachings. From the above statements, if one follows the natural operations of things, to use one’s intuition to feel the “key positions”, to follow the trend and to use an appropriate method in avoiding direct confrontations, one would know the essential points of solving any difficult problem and in easily gaining success.

The laws of Nature and rules of the world operate naturally,

If one follows the laws and rules, it will easily lead one’s entry to the vista,

The appropriate good method is to avoid directly confronting the sharp points,

The factor of success is already hidden in this knack.

The butcher said, “Usually, in using a knife to cut the meats, a skillful cook would normally need to change his knife once a year. Those many workers in the kitchen,



who used their knives to crack the bones, would need to change their knife every month. I had used this knife for over 19 years, and had used it to slaughter no less than one thousand oxen. However, the edge of it is still as sharp as if it has just been sharpened by a stone. Why is it so? This was because there was a gap in between the joints of the bones of the ox. The edge of the knife is very thin. When I used the point of the knife, which was extremely thin, to pierce into the gap of the bones of the ox, the gap would naturally be quite spacious and **more than adequate** for what I need to do. Hence, though this knife had been used for over 19 years, it is still like a new knife which has just been sharpened. Despite this, when I met with areas where the muscles and bones crisscrossed, I would normally find it hard to get started. At this time, I would be particularly cautious, with my eyes wide open, and slow in my actions with only light force. Only when I had found the **“key position”**, I would put my knife into the ox in one stroke, and the ox would then be cut open like soils spreading onto the ground.”

By using a “thin knife” to accommodate the “width of the gap between the bones of an ox” would allow “enough space for one to maneuver” is such an “appropriate method to avoid direct confrontation”. This is the important knack which would enable one to use one’s **ability** in the “most appropriate way” without any kind of wastage. Such a philosophy of life is Zhuang Zi’s “valuing of resources” as a “way to keep fit”, both physically and spiritually. **These kinds of “personal experiences” came directly from the “realized Guru” who had gained these through his accumulated experiences, and then explained them in the form of “pith oral-instructions”**. Hence, if the origin of these “pith oral-instructions” of the “Guru” **does not come**

from the “verifications” of one’s own “realizations”, but rather has only been “handed down from the past generations”, then of course this “Guru” would naturally be able to only memorize them, and thus could not be able to explain them very clearly. Even if one can explain them, this “Guru” would only be able to give a **general description of it without knowing the minute details of the various parts**. Hence, basing upon the different explanations from the various “Gurus” on the Buddhist teachings and their practical experiences of Dharma practice, one would pretty much be able to differentiate their respective levels of excellence.

The areas that one can judge from the connotations of the Guru’s teachings include the following: whether he just reads out from the texts, and may supplement it with only a few explanations; whether his reasoning is strained; whether his explanations are beating around the bush and side-tracked from the main points; whether it is muddled and unclear, without any main focus at all; whether it is in bits and pieces, without getting the whole picture; whether it is contradictory to each other when explaining the different aspects; whether it tends to be mysterious, pretentious to be profound and unfathomable; whether it is impertinent and side-tracked; whether it is straying away from the Buddhist teachings; whether it is without adequate reasoning and superficial; whether it is difficult to apply and hard to understand. On the other hand, whether one’s reasoning is clear and in an orderly manner; whether the explanations grasp the key points; whether it is logically analyzed; whether it can get down to the minute details of things and events; whether it is of accurate reasoning; whether it is pragmatic without flaunting; whether it is full, complete without anything missing; whether the sequence of ideas are clearly and logically framed; whether it is most direct, simple and precise; whether it is easy to understand and apply; and whether it is of practical and effective usage.

Principles for the “Achievement of Swift Attainments” in “Vajrayana Teachings”

Even though the butcher is of such a high caliber and is such a “miraculous expert” in ox-slaughtering, when he met with areas where the muscles and bones crisscrossed, he would also feel hard **to decide where to get started**. He would still need to be very cautious, open his eyes to focus, be slow in his action and in the using of light force. Until he has found the key part, he would then just cut open the ox in one

stroke. This is the same for one's Dharma practice. When encountered with complex issues at the "critical junctures of deaths and rebirths", particularly during the "wrestling ground of energies" at the posthumous world when all things are so "impermanent" and ever-changing, even a "realized Guru" would still need to "maintain his alertness, to keep calm, to focus and not to use any force". Until one has observed clearly and found the "key position", one would immediately take actions without any delays. "Before things become clear, one would remain calm and quiet like a virgin; when things are clear, one acts very quickly like a running rabbit". This is similar to the saying in Sun Tzu's "The Art of War": "when it is not in motion, it is as steady as a huge mountain; but when it acts, it moves like the strong wind".

It transpires from the above descriptions that to think that as if one only knows how to memorize some mantras, the ritual-texts, and practice with a few visualizations, hoping that with the so-called "blessings", one would be able to deal with the "wrestling ground of energies" at the posthumous world is, indeed, a most impractical and naïve way of thinking. Hence, the "best plan" for one would be to find a "Guru" who is most clear in his guiding of the Buddhist teachings, as well as in the explanations on the practical training for the "critical junctures of deaths and rebirths", so as to teach and guide oneself in the practical experiences of Dharma practice. After all, all those who have to go through the "wrestling ground of energies" at the posthumous world will have to face the various difficult situations and be able to resolve them. They cannot simply rely upon the external force of "blessings" which is most indirect, but will instead have to rely upon their own internal adaptability which is most direct.

If one chooses an inappropriate "Guru", such that one's Dharma practice is not in accordance with the Holy Dharma, and does not understand the principles behind one's Dharma practice, then one is just like a "novice butcher" who finds his work very laborious and tedious. How could one be able to handle the "critical junctures of deaths and rebirths"? The butcher had said that a highly skilled cook usually needs to change his knife once a year as he used it to cut meat. Many of the workers in the kitchen used knives to chop the head bones, and as such they had to change their knives once a month.

Due to the fact that the "novice butcher" does not know the principles and essential points in using the knife, he would indiscriminately use his "knife" to directly confront the hard surfaces of the head bones,

thus shortening the life span of the "knife". This is similar to a Dharma practitioner whose practice is not in accordance with the Holy Dharma, and who does not know the knack in his practices. He would forcibly memorize the ritual-texts, the Buddhas' Holy Names, mantras, and would thus directly confront the difficulties at the "critical junctures of deaths and rebirths". Just like the "novice butcher" in using the knife to chop the head bone, and so this Dharma practitioner does not know why he has to practice in such a way, and what type of environment he would have to face? How can one apply on the recitations of the Buddhas' Holy Names, mantras and the ritual-texts that he has been practicing? The outcome is that one has wasted a lot of one's efforts on some areas which are not the "key positions" of one's Dharma practice. The effects of one's practices would thus be minimal, even though one has already put in double the efforts.

As the butcher was good at using the knacks, his approach in dealing with things was not only successful but was also "more than adequate in meeting the requirements". The knife that he had been using for 19 years was like a new knife that has just been sharpened. This is comparable to a Dharma practitioner who knows the knacks of Dharma practice, and practices in an appropriate way. He would only need to spend the right amount of efforts on the "key positions", and would not only be able to "achieve quick attainments", but would also be "full of energies without any losses", and would always be "feeling relaxed and happy", resulting in the "further enhancement of one's own wisdom", just like the butcher who would be "feeling



satisfied as his ideal has been fulfilled and his whole body would feel delightful". This is the principle for the "using of four ounces of efforts to remove heavy object of a thousand catties".

This is also the **essence** for the "Vajrayana" teachings to be able to "attain Buddhahood within this single lifetime", or to "attain Buddhahood with this very body". It is definitely not something of either "speaking highly of oneself", or in the "blowing of one's own trumpet", but instead it is something that "truly deserves its own worth", with "good grounds and evidence" to support it. This is because for the Dharma practice of "Vajrayana" teachings, efforts are spent on the "key positions" as the Dharma practitioners know the "knacks" of Dharma practice. So long as one can find an "authentic Vajrayana Guru" who can clearly explain and guide one's Dharma practices, one would be able to know the knacks and make good use of them. As the "knacks and key positions" of one's Dharma practice can help to speed up one's success for Dharma practice, and will shorten the pathway leading towards success, the ways on how to find the "key positions and knacks" have also become an important element on the "planning of time and its effectiveness".

Unfortunately, although there are many speakers on the Buddhist teachings nowadays, very few of them truly understand the Buddhist teachings. Some of the speakers on the Buddhist teachings only focus on the explanations of some of the "jargons", and so a lot of the learners will find them difficult and not practical. As a result, it would be hard to spread the Holy teachings. Then, there are those speakers who only focus on the

superficial levels of "doing good deeds to accumulate merits, to treat people with a kind heart, and to pacify the hearts and minds of people". In this way, many learners would feel that Buddhism is very similar to many other religions, like Christianity, etc. Its practical usage is confined only on the "daily life" of this secular world, and so the followers would comfort themselves on the hope that, by performing all these good deeds, they would be able to either "go to heaven", or to be "reborn as a human being" again. Unfortunately, the "impermanent" nature of the universe is hard to predict, and does not operate in the ways that they think it would be.

Many of the preachers and learners of "exoteric Buddhism" do not have any knowledge on the "posthumous world", and would thus adopt the "ostrich policy" to exclude and expel such kind of knowledge and teachings. This is, indeed, a great pity because their learners would have no idea to imagine how "highly dangerous" the "posthumous world" can be. Yet, like it or not, we all will have to encounter it. By the time when they are already in such an emergency situation, they would come to realize the "limitations of their learning, the narrowness on the scope of their knowledge, and the lowness of their own adaptability". As such, they could hardly be able to escape from the predestinated fates of their own karmas, and that they would have to follow their "karmic forces" in this "cycle of karmic existence" (or "Samsara" in Sanskrit), to be reborn in those places that they would not want to go. The meaning on "following one's destiny" would be like this: there is no need to know the kind of "knowledge on the key positions", neither is there a need to bother with the "key points on the cycle of karmic existence". One would simply continue to "drill" upon this "ocean of sufferings" and would continue to become the "ostrich with the most wisdom, so as to naturally follow the development of one's own natural karma, by following the most practical ways of this Human Buddhism".

One would really wants to know whether there is an element of "cheating the followers" in such type of "ignorance", or whether this is some kind of an "in-fight between different sects" for "getting more followers and offerings". This type of exclusion and expulsion illustrates one point: that "exoteric Buddhism" is now in the "Dharma-Ending Age", and that their quality is getting lower and lower, and would thus be difficult to elevate. In the course of their becoming more and more popular, their narrow scope of knowledge has been lowered to the level on the "Yana of Gods and Humans". If the preachers for "exoteric Buddhism" are



in real possession of “mercifulness and compassion” and would consider the future destiny of their followers, they should then **fill up** the kind of knowledge gap that they have in terms of knowledge and teachings. Try to be more humble, and should not **blindly exclude and expel** those who have this kind of knowledge and teachings. One should pause and ponder on where is the “key position” of “mercifulness and compassion”? What is **the main objective of “mercifulness and compassion”**, whether it is for the protection of the interests of the followers, or whether it is for the protection of the interests of the different sects?
(To be Continued) 🏠

To get hold of the **key** will enable one to untie thousands of knots,

To turn the hub will enable one to move thousands of cattles of heavy objects;

How should one cross over the critical junctures of deaths and rebirths?

To know the **knacks** would enable one to be free from the cycle of karmic existence.

Difficulty, why is it always difficult to resolve?
Key point, why is it always difficult to find?
Knack, why is it always difficult to obtain?

Oh! Child! **Difficulties** usually appear in a very complicated manner. Its disturbance will blur your vision, and its complexity will disturb your trains of thoughts, resulting in not knowing where to get started. Don't be afraid. Please adopt the approach of “simplifying the complex issues”, and the sequence of ideas would then be shown and the structure would then be seen. Through your observations, you can come to know **the key positions and the entry points for dealing with those issues**. With such an approach, the difficulties would then be resolved in the foreseeable future. **Please observe!** Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! **Keys** are usually hidden at the turning

points of things and events, and would appear indistinctly in the connecting points of things and events. They signify the fortress for one's entry to success and the keys for resolving all difficulties. So long as you **know their special characteristics**, take a bird's eye view of the issues, keep calm by observing in minute details, there is no way for the key positions to escape your eyes, and they will appear one by one. You will definitely be able to master them. **Be meticulous!** Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! **Knacks** usually are hidden amidst your variegated experiences. Please work hard to accumulate your own unique experiences, and be humble to ask questions in collecting others' precious experiences. Once you have discovered the “interdependent loci for the operation of causes and conditions” within your experiences, the **knacks would then be discovered unintentionally**. Please use your “heart” to feel it, and the knacks will arise from all fronts. **Please realize this!** Wish that you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! Wish the Lord Buddha will guide you! And enable you to **give rise to the bright intrinsic nature of Enlightenment!**

[Note: The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (1)” has already been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice” from Issues 1 to 10.]





The Essence of Teachings: Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness (16)



By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye
Transcribed by To Sau-chu and Byron K.K. Yiu
(Lecture delivered : July 10, 2003)

Excerpt of Last Chapter

If we can have some kind of understanding or realization on the “Eight Negations”, during the process in trying to understand the Buddhist Dharma, then our **wisdom may be revealed**. Indeed, the goal to learn the Buddhist Dharma, from the very beginning, is to reveal one’s own wisdom. The “Eight Negations” is like this:

Neither Creation Nor Destruction

The Lord Buddha had taught us that all sentient beings have the ‘Buddha-Nature’ within themselves, and that all things in the universe have their own ‘Intrinsic Nature’. Our own ‘Intrinsic Nature’ is **“Neither Created Nor Destroyed”**, and it is **present ever since the ‘beginningless’ time immemorial**, without any origin or process of being created, and it has **never been destroyed, and will remain forever.....** (please refer to the article on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness (13)” in Issue 18 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism

The Second pair of dualism is “Neither Eternalism nor Nihilism”. These are two erroneous views: **Eternalism** is the belief that there is a permanent and causeless creator of everything. In particular, it believes that one’s identity or consciousness has a concrete essence which is independent, everlasting and singular in nature. On the contrary, **Nihilism** is the other extreme view that everything is void and their nature is of “nothingness”. In particular, it believes that there is no rebirth or Karmic effects, and hence there

is the “non-existence” of a mind after death.

Hence, what is meant by **“Neither Eternalism nor Nihilism”**? Its meaning is that all things will **not ‘continue forever’**, and that is **‘not Eternalism’**. But they are **continuously circulated** in the different stages of ‘formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation’, and thus is not **‘not Nihilism’**. It is because all things are formed when the ‘causes and conditions are matched’, while they will disintegrate when the ‘causes and conditions no longer match’ each other.



Neither Identicalness Nor Differentiation

The Third pair of dualism is “Neither Identicalness nor Differentiation”. For example, when water becomes steam, it looks like the water has gone into thin air. Water and steam are two different forms, and so they look different, and yet they are of the same nature. Hence they are “Neither Identical Nor Different”.

So, what is “Neither Identicalness nor Differentiation”? Using the same example of having water in becoming steam, or that of ‘all things being created by Emptiness’. Indeed, water and steam have the same properties, but only that their **physical appearances (forms) have changed continuously**. It has different physical appearances (forms) and therefore it is ‘**Not Identical**’, yet it is also ‘**Not Different**’ simply because it is not another thing altogether. The truth is that all things have the **same nature of properties**, and yet have manifested in different physical appearances (forms), such as ‘water and steam’. And so this is “Neither Identicalness nor Differentiation”.

Neither Coming Nor Going

The Fourth pair of dualism is “Neither Coming nor Going”. Things that are in motion seem to look like that they are either coming or going. But when you analyze them more deeply, they, in fact, remain stable. “Motion” & “Stability” are the two sides of the same coin, and is relative to each other.

So what is meant by “Neither Coming nor Going”? If we replace the word ‘Going’ by ‘Passing’, then it will be the same as what I have mentioned before in the previous chapters, and can be understood as ‘the Past **has gone**, the Present **stays** and the Future **will come**’.

The meaning of “Neither Coming nor Going” does not have the so-called ‘Past and Future’. If you use another level to interpret this “Neither Coming nor Going”, you can view it as ‘**Dynamic and Static**’. And the truth is that both ‘Dynamic and Static’ is **relative in nature**.

For example, the films of motion-pictures are composed of numerous stacks of fixed ‘slides’ of static ‘plastic film’, and if they have been revolved in fast speed, then we will have the false impressions that they are actually ‘moving’. Hence, many of the movies and cartoons, etc, are actually formed by numerous ‘Static’ images. They have never actually

‘moved’, but it seems to you that they are ‘moving’. In actuality, they themselves are “non-motion” in nature. Hence, the truth is that they are ‘Neither Coming nor Going’! Each of the film slides remains unchanged, is the same as ever, is ‘Static’, and unchanging. Yet, it looks like that it is continuously ‘moving’, and is ever changing. Thus, “**Neither Coming Nor Going**” is referring to this kind of a state.

The Lord Buddha said that each of us has the ‘Buddha Nature’, and that all things also have their ‘Intrinsic Nature’, and their natural properties also possess those characteristics of the “Eight Negations”. Hence, the “Eight Negations” are being used to describe the ‘Buddha Nature’, and thus become **the special terms of the ‘Buddha Nature’**.

Conclusion (3)

Question C: I have two questions: Could you explain once again about what is meant by “Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism”? This is the first time for me to hear about these “Eight Negations”. Yet, the “Heart Sutra” also mentions some other “Negations”. So, how many of these “Negations” do we have to memorize?

Answer by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren: Which one do you think is the most natural, or the easiest, for you to memorize, then you can just memorize that one. If you think that you have a good memory, and will not be confused, then of course you can memorize them all. Yet, as each individual may have his/her own ‘Karmic Impressions’ or ‘Habitual Tendencies’, and so he/she may specifically like a particular one and would thus memorize that particular one. For instance, one can chant the “Heart Sutra”. Even for young children, they can chant it out and will find it easier to memorize. So, it may be fine to just memorize the “Heart Sutra”. The contents of the “Heart Sutra” are basically the same as those of the “Eight Negations” that we have mentioned, simply because both of them were describing the characteristics of the “Buddha Nature”.

“**Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism**” – The Lord Buddha had told us that everything in this world, whether they are materialistic or non-materialistic, **belong to “Emptiness”**. They **do not ‘continue forever’**. Indeed, “Eternalism” means to ‘continue forever’. On the other hand, “not Eternalism” means ‘not to continue forever’. In other words, there is no such a thing that is permanent and everlasting in this world. Conversely, they are always continually circulated in the different stages of ‘formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation’. For instance, ‘Formation’ is like what

you see during the process on the **making** of a cup. 'Persistence' means the present **state** on the **existence** of this cup. 'Disintegration' means the process on the **deterioration** of this cup. 'Annihilation' means that this cup was broken down and destroyed by someone, and it thus becomes '**empty**' in nature. After which, 'Emptiness' then takes on another form and becomes something else. This implies that all things **never stop** circulating in a continuous way, and so this is 'unceasing' in nature. Indeed, this is what is meant by "Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism".

Answer by Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye: I would like to supplement a bit more on this. According to the Buddhist Sutras, both "**Eternalism**" and "**Nihilism**" are the two extremist '**wrong views**', which would mean that most people will tend to grasp hold of either of these two kinds of biased and wrong 'views'. "**Eternalism**" is a kind of 'wrong view' which believes that all things will '**continue to exist forever without changing**'. On the other hand, the Lord Buddha had told us that all things are '**impermanent and would be ever-changing**'.

Let's say, for some religions, they believe that there exists a Creator who creates this universe. They further claim that if one only needs to believe in this Creator and follow him, then one can get 'eternal life'. This view of the 'eternal life' is, in fact, a kind of "**Eternalism**". Hence, if one believes that after one has gone to heaven, one will then be able to enjoy a happy life there forever, and will not have to undergo any more downfalls, such that one will stay in this way to enjoy 'eternal life' forever. This view is, indeed, a kind of "Eternalism".

Similarly, the view of "**Nihilism**" is also another kind of 'wrong view' which believes that when things got ruined or dissipated, they would then disappear altogether, such that these will never exist in this world anymore forever. As for the saying of common people goes that "the death of a human being is just like the extinction of a butter lamp", it believes that when a human dies, regardless of whether one is being cremated or buried in the ground, this person will completely disappear in this whole universe forever, as if a candle light will be terminated forever when it burns out completely. But, in fact, is this really true?

According to the Buddhist Dharma, **these two views are actually 'wrong views' that deviate from the "truth" of reality**, and so these are not considered as the correct '**right views**'. Hence, in order for us to have a true picture of what the reality of this universe would be like, we have to do away with these two kinds of 'wrong views'.

Furthermore, The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this universe exists due to "the matching of causes and conditions", yet its nature is "Emptiness". Hence, when the "causes and conditions" of certain events or things matched together, then the happening itself comes into being – its so-called 'existence'. However, when the "causes and conditions" of an object dissipate, then the substances will become varnished, and so it will **no longer exist forever**. Indeed, all things exist in this world due to the "matching of causes and conditions". Hence, this kind of explanation can satisfactorily refute the views of both "**Eternalism**" and "**Nihilism**". This is the most basic and fundamental rationale behind the refutations on both 'wrong views' by the "scientific view of truth", which is identical with the "reality of the universe". This is often called by the Buddhists as the "**Real Emptiness with Mystical Existence**" (can be considered as what we now called as the concept of "virtual reality").

The Buddhist Sutras talk about the "Middle Way", which is not to fall into either of the two extremes of "Eternalism" or "Nihilism", but to remain in the **middle** of both. The meaning of the "Middle" is the '**rightful matching with the reality, but not to be skewed towards both extremes**'. For instance, all things exist due to the "matching of causes and conditions", but their "Nature" itself is "Emptiness". The Buddhist Sutras called this as the "**Inter-dependent Co-origination of Things, with Emptiness as its Nature**", which is the view of the "Middle Way".

Question D: Is "Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism" a view? How can we use it in our daily life so as to cleanse our grasping of "greed, hatred and ignorance"?

Answer by Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye: Yes, this is a view. In considering our Dharma practice, this actually has to be directly applied in our daily life. It is because, in real practice, one has to learn how to put the 'view' into practice in our daily living.

Answer by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren: Take for example, like the view on "Not Eternalism" can help us to do away with **grasping**, but then how to do it? When you see something, you start to like it, and then you really want to get it. Then, we can apply this concept of "Not Eternalism" to eliminate this "greedy thought". You should think that these things would not 'continue forever without changing', such that "I should not waste so much of my energy, or the using of so many tricks, in trying to get hold of them, regardless of how much bad karma that I would accumulate from them". Hence, in actuality, why not give them up, and instead try to use your energy to transform them into doing some other more meaningful things, such as in doing

more virtuous deeds, or in practicing the Buddhist Dharma. This is, indeed, **the attitude of not grasping**.

Take another example. Let's say you see a beautiful girl and you want to chase after her, but then you have gone through many hardships. Even if you kneel down before her, this is useless. Then, you should think that **she is "not eternal"**, and so eventually she will get old and become ugly. Hence, "I should not be grasping by doing all those meaningless things just in order to please her. What "not nihilistic" means that this girl will continue to be in this 'cycle of karmic existence', and will evolve into different forms. Think about this: if it is because of her present form which you liked and so you chased after her, but then it may end up that you might lead yourself to have downfalls into either the hell realm, or to become a pig or a dog, then would it be much better for you to utilize your present limited time and resources, and try to make your best efforts in practicing the Dharma so as to liberate yourself from the 'cycle of karmic existence', whereby you would no longer be constrained by all these endless sufferings anymore? Hence, these pathways of thinking can then help you by **applying these views of "Neither Eternalism Nor Nihilism" to liberate your own graspings** in your daily living.

Question E: I have just heard that to **meditate on emptiness** can be a kind of merit. My question is: why is it to meditate on emptiness can be considered as a kind of merit? Is it because '**not grasping**' means not having some kind of a constraint? Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye, can you please answer this question for me?

Answer by Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye: This is but just one aspect of it, and in fact there can exist quite a few aspects to this. If you have practiced for quite some time, and have reached a certain level of practice in the future, then you would come to know why we have to meditate on "Emptiness" every time we practice on a "ritual text" (or "**Sadhana**" in Tibetan). Furthermore, for each of the "ritual texts", we would have to recite on the "mantra for meditating on emptiness". Thereafter, we will have to meditate that everything will become empty. After becoming empty, then you would further meditate upon the **illusory manifestations** on the Mandala of the "Yidam" (in "**Vajrayana**", "**Yidam**" means the name of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which is the "**Master of the Dharma**" for each of the "**Vajrayana**" practicing ritual texts) arising from "Emptiness".

And then the whole material world would become the **illusory manifestations** of the "Yidam's Buddha-field" and palace, and all sentient beings would become the **illusory** "Yidams", reciting the sounds of their own mantras. Within this whole process, **one's**

'meditating on emptiness' is a very important step. It is because we have been bound and constrained by all those graspings, ever since the beginningless time immemorial, that we were wrongly engaged to be circulated within the 'cycle of karmic existence', and thus continuously to have births, deaths and rebirths within the 'six realms' ("**Six Realms**" means "**Realms of Heaven, Human, Asura, Animal, Hungry Ghost and Hell**"). If one would like to **get rid of this kind of grasping and of destiny, then one's 'meditating on emptiness' is the most important and crucial key element.**

Answer by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren: That is why the "mantra for meditating on emptiness" is also known as the "**mantra for accumulating the merit of wisdom**". The 'meditation on emptiness' can help one to reveal upon one's own wisdom. As when you release yourself from those bindings and constraints, your wisdom will manifest itself. Didn't I mention before that "**if there are no limits in your thinking, then there will be no limits to your abilities**". In other words, if you 'meditate on emptiness', then you will be able to manifest your own wisdom, since there are no limits to your thinking, and so your **wisdom would be able to be revealed from this.**

Answer by Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye: This is because we are all socially and culturally bounded and conditioned by all these limitations and constraints, and cannot find other spaces for us to further develop. Hence, we will have to do away with all these limitations and constraints so that we will be able to have **boundless spatial dimensions** for us to give free rein to. ... (To be continued) 🌀



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, VCDs and DVDs, 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.

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