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Lake of Lotus

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"Scenes at the Moment of Death" and "Rebirth Consequences"

Method to Avert Rebirth into the Realm of "Specters"

Amazing Impacts of "Mental Strength" at the Moment of Death

The Highest Objective that "Prayers" can Achieve

"Prayers" to Attain the Level on the "Emptiness of Ego"



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English Version

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Spiritual Advice for Dharma Practitioners of this Degenerate
Age (2)

by His Holiness Chadrak Sangye Dorje
Rinpoche –

Translated by His Holiness' Humble
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The Contemporary Mahasiddha with Many Prophecies Spiritual Advice for Dharma Practitioners of this Degenerate Age (2)

by His Holiness Chadrak Sangye Dorje Rinpoche

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

His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche's Spiritual Advice (2)

There is this verse from **Jowo Atisa** which says:

**To be kind to those who have come
from afar,
To those who have been ill for a long
time, or
To our parents in their old age, is
equivalent
To meditating on emptiness of which
compassion is the very essence.**

It is most important to **turn inwards and change your motivation**. If you can correct your attitude, skilful means will permeate your positive actions, and you will have **set out on the path of great beings**.

Hence, **whether your motivation is pure or not will have an important bearing on the final outcome of your practices**. It is thus said that **"the pure mind is the land of the path for the Bodhisattva"**, and so with this our everyday life will also be good.

Hence, if your mind is good, your path and the land that you will tread upon will be good; on the other hand, if your mind is bad, your path and the land that you will tread upon will be bad.

The mind is the sole generator of good and bad. So always examine your mind.

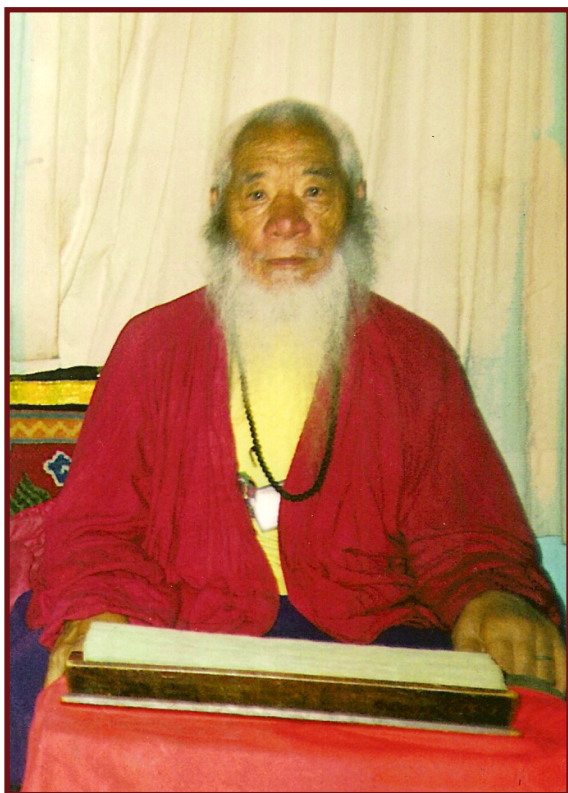
If your thoughts are positive, be glad and do more and more good. **If they are negative, confess them immediately, feeling bad and ashamed** that you still entertain such thoughts in spite of all the teachings you have received, and telling yourself that from now on, you must do your utmost not to let such thoughts occur in your mind again.

So **always watch your mind carefully. At all times, be mindful and vigilant!** We should, therefore, bear in mind the following important words:

**Not committing any evil deeds,
Fostering all that is virtuous, and
Taming one's own mind,
Are the teachings of the Lord Buddha.**

If you can fully renounce those "non-virtuous" deeds, you will close the doors of the lower realms, and you can then get the precious human birth. You will be able to meet with the Holy Dharma, and be accepted by a Spiritual Friend. Then, your obscurations will be purified, and then you will be reborn in either the **Buddha Amitabha's** "Pure Land of the Great Bliss" (**Skt. "Sukhāvati"; Tib. "Dewachen"**), or the "Potala Buddha-field" of **Avalokitesvara** (**Skt. Potalaka**), or in **Guru Padmasambhava's** "Buddha-field of the Glorious Copper-Coloured Mountain" (**Tib. "Zangdokpalri"**) ⁽⁶⁾ in the future.

They will hold you with their compassion and will accept you (**as their disciples**), so that



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eventually they will lead you to full liberation and enlightenment, with the qualities of the **“Ten Strengths”** ⁽⁷⁾, the **“Four Fearlessness”** ⁽⁸⁾, and so on.

Thus, in the face of many sufferings nowadays, such as the new kinds of illnesses, wars, people who are sick in their whole lives, and those who may die suddenly, the most important thing to do is to **pray to the Three Jewels** ⁽⁹⁾ **with a “pure heart”**. Then, all of your prayers will be heard and answered, and all of your wishes will be fulfilled!

The “Mantrayana” can be entered by many routes. It contains many methods for accumulating “merits and wisdom”, and profound skilful means to **make the potential within us manifest without our having to undergo great hardships**. The basis for these methods is the way we direct our **aspirations**: “Everything is circumstantial, and depends entirely on **one’s aspiration**.”

The unerring path is that, on our way, we use the **basis** of our own Buddha Nature, the **support** of our precious human life, the

circumstance of having a spiritual friend, and the **method** of following his advice. In this way, we can become **the Buddhas of the Future!**

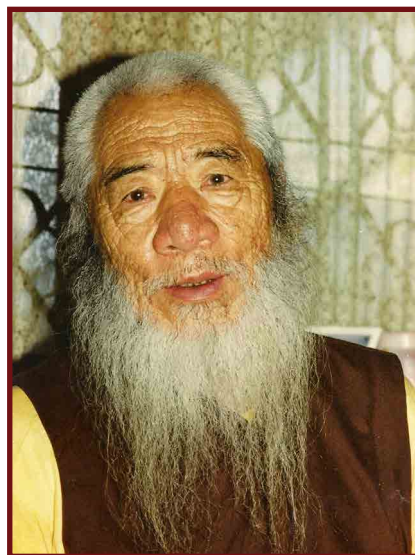
All these, of course, will have to depend upon our using of the **“Three Holy Acts”** ⁽¹⁰⁾: (i) **at the beginning** – in the generation of one’s **“Bodhicitta”**, (ii) **during the process** – in doing the main practices of Bodhisattva Activities **free of conceptualization** (that is, with the nature of Emptiness), and (iii) **at the end** – the **Dedication of Merits** for the “Attainment of Buddhahood” for all our motherly sentient beings.

Furthermore, we will **have to do all these practices everyday**; otherwise, you will feel sick and tired, and will then have many obstacles. So in order to avoid this, **be consistent with your practices of the Holy Dharma everyday!**

Thank you! 🙏

Notes:

- (6) The “Three Saints of the West” refer to the Buddhas of the “Three-Kayas” of the “Lotus Family” in the direction of the West, namely: (i) the Dharmakaya Buddha of the Boundless Light; (ii) the Sambhogakaya Buddha of Avalokitesvara; and (iii) the Nirmanakaya Buddha of Guru Padmasambhava.
- (7) The “Ten Strengths” (daśabala) of the Buddha are: (i) the knowing of what is correct and incorrect by the Buddha in accordance with the actual Truth; (ii) the knowing of all karmic activities and their results



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throughout past, present and future times by the Buddha, including the loci, structures and locations of the karmic actions and associated retributions; (iii) the **knowing of the different ways to establish meditative concentration**, including all kinds of dhyanas, samadhis, and absorptions, in accordance with the actual Truth by the Buddha, with distinctive characteristics in defining their relative defilements and purities; (iv) the **knowing of all capacities and faculties** of all sentient beings, as well as their characteristics of superiority and inferiority, in accordance with the actual Truth by the Buddha; (v) the **knowing of all sorts of aspirations and desires** possessed by all sentient beings by the Buddha; (vi) the **knowing of all countless worlds' different elements and their natures** by the Buddha; (vii) the **knowing of the characteristics of end-points of all the paths** by the Buddha; (viii) the **knowing of all previous lifetimes** of oneself and others conclusively, together with their commonly-held characteristics and causes and conditions, by the Buddha; (ix) the **full knowledge of the "transferences, deaths and future rebirths"** of all sentient beings by the Buddha; and (x) the Buddha has **achieved the liberation of the Non-Outflow Mind** in which all defilements are totally exhausted, with omniscient knowledge of all the paths and their results. (Please refer to the detailed explanations of these "Ten Strengths" in the article "The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (19) in Issue 19 of the "Lake of Lotus".)

- (8) The "Four Fearlessness" (**abhaya**) of the Buddha are: (i) the **fearlessness** in declaring oneself to be enlightened to the truth of all phenomena; (ii) the **fearlessness** in proclaiming oneself to have extinguished all desires and illusions; (iii) the **fearlessness** in proclaiming oneself to have elucidated the obstacles to Buddhist practices and their attainments, as well as the faults and pitfalls of other non-Buddhist practices; and (iv) the **fearlessness** in declaring oneself to have clarified the ways of liberation from the worlds of sufferings, and have thus clarified the ways to attain them.
- (9) The "Three Jewels" (**triratna**) are the three main objects of refuge, namely: the Jewel of the "Buddha", the Jewel of the "Dharma", and the Jewel of the "Sangha".
- (10) "Three Holy Acts" – are the "Three Supreme

Methods", which can be defined as those **three steps** that can be applied in every act, or even for every "thought that arises within one's own mind". When Dharma practitioners would act in such a way constantly, they will slowly and eventually attain the status of a "sage", and their acts are then known as the "Three Holy Acts". If one could apply these **three steps** in one's each and every **behavioural programming directly and continuously**, and even for every "thought that arises within one's mind", then one would have, indeed, become a "sage", and would eventually "attain Buddhahood". These three steps are: (i) **The Preparation at the Beginning** - the Dharma practitioner would "generate one's Enlightened Mind or Mind of Awareness (**Bodhichitta**)" and "aspire to become an Enlightened Being (**Buddha**) in order to benefit all motherly sentient beings", such that each and every act would not be separated from this generation of the "Bodhichitta" (**hence, this is known as the "Bodhichitta of Aspiration"**); (ii) **The Main Part in the Middle** – the Dharma practitioner would apply the "Realization of Emptiness in Three Aspects" (such as, realizing that the donor, the recipient and the action itself, including the item that is being donated, are all empty in nature) to practice the six transcendent perfections and countless "activities of the Bodhisattva" (this is known as the "Bodhichitta of Action". Both the arousing and the practicing of the "Bodhichitta of Aspiration" and of the "Bodhichitta of Action" thus belong to the "Relative Bodhichitta"). Yet, for every single aspiration and thought, as well as for every action of one's "enlightened status" (that is, "Bodhi"), one must have to be free from all "grasping", with non-attachment, in order to realize the true nature of "Emptiness" (only if one can really practice in this way that one will actually be able to practice the "Absolute Bodhichitta"). In this way, one will not be in the state of non-action due to the "grasping of emptiness", neither will one not act due to one's not knowing. Instead, one will be in the state of "emptiness, clarity and awareness" while "acting without grasping". Hence, one would clearly understand the "three aspects" of the "I" (or the "subject"), "the other" (or the "object") and "the thing or event that is being acted upon" as having emptiness as their very nature. By following each of the specific characteristics of 'the three aspects' to act upon in a clear and distinct fashion, one will act without "grasping". Hence, one would enter into the state of "emptiness, clarity and awareness" while "acting without grasping". In this way, one would not grasp upon the individual characteristics and forms of each of the "three aspects", but would all enter into the state of "Emptiness – Neither Existence Nor Voidness"; (iii) **The Conclusion at the End** – the Dharma practitioner "dedicates all merits" without any grasping. One would dedicate all the merits for the final liberation and enlightenment of all our motherly sentient beings, in such a way that one prays that they will all be free from sufferings, to have received great benefits, and, more importantly, to finally attain enlightenment (or "Buddhahood") at the shortest possible time.

The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death :

The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (23)

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

Excerpt of Last Chapter: Various Reasons on the Formation of Different Scenes at the “Moment of Death”

The “scenes at the moment of death” can be roughly classified in the following categories in accord with the varieties of the “**main causes**” and “**auxiliary conditions**”:

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” (please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issues 8 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
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” (please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
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 ([please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)); and (b) the efforts of one’s Dharma practice ([the main theme of this article in this issue](#)).
- ii. **Unwholesome Ones** – arising from: (a) vicious retributions; and (b) the forces of karmic creditors in seeking compensations on one’s karmic debts.

“Scenes at the Moment of Death” and “Rebirth Consequences”

“Karmic force” is a series of irresistible “tractional forces”, while the “consequences of rebirth” are the resultants of these groups of “tractional forces”. Due to the mutual-entanglements, inter-penetrations and mutual-influencing among the different “mental strengths” of both oneself and those others who had been involved, and rooted in both the “virtuous or vicious” actions of a person’s countless past lives, some kind of a “tractional network” is formed and is known as the “karmic network”.

These “tractional forces” can be derived from one’s inner behavioral patterns ([and thus the](#)

[person would be under reining](#)), as well as from the minds of other concerned sentient beings. When the “life forces” of sentient beings are vigorous, the “tractional forces” thus formed by their own inner “consciousness” or “sub-conscious” would be overwhelming and adequate for self-defense. However, when their “life forces” are frail, those sentient beings would then be **in a confused condition and involuntarily** reined by the “tractional forces” from other sentient beings. This sort of force, with strong influencing power dictated by the “tractional forces” from other sentient beings, is known as the “karmic wind”.

Under such settings as in extreme illnesses, or during a trance, or at the end of one’s life, or at the stage of rebirth, the “life forces” of sentient beings are at the weakest moment, and so the “karmic winds” would then come into effects. During the arising of these “karmic winds”, both sorts of forces are at work, namely: those forces coming from the **“assaults from karmic creditors”** ([usually more negative in nature](#)) and those from the **“protections by grateful debtors”** ([usually more positive in nature](#)), and they would **wrestle against each other**. The directions of these “karmic winds” would continuously change in accord with the unceasing developments, depending upon which side of these forces would win out or lose out during this **wrestling of energies**. As such, the scenes that would be seen by deceased persons at the moment of death might not be the same as, or even would be very different from, those seen at the moment when actual rebirths take place.

Resembling evidences show that: “some survivors of ‘near-death experiences’ (NDEs) had seen **instantaneous exchanges of different scenes turning from good to bad**, and vice versa; and some others had also seen **good or bad scenes changing at different intervals**. Some had recalled that the **scenes** of their former lives at the moments of death to be **rather different** from those during rebirths.” All these exemplify what have been revealed in the “Buddhist teachings” that the “consciousness” of a deceased person would be like **a piece of feather** to be **drifting along** here and there



by one's "karmic winds". Not until the very last moment, when the actual rebirth takes place, that the outcomes of one's final destination will remain uncertain. This is conforming to the Natural Law of Evolution – **all things are impermanent** – which is a simple "statement of truth"!

Hence, with one's "consciousness" and "sub-conscious" as the "cardinal causes", in conjunction with the "karmic forces" as the "auxiliary conditions", the "scenes at the moment of death" induced by them would be **extremely unsteady** and **changing instantly**, regardless of whether the phenomena to be manifested would either be good or bad in nature. This is particularly so when the "auxiliary conditions" during the "scenes at the moment of death" involve "karmic forces", a situation in which mutual interactions of either **"bi-directional"** or **"multi-directional"** ways would then be formed. This kind of influence, in which the driving forces were based upon the "karmic forces" as "auxiliary conditions", would be **gradually strengthened** after the person had passed away, and they would become **more and more severe, until the rebirth of the deceased person.**

The **only method** to diminish such "karmic forces" is to counteract them by one's own **"cardinal causes"** (of both the **"consciousness"** and the **"sub-conscious"**). In other words, **one's "mental strength" (as the "main cause") can be reinforced and elevated**, through one's Dharma practices, to overcome the "auxiliary conditions" of "karmic forces". However, **great attention** should be given to the fact that whether the methods of one's Dharma practices are **"up-to-the-point", relevant and do not astray**, which is the **most pivotal issue that needs to be addressed.** (Please refer to the article on **"The Meaning of Near-death Experiences"** in Issue 22 of the **"Lake of Lotus"**).

Some experts would argue that the "scenes at the moment of death" are simply "psychological projections", and so the so-called settings of "heaven and hell" only occur to those deceased persons who had such concepts before they die. Hence, to these experts, those people



who did not have the concepts of "heaven and hell" before they die, there would not have any occurrences of such settings upon their death, and so they would not be reborn into those places. Thus, some people deem that the arising of such "scenes at the moment of death" is only some kind of "psychological projections", which would influence the "consequences of rebirth". Once the concept of "hell" is **totally erased** in the "mind", people would no longer need to be reborn into those places. As long as people can **strengthen all** concepts in relation to "heaven", then they would be able to be reborn into "heaven". To these people, they believe that this method is a more pragmatic and effective way than any other religious teachings and practices.

This sort of thinking could only be said to be **partially correct**. Since "everything comes from the mind", and so "scenes at the moment of death" would actually be affected by "psychological, physiological and conceptual" factors. If a person does have the concepts of "heaven and hell" in one's mind, then he or she **would** naturally **be easier** to have projections of these images. However, "karmic forces" involve the "mental strengths" of many sentient beings; and so even though a person may not have the concepts of "heaven and hell" in one's mind, his

or her avengers could still have these concepts in their minds. Even if **all** concepts in relation to “hell” can be **erased** from the thoughts of all mankind, **would it be possible for us to alter the thoughts of those beings that have existed in other life forms?** When they have the abilities to carry out their great plans of revenge, they would certainly seek for or try to construct a setting in resembling the “hell” realm, so as to lure and capture their victims into their plots.

Likewise, those who tend to repay your kindness with gratitude would also seek for, or try to build up, a setting in resembling the “heaven”, so as to guide their benefactors to be reborn into it. This is the reason why those people who had committed “virtuous or vicious” deeds would either encounter the scene of “heaven or hell” at the moment of death, even though they had no religious belief whatsoever. This is the **influencing power of “karmic forces”, which involve the assorted “mental strengths” of many other sentient beings.** (For more details, please refer to the DVD on “The Inconceivable Law of Karma”, published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).

Those sentient beings with overwhelming conscience of guilt and shamefulness, or with thoughts that are full of excessive evils and darkness concerning apparitions, and if such thoughts still remained even until the very “fragile yet pivotal” moment of death, then they would be **directly connected** to those settings in which the magnetic fields are of **negative energies** in nature. Reflections of the negative elements within their “minds” would project upon them the resembling images of “hell” at the moment of death. Likewise, those sentient beings who **understand the principles behind this**, and persisted on their Dharma practices throughout their lives, such that their thoughts are filled with “compassionate love and the solemn Buddha-Lands of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas” all the way through until the “pivotal and fragile” moment of death, then they would be connected to those settings in which the magnetic fields are of positive energies in nature, which are then reflected upon their “minds”, and could thus visualize the scenes of the “Buddha-Lands” at the moment of death.

For **sentient beings with ultra strong “mental strengths”**, even if they are temporarily affected by the “Separation of the Four Elements”, such that extraordinary images of “conflagration, big floods and smog” are seen (please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 8 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”), or if the “assaults by karmic creditors” are closing by, **as long as they know how to resolve the problems with their sustained “mental strengths”**, there would not be any damaging effects on the final “consequences of rebirth”.

In other words, it is genuine that **“everything comes from the mind”**. Thus, it affects both oneself and all other sentient beings. In order to analyze any phenomenon, **none of the parties involved could be ignored**. Though numerous “mental strengths” of sentient beings are involved, doubtless to say there are always **differentiations on the hierarchies of “cardinals and subordinates”**. The inner “consciousness” of sentient beings is the governing “main cause” on the final destiny of one’s own rebirth, while the external assaults of “karmic creditors” and grateful guidance of “karmic debtors” are merely “auxiliary conditions”. If a person has an excellent inner “mental strength”, much stronger than the external “tractional forces”, and further knows the direction for one’s proceeding, then one’s own **destiny would definitely and truly be in command within one’s own hands**. The **key is whether the person has carried out correct and “up-to-the-point” Dharma practices “while still alive”, and whether the emphasis has been on the training of one’s “mental strength” or not?**

Amazing Impacts of the “Mental Strength” at the Moment of Death

According to the records of different surveys, most of the dying people had seen the following scenes:

1. **Protectors or avengers:**
 - (i) good ones – saw kith and kin who had passed away, unknown

protectors, deities or Buddhas coming to fetch for oneself.

- (ii) bad ones – being besieged by a crowd of ferocious persons or beasts, and going along in company with groups of people who looked confused.

2. **Strange places:**

- (i) good ones – saw pavilions, balconies, buildings, flower fields, rivers, light zones, towns or cities.
- (ii) Bad ones – saw wilderness, forests, darkness, caverns, hells.

3. **Messy Issues that cannot be recalled clearly.**

How would the Buddhist point of view comment on these phenomena? According to the Buddhist teachings, it was said that rebirth would take place within forty-nine days after a person has passed away, then why would a dying person see the kith and kin who **had passed away long time ago** still coming to fetch for him or her? Why had not the kith and kin taken rebirths after so many years posthumously? Are the appearances of these deceased persons merely the illusions of the person who is going to die? Or were they really true? Are there any other reasons? Are



those strange places the destinations where they are going to be reborn into? In order to answer these questions, please take a look at the following case before any answers will be given.

Case 29

“One night in 1994, a traffic accident happened to a young woman and her child at a place somewhere in the mountains of Nevada, USA. The woman fell down with the car from a steep cliff and was killed. The wreck of the car lay on a slope about 50 feet from the road, while her three-years-old kid was still alive. Since the location was so remote, and thus nobody knew about the accident. Even though there were vehicles passing by, yet since the drivers did not see any trace of the accident and so none of them would stop for their rescue. The kid was trapped inside the wreck of the car and was in imminent danger.

Five days later, a man riding a motorcycle was passing by. He saw a nude young lady lying on the highway. He then stopped over to have a look. However, the young naked woman had already disappeared. He looked around curiously trying to find out what had happened. He then found that the wreck was lying on the slope just right beneath the spot where the naked woman had appeared on the highway. Rescue started immediately and the moribund child was just in time to be saved. After the breakout of the news, it attracted the attention of the whole nation.”

When a sudden death has occurred to a person, in general the deceased person would not have realized the fact that he or she was already dead. Furthermore, this person would not have known how to capture the opportunity when one’s “mental strength has been freed” from somatic binding, and thus make good use of the time interval for one’s own rescue. For those people who have died of accidents or heavy crashes, their “spiritual bodies” would rather promptly leave their “physical bodies”. As according to the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**, even if a person died of a natural death, the “spiritual body” would usually leave one’s

“physical body” within three-and-a-half days.

This case showed that after the young woman had passed away, when the “spiritual body” left her “physical body”, she still strived to save her own child but was in vain. Having been stalled until the fifth day, she was so desperate and eventually she came up with an eye-catching method for people’s attention. Although she had never been trained on her “mental strength”, she **strived to consolidate** on her “spiritual body” with much mental concentration, such that she could be seen in the human world where the material densities are much higher. In view of the intensity of her “mental strength”, she tried not to divert her own mental concentration, otherwise it would be ineffectual that she might miss the rare chance of a passing-by vehicle. As such, she could only **manifest in a static form** – lying still. She could not sustain her manifestation for long, so that when someone had just a glance, she would then have to disappear and could not be seen again, and neither could she guide the way for potential rescue. In order to enhance the efficacy and increase the odds of success, she appeared to be naked and lay down on a place **right above the spot** of the accident. She was eventually successful. Not only had she manifested her figure, but had also successfully rescued her own child through her manifestation.

This case had pointed out a fact: if a sentient being **“died unwillingly”** and there were issues not yet reconciled, the “mental strength” of the deceased person could alter some of the existing situations, including the “consequences of rebirth” which were supposed to be governed by the “karmic forces”. The real issue lies in the fact that whether one’s “mental strength” is wholesome, righteous and positive, or whether it is bad, unwholesome and negative. This is also the main reason why we need to practice the Holy Dharma, that **the “training of the mind” is the key for all Dharma practices**, and so the pivotal point in Dharma practice is **to nurture and train one’s own “mental strength”**.

At the moment of death, if the dying person has some unsettled wishes in mind, then there would be significant impacts on the deceased person.

Not only that the deceased person could not be smoothly reborn into a better realm, but also that this person might unwittingly enter into the “realm of specter”. This kind of phenomena frequently happened to those deceased persons under such conditions as: murders, cruel slaughters, suicides, unrighteous accusations, or with unyielding grasping on associated people or things while still alive, or sudden deaths, or with excruciating pains, or would try to protect those kith and kin who are still alive, and so on. How did they fall into the “realm of specter” without even knowing it? Please refer to the following case in point.

Case 30

“An American woman under hypnotherapy recalled her previous life and found that she was abandoned in the year of 1897 by her husband, to whom she had married for five years. Her husband went far away and it was difficult to trace him. When her husband left her, he claimed that he wanted to leave her, not because of her repugnance, but that he had “yearned for freedom”. She saw that she just **could not accept** the suffering of loneliness for the rest of her life. Since she loved her husband too deeply and had believed that her husband still loved her, she then persisted to wait for her husband to return one day. She had waited like



this for over twenty-two years, and it was under **desperate despair and helplessness** that she had finally passed away.

Even after she had died, she still persisted to believe that her husband would return one day. She saw her “spiritual body” drifting around, but still could not find her husband. She then returned to her old home and continued to wait for him. She kept on crying day and night, and when she could not control herself, she just burst out by sweeping away anything that was in her reach. She found that she had become a “specter”, and her crying could then be heard even by worldly people. While she madly swept away the substances around her, even those worldly substances of high densities were also affected by her actions. The pounding noises had scared the worldly sentient beings.

This kind of situation had dragged on for four years, until she grew weary of it in her **“mind”**, as though she should have awakened from the suffering. Even though this idea was very short and not vivid, yet at that very moment, a kind-hearted volunteer in the spiritual domain came along to exhort her, and brought her away from the old dwelling with poignant memories. She was led to a place filled with youthful vigor and positive thinking. There were beautiful fields of flowers and butterflies. After adequate time for the **resting of her spirit**, she was again brought to another place, where **the contributions and faults of her whole life were being debated**. After that, she embarked on the journey for rebirth, which has started her present life.

Strangely enough, she found out that her husband that she has abandoned in this present life was, in fact, her previous husband who had abandoned her in her previous life. Even though it seemed to be a revengeful action, yet she felt that she **did not do it intentionally**. Neither did she feel happy about it; on the contrary, **indescribable sentimental feelings of sadness and helplessness still continue to sustain** in her “mind”. This sort of sentiment intertwined her in this present life, and so she had to undergo hypnotherapy. After she saw what she had come across in her previous life, she finally came to realize



the “causes and consequences” of everything. The negative thinking of her “mind” had thus been relieved, and she was astonished at the ingenuity of the various happenings. Even all kinds of associations and encounters of different people and things around her **were not fortuitous**. In fact, all of them must **have their previous connectivities**. As these kinds of linkages **had not been properly resolved**, the same kind of story **repeated itself over and over again** life after life; the only difference lies in the interchanged positions of the persons involved. The victim of this present life became the one who would do the damage to the other person in the next life. Yet, it seems that none of them would have done it intentionally.”

This case could clearly indicate another simple fact: if a person **feels very resentful** at the moment of death, an extremely strong “mental strength” would have been formed, upon which this person would be besieged in the abyss of agonies. Since she did not have anybody to provide guidance to her while she was still alive, and so she did not realize the modes of operation in the “posthumous world”. Neither did she know how to utilize the ability induced from her “mental strength” to track down her husband’s location by the unique oscillatory frequencies of her own mental “energies”.

In fact, many “karmic creditors and avengers” find their target objects in this way. She could not find her husband, and so she could not let go of her resentfulness in her “mind”. Thus, she got bogged down and stranded in the human world. Her “mental strength” was gradually enhanced due to her own grasping, and her “spiritual body” was consolidated to become a “specter” with high material density, and so her crying could easily be heard by other worldly people. When she was too overcome by emotions, all of a sudden her “mental strength” was so much enhanced in multitude that she was able to move worldly substances of high densities. It was due to her own “**karmic consequences**” that she fell into the realm of “specter”. At a closer look, we can find that the structure of “karmic forces” is composed of the “mental strengths” of both “oneself and other sentient beings”. The main force which drove her into the realm of “specter” mainly came from the “mental strength” of her own grasping. This is one of the ways in entering into the realm of “specter” and is rather prevailing.

Likewise, the “karmic forces” that can liberate her from sufferings so as to uplift her from the realm of “specter” were originated from a trace of “awareness” in her own “mind”. When the notion of “awakening from agonies” had risen in her “mind”, the calling from her own “mental strength” had generated such signals linking up to the volunteers in the spiritual domain to come and rescue her. This is the main reason why one needs to practice the Holy Dharma while one is still alive. It is important to learn the necessary skills and mentality of how to carry out “self-rescue” and “signaling for help”. One needs to have trainings on the development of positive thinking and behavioral patterns – to be liberated from agonies, from dangers, from confusions, and from grasping.

Methods to Avert Rebirths into the Realm of “Specters”

Numerous sentient beings are having problems in their patterns of thinking and behaviors, due to their own “minds”. They continue to keep on amassing negative emotions throughout

countless cycles of life and death, and thus forming the **incomprehensible “karmic retributions”**. Even though they have no “vengeful” intentions, those negative emotions of their “mental strengths” are affecting their own “sub-conscious”, and thus reining their behaviors. In this way, tragedies are **kept on repeating** and the situations are getting even worse. Once released, the energies of negative emotions would continue to exist in the form of signals in the same “space-time setting”. As such, the magnetic fields of “haunted houses” can be rather harmful to some people. If those people who are in rather bad “spiritual conditions” live in these places for an extended period of time, they would be interfered by the energies of negative emotions, and thus may result in deviations of thoughts and behaviors. Or else, they might get sick.

Thus, the Dharma practices in “Buddhism” ceaselessly provide teachings and admonitions to all sentient beings for the corrections of their patterns of thinking and behaviors in their “minds”. This is, indeed, a method for **both alleviating the symptoms of an illness, as well as in performing a permanent cure** of it and can provide a radical rescue for all sentient beings. The skillful means in “Vajrayana” are to give assistance to sentient beings in averting interferences of “harmful places, substances and other sentient beings” by all means, such that it would be easier to lay a firm foundation of Dharma practices. So long as a person is not indulged in superstitions, but is able to **select “skillful means” through rational analysis**, then these factors could be taken as a kind of positive “auxiliary condition”. However, if a person becomes too superstitious and thus affecting the **awakening ability of one’s own “mind and wisdom”**, then it will derive contradictory effects and the “auxiliary condition” would then be turned into **an interference of grasping**.

According to the records in the Buddhist scriptures, it was mentioned in the Volume Eight of the “**Abhidharma-hridaya-vyakhya**” that there are two ways to enter into the “realm of specter”, namely: to be born either in the form of “feetus” or through “metamorphosis” (or “viviparity”). In the Volume 16 of the



“Saddharmasmrity Upasthana Sutra”, it was said that there are also two types of specters: “one type of them lives in the human world, while another type lives in the realm of the hungry ghost”. In the Volume 4 of the **“Yogacarabhumi-sastra”**, it was mentioned that there are three types of specters: “whose diets being obstructed externally, whose diets being obstructed internally, and whose diets would not have any hindrances”. There are a total of 36 kinds of specters if classified in accordance with the differences of their appearances, ways of eating, and differences in enjoyment of fortunes, and so on, as described in the **“Saddharmasmrity Upasthana Sutra”**. Apparently, the lady in Case 30 was the kind of “specters that live in the human world”, and that she has come into being by “metamorphosis”.

Whether a “specter” could have any eating or not will have to depend upon its own “karmic retributions”. For instance, whether the person could not have eating due to defectiveness of the body, or having difficulty in finding food in the external environment, or excruciatingly agonizing feelings due to its internal psychological perplexity. There is also a kind of “specter” that has no obstructions in eating and is called the “specters of fortunes”. As the notion that has arisen in one’s “mind” at

the moment of death would have an extremely significant impact, and so a deceased person who has strong grasping might still continue to be hanging around in the human world due to sentimental attachments even though 49 days had passed after his/her death. As for the period of 49 days, it is not wholly based on the time scale of the human world. The first half of the 49 days will be based on the time scale of human world as the deceased person comes from there. However, for the second half of the 49 days, it will depend on the time scale of the “realm” upon which one’s rebirth is going to take place.


In Case 30, the “karmic retributions” of the woman was not too bad, and so supposedly she could be reborn into the human world within 49 days, which is within the time scale of the human world. Pitifully, driven by the cardinal strength of her own “mind”, she strained to stay in the human world with unwillingness for departure in order to wait for her husband. Since it had exceeded the period of 49 days in the time scale of human world, her “spiritual body” of low density gradually became higher in density, and thus formed the “shape of a specter”.

Having been liberated from the agonies, she had the good chance to be reborn as a human being again, and so this has shown that her “karmic retributions” was not too bad. It was merely a problem that she was stranded in her own “mental strength”. If she grasped hold obstinately onto errors and persisted to “isolate herself in agonies”, the longer she dragged on, the denser was her somatic density as a “specter”. Similar kinds of magnetic fields would be mutually connected with each other and get consolidated gradually, until she could not maintain her stay in the human world and be dragged into the “realm of the hungry ghost”.

Thus, strong grasping is the most dangerous kind of “mental strength”, which is most harmful to the deceased person. Therefore, we should show tender loving care to a person who is going to die, and try our utmost to satisfy his or her wishes. Moreover, we should teach them to “let go” of their attachments, so that they

can be relieved of their grasping and can thus proceed, with ease of their “minds”, onward to their own future destinies.

What would be the other possibilities that a deceased person could be dragged onto an even worse situation than a normal rebirth? In Case 30, it was mentioned that the woman was brought to a place where “debates on the contributions and faults of her whole life, and then after which, she was reborn again”. Was this a kind of “judgment”? Why was it that: while the woman did not have a vengeful will, and neither did the other party have any intention for further entanglements, they still came to encounter each other in their next lives and thus continued their intertwining?

In “Buddhism”, it is said that a deceased person would take formal rebirth within 49 days, then why did some dying persons could see their kith and kin who **had passed away for many years** still come to fetch for them? Then, why had those kith and kin, who had been dead for so long already, still have not taken their rebirths? Were their appearances a sort of hallucinations of the dying persons? Or whether they were really true phenomena? Are there any other reasons for that? Whether the strange places that were seen at the “moment of death” to be the destinations of rebirths? Are there any methods to help the deceased persons to avert their sufferings, and to elevate them to better places of rebirths? In fact, what should be the important elements to be included in the methods of one’s Dharma practice so as to be considered as an “up-to-the-point” “training of spiritual elevation”? As there are so many kinds of “trainings of spiritual elevation”, then how should one make a choice among them in order to cope with each of the different stages? In the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, we will continue this discussion on the subject concerned.....(To be Continued) 

(Remark: 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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- Special Common Features of “Near-Death Experiences”
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- The “Energy Thread” Between Life and Death
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- The Mystery of “Light”
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The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (23)

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 Issue 21 of “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 ([please refer to Issue 21 of “Lake of Lotus”](#)).

(xviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (15): Mastering of Time and Choice of Methods** – Irrespective of the objectives of one’s Dharma practice, one must choose the appropriate “methods of Dharma practice” that **correspond with one’s objectives**. The amount of **time spent** on these “methods of Dharma practice”, and the **effects that one can achieve** through them, are the **key and critical points** as to whether or not one can achieve the objectives, and so one should analyze them in more details. In order to have a quick and accurate way to analyze and measure the various “methods of Dharma practice”, one must first “bring out the chief points” on the “objectives” of the various practices, as well as the **effective**

elements of the “methods of Dharma practice”, before one can correspondingly discuss and analyze the issues ([please refer to Issue 22 of “Lake of Lotus”](#)).

(xix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (16):**

Excerpt of Last Issue

For the general populace, and even up to the great Dharma practitioners, their objectives of Dharma practice should be more or less of the following types:

1. **Praying for worldly desires** – For example: to seek for oneself and one’s own relatives to have “longevity, recovery from illness, success in one’s career, good marriage, wealth increase, averting disasters and relief from sufferings, as well as reunion with those deceased loved ones”. Also, there are those who hope to get the “ease of heart and security at the present life”, etc.; or for “fame, wealth, respect” in order to study Buddhism; as well as for those who put in efforts to practice the Dharma.
2. **Rebirth in the good realms** – For example: to hope and pray for rebirth in the heavenly realm, or in the human realm, and not to fall into the evil realms ([of animals, hungry ghosts and hells](#)).
3. **Liberation from the tractions of the “cycle of karmic existence”** – to hope and pray for **the freedom** in deciding for oneself as to whether one would be reborn into the six realms ([of heavens, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hells](#)), or whether to remain in the highest level of the “Realm of Form”, such as the “Akanistha” ([the “Heaven at the End-of-Form-Realm”](#)), which is beyond the control of the tractions. ([Please refer to the explanations on](#)

the “Three Realms” in the article on the “Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death: The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

4. **Attainment of Buddhahood** – The recovery of one’s “Primordial Nature” and the originally possessed and boundless capabilities, which are free from any bondages and to remain in the “Dharma Realm”. (The “Nature of the Mind”, also known as the “Buddha Nature”, or the “Primordial Nature”, refers to the original possession of that most crystal clarity of awareness. Please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 4 & 5 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

What are the methods that one can choose in order to achieve these four types of objectives? What will be their effects? What are the **critical key points** that one should pay attention to when judging upon and in choosing those methods of Dharma practice? Regardless of what kinds of religions, the practice methods can be broadly divided into the following types:

1. **Prayers** – Including confessions, repentance of one’s conducts, and in the making of aspirations and wishes;
2. **Recitations** – mantras, Buddhas’ Holy Names, or sutras
3. **Visualizations** – themes include the formulae for different types of “meditation”, or even the making use of the internal functions of one’s body for coordination.

Irrespective of which types of practice methods, it must include the training of one’s “mental strength”. Otherwise, it would not be able to produce any effects. One of the important points for judging which of the practice methods are the most effective ones is the degree of influence that these can have on one’s “mental strength”? What percentage

will they constitute?

The Highest Objective that “Prayers” can Achieve

Although there are reasons to support that “prayers” do produce certain effects, yet what exactly are the effects of “prayers”? What are its **inadequacies and drawbacks**? What are the highest level of objectives that “prayers” can **achieve**? The “mental strength” thus generated from “prayers” would also be influenced by many other factors from all aspects. Hence, the “training and application” of one’s “mental strength” would not be direct enough, and so the time required to accumulate one’s “mental strength” would have to be longer in order that it can achieve any success (please refer to the article on the “The Application of Wisdom in Dharma Practice” in Issue 22 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

On the side of effectiveness, even though they consist the element of one’s “mental strength”, since “prayers” do not involve any practices on “Emptiness” and so they are neither direct enough, nor have they included any programming for the practicing of “Emptiness” that could counter-act the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic existence”. Hence, though “prayers” can produce some effects, the highest level that they can achieve would only be **limited** to the “materialization of requests for worldly desires” or for the “rebirth in some virtuous realms”. One would **not be able to achieve the two objectives of** : (i) liberation from the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic existence”, and (ii) the attainment of enlightenment (Buddhahood). Hence, “prayers” will not be able to become the major item of practice in Buddhism, and that it can only **be a supplementary method of practice**. (“Emptiness”: please refer to the DVD on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).

For some of the religions at the lower levels, the “objectives of their religious practices” would be either for “requesting some worldly desires”, or for the “rebirth in some virtuous

realms”, or even for the worldly practices of “asking their gods’ advices” through oracles, or for the “offering of sacrifices” to either ancestors in the ancestral temples or to the gods in the universe. Hence, due to the limitations on the levels of their teachings, they would adopt “prayers” as their main item of practice. Since the saying of “prayers” is the easiest method of religious practice which can directly express the desires within one’s heart and mind, it has become the most common practice method. As a result, the saying of praying has become too common and too easy to learn, such that the original meaning and value of “prayers” has been gradually neglected by the general populace, and has now been downgraded to a method for requesting for material wishes.

If one begins with the contents of “prayers”, one would slightly be able to elevate the “objective of one’s Dharma practice”. How should one assess the contents of these “prayers”? Nearly, all “prayers” must have their “motives and outcomes”. If the motives do not contain any “greediness, hatred and ignorance”, the outcomes would usually be able to elevate and enhance the quality of the nature of one’s “mind”. In this way, these types of “prayers” can be considered as those of the highest quality, and these would enable one to elevate the “objective of one’s Dharma practice”.

On the other hand, if the motives contain lots of “greediness, hatred and ignorance”, the outcomes of which will usually downgrade the quality of the nature of one’s “mind” at a great speed. Such kinds of “prayers” would be considered as the poorest type of “prayers”, and thus would lower the “objective of one’s Dharma practice”.

If the motives consist of some “greediness, hatred and ignorance”, the outcomes would make the quality of the nature of one’s “mind” to be at the verge of collapse. These kinds of “prayers” would be considered as those that will be stepping on the line, such that the “objective of one’s Dharma practice” would go downward at anytime.

In order to supplement the inadequacies of

these aspects, as well as to prevent Dharma practitioners from mistakenly falling into the traps of “greediness, hatred and ignorance” so as to be further bogged down by these traps, the Buddhist guideline is to add in some elements of compassionate aspirations into the contents of the “prayers”. That is to say, even if your request is for the fulfillment of individual worldly desires, it must have to be for the helping of many more sentient beings after you have got away from your own plight. Such kind of behavior in the saying of “prayers” and in the making of “aspirations” would not only benefit oneself, but would also benefit others. Thus, in Buddhism, this kind of behaviors of “mutual benefits” is regarded as a “win-win” behavior.

This balanced and “middle-of-the-road” teaching would enable one to exert a subtle influence on, as well as to gradually inspire, those selfish people to get away from those traps of “greediness, hatred and ignorance”, and to generate among themselves the unique quality of the nature of the “mind” – that is, the “selfless compassionate love” – which would eventually stimulate the potential of the nature of one’s “mind”, such that this would further elevate very rapidly the two “objectives for Dharma practice” of “liberating from the cycle of karmic existence” and of the “attainment of enlightenment” (Buddhahood), up till their final success.

Appropriate “prayers” can be used as a means to help meet urgent and dangerous needs during one’s lifetime so as not to fall into the





traps of “greediness, hatred and ignorance”. At the same time, they can also be used in the spiritual realm after one’s death. Our Lord of Refuge, His Holiness Chadrang Rinpoche of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, once said to a western disciple who had requested him for some teachings: “Please remember **“The Prayer of Calling the Lama from Afar”** that I had transmitted to you. If you can remember it even when you die, it will already be adequate.” This disciple has remembered this by heart ever since, as he has firmly believed in the guidance of his Guru.

All along, all the “gurus” of “Vajrayana” will have to adhere to an important ruling: that when they transmit the Dharma teachings, they would only transmit to their respective disciples who are suitable enough to receive the different levels of teachings. From the above-mentioned illustration, one would know that those greatly realized Dharma practitioners would still have to **remember by heart those “high quality prayers”** in asking for help and to make use of them in appropriate times **(and thus fulfills the “Vajrayana” requirements)**, let alone the general type of Vajrayana practitioners.

“The Prayer of Calling the Lama from Afar”, which has important **guidance on “Emptiness”**, has now been translated from Tibetan into English and Chinese. Unfortunately, the words used in the Chinese version are too difficult to understand and has thus reduced its sense

of inspiration. When suitable circumstances arise in the future, this prayer will need to be translated again in order to benefit all those “Vajrayana” practitioners who are really serious in their practices.

“Prayers” to Attain the Level on the “Emptiness of Ego”

The contents of “prayers” are broadly expressed to the Buddhas or gods for some special wishes, including elements like “thinking of somebody or something, forgiveness, gratefulness, releasing, asking for help, making aspirations, with blessings and confessions”. **“Prayers” seems to be like a daily reminder in reminding one of the principles and beliefs that one has to adhere and uphold.**

Is there a deeper meaning under the saying of “prayers”? At the time when one prays, if one can completely dissolve one’s own “mind” into the “prayer” and into the body of the “one being requested for”, or even to be able to “merge as one”, then such kind of **“prayers”** can be considered as those **that can help one to attain the level on the “Emptiness of ego”**. As such, this would produce extremely great effects on the “one saying the prayers”. If one does not have any “grasping” on “oneself”, this would become **the first landing step** for entry into the state of “Emptiness”, and would speedily elevate the potentials within the practitioner. This type of practice method is regarded as the “internal practice”, which is much deeper and at much higher levels than those practice methods, which mainly focus on the “external practices” of making requests to external parties, that have been adopted by most other religions.

Apart from **Buddhism which focuses on the “internal practices” and “Emptiness”**, there are some other religions which can have “prayers” of comparable levels. For example, some of the religious practitioners of “Catholicism” advocated the saying of “prayers” so as **to generate one’s realization**, the important point of which is to use **a “language that one can fully understand”**. In **the Corinthians 14:13-19** of the

Bible, there was a reference on “the using of a tongue that one knows” to “pray for realization”. After they had experienced the “praying for realization”, they would then pray for the “Holy Spirit” to descend upon them; and with their “prayers of the tongue”, they would then say out the words of the “Prophets”. When they were in a deep trance, they would then “worship silently in spirit” to enter into the state of “egolessness”, thus feeling extreme “Ecstasy” of being merged with “God”. They regarded such kind of prayers as the “breaths of the spirit”, and are important in maintaining their spiritual lives. “To use the tongue inspired by the Holy Spirit to say the ‘prayers of spiritual words’ (**Corinthians 14:14 & 15, and the Romans 8.26 & 8.27 of the Bible**). “To pray to God with one’s spirit – ‘pray in silence’” (**John 4.27, and Corinthians 14:28 of the Bible**).

Even for the believers of other religions, they also know that the **most direct method** is to use “a language that they can know of to **“pray for realization”**. This is because the using of “a language that one knows” is **the most direct communication method with one’s own “inner self”**, which can **directly** give rise to the realization of the “mind”. However, some Vajrayana practitioners, still having some superstitious hues in their minds, and even some of the Gurus themselves would still insist that their disciples should use the “Tibetan language” for reciting the “ritual texts” (or **“Sadhanas”**) during their practices, instead of using their own mother tongues to practice. This is a very indirect way, and such a move would become an obstacle for the Dharma practitioners to “generate one’s realization”, and that the progress of their practices would thus be delayed. In this way, one can see that the **standards** for such kind of “Gurus” are **even lower** than the “wisdom and knowledge” of the religious practitioners of other religions, as they are still remaining at the low level of “self-superstition” by the so-called “blessings of sounds”. This is much farther and farther away from the **elicitation method of practice** on the “nature of the self”.

To enter into **the state of “egolessness”, and to be in extreme “ecstasy” of being in union with**

“God”, is the highest level that the Catholics and other Christians would like to achieve. In order to enter into such a state, they would not just rely upon this “method of praying”, as they would also adopt other methods to help them, such as to use **the method of “contemplation”** to achieve this. Take for example, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Lisieux (1873-1897), who was brought up in Alencon of France, and was also known as the Little Flower. In her autobiography, she described her practice method of “looking at God with the innocence and simplicity of a child, and gazing attentively at God, particularly on his face. As if when you are in love with somebody and was gazing at him fixatedly, you would then not see his heels, nor would you see his shoulders, but you would only see his face.” St. Theresa of the Child Jesus used this practice method which was far better than the ordinary method of prayers. Since she has adopted **“contemplation” as the cardinal method** in entering into this stage, and so some of the people have called her as the **“Great One of Silent Contemplation”**.



Therese at age eight



St. Theresa of the Child Jesus (1873 -1897)

To have a mindset which is so fully absorbed by one’s “admiration” and to gaze deeply upon the face of one’s “believer” is the quickest way for entry into the state of “egolessness” and to “be in union” with him. This practice method is similar to the practice methods in “Vajrayana” Buddhism of “concentrating on visualizing” the face of one’s own “Guru”, or the meticulous “visualization” on the various forms and shapes of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or the “visualization” of the Buddha Amitabha and his Pure Land of the “Pure Land School”. Such

kind of practice method is much better than the practice method of just saying “prayers”.

Since not too many of the other religions would be able to adopt such a high level of practice methods, and so if there was someone who knew about this, then many people would already regard him or her as the “Great One of **Silent Contemplation**”. On the contrary, in **Buddhism**, it is very common for one to focus on the “internal practices” and on “**Emptiness**”, and so those who know about these kinds of practices would not be regarded by others as to be so great for “**silent contemplation**”. At most, the highest level of practice to be considered by other religions is only confined to the achievement on the “**Emptiness of the Ego**”. While they may be able to lose their “egos”, yet they still cannot forget about their “God”, and so there is still the grasping on the “dichotomy of dualism”. As such, they still cannot enter into the **state of “oneness” on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness**”, and so they cannot fully recover their “primordial nature” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. In “Vajrayana” Buddhism, its way of “visualizing one’s Guru” would be to lead oneself to enter into the state of “non-differentiation and non-duality” by eventually merging one’s own “nature of the mind” with that of the “Guru”, which would be the state of the highest level **without any grasping** (1. attaining Buddhahood: The recovery of one’s “Primordial Nature” and the originally-possessed and boundless capabilities, which are free from any bondages to be remained in the “Dharma Realm”. 2. The “Nature of the Mind”, also known as the “Buddha Nature” or the “Primordial Nature”, refers to the **original possession of that most crystal clarity of awareness**. Please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 4 and 5 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Some other religions, such as Hinduism believes in the “**union of oneself with Brahman**” as the highest level of religious practice, and so is the belief of “**merging with all things in the universe**” as the highest level of religious practice in Daoism, all of which will think that they need to “merge and unite” with some “external” things or objects in order to enter into

the level of “egolessness”. Yet, they still have the grasping on the “dichotomy of dualism”, and as such, they still cannot enter into the **state of “oneness” on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness**”, which is the ultimate and highest state of spiritual development, and thus cannot fully recover their “primordial nature” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. In this way, their **methods of religious practices cannot be as complete, holistic and ultimate as those of “Buddhism**”. Since the main practices of these religions are based on “visualizations”, while “prayers” are only secondary, and so they are much higher, in terms of their **levels and cases of success**, than those other religions whose practices mainly depend upon “prayers” only.

The relatively lower level of practices in saying “prayers” is **the flow from one’s inner self, and is therefore an expression of active engagement**. While one is saying “prayers”, one would firmly believe in the existence of “God”, or even be sensitive enough to feel that oneself and God, or the universe, to be “united as one” naturally. Such kind of feelings and experiences would further expand to different kinds of religious experiences, and would thus help to bring about the further development of religions.

The saying of “prayers” can help one to transform passive feelings and negative emotions, to maintain peacefulness in one’s mind, which will be able to bring about further spiritual comforts, and so its psychological effects are very significant, indeed. The most common way that has been adopted for “prayers” is to **continuously repeat** the sayings of the “prayers”, or to **repeat some actions**, so as to make the “one saying the prayers” to feel completely enchanted by one’s total isolation from the external world, and would thus enter into the realm of “self-deepening”. Such a state can help the “one saying the prayers” to become directly and deeply connected with the “source of life – compassionate loving-kindness”. Hence, the saying of “prayers” can be regarded as the simplest method to enable one to be always together with this “original source of love”.

The strengths of **appropriate** “prayers” are indisputable, and yet the degrees of their effectiveness will have to depend upon a number of factors. The more the “prayers” can stimulate both the “mental strengths” of oneself and of others, the more they would have their effects to be materialized in greater strengths, and the more quickly they will achieve their effects. Yet, **this practice method will compare less favorably with the other two above-mentioned practice methods.** The rationale behind this will be further discussed in the next Issue.

The merits and demerits of all practice methods will have to depend upon the amounts of training on the **positive** “mental strength”. Hence, the merits and demerits of “prayers”

will, in turn, depend on how deep these prayers will have on the influence of one’s “mental strength”. **Attached** here in this article is **a reprint** of a “Prayer for the Release of Negative Energies”, and is most appropriate for the general population, or even for all Dharma practitioners. We sincerely pray that this prayer will benefit all sentient beings! 🙏

..... (To be Continued)

(Note: The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Sharma 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.)

Prayer for the Release of Negative Energies

May the negative energies be released ! May the negative energies be released ! May the negative energies be released !

May all fears be released
 May all sadness be released
 May all anxieties be released
 May all resistances be released
 May all guessing be released
 May all hatreds be released
 May all hostilities be released
 May all loneliness be released
 May all worries be released
 May all sorrows be released
 May all limitations be released
 May all bruises be released
 May the resistance to authority be released
 May the fear of the future be released
 May all guilty feelings be released
 May all shameful feelings be released
 May all feelings of setback be released
 May all feelings of nothingness be released
 May all feelings of inability be released
 May all feelings of despicableness be released
 May all feelings of fearfulness be released
 May all feelings of oppression be released
 May all feelings of instability be released
 May all feelings of indeterminacy be released
 May all feelings of isolation be released
 May the pains of not being loved be released
 May the pains of not being understood be released
 May the pains of being rejected be released
 May the pains of being excluded be released
 May the pains of being looked down upon be released
 May the pains of being treated with hostility be released
 May the pains of being compared with others be released

May all angers be released
 May all depressions be released
 May all grievances be released
 May all resentments be released
 May all jealousies be released
 May all senses of repulsion be released
 May all hard feelings be released
 May all senses of loss be released
 May all fears be released
 May all feelings of reproving oneself be released
 May all guilty conscience be released
 May all feelings of frailty be released
 May the fear to life be released
 May the fear of love be released
 May all senses of shame and guilt be released
 May all feelings of inferiority complex be released
 May all feelings of at a loss be released
 May all feelings of distress be released
 May all senses of deficiency be released
 May all feelings of guilt be released
 May all feelings of helplessness be released
 May all feelings of suffocation be released
 May all feelings of heaviness be released
 May all feelings of insecurity be released
 May all feelings of worthlessness be released
 May the pains of not being accepted be released
 May the pains of not being forgiven be released
 May the pains of being criticized be released
 May the pains of being pushed aside be released
 May the pains of being refused be released
 May the pains of being isolated be released
 May the pains of being neglected be released

May the pains of being doubted be released
May the pains of being bullied be released
May the inexpressible pains be released

May the pains of being insulted be released

May the pains of being cheated be released
May the pains of being slandered be released
May the pains of being misunderstood be released

May the consciousnesses of all those victims be released
May the consciousnesses of all those who have been treated unfairly be released
May the consciousnesses of all those being harmed be released
May the consciousnesses of all those who have been treated inequitably be released
May the consciousnesses of not measuring up to standards be released
May the consciousnesses of deficiencies be released

May all the negative energies accumulated during the different stages: while one was in the embryo stage, in the process of giving birth, at the moment of being born, as a baby, at the infant stage, at the childhood stage, at the adolescent stage, upon which one was not being able to control the situations, unable to accept and express oneself, thus producing anger and grief, all to be released! **They have all been released by now!**

I release all the past feelings of being at a loss due to (somebody, some issue or something), I let go of them.

I release all the worries for the future (somebody or some issue), I let go of them.

I truly bless (someone who has made me suffered or has harmed me) , I let go of them.

May I release all feelings of both attacks and defenses.

May I release all feelings of all the self-imposed limitations.

May all feelings of inferiority be released.

May the pains of being deserted be released
May the pains of being oppressed be released
May the pains of not being able to be oneself be released

May the pains of not being fairly treated be released

May the pains of being betrayed be released
May the pains of being labeled be released
May the pains of being innocent, yet treated unfairly and unjustly be released

May the negative memory, negative energy and negative consciousness of each and every cell in my body be released.

May the fears of the past, the present and the future be released.

May I open up my heart to accept all the truth, goodness and beauty of all things in this world!

After this confession, all of my stupidity, ignorance and wrongdoings have all been released!

All of them have now been released! The nature of the “mind” has been restored to its normality and purity! The potential has already been arisen!

May the Buddha guide me! And enable me to give rise to the bright light of the nature of “Awareness”!

May this purity be extended to all things such that all of us, together with all sentient beings, would obtain this purity. May this perfection and goodness flourish!

The Highest Objectives That Can Be Achieved By Prayers

Can

Request for
worldly desires

Rebirths in
virtuous realms

Since the training on one’s “mental strength” by “prayers” is limited, it will not last forever even if one is successful, as the merits would vanish after they have exhausted.

Cannot

Be free from the
tractional forces
of the “cycle of
karmic existence”

Attainment of
“Buddhahood”

The Essence of Teachings: Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness (18)

By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye

Transcribed by To Sau-chu and Byron K.K. Yiu

(Lecture delivered : July 10, 2003)

Excerpt of Last Chapter

The story of the Monkey King has a special meaning to us Buddhists: why are we being trapped by the “Six Realms” in the “cycle of karmic existence” (“[Samsara](#)”) ? And why do we only have limited capabilities? The story can help to give us an answer: all these so-called “[limitations and boundaries](#)” are, in fact, [all fabricated by our own minds](#)! Even though we are fully aware of the reason behind it, and then start practicing on our Dharma Practice, we may still not being able to have a full “Realization” on the state of “[Emptiness](#)”.

Attitudes and Ways of Our Dharma Practice

If you are fortunate enough to have an experienced teacher to guide you, and then if you know how to apply the practices, and furthermore, if you are of a good capacity, then you may be able to derive the following good results:

The first effect will be that a lot of our grasping can soon be loosen up, and so our hearts and minds will become more relaxed, resulting in the diminishing of one’s sufferings in life. This

is because one can start to see the “reality” of things, with much deeper levels of meanings behind them, and not just the superficial meanings on the surface of things.

Through applying such an [awareness](#) in one’s daily living, it can help one to relax and loosen up one’s own grasping, resulting in the further loosening of the limitations on one’s mental capacity. In this way, it will help to slowly nurture our “[wisdom](#)”, and to develop it more and more.

With the increase in wisdom, one will then be able to know how to use one’s scarce resources ([such as: this precious human life, time and efforts, etc.](#)) more wisely and effectively, to engage oneself more in “good deeds”, while trying to refrain from the “bad deeds”.

In this way, a “[virtuous cycle](#)” will slowly emerge, so that one will further increase one’s own “good karmas” while reducing, or even to cease, one’s “bad karmas”. All these efforts and practices will need one’s wisdom in order to make it to become a reality!

Hence, if we can really practice the Dharma in such a concrete and solid way, it can slowly help us to finally “gain liberation from Samsara” in this present life, especially with those Dharma practices of “[Vajrayana](#)”, but, of course, this

will exclude all those who only superstitiously believe in blessings and miraculous powers, but without having put them into solid and genuine practice.

The reason is simply because one did not put one's solid and genuine practice of the Holy Dharma as one's main focus, but has, instead, been side-tracked into other worldly concerns, such as fame, wealth and glory. As a result, this will only increase the limitations of one's thinking patterns, resulting in one's further trappings in this "cycle of karmic existence" ("[Samsara](#)" in Sanskrit).

On the other hand, all those who genuinely put the Holy Dharma into concrete and solid practice, and will continue to do so diligently, will find themselves to be able to become liberated from this "cycle of karmic existence". Even after their liberation from this "cycle of karmic existence", either in the [Buddha-field](#) or in the [Pure-land](#), they will continually, through the various paths and stages, and will eventually attain the "complete and perfect enlightenment" of [Buddhahood](#), as have been accomplished by countless Buddhas before. ([Please refer to the articles on the "Spiritual Advice for Dharma Practitioners of this Degenerate Age - Parts 1 & 2", by His Holiness Chadrak Gyendun Rinpoche in Issues 22 & 23 of the "Lake of Lotus"](#)).

Obstacles & Difficulties Encountered During Dharma Practice

However, there are certain major obstacles and difficulties that we may encounter in-between the different stages of "awareness", on the one hand, and also those encountered at the different stages of "realization", on the other hand.

The first obstacle and difficulty is this: due to one's own grasping on the "puzzled meanings" of the wordings in the Buddhist scriptures, while neglecting the important spiritual experiences in the actual practices of the Holy Dharma, one would then be easily led astray and trapped into the "Ivory Tower" of our own imaginations by "intellectualism and conceptualization".

The second obstacle and difficulty is this: the restless and endless disputes among people, without a correct and "right outlet" for the right answers, will only block the revelation of one's own wisdom, and can thus easily lead oneself into wrong detours, or even other arrays, and will again be lost in the way.

The "[mere talk of eating will not satisfy hunger](#)", which is a very common fault for Dharma practice, and so one must try to avoid in having one's Dharma practice to become just purely an academic subject for study.

Hence, from the very beginning, two necessary distinctions need to be made here:

Firstly, what are the differences between "[Learning about the Buddhist Teachings](#)" and the "[Buddhist Studies](#)". Our main objective in learning about the Buddhist teachings is to become liberated from Samsara, and so with the study of it, we need to genuinely put the Holy Dharma into practice in order to gain liberation from Samsara.

On the other hand, the "Buddhist Studies" mainly pertain to a more academic study and research on the subject matters of the Buddhist philosophy and its religious practices. Hence, a Buddhist scholar's attitude towards the Dharma will be quite different from a Buddhist Dharma practitioner, which will be reflected in one's actual behaviors when studying about Buddhism.

Secondly, there is the distinction between the "[Inner Ordinary Person](#)" and the "[Outer Ordinary Person](#)". For the latter case, this can be any person in society, including those who do not have any religious belief at all. In this way, one will approach and study Buddhism purely from an academic perspective, without having any faith or belief in it, and so one will not have to take refuge from the "Three Jewels". On the other hand, for the former case, one has a strong faith in Buddhism and so approaches it by taking refuge, and then try to put and merge the Holy Dharma into one's concrete and genuine practice, hoping that one will be able to attain the goal of "liberation from Samsara"..... ([To be Continued](#))

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.

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