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What is the Second Stage of Approaching Death?

What is the "Fundamental Life Education" that Cannot be Omitted?

"Mind-Training" From the Core and Foundational Basis of One's "Awareness"

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# The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (41)

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

- **What is the Second Stage of Approaching Death?**
- **What is the “Fundamental Life Education” that Cannot be Omitted?**

## 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.

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? Under what circumstances would the normal rebirth of a dying person be negatively encumbered? Is there any way to help a deceased person to avert sufferings and elevate to a better place of rebirth?

Human beings have four kinds of conditions of consciousness ([please refer to the article “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)) as follows:

1. **Beta  $\beta$  waves** – the “conscious condition” of daily living;
2. **Alpha  $\alpha$  waves** – the relaxed “consciousness condition”, such as in entering into the elementary stage of ‘visualization”, or at the first stage of “mental concentration”; or the condition when the “spiritual body” is **slowly separating** from the “physical body”;
3. **Theta  $\theta$  waves** – the peaceful “conscious condition” of having entered into higher levels of “visualization”, or at the deeper levels of “mental concentration”;
4. **Delta  $\delta$  waves** – slow “conscious condition” of not having any dreams, and in a stage of slow-wave deep sleep.

In fact, how does the arising of the different stages in approaching death and its “transformation of consciousness” affect the thoughts and behaviors of dying patients? What are their relationships with the “scenes at the moment of death”? ([Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 29 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)) How should the family and kin and kith who take care of the dying patients respond to the “transformation of consciousness” and change of “scenes at the moment of death” for guiding the emotions and spiritual direction of the dying patients? Could the “transformation of consciousness” and the change of “scenes at the moment of death” be complementary to each other? Furthermore, the **“disintegration of the Four Elements”**



of the physical body **also affects** the “transformation of consciousness”, as well as on the change of the “scenes at the moment of death”. Hence, how should one support and provide guidance to a dying patient in order to **reduce or resolve** the predicament from these problems?

## What is the Ultimate Assistance in the First Stage of Approaching Death?

The care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors should perform the following steps when a dying person is **approaching the “first stage of death”**:

1. Accepting and Understanding (please refer to Issue 30 of the "Lake of Lotus");
2. Listening and Observing (please refer to Issue 30 of the "Lake of Lotus");
3. Analyzing and Adopting (please refer to Issues 31, 32 and 33 of the "Lake of Lotus");
4. Leading Out and Guiding In (please refer to Issue 34 of the "Lake of Lotus");
5. Accompanying with Unspoken Consensus (please refer to Issues 35-40 of the "Lake of Lotus").

## What is the Second Stage of Approaching Death?

In fact, when will **the first stage of approaching death** be over? It ends when **the second stage of approaching death** starts. Then, how to judge when the second stage of approaching death has actually started? This is exactly the most important piece of knowledge that the kin and kith, as well as the professional counselors, who give care to dying persons must have to know about.

When a dying person tells you: “I feel like drifting.” From this statement, it denotes that **the second stage of approaching death** has quietly stepped in already.

At this particular moment, the **internal changes** of the dying person start entering into the dissolution of the physical system, with the “spiritual body” on the edge of departing from its “physical body”. The “consciousness” of the dying person, like many other near-death experiencers, often exists outside of the physical body.

The case of “**out-of-body**” gradually happens more frequently to the dying person, and the “consciousness” wanders around outside of the body. This kind of situation sometimes happens when the dying person is unconscious, while at other times, this happens when the person is quite awake. Therefore, relatives and friends who give care to the dying patient will sometimes find that the dying person seems to be talking to some invisible persons; or sometimes the dying person seems to be staring at somewhere up in the air and trying to grasp onto something; or sometimes the dying person concentrates his/her attention upon a white wall.

When such kinds of situations occurred, the emotions of the dying person may likely have the following changes:

1. **Positive and Gleeful** – The dying person may tell the relatives that he/she has seen deceased kin(s) for whom he/she has missed for so long, and hence he/she is **so pleased** about that. Sometimes, the dying person describes some strange persons and strange phenomena, such as unusual kind of music that seems to have come from the heavens, thus he/she can forecast his/her own ending time and the future place that one will be scheduled to go to. Since the dying person is so satisfied about the “foreseen future place of lodging” out of his/her expectation, he/she is no longer afraid of death, and even **positively await** for this moment to come. The dying person, who initially felt restless and anxious about his/her illness and death, now becomes more relaxed and so the situation has improved.
2. **Panic and Hateful** – The dying person may tell the relatives who offered their cares that he/

she has seen deceased persons for whom he/she has hated, as he/she has been accused or threatened by them before. He/she feels **panic and hateful** towards them. Sometimes, the dying person describes the visions of strange people and strange phenomena, such as some unusually horrible sounds. As such, he/she can foretell the time of one's ending and where he/her would go to. Since the dying person feels disgusted and resistant towards the "foreseen future place of lodging", he/she becomes fearful about death and even wants to try by all means to avert the final moment. For instance, he/she may seek for the support of "spiritual powers" from cults with beliefs in deities and demons, or with genuine Buddhists, or other religious bodies. However, due to the fear of illness and death, the dying person's anxiety and unrest become more serious, and may even develop into **hysteria**.

3. **Lost and Confused** – The dying person may not want to tell the relatives anything, and merely murmurs to himself/herself with a bunch of speech which are not understandable. Occurrence of such situation is due to the separation of the carrier of emotions from the physical body. **The carrier of emotions is one of the energy carriers of human beings, and is one kind of electromagnetic fields of the "consciousness"**. When the physical body is about to dissolve, the carrier which contains either **negative** energies of 'greed-anger-ignorance', or **positive** energies of 'mercy-wisdom', would be loosened, decomposed and projected outwards. People who lack of relevant training while alive, and with immense negative energies of greed-anger-ignorance, will be affected by this sudden burst of these negative energies of 'greed-anger-ignorance' which have been suppressed deep down inside one's own mind. As such, the dying person may **end up in a mood of depression**. When the inferior images and emotions continue to show up, the dying person would then become **lost and confused**.

4. **Criticism and Attack** – If the dying person is bad in temper, and with intense negative energies of greed-anger-ignorance, when the carrier of emotions becomes loosened, the person may turn into a chattering grumbler, a critic, and even a person who may launch assaults.

Since the dying person may exhibit the aforesaid varieties of emotional changes, there may be more than one kind of emotional changes at the same time, and so the relatives and professional counselors who take care of the patient have to further understand what is the **ultimate assistance in the second stage of approaching death?**

## What is the "Fundamental Life Education" that Cannot be Omitted?

### Case 46

A middle-age daughter who is single so tells about the elegy of her life:

"I had been through a series of losses, which are the most serious ones in my life, a few years ago. Many lives seemed to have been lost just overnight, including my mother, father, friends and the most beloved girl puppy. The ultimate lesson that I learnt seemed to be consistent in nature: **Life is impermanent, and cannot be predicted**.

At the age of 37, my mother who was at her 58 used a period of three months to educate me that death is scary. Then, at the age of 38, my father took two days to tell me that death comes without any sound and trace. Keeping company with my parents until their ends arrived makes me endure the most unbearable agony in my life. If the middle age of one's life is the best moment to restore one's relationships with one's parents, I believe that I am not one of them. On the other hand, **if the children can stand up and be**



released from the binding of their parents' influence, several years after their parents have passed away, then I believe that I am one of them.

I have appeared to be too exhausted that my energy was not enough when taking care of my mother at the end of her life. My mother had a personality of being nonsensical and liked to make jokes. However, during the last three months of her life, she became quite speechless. During the period of two months, we had spoken for not more than ten sentences.

As according to the book **“On Death and Dying”** by the famous psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, emotional responses of patients of terminal diseases can be classified into five stages (please refer to the article on **“The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences”** in Issue 39 of the **“Lake of Lotus”**). My mother had obviously only developed into the fourth stage of ‘depression’, and had not reached the fifth stage of ‘acceptance’. She has **left in depression** and never reached the fifth stage. As her daughter, I was stuck in-between the second and third stages of ‘anger and bargaining’, and could not let go of myself.

I sought for resolutions from religious studies, spiritual healings, psychological treatments, dream analysis, and so on. I kept on trying to dedicate the merits for my mother, and prayed that my mother could be reborn into the Western Pure-land of Happiness. I am not sure whether it was for this reason that my father had suffered for another two days while facing death as another **trial in my life** for me to compensate for my fault of not taking good care of my mother.

If I can do it again, will I be able to take care of my mother more appropriately and with better care, so that she would not have **passed away in depression?** ”

This piece of elegy has thoroughly elaborated on the kind of difficulties, helplessness and sorrows when taking care of dying persons. The suffering will last for years after years, till the end of one's life. The pain lies in the fact that it **“cannot be re-done and cannot be compensated”**. Therefore, learning how to take care of dying patients who are going through the various stages of death is, indeed, **the most “fundamental life education” that cannot be omitted.....(To be Continued)**

## Remarks:

1. 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 of the **“Lake of Lotus”**.
2. The newly-released book on **“The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (2) – The Key Points at the Moment of Death and the Essential Revelations of the Tibetan Book of the Dead”** has been published. Its contents include the articles on **“The Meaning of the Near-Death Experiences”** from Issues 11 to 20 of the **“Lake of Lotus”**.
3. The newly-released book on **“The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (3) – The Various Ways of Realization and Rescue of Dying Kith and Kin”** has been published. Its contents include the articles on **“The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences”** from Issues 21 to 30 of the **“Lake of Lotus”**.

# **The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (41) The Mind-Training Episode (4)**

By Vajra Master Pema Lhadren  
Translated by Fong Wei

- **"Mind-Training" From the Core and Foundational Basis of One's "Awareness"**
- **How Could One be Able to Practise and Achieve the Superior Nature of One's Mind on "Equal-Abiding" during "Meditation"?**

## **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 “Mind-Training Episode”

The focus of “mind-training” is on how to “visualize one’s mind”. Starting from Issue No.38 of the “Lake of Lotus”, the various articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” have clearly described those who are able to “visualize the mind” could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain “Buddhahood”, and is the important guideline in the “**Mahāyāna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**”. Then comes the question as to how to “visualize one’s mind”? Whether it will be fine by just “visualizing” oneself as the Buddha or the “deity”?

What are the contents and procedures of one’s “Visualization”? In modern terminology, it is the question of how to proceed with the programming of one’s “visualization” in order to be most effective? **There are countless and endless methods of “visualization”, and so which kinds of them are correct? To which levels of “visualization” do they belong? What kind of situations are they specifically for? How are their effectiveness being demonstrated? Are there any opposing effects, or side effects?** A series of such questions are the “important points for consideration” in choosing one’s method of “mental visualization” (please refer to the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues 38 to 40 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

In the “**Mahāyāna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the due process and conditions of “Mental Visualization”. Hence, this Sutra can be said to be a **pivotal point and convergence of all kinds of “mental visualization” methods**, and is also the **foundational base** for all the Dharma practices which can help all sentient beings to **swiftly attain “Buddhahood”**.



Then what actually are the grading/levels, procedures and conditions for these methods of “mental visualization” in Dharma practices? Can one jump some of the steps in these practices? Before further explanations are given, let us first have a look at the **“Mahāyāna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”** to see how the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had generally classified the “mental visualization” methods, **from shallow to deep, and from the foundational basis to progressive elevations** :

1. Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude (please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 40 of the “Lake of Lotus”)
2. Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires
3. Averting the Delusive Mind
4. Visualization of Entry into the Holy Wisdom
5. Visualization Method of the Mind Ground
6. Mental Visualization on the Bodhicitta
7. Visualization on the Three Great Secret Dharmas

**"Mind-Training" From the Core and Foundational Basis of One's "Awareness"**

In the **“Mahāyāna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the “Mental Visualization” method for the **“Mind Ground Visualization on the Requit of the Four Kinds of Gratitude”**. On the face of it, such kind of “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude” appears to be of a high degree of difficulty. Yet, **in terms of meanings and principles, it is indeed extremely deep and far-reaching**. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni instructed that “Even though one may make offerings to one’s parents by the cutting of one’s own flesh thrice a day, this is still not enough for one to repay the great kindness and gratitude that owed to their parents for just one single day.” The last chapter has already discussed **the abstruse meanings and principles of one’s Dharma practice** relating to it.

In view of the high degree of difficulty, the five hundred elders who were present at that time in hearing the Lord Buddha’s preaching all said in unison that “It is very difficult (to practise)!” but then the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this is a must. So **are there any other solutions?** Before further solutions are quoted, let us first look at how, apart from the “Filial Gratitude to Parents”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had preached on the other three of “the four kinds of Gratitude”, namely: the “Gratitude to all Sentient Beings, Gratitude to the King, and Gratitude to the Three Jewels”, and see whether they are also equally difficult to be repaid?

Volume Two on the Requit of Gratitude Section No.2 [0297a07] of the **“Mahāyāna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”** mentions the following passage (in modern terminologies): “For those virtuous people with good convictions and good minds, they should understand that all sentient beings do have great gratitude and kindness to us. It is because from time immemorial, all sentient beings should have been born in the **“viviparous” form** within the five life-paths (except for the life-path of **“metaplasia” form**), revolving in the cycle of karmic existence of rebirths for more than hundreds and thousands of kalpas. (A **“kalpa”** refers to a period of time. A **“small kalpa”** is equal to the time required for a universe to go through the process of **“formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”**. **Twenty “small kalpas”** are equal to one **“medium kalpa”** and **four “medium kalpas”** to one **“big kalpa”**.) In many of these lifetimes, each and every sentient being and us have been parents **to each another**. Because of this inter-related and mutual parenthood of one another, all men are therefore (our) kind-hearted fathers, and all women are (our) mothers with compassionate hearts (including one’s own self). In many of the past lifetimes, they had offered great gratitude and kindness to one another, which were no different from the same kind of gratitude and kindness due to one’s parents in the present life. While **a lot of these long-existing gratitude and kindness in the past have yet to be repaid**, our ignorance and foolishness have



now caused us to rebel against our parents, and even to generate resentment among one another as a result of our attachment. Why is it so? It is because our foolish “ignorance” has clouded and blocked the bright wisdom and supernatural powers that we have had from time immemorial, resulting in our inability to understand and know clearly that these sentient beings have once been our parents, with whom there ought to be mutual offerings, and requital, of gratitude among one another. Any **failure in the offering of and requital of gratitude will be considered as non-filial**. Because of all these kinds of “causes” and “conditions”, all sentient beings, regardless of what types/forms (**they are**) and at what times, should have offered us great gratitude and kindness. As there are **far too many of them and also hard to understand**, it is therefore **very difficult for the requital to be made in actual terms**. This kind of **fact** is known as the “Gratitude to all Sentient Beings”.

In the course of Dharma practice, one is supposed to practise one’s “**Intrinsic Nature/Awareness**” so that the **potentials** in one’s “Intrinsic Nature/Awareness” could be realized, thus facilitating us to get liberated from the bondages in the cycle of karmic existence. One of the characteristics of the “Intrinsic Nature/Awareness” is “endless mercy and compassion”, that is the so-called “**Great Mercy with No Affiliation, Great Compassion with Common Ground**” in the “**Buddhist Sutras**”. “**Bodhi**” represents “Awareness, the Buddha Nature”. The “endless mercy and compassion” that embrace **wisdom and the ability of awareness** is known as the “**Bodhicitta**”. Hence, in order to arouse the potentials in one’s “Intrinsic Nature/Awareness” **swiftly** in the course of one’s Dharma practice, one of the most **fundamental and practically effective** methods is to treat all sentient beings with an “endless kind and loving heart”. The practising of one’s “Intrinsic Nature/Awareness” right from its **core and foundational basis** will, of course, be the **fastest method and this is exactly where the key to one’s “mind-training” lies**.

In **reality and under circumstantial constraints**, all sentient beings, irrespective of their types/forms and at whatever times, are having great gratitude and kindness upon us, and these are the **debts owed by us that have not yet been repaid, which is a kind of recessive emotional attachment**. This kind of **indebted and emotional** tractional force is a kind of strong force and energy that pulls and obstructs us from getting liberated from the bondages of the cycle of karmic existence. It seems that it is **difficult to clear up all the debts**, even though one is ready to repay the gratitude seriously. That is why the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had remarked that this is, indeed, “truly difficult to be repaid”.

### **How Could One be Able to Practise and Achieve the Superior Nature of One’s Mind on "Equal-Abiding" during "Meditation"?**

To untie a bell needs the same person who **fastens it in the first place**. Given that all sentient beings had equally offered their great kindness and gratitude to us, we should, in our **mentality** and for the truth of the facts, treat all sentient beings equally with the same kind of **benevolent and filial treatments, regardless of** whether they are/were our parents in **the present, or in the past**, lifetime(s). If one is able to do so, then several effects will appear as follows:

1. **The practice on the superior nature of one’s mind on “Equal-Abiding” during “Meditation” – the offering of and requital of gratitude with equal treatments for all sentient beings (“Equanimity” here means the “Immeasurable Mind of Non-Attachment”). Do not care about how**



much each and every sentient being has actually owed to us in numerous past lifetimes, and how much I still owe them, as no one is able to count them all and there is no such a need to do so. It is because even **if one can quantify them at all, it would mean that one's "self-attachment" still continues**, and as such, how could one be able to become liberated from those bondages of the cycle of karmic existence? Regardless of whether it is you who owe him or it is he/she who owes you, so long as there is such "a tail that was left behind", it would mean that there is still "a piece of rope left behind" to tie yourself up. In order to **restore freedom in one's own "mind"**, and to recover the potentials in one's "Intrinsic Nature/Awareness", it is most essential for one to adopt an "abandoned mind" for equal treatments **(of all sentient beings)**. It is only when one **makes no demands (requests) and not caring** about whether all sentient beings would requite their gratitude towards me, then this piece of "rope of greedy attachment" would then be able to "break in one's **mind**". This **tractional force** of both gratitude and resentments that has been generated from "the kindness and grievances as a result of the indebted gratitude owed to me" in countless past lifetimes **will accordingly be dissolved and destroyed**. This is greatly beneficial to one's both "mind-training" and "Dharma practice". What still remains by now is the existence of the tractional force from "the gratitude that I owe to all sentient beings" which has yet to be repaid. If one can do it **with one's "utmost efforts, in the offering of and requital of gratitude, with equal treatments for all"**, then a state of "being repaid, with everything being equal" would appear in the nature of one's mind, which is in a **load-free, balanced and stable** condition. This would definitely be of a decisive help to one's practice on **the superior nature of one's mind on the "Equal-Abiding" during "Meditation"**. If one could further incorporate one's mind in expressing praises and "joys for others", one would then be able to put the **"Four**

**Immeasurables of Mercy, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity"** into actual practice in one's daily living. This kind of **behavioural programming**, together with the **echoing of the nature of one's mind**, will arouse **multiplying effects on the virtuous "mental strength"**, allowing one's "karmic retributions" to enter into an orbit of the **"virtuous cycle"** which will be most helpful for one's Dharma practice. It also plays an important role in up-keeping a stable balance in the "nature of one's mind" during Dharma practice, thus enabling Dharma practitioners not to lose one's balance easily, nor losing one's mental concentration, nor going towards a dead end, and not getting obsessed and be possessed by evil elements, and so on. This is indeed, an **indispensable part of one's "mind training"**. If you are unable to treat those who have offered gratitude to you in an equal manner, how would others expect you to be able to treat others equally? How could one be able to practise and achieve the superior nature of one's mind on "Equal-Abiding" during "Meditation"?

2. **Reduction of obstacles and barriers** – Owing a debt **(of gratitude)** is a kind of **"negative energy"** that will arouse the multiplications of the vicious "mental strength" which will in turn lead to one's entry into the orbit of the **"vicious cycle"**, causing obstacles and barriers to arise. In order to ensure that one's Dharma practices will be smooth without any obstacles, one needs to reduce one's karmic debts by repaying the gratitude and kindness of others, and in so doing, it will be conducive to one's Dharma practices. It **will be non-filial if one does not offer and requite the gratitude**. Although it is extremely difficult to make requital, yet so long as "one's debts are in the process of being cleared and repaid", this would mean that "one's obstacles and barriers are also in the process of being reduced". The key point is: **"the life-long debts are to be repaid by the training of one's mind"**. When the nature of one's mind is treating the three entities of "the



Mind, the Buddhas, the sentient beings” on an equal basis without any differences, then the issue of “owing or not owing” (of debts) would no longer exist. The kind of “negative energy” that has long been existing in our minds will also be cleared away gradually, giving rise to an “equal” kind of wisdom known as the “Wisdom of Equality”. Therefore, the reasons for not evading or ignoring the requital of the “Gratitude to all Sentient Beings” are that such a requital would have very deep and far-reaching meanings and effects. It can repay the “Gratitude to all Sentient Beings”, whilst at the same time, and also the requitting of one’s “Filial Gratitude to Parents”, all of which will give rise to one’s achievement of wisdom.

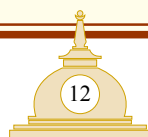
3. **Inducement of one’s “Bodhi”** – We need to be thankful and grateful to all sentient beings simply because, in actual facts, we have indeed received their kindness and gratitude. Therefore, “thanksgiving” is the thing that we should do. When a Dharma practitioner treats everybody and every thing with a “grateful heart”, it will make one’s “mind” to readily focus on “joy and gratitude”, such that one’s “Nature of the Mind”

will become soft and wide enough to carry and accommodate everything. It will also induce all the best things “internally”, including wisdom and “awareness, enlightenment, the Buddha Nature”, which are extremely important to one’s Dharma practices, especially on one’s “mind-training”. Being able to “induce one’s Bodhi” is equivalent to being able to induce one’s “awareness, enlightenment, the Buddha Nature” and is, indeed, the shortcut to one’s “attainment of Buddhahood”.

Yet the methods for the requital of gratitude, as cited in the text of the Sutra, are of very high degree of difficulty! Is it really necessary for one to cut one’s own flesh in order to repay for the kindness of others? Will it form a kind of “attached mind” that will affect one’s Dharma practice on “Emptiness”? How does one practise this “Mental Visualization on the Requital of Gratitude”? The five hundred elders had all said that “It is very difficult (to practise)!”), but then the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this is a must. So, are there any other solutions? What about the other six methods on one’s “Mind-Training”?.....  
.....(To be Continued)

## Notes:

1. The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (1)” has already been published. The content includes the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues No. 1 to 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”.
2. The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (2) - Seven Methods of Strengthening One’s Mind to Counteract Adversities” has already been published. The content includes the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues No. 11 to 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”.
3. The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (3) - One of the Pivotal Points in Practising the Holy Dharma: The Mysteries and Usage of the Mantras and Sounds” has already been published. The content includes the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues No. 21 to 30 of the “Lake of Lotus”.





The Essence of Teachings:

# Everything Comes from *the Mind* (13)

By **Vajra Master Pema Lhadren**  
Translated by Various Disciples

## Excerpt of Last Chapter

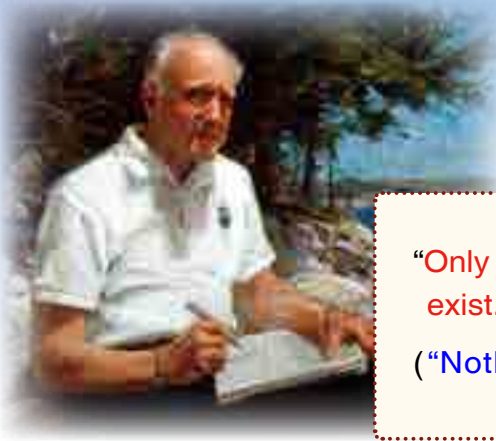
The “**Avatamsaka Sutra**” mentions that “everything comes from the mind”. So, in order to explain that “**everything comes from the mind**”, we have to talk about the importance of “**mental strength**”. Since the “cycle of karmic existence” composes of strong “tractional forces”, which would subject all of us to its bondages, to be drawn into, and under the control of, the tractional forces of the “**Law of Cause and Effect**”. So, the kind of force we called “**mental strength**” is the only kind of force that can counteract the “tractional forces of the cycle of karmic existence”, and can thus help us to be released and be “liberated from reincarnations”.

Since this kind of force is coming from the function of one’s own “**mind**”, and that is why it is called the “**mental strength**”, and is also a sign of “**everything comes from the mind**”. Furthermore, the “tractional forces of the cycle of karmic existence” are, in fact, originated from the combinations and permutations of countless “**mental strengths**”, thus constructing a grand design and blueprint of “**everything comes from the mind**”, and also form the “**Law of Cause and Effect**”.

For what scientists to be recognized as the “Law of Cause and Effect”, the so-called “**Cause**” is one’s “**Observation**”. The “energies” coming from one’s “**sight**” and “**mental strength**” will bring about changes in the **observed** electron. This is a mutual “interactions of tractional forces”, and this is the “**Cause**”.

Then, what is the “**Effect**”? The “**thing**” that is being observed by you will **manifest itself in a certain shape**; or else the “**thing**” that is being observed by you, due to the energy that was added by one’s “**mental strength**”, will change its original “**speed**”, “**form**”, and “**direction**”, and all these are the “**Effects**”. Thus, this is recognized by the scientists as the “**Law of Cause and Effect**”. ([Please refer to the article on “Everything Comes From the Mind” in Issue 36 of the “Lake of Lotus”.](#))





“Only when something is put under observation, it will then exist. If there is no observation, the matter will not exist”.

(“Nothing exists until it is observed.” by **John A. Wheeler**)

## The Inconceivable "Law of Karma"

Because of the existence of this “Law of Karma”, it makes the behaviours of all sentient beings: **the behaviours of their bodily movements, the behaviours of their speech activities, and the behaviours of their mental activities and thinking patterns** to be under its impact, and thus brought about all kinds of consequences. **These kinds of “tractional functions” in bringing about the various effects and “consequences”** are known as the “karmic forces” in the [Buddhist teachings](#).

This type of “karma” will further give rise to different complexities in its next step. The kind of situation is just like the kind of “tractional forces” that exist amongst the various galaxies in the whole universe which operates naturally, and is thus considered as a **“natural phenomenon”**. There is no such a person as the “Final Judge” or the “Creator”. The “karmas” of all “sentient beings” is such kind of **“entangled tractional forces” that are intertwined** with each other and thus **unclear** to the eyes of all sentient beings.

The Lord Buddha had mentioned before that **“the karmic force is inconceivable”**. “Karma” works beyond our imaginations. One could hardly think of the complexities of karma, and that is why it is

beyond our further discussions, simply because it is so **extremely complicated** that is well beyond our understanding and comprehension.

It would be much easier for us to understand when this karma is applied in a “one-to-one” situation, where the karmas are only drawn to, and from, each other. Take the example that you have killed me, and so I would try to find you in order to take my revenge. Thus, in this way, we will continue to be entangled together. Such **“tractional forces”** would have been submerged in the depths of the **“minds”** of all sentient beings and would not go away. When these meet with the suitable **“causes and conditions”**, the **“effects”** will immediately appear. Just like what the scientists had said: “when it meets with the ‘cause and condition’, it will start to function”. The [Buddhist teachings](#) called this as the **“karmic retributions”**.



When the “karmas” of many sentient beings continue to be accumulated and intermingled with each other to form these “tractional forces”, it is then known as the “collective karma”. This “collective karma” is the function that is produced through the “minds” of many people. Take for example, when a country goes into war with another country, the kind of hatred that have been gathered from all those people who comprised the country will then be directed against those people who comprised the other country. They will set their minds together and then start off the war to fight against the other country. This is a kind of “collective karma”.

As according to the “Aryasaddharma-Smrtiyupasthana Sutra”: “The minds can create all kinds of karmas. It is due to the minds that will bring out all kinds of effects. Hence, with the numerous workings of the minds, it will give rise to various karmic retributions”. Please pay attention to the Sutra which said that “the mind is responsible for creating all kinds of karmas”. It did not say that the consequences were the outcomes of our bodies, but rather it said that these were due to our “minds” that had committed those acts. It is your mind, indeed, that have committed the acts, regardless of what shape and form of the body that you might have attached to.

“It is due to the minds that will bring out all kinds of effects” is referring to the fact that because of your “mind” which has triggered the “function of the tractional forces”, which would then further lead to some other “effects”. The fact that you had such “karmic retributions” is due to the “function of the tractional forces”, and not because you have been under trial by a judge.

“Hence, the numerous workings of the minds” is referring to the numerous kinds of behaviors that are resulting from the minds. “It will give rise to various karmic retributions” means that such behaviors will give rise to numerous and different kinds of effects, regardless of rewards or punishments. This is just a “natural phenomenon”, just like what the scientists have done in explaining the various phenomena through their experiments. The Buddhist teachings do not mean to scare you or to persuade you to learn about Buddhism. It simply tells you that this is a “natural phenomenon”, a kind of “truth”..... (To Be Continued)





# EPILOGUE

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

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

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