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**The Actual Departure When
Approaching the Fifth Stage of Death**

**The Seemingly Touching, but Filling
With Risks and Variations In Actuality,
Process of Death**

**The Lord Buddha Said That There
Are Four Kinds of "Sangha Jewel".
What Are They? Are Those Dharma
Practitioners Not Undergoing
"Pabbajja" To Be Regarded As The
"Sangha Jewel"?**

**What Are The Real Reasons For The
"Sangha Jewel" To Be Able To Save
And Assist Sentient Beings?**

**What Are The Supernatural Powers in
The Buddha Dharma?**

**Golden Pagoda
at Dambulla,
Sri Lanka**





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The Profound Abstruseness of
Life and Death



The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (45)

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

- The Actual Departure When Approaching the Fifth Stage of Death
- The Seemingly Touching, but Filling With Risks and Variations In Actuality, Process of Death

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 on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)) as follows:

1. **Beta β waves** – the “conscious condition” of daily living;
2. **Alpha α 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 θ waves** – the peaceful “conscious condition” of having entered into higher levels of “visualization”, or at the deeper levels of “mental concentration”;
4. **Delta δ 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").

The General Change of the dying persons’ Emotions (Please refer back to Issue 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

What is the Ultimate Assistance in the Second Stage of Approaching Death? (Please refer back to Issue 42 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

The Secret of “Flash-back” During the Third Stage of Approaching Death (Please refer back to Issue 43 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Various Adventures While Progressing towards the Fourth Stage of Death (Please refer back to Issue 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



The Actual Departure When Approaching the Fifth Stage of Death



Astrological Diagram of Tibetan Buddhists

There are no obvious distinction between the fourth stage and the fifth stage of death, especially when a dying person enters into the fourth stage whose body has stopped its responses to outer stimulations. Thus when the dying person has entered into these stages, the living people have no way to know the mental conditions of the deceased one from the changes of his/her physical body.

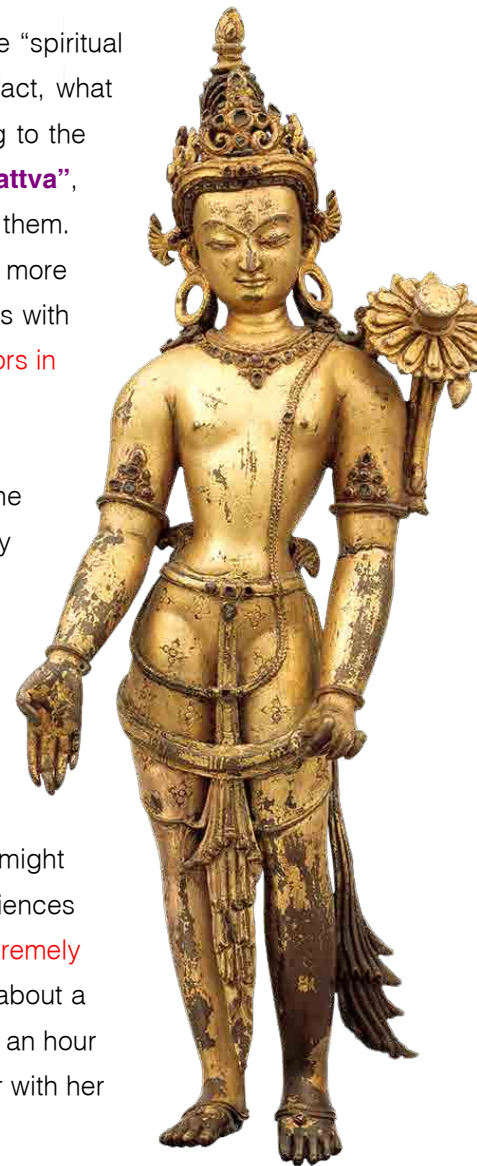
The **main changes** in the fifth stage in that the silver energy cord that is connecting between the “spiritual body” and the physical body would gradually be weakening until it is completely broken. In this stage, even if the “spiritual body” of a dying person has left the physical body, yet if the energy cord is not yet broken, the deceased person’s “spiritual body” could still be able to return to the vicinity of the physical body. Since there might be **some strange phenomena** associated with the process of dissolution of the energy cord, people might misunderstand that there are still some slight traces of life of the dying person.



When the energy cord actually breaks, it is a symbol that the fifth stage is over. The “spiritual body” of the deceased cannot return back to the physical body. As a matter of fact, what would the deceased encounter in this stage? Would they be in danger? According to the Buddhist sutras, for instance, the **“The Sutra on the Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva”**, the deceased persons would see their relatives and friends coming forth to greet them. However, the place where they are going to looks fine superficially, but, in fact, it is more likely to be misfortune rather than auspiciousness. Since those relatives and friends with whom they will meet are **mostly likely to be illusionary images of their Dharma creditors in disguise, coming with vicious wills.**

The famous book about death, **“The Tibetan Book of the Dead”**, also pointed out the risks involved. Furthermore there were descriptions about the light of various intensity of brightness. The light of various intensities may come **from either a good magnetic field or a bad magnetic field**, and the place where the deceased is transmigrating, as well as how the deceased should deal with the situation; all of these are having guidance in this book such that the **“The Tibetan Book of the Dead”** became an important master piece about thanatology.

The scenes experienced by a deceased person in the fourth stage and the fifth stage might have coherent experience sharing with a living person together. The coherent experiences mostly occur in a situation when the deceased and the person alive are **having extremely close contacts, smell of mutual breaths, or telepathic connections**. The following is about a case that a daughter conducted mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for her mother for half an hour but failed. Afterwards, the daughter had gone through the process of death together with her mother. This phenomenon is known as “shared death experience”.



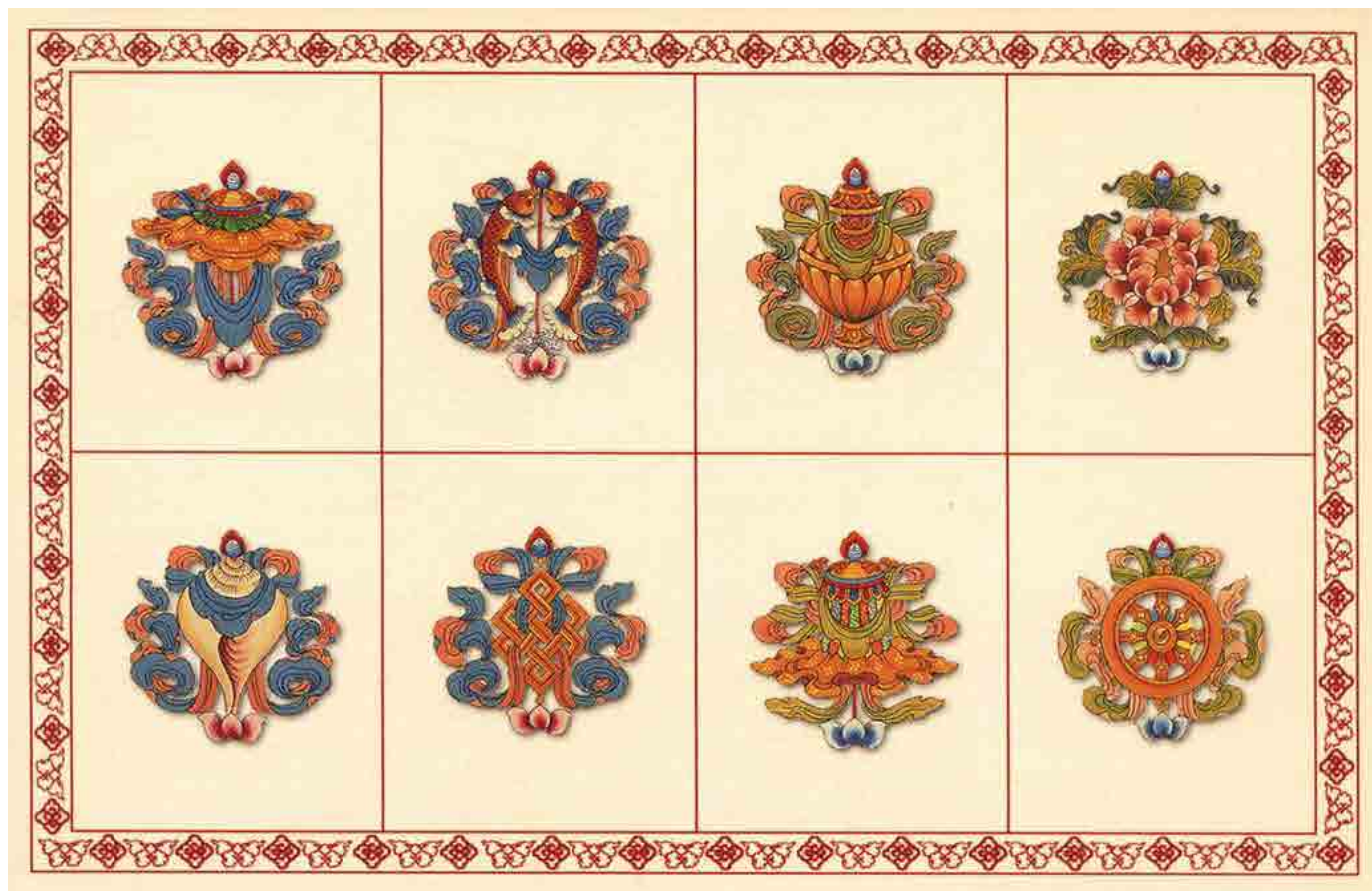
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Case 51 (Taken from Dr. Raymond Moody's descriptions in his book **“Glimpses of Eternity: Sharing a Loved One's Passage From This Life to the Next”**, with true stories about shared death experiences) :

Dr. Jamieson, a professor whom was highly respected by Raymond Moody, told him a story of her past. The following is Dr. Jamieson's narration :

“First, let me tell you that I was not brought up in a religious family”, she said, “but that doesn't mean my parents were objected to religions – perhaps they merely didn't have a special thought. Thus I have never thought of **life after death** because this was never a topic of discussion in my family.”





"No matter what, about two years ago, my mother suddenly suffered from stopping of pulse and heartbeat. It came so sudden and it happened at home. It was such a coincidence that I went to see her at that time. I then performed CPR on her. Can you imagine doing the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation with the mother? It is difficult to do it with a stranger but performing that for one's own mother is hard to think of."

"I kept doing that for a rather long period of time, about 30 minutes. Then I understood no matter how hard I tried, it was futile because she had gone. Then I stopped and caught up with my breath. I was **so fatigue** to move. I could frankly say that I didn't have the feeling of losing my dependence at that time."

All of a sudden, Dr. Jamieson had a feeling as if she had left her body. She realized that she was above both the bodies of her mother and of her own. When she looked down at the whole scene it was as if viewing from the balcony.

"The experience of out of body caught me in surprise. When I tried to find out what's going on, I was startled to see that my mother was in her spiritual body beside mine, swirling together with me."

Dr. Jamieson said farewell calmly to her mother, who was smiling and seemingly happy at that moment, which was obviously very distinct from that of the dead body lying down below. Consequentially, Dr. Jamieson saw other things that amazed her as well.

"I looked to the corner of the room and realized that light pouring out from the **crack of the universe** which resembled



to water flowing out from a broken water pipe. There was a person whom I knew for a long time coming out from the light. He was a friend of my mother who had passed away. There were also some other people but I didn't know them. However, I guessed they were all my mother's friends, although I didn't know them in person."

While Jamieson was staring at all of these, her mother drifted into the beam of light. Dr. Jamieson caught the last glimpse of her mother in touching reunion with her friends. "Subsequently the tube of light, like a lens of a camera, spiraled to shut down and the light disappeared." She said.

Jamieson had no idea about how long all of these lasted. However, when it was over, she found herself being returned back to her physical body and was standing beside her mother's dead body. She felt puzzled about what had just happened.

As the biological daughter, Jamieson certainly hoped that her mother would be happy and blissful after her passing away. Thus the good scene had deceived her easily. After leaving the physical body which suffered the pain, her mother's "spiritual body" resumed freedom, and upon seeing the light and those acquainted relatives and friends coming forth to greet her, there was no reason why she would not go with them happily. And what could she do if not following them? This is, indeed, the biggest problem and difficulty for those who have never studied Buddhist teachings, or who merely have superficial knowledge in Buddhism, or who have never practised "the methods to deal with the varying conditions in the posthumous world so as to attain real liberation" – What can I do?

For those readers who would like to have the answers, please visit the 'Video Series about the Posthumous World' on Youtube. You will find ways to be widely and greatly explored in one's wisdom. The following is the link of such films: <http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist>

.....(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".



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The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (45) **The Mind-Training Episode (8)**

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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 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 **“Mahâyâna 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 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)).

In the **“Mahâyâna 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 basis 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 **“Mahâyâna 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 elevation:



1. **Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issues 40 to 44 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**; and
7. **Visualization on the Three Great Secret Dharmas**.

In the “**Mahâyâna 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”. These four kinds of gratitude and kindness that require one’s requital are:

1. **Filial Gratitude to Parents** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 40 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
2. **Gratitude to all Sentient Beings** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
3. **Gratitude to the King** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 42 of the “Lake of Lotus”); and
4. **Gratitude to the Three Jewels** -
 - (i) **The Gratitude to the “Buddha Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 43 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
 - (ii) **The Gratitude to the “Dharma Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
 - (iii) **The Gratitude to the “Sangha Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 45 of the “Lake of Lotus”).





The Lord Buddha Said That There Are Four Kinds of “Sangha Jewels”. What Are They? Are Those Dharma Practitioners Not Undergoing “Pabbajja” To Be Regarded As The “Sangha Jewel”?



In Volume One on the Preface Section No.1 [0294b22] of the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us (in modern terminologies) as follows: “Because you worldly people ‘do not visualize your own minds’ (that is, not using visualization for mind-training purpose), hence you are subject to the cycle of karmic existence endlessly, drifting and floating in the Ocean of Life and Death. As all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are able ‘to visualize their minds’ (for mind-training), they can thus cross over the Ocean of Life and Death in reaching to the other shore in the Pure Land, either to become liberated from the cycle of karmic existence, or gain entry into the “Dharma Realm”. The Buddhas of the past, present and future worlds all practised their Holy Dharma in this way”.

From this, one can see that "Mental Visualization" is extremely important, and is the **only method** for Dharma practice. With regard to the foundational base of "Mental Visualization", one must first **understand and repay** the four kinds of gratitude and kindness; among which, the **“Sangha Jewel” is the treasure that is most easily accessible to and easy for sentient beings to produce virtuous merits in this worldly realm**. Whether or not sentient beings can benefit quickly from difficulties and miseries, whether or not they can become liberated speedily from the cycle of karmic existence, whether or not they can attain "Buddhahood" swiftly, would all depend on the existence of the "Sangha Jewel". So actually how important is the "Sangha Jewel" to the sentient beings? What actually are the substances of the "Sangha Jewel", and how "deep" and "wide" is it?

In Volume Two on the Requital of Gratitude Section No.2 [0299b11] of the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has made the following explanations (in modern terminologies): [All men with virtuous minds, **there are three kinds of Sanghas in the worldly and other-worldly realms**, namely:



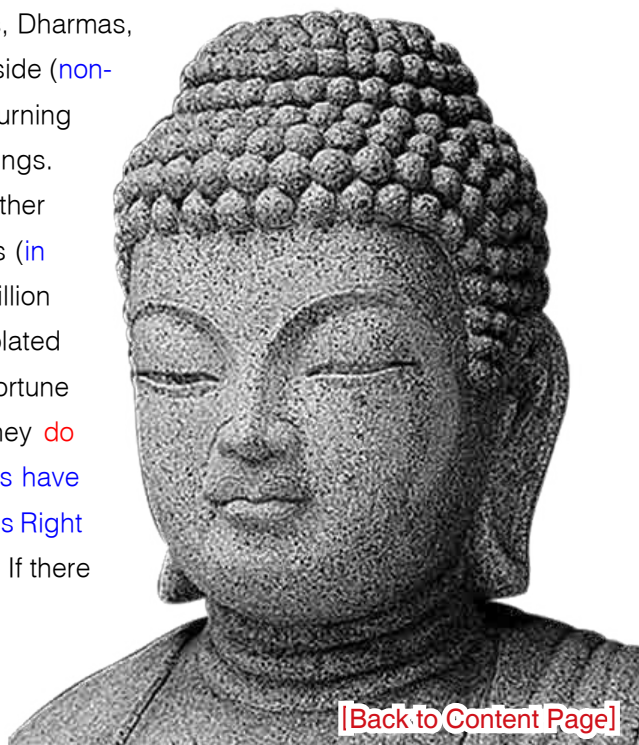
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1. The "**Bodhisattva Sanghas**" - Bodhisattva Manjushri and Maitreya, etc. are the "Bodhisattva Sanghas".
2. The "**Sravakas Sanghas**" - Dharma practitioners such as Sariputta, Moggallana etc. who had practised the Theravada teaching methods after having directly heard of the Lord Buddha's sermons are known as the "Sravakas Sanghas".
3. The "**Laymen Sanghas**" - For any truly virtuous lay people who succeed in abiding to and upholding the "Pratimoksa Precepts", and are endowed with all the "right views" (**without misleading sentient beings**), so much so that they are able to widely preach and propagate numerous holy Dharma laws and practising ways to benefit sentient beings, and to bring happiness to them, they are known as the "Laymen Sanghas".

Although these Sanghas have not yet been liberated from the "**Three Contributing Studies**" of the "**Disciplines, Meditation, Wisdom**" and Without Discharges (**that is, without afflictions of "Ignorance, Hatred and "Greed"**), one can receive immeasurable virtuous rewards by making offerings to these Sanghas. These three kinds of Sanghas are known as the "**True Fortune Field Sanghas**" and whoever can **truly** make offerings to them will be able to grow virtuous merits, like the "**monks in the fortune fields**". There is also another kind called the "**Fortune Field Sanghas**".

4. Another kind of the "**Fortune Field Sanghas**" (**must be in full compliance with the following five points**) :
 - People who have great respect for and strong faith in the "**relics of the Buddhas, the Buddha images and the precepts**" formulated by various Dharma monks".
 - People who have no heterodox views themselves, and can also make other people free from any heterodox views.
 - People who can expound and propagate **correct and proper** Buddhism and teaching methods, while also praising the Buddha Dharma of the "**One Vehicle**".
 - People who deeply believe in (**the Law of**) Causes and Effects, and frequently generate virtuous good wills.
 - People who can arouse deep remorse for self-committed mistakes or violation of precepts, and vigorously clear away the karmic obscurations.

It should be noted that for those people who fit in the above few points, the powers so arisen from their deep faith in the "Three Treasures of the Buddhas, Dharmas, Sanghas" is one hundred million times superlative than the various outside (**non-Buddhist**) pathways. It also surpasses the "four kinds of Sage King in Turning the Dharma Wheel Chakravartin", let alone the rest of the sentient beings. It is just like the tulips which, though already withered, still excel all other kinds of miscellaneous flowers. The same also applies to the "Bhiksus (**in Sanskrit; in Pali: Bhikkhus**) with **Right Views**", who are one hundred million times superior than the rest of the sentient beings. Even if they have violated and breached their "Precepts", they can still be regarded as the "Fortune Field Sanghas" by virtue of these causal conditions, provided that they **do not obliterate or corrupt the "Right Views"**. (**In the event that their views have corrupted, deviated or mistaken ones, then they belong to the "Erroneous Right Views" and can no longer be the other kind of "Fortune Field Sanghas"**). If there



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are virtuous men and virtuous women making offerings to these "Fortune Field Sanghas", the virtuous merits they receive will be unlimited, which are **equally the same as and no different from** those merits they would have received from making offerings to the first three kinds of the "True Sangha Jewel". As these **four kinds of divine and worldly Sangha Jewels** would constantly benefit and comfort all sentient beings without any temporary renunciation, they are thus known as the **"Inconceivable Gratitude to the Sangha Jewel"**].



What Are The Real Reasons For The "Sangha Jewel" To Be Able To Save And Help Sentient Beings?

Many people nowadays have a misunderstanding of the **"Sangha Jewel"**. For instance, those Dharma practitioners who have not yet undergone the process of "Pabbajja" (in Pali; in Sanskrit: Pravrajya) should not be called as "monks"; Dharma practitioners who are not vegetarians should not be called "monks"; Dharma practitioners who have wives and children should not be called "monks"; Dharma practitioners who do not wear monks' robes should not be called "monks"; Dharma practitioners who have not shaved their heads should not be called as "monks", and so on. All these are just one-sided view and understanding of what the **functions of the "Sangha Jewel"** are, where do **the meanings and principles of the "Sangha Jewel"** lie, and **what the true Buddhist teachings are**.

As sentient beings are trapped inside the **endless** "Ocean of sufferings of Life and Death", only the **true meanings and principles** of the "Buddha Dharma" can completely rescue and help them. Therefore, whoever "hold the right views/ insights of the Buddhist teachings" "will be those people who are able to rescue the sentient beings". The reasons for these people to be **able to successfully save and assist the sentient beings are due to their "holding of the Right Views on the Buddha Dharma"**, but not their appearance and attire in monks' robes, their recognized position/status, their merits on vegetarian diet, nor their dignity as a "Pabbajj".





Therefore, in explaining this section of the Sutra on "What the Sangha Jewel is", the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni reiterated continuously the important point of the "Non-Erroneous Right Views". The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni also emphasized explicitly that even if these monks have violated or breached the "precepts", so long as they hold the "Non-Erroneous Right Views", they are still "Fortune Field Sanghas" from whom virtuous merits would be generated for the offerings made to them. The virtuous merits so cultivated are the same virtuous merits generated from the three kinds of the "True Fortune Field Sanghas" as mentioned above with no differences or differentiation. The **only indispensable condition is: the "Non-Erroneous Right Views"**.

The attire in monks' robes, their recognized position, their merits on vegetarian diet, their dignity as a "Pabbajja" can arouse confidence from sentient beings more easily. However, if one's "confidence" is built on the basis of such superficial phenomenon, rather than on the **true views** generated from the essences of the Buddhist teachings,

such kind of floating sand-like "confidence" will not be able to withstand the brutal trampling of one's "karmas", **nor can it generate any ability for one's own self-protection**. These sentient beings will soon get lost again in the prolonged sufferings of their ignorance and perplexity.

If sentient beings are able to generate true views from the essences of the Buddhist teachings in their minds, a indestructable "determined confidence" will be strengthened continuously in their inner hearts, such that it becomes strong enough to protect them against the destructive abrasions of their big and small "karmas", as well as to cross over the Ocean of sufferings of Life and Death to attain real liberation of freedom. This is a kind of liberation of one's "Mind", not a change in the external appearance. Hence, only the **"Right Views of the Buddha Dharma" are adequate enough to make one's "Mind" to become liberated**, but not the **external** "appearance, position, vegetarian diet and Pabbajja". All such behavioural actions are **not the key** for one's liberation from the Ocean of Sufferings of the cycle of karmic existence. They can only be regarded as a kind of ancillary force, not the principal power.

The first three kinds of Monks are known as the "True Fortune Field Sanghas". They are different from the other kind of "Fortune Field Sangha", mainly in terms of their levels and degrees of their Dharma practices, and hence the difference in their respective speeds in getting liberated from the cycle of karmic existence. As they are all **holding the same Right Views**, therefore the merits arising from their "guiding the sentient beings to acquire the Right Views" are equally the same.





In light of the foregoing, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni cautioned the sentient beings not to ignore/neglect in paying respects and making offerings to these “Sangha Jewel” out of their own ignorance and misunderstanding. “Right Views” can make one stay away from superstition, particularly in tackling contemporary people’s “superstition in ‘blessings’, superstition in making ‘external’ rather than ‘inner’ pursuits”. “Right Views” include one’s “recognition of ‘impermanence’, strong conviction in (the Law of) Causes and Effects”. It should be noted that “true blessings” are not a kind of external mystical powers. They are “the Right Views that are added into one’s mind and retained for tackling one’s bewilderments”. These are the “true ‘blessings’” for which the “Sangha Jewel” have to shoulder the greatest responsibilities. This is the reason why it is bestowed with the name of the “Sangha Jewel” by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

Many people are so obsessed with and superstitious about the mysterious powers that they would neglect to “deeply believe in causes and effects”, thus inducing endless heterodox and erroneous views, and rendering them unable to protect and retain the Right Views already acquired. They consider that mysterious powers can change causes and effects, hence “denying the causes and effects”. The function of the “Sangha Jewel” is to add in the Right Views to the sentient beings again. Whether sentient beings can further hold onto and retain these added Right Views would depend on their own efforts.

“The Sangha Jewel” can be said to be an important bridge between the “Buddha Jewel” and the “Dharma Jewel”. It enables the continuation of the “Dharma Jewel” that (was left behind by) the “Buddha Jewel” and makes it understandable. Therefore, the “Sangha Jewel” is a pivotal treasure in linking up the past with the future. The “Sangha Jewel” extends and continues the wisdom life of the Buddhas, and ignites the light of the Buddhas’ hearts. The “Wisdom Life and the Light of Heart” all refer to the “Right Views”. Without the “Sangha Jewel”, it is difficult for the “Dharma Jewel” to bloom in radiance. Yet without (the presence of) the “Sangha Jewel”, the “Buddha Jewel” and the “Dharma Jewel” would slowly be exhausted, leaving nobody knows about their true nature.

“The Sangha Jewel” can guide to the “Right Views”, unfold and inspire the wisdom of sentient beings, and rescue sentient beings from the Ocean of sufferings. On the contrary, if people are preaching heterodox views, or explaining wrongly some insights that depart or deviate from the “Right Views”, they are not regarded as the “Sangha Jewel” even though they are wearing monks’ robes, undergoing “Pabbajja”, and on vegetarian diet. It is because their heterodox and wrong views would make sentient beings sink more deeply into the Ocean of sufferings in the cycle of karmic existence. Take for an example, in order to determine whether those people who flaunt and brag over their own supernatural powers belong to the “Sangha Jewel” or not, the key point lies in whether these people’s views are regarded as the “Right Views” or not, rather than by any other factors.





What Are The Supernatural Powers In The Buddha Dharma?

The supernatural powers in the Buddha Dharma refer not to the so-called mysterious powers, but the wisdom so arisen from one's **Right Views, Dharma practices and mental concentration**, through which one's **state of mind** can **pass through** all the obstacles, cognitions and afflictions, and to become enlightened for entry into the "Dharma Realm". For those Dharma practitioners who are endowed with such **supernatural powers in the Buddha Dharma**, their **understandings** of the Buddhist teachings should be extremely **profound, thorough, detailed, and comprehensible**. They should be able to disclose and demonstrate these in their abilities to **explain Buddhism**, while **exhibiting the supernatural powers in the Buddhist teachings**, be they in texts or in language. If these "Sangha Jewel" could not be found or met, then how would one be able to judge such insights as the "Right Views" ? (Please refer to the video entitled "The supernatural powers in the Buddha Dharma" – on Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist>).

The "Right and proper Views" are dependent upon one's understanding of the "Three Dharma Seals", namely: "All activities are impermanent; All dharmas have no selves; Nirvana is silent and tranquil". By verifying everything with these "Three Dharma Seals", it would not only keep oneself from getting lost, but would also **make oneself to become a "Dharma Jewel" as defined by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni**, such that one can discharge the utmost responsibilities in benefiting oneself and others, as well as in enlightening oneself and others.

The "Sangha Jewel" does not mean a "Sangha Community". Some sentient beings might have misunderstood that a "Sangha Community" that comprises many monks would be even more valuable? It should be noted that a "Sangha Community" is a place for many monks where disputes and differences are bound to arise. Even during the time of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, serious differences and deviations had occurred in the "Sangha Community" that was led personally by the Lord Buddha, resulting in its splitting-up that **had caused very long-term and negative influences**. Therefore, the "Sangha Jewel" that was referred to by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni is not the "Sangha Community Jewel". In order to enable sentient beings to further distinguish what a "Jewel" is, and to avoid misunderstanding, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had specifically stipulated ten kinds of meanings and principles to define what is meant by a "Jewel". The next chapter will give further detailed elaborations on this.





The methods for the requital of the “Filial Gratitude to Parents, Gratitude to All Sentient Beings, Gratitude to the King”, as cited in the texts of the Sutra in the last few chapters, are of very high degree of difficulty! Now together with the requital of the “Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel, Gratitude to the Dharma Jewel, Gratitude to the Sangha Jewel”, will it form a kind of “attached mind” that will affect one’s Dharma practice on “Emptiness”? How does one practice 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](#))

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(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”.)



Synopsis of Each Chapter

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:

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”).

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 meth-



ods 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 envi-



ronment' 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): The Highest Objective that "Prayers" can Achieve** – On the side of effectiveness, even though they consist the element of one's "mental strength", but since "prayers" do not involve any practice 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 exercise". 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 "rebirths in some virtuous realms". One would not be able to achieve the two objectives of: (1) liberation from the tractional forces of the "cycle of karmic existence"; and (2) the attainment of "Complete Enlightenment" ("Buddhahood"). Hence, "prayers" will not be able to become the major item of Dharma practice in Buddhism, and that it can only be a supplementary method of Dharma practice.....(please refer to Issue 23 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (xx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (17): The Mystery of the Blessings of the Sound in the Recitations of "Mantras, Buddhas' Names or Sutras"** – The practice method of using sound to recite "mantras, names of Holy Deities, and scriptures" is one of the practice methods that have been adopted by most religions and ceremonies in this secular world. Does it consist of other deeper meanings? What are some of the effects that will be produced from this kind of practice methods? What are the degrees of influence that this has upon one's own "mental strength"? What is the highest level of objective that it can achieve? What is the length of time that it will take up in order to achieve the objective?.....(Please refer to Issue 24 of the "Lake of Lotus").



- (xxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (18): How to Make Different Mantras to Produce Effects** – the effects and energies that are produced from the “resonance” of sound can make the “electrons” at the outer layer of the “atom” to move over to the other “atom” next to it, or else the two “atoms” can share the same “electrons”. This kind of mechanism can help make “atoms” to become bondings in forming “molecules”, or other types of “compounds”. Through this process, **different types of materials can then be connected, consolidated and formed**. Yet, what types of pronunciation of “sounds” could match such particular effects?(Please refer to Issue 25 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (19): What is the meaning of having received the “relevant trainings” in the recitation of mantras in order that merits would be arisen which are remarkable and vast, particularly in the enhancement of one’s own wisdom which would be very significant, and would not be lost in one’s numerous lifetimes?** – There are numerous mentions of the “**Dharani Samadhi**”, the “**Dharani Seal Samadhi**” and the “**one hundred and eight kinds of “Samadhis**” in the different “Buddhist Sutras”, and so what are they? These are referring to the **different “Mantras” within the hundred types of “Right Concentrations”**, and so what is the mysterious rationale behind them? Should “mantras” be translated? What are the merits that can be arisen from the “**relevant trainings**” in the recitation of “mantras”?(Please refer to Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (20): How to Give Rise to the Wonderful Merits in “Pacifying/Averting Adversities” by Reciting the “Mantra Dharani”?** – There are many more conditions that need to be coordinated in order to give rise to the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” by reciting the “Mantra Dharani”, as it would involve the “collective karma” of all those who are involved, that is, the “karmas” of each and every one that would be affected by those adversities combined together. As such, it would be much more complicated than the “karma” involved in both the “**Dharma Dharani**” and the “**Meaning Dharani**”, as for the latter two only the “karma” of the Dharma practitioner himself/herself would be involved. Hence, it would be relatively much easier to give rise to the merits of both the “**Dharma Dharani**” and the “**Meaning Dharani**”, and the level of “meditational power” that is required to match these Dharani is relatively lower. On the other hand, the level of “meditational power” that is required to match the giving rise of the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” of the “**Mantra Dharani**” would be correspondingly higher.....(please refer to the Issue 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (21): The wonderful merits of the recitation of “Endurance Dharani”** – How to generate the merits of “**Endurance Dharani**”? “Endurance” has two meanings: one represents the “**Endorsement Abler**”, and the other represents a “**Decision**”. The “Endorsement Abler” means that “after the verification and endorsement, one has been confirmed to have such an attainment”. As for the “Decision”, it indicates that one has “surely and profoundly realized, and has thus affirmatively achieved a certain level of attainment, in a decisive and firm manner without any doubts”.....(please refer to the Issue 28 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (22): How to set up an all-rounded protection shield** - In the “**Sutra on the Holy Names of the Buddhas**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has proclaimed the Holy Names of



thousands of Buddhas. If counting the compressed abbreviations, such as “Namo to the eight hundred billions of those designated Buddhas of the Second Kalpa who are having the same names with the same Dharma states” and so on, then the Holy Names of the Buddhas being mentioned are actually infinite in numbers. Hence, if all sentient beings could follow exactly what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has told us to recite and chant, then the causes of connections being sown with all the Buddhas could also be infinite. In the future, sentient beings could be taught by such a vast number of Buddhas, and could also receive sky-like protections from countless Buddhas and related protectors, such that it will definitely keep sentient beings away from all karmic obstacles, and certainly they will be able to practise peacefully without disasters, difficulties and hindrances, until they will finally attain Buddhahood. In other words, the recitation and chanting of the Buddhas’ Holy Names is a kind of Dharma practice with the nature of “praying, being blessed and protected”. Yet, it does take a longer period of time and is a bit indirect.....(please refer to the Issue No. 29 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xxvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (23): Is there any difference in reciting and chanting the “Buddhist Sutras” when one has already got the wisdom seeds in one’s unconscious - “Buddhist Sutras”**, as ancient books and records, actually stored the boundless wisdom of the Lord Buddha. By the using of words to show the Lord Buddha’s wisdom to the world, it also wishes to let all sentient beings to truly understand the kind of wisdom that was unveiled by those words, so as to know how to apply them. Unfortunately, in achieving such kinds of results are not easy things, except for those ripe sentient beings who have the past causes and merits, and they also should have the wisdom seeds within their unconscious. Thus, even though people have been trying to abandon the ancient words, and have changed them into modern terminologies, it is still unable to make this wish come true. Yet, are there alternative ways to make this wish come true? For those who have already gotten the wisdom seeds in their unconscious and for those who do not, when reciting and chanting the **“Buddhist Sutras”**, would there be any difference between them?..... (please refer to the Issue No.30 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xxvii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (23): What is the “evil spirit within one’s own mind”?** – Many people have mentioned that the practicing of the Buddhist Dharma is to overcome our own “mind”, that is, the “evil spirit within one’s own mind”. Actually, what has created this “evil spirit within one’s own mind”? In fact, this so-called “evil spirit within one’s own mind” is some kind of a bad inclination within oneself, which has been reacted upon and projected from the bad “karmic seeds” that had been sown in the “field of the eighth consciousness” in one’s endless past lives. In order to overcome this “evil spirit within one’s own mind”, many people will come to know that it will be very difficult to depend on others, but that one should “begin with one’s own mind”. However, if one has only very limited knowledge, with a weak capability to resist stress, then how could one “begin with one’s own mind”? (please refer to the Issue No. 31 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xxviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (24): How could one extend the life of a dying relative? How to use the four levels to help and save patients?** – When the signs of death of patients are shown and even unveiling that one is going to enter into the initial stage of either virtuous or evil judgment, that means even though this person has not yet formally died, he or she was already stepping into the edge at the “margin of



life and death”. As this is a critical position, that whether one could “recover from death, and to extend one’s life” or not will have to depend upon how many merits this patient could have aroused or being induced at that very moment. (please refer to the Issue No.32 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xxix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (25) : How to directly elevate the functions and merits of one’s own mind?** - Sound is a vibration with frequency. If the airflow and muscles of one’s body are blown up to make the vocal cord vibrate, the sound so produced will have certain impact on the body, regardless of whether it has any meaning. This includes the impact on the spiritual level. Different degrees of sound would, of course, have different degrees of impact. Therefore, among the Buddhist practice methods, sound has been included as one of the important dimensions for its Dharma practices. What are the comprehensive merits of this kind of Dharma practice? (please refer to the Issue No.33 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (26): The skills of chanting need to be adjusted and changed in accordance with “the characteristics of one’s habitual tendencies, features of karma, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentration** - Whether the “resonant frequency” of a particular “Mantra, Buddha’s Holy Name, or the Sutra” is suitable for the reciting person, whether it matches the “the characteristics of habitual tendencies, features of karmas, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentrations” of the reciting person and so on is a major factor that influences the effects. If the reciting person understands his own “ characteristics of habitual tendencies, features of karmas, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentrations” so well that he knows how to choose a “Mantra, Buddha’s Holy Name, or the Sutra” that is most suitable for himself to recite, then the skills of recitations will become the only major factor that influences the effects. Are there then differences in the skills for reciting the “Mantras, Buddhas’ Holy Names, or the Sutras”?..... (please refer to the Issue No.34 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (27): How to Use the “Sound of Mantra” to Transcend All Limitations of Dharma Practice** - “The Power of the Resonating Voice” is sufficient enough to make the long progress period of one’s Dharma practice to become a rapid achievement of goals. Why is it so? The most important key point for one’s real Holy Dharma practice is on one’s “mind training”. And the highest level of one’s “Mind” is to restore the state of **“Emptiness: Neither existence nor voidness”**. Then what is the “vibration frequency” that is closest to this state? A good mastery and application of this special “vibration frequency” is undoubtedly the “shortcut” for one to enter this state of condition. Therefore, the arising of human sounds, regardless of whether they come from the “conscious” level or from the “subconscious” level, will be extremely useful in one’s Dharma practice, if one knows how to use them.....(please refer to the Issue No.35 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (28): The interrelationships of the sounds of the human body with one’s Dharma practice and with that of the “Consciousness” and the “Subconscious”** - Other than for the use of talking, the sounds of human beings can also be used to express emotions, such as laughter, crying, moaning, sighs, cries of grief and even yawning etc. They all have the various functions to relieve our emotions, stress and tensions. Some of them are generated as the functions of one’s “conscious” level



while others are generated as the function of one's "unconscious" level. Therefore, the origins for giving rise to the sounds of human beings can be divided into those coming from the "conscious" level and those from the "unconscious" level. Can their interrelationships render assistance to one's Dharma practice?
(please refer to the [Issue No.36 of the "Lake of Lotus"](#)).

(xxxiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (29): The use of the "core basic sound". Its usefulness to sentient beings in elevating their lives and in practising the Holy Dharma** - The "core basic sound" represents the pure and natural sound of its original nature of each individual sentient being. From the physical structure to the spiritual dimension, their inter-dependence and co-existence are inseparable from the relationships on the movements of the "molecules" and "bio-energy". Thus, the "vibration frequency" so generated will be that kind of "frequency vibration" that controls and affects the physical and mental conditions of that particular sentient being. When this kind of "frequency of vibration" expands to become sounds, this can be used to elevate both the physical and spiritual states of that particular sentient being..... (please refer to the [Issue No.37 of the "Lake of Lotus"](#)).

(xxxiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (30): Those who are able to "visualize the mind" could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain "Buddhahood"** - Why "Visualization" is a method of Dharma practice that can mostly directly link to one's "Nature of the Mind"? Where are the reasons and the evidences? In order to see the evidence, one should first look at what the "Buddhist's Sutras" have to say. The "**Avatamsaka Sutra**" has mentioned: "Everything comes from the Mind". This quote points out that the manifestation and emergence of all things are caused by the tractional forces of the "Mind". In other words, the "Mind" is the source of everything. To catch all the thieves, one needs first to catch its chief. Therefore, in order to achieve success in one's Dharma practice swiftly, not as slow as "ants crawling upwards from the ground", one needs to deal with the "Mind". In this regards, "Visualization" is a method of Dharma practice that can most directly link to one's "Nature of the Mind". Let us look at the following golden verses from the Buddhist Sutras that can provide us with guidelines ([as pointers](#)) towards the "Grand Boulevard of Golden Light".....(please refer to the [Issue No.38 of the "Lake of Lotus"](#)).

(xxxv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (31): The "Mahayana Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplations" is an important evidence for the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni's preaching on "Vajrayana" practices** - In the "**Mahayana Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplations**", the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the respective methods of the "Mental Visualization" through the "Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana" Dharma practices. This Sutra can be said to be a clear and simple overview of the Dharma practices on "mental visualizations". The fact that the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us in one and the same Sutra on the "mental visualizations" through the "Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana" practices is sufficient enough to be a strong and important evidence to prove against the wrong accusations from both the "Hinayana and Mahayana" that "Vajrayana" practices were "not preached by the Lord Buddha". It also testifies that the defamation from some of the "Hinayana and Mahayana" practitioners against the "Vajrayana" practices will only constitute an evil cause for their downfalls ([to the "evil realms"](#)) due to their "slandering the Lord Buddha's teachings".....(please refer to the [Issue No.39 of the "Lake of Lotus"](#)).



- (xxxvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (32): What are the methods of “Mental Visualization”?** – The previous two chapters have clearly described those who are able to “visualize the mind” could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain “Buddhahood”, and this is also the important guideline in the **“Mahayan 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 he Buddha or the “diety”? 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 what 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 Issue No.40 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxvii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (33): The “Training of Mind” From the Core and Foundational Basis of One’s “Awareness”** - In the **“Mahayan 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. 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?.. (please refer to the Issue No.41 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (34) - What is actually the “Gratitude to the King” that needs to be repaid by sentient beings as requested by the Lord Buddha?** - The mindsets and thinking patterns of most sentient beings today in this contemporary world focus mostly on the “self-centered, free and equal” kind of “liberated, confrontational and anti-authority” behavioural programming. It seems to be an extremely difficult thing to ask them to understand what is meant by the “Gratitude to the King”, and even request them to make requital in their behaviours. Our current “century thinking” nowadays is “No king but elections”. Is this kind of thinking actually a counterbalance to what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said without any commonality? (please refer to the Issue No.42 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (35) - The “Buddha Jewel” has “Three Bodies”. What are their merits? The “Sambhogabaya (Enjoyment Body)” of a Buddha has two forms. What are their characteristics? What do the ten kinds of special “Manifested Body of a Buddha” represent?** - In Volume One on the Preface Section No.1 [0294b22] of the **“Mahayan Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us that: “Because you worldly people ‘do not visualize your own minds’ (that is



not using visualization for mind training), therefore you are subject to the cycle of karmic existence endlessly, drifting and floating in the Ocean of Life and Death. As all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are able 'to visualize Their minds' (for mind-training), they can thus cross the Ocean of Life and Death to reach to the other shore in the Pure Land either to get liberated from the cycle of karmic existence or get entry into the "Dharma Realm". The Buddhas of the past world, the present world and the future world all practised their Holy Dharma in this way". From this, one can see that "Mental Visualization" is extremely important and is the only method for Dharma practice. With regard to the foundational base of "Mental Visualization", one must first understand and repay the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, among which, the "Gratitude to the Three Jewels" can be said to be of "prime importance". The "Gratitude to the Three Jewels" refers respectively to "the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel, the Gratitude to the Dharma Jewel, and the Gratitude to the Sangha Jewel". Let us first talk about "the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel". The "Buddhas" appear to be very perfect, unreachable and also difficult to communicate as they are very far away from the sentient beings. Then how is "the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel" formed and how "deep" and "wide" is it? (please refer to the Issue No.43 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xxxx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (36) – There are “Four Kinds” of “Dharma Jewel”. What are Their Merits? Who Are the “Gurus” of the Various Buddhas of the Worlds of the Three Times?** : Among the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, the "Dharma Jewel" is the teacher/mentor of various Buddhas of the Worlds of the Three Times. So how important is it actually? As all Buddhas have to rely on the "Dharma Jewel" to attain "Buddhahood", then what actually are the substances of the "Dharma Jewel"? What are the efficacies of the "Dharma Jewel", and how "deep" and "wide" is it?(please refer to the Issue No. 44 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xxxix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (37) - The Lord Buddha said that there are four kinds of “Sangha Jewel”. What are they? Are those Dharma practitioners not undergoing “Pabbajja” to be regarded as the “Sangha Jewel”? What are the real reasons for the “Sangha Jewel” to be able to save and help sentient beings?** : Among the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, the "Sangha Jewel" is the treasure that is most accessible to and easy for sentient beings to produce virtuous merits in this worldly realm. Whether or not sentient beings can benefit quickly from difficulties and miseries, whether or not they can become liberated speedily from the cycle of karmic existence, whether or not they can attain "Buddhahood" swiftly would all depend on the existence of the "Sangha Jewel". So actually how important is the "Sangha Jewel" to the sentient beings? What actually are the substances of the "Sangha Jewel", and how "deep" and "wide" is it?..... (please refer to the Issue No. 45 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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.

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