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The Real Meaning of "Awakening"
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Criteria for
Distinguishing
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on Their Methods
of Dharma Practice



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English version

Authentic Versus Fake "Lineages" and Their Related Meanings (4)
Criteria for Distinguishing Schools and Teachers on Their
Methods of Dharma Practice

by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren,
translated by Byron K.K. Yiu

1-11

The Contemporary Mahasiddha with Many Prophecies : Our
Lord of Refuge, His Holiness Chadrak Gyel Dorje
Rinpoche (10)

by His Holiness' Humble Disciples Yeshe
Thay & Pema Lhadren

12-14

The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death: The Meaning of
Near-Death Experiences (15)

Special "NDEs" of The "Psychics"
Just One Step Away from the Experience of "Attaining
Buddhahood"
The Theories, Trainings and Practical Strategies of "Attaining
Buddhahood"

by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren,
translated by Simon S.H. Tang

15-25

The Application of Wisdom: The Wisdom in Directing One's
Dharma Practice (15)

Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities"
"Seven Methods of Strengthening One's Mind" to
Counteract Adversities

by Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren,
translated by Amy W.F. Chow

26-33

"Emptiness : Neither Existence Nor Voidness" (10)

by Vajra Master Yeshe Thay

34-35

Form For Donations, Subscriptions & Mail Orders

36

Authentic Versus Fake “Lineages” and Their Related Meanings (4)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren

Translated by Byron K.K. Yiu

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Criteria for Distinguishing Schools and Teachers on Their Methods of Dharma Practice

“One is unable to enter the great ocean of the Buddhist Dharma without faith.” Regardless of what religions, all will use “faith” as one’s foundation of belief. The question is where should “faith” be based upon? What consequences would it bring if “faith” is based on wrong reasons, and upon superstitions at the wrong directions? Actually, what kind of criteria can assist us in correctly building up our “faith”? The teachings in the “Lineages” of “Vajrayana Buddhism” have their own practice guidance that can be dated back in its long history, and have gone through numerous generations of practitioners. Even though these lineages might have been confirmed to be genuine ones, with their histories coming from when, where and whom, all of which are true, yet how can one be able to ascertain that these teachings are, indeed, correct, can be trusted and have not been distorted? The comprehension of teachings, and even the practice guidance, has all been guided by “persons” like “Gurus, Teachers and Monks” so as to teach the next generation’s Dharma practitioners. After all, what criteria should be used in distinguishing these “persons”, such that the next generation’s Dharma practitioners can be certain that to follow them will not be wrong?

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had personally mentioned four criteria in order to help Dharma practitioners to clarify and solve the above-mentioned questions. However, these four criteria, known as the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances”, have often been misunderstood. Some people even use their distorted explanations in order to attack “Vajrayana Buddhism”. The “Four Reliances” (Sanskrit: catvari pratisaranani) refers to the four types of “reliances that one can follow” in order to lead oneself to “attain Buddhahood” (that is, to recover the “intrinsic awareness and great power”). These four criteria have already been mentioned in different sutras and sastras like The “Vimalakirti Sutra, Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Vaipulya Sutas, Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra”, etc. [Specifically, these “Four Principles” can be found in the following sources, including : The Southern Version of the Great Entrance into Extinction and Cessation Sutra (the Mahaparinirvana Sutra) Vol. VI; The Sutra of the Great Assembly of Bodhisattvas from Every Direction (Mahavaipulya Mahasamnipata Sutra), Vol. XXIX; The Sutra of the Great Upaya of the Required Favours by

the Buddha, Vol. VII; The Sastra for the Greater Prajna-paramita Sutra (Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra), Vol. IX; The Yogacarabhumi Sastra, Vol. XLV; The Essay on the Meaning of Mahayana, Vol. XI; The Teaching on the Ritual for Taking Refuge and Paying Respects to Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, Upper Section, and so on.] So, it shows that these four criteria have all been put in the first place with regard to their importance and guiding principle. Therefore, we should use the right view to read into these four criteria for reliance, so that these should not be distorted any more.

1. To reply upon the meanings that lie beyond the words, but do not reply upon the words alone (Sanskrit: artha-pratisaranena bhavitavyam na vyanjana-pratisaranena) – meaning that Dharma practitioners should rely upon the “Dharmata” as “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” to be the true meaning and reasoning to determine the correctness of all teachings and practice guidance. (Please refer to the DVD on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, published by “Dudjom Buddhist Association”; “Dharmata” also known as “intrinsic nature”, “primordial nature”, “Buddha Nature”, which is the great power that all sentient beings originally possessed. Please also refer to the articles on the “Meaning of the Near-Death Experiences” in Issue 4 & 5 of the “Lake of Lotus” in which there were detailed explanations on the ‘intrinsic nature’.) It is incorrect for any teachings and practice guidance to stray away from this meaning and reasoning. “Dharmata” as “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” is a kind of truth and profound abstruseness of Nature, and is also a kind of truth of “para-science”. But, it is difficult to comprehend, and so one needs to use words, speeches, languages, and so on in order to explain it.

However, once it was interpreted by a “person”, and if this “person” did not have the actual realization of the “Dharmata”, then this person’s explanations by means of words, speeches and languages may deviate from the truth, or may be wrong. By relying upon these deviated or wrong explanations for one’s Dharma practice, the followers will end up just like what the Chinese saying had mentioned: “if being astray by even just a slight error, a far great distance of the erroneous outcome will result”, which will mean that they will never be able to recover one’s “Dharmata” in attaining Buddhahood. In order to avoid such shortcomings, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had given us his Spiritual Advice that all Dharma practitioners should rely upon the meaning and reasoning of the true “Dharmata” for one’s Dharma practice, and should not rely upon the explanations based on words, speeches and languages for one’s Dharma practice.

2. To rely upon wisdom awareness, but do not rely upon ordinary consciousness (Sanskrit: jnana-pratisaranena bhavitavyam na vijnana-pratisaranena) – “wisdom” refers to the “radiant awareness” that the “mind” originally possesses, and which can merge with the “Dharmata”, such that one’s Dharma practice will not deviate from the correct and true path of “Dharmata”. This is known as the “non-discriminating wisdom” as this “mind” will not grasp onto things through various discriminations. “Ordinary consciousness”, on the other hand, refers to the “deluded mind” which has always emerged from various discriminations, and thus comprising of the “four cognitions, namely: the four kinds of discriminations in accordance with form, sensation, perception, formation” (please refer to No. 397, Mahavai pul ya-mahasanni-pata-sutra, Chapter 29, T13, p0205a), which means the four types of cognitive and discriminative powers for all kinds of matters, feelings, thoughts and behaviors in the secular world. Because of these “four types of cognitive and discriminative powers”, we have been lured by the world and grasped onto all things and experiences in such a way that we have deviated from the “Dharmata”. It thus makes the Dharma practitioners to become unable to recover one’s “Dharmata” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. Therefore, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has given us his Spiritual Advice that all Dharma practitioners should rely upon the “non-discriminating wisdom” for one’s Dharma practice, and not to rely upon the “deluded mind” for one’s Dharma practice.

3. To rely upon “absolute meaning sutras”, but do not rely upon the “interpretable meaning sutras” alone. (Sanskrit: nitārtha-sūtra-pratisaranena bhavitavyam na neyārtha-sūtra-pratisaranena) – In order to teach countless sentient beings with various levels of understanding, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had sometimes assented to the use of some “not reaching perfection” (that is, non-ultimate) but expedient teachings and metaphors in some of the “sutras”, and thus avoid the talking of “Dharmata” in order to make it much easier for more sentient beings to understand and to generate their faith and confidence, and thus these sutras came to be known as those “interpretable meaning (Drang Don) sutras”. On the other hand, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had also used some perfected and ultimate “Dharmata” teachings in some “sutras” to directly guide practice, and these came to be known as those “absolute meaning (Nges Don) sutras”. As those “interpretable meaning sutras” do not mention about “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” such that those who follow these “sutras” to practice will never be able to recover one’s Dharmata in order to “attain Buddhahood”. Therefore, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has given us his Spiritual Advice that all Dharma practitioners should rely upon “absolute

meaning sutras” for one’s Dharma practice, but should not rely upon those “interpretable meaning sutras” for one’s Dharma practice.

4. To rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it. (Sanskrit: *dharmapratisaranenabhavitavyam na pudgda-pratisaranena*) – The “Dharma” refers to the “Dharmata” which relies on “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” as the truth of meaning and reasoning. The “Person” means all those who do not understand the “Dharmata”, including all those “Buddhas” who had used the methods of “interpretable meanings” to explain the Buddhist Dharma. Is it true that even “Buddhas” should be included as well? Does it mean that one should not follow those Buddhas’ teachings of “interpretable meaning”? Does this also belong to a way of “relying upon persons”? What is its basis?

According to the Chapter 29 of the “*Mahavai pul ya-mahasanni-pata-sutra*”, the Lord Buddha had given us his Spiritual Advice as such: “What is meant by ‘to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it’? The singular ‘person’ refers to all those people who grasp onto the ‘views of one self (i.e. the ‘ego’), those people who develop and act upon such views, and those people who have accepted such views” (which means that those people who grasp onto the “threefold aspects” of things. The “threefold aspects” of any thing refer to the three aspects of things that are related to the principal subjects of this matter. These three principal subjects are “the matter in itself, the person who is acting upon this matter, and those people who have either accepted or endured this matter.” Those who grasp onto these “threefold aspects” of any thing will divide up the completeness of all things, such that they

will never be able to recover the “reality of oneness” and completeness of Nature. In other words, they will never be able to recover the “Dharmata”. Hence, one must have to merge the “threefold aspects” of any thing into the non-grasping “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”. The terminology used in the Buddhist Dharma is known as the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence”. The “*Vajracchedika-prajna-paramita-sutra*” stated: “the thing being donated is in itself empty, the donator is empty, and the also one who is being denoted is also empty.”) The “Dharma”, on the other hand, means that there is “no views of one self (i.e. the ‘ego’), no such people who develop and act upon such views, and no such people who have accepted such views” (thus all those ways and means that can be acted upon in accordance with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” is known as the “Dharma”).

The “person” can include “those ordinary people who are in possessions of disturbing emotions, virtuous peoples, Dharma practitioners with faith, Dharma practitioners who use their rational judgments in relying upon the Buddhist teachings for their practices, and those “eight kinds of people” (which refers to those people who can fully comprehend and acquire the meritorious qualities of the “Three Vehicles (Yanas), namely: the Shrivaka of ‘Hinayana: Small Vehicle’, the Pratyekabuddha of the ‘Middle Vehicle’, and the Bodhisattvas of ‘Mahayana: Great Vehicle’”, including those people who have few desires and be contented with one’s lot, and those people who have the eight qualities of awareness. The terminology for this in Buddhism is known as the “Eightfold Enlightenment”, please refer to “The Sutra of Eightfold Enlightenment”).

“Stream Enterers (Srotapanna), Once Returners (Sakridagamin), Non-returners (Angamin), Arhats” (these four types of persons practice ‘Hinayana: Shrivaka Vehicle’ and achieve the four different levels of accomplishments. These four different levels of accomplishments are: “First Fruit: Srotapanna; Second Fruit: Sakridagamin; Third Fruit: Angamin; Fourth Fruit: Arhat”). The “Pratyekabuddhas” (those who practice ‘Middle Vehicle: Pratyekabuddhayana’ to achieve its results, and is known as “Pratyekabuddhas”). The “Bodhisattvas” (those who practice ‘Mahayana: Great Vehicle’ and is known as “Bodhisattvas”). Therefore, the category of the “person” includes all those ordinary people to those who have realized the ultimate fruit of “Hinayana” (i.e. “Arhats”), and those of the “Middle Vehicle” (i.e. “Pratyekabuddha”), as well as those who have already aroused and practiced their “Bodhicitta” of “Mahayana” (i.e. “Bodhisattvas”). Even for such a single person, who has aroused his great compassion and “bodhicitta” to live in this world for the benefits of all other sentient beings, in guiding and helping those sentient beings who are in need of help in both the human and god realms, and has thus been reverend as the “World-Honored One”, or simply as the “Perfectly-Enlightened



Vasubandhu

One” (“Buddha”), and who has used the worldly views to teach and guide other sentient beings. Hence, if there are people who have relied upon such kinds of views to practice, then they will also be considered as “relying upon the person who expounds it”.

In order to guide those people who are grasping with the “views of one’s self (i.e. the ‘ego’),” and so the Lord Buddha had advised us “to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it”. The “Dharma” means the “Dharmata” which is unchanging, non-action, away from action, without staying, not staying, and are all equal. If it has already been equal, then it will maintain to be so, and even if it has not yet been equal, it will be reverted back to equal. It has no cause (that is, no thoughts), no conditions to be made, having the right certainty, with no differences between the worldly and spiritual categories, having the same nature and with their properties and forms not having any physical obstructions like “Emptiness”. This is known as the “Dharmata” (this paragraph was, indeed, a detailed explanation on the features manifested by the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” of the “Dharmata” by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni). If following the “Dharmata” to practice, then it will eventually not leave the Dharma essence of “oneness”. For those people who can use this view and way to practice, such that they can visualize all “worldly and spiritual categories” to be entering into the same “Dharmata”, then this, indeed, is “to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it”.

This is the most correct explanation of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s Spiritual Advice “to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it”. But even after that, there are still other people who do not understand whether those sentient beings who having received Dharma teachings from their teachers who have understood quite well on the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, or have received teachings from those realized persons, or from those “Buddhas” who have used the “Dharmata” as their teachings to explain to other people, can they rely upon their teachers’ explanations to practice? Will these be “relying upon persons”? Can one really “rely upon” such kinds of “persons”? In fact, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had replied in the Chapter 6 of “Mahaparinirvana-sutra” (please refer to the Chinese translation of “On the Nature of the Tathagata” No.4-3 [0401c02] by Dharmaraksa of the Northern Liang dynasty).

The meaning of this paragraph of the Sutra is like this: “To rely on Dharma’ refers to the fact that the

“Buddha has entered into the most perfect and thorough cessation (or “maha-parinirvana” in Sanskrit), and has recovered the most original status of the “Dharmata”. Hence, all Buddhist Dharmas are for the recovering of the “Dharmata”. This “Dharmata” means “Buddhahood” (“Buddhahood” is the same as “Awareness”). Therefore, “Buddhahood” exists forever and will never change. If someone says that “Buddhahood” is impermanent, then this person not only does not fully understand the “Dharmata”, he also does not realize it. If a person does not fully understand and does not realize the “Dharmata”, then others cannot and should not “rely upon” this person (which means that one should not follow his teachings to practice). On the other hand, the four



Dharmakirti

types of persons who have relied upon the above-captioned four criteria to protect the spiritual teachings, as they should have realized and understood the “Dharmata”, they can be the persons to be “relied upon”. Why is it? It is because these persons well understood the “Buddha’s” profound, abstruse meanings and Dharma treasures, and so they know that the “Dharmata” (or “Buddhahood”) is permanent and never changing. ... The meaning of relying upon the “Dharma” is to rely upon the “Dharmata”, while the meaning of not relying upon the “person” is not to rely upon the “Sravaka” (teachings of “Hinayana”). The “Dharmata” is “Buddhahood”, while the “Sravaka” is the “conditioned phenomena” (or “Samskṛta” in Sanskrit). The

“Buddhahood” refers to the “eternal abiding” (“never changing forever”), while the “conditioned phenomena” (“Samskṛta”) is “impermanent” (“continuously ever-changing”)....”

The True Meaning of “To Rely Upon the Dharma, But Do Not Rely Upon the Person Who Expounds It”

For all these years, people who believe in “Sutrayana” have been criticizing whether or not the “Gurus” of “Vajrayana Buddhism” can guide and direct others on all teachings. They also question why one should respect the “Gurus”. In fact, they believe that one should negate the importance of the “Gurus” as they are the “persons”, and so there is no need to follow and “rely upon” them. Their rationale is “to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it”. In using this rationale to negate the “Gurus” has revealed that these fault-finders, in fact, do not understand the true meaning of the “sutras”. They have simply “garbled” the sutras and have distorted the true meaning of “to rely upon the



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Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it”.

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had set out the criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances”, with the aim to assist Dharma practitioners to recover the “Dharmata” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. In order to achieve this goal, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had specifically set out the various criteria for Dharma practitioners in seeking for teachings, in practicing the Buddhist Dharma, and in “relying upon” the teachers. Therefore, no matter which of the criteria, these have all been **set up around the main theme of the “Dharmata”**.

Even though the contents of the “sutras” are not easy to be understood, it should not be distorted in such a way as what some of the people have been saying these days that: “For one’s Dharma practice, one can only rely upon the ‘Dharma’, but one should not rely upon any ‘persons’.” In other words, what they are saying is this: all “Dharmas” must be correct, while all “persons” must be wrong. This is, indeed, **quite a ridiculous and ignorant misunderstanding**, simply because **not all “Buddhist Dharmas” must be able to teach us the ways in “attaining Buddhahood” (that is, not all “Buddhist Dharmas” must have the “absolute meanings”); neither** is it necessarily **true** that, regardless of what the “Buddha” had said, we can all rely upon them for our Dharma practices in order to “attain Buddhahood”, simply because the “Buddha” had also expounded on some methods of “**interpretable meanings**” for **Dharma practices**. Furthermore, **neither** is it necessarily **true** that all “persons” must be wrong, simply because those highly-realized Dharma practitioners can truly help others in guiding, instructing and verifying them on the **path of “absolute meanings” in “attaining Buddhahood”**.

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had explained clearly that, since the **qualities and the levels of comprehension of**

worldly people **greatly vary and are so uneven in nature**, in order to guide different sentient beings to enter into the Buddhist threshold, and to make it easier for them to understand the “Buddhist Dharma”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has **personally admitted** that some of his own teachings belong to the “**interpretable meanings sutras**”. If some people follow these teachings for their Dharma practices, it will **never be able to** help them in recovering the “Dharmata”. Only those teachings that contained the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, to be complemented by each and every implementation procedure and details in matching the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence”, will then be considered as the “**absolute meanings sutras**”. If people can follow these teachings for their Dharma practices, then they will **definitely be able to** recover the “Dharmata”. In this way, these can truly be considered as **the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma”**.

The main purpose of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni in expounding the “**interpretable meanings sutras**” is to guide all sentient beings to enter into the Buddhist threshold at the beginning, and then slowly lead them through to correctly understand the **true “Buddhist Dharma”**. As such, this is actually an “**expedient measure**”, whereby one can “first use their desires in order to attract and hook up the sentient beings, after which one can then lead them to enter into the Buddha’s wisdom.” Since those “**interpretable meanings sutras**” are **not the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma”** and so the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni himself had stated that: if the “Buddha” expounds those “**interpretable meanings sutras**”, all sentient beings should not follow them for their Dharma practices; otherwise, this is **still considered “to rely upon person”**, for which one cannot and should not do so.

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni then further explained that the practicing method of “Hinayana” is a kind of “conditioned phenomena” (“**Samskrta**” in Sanskrit), which will change continuously, and will never enable one to recover the eternal and never changing “Dharmata”. Why? It is because the practicing method of “Hinayana” solely **focuses on the “emptiness of substanceless identity” (that is, the “egolessness”)**, and will thus only be able to eliminate one of the subjects “who is doing the matter” within the “three-fold” elements. However, the remaining two subjects – that is, “the matter itself, and those who accept or endure this matter” – can never be eliminated. Hence, one could not reach the stage on the “**emptiness of all phenomena**”, and thus this still belongs to the kind of “conditioned phenomena” (“**Samskrta**”). Furthermore, this will **arouse one’s grasping** such that it will never enable one to recover the eternal and never changing “Dharmata”. As such, all sentient beings should not “rely upon” them, nor should they follow their guidance and instructions for one’s Dharma practice.

Put it in a simple way, the so-called “persons”, no matter what kinds of persons in this world, if they do **not fully**

understand or realize the “Dharmata”, then one should not “rely upon” them, and one should not follow their guidance to practice the Buddhist Dharma. Regardless of what kinds of persons, if they do rely upon the criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances” to realize or fully understand the “Dharmata”, then they themselves can become the objects for all sentient beings to “rely upon”. Then, all sentient beings can follow their guidance to practice the Buddhist Dharma. The so-called “Dharma”, no matter what kinds of methods of Dharma practices in this world, if they cannot explain and practically help to realize the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, and neither do they match each implementation procedure and details with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence”, then these cannot be considered as the “Dharma”, simply because they are lacking of the ways in recovering the “Dharmata”, and so they are not the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma”.

Therefore, no matter what kinds of religions, or what schools within “Buddhism”, if they cannot lead the sentient beings in recovering the “Dharmata”, then one should not “rely upon” them and should not follow their guidance to practice. It is because their paths will only lead others to a “dead-end”, whereby one cannot be liberated from the spheres of tractions within the “cycle of karmic existence” (or “Samsara” in Sanskrit). (“Karmic networks”: due to both “virtuous and non-virtuous” deeds amassed over numerous past lives, a network of tractions is formed by the “mental strengths” of oneself and others which are mutually-influencing. Please refer to the DVD on the “Inconceivable Law of Karma”, published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).

How can one actually distinguish their various paths? One can only take a look at their teaching tenets to see whether they have explained on the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” or not? When they explain and instruct others on their Dharma practices, whether they have each of the implementation procedures and details to be matched with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” or not? If the answer is yes, then one can be at ease in trusting and following their tenets for one’s practice. However, if they do not have it, and even though this belongs to “Buddhism” but since their “sutras” of such schools are the “interpretable meaning sutras”, then one should not “rely upon” them and should not follow their teachings for one’s Dharma practice. Actually, how can one distinguish between those “sutras” that are of the “interpretable meaning sutras” from those of the “absolute meanings sutras”? Just take a look at the contents of the “sutras” and see whether they have expounded the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” or not? Whether they have each of the implementation procedures and details to be matched with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” or not? If yes, one can be at ease to trust and follow this school’s instructions to practice.

The “Buddhist Dharma” is so abstruse and so vast as a misty ocean that it is, indeed, very difficult to comprehend. Therefore, one should follow some teachers to learn. Yet, how can one make the right choice? Just take a look at how they have taught and instructed others through their languages, to see whether they have explained the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” or not? Whether they have taught that each of the implementation procedures and details have to be matched with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” or not? If yes, then one can be at ease to trust and follow their guidance and instructions to practice. The actual practices of the “Buddhist Dharma” require experiences, and so one would have to follow and “rely upon” some “Gurus, Masters, Monks”. Yet, how can one make the right choice? Just take a look at how they have taught and instructed others through their languages, to see whether they have explained the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” on such kind of teachings on the “reality of the middle-way” (that is, without deviating from the true nature of the “Dharmata”, or “madhyama pratipad dharmata bhuta-tathata” in Sanskrit) or not? Whether they have taught that each of the implementation procedures and details have to be matched with the “Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence” or not? If yes, then one can be at ease to trust and follow their guidance and instructions to practice.

If a person merely encourages other peoples to do virtuous deeds and to keep the disciplines, and also that some other people have followed him to do virtuous deeds and to keep the disciplines, then all these people can be considered as the “virtuous persons” according to the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni. But still, one cannot and should not “rely upon” the teachings from this kind of people for one’s Dharma practice, as their teachings are incomplete and not thorough enough, simply because their teachings are still remained at the level of the “Human-God Vehicles” (their highest achievements will still have to take rebirths in either the “god realm” or the “human realm”, and so their teachings are known as the teachings of the “Human-God Vehicles”), whereby these teachings can never be able to lead sentient beings to be “liberated from the cycle of karmic existence”, and can never be able to lead sentient beings in recovering the “Dharmata”.

The meaning of the Chapter 8 “On Longevity, No. 4 Upper” [0410a17] in the “Collection of Explanation of Mahaparinirvana-sutra” is like this: “The criteria of the Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances is used to distinguish between what is the “correct Dharma” and the “correct person”. In this way, these criteria can assist one to make a choice on the “correct Buddhist Dharma and correct methods for Dharma practices”, as well as on the “correct persons” such that all sentient beings can thus “rely upon” and follow these objects to practice. ... The doing of virtuous deeds can hardly help someone to

realize the “Dharmata”....”

Nowadays, in order to make “Buddhism” to become prosperous, many Buddhist leaders try to follow the inner-worldly virtuous means from other religions by reforming “Buddhism” such that their followers will simply do virtuous works in order to seek for their comforts of the minds. They will even use these as their methods of Dharma practices, and thus have spent the majority of their times and efforts on these. For the actual practices, they have simplified them into “solely on the chanting of the Buddhas’ Holy Names, the reciting of Sutras, and the worshipping of the Buddhas”. In this way, they have abandoned altogether the most fundamental essence of the “Buddhist Dharma” – the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” on such kind of methods for Dharma practices on the “reality of the middle-way” (“madhyama pratipad dharmata bhuta-tathata” in Sanskrit), and thus accelerates the process in making “Buddhism” to enter into the “Dharma-Ending Age”, whereby Buddhism becomes “only an empty word” while losing its true meanings behind it. Thus, all these will only make the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma” not being able to generate its true meanings. As such, there is no need for any “other religions” to make an attack on “Buddhism” itself, while it will naturally “bring about its own extinction”. In making such kind of a single-sided reform, while only focusing on the breath of it but abandoning the depth of it, as well as merely focusing on the trivial matters but discarding the fundamental essences, this move will only lead both themselves and those who follow them not being able to recover the “Dharmata”, thus harming both oneself and others. Clearly, this is most unwise!

“Buddhism” has given the ordinary people a general impression of “doing virtuous deeds, mantra-chanting, chanting of the Buddhas’ Holy Names, the reciting of Sutras and worshipping Buddhas”. They believe that these acts are the true kind of Dharma practices, and can thus help them either to gain rebirths in the Buddhas’ Pure-lands, or even can lead them in “attaining Buddhahood”. Indeed, the criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances”, as set out by the Lord Buddha himself, have become the most important criteria to “right the wrongs”. The right way for the propagation of the Holy Dharma should include both “breadth and depth”. But, which one is the primary, and which one is the secondary? Since the “Dharmata” and “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” are the core essences of the “Buddhist Dharma”, and so we should focus and concentrate our full forces in the propagation of these teachings in order that the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma” can really be preserved. This is, indeed, the true meaning of “prolonging the Wisdom Life of the Buddha, and in the lighting up of the Lamp of the Buddha’s Mind”.

If one is skewed towards only emphasizing on doing virtuous deeds, while ignoring the core essences of

the “Buddhist Dharma”, then this will cause people to misunderstand “Buddhism” as some kind of a superstitious religious sect in asking people to “worship idols, chant and recite certain things”, and only concerns itself of doing virtuous deeds. To this end, it is no different from any “other religions”. This is, indeed, equivalent to the “termination of the Wisdom Life of the Buddha, and in the extinguishing of the Lamp of the Buddha’s Mind”. The “doing of virtuous deeds” can help one to accumulate good fortunes and merits, and with strong merits, one might then be able to make connections in learning the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma”, and can then further proceed onwards toward “spiritual elevations”, and can thus be a part of one’s Dharma practice. In this way, those mundane and worldly “virtuous deeds” can also help in assisting the expansion of “Buddhism”, but one should not “confuse the primary cause by the secondary cause, nor placing the unimportant things before the important things”. Because, after all, the “doing of virtuous deeds” is only the “mundane” and worldly affairs, and will never be able to help people to become “liberated from the cycle of karmic existence”. Whereas, the teachings on the “Dharmata” and the “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness” will, indeed, be the “spiritual ways” whereby it can help people to become “liberated from the cycle of karmic existence”, and to recover the “Dharmata” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. For those persons who have wrongly misused the “mundane” and worldly affairs in representing both “Buddhism” and its “Dharma”, their influences can be quite devastating. Hence, those who have committed such wrongdoings should deeply repent on their deeds in order to try their very best in reverting back the situation, and thus help to save both themselves and their followers who have blindly followed them.

The present and future “Buddhism” leaders must, bearing in mind the future well-beings of all sentient beings as the fundamental basis, have to restructure the focus, main points and plans for their propagation of the Holy Dharma, instead of using the criterion as to whether it will help their schools and sects to become strong and powerful as their only consideration. Furthermore, this is in no way some kind of an in-fighting between the “Sutrayana” and the “Vajrayana” within Buddhism itself. They should, instead, use the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma” to lead and guide all sentient beings, and thus emphasizing on the importance of those methods of Dharma practices that could lead them to become “liberated from the cycle of karmic existence”. At the same time, they should only rely upon the “absolute meaning sutras” in choosing those methods of Dharma practices, instead of just using a few words or sentences from some “interpretable meaning sutras” in deceiving all other sentient beings.

If all the schools and sects within Buddhism can put aside their own prejudices, and rationally use the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances” as the foundation, and mutually cooperate to complement with each other in their strengths to plan and formulate



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different levels of methods for Dharma practices, then this will be most **beneficial to all sentient beings and also to the whole of "Buddhism"** as well. On the other hand, if the different schools and sects try to use their own means of distorting the "Buddhist Sutras" for their own ulterior motives, or criticizing **irrationally and without bases** on some "Buddhist Sutras" as "fake sutras", then the greatest victims of all will be all the sentient beings, and of course the whole of "Buddhism" itself. Conversely, **the biggest beneficiaries will be all the "other religions"**. **This will only become "painful for those who love it, while joyful for those who hate it" !**

It is because the "Dharmata" and the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness" is a theoretical basis, and is so very abstract that it is not easy to be understood. Furthermore, it is not easy at all to put this into real practice. Hence, this is why that this fundamental essence of Buddhism has been **ignored by those "ignorant" Dharma propagators**. As for the "practicing ritual texts" (or "**Sadhanas**" in Tibetan) in "Tibetan Buddhism", especially those of the "**Completion Stage**" (or "**Dzog-rim**" in Tibetan) and those of the "**Great Perfection**" (or "**Dzog-chen**" in Tibetan) and Great Seal (or "**Mahamudra**" in Sanskrit), they are the **methods of Dharma practices** that are the complete methods on practicing the "Dharmata" and the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness" on such kind of **methods for Dharma practices on the "reality of the middle-way"** ("**madhyama pratipad dharmata bhuta-tathata**" in Sanskrit). And since each and every implementation procedures and details do match with the "Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence", these are, in fact, **the most effective practicing methods**. Furthermore, the detailed explanations of these "practicing ritual texts" have come to be known as the important "Guidance and Oral Pith-Instructions", which are the **true connotations**. Therefore, if the "Sutrayana" resist the "Vajrayana", then it can be said that it will be **a great loss to the whole of "Buddhism", as well as to all those sentient beings who intend to practice the Holy Dharma in order to become**

"liberated from the cycle of karmic existence" at the end of the day (please refer to the article on "The Meaning of Near-death Experiences" in the 15th Issue of the "Lake of Lotus" on the explanations of both the theory and practice of "attaining Buddhahood", as well as on the case study for illustration).

In modern days, **some** of the Dharma propagators of "Tibetan Buddhism" **only know** how to "give empowerments and conduct ritual activities", and only boasting on such things as "living buddhas, big titles, supernatural powers and psychic powers" so as to attract their "superstitious" believers and their offerings. Yet, **no explanations** on the "Dharmata" and "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness" **have been added into the practices** when they try to explain the details of all their "empowerments and practicing rituals", neither will they teach others as to how to match their practices with the "Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence". Hence, **not only were** the important "**Guidance and Oral Pith-Instructions**" all missing, **and even if they do have them, these are not matching with** the "Three-fold Emptiness of Inherent Existence". As a result, this will only attract a bunch of "superstitious" followers, and thus even some members from the "Triad Gangs" are being attracted. This has led to the behaviours and speeches of the majority of "Tibetan Buddhist" believers to have **deviated from the correct and true "Buddhist Dharma"**, which makes others to look at askance. These so-called Dharma practitioners are using the "reciting of mantras" as a means to fulfill their own worldly desires. Even though they might, once in a while, practice the rituals and only in rare occasions, they will only beg for fortunes, longevity, health and good luck. Such moves will only bring demise upon **the correct and true "Buddhist Dharma" and the whole of "Tibetan Buddhism"** and will lead it to fall into the "**Dharma-Ending Age**" by simply turning it into a "hollow shelf with no substance in it".

Why is it that the "Sutrayana" has resisted the "Vajrayana"? It might be because they are suspicious of their practices **since they do not understand the connotations behind them**. But, probably another reason has actually got to do with the kinds of behaviors that were exhibited by those "Vajrayana" propagators and their followers in the eyes of the "Sutrayana" propagators and their followers. One of the reasons for their resistances is that it puts deep respects upon the "Gurus" in "Vajrayana Buddhism". Yet, in recent times, there are so many "fake gurus" that have frequently emerged who have **made use of their so-called commands of respecting the "Gurus"** in abusing their followers and believers, and in doing whatever they like. **These are the black sheep of the family!** The happenings of all these cases have been blamed by the "Sutrayana" propagators and their followers, and so they have used the excuse "to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it" in attacking the whole of "Vajrayana Buddhism". There is a Chinese saying that "there must be some withered branches

in a big tree, and there must also be some beggars in a big clan". No matter what religions, or what schools or sects of Buddhism it may be, and even though it may have a rigorous system, it is still unavoidable that various kinds of scandals and frauds will happen. But, after all, having some kind of a system with some criteria should always be better than having no systems with no criteria. Hence, the Founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Guru Padmasambhava, has warned us time and again: **"Not to examine the teacher is like drinking poison; not to examine the disciple is like leaping from a precipice."** In fact, the problem has nothing to do with "respecting the Gurus", simply because the "respect for a Guru" is a necessary condition for **practicing successfully in the actual practices** of "Vajrayana Buddhism". The actual and fundamental problem really lies in **whether those seekers of Dharma teachings have used the above-captioned important criteria to observe and choose their "Gurus" or not?**

Some may ask: How to observe? Use what kinds of criteria to observe? The Ven. Kashyapa (one of the great disciples of the Buddha) had asked the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni on these questions, and the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had replied by using the "Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances" as the answers to his questions. These "Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances" can be described as the criteria, standards, specifications and norms, and thus some people have even named them as the **"Vows of the Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances"**, simply because if one does not rely upon these criteria to practice, then one will never be able to recover the "Dharmata". Before the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had entered into "mahaparinirvana", the Ven. Ananda (another great disciple of the Buddha) had asked the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni by saying: "if the 'Lord Buddha' had left us, then **whom should we rely upon as our teacher?**"

In the chapter **"On Bequeathed Teaching" No. 1 [0901a24]** of the **"Mahaparinirvana-sutra"**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had replied by saying that the "keeping of disciplines and vows" can help to arise in oneself the profound "Meditation" (or **"Samadhi" in Sanskrit**) and "Wisdom" (or **"Prajna" in Sanskrit**). Yet, there are different kinds of "disciplines and vows": there are those "disciplines and vows" for "Hinayana", "disciplines and vows" for "Mahayana", and "disciplines and vows" for "Vajrayana". As the Ven. Ananda was practicing "Hinayana", and so the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had replied by saying that: **"Sila-Paramita" is your master** (**"Sila-Paramita" in Sanskrit, with its abbreviation simply as "Sila", has its direct translation as 'cool and refreshing', which is the true meaning of "disciplines and vows"**). Hence, to rely upon this **"Sila-Paramita"** for one's Dharma practice will enable one to achieve the profound "Meditation" (or **"Samadhi"**) and "Wisdom" (or **"Prajna"**). However, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni did not mention that the keeping of these "disciplines and vows" can help one to recover the "Dharmata". Nowadays, some people

have **distorted** these teachings altogether by saying that: "The Lord Buddha himself had mentioned that after his passing away, all kinds of persons should not be the teachers, but one can only 'rely upon the disciplines and vows as teachers', and that one should only have 'to rely upon the Dharma, but do not rely upon the person who expounds it'".

The personal "Guru" of Ven. Ananda was the Lord Buddha himself. After the Lord Buddha's "mahaparinirvana", there was, of course, no one else who could become Ven. Ananda's "Guru". Therefore, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had replied to Ven. Ananda by saying that: "You should rely upon 'disciplines and vows' (**"Sila-Paramita"**) as your 'master'", but then the Lord Buddha **did not say that this is the "only master"**, simply because that even after the Lord Buddha's "mahaparinirvana", the Lord Buddha himself was still continued to be Ven. Ananda's "Guru". Hence, the answer that the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had given to Ven. Ananda was specifically for Ven. Ananda himself, but it can also be the same answer that all common people can follow. This is because all **"disciplines and vows"** are actually **some of the criteria for one's Dharma practices**, and are the necessary **criteria in reaching certain standards and levels**. Some criteria can assist one to **accumulate more virtues and merits**, while some other criteria can help one to **elevate one's own wisdom**. Similarly, some other criteria can help you to be **free from sufferings**, while some other criteria can assist you to **gain rebirths in the Buddhas' Pure-lands**. Furthermore, some other criteria can help you to **become liberated from the cycle of karmic existence**, while some other criteria can assist you to **recover the "Dharmata" in order to "attain Buddhahood"**.

From what we have mentioned earlier, it can be seen that the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had **actually given the most correct and true, as well as the most complete, answer** to Ven. Kashyapa. Those who have distorted the Buddhist Dharma, may be either out of "intentional" or "unintentional" reasons, must be very "careful" about their own doings, or else one will have broken their "disciplines and vows". The best way for one to do is to first quote the exact sources on the "original contents" of the "Buddhist Sutras", and then by **relying upon these "original contents"** for further in-depth discussions and studies, in order that one's **"true wisdom" will slowly emerge**. If not quoting the "original contents" of the "Buddhist Sutras", then one is only using **one's personal interpretation to wantonly comment on them**, which not only will generate **"ignorance" for oneself**, but will also be **suspected of trying to "fool other people"**.

In front of the "Buddhist Dharma", all sentient beings do not understand them and will be just like a piece of white paper. Hence, they will have to rely upon the "persons" to **explain** them, or to rely upon those "persons" who publish books to **explain** them, or to rely upon those "persons" who have **memorized, re-described and recorded** those "Dharma Texts", or to rely upon those "persons" who

have practical experiences behind them in guiding and instructing others. In the end, they still cannot do away without “relying upon the persons”. As such, if some people stubbornly insist that in the practicing of the “Buddhist Dharma”, one cannot “rely upon a person”, then this is actually an absurd “ostrich strategy” which also shows that these people actually only “have a very superficial knowledge” of the “Buddhist Sutras”. Yet, they continue to use these “superficial knowledge” in attacking other schools and thus showing how “ignorant” they are. Yet, they claim themselves to be the teachers of the “Buddhist Dharma”, such that it not only mislead others but also make flaws in distorting the correct and true “Buddhist Dharma”, and thus have broken the “heavy disciplines and vows” in “degrading the Buddhist Dharma and in defaming the Holy Dharma”. As for all those sentient beings who chose to follow these Buddhist teachers, then how can they avoid having broken the same “heavy disciplines and vows” as their teachers?

Therefore, those “persons” who guide other people are extremely important, and must be chosen very carefully, and so one should follow the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances” in order to make a choice. Otherwise, it will only end up in the “blinds leading the blinds, and all will fall into the fire of hell”! In order to properly distinguish the differences among “authentic versus fake lineages, authentic versus fake gurus, authentic versus fake teachers, authentic versus fake teachings, authentic versus fake Buddhist Dharmas”, as well as for the basic foundations of one’s own “faith”, all these should be based upon the criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances” as set out by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

The Wrong Directions of “Faith”

For many people who started off to enter into the threshold of “Buddhism”, and then later on established their so-called foundation of “faith” and belief based upon the wrong directions of either the so-called “blessing powers of the Buddhas, or on the rescues by supernatural powers, or in the fulfilling of their own worldly desires”, such that they have led themselves to fall prey into the desires and wants of “superstitions”. In particular, this kind of situation is even worse for those so-called “Vajrayana” followers and believers. These wrong directions of “faith” from those followers and believers help to promote many “fake gurus and fake masters” such that they have led themselves into a stage of “doomed eternity” (please refer to the articles on the “Authentic Versus Fake Lineages and Their Related Meanings” in Issues 12, 13 and 14 of the “Lake of Lotus” on the dangers of “doomed eternity”). Indeed, even though some of these believers have already met an “authentic Guru”, but since the true meaning of the “Buddhist Dharma” is to teach oneself to recover the “Dharmata” and so such an “authentic Guru” will only guide the sentient beings to tame their own

“minds” but will not fulfill their worldly desires. As such, these “superstitious” sentient beings will eventually feel disappointed. In this way, these “superstitious” sentient beings will be like “those people who have entered into a mountain of treasures but have also left it empty-handed”, as they could not receive the real benefits of the “Buddhist Dharma”.

Then, for those “fake gurus” who will be meeting with those “superstitious” sentient beings is simply the fitting in of “exactly what these fake gurus would like to wish for”, and so those fake gurus can “cheat these sentient beings on both their monies and bodies”. However, when the “authentic Gurus” meet with these “superstitious” sentient beings, it is indeed not an easy thing to cope with. There was one case in which a middle-aged divorced woman, who has learnt “Sutrayana” for over ten years, thought that these teachings were not powerful enough and could hardly fulfill her own desires, and thus decided to change over to follow the teachings of “Vajrayana Buddhism”. She has finally found a world-renowned young “reincarnated Dharma practitioner” (or “Tulku in Tibetan”) from whom to learn the Buddhist Dharma. As her desires for love has been unfulfilled, and her divorce has made her to have serious “depression and pains”, resulting in her having uncontrollable emotions, but often believing herself to have already practiced to the stage of having supernatural sensations with paranormal induction forces. As such, she has projected her desires onto the reincarnated Tulku. She thinks that this reincarnated Tulku had been her husband in one of her many past lives before, and so she has tried hard to closely get in touch with this Tulku. She also believes that this reincarnated Tulku must have “supernatural powers”, and so she has confirmed that this Tulku had used “supernatural power” to enter into her dreams to take up the responsibility as her husband in fulfilling her own desires. When she is emotionally unstable, she will lose her tempers and speak out on the so-called wrongdoings of this reincarnated Tulku.

Because of her “faith” that was built upon the wrong directions, it ends up that this woman’s illness is getting worse, while this reincarnated Tulku has innocently become the scapegoat. Even though this reincarnated Tulku behave in a fit and proper manner, has been using



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his utmost efforts in propagating the Holy Dharma, **has never publish any books**, nor has written any discourses or discussions concerning the practice of “Yab-yum”, and so he should not have been brought into such troubles. **Unfortunately, his well-known reputation has thus been stained and ruined**. He has been greatly harassed but found no ways to defend, and such an incident has even contaminated the whole of “Tibetan Buddhism”. It is, indeed, a great pity that there are so many sentient beings who have built their “trust” upon the blind faith of “supernatural powers”. In this way, many more of these kinds of troublesome people who are **admiring the “supernatural powers”, but do not want to practice** at all, will unceasingly emerge.

Similar cases are not rare at all. Another middle-aged, wealthy but divorced, woman believes that “Tibetan Buddhism” do possess great attractions, and so she wanted to learn teachings from a middle-aged male teacher. After a while, she has started to infatuate with this teacher without herself noticing it. Everyday, she would find some excuses to go to the Buddhist hall and obsessively gazing at this teacher for half a day, or even the whole day. She had given real estate property and a car to this teacher. Finally, this teacher **could not resist such kinds of temptations** and so he has finally abandoned his teacher’s position to follow after this lady. As a result, it becomes a case of having a “golden house to hide away the teacher”. **These kinds of stories have happened before in many religions as well**. Therefore, if one wants to learn “Buddhism” but then **have one’s own “faith” built upon the wrong directions**, this will only drag oneself into troubles because of vanity. For example, there were cases that one would want to become the “wife of a Tulku” (or “**Buddhabhagavati**” in Sanskrit) in order to be envied by all others. As a result, consequences of various negative karma will soon follow. This is actually **hurting oneself, the others and the whole of “Buddhism”**. After all, “desires” is a kind of “negative energy”. If one is “seeking all the time but cannot get it”, then this “negative energy” will turn inwards and **attack oneself internally**, thus making one’s body to suffer from **painful illness** and mental damage. If this “negative energy” **projects outwards**, then it will **“lead the demons to enter into one’s body”**, and then one will suffer from various uncommon illnesses, as well as many serious mental problems. Indeed, this is a very sad tragedy, with **“desires” as the “arch-criminal” of them all** (please refer to the article on the “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice(15)” in Issue 15 of the “Lake of Lotus” on the solutions for “desires and adversities”).

The Chinese translation on the terminology of “Tulku” as the so-called “Living Buddha” is actually **a misleading term**. The original meaning of the Tibetan word “Tulku” is actually a “reincarnated Dharma practitioner”, and is not a “Buddha who is still living”. Regardless of whether his/her previous life is “a Dharma practitioner, a Lineage Guru, or a Master”, or whether he/she is just an ordinary

person, but once the person has gone through the process of reincarnation, all his/her past memories will then become the “hidden memories”, and so his/her present **ability will be just like any other ordinary people**. They will **need to learn afresh** the Buddhist Dharma, and only through practicing the Holy Dharma will they be able to **arouse their “awareness of the Dharmata”**. Hence, whether these “Gurus” are coming back as “reincarnated Dharma practitioners”, or whether or not he/she has adopted back the “title” of his/her previous life (no matter how big and renowned it was), or whether one had the “realization” in his/her previous life (no matter how great it was), he/she will still need to “start afresh”. Thus, in the choosing of a “Guru”, one should not be **psychologically superstitious by throwing yourself into impasse**. No matter what kinds of “Gurus”, one **must** have to rely upon the criteria of the “Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances” in order to go for further observations for their **examinations and verifications** (please refer to the article on the “Authentic Versus Fake Lineages and Their Related Meanings” in Issue 12 of the “Lake of Lotus” on the other criteria of **examination and verification**).

Learning Buddhist Dharma should rely upon faith, yet there are criteria that need to be based;
Four Principles of Reliances and Non-Reliances in choosing for the correct Dharma and the correct person;
Dharmata is Neither Existence Nor Voidness, relying on this will help to determine authentic from fake;
Should not follow those ignorant people, but only follow those who knew and have realized.

... (To be Continued)

This article is welcome to be distributed to all parties, provided that the exact source and the author’s name should be cited for acknowledgement.

Request for Reference Cases:

In order to let virtuous believers in future not to be poisoned by the “fake gurus and fake lineages”, we here sincerely invite those virtuous believers who have been poisoned to mail us and disclose to us those cheating details, the degrees of damages, and the sham methods used by those “fake gurus”. We sincerely hope to use these case studies to serve as warnings and revelations to the general public so that they will not fall into those traps again. All these cases will be kept strictly confidential, and alias will be used for the persons within the cases in the articles, with the cases to be described in a pin-pointed fashion.

The Contemporary Mahasiddha with Many Prophecies --- Our Lord of Refuge, His Holiness Chadrak Gyendun Rinpoche (10)

by His Holiness' Humble Disciples Yeshe Thaye & Pema Lhadren



Namo Gurubhya!

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

Palden Tsa'wai Lama Channo!

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

Emaho!

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

The Most Powerful "Fearless and Compassionate Generosity"



His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche

In particular, His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche's enlightened mind is filled with the mind of awakening. As a sign of its fruition, He has a yearly practice of giving the most powerful ceremony on the "compassionate refuge and generosity of fearlessness" by freeing millions and millions of weary, unprotected animals, such as fish, frogs, eels, snakes, birds, cattles, and so on. Donations for the freeing of animals flocked from all over the world, in full support of His Holiness' enlightened activity, and so this is an annual huge project for the freeing of countless helpless lives, using the very limited resources that His Holiness has for the greatest benefits to all sentient beings. There are some people who have doubts about this: "For the lives of



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche and His daughter Ven. Tsemo Saraswati



animals, you might free them today, but for tomorrow they might be eaten by others, so their final destiny is death anyway. Then, what is the **meaning** of freeing them?"

In the article of ***"The Benefits of Saving the Lives of Other Living Beings"*** written by His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche Himself (please refer to the Issue 5 of the "Lake of Lotus"), it is mentioned: "Behind all these teachings, there is one single fact of cardinal importance: that on this earth, a human being can commit no greater sin than taking the life of another living being. By implication, there is no bigger source of accumulating merit than saving life... We can praise and please our Lord Buddha in no better way than by doing all we can to save the lives of **innocent, mute and defenceless** animals and birds, fish and insects and thereby **grant them the precious gift of life.**"

For those people whose intentions are pure, during their freeing of the animals, it will help to rid themselves of the "three poisons" (of greed, hatred and ignorance) in their "mind-training" practices, and

will also have practical benefits in their "karmic causes and results". **As for those animals, which can be blessed and freed by such a realized master as His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche Himself, they will be sown a very positive seed of the "cause" to be swiftly released from their animal bodies in their "minds", so that their chances of escaping from the "three lower realms"**



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche

will be greatly increased. This is the real meaning for the freeing of animals ! (Please refer to both the book and the CD on the "Release of Animals and the Law of Karma", published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association.)

For such a great realized Master (Mahasiddha) who has achieved the highest level of Dzogchen attainments – His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche – now in his mid-nineties, still tirelessly and endlessly travels to Calcutta, India every year for the freeing of fish and other animals, do you still think it is meaningless? As lowly as we are, in terms of both the study and practice of the Holy Dharma, can we still say that there is no such a "Law of Cause and Effect"? **Why do we still want to deceive both ourselves and others?** Please carefully examine our own practices, and do not just pay lip services to such kinds of **empty talks like "don't be attached", "everything is empty"**, otherwise we will just end up in leading both ourselves and others astray!

His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche teaches us by setting a personal and very good example of merging the Dharma with everyday life by practicing his "meditation" in "action". "Is this very simple?" "Of course not! If yes, can you really do it?" "So, it must be very difficult!" "Well, on the other hand, it is not too difficult if we can really put in our efforts with great determination!"



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche





This photo of H.H. Chadral Rinpoche was taken during the Ceremony for the Freeing of Fish in Calcutta, India back in December of 1999.

Again, there are other Dharma practitioners who have said that: "We eat the meat of animals so that we can have karmic connections with them, so that we can save them by our Dharma practices!" However, we have never heard of such kind of a saying from our great realized Master, His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche, Himself. So, we just wonder who are those great Dharma practitioners who would make such kind of a claim? We have to take this very seriously because their words and deeds will influence a lot of Dharma practitioners who are following them, and so this will, in turn, involve how many lives? How many causes and effects? Even though when that great Dharma practitioner may have the certainty of liberating him/herself from the cyclic existence, can his/her followers have the same kind of certainty to do so? Will those animals whose bodies have been eaten by them be really saved? Will the toxic substances inside one's own body, from eating meats, be cleansed by itself?



His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche



His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche



His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche (right), Mr. Saraf (middle), and Ven. Tsemo Saraswati (left).



Newspapers reported on the news of H.H. Chadral Rinpoche's release of cattles in Siliguri, India back in 2004.

Hence, if one has practiced "Dhyana" to a certain stage, one will be able to have a deeper analysis on the answers to these questions, and will clearly come to know and **marvel at the deep meaning and great significance of the "real life example"** of His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche! At this Degenerate Age, when rights and wrongs are always confused, when things are becoming diverted and perverted, and when the Holy Dharma is being corrupted and distorted, **the teachings of His Holiness Chadral Rinpoche's words and deeds is like a fresh gust stream of pure and clean nectars, not being contaminated by this most ungrateful and sinful worldly context!** This stream helps to cleanse, moisturize, clear the doubts and save the hearts and minds of countless sentient beings. At the same time, His Holiness' great enlightened activities bless their "body, speech and mind", so as to dispel their ignorance of attachment and to increase their wisdom! 🙏

Kind and compassionate to those in the ocean of suffering,

Bestowing the cause of liberation through freeing them,

Do not find excuses to satisfy one's own lusts,

The pure example of the Holy Saint will cleanse all doubts!

..... (To be Continued)

The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death :

The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (15)

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

For ordinary Near-Death Experience (NDE) survivors, even if they have religious beliefs, it is extremely rare for them to become “psychics” even before they come across NDEs. Therefore, when the NDE survivors recalled their posthumous situations, most of them could only **roughly describe the scenarios that they had encountered after their apparent deaths**. Since they **were not psychologically prepared** for the scenes which had suddenly appeared, neither did they have **any guidance** through spiritual teachings, nor did they have any knowledge about how the “posthumous world” operates, and so it was very difficult for them to **cautiously observe the subtle changes** in minute details during the course of **rapid proceedings** after death. It was even more difficult for them to comprehend **the interrelated connections** of these meticulous changes **and the reasons behind them**.

After all, are there any NDE cases that are experienced by people who have the “psychic abilities”? And that these people who have the “psychic abilities” might even know of those religious beliefs which include the knowledge about how the “posthumous world” operates? If there existed such kind of NDE cases, would their contents be very **different** from the rest? Would it be possible that, through these cases, they will be able to reveal more on the **abstruseness of Mother Nature**? Would these abstruseness dovetail with both the **teachings of Buddhism and of sciences**?

Special NDEs of the “Psychics”

Case 19

Satana was a native inhabitant in America (that is, an American Indian) who **possessed the “psychic abilities”**. She had studied in India, and she had studied in great depths on the teachings of Hinduism. She could be said to be **a spiritual practitioner whose practices are based upon the teachings of Hinduism**.

During her stay in India for her pursuit of spiritual studies, she had paid a visit to her friend at one time. Due to courtesy, she dared not refuse the offer of a glass of cold tap water by her friend. After taking it for a while, she felt extremely uncomfortable in her whole body. She went home and her



condition deteriorated very quickly. In less than two hours, she had developed high fever and her mind was unclear. She suffered and struggled in bed. A large portion of the pink bedspread was being wet by her sweat.

The following is her self-narration:

“At first, I found myself sitting at the rear of the bed with both legs crossed. This was my usual sitting posture while I was in India. I was looking at my ‘other self’ whose body was tossing, turning to and fro in bed, and was fallen into coma. I saw that the bedspread was now green in color, which was a color of healing, and so I knew that my body could recover. The ‘self’ who sat at the rear of the bed looking at my body in coma was completely relaxed. I called this relaxed body the ‘observer’.

This ‘observer’ suddenly sensed some sort of a ‘lingqi’ (an invisible existence of an essence of energy) upon its left shoulder. Through my experiences and knowledge during trainings in meditation, I knew this ‘lingqi’ was the ‘eye-witness’. Let me explain it: this ‘eye-witness’ could be said to be my second body, which had no cognitive ability and could not communicate with my other body, the ‘observer’. The ‘eye-witness’ did not have any thoughts, and so it merely has no cognitive ability and comprehension. It was only an ‘eye-witness’. I knew some wizards who said that the ‘God of Death’ would stand on the left shoulder, and I so believed that this second body of the ‘eye-witness’ was what they were referring to.

Once I sensed that there was this ‘lingqi’ upon my left shoulder, I was forcefully dragged into the ‘eye-witness’ immediately. From that moment onwards, I moved swiftly because I knew that I had to chase after that ‘beam of light’, and should not be interrupted by any other things. As all other matters had already been finished, so I should not think of them any longer. I told myself to use all of my might to chase

after the light. Hence, I dashed off towards that ‘beam of bright light’. When I floated up in the air, I found that what surrounded me were the dainty scenes of great elegance. They were so beautiful that I couldn’t help lingering around, almost forgotten to move forward. I could ‘achieve everything that I would think of’ and ‘could do anything at my own will!’ The beauty of tints and sounds were so diversified and exquisitely touching that it has greatly exceeded what mundane people could have thought of them. I believed that many of the inspirations of many great musicians and artists must have come from here. I am very sure that all those who had crossed the threshold and entered into this place would want to stay behind, simply because it was just too beautiful.

However, I knew that I must have to maintain my ‘attentiveness’ and sustain to enter into that ‘beam of light’, and should not be stalled by the scenic beauty. I unceasingly penetrated through that ‘beam of light’, passed through it, and then kept on overtaking it. At first, I had transcended the ‘time’ element, and finally I had also transcended the ‘space’ element, and thus had arrived at a certain ‘point without space’. At the same time, I had also transcended any kind of ‘physical body’, and had just left behind my ‘self-awareness’. In abandoning the ‘physical body’, I felt freedom without the slightest bondage. Not until I had abandoned my ‘physical body’, I had always thought that there was no such thing as ‘flawless perfection’ in this world, but then by now I could actually be able to realize this.

When I further penetrated through that ‘beam of light’, I entered into a state of ecstasy. It was not a joy but a state of ecstasy which was beyond any descriptions. I continued to move onward in overtaking it, and even transcended the level of ‘experience’ itself. At that very moment, I had discovered some sort of a freedom which was ‘without any emotions and experiences’. It even went so far as of having simply without the existence of the ‘self’. When I proceeded even further in overtaking it, it had become a state without a ‘single consciousness’ while existed only in a endless and boundless vast expanse. My ‘point of consciousness’



was just like a tiny drop of water that **has been completely dissolved** in the vast great ocean.

I then returned back to my 'physical body'. When I woke up in the hospital, I noticed that I had the '**self-awareness**' and my mind was very clear. I realized that there was **no "separated individuality"**, and that all things had been **"combined into one" in union**. The first thing in my mind after waking up was that I must have to remember the direction of each and every stage, so that I could **inform others as to how to proceed**."

Just One Step Away from the Experience of "Attaining Buddhahood"

Satana **did not** describe how she had returned back to her 'physical body' of the mundane world from the **United Oneness with Universe (or "Dharmadhatu" in Sanskrit)**.

But one thing is certain: that she had not yet fully **recovered** her **"intrinsic nature"** (that is, the **originally-possessed pristine awareness which is primordially and inherently possessed by all sentient beings**. Please refer to the articles on "The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences" in Issues 4 and 5 of "The Lake of Lotus" concerning detailed explanations on the 'intrinsic nature' and the 'Dharmakaya'. The '**Dharmadhatu**': the boundless domain of the 'Dharmakaya'), even though she had been very close to it, and was thus just one step away from the experience of "attaining Buddhahood". In other words, she was very close to the "attainment of Buddhahood" (through the recovering of **all** of one's '**intrinsic abilities**') as an ultimate result during this particular experience.

Even though Satana had only studied and practiced the teachings of Hinduism, and had no prior knowledge of Buddhism, there were **certain methods of practice** in Hinduism that were **quite near to** those in Buddhism, and so she was able to **meticulously master** some of the techniques in the **recovery** of her **"intrinsic nature"**. She was also **well versed** in some of the **advanced practical techniques and knacks** that are especially available only in "Tibetan Buddhism".

Then **why** had she failed? That is the **"real abstruseness of Mother Nature"**. Do you want to know? Then, please try to **expand the amplitudes of your mind, horizon and vision**. Do not be **opinionated** about her, but think about her **points of success**:

1. **Mastering the posthumous situation** – Satana **knew** the **modes of operation** in the "posthumous world", and so she "had not been stirred up by the mundane **emotions and desires**. Instead, she

waited quietly in just observing her 'physical body', waiting for the right moment to come, and then chasing after the 'bright light'".

2. **Outstanding ability in determination** – she **abandoned** the exquisite environment of 'heaven', **transcended** the clinging onto ecstasy, **did not grasped** on any physical body, and **attempted** to fuse into the "Dharmadhatu" of the Universe.
3. **Unshaken ability of concentration** – she was able to maintain her **concentration** even when she was **forcefully dragged into** an unknown environment so as **not to miss the opportunity** to chase after the 'bright light'. Under the **temptations** of the exquisite environment of 'heaven' and the state of ecstasy, she was still able to maintain her **concentration** and **not to be reined** by the situation. Under the **habitual tendencies** of possessing 'physical bodies', she was still able to keep her **concentration** without any aspirations and **not to be intertwined** by the 'serial **habitual** desires'.
4. **The wisdom of unselfishness** – she would not give up the opportunity of merging into the 'bright light', due to **one's own selfishness in trying to keep one's 'ego'**, by attempting to 'unite into oneness' with the "Dharmadhatu of Egolessness". The first thing that came to her mind upon awakening in the hospital was in trying to remember the direction of each stage, so that she could be able to advise others on how to proceed, and thus **pave the road for her countless successors**.

Being a Buddhist disciple, **do you agree** with the kinds of merits that were shown by a Hindu disciple? When swapping her position with yours, **would you be able to do the same kind of things**? Do you feel **abashed of not being able to be "equally good"**? Do you feel that your spiritual practice is **rather superficial and theoretical in nature**, but not pragmatic enough? Would you be **easily defeated** in the posthumous battle when facing even the mildest practical challenges?

One may be so full of conceit thinking that: I am **well-learned in Buddhist teachings and highly-skilled in its Dharma practice**, I am already a **teacher** of others, I am able to comprehend or recall the Sutras and their discourses, I am able to recite the Holy Names of the Buddhas and their mantras, as well as to recite the Sutras in countless times, I am able to practice meditation and contemplation, I am able to concentrate on the visualization of various Tantric rituals and practices, and have been in retreats for many times. With all that behind oneself, then, may we ask the question that, if you do not look at the answer (which we will give below), "do you really know the **reasons for Satana's failure**? And **how many reasons**

do you really know?" Although the following answers might not be the most thorough and comprehensive, it is good to collect different ideas in order to depict a more complete picture. It is advisable to do some further studies together about the matter, in order to assist countless sentient beings in the remedy of shortcomings so as to make great strides towards success. Try not to "confine our visions", otherwise our advancements will be obstructed.

The Theories, Trainings and Practical Strategies of "Attaining Buddhahood"

If one would want to recover one's own "intrinsic nature" in order to attain "perfect enlightenment" (or "Buddhahood"), then all those merits that had been exhibited by Satana should not be omitted. The omission of any one of the merits would only lead to failures. The reason why Satana had failed is due to her lack of the following "knowledge and training". For such a talent, it is really a pity that she had failed as a result of the inadequacies of merits and wisdom.

1. The doubts and wrong cognitions concerning the posthumous occurrence of several 'bodies' -- according to the tenet that Satana had received, it would believe that there will be two 'physical bodies' after death, one of which is known as the "observer" while the other one is known as the "eye-witness". Some of the wizards would mention that the "eye-witness" is considered as the "God of Death". Some people who believe in Taoism of China would claim that the soul of a person is composed of "different entities". Other tenets of some other religions, or even of the different sects of the New Age, claim that the human soul is divided into several layers or levels. What on earth are they -- those two



The Hindu "God of Death"

(or more) 'bodies' -- that had occurred after death? If this sort of misconceptions is not corrected, then what kind of obstructions would occur on the path for one's recovery of the "intrinsic nature" in attaining "perfect enlightenment" (or "Buddhahood")? How long-lasting and how intense would its damaging effects be? What would be the explanations in Buddhism?

With his "wisdoms of realization" in the "attainment of Buddhahood", the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had explained "all the phenomena of Mother Nature" in a

most comprehensive, most thoroughly and pertaining to the truth within the Buddhist teachings. It could be said that it is a kind of natural phenomenon of and a function of the "mind". Buddhism considers the "mind" as the cardinal subject of all our spiritual functions. There are eight different kinds of functions of the "mind", and the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni called it as the "phenomena of the mind" (the "citta" in Sanskrit).

Among the eight different functions of the "mind", the most basic and fundamental of them all is of the "Eighth Consciousness" (or "Alaya-vijnana" in Sanskrit). "Alaya" is a Sanskrit word meaning "storehouse". The Chinese Discourse on the "Chapter on the Elaboration of the Profound Meanings of Mahayana" has mentioned that "Consciousness" is another name for the 'Mind'. Hence, 'Consciousness' is 'Mind'. In simple terms, 'Consciousness' is a kind of 'Energy'. The characteristic of the "Eighth Consciousness" is like a warehouse, or the hard disk of a computer. All kinds of matters and affairs that had occurred in the past countless lifetimes would have been stored in the "Eighth Consciousness" regardless of whether they are good or bad. The "Eighth Consciousness" is a place for the stashing of all karmic forces of all sentient beings (the web of "karmic forces": due to both virtuous and wicked deeds amassed through countless past lifetimes, the linkages of the mental strength of both one's inner self and of others are crisscrossing and inter-influencing each other, so as to form the network of tractions. This is known as the "karmic network". Please refer to the DVD on "The Inconceivable Law of Karma", published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association) and is the cardinal subject for the "cycle of karmic existence" (or "Samsara" in Sanskrit). It has existed ever since time immemorial, and will last forever without an end. Even though it goes through endless cycles of various lifetimes, it will never be deteriorated or annihilated.

The "Eighth Consciousness" is the combination of the "intrinsic nature" with the "mundane deluded mind", a fusion of both "awareness" and "attachment to ignorance", and so all sentient beings have the ability of "self-awareness". Every thought or notion, or every word or deed will form "a seed of karmic force", and so it is called a "karmic seed", or simply "seed" (or "bija" in Sanskrit), and can be conceived of as some kind of a "mental strength" with memory functions to be stored inside the "Eighth Consciousness". Since the "Eighth Consciousness" is merely responsible for the storage function, it does not have the function of differentiation. However, the "habitual nature" of all sentient beings is fond of looking outwards to explore and grasp onto concepts and things of the external environment. For the convenience of operation, another kind of function, namely the "Seventh Consciousness" (or "Manas-vijnana" in Sanskrit), is thus derived from the "Eighth

Consciousness” through one’s “mental strength”. “Manas” is a Sanskrit word meaning calculation or conjecture which are the functions of the “Mind”, and is the noumenon of one’s “Mental Consciousness” (or “Mano-vijnana” in Sanskrit, or simply the “Sixth Consciousness”).

As the “Seventh Consciousness” is rooted from the “Eighth Consciousness” and only comes into being for the fulfillment of desires, it is the foundation for the “mental strength of desires”. In this way, it is influenced by the “mental strengths of greed, hatred and ignorance” that has been stored inside the “Eighth Consciousness” and grasps onto the “images projected by these negative forces”, thus deeming it that there is the existence of an “ego” or a “selfhood” (known as “ego attachment” in Buddhism). In the course of a lifetime, a distorted “nature of mind”, which was addicted to one’s own “ego”, has gradually formed. It consistently and ceaselessly plots for only the selfish benefits and gains of self-concerns and self-protection. Therefore, the “Seventh Consciousness” could be considered as the center for handling selfishness and self-concerns. In this way, it makes the “intrinsic nature” of the “Eighth Consciousness” to become more dim and blurred, as well as more deeply hidden.

When a person’s “nature of selfishness and self-concerns” has become even more aggravated, he/she would then wish to obtain and garner even more benefits from the externals, then the “Sixth Consciousness” (or “Mano-vijnana” in Sanskrit, or simply the “Mental Consciousness”) is formed, which is the “function of application” of the “Seventh Consciousness” (or “Manas”). Both are parts of the “Mental Consciousness”, with the “Seventh Consciousness” as its “noumenon” and the “Sixth Consciousness” as its “function of application”.

The “Sixth Consciousness” is the integral center

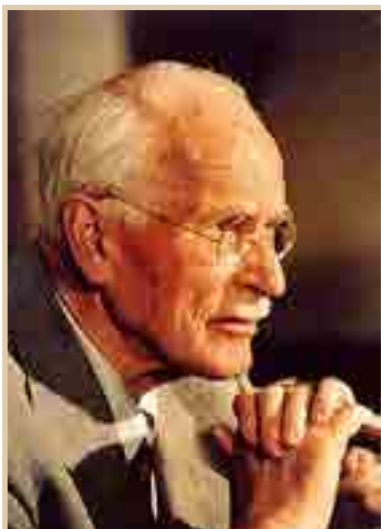


Sigmund Freud

of all psychological and mental activities. All our sensations of “seeing, hearing, feelings”, as well as “perceptions, cognitions, thoughts and judgments” of all sorts are guided and directed by the “Sixth Consciousness”. In western psychology, the “Sixth Consciousness” belongs to the level of “consciousness”, while the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness” belong to the domain of the “unconscious”. Due to the fact that the “Seventh Consciousness” is the “root of the Mental Consciousness”, while the “Eighth Consciousness” is the basic ground and root of all the phenomena (or “dharma” in Sanskrit) of the universe, hence all the activities of the “Sixth Consciousness” (or the various discriminations associated with the “Mental Consciousness”) are doubtlessly influenced by both the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness”.

As such, in order to let the “Sixth Consciousness” to manage so many examinations and judgments of things, it will require quite a number of “instruments” to help collect the necessary information and data. Hence, some more functions have been derived from the “Sixth Consciousness”, namely: the “First Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Eye Consciousness”), the “Second Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Ear Consciousness”), the “Third Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Nose Consciousness”), the “Fourth Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Tongue Consciousness”), the “Fifth Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Body Consciousness”). All these five kinds of discriminations or “consciousnesses” (or “vijnana” in Sanskrit) are, indeed, the five kinds of “energies” that are relying upon the five “sense organs or faculties” (or “indriya” in Sanskrit), namely: the eyes, the ears, the noses, the tongues and the bodies, for the collections of the five “sense data” (or “visaya” in Sanskrit) from the externals, namely: the forms (the shape and imagery of a substance), sounds, odors, tastes and the tactile sensation, which are the five kinds of sensations and perceptions. The “Sixth Consciousness” also relies upon the “mental organ” for the distinctions of “all kinds of phenomena” (mundane worldly matters) known as “sense data and/or conceptual objects”.

After having collected all sorts of information and data, in accordance with the habitual guidance and influences of both the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness” as its main criteria, the “Sixth Consciousness” would then classify these information and data under its own “subjective judgments”, or even distortion respectively, and then hand them over to the “Seventh Consciousness” with its provisions of the conclusive information and data. The “Seventh



Carl Jung

Consciousness” would then act as a “messenger”, and then further pass on these information and data to the “Eighth Consciousness” for storage.

Sigmund Freud, being the founder of Western Psychoanalysis, was the first thinker in Western intellectual history who had placed

great importance to the functions of the “unconscious” of human beings. Carl Jung, another founder of Analytical Psychology, had further elaborated on the theory of the “collective unconscious”. He had done in-depth studies on the different aspects of the Eastern traditions and cultures, including such aspects as “Buddhism, meditation, yogic practices”, and so on. According to the Tibetan Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup’s English rendering, Dr. Evans Wentz, a professor at Oxford University, England, had compiled and edited the first foreign translation of the “Tibetan Book of the Dead”. Indeed, it was the first translated great masterpiece on life and death in the West back in 1927. For this first foreign translation, Carl Jung had specially written his Psychological Commentary on it. After absorbing some of the thinking of Buddhism, Carl Jung had further classified the spiritual domains of human beings into three levels, namely: the “conscious” level, the “personal unconscious” level, and the “collective unconscious” level. The “personal unconscious” is just like the “warehouse of memories” in which the personally suppressed psychological complexes are stored. On the other hand, the “collective unconscious” is for the storage of the hidden primitive imageries (either “motifs” or “archetypes”) of human beings over past countless generations. These theories are very close to the idea of the “Eighth Consciousness” (or “Alaya”) in Buddhism. This is a factual example of the influence that Buddhism has made upon modern psychology.

Perhaps, someone may ask a question: given that the energies of the “First Consciousness” up to the “Fifth Consciousness” coordinate with the corresponding human organs for their collections of information, if these organs fail to function and could no longer carry out their coordination, then what will happen? Again, after a person has died and all these five human organs have already been decayed, what would happen?

In fact, there are two sorts of functions for the “Sixth Consciousness” (or the “Mental Consciousness”). The first function is that the effect of the “Mental Consciousness” arises together with one or more of the “First Consciousness” up to the “Fifth Consciousness” simultaneously for coordination with the five human organs for the collection of data, or in carrying out an action. The occurrence of both sets of entities and their mutually-echoing functions is known as the “Five-Completely-Arising Consciousnesses”. Since the functions of the “First Consciousness” up to the “Fifth Consciousness” are very weak and have no distinguishing or examining function in themselves, and so they must have to coordinate with the “Mental Consciousness” for simultaneous action. The “First Consciousness” up to the “Fifth Consciousness” are being responsible for coordination with the corresponding organs for the collection of data, while the “Mental Consciousness” is thus responsible for distinguishing and examining the various data collected in order to know what they really are respectively. Hence, the failure of any of the specific organs while a person is still alive would lead to the malfunctioning of that particular part of discrimination. For instance, if a person is blind while he is alive, he would not be able to see any images, nor can he collect any data of images. As such, the “Mental Consciousness” would not be able to make any kind of distinctions or examinations. How about the situation after a person has passed away? Since all those five organs would have already decayed, then how could one be able to collect data from the externals? So, would a blind person continue not to be able to see things posthumously? Or even more, how about the other sense organs that are not functioning, namely: deafness, anosmia, ageusia, and without tactile sensation, etc.?

Please think about this. The “mind” is the governor of everything and it can create all things. It is proclaimed that “Everything comes from the Mind” as mentioned in the “Avatamsaka Sutra”. If that is the case, then how could it be so incapable? If it is really so incapable, it would only be the self-bondage of the sentient beings, as a kind of “autism”. Hence, the “Mental Consciousness” has further developed the second function: it can function without any coordination with the “five consciousnesses” and the five organs for the collection of data, or in taking actions, and is then known as the “Incompletely-Arising Consciousness”. There are two other functions of this “Incompletely-Arising Consciousness”, namely: the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”.

While a person is still alive, the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” function in the way of mutual coordination with the “Mental Consciousness”. When the “Mental Consciousness” is distinguishing

and examining the data collected by the “First Consciousness” up to the “Fifth Consciousness” via the five human organs, it will have to go through the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” to the “Eighth Consciousness” in order to seek for similar kinds of data for the sake of analog and comparison, such that further distinctions and examinations could be carried out. It is the sequence that having collected the data and for the convenience of further distinctions and examinations, the correspondingly relevant information would be sought **thereafter**. For instance, after the collection of data by the “Eye Consciousness”, transmissions would be made to the “Eighth Consciousness” in searching for the relevant data of **images**. Similarly, after the collection of data by the “Ear Consciousness”, transmissions would be made to the “Eighth Consciousness” in searching for the relevant data of **sound**, and so on, and so forth. Hence, they are known as the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses”.

As to the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”, there is no need to rely upon the different sense organs to collect the data while a person is alive, while the **searching for instruction and information** could be made **directly** from the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness”, and it is also possible to **receive projections** from the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness” for further distinctions, examinations and applications. Since it can function all **by itself**, and so it is known as the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”. Thus, people might have numerous notions, dreams, delusions, or even suffer from **chaotic notions and images** due to excessive information. Other sorts of “**auditory hallucinations and optical illusions**” are formed due to these functions.

According to modern western psychology, experiments that were done have indicated that after images have been visualized, these would then go into the human brain, upon which the data actually collected would then be **mixed** with some other images that were **created** by the individual, as well as with images from **past memories**, and thus forming **a unique scene that only this very person could visualize**. This **newly-added** situation is some sort of a solo or mixed effect that is derived from either or both the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”. (Please refer to the VCD on “Everything Comes From the Mind”, as well as the DVD on “The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death” - Episodes 1 and 2, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association.)

When a person is dead, the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness” would be **detached from the bondage of the physical body**, and would be **able to**

collect information directly from the externals or to take actions. Thus, even if a person is either blind, or deaf, or anosmia, or ageusia, or having no tactile sensation while he was still alive, **all those functions would be revived** after the person has passed away. Hence, blind NDE survivors all said that they could see things during their near-death experiences, simply because this is the effect that has been arisen by the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”. Therefore, while a person is still alive, due to the constraints of the physical body, as well as the roles played by the “First Consciousness” to the “Fifth Consciousness” in coordination with the corresponding organs for the collection of information from **the externals**, the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness” would only search **internally** for information from the “Eighth Consciousness”, and would also receive the projected information generated internally by the “Eighth Consciousness”. After a person is dead, the constraints of the physical body had been removed, and so the channels for the collection of information from the externals were no longer available, then both the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness” **could reopen the channels to the externals**.

Some spiritual practitioners, including those of non-Buddhists, have **endeavored to develop the latent potentials** of the “Five-Consequential Consciousnesses” and the “Singly-Arising Consciousness”. Thus, while they are still alive, they could collect information from the externals without depending on the sense organs of the physical body whose capabilities are limited. **Supernatural power** such as “clairvoyance” (or “Divyam caksuh” in Sanskrit) and “divine hearing” (or “Divyam srotram” in Sanskrit) can be formed. For instance, they can see images with their ears, and can listen to sounds with the eyes, and so on (for more details, please refer to the article on the “Meaning of Near-Death Experiences(2)” in Issue 2 of the “Lake of Lotus”). The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (or “Chenresig” in Tibetan, or “Kwan-Yin” in Chinese), who is well known in China, gained his special name because he was able to **see the sounds** with his **eyes**. This is known as “the perfection of the six organs” in Buddhism (from the “Maha-Parinirvana Sutra” and the “Suramgama Samadhi Sutra”). This ceaseless outward **expansion and development functions** for the satisfactions of unfathomable desires, which is a characteristic of the “mind”, is exactly what the westerners had mentioned in the “Theory of Evolution”.

However, the “Theory of Evolution” of the western world is **still a long way behind** the wisdom of Buddhism in terms of both its **breadth and depth**. The “Theory

of Evolution” of the western world discussed merely the evolution of human beings and other species, but did not know that “spiritual practices” can further **swiftly elevate** the rate of evolution. The so-called “spiritual practice” is an **attempt to influence** the “Sixth Consciousness” (or the “Mental Consciousness”) with **correct programming and correct mental strength** in order to amend the **principles in its distinctions, judgments and applications**, such that the information being collected would become **purified and free from any contaminations** [according to the doctrine of “Consciousness-Only” (or “vijñapti-mantrata” in Sanskrit) of the Yogacara School, this is referred to as the “uncontaminated seeds”, meaning those seeds that are free from the afflictions of “greed, hatred, ignorance”]. Then, these data are to be stored in the “Eighth Consciousness” to replace those incorrect programming and amend the incorrect “mental strength”. At the same time, the existing contaminated “mental strength (seeds)” would be further unleashed for purification. This process could ceaselessly “purify” the “mind”, thus allowing the “mind” to enter into the **correct locus and path of “spiritual elevation and evolution”**.

However, since the “Seventh Consciousness” is the **processing center of selfishness and self-interests**, and owing to its **habitual tendency for self-protection**, the re-bouncing effects will often happen by acting against those **correct programming and correct “mental strength”**, thus making these programming and “mental strength” hard to be stored up in the “Eighth Consciousness”. In other words, those programming and “mental strength” within the “unconscious” will **only be slightly changed or even will not be changed at all**. This kind of situation **often happens** to Dharma practitioners, making them to **believe that** they have already tried hard in their “spiritual practices” and become so full of confidence. In this way, they will tend to believe that they could manage the “posthumous world”, or to take rebirths in the Buddhas’ Pure-Lands, or to become liberated from the “cycle of karmic existence” (or “Samsara” in Sanskrit), or to attain “perfect enlightenment” (or “Buddhahood”, meaning being able to recover all the freedoms and capabilities). **The problem lies in this**: all those programming that are not stored in the “Eighth Consciousness” are **definitely not the “Main Programming”**. Similarly, all those cognitions that are not stored in the “Eighth Consciousness” are **definitely not the “Main Cognitions”**. Hence, all those newly-developed programming and “mental strength” that Dharma practitioners are trying to develop in their “Sixth Consciousness” can never be the real master to be in control of all the **habitual tendencies of their past programming and cognitions**. And even when the data have been sent to the “Eighth Consciousness”, if **it is in doubts**, they still would not become the **habitual**

“Main Programming” and “Main Cognitions”.

Once a determination for action has to be made “instantly”, and does not have **a split second of space and time** for the “Sixth Consciousness” to make its distinction, then the **habitual “Main Programming” and “Main Cognitions”** in the “Eighth Consciousness” would become the real “Main Controller”. Indeed, **numerous spiritual practitioners** have thus failed, even just one step away from the real goal, when they have to face the real “posthumous world”, an environment for a real **battle**. They were lost in this challenge because the **battle environment** of the “posthumous world” changes so **swiftly** that a person would be “caught unaware” and thus “unable to react properly”, particularly when the **differences of ups and downs would be tremendously great**. There might be some exquisite environments, but there might also be some horrible ones, and **they would be inter-changing “instantaneously”**. This is, indeed, a **natural phenomenon** of Mother Nature. It is not only a kind of **abstruseness**, **but it is also a characteristic of the “mind”** in the “posthumous world”, in which the absence of the bondage of the coarse physical body would allow the “mind” **to operate freely** on its own.

The Chinese Master Hsuan-tsang of the Tang Dynasty described the “Eighth Consciousness” as: “**it is the last to depart, and yet it is the first to come as the Master**”, which means that when a sentient being is **in the process of dying**, the “Eighth Consciousness” is **the last entity to leave the physical body**; at the same time, the “Eighth Consciousness” is also the **first entity to enter into the mother’s womb during the process of rebirth**. Owing to the fact that after the decease of a person, one’s “mind” is still continually and **habitually projecting multiple functions**. Thus, some of those people who “possess the power of concentration due to long-term practices on meditation”, or those who have “strong will-power”, or those who are “mentally disturbed”, would discover the occurrence of two or more projections of the physical body during the moments of death, or in “out-of-body experiences”, or in “near-death experiences”. In fact, they are **all rooted in the “mind”**. That is why it was mentioned in the “Avatamsaka Sutra” that **“Everything comes from the mind”**.

The “observer”, to whom Satana had referred, knows how to observe the minute details, such as its “noticing of the pink bedspread to have turned into green colour, which stands for goodness; or that she felt the “lingqi” that had appeared on her left shoulder”. From these observations, we can understand that it is an “entity of the mental consciousness” which has the function of distinctions. In other words, as according to the Buddhist explanations, it is a projection of both the “Sixth Consciousness” and the “Seventh

Consciousness" (including the "Incompletely-Arising Consciousness") which was first emitted from the physical body. The "eye-witness", to whom Satana had also referred, has no thoughts. Neither does it have the abilities of cognition and comprehension, but it has the sense of "self-awareness". For this, again according to the Buddhist explanations, is the "Eighth Consciousness". Since the "Eighth Consciousness" is the last entity to leave the physical body (upon the decease of a person), therefore during the early stage when Satana was quietly and calmly sitting on the rear of the bed and watching her own body, she did not notice the appearance of the "lingqi" on its left shoulder.

It was only later on when the "Eighth Consciousness" had left the body that Satana was able to notice the appearance of the "lingqi" on its left shoulder, due to her own "power of concentration" after having been trained in meditation for a long-time. Since she had no ideas about "Buddhism", and thus lacked an understanding concerning the correct principles of the Mother Nature. She did not know that the "Sixth Consciousness", the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" are of the same entity (noumenon). When these met outside of the physical body, they would fuse together automatically. Hence, when the fusion was about to take action, Satana had described it that the "observer" (that is, both the "Sixth Consciousness" and the "Seventh Consciousness") was forcefully dragged into the "eye-witness" (the "Eighth Consciousness"). This has revealed that in her own "mind", the two entities were regarded as "independently-existed bodies", and thus a "state of dichotomy/duality" was formed. Since the tenets of the religion that she has believed in was incorrect, and so after a period of training, this sort of "cognition" has been firmly stored in Satana's "Eighth Consciousness" for a long time and has become her "Major Cognitions". At the same time, this has become her main obstructions, and was one of the main reasons why she was not able to recover the "intrinsic nature". In Buddhism, this is known as the "obstructions due to knowledge", that is, the obstructions due to incorrect cognitions.

As some wizards said that the "God of Death" will stand on the left shoulder, and thus they took the "Eighth Consciousness" as a separated entity and makes the "obstructions" even more intensive. For those believers of other religions, or for those people with supernatural abilities, when they saw the phenomenon of a person having various projections of the "mind" after decease, they had taken this superficial phenomenon as the "ultimate truth", since they were lacking of the correct cognitions on the principles of Mother Nature. Hence, they had arbitrarily made up some tenets so as to form some "religions" in order to mislead many future followers, making many sentient beings to

become bogged down in deeper and deeper levels of sufferings. Just in the case of Satana, who was so filled with confidence, but still narrowly missed the target, and thus found it difficult to recover the "intrinsic nature" in order to either "attain perfect enlightenment" (or "Buddhahood"), or to become "liberated from the "cycle of karmic existence" (or "Samsara"). Therefore, please do not just take a simple view that all religions would ask people to do good and virtual deeds and so they are doing no harm. In actuality, the real harm has been done in such a way that they would instill a lot of incorrect information and programming inside your "Eighth Consciousness". The result is to plant numerous time bombs and obstructions in your "mind", in such a way that you would find yourself being bogged down in Samsara forever. There are some Buddhists themselves who have disparaged the Buddhist teachings, while there are some others who have misunderstood the Buddhist teachings. Some have disparaged the practical trainings in "Tantric Buddhism" (or "esoteric Buddhism"), while some others have misunderstood the practical trainings. All of these Buddhists would end up having the same result as that of Satana, or might even be worse than her case.

Since time immemorial, all sentient beings have the habitual tendencies to project various kinds of "mental strength" and "illusions" inside their own "minds". Even though they might know that the "Sixth Consciousness", the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" are of the same entity theoretically, but due to the fact that they are lacking of "up-to-the-point" practical trainings while they are still alive, they would inevitably fail due to the obstructions that have arisen from their own "discriminating minds" after death, and would thus result in their continual sufferings within the "cycle of karmic existence" (or "Samsara"). "Tibetan Buddhism" does really have its advantages of "up-to-the-point" trainings and uniqueness in such practices as the fusion of illusory bodies, the transformation of the "discriminating mind", and its mastery in the training on the cognitions of the "posthumous world", and so on. However, if a person merely receives "empowerments" and ordinary "oral instructions on visualization", but without elaborate "explanatory guidance" and "oral pith-instructions", one would still narrowly miss the target when facing the severe challenges in the "posthumous battle".

The explanations in this article are, in fact, some kind of an "explanatory guidance" in itself. If a person has not received the relevant "explanatory guidance", would one be able to realize the criticalness and importance on the cognitions of the various "consciousnesses" of the "citta" (or "phenomena of the mind")? At the critical junctures, these sorts of cognitions are actually so important that it becomes the watershed for either

The Areas and Questions Pending for Further Discussions

As a matter of fact, are they the same reasons for the occurrence of “Near-death Experiences” (NDEs) as well as the bad scenes at the “brink of death”? In the article on “The Meanings of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 8 of the “Lake of Lotus”, it was mentioned that some scenes at the moment of death had also occurred in some other religions. There were also similar reports of “being besieged by brightness, and saw that Jesus and Mary coming to fetch them.” Why is it like that?

In fact, what do the phenomena of the “scenes at the moment of death” really represent? Whether it represents some worrisome results of miserable ending when encountering some bad scenes? In the descriptions about the twenty-five Dharma practitioners in Issue 8, they were using the same kind of method for their Dharma practice, and they were united together and endeavored with the same efforts in their practices. Yet, various bad scenarios had occurred on their verge of dying. Why is it like that? In fact, what had gone wrong?

In the other religions, there were reports about the coming of “God” to fetch for the deceased persons, and so does it mean that all religions are having the same kind of effect? How to carry out one’s Dharma practice in order to ensure that an “auspicious scene” can occur at the moment of death? If bad scenes had appeared at the moment of death, is there any method of rescue for such kind of emergency?

In fact, what are the required conditions in the methods of “Dharma practice” that are considered as “up-to-the-point” “training on the spiritual elevation”? How can one make a choice amongst the so many methods of “training on the spiritual elevation” when coping with the different stages?

We may conduct another “brain storming session of wisdom” and give these some more thoughts. In the future articles, we will continue and try to verify the answers which can adhere to both science and the Buddhist teachings. How about that? (To be Continued) 🌸

(Note: The newly-released book on “The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (1) has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meaning of the Near-Death Experiences “ from Issues 1 to 10.)



success or failure”. Hence, “**explanatory guidance**” is not merely some kind of a theoretical explanation, but it has to be **linked up with the “practical experiences in the battlefield”**. Only when both aspects will be taken up side by side, together with mutually-supplementary explanations, can **actual results of having deep effects be derived**. As a “Guru”, whose role is supposed to give guidance and instructions in the Dharma practice so as to lead the battle in the “posthumous world”, if he does not instruct his/her disciples with the “**explanatory guidance**” and “**oral pith-instructions**”, or even if he himself **does not know** about them, then it would indeed be a **great regret**. If a so-called guru only cares about collecting wealth and offerings, by merely conducting “empowerments” and “rituals”, but without any actual experiences in both the “theory and practice” of the Holy Dharma, and only **boasting** about oneself’s so-called “**supernatural power**” in order to **deceive the general public**, it would really be a **great shame to the whole of Tibetan Buddhism!**

As a Dharma practitioner of the “Sutrayana” (or “**exoteric Buddhism**”), if one **does not** have any ideas about the **methods of Dharma practice** in “Tibetan Buddhism”, and yet one wants to **fiercely attack it arbitrarily**, it has shown that not only one is acting out of “ignorance”, but it also shows that one has indeed committed severe transgressions of the heavy “disciplines and vows”. This is a **great sorrow** for both “Buddhism” and all sentient beings.

2. Are there **any other reasons** for the failure of Satana?

It was suggested in the “**Tibetan Book of the Dead**” to give the following instructions to the dead person in front of the corpse: “During the separation of the mind and the physical body, the pure vision of the Dharmakaya of the “intrinsic nature” will exhibit itself in the form of bright light. The **intensity of light** is so thrilling as if the scorching sun is heating up the wilderness. The flame of the sun is twinkling unceasingly. All these scenes would happen to everybody, and so please don’t be afraid and don’t panic. You must know that this is the **primordial light of your own innate “Dharmata” (or “noumenon”)**. **Recognize it!**” Satana had chased after the brightness in such a way that she had really advanced from one stage to another, and had reached almost to the ultimate level. But, then, why did she still fail? As mentioned in the “**Tibetan Book of the Dead**”, wouldn’t the facing and the striding towards the Light already be a way for success in the “**Recognition of the Bright Light**”? What else should be done for an actual “**Recognition of the Bright Light**”? Let us together ponder for a while on these questions, and then we will try to explore further on this in the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, how about that?

Citta : Functions of mind

The "Eighth Consciousness" :
Alaya-vijnana (mind-basis-of-all)

The "Seventh Consciousness" :
Manas-vijnana (afflicted intellect)

The "Sixth consciousness" :
Mental consciousness

"Five Co-arising Consciousness"

The "First
Consciousness":
eye consciousness

eye

forms

The "Second
Consciousness":
ear consciousness

ear

sounds

The "Third
Consciousness":
nose consciousness

nose

odors

The "Fourth
Consciousness":
tongue consciousness

tongue

tastes

The "Fifth
Consciousness":
body consciousness

body

tactile
sense

mental organs

conceptual objects/
sense data

"Incompletely-Arising
Consciousness"

"Five-Consequential
Consciousnesses"

"Singly-Arising
Consciousness"

1. Single arising mental consciousness of **dreaming**: taking the scenes in a dream as data for processing
2. Single arising mental consciousness of **meditation**: taking the scenes in concentration as data for processing
3. Single arising mental consciousness of **restlessness**: taking disoriented thoughts as data for processing
4. Single arising mental consciousness of **frenzy**: taking frenzied scenes as data for processing



The Application of Wisdom

The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (15)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

in order to “adopt and abandon” in these various “plans”. In this way, this would enable the limited resources to become “ever-renewing, inexhaustible and of unusual value for money” within a limited framework of time and space (please refer to Issue 6 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(iii) **Strength and Weakness:** Every person has his/her own strengths, merits, skills, as well as his/her weaknesses and the Achilles’ heel (weakest point). In order to achieve success of any “objective” or of any “plan”, one must be very clear of one’s own strengths and weaknesses; and then through various skillful arrangements, try to complement and make use of one’s strengths and weaknesses in designing the contents and procedures of the “plans”. This is an “important strategy” in eliminating and deploying the “plans”, and thus should not be underestimated (please refer to Issue 7 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(iv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (1):** In drawing up any “plan”, one must take into account the “planning of time”. The “principles for the usages and wastages of time” must be clear, and have to be linked up with the effectiveness of the “plan”. Hence, time should be spent on those “plans” which are most effective and can bring the highest rate of return. One should prioritize one’s different “plans” according to the long or short durations of time used and their relative effectiveness. “Plans” that require one to put in a lot of time and effort, but with low rates of return and low effectiveness, should be scrapped. One should refine and improve one’s “plans” by making reference to the “principles for the usages and wastages of time”. This is a major direction in the selecting, eliminating and refining process of one’s “plans” (please refer to Issue 8 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(v) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (2):** Due to the simple fact that one has only very limited time and energy in one’s lifetime, and if one’s own objective is either to be “liberated from the cycle of transmigration” (known as “Samsara” in Sanskrit), or to attain “full enlightenment” (“Buddhahood”) within this very life, then

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

(vi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (3):** Does it mean that if one is unable to undergo “long-term retreat”, one would not be able to achieve the “objective” to become “liberated from Samsara or in attaining Buddhahood within this lifetime”? If you want to know the answer, please answer the following three questions first and to know about the “three essential factors” in the application of Buddhist teaching in our “Daily Living” (please refer to Issue 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

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

No matter in the setting of what kinds of

“plans”, one has to try and predict what would be the outcomes that would be brought upon you by this “plan”? What will be the side-effects and how many? One always hopes for the best but be prepared for the worst. Many a Dharma practitioners, when planning the times for their “Dharma practices”, will tend to **take care of one but then lose hold of the others**, making it more contradictory, and also more confusing, for one’s own “daily living”, and thus ending in the **loss of what to “adopt and abandon”**. (please refer to the Issue 11 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

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

(ix) The Factor 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) Time and Effectiveness (8): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities”

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**.

Criteria for “Dharma Practice During Adversities”

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
7. to elevate one’s own awareness

1. To Alienate From One’s Role

The greatest impact from the attacks of adversities is that it would easily make one to lose one’s rationality,

resulting in one’s being bogged down and entrenched deeply in the entanglements of one’s train of **thoughts and emotions** which are “fearful, depressed, sad and helpless”. If the situations are not handled properly, any kind of thinking made under **irrational emotions** would be confusing and entangled. When such entanglements are getting more and more serious, and due to their chaotic nature, these would not only further block the channels for resolving or reducing the seriousness of the adversities, it would also result in one’s own emotions to be further bogged down in a state of **confusion and blockage**. Under such circumstances, the **time taken** for one’s Dharma practice would be prolonged, and it would be difficult to have any **effects**.

Due to the blockage of one’s emotions and train of thoughts, there is no way that one can give vent to them. Nonetheless, they are **in constant operation such that the painful thinking pattern continues endlessly**, resulting in the minute air currents within one’s own brain to impact upon each other. As such **influences are crisscrossingly and mutually affecting**, and are so much interlinked and interrelated to each other, so that their abilities in inflicting damages upon oneself would become greater and greater. Eventually, the whole matters would end up in a total fiasco. Confused thinking patterns would lead one to make further mistakes in one’s decisions resulting in a succession of adversities coming one after the other to “follow one’s heel”. One would then feel dull and depressed, such that the body will easily fall into illnesses.

It starts off with the matter in influencing one’s emotions, which will in turn influence one’s thinking, which will again in turn influence one’s behaviours. Furthermore, the behaviours will again influence back on the development of the matter itself. Due to a mistake made in one’s own decision, the matter would then be further trapped in a deadlock, which will again further deepen its influence upon one’s own emotions. The emotions would intensify the turbulence over one’s thoughts, which will unavoidably be bogged down in a cul-de-sac. Such blockages and the “vicious cycles” resulted would only further make **the effects of adversities to become more and more serious**, resulting in one’s **losing control of one’s own emotions, and eventually of one’s own rationality**.

One would first be absent-minded and find it hard to concentrate. Then, one would be dispirited and would lose one’s appetite. Later on, one would feel depressed and could not sleep properly at night. The next step would be that one would slowly become mentally- deficient in various ways, like suffering from either “depression, or mania, or mental disorder, or



even becoming crazy". Physically, one would have different types of "pains and cancerous tumors". All in all, one would be suffering from **various kinds of diseases, whether they be of sicknesses that one could think of, or otherwise.**

Why would it be that one will **bring damages to oneself** like this? Are those adversities really that horrible? Is it worth our efforts to **foster** such kinds of **damaging forces** from those adversities? Is it because of the fact that one could hardly control one's own "self", or whether because one does not know how to handle them? There is only one simply answer to all these questions. This is because **human beings would love to grasp onto one's own "ego" ("atman" in Sanskrit).** Because of this so-called "ego", one would consider that all kinds of adversities have thus hurt "my ego, my relatives, my friends, my interests, all my possessions, my self-esteem, my loves, my feelings and emotions....." In order to protect these interests from being hurt, from being reduced or damaged, or to restore those interests that had been hurt, reduced or damaged, all sentient beings would think of all kinds of methods in order to restore them. Unfortunately, as one has **been so much entrenched and deeply bogged down by this "ego"**, one would then lose control of one's emotions, while one's own reason would have been buried. All the methods that one has employed to make for their compensations would only **become wrong behaviours.**

Some sentient beings have the inclination of "bringing damages to themselves". They would like to indulge themselves in pains, **to besiege themselves** and refuse the help from others. This type of sentient beings would

be deeply bogged down in their concerns for "self-esteem, shame and guilt, as well as disappointment on human nature". There are also those sentient beings who would like to "bring damage to themselves" in order to draw the attentions of others or from those whom they loved. These acts would only result in their being constantly submerged in an ocean of sufferings. This kind of a "mentality" would slowly become **the function of the "Cardinal Mentality"** for their future downfalls into the "Three Lower Realms" (**that is, the realms of the Hell, Hungry Ghosts and Animals**). This is an extreme type of **ignorance and greed.** These people will use their ignorance in dealing with their adversities, while using their greed in trying to solve their problems. The ending for such an approach would be that **"the adversities would become pains; the pains would become disappointments, and disappointments would become desperations"**. Whether one has "only oneself to be blamed" for this outcome, or whether it is due to the improper handling of the matter? Whether one's destiny could be changed, or whether one is willing to change it?

It can be said that **the root of all sorts of sufferings** stems from this word of "ego". Since this "ego" is the **principal culprit** of obstacles in solving our problems, and the **chief instigator** for giving rise to many more adversities, why should one be still holding onto it? Is there any method that one can **avoid it or resolve it**? This is the key problem that all Dharma practitioners will have to address since the past thousands of years. It is, indeed, also the key in one's "mind-training" process, let alone for those who have encountered adversities. To **address** all kinds of problems in relating to the "ego", there is only one way in which one can practice "Emptiness" of the Buddhist Dharma in order that one can thoroughly **resolve** this fundamental issue (**please refer to the DVD on "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness", published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association**). It would not be too difficult if one would be able to handle adversities properly through **avoiding them.** Even for an ordinary person, it would be possible for one to do it by trying to **alienate oneself from the role that this so-called "ego" has been playing.**

Why is it like that? This is simply because, without the feelings that my "ego" has been hurt, one's own emotions would tend to become more stable such that one would be able to keep calm in finding the best "options in handling adversities". With this approach, there would be **hopes and opportunities for the restoring** of one's own interests which may have either been hurt, reduced or damaged. This is similar to the message of the "phoenix rising from the ashes" (that is, to be able to re-live again after the thing has been destroyed") and is also **a kind of wisdom of**



“first abandoning it in order to gain it”. The Buddhist Dharma of first “being egoless in order to attain Buddhahood” is not only the Natural Law of “Returning to the Primordial State” of Nature, but is also a kind of “Supreme Wisdom” (please refer to the articles on the “Meanings of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 15 & 16 of the “Lake of Lotus” on the actual experiences in “attaining Buddhahood”). This approach would shorten the time required for one’s Dharma practice, while the effects of it could be seen immediately.

Emotions, why are they always wavering and are difficult to relieve?

Train of thoughts, why are there always obstacles and blockages within them?

Adversities, why are there so many of them?

Oh! Child! Due to one’s “greed, hatred and ignorance in one’s mind, the thoughts of protecting “all that I have” is “lingering in one’s mind” all the time. One will always pray for many desires, and yet the **gains and losses are unpredictable**. One’s mind is interweaved with the emotions of ups and downs, as well as of successes and failures. Sufferings and happiness, which are of great contrast, fully occupied one’s mind, so that one’s emotions are seriously undulated, while one is covered with clusters of wounds. When one encounters adversities again, one will feel sorry and worried for one’s own “ego”. How could then one’s emotions not to be wavered, either in dullness,

depression and anger? To have few desires and be contented is the root of happiness. To **abandon the grasping onto the “ego”**, one would be relieved from the emotions of dullness, depression and anger. Please alienate from it! Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! One’s train of thoughts will be in control by one’s emotions. Don’t you know that sufferings would make one’s train of thoughts stagnate? Sorrows would also make one’s train of thoughts to be confusing, while fears would make them drifting in all directions. If one would want to have one’s train of thoughts to be unblocked such that they will help one to remove the dangers and limitations, one should first have to placate one’s own emotions. Try to **abandon the graspings onto “all that belongs to me”**, then sufferings would naturally be far away from you. One’s train of thoughts will then return to its tranquility and clarity. Please alienate from it! Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! Adversities and prosperities are only the illusory projections of “greed, hatred, ignorance”. Basically, they could hardly harm you at all. It is only because of your **desires and grasping** that will enable these “adversities and prosperities” to successfully lead you by your nose. You have now become the “slave” of adversities and prosperities and are thus subject to their trampling, thus you could hardly become your own Master any longer. The **more desires and grasping** you have, the **more adversities would be developed**. Unavoidably, you will “not be able to get what you strive for”, and will “lose the people and things that you loved”. There will be never ending setbacks and failures which will then make you lose your mind and self-control. Do you want to **restore your own rights**? Please abandon “my desires and grasping”, upon which you will be clear-headed naturally and will become fearless for all kinds of adversities, thus regaining your freedom. Please alienate from it! Wish you can remember this by heart!

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

2. To Remain Calm

“Calmness” is **one of the elements for success that any successful people cannot do without**. It is also a “**sedative agent**” for any kind of suffering. Without it, there will only be “confusions”. One would also suffer

an overwhelming defeat in whatever one does, and the efficiency would be extremely low.

When one meets with adversities, if one wants to remain calm, one must first have to alienate from one's role so as to be far from "greed, hatred and ignorance" in order to maintain a high level of calmness. For the ordinary people, their so-called "calmness" has been mixed with "greed, hatred and ignorance" because they could not free themselves from grasping onto the "ego". This would become their Achilles' heel that can be pinned down by their enemies. Such type of calmness is only very fragile. When one's enemy hits on, or is able to control one's Achilles' heel, then one's calmness would collapse, and the situation would be turned into one of besiegement. Hence, if one only makes use of such type of calmness, which contains impurities, to solve problems during adversities, it would take much longer periods of time and the effects would definitely be very weak.

How does "meditational power" arise? "Meditational power" arises through steeling oneself with hard trainings in repeated practices of meditation, accumulation of experience and from lessons learned through failures. When one enters the state of "egolessness", notwithstanding all the disturbances and obstacles, one would feel fearless and thus one's "meditational power" will arise realizing that nothing really matters. Hence, many Dharma practitioners will practice meditation so to enhance the precipitation of their train of thoughts, to isolate all disturbances so as to be free from all cares. This would eventually lead one into the state of "egolessness", whereupon one's "meditational power" will arise. This is a way of giving rise to "meditational power" in a static environment. The hustles and bustles, as well as all the confusions and adversities, of our "daily living" can be considered as the dynamic environment for the steeling of oneself in order to give rise to the "meditational power".

Many of the great men in history would be able to display an indomitable courage and an "unyielding and unbending spirit", such that they would continue to fight all the way through despite repeated setbacks and failures during great adversities. As a result, they had tempered and gave out astonishingly-strong airs of "calmness". Upon the strength of such an air of "calmness", the "morale" of their followers had been "greatly boosted" in fighting against their enemies. Their high spirits would have thus frightened their enemies who would then slow down their pace of attack. Thus, it would then enable these great men to have extra amounts of time in finding out their "points of breakthrough" so as to eventually remove their adversities and in regaining their final victories. Hence, "calmness" is an important element in turning

adversities into prosperities.

The weak ones will lose because they are "weak in their minds", whereas the strong ones will win because they are "strong in their minds". Then, how can one be "strong in one's mind"? The answer is: "to alienate from one's 'ego'". As one does not have any selfish motives, one would naturally be bold and self-confident, and so one's mind would naturally become strong. With a calmly tolerant spirit to steady one's body and mind, one's mind would naturally become strong. To be able to accurately analyze the various circumstances, and have a sense of propriety of advancing and retreating, one's mind would naturally become strong. To act within one's own capacities so that one would know exactly as to when would be the opportune time, to either advance in attacks or to retreat in defences, without fears of things that may happen back home. Thus, one's mind would naturally become strong. To take advantages of the different situations, be skillful in distributing the resources appropriately so as to show one's strengths, one's mind would naturally become strong. To learn the lessons from one's experiences so as to turn one's weaknesses into one's strengths, thus one's mind would naturally become strong. To elevate one's own awareness, to take precautions against possible difficulties, and to know in advance the various options and opportunities, one's mind would naturally become strong.

When one's "mind" has been strengthened, one would be able to face all kinds of adversities, and can even turn them into prosperities in making them to become enabling forces. This is, indeed, an essential element for one's Dharma practice in one's "daily living" as



well as in this secular world. This is also a necessary requirement for all those Dharma practitioners who want to practice “Vajrayana Buddhism”. “Difficulties and hardships will temper one’s mind, while easy and comfortable lives will wear off one’s will”. When one has the correct comprehensions in understanding adversities, one would not then have any fears for them. In this way, adversities would become a **dashing driving force** which would help make the objectives much easier to achieve. Furthermore, the **correct comprehensions** would help one to maintain one’s “calmness”.

One would require “meditational power” to deal with all sorts of difficulties, including challenges, disturbances, temptations and evil thoughts. The “meditational power” can help one to shorten the **time required** for Dharma practices, to strengthen its **effectiveness** and should thus **be fostered properly**. The main difference between the weak ones and the strong ones mainly lies on **their mentalities and skills in dealing with adversities**. For the strong ones, they will have the “meditational power”, while the weak would only have “confusions”. When a comparison is made among the “strong ones”, the greatest difference would be that the “strongest ones” would have the “egoless” mentality, such that their abilities in maintaining their “**meditational power**” **would be long-lasting**. As for the “ordinary strong ones”, their minds would still consist of “greed, hatred and ignorance”, their “**meditational power**” **cannot be kept for long and thus cannot stand the test of time**. Hence, having the “egoless” mentality can be said as an **extremely important mentality in Dharma practice**. This is the foundation stone for the giving rise of the “meditational power”, and is also an **important element in the “attainment of Buddhahood”**.



When one has many desires in one’s mind, adversities will arise amidst them.

When one’s emotions fluctuate erratically, one’s train of thoughts will be confused and lost tracked of.

One is in pains when grasping onto the ‘ego’, then how would one solve them?

If one can let go of everything that one has, the “meditational power” would help one to feel relieved in breaking away from one’s besiegement.



In the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, we will further explore the remaining **criteria**, as well as how to make flexible use of one’s mentality in Dharma practices..... (To be Continued)

The “Seven Methods of Strengthening One’s Mind” to Counteract Adversities:

To alienate from one’s role - without having any selfish motives, one would naturally be bold and self-confident, and so one’s mind would naturally become strong;

To remain calm can steady one’s body and mind, and so one’s mind would naturally become strong;

To analyze accurately so as to have a sense of propriety of advancing and retreating, and so one’s mind could naturally become strong;

To act within one’s own capacities so that one would know when would be the opportune time, either to advance in attacks or to retreat in defences, without any fears of things that may happen back home, and so one’s mind would naturally become strong;

To take advantages of the different circumstances and be skillful in distributing the resources appropriately so as to show one’s strengths, and so one’s mind would become strong;

To learn from one’s own experiences and turn one’s weaknesses into one’s strengths, and so one’s mind would naturally become strong;

To elevate one’s own awareness, to take precautions against possible difficulties and to know in advance the various options and opportunities, and so one’s mind would naturally become strong.



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



The Essence of Teachings: Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness (10)

By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye

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

(Lecture delivered : July 10, 2003)

The Perception of "Time" in Buddhism

Carl Sagan was a contemporary physicist who wrote the preface to the one of the world's bestseller book *"A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes"* authored by Stephen Hawking. In this preface, it was mentioned that "this book is perhaps **pertaining to the non-existence of God.**" What he meant was that the content of this book is, in fact, on the explanation about the non-existence of God. The universe is boundless in terms of its "spatial" dimension, and in terms of its "time" dimension, there is **no beginning** and **neither** does it have **an end**. There is no role for a creator to create it. This point has made it very clear for the subject matter. It has shown that, even from the scientists' viewpoint, as well as from the empirical standpoint of studies, a similar kind of perception was engaged as that of Buddhism. This, in fact, has proven that what the Lord Buddha had taught us is **the truth**.

How about the perception of "time" in Buddhism? The Lord Buddha had said that "time" is **"timeless"**, and "time" is being defined by us, and it is a **presumption**. How is "time" being presumed in Buddhism such that it is easier for us to understand? The Lord Buddha presumed that a **"small kalpa"** is **equivalent to a certain period of time**. Instead of adopting either a year, or a month, or a day as the basic units, The Lord Buddha had used a period with the measurement of the four stages of development for the universe -- "formation, persistence, deterioration and annihilation" -- as a basic unit known as a "small kalpa". That is to say, **the period of time from the formation of the universe to its final destruction is known as a "small kalpa"**.

According to the Lord Buddha's definition, if we use the modern scientific terms of year, month and day for calculation, a "small kalpa" is around 16,798,000 years. Furthermore, the Lord Buddha had said that 20 small kalpas is equivalent to one "middle kalpa", and four such "middle kalpas" is equivalent to **one "great Kalpa" which is about 1,343,840,000 years** (of course,

all these are just rough figures).

So, what is "asankhya"? "Asankhya" means innumerable. "A" means "nil" and "sankhya" means "measurable". And so, "asankhya" is innumerable or countless. If the modern Indian way of calculation is used and be converted to that format of nowadays, it is 10 to the power of 51. Thus, according to the Buddhist sutras, a "small kalpa" is the time taken for the completion of one cycle of "formation, persistence, deterioration and annihilation" of the universe. Therefore, **"asankhya-kalpa" is an immeasurable time period**. For a more specific measurement of time, it is a duration of 10 to the power of 51 number of cycles on the completion of the 4 stages of "formation, persistence, deterioration and annihilation" of the universe. In fact, the magnitude of time as revealed by this figure is most astonishing.

Therefore, the Lord Buddha said that if a person conducts one's spiritual practice on a theoretical basis, for instance, like what the "exoteric Buddhism" usually does in their spiritual practices, which is in accordance with the theories and hopes that one's "mind" can be altered, then it would **take innumerable number of kalpas which is three "asankhya-kalpas"**. It is really a very long period of time, and it is uncertain as to how many cycles of deaths and rebirths that one would have to take before final success. In "esoteric Buddhism", on the other hand, it was mentioned that one can "attain Buddhahood in this very body". Even if one's spiritual practice is poor, there is still a known figure, for instance, the "attainment of Buddhahood" after



Carl Sagan

seven cycles of deaths and rebirths.

Why is it like that? It is because the spiritual practices in “esoteric Buddhism” are mostly of “empirical methods”, while also emphasizing on theoretical applications. For the practice of “esoteric Buddhism”, first of all, a Dharma practitioner must **have to study “exoteric teachings” for twelve years, which is a basic pre-requisite**. For example, when “Emptiness” is being discoursed, you have to know its meaning of “Neither Existence Nor Voidness”. Otherwise, how can you come to actualize it if you do not even know its fundamental explanation? Therefore, one should study the “exoteric teachings” for twelve years, before one can further proceed to study the “esoteric Buddhism”. As for the “esoteric Buddhism”, all the formats and methods of Dharma practices are very “pragmatic” in nature. If you can really adhere to the formats and methods of a comprehensive “esoteric practice”, together with the foundation of the “exoteric teachings”, then you might have the good opportunity to “attain Buddhahood with this very body”. Therefore, you must first have to know the basis of its theoretical knowledge about the aforesaid issues.

The Calculation of “Time” in Natural Sciences

How do natural sciences calculate the concept of “time”? For example, the completion for one cycle of its intrinsic spin of the earth is considered as one day, while a 360-degree cycle of its intrinsic spin of the solar system will take one trillion years. However, the rate of the intrinsic spin of each solar system is different, and so the standards of “time” are different in different solar systems. This explains why that **all the “time scales” are relative in nature**, and that these are the definitions that are created by human beings. It is basically a **presumable and conceptual** issue.

Therefore, in the Buddhist teachings, some other definitions of “time” had been provided for our comprehension of it, such that the units of year, month, day and hour are not the only scales for its measurement of “time”. Instead, Buddhism has used a concept of totality in its calculation for the measurement of “time”. In other words, the whole process of the “formation, persistence, deterioration and annihilation” of the universe should be taken as a basic unit and an integral entity for its consideration. There is a terminology known as **“one Buddha-world” (buddhaksetra)**, which represents the time needed for the completion of one cycle of the “formation, persistence, deterioration and annihilation” of the whole **“Three Thousand Great Thousand Worlds” (great chiliocosm)**.

You might think that this time scale is too long, and so you might wonder as to whether there are some other shorter units of time. Indeed, there are. That is the **“time scale” being defined by the activities of the “mind”**. For instance, the arising of one thought in one’s

“mind” is known as **“one thought” (one ksana)**. In fact, “one ksana” is a description of one of the shortest “time scales”, that is, just **“a split second”**.



Stephen Hawking

You should know that the Lord Buddha had defined the concept of time with a **kinetic mode**, and so are all the scientists in using kinetic modes to define their “time scales”. For instance, the definition of “time” is based upon how the earth rotates around itself, etc. The Lord Buddha also mentioned that time is being calculated on the basis of the kinetic mode of one’s “mind”. That is to say, **without the kinetic mode** of one’s “mind”, there **would not be any “time”** element. If a measurement of time is not founded upon any activities, then basically “time” cannot be delineated. Hence, there is a Chinese proverb which says: “just a day in the mountain, a thousand years has already lapsed in the secular world”. Or just like what modern scientists have said that the living on a planet of the outer space for one year, it might already have been tens of trillion years on the planet earth.

The reason for this is due to the **differences in the kinetic situations of each planet, the calculations of “time” are different**. If you think that all of these are too abstract, then please just think about this: why does “esoteric Buddhism” require its Dharma practitioners to put aside everything, and then go to the high mountains for practices in retreats? It is because when you have gone to the high mountains for practices in retreats, you would no longer think of returning to this secular world. Without having achieved some successes in one’s Dharma practices, the Dharma practitioner would not leave the high mountains. As such, all connections to the secular world would almost be totally disengaged. No matter whether it be one’s clothing, or eating, or living, or one’s movement, all these are no longer directly acquired from the secular world, but instead to be gained only from the high mountains. Thus, you would no longer keep on counting the number of days or weeks that you have been practicing in the high mountains. In this way, slowly and slowly, the concept of a “date” vanishes. Gradually, the concept of “time” also becomes more and more blurred and remote. Your consciousness about year, month, day and hour does not arise any longer. **“Time” becomes meaningless to you**. Your kinetic status that you are now having has been **disassociated** with that of the secular world. This is just because of the fact that there is an alteration of one’s own “mind” that has made such a change, then how would it be if one is living on another planet where the situation is under totally **different “gravitational forces” and influences of different rotations**? The calculation of “time” over there will definitely be very different 🌀

.....(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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