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Does "Hell" Really Exist?

"Scientific Nature" on the Settings of "Hell"

In What Way Do the "Buddhist Scriptures"

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恭賀新禧 如意吉祥

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A Prayer for World Peace (1)

by Kyabje Chadrak Gyatso Rinpoche

Namo Guru Ratnatraya!



To the Teacher and the Three Jewels, I
bow !
True Leader of the Golden Age --
Crown of
the Shakyas !
Second Buddha, Prince of Oddiyana, Lake-
Born Vajra !
Bodhisattvas, eight closest spiritual heirs,
The High Noble Ones, Avalokiteshvara,
Manjushri, Vajrapani and the others !
Twenty-one Taras, Host of Noble Elders,
Root and Lineage Lamas, Deities of
Peaceful and Wrathful Ones !
Dakinis in the Three Realms !
You who through wisdom or karma have
become Defenders of the Holy Doctrine !
Guardians of the Four Directions !
Seventy-five Glorious Protectors !



You who are clairvoyant, powerful, magical
and almighty !
Behold and consider the beings of this time
of disturbance !
We are beings born in this sorrowful
Degenerate Age;
An ocean of ill effects overflows from our
universally bad karmas.



The forces of quick jerks,
The forces of darkness -- like an army of
demons -- inflame important and powerful
people,
That will rise in conflicts, armed with nuclear
weapons,
That will disintegrate the world.



The weapons of perverse and erring
intentions,
Have released this violent wind-storm.
Through this ill-omened devil's tool,
It will soon reduce the world, within a split
second,
And all those in it to atoms of dust.



It is easy to see, hear and think about
Ignorant people, caught in a net of confusion
and doubt,
Who are stubborn and still refuse to
understand.
It terrifies us in just hearing about it, or to
remember
This thing that has never occurred before,
The world is so full of uncertainties !



...To be Continued

The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death:

The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (25)



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

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

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

1. The “**Separation of the Four Elements**” – the “**main cause**” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”, including all kinds of memories) conjoins with the “**auxiliary conditions**” (the ‘**Separation of the Four Elements**’ in the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death” (please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issues 8 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
2. The “**Endorphins Inside the Brain**” – the “**main cause**” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “**auxiliary conditions**” (the “**endorphins inside the brain**” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death” (please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
3. The “**Karmic Forces**” – the “**main cause**” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “**auxiliary conditions**” (the “**karmic forces**” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death”. This can be further classified into the following two kinds:

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

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

1. **Protectors or avengers:** (i) **good ones** – saw kith and kin who had passed away, unknown protectors, deities or Buddhas coming to fetch for oneself.
(ii) **bad ones** – being besieged by a crowd of ferocious persons or beasts, and going along in company with groups of people who looked confused.
2. **Strange places:** (i) **good ones** – saw pavilions, balconies, buildings, flower fields, rivers, light zones, towns or cities.
(ii) **bad ones** – saw wilderness, forests, darkness, caverns, hells.



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

How would the Buddhist point of view comment on these phenomena? According to the Buddhist teachings, it was said that rebirth would take place within forty-nine days after a person has passed away, then why would a dying person see the kith and kin who **had passed away long time ago** still coming to fetch for him or her? Why had not the kith and kin taken rebirths after so many years posthumously? Are the appearances of these deceased persons merely the illusions of the person who is going to die? Or were they really true? Are there any other reasons? Are those strange places the destinations where they are going to be reborn into? Under what circumstances would the normal rebirth of a dying person be negatively encumbered? Is there any way to help a deceased person to avert sufferings and elevate to a better place of rebirth?

The Influences of “Emotions at the Moment of Death” on the “Scenes at the Moment of Death”

How significant are the influences of one’s “emotions at the moment of death”, as well as the visions and sounds that were experienced by a dying person, upon the environment that this individual is about to be reborn into thereafter? Even our contemporary society **does not really care too much about the dying process of a deceased**. Neither do they have any ideas about whether the deceased person has the capability to deal with the “ever-changing posthumous world, which is unpredictable and full of dangers”. They unilaterally deem that, once a person has a religious belief, then all the spiritual problems would be automatically resolved. Nonetheless, the various elements on the processes of natural evolution, such as the conditions of the deceased person’s “mind”, and the various “karmic forces” that were involved, could not be resolved simply by the strength generated from the usual religious faiths. ([Karmic force is a sort of traction](#), “[Karmic](#)

network”: the network of tractions formed by the “power of the mind” due to virtuous and non-virtuous deeds amassed over **countless previous lifetimes**. These karmic forces would affect the “mental strength” of one’s inner self as well as that of other sentient beings, and are so much mutually intertwining and influencing with each other, that it forms the network of tractions known as the “karmic network”. Please refer to the VCD on the “Inconceivable Law of Cause and Effect”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association).

The “emotions and the scenes at the moment of death” are also the function of the “karmic forces”, as if the **ignition** in the storage of explosives, which could trigger the explosion on the storage of “virtuous or vicious karma”, which could then rapidly induce the effects of “karmic forces”. Therefore, whether the deceased person was peaceful or vexed upon the dying process, as well as whether the “scenes at the moment of death” were good or bad, would **significantly influence the outcomes**. Are there any indicative instances as proof? The following case can be taken as an admonition.

Case 31

In 1981, a group of researchers of the “Science of the Mind” and “professional psychics” conducted an experiment in a residential house in the suburb of Paris, France. The objective of this research was to study **those people who had committed a lot of “evil deeds and karmas” when they were alive, while dying in agonies**, as to what sort of environments they would be situated after their deaths. They had selected the notorious slaughterman **Adolf Hitler (1889–1945)**, who was the President of Germany, as well as the arch-criminal of war who started the Second World War, to be their subject of investigation.

Mitchell, a famous French “professional psychic”, used his way of calling upon the specters by having his own “mental consciousness” to enter into the condition of deep meditation. He was successful to



have connected with the “consciousness” of Hitler. Hitler’s “consciousness” had been able to express his thoughts through the body of Mitchell. The scientists of the “Science of the Mind” then raised various questions to confirm with the identity of this “consciousness”. They found that his German voice was of the Vienna accent, which very much resembled the voice of Hitler. However, the voice seemed **to be in pains**. After a round of questions and verifications, the attending people firmly believed that this “consciousness” was, indeed, Hitler. With that, they started to ask questions for their study.

A psychologist named Malcolm asked, “Mr. President, may I ask where are you now dwelling in the universe? Before we invited you, what were you doing?” Replied in a voice of fatigue, Hitler said, “Uh, it would be nice if I can give you the answer, but I have no idea about what this place is! Perhaps the hell! When I looked up to the sky, it was a thick mass of dark clouds, very gloomy. I was almost suffocated under the atmosphere. Surrounding me was a dead still silence of vast wilderness.... It was a desolate piece of land without trace of any human beings. There was only me hurrying on the road unceasingly, keep on hurrying...”

Malbury, a researcher of the “Science of the Mind”, couldn’t help asking in consternation, “Would it mean that you have been walking all along ever since your death?” Malbury’s **curious question** was sensible, simply because Hitler should have been dead for 36 years, calculating from 1945 to 1981. During this long period of time, Hitler had not been proceeding in accordance with the “general rule on the cycle of death and rebirth (“Samsara” in **Sanskrit**) within 49 days”, as what Buddhism has proclaimed. He was able to retain his past memories and has not yet been reborn. Why is it so? It was interesting to note that, during this long period of time, he was **wandering all alone** by himself. It closely resembled the descriptions in the Buddhist scriptures (“Sutras” in **Sanskrit**) about the spiritual realms of the specters and ghosts. Take a look at the answer of Hitler, then people in general would come to know that the “spiritual realms” are not as simple as they would think of. They would even be so astonished at the **true descriptions** of the “spiritual realms” that were described by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni in the Buddhist Sutras.

Hitler replied, “Right, I am not sure what is going on. My legs were **not at my disposal** and they kept on walking, walking.... There was not even one piece of rotten timber, or any trace of weeds. In the mass of dark clouds, it appeared that there were **human heads** that were flying to and fro. However, at a closer look, they all turned into hard rocks darting upon me like arrows. However, my body was **numb without any sensations**.”

Hitler’s sigh of agony for the tribulations that he had gone through filled up the room. “I don’t know why”, he continued, “My steps were so heavy as if my feet **had been tied up with iron chains, but when I looked down on my feet, there was nothing there**. I had to stroll bare footed along the muddy roads. Each and every step was stranded deep into the mud, and I had to exhaust myself in pulling my feet out for the next step..... Both of my feet were already ulcerated. From the very beginning, I was already very fatigued and exhausted, but nonetheless, I had to keep on hurrying up on the road **involuntarily**.....”

At this point, Hitler started sobbing. Another psychologist, by the name of Farandole, raised a new question, “Then, Mr. President, did you know where was your destination when you continued to proceed onwards?” Hitler replied, “As far as I can see, **there is nothing but only me**. Behind me was the vast area of quagmire that I had gone through. There were also gusty winds blowing across, but then the dark mass of black clouds could not be cleared away. Nonetheless, the winds had torn apart each and every inch of my skin and flesh. Even though I did not feel any pains, it was so vivid that I could clearly see my own body to be in great torture, while the sufferings in my mind were inexpressible. In this desolate place without any joy of life, there was **not even a single beam of light**. I don’t know why, but then I could see an infinite number of quagmire. I kept on falling into the quagmires, and there was nobody available to lend any kind of help to me. So, I had no alternative but had to struggle and managed to get up, and then continued walking, and walking. I was **unspeakably tired**, just too exhausted...”

At this very moment, Hitler’s voice gradually weakened and diminished, and the linkage was spontaneously disconnected. All the scholars on the spot had believed that it was, indeed, the “consciousness” of Hitler who had made all the statements. The contents about the “hell realm” were the same as what had been mentioned in the Buddhist Sutras.

Does “Hell” Really Exist?

By the way, if the environment as mentioned by Hitler was some kind of a “hell”, then what kind of “hell” was it that is in accordance with the descriptions in the Buddhist Sutras? **There are a vast number of “Buddhist Sutras” that recorded the types and conditions of “hells”.** We hereby just give a brief introduction on them, and the readers would **suddenly realize** that the legends about “hells” are not incidental fabrications, but are **real and unquestionable phenomena of the Nature**. Otherwise, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni would not have repeated it again and again, and have elaborated the settings of “hells” in extreme details.



The various “Buddhist Sutras” having descriptions about the hells include the following ones: “Dirgha Agama”, “Madhyama Agama”, “Ekottara Agama”, “Samyukta Agama”, “Saddharma-smṛtyupasthana Sutra”, “Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra”, “Saddharma Pundarika Sutra”, the “Eighteen Naraka Sutra”, “Fo Shuo Zui Ye Ying Bao Jiao Hua Di Yu Jing”, “Prajnaparamita Sutra (of the Practice of the Way)”, “The Quest of Naraka Sutra”, “Prajnaparamita Sutra (of the Practice of the Way)” in another Chinese translated version, “Six Paramitas Sutra”, “Dharmapadavadana Sutra”, “Fo Shuo Zi Ai Jing”, “Fo Shuo Ma Yi Jing”, “Loka-sthana Sutra”, “Yogacaryabhumi Sutra”, “Parinibbanasuttam Sutra”, “Maharatnakuta Sutra”, Brief Version of “Prajnaparamita Sutra”, “Mahaprajna Sutra”, “Four Naraka Sutra”, “Fo Shuo Tie Cheng Ni Li Jing”, “Wu Ku Zhang Ju Jing”, “Prajnaparamita Sutra (short version)”, “The Quest of Purna Sutra”, “Buddhadhyanasamadhisagara Sutra”, “Karuna-pundarika Sutra”, “Fo Shuo Lun Zhuan Wu Dao Zui Fu Bao Ying Jing”, “Fen Pieh Yeh Pao Liao Ching”, “Fo Shuo Yan Luo Wang Wu Tian Shi Zhe Jing”, “Xian Yu Jing”, “Agganna Sutta”, “Samsara in Six Realms Sutra”, “The Ten Unwholesome Karmic Paths Sutra”, “Fo Shuo Liu Dao Jia Tuo Jing”, “The Samadhi Sutra on Liberation through Purification”, and so on While the various Sastras (Discourses)

that were composed by different Bodhisattvas include the following ones: “Abhidharma-kosa Sastra”, “Dasabhumika-vibhasa Sastra”, “Fo Shuo Li Shi Ai Pi Tan Lun”, “Fa Yuan Zhu Lin”, “Mahavibhasa Sastra”, “San Fa Du Jing Lun” (“Tridharmakandha”) and so on

There are, of course, many other Sutras and Sastras with descriptions on the various facets about “hells”, and we are not going to list them all out here. The term “hell” was known as “Niraja” or “Naraka” in Sanskrit, and it means the “possession of nothing”. It implied that it is a “place without any joy and fortune”. Among the “six realms” (namely: deva, human, asura, animal, preta, naraka), the “realm of hell” is most dreadful. To a worldly person, even a superficial realization about it would “cause great fear”.

The “hells” are classified into “four major categories and eighteen species”. For the “four categories”, they are the “Eight Hot Narakas, Boundary Narakas, Eight Cold Narakas, and Isolated Narakas”, while for the “eighteen species of hells”, they are the “Eight Hot Narakas, Eight Cold Narakas, Boundary Naraka and Isolated Naraka”. These eighteen Narakas could be further classified into eighteen levels, as according to the “severity and duration of sufferings” among them. Since there are numerous descriptions of the “hells” in the Buddhist scriptures, and all these impermanent phenomena would change as according to the “collective karmic forces” of different sentient beings, and so the different settings, severity and duration of sufferings, as well as the natures of the “hells” would change as time passes by. Therefore, the different descriptions of the “hells” in the Buddhist Sutras were not all the same. But one thing for sure, regardless of the variations in their descriptions, the basic tone was that the “hells” are all the places of “great agonies”.

Some people do not realize the profound principles of truth that “everything comes from the mind, and all things are impermanent and ever-changing”, and so when they come across the different descriptions of “hells” that were not identical, or they might have mistakenly



misunderstood the principle “everything comes from the mind” to be meant as everything is being fabricated, they simply discarded the theory about “hells”. In fact, sufferings in “hells” are **as real and genuine as** sufferings in the cycle of “birth, aging, sickness and death”. Do you think that if the theory that “everything comes from the mind, and so all is just illusory in nature” holds true, then does it mean that all people do not have to suffer in the cycle of “birth, aging, sickness and death”?

When the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni was at his old age, he had taken some poisonous mushrooms that caused non-stop bleeding in his excretion. It was so painful that he could hardly walk by himself, and his life was in great danger. Ananda, the disciple who had been serving the Lord Buddha, was scared to death and disoriented. Nevertheless, when the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni was about to **abandon his physical body to enter into the “great peace”** (“Nirvana” in Sanskrit), **he had no hindrances at all**. From this, it was clear that the pains in the “material body” could not be entirely eliminated by applying the theory of “everything comes from the mind, and so all is just illusory in nature” under the principle of “Emptiness” (“Shunyata” in Sanskrit). Only under the exceptional condition of **“non-materiality but only pure mentality”** that the theory of “everything comes from the mind, and so all is just illusory in nature” under the principle of “Emptiness” (“Shunyata” in Sanskrit) could be applied without hindrances. Sentient beings are having too many “distracting thoughts so full of the elements of **‘greed, hatred and ignorance’** in their ‘minds’”, which are tractional forces in themselves, and so they could not achieve the exceptional condition of “non-materiality but only pure mentality”. In this regard, they could not disengage themselves from the range of

tractional forces of “Samsara”, just basing upon the theory of “everything comes from the mind, and so all is just illusory in nature” under the principle of “Emptiness” (“Shunyata” in Sanskrit). The giving of just **“hollow talks” about “Emptiness”** (“Shunyata” in Sanskrit), so as to **negate the existence of “hells” basing on the theory of “everything comes from the mind”** is both deceiving on oneself and others, like the ostrich policy. For those who could not achieve the exceptional condition of “non-materiality but only pure mentality”, the actual existence of “hells” is part and parcel of the natural processes of Mother Nature.

Some experts believe that the “scenes at the moment of death” are a kind of “psychological function”. Only those people who have the concepts of “heavens and hells” while they are still alive would then see the appearances of “heavens and hells”. Whereas for those who do not have such concepts while they are still alive, then they would not see these occurrences at the moment of death. Neither would they be reborn into these places. Thus, some people would believe that the “scenes at the moment of death” are only a kind of “psychological projections”, which would then affect the “results of one’s rebirth”. So long as **all kinds of concepts on the “hells” have been erased**, then human beings would no longer be reborn into “hells”.

On the other hand, once **all kinds of concepts on the “heavens” have been consolidated**, human beings would then be bound to be reborn into the “heavens”. Hence, they believe that this way is more pragmatic and effectual than those of all other religions. This sort of thinking can only be said to be **partially correct** simply because of the theory that **“everything comes from the mind” is true**. The “scenes at the moment of death” are truly affected by the “psychological, physiological and conceptual” elements. Bearing the concepts of “heavens and hells” in one’s mind would naturally **be easier** to have the projections of these images. However, one’s “karmic forces” involve a great deal of “mental forces”, and so even though an individual doesn’t bear any concepts of the “heavens and hells”, such concepts could



still be borne by their avengers. Even if **all the concepts** concerning the “hells” **are erased** from the thoughts of all human beings, but **can you change all those thoughts and concepts that were borne by other sentient beings who are in other life forms of existence?** When they have the abilities to plot out plans of revenge, they would find out or craft up environments that resemble the “hells” so as to seduce their objects of victims. They are waiting for the preys to go into their traps and then capture them.

“Scientific Nature” on the Settings of “Hell”

The “hell realm” is the worst among the ten realms of sentient beings. The “ten realms” are: “Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyeka-Buddhas (**Enlightened Ones for Oneself**), Sravakas (**Hearers**), devas, human beings, Asuras (**Demons**), animals, pretas (**specter**) and hells”. The former four types are categorized as the “Four Holy Realms”, while the latter six types are referred to as the “Six Secular Realms”, or simply the “Six Paths” (**or “six directions for rebirths”**). The “Four Holy Realms” are those “sages” who **have been disengaged from the sufferings of “samsara”**, and so they are **no longer reined by any “tractional karmic forces”**, and can thus be transcended from the secular realms to the holy realms. They are the “Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyeka-Buddhas and Hearers (**“Arhats” in Sanskrit**)”. Forever, they will happily enjoy the leisure and freedom in the different “Pure Lands and Buddha-Fields” in the various “Form Realms”. (**For details about the “Form Realms”, please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus”**). And the beings of the “Six Paths” would be transmigrating in-between the “stained soils” of the “Realms of Desire” without ending. The latter three paths of the “Six Paths” are “animals, pretas and hells”, and they are named as the “Three Evil Paths”, or the “Three Inferior Aggregates”, where “hells” are considered as the worst of the “Three Evil Paths”.

In the “**Naraka Sutra**”, it was mentioned that



one day in the first tier of the “hells” is equivalent to 3,750 years in the human world. 30 days make up one month, and 12 months make up one year. Sentient beings who are stranded in here usually will have to be sentenced to around 10,000 years. If converting this into the scale of human time, it will be equivalent to 13.5 billion years. Starting from the second tier of the “hells”, the severity of sufferings would be increased by 20 times as compared with each of the previous tiers of the “hells”, while the duration of it would be doubled of that of the previous tier. Up to the eighteenth tier of the “hell”, the total duration of sufferings would have increased to 23 septillion years (**1 septillion is 10 to the power 24**). For such a long duration of sentence, it is veritably an irreversible process for “tens of thousands of kalpas”. The sufferings and scenes of cruelty inside are beyond the conceivability and understanding of human beings.

In the “**Quest of Naraka Sutra**”, it was mentioned that the “consciousness” of a deceased person would leave its physical body after death, pending for its rebirth. During this period, the “spiritual body” is composed of “extremely sparsely-dense materials” and is known as the “**Body at the Bardo State**”. The “Body at the Bardo State” would drift along to the “**Black Ear Hell**”, where there is **complete**

darkness without a single beam of light. After the “Body at the Bardo State” enters into this “hell”, it would start in the **blowing of wind**. Those who had widely practiced charitable deeds and have accumulated merits, and is supposed to enjoy joyful retributions, would sense the fragrance in the wind. This blowing of the wind would craft the individual to become a dignified figure in its “future reincarnation”. On the other hand, for those who had committed a lot of evil-doings, they would smell stinky wind, which would craft a coarse and stupid figure in its “future reincarnation”. Those who are supposed to enjoy joyful retributions would **promptly** transmigrate into other places. Those who are supposed to suffer evil retributions would **gradually** transmigrate to “hells” of worse tiers to suffer. [Original article from No. 2121, Volume 53 of the Taishō Revised Tripitaka, Volume 49, Upper Session of Naraka (0259b18) and Lower Session of Naraka, Volume 50 of the “Extraordinary Episodes in Sutras and Pratimokshas”].

In the “**Samadhi Sutra on Liberation through Purification**” and the “**Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra**”, there were descriptions of the fact that when a person is about to pass away, in accordance with one’s “virtuous and evil karmas” amassed, there are various devas and demons appearing in the figures of relevant kith and kin coming to fetch for them. They might lead the deceased either to the “Three Good Paths”, or to the “Three Evil Paths” including the “hells”. Some people might think that, since there were discrepancies in the descriptions about destinations and after-life settings in the aforesaid three Sutras, it was rather confusing. There were also others who queried why all the deceased persons **would have to first enter** into the “Black Ear Hall” regardless of whether one had done either “virtuous” or “evil” karmas? Is this an indication that there exist some kind of “internal contradictions” or “mutual exclusions” within the various “Buddhist Sutras”? Would it be that there are the existence and differentiation of the “genuine Sutras” or the “fabricated ones”?

The “Black Ear Hell”, as stated in “**The Quest of Naraka Sutra**”, is some sort of feelings that

the “mental consciousness” of the deceased person would have while undergoing the physical transformation of Nature. When the “mental consciousness” is about to disengage from and leave the materialistic binding, that is the very moment when the decomposition of the “Four Fundamental Elements” of “earth, water, fire and wind” took place. The decomposition is happening down to the **microscopic scale** of the “atom” in which its “electrons” of the outer shell would be detaching themselves away from the “atomic orbit”, which would also involve the release or absorption of “energy”. When the “molecular **bonding**” breaks down, the “mental consciousness” would no longer sense the outside world through materials. During the “intermediate process of transformation” for the deceased person, its sensation of the outer world by its “mental consciousness” would have to go through a stage of not feeling any kinds of materials, including the existence of light. This is **the moment when the “Black Ear Hell” occurs**. (Please refer to the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issues 24 and 25 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Thereafter, it is the period that the sensation of the outer world was done **merely** by the “mental consciousness”, which is also the moment when the “mental consciousness” started to re-condense all the new materials. When the process of condensation arrives at the stage of successful combination of the “Four Fundamental Elements”, the “mental consciousness” would feel the various characteristics of “earth, water, fire and wind” respectively. Among these, the “wind” element would be specially common for all to be felt, since **all** the deceased persons (**regardless of the “virtuous” or “evil” karmas to be borne by the individuals**) would **have to enter into** the “Black Ear Hell” in experiencing the conditions of being embodied for their future configurations. The “wind” element itself, while having the nature of the “mind” as its “**main cause**” and the “karmic wind” as its “**auxiliary condition**”, enters into the physical condition of materialistic condensation. Any “mental consciousness” that is still under the “tractional forces of Samsara” would go through such embodiment. These situations are also

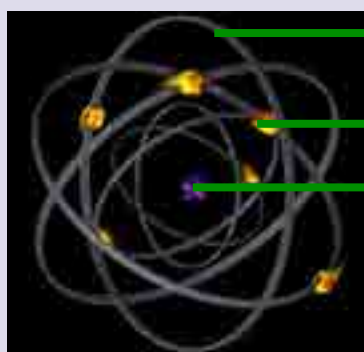
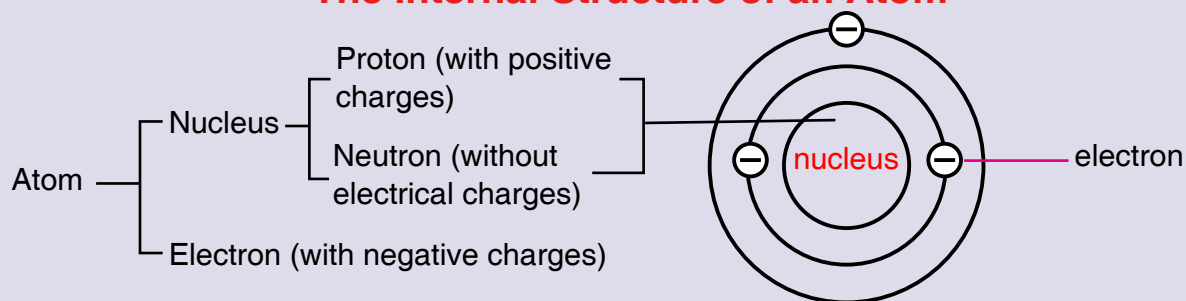
mentioned in the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**. Certain Dharma practices in “Vajrayana” follow the physical conditions in deconstruction of the control of “tractional forces of Samsara”. If the individuals understand and analyze the formation of the “Black Ear Hell” in depth, not

only would they not be afraid of it, but they would in fact appreciate its occurrence, since they would be able to deconstruct it and apply it. This is the advantage of having analyses for “spiritual guidance” so that an individual would not fall into the abyss of “superstitions”.

Formation of Components of Living Creatures

Biological organism system organs tissues cells organelle molecules atoms
sub-atomic particles

The Internal Structure of an Atom



In What Way Do the “Buddhist Scriptures” Mutually Confirm with “Sciences”?

In the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**, there was no detailed analysis about the situations on the “Separation of the Four Fundamental Elements”. Neither was there any teaching on the methods of practice. As there was a lacking on the detailed analysis and guidance on the “Separation of the Four Fundamental Elements” and the “Reconfiguration of the Four Fundamental Elements”, the readers might feel a loss of focus and thus become disoriented. Some other Dharma practitioners who had smattering knowledge would have many queries when they studied all kinds

of relevant Sutras. They might even think that there were “internal contradictions” or “mutually exclusions” among the different Sutras, not to mention the possible mutual confirmation with the “sciences”. Furthermore, the ordinary gurus, who also have smattering knowledge, would only be able to give brief and superficial explanations when they teach the “ritual texts” (“Sadhanas” in Sanskrit) of the Dharma practices, and so the trainees would not be able to command the key knacks such that their endeavors would be in vain.

Thus, the pivotal point in one’s Dharma practice is not just to obtain “empowerments” (or “initiations”) and the “ritual texts” (“Sadhanas” in Tibetan) of the Dharma practices, but to gain

the authentic connotations of the Buddhist teachings and its pragmatic practices. These “authentic connotations of the Buddhist teachings and its pragmatic practices” are the “spiritual guidance” (“Tri” in Tibetan) and “oral-pith instructions” (“Man-ngan” in Tibetan). Therefore, when selecting a guru for oneself, an individual should not just pick a “Guru” with an authentic lineage, but also one who knows the “spiritual guidance” and “oral-pith instructions”, or a “Guru” with the ability for profound analysis, one who has reached the standard, and with “experiences in the pragmatic Dharma practices”, for one’s confirmation (with “shunyata” or “emptiness”). In other words, he/she must be a “Guru” who has “both the knowledge and practical experiences on the Dharma practices for verification (of “shunyata” or “emptiness”)”, otherwise all of one’s endeavors would be in vain, and it has no difference than just blindly shooting in the dark.

As a matter of fact, there was no ambiguity in the three aforementioned “Buddhist Sutras”, namely: “The Quest of Naraka Sutra”, the “Samadhi Sutra on Liberation through Purification” and the “Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra”, and neither was there any contradiction nor mutual exclusion among them. It is merely the matter that sentient beings have limited knowledge to realize the meanings behind them. In fact, all the Buddhist Sutras can be explained by those people who have practical experiences on the pragmatic Dharma practices for verification and have reached the levels of realization, in coupling with mutual confirmation with the “sciences”. Many people who have studied the “Buddhist teachings” could not explain them in depth, not because of their inadequate ability in presentations, but because of their lack of “practical experiences on the pragmatic Dharma practices for confirmation”, or because of their very low levels of realization, that they did not understand the ultimate meanings of the “Buddhist teachings”. Neither were they able to understand some of the situations that were described in some of the “Buddhist Sutras”. Although they did not have adequate practical experiences on the pragmatic Dharma practices, neither did they have the basic abilities on the realization, but because of the simple fact that they were in

highly respected positions, and so they were left with no option but to weaken the importance, or avert the attention, or disregard and even denigrate the important areas which they could not understand as simply “superstitions and fabrications”. For example, some of the Dharma practices of “Vajrayana”, or the concepts of “Hell”, the operations of the posthumous world, and so on, were all difficult issues to be understood, and so any discussions about them had to be averted, denied in a high-toned pretension, or even to be attacked. However, all of these were not practical and naïve and ignorant ways to deal with those issues.

The “Black Ear Hell” is the setting where the “mental consciousness” has to go through when the “Separation and Reconfiguration of the Four Fundamental Elements” take place. What were described in the “Samadhi Sutra on Liberation through Purification” and the “Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra” were about the settings that the “mental consciousness” of the deceased person was being interfered by the “karmic avengers and creditors”. Unless a person’s “practical experiences on the pragmatic Dharma practices for verification” has reached a certain standard and level of realization, there is no way for one to distinguish the differences between the two. Due to one’s ignorance on these ambiguities, they had no alternatives but to avert further discussions, or fabricate high-toned negations of these issues. Many people thought that those had better attainment in Dharma practices, were greatly-renowned for their high positions, yet could not clearly explain the “Buddhist teachings” in details and in great depths were due to their deficiencies in their presentation skills, or because of the confidentiality of those issues concerned. However, these were all just excuses or beautiful misunderstandings. In fact, these were the results on the lack of knowledge and practical experiences on the pragmatic Dharma practices for verification. It would be much better for a person to choose the option in facing the reality frankly, rather than to mislead other sentient beings, or make blindly attacks on certain Dharma practices of “Vajrayana”. At least they would not fall into the “Hell Realm” due to the “transgressions of their precepts”. (About the “Separation of the Four

Fundamental Elements and Reconfiguration of the Four Fundamental Elements”, please refer to the DVD on the “Knacks at the End-of -Life and the Essences of Rescue” in the “Course of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhist Pragmatic Practices (9)” and the “The Abstruseness about Transformation of Energies after Death and the Origin of Substances” in the “Course of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhist Pragmatic Practices (10)”. Versions in both Putonghua and Cantonese are available).

The settings so revealed in the aforesaid case study of Hitler were the typical circumstances in the “Black Ear Hell”. The characteristics of the “Black Ear Hell” are that: there is “not a single beam of light”, with gusty wind blowing violently, while one’s skin ruptured with one’s body figure to be deformed. The individual suffers from unspeakable pains and exhaustion”. In Hitler’s case, he was “situated in a place where there was not a single beam of light and the wind was so strong that it had torn apart each and every inch of his skin and flesh. He clearly saw his own physical body to be in extreme tortures”. This has revealed that Hitler was crafting the future scenes of “sufferings in Hell”. Since Hitler’s personality was “eccentric, vicious, over-confident, without the slightest compassion for life, selfish and self-centered”, and so when he died, he was “lacking of security. He was a loser and became desolate and hopeless, and got stranded in crossfire”, hence he ended up by committing suicide. This nature of his “mentality” had driven him to “a place of loneliness to be all surrounded by quagmires” after his death. “There was not a single vegetation, and without any trace of vividness”. Those quagmires stood for the “situations of being deeply-trapped in the predicament, and was unable to withdraw from it” which rightly reflected his own “subconscious” on his decisions of “starting the war in conquering other nations, and carrying out genocide” which had caused himself to be “stranded in the deadly place and difficult to move forward, and so he had no future destination”. Even though he wanted to retreat, he was still stranded in the quagmires. In advancing forward, there were endless deadly places of quagmires awaiting for him.

Hitler said: “I kept on falling into the quagmires, and there was nobody available to lend any kind of help to me. So, I had no alternative but **had to struggle and managed to get up, and then continued walking**, and walking. I was **unspeakably tired**, just too exhausted...” An extremely selfish person whose nature of “mentality” would be the cause for making himself to be trapped into “a situation where assistance from anybody is impossible. Even if an individual managed to get out of the predicament, it would be extremely exhausting”. We think that even Hitler himself would believe that being trapped in such an environment for himself after his death was rather **reasonable**. These settings has revealed that the “main cause” for causing these circumstances came directly from the quality and nature of Hitler’s own “mind”, which was a kind of the **“inner karma”**. That is why the “Buddhist teachings” gave the admonition and guidance that the **“training of the mind to utterly reflect upon all of one’s own behaviors, so as to correct and uplift one’s mode of behaviors”**, in order to nurture the **superior quality on the nature of the “mind”**. “Vajrayana” puts extreme emphasis and places great importance on the Dharma practices at the “moment of death”, such that the effect could be maximized by **conjoining with this pivotal moment** with the superior nature of one’s “mind” in assisting sentient beings to disengage themselves from the controlling “tractional forces of Samsara”. **High quality of “inner karma” would derive high quality “vividness” that forms the foundation of one’s “enlightenment of Buddhahood”**. This is, indeed, the ultimate goal and direction of



one's "Dharma practice". The case of Hitler rightly demonstrated the phenomenon of "everything comes from the mind", simply that all phenomena originate from one's own "mind". All the encounters are derived and constructed by the nature of one's own "mind", which is the "root" and the original source. Instead of saying that the after-life judgment of a deceased person is being made by "Yama" to be sentenced to suffer in "Hell", we would rather say that the deceased is being stranded by one's own nature of the "mind" in crafting the "mental settings". Hence, those hypocrites whose nature of their "minds" are so vicious, wrest for the positions of a "guru" by hook and by crook, and see the "transgressions of precepts" as nothing. If they think that in carrying out Dharma practices, it would then let them avert from "falling into hell", it would be an ignorant thinking which does not realize the true "Buddhist teachings" and the "operational natural laws of Mother Nature". They would suffer from their so-called "intelligence", and would thus hurt themselves at the end.

All the settings are derived by one's own "mind",
 All the nets are knitted by one's own hands,
 Whoever ties up the bell should release it by oneself. Whoever created the predicament should come out of it by one's own self,
 When mind-training is up to the level that all are clearly perceived like the reflection of a mirror, locks would then be opened without the keys.

Hitler saw that there were numerous human heads flying over him to and fro in the dark clouds, but when he stared at them, immediately they would turn into rocks and darted onto his body like heavy downpours. This manifested that there were a lot of "karmic avengers and creditors" trying to take revenge on him. However, since his form had not been in "full shape" and was still in the "plastic stage" of the "Bardo State", and so he was not yet entered into their magnetic field. Therefore, his "karmic avengers and creditors" could only keep watching and interfere from a distance by just flying over him to and fro so as to attract Hitler's attention. Whenever Hitler stared at

them, the two different magnetic fields could then be "connected" in the way of "point-to-point", whereupon his "karmic avengers and creditors" could enter into Hitler's magnetic field to take assault on him. Therefore, Dharma practitioners must endeavor to focus their "mental concentrations" on the "Dharma practices" at the "moment of death" or "after-life", and should not be distracted or interfered by the "karmic avengers and creditors" who had turned themselves into the images of one's kith and kin, such that the "protective zone" would be dismantled. In the case of Hitler, it has apparently manifested the key warnings that were disclosed in the "Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra" and the "Tibetan Book of the Dead" (please refer to the articles on "The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences" in Issues 9 and 14 of the "Lake of Lotus" for more details).

The Inter-relationship Between the "Body at the Bardo State" and the "Black Ear Hell"

The "Body at the Bardo State" is the body of the intermediate state, which is constructed jointly by one's "mental consciousness" and one's "karmic forces" to form a new body and new magnetic field. In the "Tibetan Book of the Dead", it was mentioned that it would take 49 days for completing the process of rebirth. Since everything is impermanent, this period of 49-days is not an invariant figure, and neither is this to be calculated all within the time scale of this human world. Regardless of other extraordinary situations, the former part of the 49-days's period of a deceased person in this human world would be calculated within the human time scale, while the latter part of it would be calculated in accordance with the specific time scale of the particular domain where one's reincarnation would take place. Basing on Hitler's own narrations, in conjunction with his intense evil karmas of killing a lot of people, it is gauged that he would enter into the "Hell realm".

According to the "Naraka Sutra" as aforementioned, one day in the "Hells" of the

first tier would be around 3,750 human years for their one day. It is unknown as to which of the tiers of the “Hells” that Hitler would end up, but we can estimate that for each day of the latter part of his 49-days’ period, it would be **equal to or more than** 3,570 years. Because of this, though Hitler had been dead for 36 years at that time from 1945 to 1981, he was still at the “stage of crafting of his figure and condensing the future settings” for himself in the “Black Ear Hell”. The main characteristic of the “Black Ear Hell” is that **“all is still in the process of consolidation”**. Although Hitler had been dead for 36 years according to the time frame of our human world, it was only about less than one minute within the time scale of the domain of the “hell”. What has been condensed and consolidated within one minute was extremely limited, and so Hitler’s “body in hell” had not been formed, not even for a small bit of it. Therefore, even though Hitler was hit by the human heads, which were as hard as rocks, he didn’t feel the pain at all. At that time, Hitler only suffered mainly from his “psychological anxieties”, but not from the “physical pains” of his body.

Nonetheless, since “all was in still in the process of consolidation”, and so Hitler **would only feel** that his feet were chained, but when he looked down, he could not see anything. The chains had not been “formed” to materialize in becoming the shape of some materials. Since the “Black Ear Hell” itself is not formed by materials, but merely coming from the sensations of one’s “mental consciousness of the Bardo State” to be reined by one’s own “karmic forces”. Therefore, another characteristic of the “Black Ear Hell” is that all **“the substances are still at the stage of consolidation, and in its initial stage, even light could not exist as it is so sparsely-dense materialistically”**. Thus, all the quagmires, dark clouds and the scenes of human heads were just all imageries of the internal projections and cognitions of Hitler’s own “mental consciousness”, and so there was no need to have any **“light”** for illumination in order to be seen and recognized. Therefore, Hitler was very puzzled as to why he could still see things even though he was in a setting where there was no “light” at all.

As there are various stages on the different levels in the “posthumous world”, and so for different people with different “karmic forces”, they would experience “different kinds of settings”, and so their methods to deal with these situations would also vary accordingly. Therefore, **in order to “save oneself”, it is most important for the individual to learn the “up-to-the-point” Dharma practices while one is still alive, especially to understand well and to master the “modes of operation in the posthumous world”**. The aforementioned case study of Hitler has indicated that he would be reborn into the “Hell of Isolation”. In order to let people understand better and realize the importance of the kinds of behaviors and decisions that they are **now** making at the present stage would surely affect their future directions and settings after death, as well as their rebirths in the after-life. The next chapter would further explore the issue on how “the emotions of a dying person at the moment of death, and what this person had seen and heard during such a setting, would affect and influence the future after-life environment, as well as the place of one’s rebirth.”

..... (To be Continued)

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



Summary on the Key Points of Each Issue

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

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

Issue 3

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

Issue 4

- The “Almighty Light” at the Moment of Death
- The Origin of “Light”
- The Application of “Light”
- “Super Abilities”, “Supernatural Powers” and “Levels of Realization”

Issue 5

- Reasons for the Generation of the “Light of Life and Death”
- Illusions of the “Mind”
- The Truth of “Prophecy”

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- “Omniscience” and “Flash Foreword”
- The Truth of “Predictions” and “Future”
- Don’t Become the Slaves of “Fortune-Telling, Divinations and Predictions”

Issue 7

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

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- The Different Phases of “Death”
- The Phase of Separation between the “Physical Body” and the “Spiritual Body”
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- “Transitional Period” and the Phase of Standby for Rebirth
- Shocking Revelations: Scenes Before Death

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- One Out of Seven “Near-Death Experiences” is Negative
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The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (25)

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

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

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

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

1. **Complementarity and the Enhancement of Effectiveness:** The links between "plans" should have compatible, complementary and interdependent effects....(please refer to Issue 4 of the "Lake of Lotus").

2. **A thorough elimination process to decide what to "adopt and abandon":** Irrespective of working out major, medium-term and small "plans", there must be a process to prioritize and eliminate with regards to some designated elements and conditions. A thorough elimination process to determine what to "adopt and abandon"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

methods is to merge one's own "Dharma practices" into one's "daily living" so as to ensure one's mastering of the "Planning of Time".

No matter in the setting of what kinds of "plans", one has to try and predict what would be the outcomes that would be brought upon you by this "plan"? What will be the side-effects and how many? One always hopes for the best but be prepared for the worst. Many a Dharma practitioners, when planning the times for their "Dharma practices", will tend to take care of one but then lose hold of the others, making it more contradictory, and also more confusing, for one's own "daily living", and thus ending in the loss of what to "adopt and abandon". (please refer to the Issue 11 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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

- (ix) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (6): The Skilful Usages of the "Main

Theme" and the "Sequences of Events": The "cardinal mentality" is the major key in deciding on all things, and so the "planning of one's Dharma practices" in one's "daily living" has to use the "cardinal mentality" as the "main theme" to link up the "static states of Dharma practices" with the "dynamic states of Dharma practices", by connecting their "common points" so as to get through the rigid dichotomy in one's "planning of time," and thus opening and tidying up the disordered "sequences of events" in order to synergize the contradictions of these two and to make them to become complementary to each other, while using the "cardinal mentality" as the basis all through. This is, indeed, the "main points of planning" for one's Dharma practices in "daily living". Yet, how one focuses on the "cardinal mentality" and the "planning of time" would become the main key points for one's "successes and/or failures".... (please refer to the Issue 13 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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

- (xi) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (8): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (1): In the undulated

journey in the course of one's lifetime, it is **unavoidable** that one would meet with many adversities. If you encounter these adversities and could not handle them properly, they would become the **obstacles** to all of your plans and objectives. Regardless of what "time and effectiveness" that you may have, they would be **completely** disturbed and delayed, and would hardly function properly. Thus, when one can skillfully adopt the strategy of getting through the obstacles by linking up the "Main Theme and the Sequences of Events", and when one has set up the principles for **choosing** one's "Cardinal Mentality" and also for the "Three Essential Factors" within one's "mind", one should at the same time follow the criteria for one's "Dharma practices in times of adversities" as the **procedures for handling the situations** (please refer to the Issue 15 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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

(xiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (10): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (3):** In times of favorable circumstances, it would be easy for one to achieve success regardless of what one does. One would **naturally** be successful without having to wait for the right opportunities, neither does one have to make any planning. This is because this will be the time for **the arrival of the**

"achieved rewards". The good deeds that you have accumulated in the past are the best planning for the "achieved rewards." However, in times of adversities, no matter what one does, one would have encountered many obstacles and have one's head badly battered. If one simply goes along naturally, it would lead one to a dead end. This is because, in times of adversities, it is the time **for the coming of one's retributions due to one's past bad deeds**. If one does not remain calm, wait for the right opportunity, and plan appropriately, it would be difficult for one to get out from the plight. The question, then, is **when will be the best time** to get out from the plight? And what would be considered as the **appropriate planning** (please refer to the Issue 17 of the "Lake of Lotus")?

(xiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (11): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (4) – Making use of the Circumstances:** The characteristics for being in adversities are that one would be **beset with difficulties and will be unable to cope with the situations**. If one has to make use of the circumstances of that particular situation and time so as to break through the obstacles is basically an **extremely difficult matter to achieve**. Since it is **all that difficult**, the conditions that one would have to consider in order to complement the whole situation would be particularly even more so. There is an old Chinese saying that "Hero makes the trend of his time, and the trend of the time makes its own Hero". After all, 'the trend of the time and the environment' together is one of the major elements for one's success and failure. Hence, it is also **a necessary element** for one to get out from the plight by making use of the circumstances to break away from adversities. If one is to make use of the circumstances, one would adopt one of the following situations: (1) to **quietly wait** for the favourable circumstances to arise; (2) to **make use of** the existing circumstances; and (3) to **build up** favourable circumstances (please refer

to the Issue 18 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (12): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities”(5) -- Learn One’s Lessons from Past Experiences:** Failure is not necessarily a miserable thing. It can only be said as a blueprint which reflects on a series of **merits and weaknesses**. If one can learn one’s lessons well from past experiences in finding out the “reasons for one’s failures, as well as the **personal behavioral formulae** that led to such failures”, **one’s “wisdom of self-enhancement”** will be elevated by applying proper remedies to revise these **extremely concealed** and improper formulae, this would help to bring about one’s success in the next occasion. During this process of “self-enhancement”, it would enable one to live more happily and to have a direction, to have more meanings and values, and to be more proactive. In this way, what one would regard as failures have, in fact, now been changed into successes, and have brought about the essential elements for one’s future successes. The “state of invincibility” is the most lonely and painful experience. Too many successes and for too long will only make one to lose one’s sense of direction, and to easily lose oneself in one’s own “ego”. As such, one **would not be able to find out and revise the poor formulae**, and oneself would thus be easily bogged down in the mire of having too much “self-pride” and strong “arrogance” within one’s own “ego”, never being able **to see the real world in its totality**. In this regard, such kind of continuous successes can only be said to be **an extremely big failure** (please refer to the Issue 19 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (13): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (6) – Enhancing One’s Awareness:** Many a times the formation of one’s mistakes and failures are due to the inadequacy of one’s own “awareness”. The biggest drawback

was one’s own failure lied in not “being aware” of what and where had gone wrong in one’s own “behavioral formulae”. This would result in one’s repeating, or even expanding, of one’s mistakes and failures endlessly. Being faulty or carelessness for a short while is not the main cause for one’s mistakes and failures. **The main and real cause is the existence of deviations and defects in both the consciousness and the subconscious of one’s own “behavioral formulae”**. This would lead to a chain of wrong behaviors, which would form **an orbit which would lead to further failures, and that one would find it hard to depart from it**. Along with this orbit of failures, it would further extend to many more faults and carelessness, and the end result would be more and greater failures. Hence, to “enhance one’s awareness” is not only to elevate one’s attentiveness, such that the frequency of one’s making mistakes due to carelessness would be reduced, but the more important aspect is whether to have the ability for one’s “self-reflection”, for observing the minute details, and to carefully find out the deviations and defects in one’s own “behavioral formulae” (please refer to the Issue 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xvii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (14): Simplifying the Complexities, Finding the Keys -** Due to the fact that one’s life span is **temporary and impermanent**, and so when one design and draw up a plan for one’s own Dharma practice, one should need to include the “factor of time and effectiveness”, all the more, as **the primary important point for one’s consideration**. Apart from having the “right mindset and criteria” in handling periods of “adversities or prosperities” so that one would be able to “master the factor of time” more accurately and to have **an edge, what other principles that one should need to pay attention to?** No matter what kinds of the “planning of time” that one has, they are bound to have both strengths and weaknesses. It is unavoidable that there will be some faults.

However, the appropriate “planning of time” should be able to reduce or lighten all kinds of faults and be able to speed up the process in the showing of “success”.

An appropriate “planning of time” must make use of the following principles in its design: 1. Linking up by the Main theme, and getting through the sequences of events – target: daily living before one’s death (please refer to Issue 21 of “Lake of Lotus”); 2. Simplifying the complexities, finding the keys – target: the wrestling ground of energies after one’s death; 3. Differentiation on the order of importance, Proper handling of the interferences – target: the wrestling ground of energies after one’s death (please refer to Issue 21 of “Lake of Lotus”).

“Emptiness” that could counter-act the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic exercise”. Hence, though prayers can produce some effects, the highest level that they can achieve would only be limited to the “materialization of requests for worldly desires”, or for the “rebirths in some virtuous realms”. One would not be able to achieve the two objectives of: (1) liberation from the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic existence”; and (2) the attainment of “Complete Enlightenment” (“Buddhahood”). Hence, “prayers” will not be able to become the major item of Dharma practice in Buddhism, and that it can only be a supplementary method of Dharma practice. (Please refer to Issue 23 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xviii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (15): Mastering of Time and Choice of Methods – Irrespective of the objectives of one’s Dharma practice, one must choose the appropriate “methods of Dharma practice” that correspond with one’s objectives. The amount of time spent on these “methods of Dharma practice”, and the effects that one can achieve through them, are the key and critical points as to whether or not one can achieve the objectives, and so one should analyze them in more details. In order to have a quick and accurate way to analyze and measure the various “methods of Dharma practice”, one must first “bring out the chief points” on the “objectives” of the various practices, as well as the effective elements of the “methods of Dharma practice”, before one can correspondingly discuss and analyze the issues (please refer to Issue 22 of “Lake of Lotus”).

(xix) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (16): The Highest Objective that “Prayers” can Achieve – On the side of effectiveness, even though they consist the element of one’s “mental strength”, but since “prayers” do not involve any practice on “Emptiness”, and so they are neither direct enough, nor have they included any programming for the practicing of

(xx) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (17): The Mystery of the Blessings of the Sound in the Recitations of “Mantras, Buddhas’ Names or Sutras” – The practice method of using sound to recite “mantras, names of Holy Deities, and scriptures” is one of the practice methods that have been adopted by most religions and ceremonies in this secular world. Does it consist of other deeper meanings? What are some of the effects that will be produced from this kind of practice methods? What are the degrees of influence that this has upon one’s own “mental strength”? What is the highest level of objective that it can achieve? What is the length of time that it will take up in order to achieve the objective? (Please refer to Issue 24 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Excerpt of Last Issue

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

1. Praying for worldly desires – For example: to seek for oneself and one’s own relatives to have “longevity, recovery from illness,

success in one's career, good marriage, wealth increase, averting disasters and relief from sufferings, as well as reunion with those deceased loved ones". Also, there are those who hope to get the "ease of heart and security at the present life", etc.; or for "fame, wealth, respect" in order to study Buddhism; as well as for those who put in efforts to practice the Dharma.

2. **Rebirth in the good realms** – For example: to hope and pray for rebirth in the heavenly realm, or in the human realm, and not to fall into the evil realms (of animals, hungry ghosts and hells).
3. **Liberation from the tractions of the "cycle of karmic existence"** – to hope and pray for the freedom in deciding for oneself as to whether one would be reborn into the six realms (of heavens, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hells), or whether to remain in the highest level of the "Realm of Form", such as the "Akanistha" (the "Heaven at the End-of-Form-Realm"), which is beyond the control of the tractions. (Please refer to the explanations on the "Three Realms" in the article on the "Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death: The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences" in Issue 17 of the "Lake of Lotus").
4. **Attainment of Buddhahood** – The recovery of one's "Primordial Nature" and the originally possessed and boundless capabilities, which are free from any bondages and to remain in the "Dharma Realm". (The "Nature of the Mind", also known as the "Buddha Nature", or the "Primordial Nature", refers to the original possession of that most crystal clarity of awareness. Please refer to the articles on "The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences" in Issues 4 & 5 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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

divided into the following types:

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

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

The last chapter has clearly explained the effect and mystery that the sound has produced on people. (Please refer to the article of the Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practices of Issue 24 of the Lake of Lotus) The part on the rationale for the "resonance" and "operation" is one of the functions on the recitations of mantras. Since the sound of mantra does not necessarily have to be words that could be translated or understood, particularly those mantra which are meant for the following purposes:

1. linkage or condensation;
2. cutting off the linkage or condensation
3. taming and shattering

How to Make Different Mantras to Produce Effects?

The method is to make, or produce, a sound which is similar to, or the same as, that of a particular material until it gives rise to "resonance", such that the two objects will be linked together or get condensed and consolidated. For example, to make use of this method to get linked up with the "Pure Land" so as to help oneself to get rebirth over there. Using this method in such a way that the materials of the cells which constitute a particular

organ will be **condensed and consolidated** to help some particular structure of the body to rejuvenate again. Or to make use of this method to **get linked** to one's immune system, which one has lost contact with, to be rejuvenated again so as to help one to treat illnesses. All of these rely on the rationale that was already described in our last chapter : that is, the effects and energies that are produced from the "resonance" of sound can make the "electrons" at the outer layer of the "atom" to move over to the other "atom" next to it, or else the two "atoms" can share the same "electrons". This kind of mechanism can help to make "atoms" to become **bonding** in forming "**molecules**", or other types of "compounds". **Through this process, different types of materials can then be connected, consolidated and formed.**

Yet, what type of pronunciation of "sound" could match such particular effects? There is only the mighty power of the "awareness" of the "Buddha" that can tell **which type of pronunciation of a sound can match the effect of the magnetic field of a particular material in order to have such an effect, while the up-to-date scientific knowledge still lags behind in this aspect.** As different sounds can produced different "frequencies of vibration" to match the magnetic fields and structures of things, it is due to this reason that there exists different types of "mantras". For example, the "Mantra of the Medicine Buddha" is for treating illnesses; the "Mantra of Kurukulle" can help to improve human relations; the "Mantra for the Buddha of Longevity" can help to extent one's life; the "Mantra of Manjushri" can help to give rise to one's own wisdom; or those "**Increasing Mantras**" for helping to improve beneficial activities, or those "**Magnifying Mantras**" for helping to improve one's love relations and all emotionally-related matters.

But, then, how can one make efforts in the recitation of mantras in order to produce those effective results? The answer is that one must have to meet the following two conditions:

1. **The Main Cause** - with a focused and sincere mind, one should use different speed and volume of sound to continuously recite the mantra, until "one's inner body can feel the giving rise of comfortable, harmonious and continuous vibrations". Depending upon

the various situations, one **must consult an experienced "Guru" with proper lineage** to receive instructions on the parts of the body with vibration and other auspicious signs. This not only involves the experiences for one's practices, but it also need the "**oral-pith instructions**" ("**Man-ngan**" in Tibetan) on various "**visualization**" practices which have been "**passed down orally through generations of past Gurus to one's present Guru**". As such, this part will not be explained further here.

2. **The Ancillary conditions** – this must be personally-transmitted by a well-qualified "Guru" with proper lineage before one can have the chance to practice successfully. This is because that the "mantras" involves the "magnetic fields", and whether these "magnetic fields" can either get successfully linked up, or be cut off, would rely on the matching of both the "ancillary conditions" and the "main cause". If one has to rely solely on the "main cause", one would need to be a **Bodhisattva of the "Eighth Stage"**, [the stage of emancipation from the materials. Please refer to the article on the "Eight Manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava - The Lion's Roar" in Issue 7 of the "Lake of Lotus". The "Eighth Stage: the Unshakable" refers to one's practical experience of entering into the state of "emptiness" in an extremely stable condition. The awakening and realization as a result of one's practices have developed to be very steady. When a person has attained such a level of practice, then if one is to be reborn again, one would not be reborn into the "evil paths", and can thus continuously to be a Dharma practitioner without any more retrogressions. The power of one's Dharma practice will enable one to see a small fraction of the light of the "Sambhogakaya Buddha" (whose brightness is equivalent to the brightness of one thousand suns). As for one's behaviours, even when one is subjected to the furiously attacks of different worries and troubles, this would not affect one's Dharma practice nor would one withdraw from one's Dharma practices] before one can have sufficient abilities to ensure that the

linkage, or the cutting off, of the “magnetic fields” can be made possible. For those whose attainment of the Dharma practices are below this level, they must have to rely on the assistances of their “past Gurus of the lineages, their own Gurus, Deities, Dakinis, and Dharma protectors” before they can ensure success in their practices. Hence, the “Varjayana” emphasizes the importance for Dharma practitioners to “strictly observe the percepts, to be pure in one’s vows, and to be respectable and loyal to one’s own Guru”. Otherwise, it would be difficult to have any success even if one has received the mantras. Dharma practitioners may finally fail due to the influences of various elements, like the “inaccurate pronunciations of the mantras, lack of “spiritual guidance” or oral-pith instructions (“Man-ngan in Tibetan), obstacles due to one’s breaking of percepts and samayas, or the lack of ancillary powers”. No matter how hard one recites the mantras, one would not be able to become successful, and with no effects.

Another type of mantra which is for the “cutting off linkage or cutting of the consolidation”, which has the unique nature of producing sound which is the same of, or similar to, the “frequencies of vibration” of certain things until the production of “resonances”, such that it would cut off the linkage between the two materials, or to damage the development of consolidation of the two things. For example, to make use of such method to cut off the linkage with the “three lower realms” of the “hell, hungry ghosts and animals” so as to help oneself to get away from the evil paths of rebirth; or to help oneself in getting rid of the entanglements from the tractional forces of these evil paths. With such a method, one can cut off the consolidation of materials in the cancer cells so as to stop the growth of tumors; or one can use such method to cut off the linkages on the disturbances of the negative magnetic fields.

The method that one can rely upon has already been described in the previous chapter : that is, the effects and energies produced from the “resonance” of sound can make the “electrons” at the outer layer of the “atom” to change its orbit. Such kind of mechanism that helps to

make bonding of “atoms” would then be broken up. In this way, different types of materials will soon become damaged and decayed.

For example, the “Mantra of Emptiness” can help to cut off, or weaken, the disturbances and interferences of “magnetic fields”; the “Mantra of the Original Enlightenment” which enables those Dharma practitioners who have practiced on the visualization of emptiness for certain levels to be able to get rid of all linkages and thus be able to enter directly into the “state of enlightenment”, or “primordial awareness”; the “Hundred Syllables Mantra” can help to remove obstacles; the rediscovered treasure on the “Mantra of Urgyen Menla” can help to treat cancers; and the types of “Pacifying Mantras” which help to remove calamities or illnesses. All these types of mantras were established with the above-mentioned purposes, and would thus be effective according to the rationale explained above.

There is another type of “Subjugating or Overpowering Mantras” which are for the purposes of either taming or the breaking up of things. The unique nature of the sound produced is similar to, or the same of, the “frequencies of vibration” of certain materials, and so when there is “resonance”, it can have the power to tame the furious obstacles, or shatter (break up) the strong materials that have been formed. The “resonance” produced from these “frequencies of vibration” is particularly strong and attacking. Such method can be strong enough to break glasses, to tame the evils and obstacles, or stand against and break up the attacks of “karmic avengers and creditors”. The basis for all these depends on the rationale of what has already been explained in the previous chapter : the energies and effects from the “resonance” of sound can make the “electrons” at the outer layer of the “atoms” to get dispersed. Such kind of mechanism can make the bonding of atoms to be totally collapsed in a short period of time.

For example: the “Mantra of Vajrakilaya” is for the destroying of the furious evils and obstacles; the “Mantra of Guru Drakpo” is for the healing of miscellaneous queer and peculiar diseases; the “Mantra of the 100 Peaceful and Wrathful Deities” can break up the strong forces of negative magnetic fields and to dispel the devils

and evil spirits; the different types of “Subjugating or Overpowering Mantras” are all established on the basis of the above-mentioned purpose, and will produce effects on the basis of the above-mentioned rationale.

“Vajrayana” is regarded as the school with the most “effective practical practices”, not because of its being “superstitious”, but because of the fact that its methods of practice have practical effects. There are “Four Kinds of Activities” in “Vajrayana”: “activities of pacifying/averting adversities for self and others; activities of increasing/seeking good fortunes; activities of magnetizing/seeking for the care and protection of the Buddhas; and activities of subjugating/subduing/overpowering enemies”. Some of the methods of practice rely on the “recitations of Mantras” to achieve the intentional objective, which will be dependent upon the above-mentioned rationale to produce the necessary effects. On the other hand, there are some other methods of practice that belong to the “Methods of Achievement” in “Vajrayana” which also rely upon the “recitations of mantras” in order to perfect and complete the “fruits”, and the reason for their being effective is also based on the above-mentioned scientific rationale.

Abilities and Functions of “Mantras”

As such kinds of mantras are “sounds of special nature” which are established in accordance with the particular nature of some materials and magnetic fields, they are usually single syllables with single sounds, or mother sounds without any meanings, but they do have their independent and special “sound ranges”. Among the syllables in the whole mantra, the most important and key sound is called the “seed syllable” (“Bijas”) in “Vajrayana”. All these have important matches with the “channels, winds and wisdom drops” of one’s own body for Dharma practices during the “Completion Stage”. Most of the “Gurus” in general would not be able to answer questions like these: how can this “seed syllable” to be formed in one’s Dharma practices, upon what elements were they being condensed in their formations, and how can they produce functions and effects, etc.? They would only know that these mantras have been passed down from the ancient times and one only needs to recite

them continuously. The “Gurus” in general do not know, and thus would not be able to explain, the contents as described in the previous chapter and the above-mentioned explanations. Hence, they would normally encounter many obstacles both in their own practices and in teaching their disciples. [The “Completion Stage” refers to the practical training on “Emptiness”. Such level of Dharma practices does not need to rely upon the blessings of the “deities” (“Yidams” in Tibetan), but one must train one’s “meditational power”. If one’s “meditational power” is strong enough, coupled with the practical trainings on “Emptiness”, the quickest way for one would be able to attain “enlightenment” (or “Buddhahood”) “upon one’s death”, that is, to “attain Buddhahood in this very lifetime”. Please refer to the explanations in the article on the “Introduction of Guru Padmasambhava, the Founder of Tibetan Buddhism” in the Inaugural Issue of the “Lake of Lotus”.]

Due to the fact that they do not know the rationale behind this, they naturally do not know how the concerned elements would be condensed, let alone not knowing how to make use of the “mantra wheel” and the “seed syllable” of them. In fact, these mysteries not only can be explained, but they can also be dismantled into different portions to form the “spiritual guidance” (Tri) which are the important analysis of Dharma practices. Within which, the most important point and key is the “oral-pith instructions” (Man-ngan). Such “oral-pith instructions” (Man-ngan) can be some key formulae for one’s “visualizations”, or can also be some “shortcuts” for mastering the methods of practices, or they can be some important points and methods for crossing over some of the “pitfalls, levels and obstacles”.

Nowadays, the “ritual texts” (“Sadhanas” in Tibetan) of Dharma practices can be obtained quite readily and easily, and the so-called “Gurus” are so many by now that they are like continuous flows of rivers everywhere, while their giving out of “empowerments (or “initiations”) have now become so common and regular as if like the taking of meals everyday. However, there are only a very few “Gurus” who can really understand the deeper levels of meanings in the Buddhist teachings. Many of them would not know how to comprehend the Buddhist

teachings, neither do they know how to directly answer those questions raised by others, and instead they would just say some other things, or that they would simply muddled through. On the other hand, they are very proficient in the **superficial aspects of the Dharma**, on the various paraphernalia of mudras-presentations, vajra-dances and other religious performances in **rituals and ceremonials**, as well as on such things like ritual objects, torma-making, etc.

Hence, the most important and fundamental point in one's Dharma practices should not be only in receiving "empowerments", nor in obtaining the "ritual texts" ("**Sadhanas**" in Tibetan) for Dharma practices. But instead, one should put emphasis on **obtaining the true connotations of the Buddhist teachings and its practical practices**. Those "true connotations of the practical practices" are the "**spiritual guidance**" (Tri) and the "**oral-pith instructions**" (Man-ngan). Hence, when one chooses one's own "Guru", one should not only just choose those "Gurus" with the proper lineages, but should also choose those "Gurus" who know about and can teach the "**spiritual guidance**" (Tri) and the "**oral-pith instructions**" (Man-ngan). If not, one would only have **practiced the Dharma blindly**, resulting in wasting a lot of one's efforts with little or no achievement, or simply a total waste.

"Mantra" is also known as the "secret words", simply because one of its mysteries has to do with its difficulty for comprehension. According to the knowledge of the ancient times, it would be difficult to comprehend in details the structural principles of "molecules and atoms". Hence, it would be difficult to understand the mysteries behind it, and thus making it all the more mysterious and



cannot be explained for all Dharma practices. **Being too "superstitious" and having "obstacles and difficulties in obtaining 'spiritual guidance' (Tri) and 'oral-pith instructions' (Man-ngan)"** have resulted in many of the Dharma practitioners **not being able to have any progress** in their Dharma practices, and some may **even become retrogressed**. Hence, one must have to have an experienced "Guru" who knows the "spiritual guidance" (Tri) and the "oral-pith instructions" (Man-ngan) in order to teach and guide oneself such that one may have **any hope of success** in one's Dharma practices.

The meaning of "**superstition**" is to be "**lost in one's belief without having any sense of awareness**". Due to stupidity and ignorance, the damages thus inflicted upon oneself will be even more serious than those of the three poisons of "greed, hatred and ignorance" in general. However, for most of the religions, they would adopt this policy of hoodwinking the people, submerging the **rationality and awareness** of their followers, and would adopt a murdering approach in removing their opponents, skeptics and the untamed ones, and of using such excuses as "these things are something that could not be explained, or beyond the comprehension of human intelligence" and so on to questions raised. They continue to mystify their teachings and their deities, by giving answers like "this is something which could not be doubted or queried, or else one would commit blasphemy to our gods" and so on in order to uphold the authorities of their religions.

In "Vajrayana Buddhism", there is a tradition of "paying respects to one's Guru". Its original intention of this kind of practice is to have a tradition of "well-trained Masters" so that an "**experienced Guru, with the protection of the genuine and proper lineages, can help to guide one's Dharma practice in order to swiftly enhance and elevate one's awareness**", particularly on those teachings that could easily be misunderstood, or on those **practical methods** of practice which is difficult to comprehend. This would enable a "**qualified Guru**" to guide and rectify the possible "dangerous situations" of "different sentient beings who may have different responses or symptoms during their Dharma practices". With such a "**qualified Guru**", this would ensure that the "Vajrayana" practitioners

can be situated on a “path leading to speedy success without any dangers”.

Of course, any religions and teachings would require one’s “confidence and respect”. Otherwise, one would have difficulty in giving rise to the real functions of one’s “mind”. However, **this does not mean that one should follow blindly and stupidly, without any critical thinking, in believing any religions superstitiously, or in a particular Guru, or in some particular teachings.** This is because “confidence and respect” should be built upon **“rational analysis, thinking of wisdom, and observation and reflection with awareness”**.

Some people would have too much grasping on one’s own “ego” and “self esteem”, and so would not want to pay respects to their “Gurus”, and would thus practice on their own in a “blinded” manner. Not only are such persons **not having wisdom**, but also wasting their precious time and opportunities. Such submerged **grasping formulae in their “sub-conscious”** would follow them all through their various lives, and would thus block the path for “enhancing and elevating their awareness”. Some people did not first observe their “Gurus” before they put in hundred percent of their trust and respect, and just put their own “roots of wisdom life” to others at their disposal. This is, indeed, very foolish and **would have the possibility of putting oneself in desperate situations with no return.** (Please refer to the DVD on the “Fifty Stanzas on Serving the Guru (8): Would the Trust and Obedience to One’s Guru Obstruct One’s Own Independent Thinking?”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association.)

“Mantra” is a noun which gives people the feelings of “superstitions and mysteries”, and that it is “both righteous and evil”. Due to the fact that, in the past, no one can **explain clearly** the mystery of mantra, one could only know a small part of the “story on its effectiveness”, and thus leading to many misunderstandings. It is, indeed, a pity that some people from “Mahayana Buddhism”, due to their **ignorance**, wrote series of articles to openly disclaim and defame the functions of “mantras”, thus resulting in their committing of “serious precepts”. While, of course, there are also some others who gave far-fetched interpretations on the power of the “mantras” and thus mystify the whole thing, instead of asking people to adopt

the correct methods in the “recitations of the mantras” in order to give rise to its effects.

The “Three Lower Portions” of “Vajrayana” is commonly known as the “Shingon School” (**in Japan**), and the “recitations of mantras” is an important part of its Dharma practices. Hence, there is a need to have an in-depth analysis on this format of Dharma practice. Other than those **“spiritual guidance” (Tri)** and **“oral-pith instructions” (Man-ngan)** which could not be disclosed, other parts of the meaning of “mantras” could be readily and openly explored. In the Buddhist Sutras, the word **“Mantra”** has been translated as the **“True Words” (“Shingon” in Japanese)**, or as **“Brightness”** or **“Wisdom” (“Vidya” in Sanskrit)**. In Sanskrit, it is known as “Mantra”, or **“Dharani”**.

Dharma practices in “Buddhism” involve **“genuine practical methods of practice”**, and so they are **very refined** and are classified into three parts: **“body, speech and mind”**, and is commonly known as the “three doors” or **“three karmas” (“Trividha-dvara” in Sanskrit)**. Each of them has its own functions, and they will supplement each other. At the same time, they can **perform their unique functions independently**. Since the “Three Lower Portions” of “Vajrayana” has **strengthened** the methods of practice for the “three karmas”, and so those practice methods which incorporate these three parts can be called as the **“Blessings of the Three Secrets”**, namely: the **“body, speech and mind”** of the **“One Who Has Thus Gone” (“Tathagata” in Sanskrit)**. The “Most Supreme Portion” of “Vajrayana” is even of a higher level, which **matches** the practice methods of the “three karmas” with that of the **“spiritual guidance” (Tri)** and the **“oral-pith instructions” (Man-ngan)**. In this way, its function has been brought to the extreme, and the incorporation of these three parts into one’s Dharma practice is known as the **“Three Vajras” (“gsang ba gsum” in Tibetan)**.

One of the practice methods in the “speech karma” is mainly on the **“True Words” (“Shingon” in Japanese)**. The meaning of **“Shingon”** is that it is a type of sound which is true and with a special sound range. It could give rise to a “vibration frequency” which could harmonize or lead to the production of “resonance” with a group of materials. It would also be explained as a type of sound which is true and with special

pronunciations, which could reach and call upon some particular Gods, Buddhas and/or Dharmapalas in certain realms for their coming to help.

“Dharani” has the meanings of “entire control, can hold and can reject”. The meaning of “entire control” is to have retained a whole range of entire memory in remembering the boundless Buddhist teachings, without ever forgetting or losing them. The meaning of “can hold” is that it can hold all the Dharmas within one single Dharma; to hold all the articles within one single article; to hold all the meanings within one single meaning, and to hold onto different good practices. The meaning of “can reject” is the ability to reject all the evil matters. (Please see Volume 5 of the “Mahaprajnaparamita-sastra”, and Volume 5 of the “Sutra of Buddha-bhumi”.)

Bodhistva Nagarjuna has mentioned the classifications of “Dharani”, in Volumes 5 and 28 of the “Mahaprajnaparamita-sastra”, as follows:

- (1) To hear and keep Dharani – the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would not forget anything that one has heard;
- (2) To differentiate knowledge Dharani – the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would be able to differentiate the righteous from the evil, and what is good from what is bad.
- (3) To hear sound Dharani – the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would be able to hear all the sounds of speech, including those that are happy, and those that are evil, without getting angry.

Furthermore, Bodhisattva Maitreya has classified “Dharani”, in Volume 45 of the “Yogacaryabhumi-sastra”, into the following divisions:


- (1) Dharma Dharani – the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would be able to remember the words and sentences of the Sutras in one’s numerous lifetimes;
- (2) Meaning Dharani - the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would be able

to remember the meanings of the Sutras in one’s numerous lifetimes;

- (3) Mantra Dharani – the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that, through one’s “meditational power”, one would be able to experience the special effects of the “mantras”, and that it would help other sentient beings to remove all kinds of calamities and illnesses.
- (4) Endurance Dharani - the successful symptom for the proper recitation of this type of mantra is that one would be able to know the real meanings of the various Dharmas, and the ability without losing them.

What is the real meaning of having received the “relevant teachings”? In the “Buddhist Sutras”, there are the mentioning of the “Dharani Samadhi”, the “Dharani Seal Samadhi”, and the “one hundred and eight kinds of ‘Samadhis’”, and so what are they? This seems to infer that there are “Mantras” within the hundred types of “Right Concentrations”, and so what is the mysterious rationale behind them? Apart from the mysteries of “resonance” and “operations”, are there any other deeper meanings in the reciting of “Mantras, Buddha’s Names or Sutras”? Are there any differences in the reciting of “Mantras, Buddha’s Names or Sutras”? Which of them would have a greater strength? What kinds of benefits will these have? What are the differences in the techniques of reciting them? There are two levels in the production of human sounds: the “conscious” and the “sub-conscious” levels. Will they be beneficial to one’s Dharma practice? What are the effects that are produced in the reciting of “Mantras, Buddha’s Names or Sutras”? To what degrees do these practice methods influence one’s “mental strength”? What is the highest level of objective that one can achieve? What is the length of time that one has to spend on this? We will continue to share some of these mysteries in the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”.... (To be Continued)

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



The Essence of Teachings: Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness (20)

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

Excerpt of Last Chapter

The Founding Father of Tibetan Tantrism, Guru Padmasambhava, has warned us that: **“Don’t lose one’s ‘view’ in one’s ‘action’, and don’t lose one’s ‘action’ in one’s ‘view’”**. Either of these two wrong ways will eventually lead one to fall into the Three Lower Realms of the “cycle of karmic existence”.

Hence, Guru Padmasambhava has given us his Spiritual Advice: **“Though my ‘view’ is higher than the sky, my ‘action’ regarding cause and effect is finer than barley flour”**. Hence, one has to learn slowly to be able to **“descend with one’s ‘view’ while to ascend with one’s ‘action’”** in order that the two can eventually be united together as one single entity.

Guiding Principle for One’s Dharma Practice

As a guiding principle: the Dharma has no categorization as to which one is more “superior” than the others; the categorization, if there is any, is merely on which one is more suitable to one’s own capacity and disposition. The “mere talk of eating will not satisfy hunger”, and so intellectual disputes is not the way out.

The only way out is through genuine practice of the Dharma; and in the process, you will find your way out. The Lord Buddha had revealed “84,000 methods in order to suit the 84,000 types of sentient beings, according to their various capacities and dispositions!” Hence, when one has chosen the most suitable





method for oneself, that is already the first step for one's success towards the final goals of "liberation and enlightenment".

Guru Padmasambhava further said that: "Vajrayana Dharma Practitioners are like a snake inside a bamboo shoot, it can only either climb up or go down. There is no third route to go". This is true irrespective of whether one is a Dharma practitioner or just an ordinary person, the end results of "Cause and Effect" will be the same for all!

One has to be "down to earth" in one's Dharma practice, to practice the Dharma "wholeheartedly" and "honestly" (i.e. not having self-deception as well as in deceiving others), and should be assisted by the very basic foundation of the Buddhist teachings. If there are confusions due to various "academic disputes", it is most essential that one should practice the Dharma diligently according to the instructions of one's own Root Guru, and to regard them as the ultimate instructions.

Of course, nowadays there are so many "false gurus" everywhere, and so we have to be very careful in choosing a genuine guru who is most suitable for oneself. Please be very very careful

about this most important issue at this time of the Degenerate Age!

The following illustrates the various ways that one can practice different methods in order to help realize and achieve the state of "Emptiness"; for instance: in the "Vairocana's Seven-pointed Meditation" in Vajrayana as taught by our Dudjom Buddhist Association, the practice "with form" can make use of the "channels, wind, and wisdom drops" of one's own body to become sublime and smooth, so that "wisdom" and "energy" could be increased. If one can alternate this practice with the "formless" way of meditational practice, it will further help the Dharma practitioner to become much easier to enter into the realization of "Emptiness" – that is, the state of "neither existence nor voidness"!

During our Dharma practices, our views and our actions must be in unison and in union with each other. In the process of one's Dharma practice, there are four different stages of the View, Meditation, Action, and Fruit that one should be aware of..... (To be Continued)





The Ultimate Love & Care of Life

End-of-Life Care (2)

Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye
Acharya Pema Lhadren

Foreword

How to face “death”, and all the way to the point of how to receive the best ultimate love and care at the last moment of one’s life journey, such that an individual would be able to proceed to another stage of life with confidence and dignity, as well as for one’s concerned kith and kin to let go of sorrows in the process is, indeed, a big matter for all of us to learn and study about. This is also the **utmost sincere wish for the two of us in trying to contribute towards the ultimate well-beings of all illimitable sentient beings.**

In order to transform this ideal into reality, the two of us started to establish the “Dudjom Buddhist Association (International)” in Hong Kong ten years ago (January 1998). Then, three years ago, the “Inaugural Issue” of the English-Chinese bimonthly magazine – the “Lake of Lotus” – was published in January 2006, and one year ago in June 2008, we have sent four of our disciples who possessed either bachelor’s degrees and/or master’s degrees, or even with a physician’s qualification, to study for the program on **Postgraduate Diploma in End-of-Life Care**, offered by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Owing to the “Bodhicitta” of these four disciples, together with their characters of “being respectful to both the Teachers and the Teachings”, they have now graduated as scheduled. In the very near future, they **will**



be sharing the valuable knowledge with those people who are interested in this topic. We would like to express our sincere thankfulness to them.

This “End-of-Life Care” program, which was the first of its kind in Hong Kong, was offered by the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and was also the first postgraduate program of this kind among all the universities in Hong Kong.

The targets for its student intake are mainly for medical personnel, but due to the fact that the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong wanted to offer this kind of service as **an integrated holistic service of love and care** to patients of terminal stage and of chronic diseases, and in order to promote this kind of service in a holistic manner, non-medical individuals such as social workers are also accepted to the course. However, the applicant must be a recognized degree holder.

The “**whole person**” means the concerns on the love and care of the four major dimensions of the patients, namely: the “**physical/physiological, psychological, social and spiritual**” aspects. Since the areas of coverage are so broad, the team that work together would have to comprise of various types of professionals, such as physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, dieticians, social workers, volunteers, and so on, in order to cater for the proper services to the patients concerned.

As the program covers a broad range of topics, it has been conducted **by experienced medical, para-medical and other professional personnel** of different specialties. The program consists of the following five major areas of concern:

1. Principles and perspectives of end-of-life care
2. Symptom control and medical care in end-of-life care
3. Psycho-spiritual care in end-of-life care
4. Principles and dilemmas in end-of-life care
5. Service models and future directions in end-of-life care

On top of lectures, students are required to attend **three rounds of attachments** in hospitals, and to submit three case reports after that. These four disciples who have recently graduated from this program will write articles for the “Lake of Lotus” to introduce relevant information for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings. The following is the Second article. **Wish for the Increase of Wholesome Merits !**

Dying Is Really Scary in Modern Times

By Pema Wangyal

He graduated with BA in Economics from Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, and was granted a fellowship to read for an MBA in Finance at Baruch College of the City University of New York in the United States. Since then he had worked for investment bank, fund management and securities companies in Hong Kong, and now he is the vice-president for a Mainland financial company. Lately, he graduated as the ‘best student in overall academic results’ in the ‘Postgraduate Diploma Course in End-of- Life-Care’, offered by the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Modern Men Do Not Understand What is Death and Its Real Meaning

Every one of us will die someday. The phrase “where there is birth, there will be death” suggests that this is something that we all will have to deal with eventually. However, from the ancient times to this modern world, human beings seldom pay attention to death. To the majority of us human beings, death means that we will be leaving the world and its people, which we have been familiar with, and then move on to some uncertain future. “Isn’t this too sad and fearful to think of? Can’t we just don’t talk about it?” will be the kind of responses from most people.

In this regard, we have numerous kinds of

education and services that are catered for those people who are *living*, but there is only very little, or almost none, that are catered for those who are *dying*. This is so because our society as a whole tends to have the attitude and the inclination that we do not want to spend too much resources on those dying persons and the deceased ones.

Yet, **how well we really care and respect for these dying people and the deceased actually reflects how well, and to what level, have we achieved for our own society, in terms of non-materialistic civilization?** What is even more important, in spiritual terms, is the fact that many things have revealed to us, from both the revelations by the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”** and the scientific research on “Near-Death Experiences”, that **death is the most critical turning-point**.

If one could understand the meaning of death itself and the dying process, as well as being able to receive the right supports during the dying process, then this will be most helpful for one to be spiritually uplifted and elevated to a higher level. Thus, if death can be seen as the crucial moment that one may seize upon as a golden opportunity to uplift oneself, both mentally and spiritually, then this kind of realization in our human history will have a great bearing and, in the long-run, will be able to further elevate and uplift the spiritual well-being on the whole of humanity and its civilization. On the other hand, if this is not the case (as what we are now having), then eventually the spiritual well-being of all human beings will continue to be degraded.

An Extremely Inhumane Dying Process as Provided by Our Modern Medical and Social Systems

What we are now is quite different from those living before the 2nd half of the last century. By then, people would die once they got a serious illness. But with the development of the modern western medicine, patients live longer through life-maintenance machineries, but still have their organs continue to deteriorate. As

a result, it means a **longer** time, **bigger** mental stresses, with **heavy** financial burdens to bear with death and dying for both the patients and their caregivers as they don't have the right preparation and supporting care services. In addition, due to the outbreaks of some major epidemics in the last century, and the development of some societal factors, most people living in the developed countries would either die in hospitals or at nursing homes. Unfortunately, at the present moment, most **hospitals or nursing homes** are not setting up for someone to die in, and therefore, they **do not have the appropriate services to provide for the death and dying**. Consequently, the death process in hospitals or nursing homes for the dying can be a very painful experience.





Places of Death and Proportion for Hong Kong People

Dying in Different Places & Proportion : The Case for Hong Kong

Place to Die	Proportion
1. In Hospital	
Acute Hospital	Most people will die in this place; that is, those in-patients, and those being sent to the "accident and emergency department" will all die here.
Palliative service ward or hospital	Only a limited number of patients will die here; as there are limited palliative care service providers in Hong Kong

2. At Nursing Home

Nursing home

Only a few people die here; Hong Kong has six registered nursing home that people can die here legally, in accordance to the Hong Kong Law. The nursing homes should have registered doctors who could sign the medical certificates on the Cause of Death. In order to provide the service, nursing homes should have a mortuary and a good palliative care team, such that they know how to take care of the terminally-ill patients. Hence, only 1-2 nursing homes in Hong Kong could allow patients to die here.

Old age home

Extremely rare since if a patient dies in the old age home, it is demanded by the government to go through a vigorous investigation process. Hence, the old age home will send the patients to the "accident & emergency department" of acute hospital whenever the patient seems to have some sort of discomfort.



3. At Home

Home

Extremely rare; patients' caregivers should have the knowledge to take care of the terminally-ill patients, and they should also receive the support (i.e. day care or home care service) from the palliative care service providers. More importantly, they should have a registered doctor from either the public or private hospital to visit them within two weeks before the patient died, such that the registered doctor could sign the medical certificate on the Cause of Death. Otherwise, the Police will have to step in to investigate the case, and there will be an autopsy to be done for the dead. And these will magnify the burden and stress for the deceased's caregivers. Again, most caregivers prefer to send the dying patients to the "accident & emergency department" of acute hospital.

4. During Accidents

Accidents

Relatively small amount of people; once a person was injured or died during the accident, one would be sent to the "accident & emergency department" of acute hospital.

Most of the dying people in Hong Kong end up in hospitals, particularly the acute hospitals (as referred to by the above table). But acute hospitals are not actually being set up to take care of the death or dying. In this respect, they have the following direct or indirect inhumane actions done that will make the dying process quite painful:



1) Dying patients are receiving some unnecessary emergency measures or life-sustaining treatments in the ambulance, accident & emergency department or the ICU ward, and thus causing both physical pains and mental sufferings for the dying;

2) Due to the limited beds available in the acute hospital, once the dying person has been certified to be dead, one will be packed into a plastic bag and being sent directly to the refrigerator of the hospital's mortuary. Even though the dying persons have been certificated to be "clinically dead", they still have the "consciousness" and various sensations, and so they will feel extremely painful when they have to go through the packing process and to be frozen in the refrigerator. In addition, there is only limited time for the relatives and friends to say goodbye to the dead.

The above-mentioned aspects illustrated some major traumatic experiences for the dying persons. In fact, currently, it seems that we do not pay too much respect for the dignity of the dying persons, not to mention that we could use this process to uplift the holistic quality of mankind. Fortunately, some palliative care services slowly emerge and develop, and to this extent, at least they could provide some more humane cares and services to the dying persons, which is already a major progress. In fact, more things need to be done in order that the dying persons can be well taken care of..... (To be Continued)

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

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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