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Lake of Lotus

No.28 Bimonthly

2010年7月 香港
2010年8月 台灣
(逢月初出版)
雙月刊

蓮花海

What Are the Real Needs of Dying Persons?

Introduction of "Life and Death Education" and Its Development

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HK\$10

香港

ISSN 1816-8019 07



9 771816 801006

NT\$120

台灣

ISSN 1816-8019 08



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English Version

The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death: The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (28)

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The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (28)

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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?

What Are the Real Needs of Dying Persons?

In the article on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issue 27 of “The Lake of Lotus”, it has discussed about the real needs of dying persons which should include the knowledge about how the “posthumous world” functions, the realization of the various upcoming “scenes during death and dying”, as well as the psychological preparations of oneself for them in order to have a complete mastery of one’s own emotions. Furthermore, auxiliary assistances should also be made available, but of course the best way is certainly to have proper trainings in advance so as to enable oneself to **confront with the totally new variable period of transformation** confidently.

The general public would not be able to have full access to all of the afore-mentioned conditions, in terms of resources in our contemporary society. It sounds like a fairy tale, and is also the biggest shortcoming of our modern civilized society. This sort of shortcoming is due to the incomprehensive system of social education. Studies in the whole areas of “thanatology, near-death-experiences, theory of cause and consequences, theory of reincarnations, transformations of mental consciousness, transformation of energies, spiritual psychology”, and so on, have all been neglected from the door of scientific studies, and have even been excluded from the formal research studies in various disciplines and subject matters. As a result, the evolution and advancement of human spirituality becomes stagnant. It could even be said that this is the **biggest deficiency in human civilization, resulting from the short-sightedness and ignorance of humankind.**

Most people tend to consider that reincarnation is a kind of folk legend, and thus this topic has been treated with disdain. There has been a small group of research scholars, who had endeavored with great efforts for their whole lives in doing research studies on reincarnation, such as the famous scholar on reincarnation studies, Professor Ian Stevenson, who has passed away in 2007. Yet, these research studies are **still not yet to be included in the research domains of formal sciences.** It is, indeed, a great pity, not only to Professor Stevenson himself, but also to the whole of humankind.



Professor Ian Stevenson

Starting in the 1960's to 1970's of last century, western scholars of different disciplines had taken on news reports in the mass media concerning children who had claimed to have memories of past-life to **become topics of serious research for scientific investigations**. Among them, Professor Erlendur Haraldsson is one of those pioneers in this field. Professor Erlendur Haraldsson is a trained psychologist at the University of Iceland. The methodology he has adopted is to conduct in-depth interviews on those children who have claimed memories of past-life, as well as on those first-hand witnesses who had direct contacts with them, especially with those close relatives who had lived together with these children.



Professor Erlendur Haraldsson

The interviews were taken independently to avoid mutual influences on the statements of the witnesses. As for important witnesses, further inquiries would then be repeated after a certain time span of several months so as to confirm the consistency of the statements. **Open-ended questions** were raised during the interviews, **with**

no leading questions being given. After data collection, the researchers would then **go out in search of the relevant information concerning those persons**, who have appeared to correspond to the descriptions of their past lives by these children, **in order to verify on them**.

For cases that no persons would correspond to the descriptions made by those children, then these would be classified as "unsolved". If there are deceased persons, with similarities to the descriptions made in the statements, to be identified, then interviews with their relevant kin and kith would be carried out and put into written records. An important point is to find out if there is any connection between the family members of those children and those relatives of the alleged past-life personalities to ensure that there is no exchange of information. This is to verify as to whether the statements made by those children have been "contaminated" or not. Specific features would be chosen from amongst the statements of those children, as well as from the interview records of the relatives of those alleged past-life personalities, to be enlisted for comparison purpose. In general, there would be around 10 to 40 such items, **with one-to-one comparison for verification of their genuineness**.

Professor Haraldsson had started joint projects with Professor Ian Stevenson, a famous scholar in doing research studies on reincarnation at the University of Virginia, USA for intensive studies of cases covering a wide scope of territories. The project covered the different areas of India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Lebanon, Turkey, Brazil, the regions of the North American Indian aborigines, and Nigeria in Africa.



These cases included peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Professor Haraldsson was responsible for the cases in Sri Lanka, where it is an area with plenty of cases on reincarnations. There are about 20 new cases in every 3 to 4 years. (Professor Haraldsson had also independently conducted research on reincarnation cases in other parts of the world as well, besides Sri Lanka).

From the case analysis, it was found that there was a common feature that those children who started talking about memories of their past-life at around the age of three, and would cease to talk on the subject after schooling at the age of around five to seven. Another common feature is that the causes of death on the alleged past-life personalities were mostly violent or accidental. Besides the verification from the statements from the cases of children, it has been observed and noticed that the behaviors of these children were rather different from that of the other children of their same ages.

For instance, some children of the cases had unspeakable phobias or special favors over certain things, which could not be properly understood by their own parents. However, similar kinds of experiences could be found from the corresponding alleged past-life personalities. In some instances, those children could clearly identify the kin of, and substances possessed by, the corresponding alleged past-life personalities.

In some cases, it was found that there were “birthmarks” on the bodies of those children which could correspond to the locations of the wounds of those corresponding alleged past-life personalities while they died. In Sri Lanka, there were cases about three children who claimed that they were monks in their past-lives. These children did not like to play and fool around with other kids, and have shown their solemnness and serenity as the style of monks. They did chanting in Pali (Pali is an ancient Indian language) every morning and evening, and offered flowers to the Buddhist statues. They would kneel down before the Buddhist statues and stupas when visiting Buddhist monasteries. They would feel very uncomfortable and did not want to be touched by the opposite sex (including one's own mother), which is the “precept” (or “discipline”) of monks in “Theravada Buddhism”.



In the one-to-one comparison of the different items on the special features of the statements, not every item would be proven to be valid. From these data analysis, basing upon the statements and behaviors of the children in comparison to the data collected from the corresponding alleged past-life personalities, the readers can then make their own judgments and to come up with their own conclusions as to whether “reincarnation” is a folk legend, or whether it is a phenomenon of objective factual existence. Yet, from the objective scientific studies by these scholars, it seems that this is beyond mere coincidence, or to be explained off simply as an artificial disguise by someone who has gathered the data from corresponding alleged past-life personalities.

Introduction of “Life and Death Education” and Its Development

These research findings are the hard works of those scholars' exhausting efforts of their entire lives, and have apparently highlighted the existence of “reincarnation”. In conjunction with a great heap of case studies, research reports and findings on “Near-Death Experiences” (NDEs), it has adequately verified the truthfulness of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings that: “human beings do not just annihilate

after death as if the extinction of a lamp”, but instead it will “continue to be reborn” and exist in different forms of life existence. The issue is to “exist in what kind of life form”? Would it be possible for people to die in “good death” with grace and dignity, and to “reincarnate in a better new form of life” if proper arrangement and adequate preparation could be made by the end of one’s life? This is the reason why “life and death education” gradually attracts more and more attention in modern times.

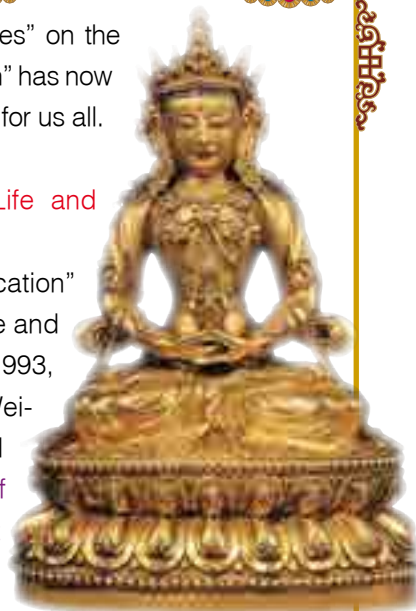
The word of “Death” has been avoided in the Chinese tradition. Even the mere talking of it can mean misfortunes for some people. Hence, most people in the Chinese culture have never been trained with education in relations to death, dying and grief while we were young. By the time we finished our higher education, our identity have already become full-grown adults when facing this world, and yet sadly enough, we still continue not being able to receive any further education in relations to the important issues of our life, such as to have more knowledge about death, on how to comfort our relatives who are dying, and on how to face the matter of grief. Once it happens to us, then most people would very often do not know how to handle it, and are thus frequently exposed to psychological sufferings.

The incidents of 9-21 Taiwan earthquake, 5-12 Sichuan earthquake, and lately 4-14 Qinghai earthquake, all of which have revealed to us the fragility of human lives. Clearly, how to assist modern people in facing “direct

perceptions and experiences” on the great issue of “life and death” has now become an important issue for us all.

1. The Introduction of “Life and Death Education”

“Life and Death Education” has originated from “Life and Death Studies”. In 1993, Professor Charles Wei-Hsun Fu has unveiled in his book “Dignity of Death, and Respect for Life” on the idea to integrate the Chinese “Wisdom of Life and Death” with the Western science of “Thanatology”, in order to establish a subject matter of “Life and Death Studies” which can slowly evolve its study “from death towards life”.



Broadly speaking, “Life and Death Education” is an education that walks one through “from death towards life”. The Taiwanese scholar, Ms. Shu-Mei Wang, has stated that: “By approaching the nature of Death itself, as well as the different phenomena in relations to death, dying and grief, so as to allow us to rethink deeply and profoundly the relationships among self and others, as well as our society, Nature and the universe, such that it will become an education that enables us to critically examine the ultimate meanings and values of life.”

In a narrow sense, “Life and Death Education” is equal to the Western science of “Thanatology” (Death Education). Indeed, this narrow sense has been adopted in both Hong Kong and the Mainland, which is the result of the taboo in our Chinese traditional culture, thus making “Death Education” to become a forbidden zone. On the one hand, this tends to be called as “Thanatology” (Death Education) overseas; while, on the other hand, in the three places across the Taiwan Straits, namely: the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong, this is known as “Life and Death Education”.

2. “Life and Death Education” Versus “Life Education”

In recent years, while the voice from the general public for “Life Education” is getting higher, it is still very rare, indeed,



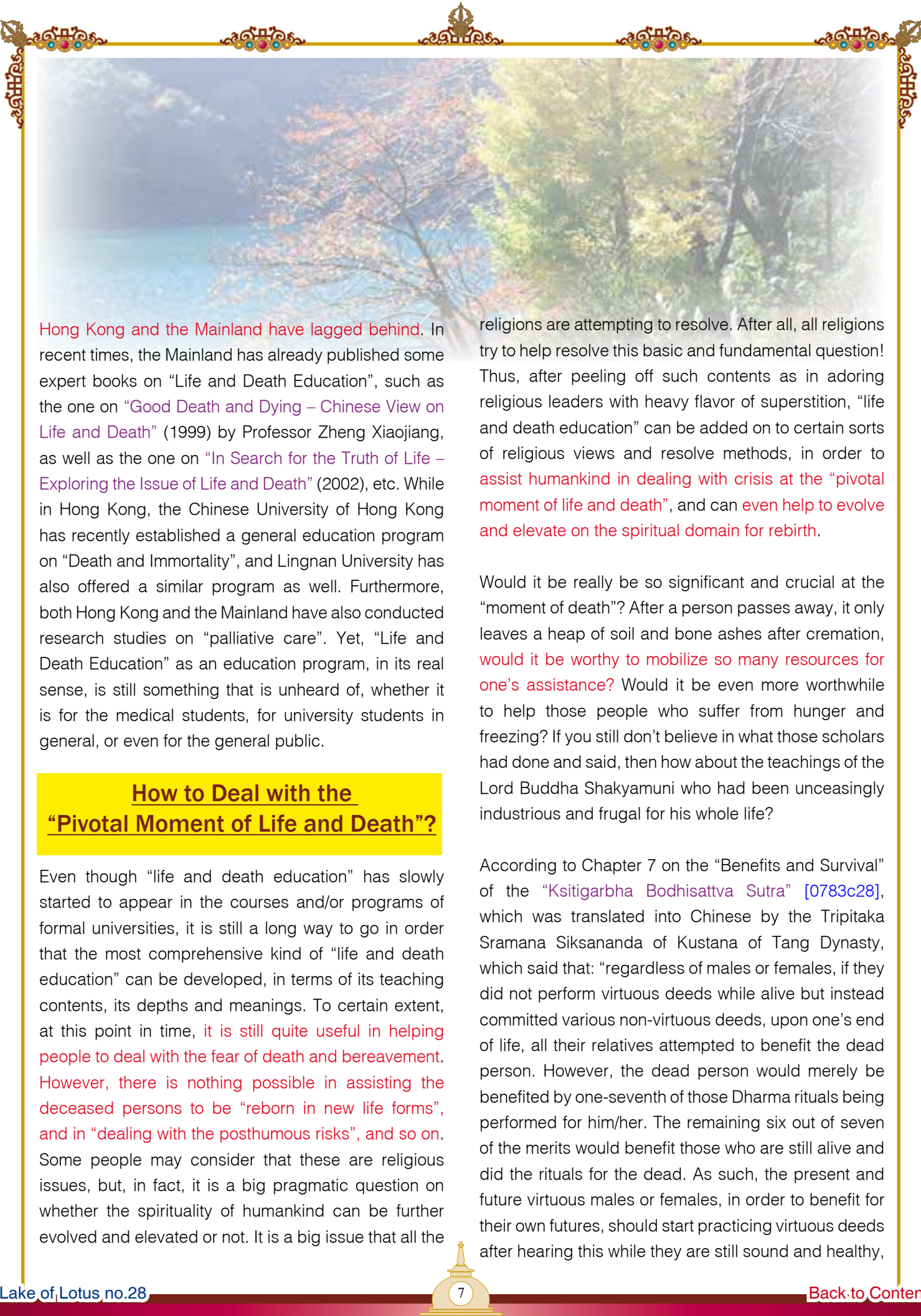
to find any local studies on “Life and Death Education”. Even as such, we can see still a strong relationship between the two: Firstly, there is an intersection between “Life Education” with “Life and Death Education”. Some scholars believe that a broader sense for “Life Education” should include human relationships, ethics, “Life and Death Education”, religion, funeral etiquette, and so on. As such, hence “Life and Death Education” should be included as part of “Life Education”. On the other hand, there are some “Life and Death Education” experts who refute such an argument by saying that as “Life and Death Education” has included all kinds of education from birth to death, and so “Life Education” should be incorporated into “Life and Death Education” instead. It may be rather meaningless to have such debates on terminologies, and yet one can see a **very close relationship between the two**.

Secondly, **there is the interdependence between “Life and Death Education” and “Life Education”**. The beginning of “Life and Death Education” starts with the support of “Life Education”. At the same time, in reaching for a deeper level of “Life Education”, we will have to rely on the beginning of “Life and Death Education”, since not touching upon the issue of Death will only make “Life Education” to be just too superficial. While other Taiwanese scholars, such as Ms. Su-Shia Lin and others, have also divided “Life Education” into two aspects, namely: “Ethics” and “Life and Death”, it is in the Mainland which still emphasizes on the orientation of ethics for “Life Education”. In this regard, we may conclude that **“Life and Death Education” is actually the important partner to drive upon the development of “Life Education” in becoming more profound and balanced**.

3. The Development of “Life and Death Education”

Following the development of research studies on “Thanatology” (“Death Education”) in USA after World War II, some of the American universities and colleges gradually began to advocate “Death Education”. In 1959, Professor Herman Feifel of the Medicine School at the University of Southern California has published a book on **“The Meaning of Death”**. Another expert on “Thanatology”, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D., has published another book called **“On Death and Dying”** in 1969. These two books are now considered as the classics of teaching materials for “Death Education”. By 1974, 41 medical schools have already offered formal training programs on “Death Education”. By now, it is believed that this number has reached a much higher level. With all those past great efforts made by these experts on “Thanatology”, “Death Education” has now flourished in many different American universities and colleges these days. Relatively speaking, most of the students who take these courses are medical doctors and/or nurses, yet there are also students who are coming from many different faculties and departments, such as from religion, philosophy, psychology, sociology, education, and so on.

With Professor Charles Wei-Hsun Fu's contributions on the research studies of “Life and Death Education”, his great efforts has been most instrumental in helping to establish the “Institute and Department of Life-and-Death Studies” at the Nanhua University in Taiwan during the 1990s of the 20th century. **Many publications have already been translated into Chinese in relations to “Life and Death Education”**. Relatively speaking,



Hong Kong and the Mainland have lagged behind. In recent times, the Mainland has already published some expert books on “Life and Death Education”, such as the one on “**Good Death and Dying – Chinese View on Life and Death**” (1999) by Professor Zheng Xiaojiang, as well as the one on “**In Search for the Truth of Life – Exploring the Issue of Life and Death**” (2002), etc. While in Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong has recently established a general education program on “Death and Immortality”, and Lingnan University has also offered a similar program as well. Furthermore, both Hong Kong and the Mainland have also conducted research studies on “palliative care”. Yet, “Life and Death Education” as an education program, in its real sense, is still something that is unheard of, whether it is for the medical students, for university students in general, or even for the general public.

How to Deal with the “Pivotal Moment of Life and Death”?

Even though “life and death education” has slowly started to appear in the courses and/or programs of formal universities, it is still a long way to go in order that the most comprehensive kind of “life and death education” can be developed, in terms of its teaching contents, its depths and meanings. To certain extent, at this point in time, **it is still quite useful in helping people to deal with the fear of death and bereavement.** However, **there is nothing possible in assisting the deceased persons to be “reborn in new life forms”, and in “dealing with the posthumous risks”, and so on.** Some people may consider that these are religious issues, but, in fact, it is a big pragmatic question on whether the spirituality of humankind can be further evolved and elevated or not. It is a big issue that all the

religions are attempting to resolve. After all, all religions try to help resolve this basic and fundamental question! Thus, after peeling off such contents as in adoring religious leaders with heavy flavor of superstition, “life and death education” can be added on to certain sorts of religious views and resolve methods, in order to **assist humankind in dealing with crisis at the “pivotal moment of life and death”, and can even help to evolve and elevate on the spiritual domain for rebirth.**

Would it be really be so significant and crucial at the “moment of death”? After a person passes away, it only leaves a heap of soil and bone ashes after cremation, **would it be worthy to mobilize so many resources for one’s assistance?** Would it be even more worthwhile to help those people who suffer from hunger and freezing? If you still don’t believe in what those scholars had done and said, then how about the teachings of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni who had been unceasingly industrious and frugal for his whole life?

According to Chapter 7 on the “Benefits and Survival” of the “**Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra**” [0783c28], which was translated into Chinese by the Tripitaka Sramana Siksananda of Kustana of Tang Dynasty, which said that: “regardless of males or females, if they did not perform virtuous deeds while alive but instead committed various non-virtuous deeds, upon one’s end of life, all their relatives attempted to benefit the dead person. However, the dead person would merely be benefited by one-seventh of those Dharma rituals being performed for him/her. The remaining six out of seven of the merits would benefit those who are still alive and did the rituals for the dead. As such, the present and future virtuous males or females, in order to benefit for their own futures, should start practicing virtuous deeds after hearing this while they are still sound and healthy,

they would then be able to receive all the benefits completely. When the “impermanence of death” arrives unexpectedly, and the “mental consciousness of the dead” in the “Bardo” (that is, the “intermediate state”) does not know when one’s fortune or misfortune would be induced first. Within the forty-nine days after death, the dead is ignorant, deaf, and doesn’t know what to do, or is awaiting the decisions on judging of its past-life’s karmic results. After judgment is reached, the dead would then be reborn in accordance with its karma. While the judgment was still undecided, the dead is so worried and sad, not to mention the kind of distress and sadness when it comes to know its falling into the inferior realms. After one’s death and before its rebirth, the dead is constantly expecting its children, kins and relatives to rescue him/her by performing merits within the forty-nine days. After this period of time, the dead would be dragged by retributions for rebirth according to one’s own karma. If such a case of evil karmas do exist, a sinner would end up in the inferior realms for hundreds and thousands of years without a known date of liberation.” (Karmic forces are tractions. “Karmic network”: the network of “tractions” formed by the “power of the mind” due to “virtuous or 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 Karma”, published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).



The “Sutra” has clearly explained that sentient beings, while situated at calamities and pivotal moments, are similar to prisoners awaiting for their judgments by judges. They are unsettled and become so anxious and frightened, and constantly pray for help from their kin and kith. If nobody renders assistance and once they are sentenced for being guilty of such evil karmas, they would face sufferings

for hundreds and thousands of years. In view of the “seriousness of consequence, fright in mind, eagerness for help, and the pressurization due to the deadline of the 49 days”, all of them are the most urgent situations, and thus it is most surely worth our while and efforts to mobilize plenty of resources for rendering help to them. Common people do not think it is worthy for doing so simply because they only care about issues that are right in front of them, but neglect the research findings and advices of both the “scholars and sages”. This is a classic example of never being able to talk to the “summer insects (which do not live long enough to see the winter in order to have an idea) about ice”.

In order to deal with the “pivotal moment of life and death”, one must need to have a long- and wide-ranged vision, with a broad- and open-mind. Only with this can relevant assistance could be made available to cater for the genuine needs in society, such that it could be developed and expanded in both its breadths and depths at high speed. We sincerely hope and pray that the “Perfect Hospital” can be established in the future to shoulder this crucial responsibility of helping sentient beings at the end of their lives – in educating the dying persons so that they would have good knowledge about how the “posthumous world” functions, and have a clear understanding about, and psychological preparation of, the various “scenes at the moment of death” which are about to appear, as well as to have an absolute mastery of one’s undulating emotions and proper preparations on the peripheral “auxiliary conditions”. Moreover, if an individual could receive relevant trainings as early as possible, so that he or she would be able to confront with the totally new variable period of transformation confidently.....(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.)



The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (28)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren
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Mantras that Would Enable Oneself to Know the True Existence and the Real Meanings of the Various Dharmas
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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 processes 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 wrongdoings? How should we practice the “Holy Dharma” so as to make the “effectiveness of Dharma practices during meditation” be linked up and **steadily sustained** with that in “post-meditation daily living” so as to further it and let it become **fully “developed”**? If one wants the “success” to be speed up, how should it be planned so as to **remove those obstacles** that will hinder the “effectiveness”? How can the **sequence** of incidents to be traced out of those confusions, and the **key** positions to be found in solving the problems? How can a consensus be reached between one’s “cognitions” and “reality” so that the **“contradictions” can be resolved**? How can the **“devotion, pure state of mind and dedication”** of Dharma practices “during meditation” be linked up and be sustained with that in the “post-meditation daily living” with a **correct “state of mind”**?(please refer to the Issue 12 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (ix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (6): The Skilful Usages of the “Main Theme” and the “Sequences of Events”:** The **“cardinal mentality”** is the major key in deciding on all things, and so the **“planning of one’s Dharma practices”** in one’s “daily living” has to use the “cardinal mentality” as the “main theme” to link up the “static states of Dharma practices” with the “dynamic states of Dharma practices”, by connecting their “common points” so as to get through the rigid dichotomy in one’s “planning of time,” and thus opening and tidying up the disordered “sequences of events” in order to synergize the contradictions of these two and to make them to become complementary to each other, while using the “cardinal mentality” as the basis all through. This is, indeed, the **“main points of planning”** for one’s Dharma practices in “daily living”. Yet, how one focuses on the **“cardinal mentality”** and the **“planning of time”** would become the main key points for one’s **“successes and/or failures”**.....(please refer to the Issue 13 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (x) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (7): Flexibility in the Using of One’s “Mentality” for One’s Dharma Practice:** While practicing

the Dharma during the undulated waves of “daily living”, one can hardly sustain one’s “meditational power” and the **degree of the steadiness** of one’s “Dharma practice” by **relying solely on “Emptiness”**. In order to be able to continuously enhance and elevate one’s Dharma practice in “daily living”, one must have to **adopt “Emptiness” as the unchanging and everlasting “cardinal mentality”**. One further needs to flexibly make use of the “three main essential points” of one’s Dharma practice in “daily living” so as to **train one’s own “mind”** in addressing the problems of one’s “daily living”, as well as to transform one’s “emotions and feelings” in becoming the “driving force for one’s Dharma practice” (please refer to the Issue 14 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (8): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (1):** In the undulated journey in the course of one’s lifetime, it is **unavoidable** that one would meet with many adversities. If you encounter these adversities and could not handle them properly, they would become the **obstacles** to all of your plans and objectives. Regardless of what “time and effectiveness” that you may have, they would be **completely** disturbed and delayed, and would hardly function properly. Thus, when one can skillfully adopt the strategy of getting through the obstacles by linking up the “Main Theme and the Sequences of Events”, and when one has set up the principles for **choosing** one’s “Cardinal Mentality” and also for the “Three Essential Factors” within one’s “mind”, one should at the same time follow the criteria for one’s “Dharma practices in times of adversities” as the **procedures for handling the situations** (please refer to the Issue 15 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (9): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (2):** Among the criteria for “Dharma Practices in times of Adversities”, one should pay attention and **adhere to** the following **procedures**: 1) to alienate from one’s role; 2) to remain calm; 3) to analyze accurately; 4) to act within one’s own capacities – this can be regarded as the

“time planning for one’s Dharma practice during adversities”; 5) to take advantage of the different circumstances; 6) to learn from one’s own experiences; and 7) to elevate one’s own awareness, with particular reference to 3) to analyze accurately (please refer to the Issue 16 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



(xiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (10): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (3):** In times of favorable circumstances, it would be easy for one to achieve success regardless of what one does. One would **naturally** be successful without having to wait for the right opportunities, neither does one have to make any planning. This is because this will be the time for **the arrival of the “achieved rewards”**. The good deeds that you have accumulated in the past are the best planning for the “achieved rewards.” However, in times of adversities, no matter what one does, one would have encountered many obstacles and have one’s head badly battered. If one simply goes along naturally, it would lead one to a dead end. This is because, in times of adversities, it is the time **for the coming of one’s retributions due to one’s past bad deeds**. If one does not remain calm, wait for the right opportunity, and plan appropriately, it would be difficult for one to get out from the plight. The question, then, is **when will be the best time** to get out from the plight? And what would be considered as the **appropriate planning** (please refer to the Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus”)?

(xiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (11): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (4) – Making use of the Circumstances:** The characteristics for being

in adversities are that one would be beset with difficulties and will be unable to cope with the situations. If one has to make use of the circumstances of that particular situation and time so as to break through the obstacles is basically an extremely difficult matter to achieve. Since it is all that difficult, the conditions that one would have to consider in order to complement the whole situation would be particularly even more so. There is an old Chinese saying that "Hero makes the trend of his time, and the trend of the time makes its own Hero". After all, 'the trend of the time and the environment' together is one of the major elements for one's success and failure. Hence, it is also a necessary element for one to get out from the plight by making use of the circumstances to break away from adversities. If one is to make use of the circumstances, one would adopt one of the following situations: (1) to quietly wait for the favourable circumstances to arise; (2) to make use of the existing circumstances; and (3) to build up favourable circumstances (please refer to the Issue 18 of the "Lake of Lotus").

- (xv) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (12): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities"(5) -- Learn One's Lessons from Past Experiences: Failure is not necessarily a miserable thing. It can only be said as a blueprint which reflects on a series of merits and weaknesses. If one can learn one's lessons well from past experiences in finding out the "reasons for one's failures, as well as the personal behavioral formulae that led to such failures", one's "wisdom of self-enhancement" will be elevated by applying proper remedies to revise these extremely concealed and improper formulae, this would help to bring about one's success in the next occasion. During this process of "self-enhancement", it would enable one to live more happily and to have a direction, to have more meanings and values, and to be more proactive. In this way, what one would regard as failures have, in fact, now been changed into successes, and have brought about the essential elements for one's future successes. The "state of invincibility" is the most lonely and painful experience. Too

many successes and for too long will only make one to lose one's sense of direction, and to easily lose oneself in one's own "ego". As such, one would not be able to find out and revise the poor formulae, and oneself would thus be easily bogged down in the mire of having too much "self-pride" and strong "arrogance" within one's own "ego", never being able to see the real world in its totality. In this regard, such kind of continuous successes can only be said to be an extremely big failure (please refer to the Issue 19 of the "Lake of Lotus").

- (xvi) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (13): Criteria for "Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities" (6) – Enhancing One's Awareness: Many a times the formation of one's mistakes and failures are due to the inadequacy of one's own "awareness". The biggest drawback was one's own failure lied in not "being aware" of what and where had gone wrong in one's own "behavioral formulae". This would result in one's repeating, or even expanding, of one's mistakes and failures endlessly. Being faulty or carelessness for a short while is not the main cause for one's mistakes and failures. The main and real cause is the existence of deviations and defects in both the consciousness and the subconscious of one's own "behavioral formulae". This would lead to a chain of wrong behaviors, which would form an orbit which would lead to further failures, and that one would find it hard to depart from it. Along with this orbit of failures, it would further extend to many more faults and carelessness, and the end result would be more and greater failures. Hence, to "enhance one's awareness" is not only to elevate one's attentiveness, such that the frequency of one's making mistakes due to carelessness would be reduced, but the more important aspect is whether to have the ability for one's "self-reflection", for observing the minute details, and to carefully find out the deviations and defects in one's own "behavioral formulae" (please refer to the Issue 20 of the "Lake of Lotus").

- (xvii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (14): Simplifying the Complexities, Finding the Keys - Due to the fact that one's life span is

temporary and impermanent, and so when one design and draw up a plan for one's own Dharma practice, one should need to include the "factor of time and effectiveness", all the more, as **the primary important point for one's consideration**. Apart from having the "right mindset and criteria" in handling periods of "adversities or prosperities" so that one would be able to "master the factor of time" more accurately and to have **an edge, what other principles that one should need to pay attention to?** No matter what kinds of the "planning of time" that one has, they are bound to have both strengths and weaknesses. It is unavoidable that there will be some faults. However, the appropriate "planning of time" should be able to reduce or lighten all kinds of faults and be able to speed up the process in the showing of "success". **An appropriate "planning of time" must make use of the following principles in its design:** 1. **Linking up by the Main theme, and getting through the sequences of events** – target: daily living before one's death (please refer to Issue 21 of "Lake of Lotus"); 2. **Simplifying the complexities, finding the keys** – target: the wrestling ground of energies after one's death; 3. **Differentiation on the order of importance, Proper handling of the interferences** –target: the wrestling ground of energies after one's death (please refer to Issue 21 of "Lake of Lotus").

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

discuss and analyze the issues (please refer to Issue 22 of "Lake of Lotus").

- (xix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (16): The Highest Objective that "Prayers" can Achieve** – On the side of effectiveness, even though they consist the element of one's "mental strength", but since "prayers" do not involve any practice on "Emptiness", and so they are neither direct enough, nor have they included any programming for the practicing of "Emptiness" that could counter-act the tractional forces of the "cycle of karmic exercise". Hence, though prayers can produce some effects, the highest level that they can achieve would only be limited to the "materialization of requests for worldly desires", or for the "rebirths in some virtuous realms". One would **not be able to achieve the two objectives of: (1) liberation from the tractional forces of the "cycle of karmic existence"; and (2) the attainment of "Complete Enlightenment" ("Buddhahood")**. Hence, "prayers" will not be able to become the major item of Dharma practice in Buddhism, and that **it can only be a supplementary method of Dharma practice**. (Please refer to Issue 23 of the "Lake of Lotus".)
- (xx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (17): The Mystery of the Blessings of the Sound in the Recitations of "Mantras, Buddhas' Names or Sutras"** – The practice method of using sound to recite "mantras, names of Holy Deities, and scriptures" is one of the practice methods that have been adopted by most religions and ceremonies in this secular world. Does it consist of other deeper meanings? What are some of the effects that will be produced from this kind of practice methods? What are the degrees of influence that this has upon one's own "mental strength"? What is the highest level of objective that it can achieve? What is the length of time that it will take up in order to achieve the objective? (Please refer to Issue 24 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (xxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (18): How to Make Different Mantras to Produce Effects** – the effects and energies that are produced from the "resonance" of sound can



make the “electrons” at the outer layer of the “atom” to move over to the other “atom” next to it, or else the two “atoms” can share the same “electrons”. This kind of mechanism can help make “atoms” to become bondings in forming “molecules”, or other types of “compounds”. Through this process, **different types of materials can then be connected, consolidated and formed**. Yet, what types of pronunciation of “sounds” could match such particular effects?(Please refer to Issue 25 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xxii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (19): What is the meaning of having received the “relevant trainings” in the recitation of mantras in order that merits would be arisen which are remarkable and vast, particularly in the enhancement of one’s own wisdom which would be very significant, and would not be lost in one’s numerous lifetimes? – There are numerous mentions of the “Dharani Samadhi”, the “Dharani Seal Samadhi” and the “one hundred and eight kinds of “Samadhis” in the different “Buddhist Sutras”, and so what are they? These are referring to the **different “Mantras” within the hundred types of “Right Concentrations”**, and so what is the mysterious rationale behind them? Should “mantras” be translated? What are the merits that can be arisen from

the “**relevant trainings**” in the recitation of “mantras”?(Please refer to Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(xxiii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (20): How to Give Rise to the Wonderful Merits in “Pacifying/Averting Adversities” by Reciting the “Mantra Dharani”? – There are many more conditions that need to be coordinated in order to give rise to the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” by reciting the “Mantra Dharani”, as it would involve the “collective karma” of all those who are involved, that is, the “karmas” of each and every one that would be affected by those adversities combined together. As such, it would be much more complicated than the “karma” involved in both the “**Dharma Dharani**” and the “**Meaning Dharani**”, as for the latter two only the “karma” of the Dharma practitioner himself/herself would be involved. Hence, it would be relatively much easier to give rise to the merits of both the “**Dharma Dharani**” and the “**Meaning Dharani**”, and the level of “meditational power” that is required to match these Dharani is relatively lower. On the other hand, the level of “meditational power” that is required to match the giving rise of the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” of the “**Mantra Dharani**” would be correspondingly higher.....(Please refer to Issue 27 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? These are the “starting points” that one should be “looking for the keys” to these issues. 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 four chapters have clearly explained the effects and mysteries that “sound” has produced upon the bodies of people (Please refer to the articles on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practices” of Issues 24, 25, 26 and 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”). The part on the rationale for the “resonance” and “operations of particles” is one of the functions on the recitation of mantras. Since the sound of mantras does not necessarily have to be words that could be translated or understood, particularly those mantras which are meant for the following purposes:

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

The last two chapters (please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issues 26 and 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”) has mentioned about the merits of having received the “relevant teachings” in the recitation of mantras which are remarkable and vast, especially on the improvement of wisdom which can be quite remarkable and can be sustained for long periods of time. As to its abstruseness, apart from relating to its rationale on “resonance” and the “motions among the particles”, it is also very much related to the different high or low levels of the “Right Concentrations” (or “Samadhis” in Sanskrit). According to Bodhisattva Maitreya’s classification, in Volume 45 of the “Yogacaryabhūmiśāstra”, “Dharanis” are divided into the following kinds:

- (1) **Dharma** Dharani – the successful symptom for the receiving of the “relevant trainings” in the proper recitation on this type of “mantras” is that one would be able to remember the words and sentences of the various Sutras in one’s numerous lifetimes (please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
- (2) **Meaning** Dharani – the successful symptom for the receiving of the “relevant trainings” in the proper recitation on this type of “mantras” is that one would be able to remember the meanings of the Sutras in one’s numerous lifetimes (please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
- (3) **Mantra** Dharani – the successful symptom for the receiving of the “relevant trainings” in the proper recitation on this type of “mantras” is that, through one’s “meditational power”, one would be able to experience the special effects of the “mantras”, and would thus be able to help other sentient beings to remove all kinds of calamities and illnesses (please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (4) **Endurance** Dharani – the successful symptom for the receiving of the “relevant trainings” in the proper recitation on this type of “mantras” is that one would be able to know the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas, as well as the ability without losing them.

Mantras that Would Enable Oneself to Know the True Existence and the Real Meanings of the Various Dharmas

In this chapter, we will continue to explain how to generate the merits of the “Endurance Dharani”. “Endurance” has two meanings: one represents the “Endorsement of Abler”, and the other represents a “Decision”. The “Endorsement of Abler” means that “after the verification and endorsement, one has been confirmed to have such an attainment”. As for the “Decision”, it indicates that one has “surely and profoundly realized, and has thus affirmatively achieved a certain level of attainment, in a decisive and firm manner without any doubts”.

Therefore, the meaning of “Endurance Dharani” is

that “if one is able to recite this type of “mantra” skillfully to a very firm level without any losses, and can enter into the level of “Right Concentration” (or “Samadhi” in Sanskrit), so as to enable the energy of the “resonance” of “this type of “mantra” to give the rein to its ultimate level. This will further enable one’s “Primordial Nature” to manifest itself so as to have mutual “verification and endorsement” with “the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”, thus confirming and profoundly ratifying the attainment of “realizing the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas” in a decisive and firm manner without any doubts”.

In the “**Commentary on the Vairocana-abhisambodhi-tantra**”, the Tripitaka master (Tripitakacharya) Subhakarasiṃha has used the “true words” (“Mantras” in Sanskrit, or “Shingon” in Japanese, mean the “true words”) to classify “mantras” into five types:

1. What the “Tathagatas” (i.e. the “Buddha”) have spoken -- the “true words” of the Tathagata Shakyamuni, Tathagata Mahavairocana, and so on.
2. What the “Bodhisattvas” have spoken -- the “true words” of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, and so on.
3. What the Saints of the “Two Vehicles” (i.e. the “Sravaka-Buddhas” and the “Pratyeka-Buddhas”) have spoken -- the “true words” of those Dharma practitioners, such as Sariputra and Maudgalyayana [the closest disciples of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, who have already realized the fruit of an “Arhat” (i.e the awakened state)].
4. What the “Devas” have spoken -- the “true words” of Brahma, Yamadeva, and so on [this refers to those “devas” (heavenly beings) that dwell in space].
5. What those “Devas that dwell on the ground” have spoken -- the “true words” of Indra, Vaisravana, and so on [this refers to those “devas” (heavenly beings) that still need to dwell on the ground].

Why is it necessary to have “Mantras” to be classified in such a way? This involves the degrees on the levels of practices and “states of meditation” for those who transmit those mantras. “Tathagata” is, in fact, just another name for the “Buddha”, and is one of the ten names of all “Buddhas”. Hence, those mantras that are transmitted by the “Buddhas”

have been developed from the inductions of their “Right Concentrations” (please refer to the articles on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practices” of Issue 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”, concerning the relationship between “power of meditation” and “mantras”), and so there is no doubt that it represents those “vibration frequencies” of the most correct, profound, and be able to directly realize one’s “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”. In fact, this is the type of “mantras” of the “Endurance Dharani”.

As for those “mantras” that are transmitted by either Bodhisattvas or Devas, they have different effects and are quite effective in their related realms, such as in the “calling up of ghosts and gods, sending of ghosts and gods to do something, communicating in different realms, and removing the barriers among different realms”, and so on. However, in terms of assisting us to directly realize one’s “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”, then only those “mantras” that are transmitted by the “Buddhas” are the most correct and splendid, as they are right on targets without any deviations.

Within the “true words”, each of the mantras would have its own “Seed Syllable”, from which it would further arise the whole “Wheel of Syllables” (this refers to the “Wheel of the Mantra”). The main syllable situated on the lotus flower and the moon disc at the centre of the heart of the “Yidam” is, indeed, the true words’ “Seed Syllable” of the “Yidam”. For instance, the main syllable “Hum” is the true word’s “Seed Syllable” of “Buddha Vajrasattva”, while the main syllable “Hrih” is the true word’s “Seed Syllable” of “Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara”, and so on.

Why there exists the “Seed Syllables” for the different mantras? What are their functions? How does one apply the “Seed Syllable” and the “Wheel of the Mantra” while reciting the mantras in order to coordinate with one’s Dharma practice? What are the kinds of relationships between the “Seed Syllable” and the “Wheel of the Mantra” with the “Channels, Breaths and Wisdom Drops”, as well as with the operational laws of Mother Nature? What is their abstruseness? In correctly applying the “Seed Syllable” and the “Wheel of the Mantra”, what will be the greatest success and effect that one can achieve? Does it involve the level on the realizing of one’s “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”? The answer is affirmative.

Since the answers to these questions involve the “spiritual guidance and oral-pith instructions” of “actual practices”, and so it could only be transmitted to those qualified disciples, and are thus omitted here. [“Spiritual Guidance” (Tri): the meticulous breakdown of various practice methods into different parts in describing and guiding the practice procedures, which belongs to the important analyses of various practices, and is known as the “Spiritual Guidance” (Tri). The key points and crux of these are the “Oral-pith instructions” (Man-ngan). These “Oral-pith instructions” are some key “visualization” programming, and can also be some methods to master shortcuts, or some key points and methods to surmount “traps, stages and barriers”.]

If talking about the “mantras” that can allow oneself to directly realize one’s “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”, it would definitely be the most widely-known “heart mantra” of the “Prajnaparamita-hridaya Sutra” (i.e. the “Heart of Wisdom Sutra”, or simply the “Heart Sutra”). “Prajna” in Sanskrit means “Wisdom”, and “Paramita” refers to the “bygone to the other shore”. Thus, “Prajna-Paramita” means that: for those Dharma practitioners who possess such “wisdom” will be enabled to “attain Buddhahood”, to be released from all kinds of ties and bindings, and will no longer dwell in the bitter sea of sufferings in the cycle of karmic existence. It also represents that such “wisdom” is able to assist oneself to directly realize one’s “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”.

What is the Core of the “Prajnaparamita-hridaya Sutra”?

The “Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra” (i.e. the “Great Perfection Wisdom Sutra”) is translated by the Venerable Tripitaka Master (Tripitakacharya) Xuanzang at the behest of the King of the Tang Dynasty. In Volume 101, the third section of Chapter 29 of “Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has the following explanation on such “wisdom” [0559b10]: “At that time, the Lord Buddha has told Sakra-devanam-Indra That is right, that is right, is what you have said. ‘Prajnaparamita’ is indeed very rare. If one is able to learn and realize ‘Prajnaparamita’, then one will be able to learn and realize ‘almsgiving, pure precepts, forbearance, diligence, mental concentration (“Dhyana” in Sanskrit) and wisdom (“Prajna” in Sanskrit) Paramitas. If one

is able to learn and realize 'Prajnaparamita', then one will be able to learn and realize the 'emptiness of the inner' ("adhyātma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the outer' ("bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of inner and outer' ("adhyātma-bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of emptiness' ("śūnyatā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the enormity' ("mahā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of ultimate reality' ("paramārtha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the conditioned' ("samskṛta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unconditioned' ("asamskṛta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness beyond limits' ("atyanta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the absence of beginning and end' ("anavarāgra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness without non-focus' ("anavakāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the indestructible' ("nirvikāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of essential nature' ("prakṛti-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of individual characteristics' ("svalaksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of common characteristics' ("sāmānya-laksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of all phenomena' ("sarva-dharma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unapprehendable' ("anupalambha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of immateriality' ("abhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of its own nature' ("svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of immaterial own nature' ("abhāva-svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit). If one is able to learn and realize 'Prajnaparamita', then one will be able to learn and realize the 'true nature' ("Bhutatathata" in Sanskrit), the 'Dharma realm' ("Dharmadhātu" in Sanskrit), the 'Dharma-nature' ("Dharmatā" in Sanskrit), the 'nature of no illusion', the 'immutable nature', the 'universal nature', the 'immortal nature', the 'inherent dharma', the 'abiding dharma-nature', the 'region of reality', the 'visible vault of space', the 'realm beyond thoughts and words' ("Acintyadhātu" in Sanskrit)..... If one is able to learn and realize 'Prajnaparamita', then one will be able to learn and realize all schools of mantras ("Dharani mukhani" in Sanskrit) and all schools of right concentrations ("Samādhis" in Sanskrit).....

The meaning is that those who are able to learn and realize such wisdom can master both the meanings and the integration of all kinds of "emptiness" (a total of twenty kinds of "emptiness"). For those who are able to learn and realize such "wisdom", they will also be able to realize one's "own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas". There is

one sentence which also mentions that for those who are able to learn and realize such "wisdom", they will also be able to master and integrate all kinds of "Mantra" ("Dharani") practices, as well as all kinds of "Right Concentration" ("Samādhi") practices. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has placed both "Mantras" ("Dharani") and "Right Concentrations" ("Samādhi") together, and so we can understand the **interdependent relationship between the two**. In order to be able to realize one's "own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas", one should be reminded of the **most important key criterion of "not grasping onto any side of 'emptiness' and 'existence'"**, and of course this include "Mantras" ("Dharani") and "Right Concentrations" ("Samādhi").

Therefore, in Volume 101, the **third** section of Chapter 29 of "**Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra**", translated by the Venerable Tripitaka Master (Tripitakacharya) Xuanzang at the behest of the King of the Tang Dynasty, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni further explains the following [0560b17] that: "Prajnaparamita" could allow one to get rid of the grasping on the 'emptiness of the inner' ("adhyātma-sunyata" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes. It could also allow one to get rid of the grasping on the 'emptiness of the outer' ("bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of inner and outer' ("adhyātma-bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of emptiness' ("śūnyatā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the enormity' ("mahā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of ultimate reality' ("paramārtha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the conditioned' ("samskṛta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unconditioned' ("asamskṛta-nyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness beyond limits' ("atyanta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the absence of beginning and end' ("anavarāgra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness without nonfocus' ("anavakāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the indestructible' ("nirvikāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of essential nature' ("prakṛti-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of individual characteristics' ("svalaksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of common characteristics' ("sāmānya-laksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of all phenomena' ("sarva-dharma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unapprehendable' ("anupalambha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of immateriality' ("abhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of its own nature' ("svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of

immaterial own nature' ("abhāva-svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes. Idem! Such 'Prajnaparamita' could allow one to get rid of the grasping on the 'true nature' ("Bhutatathata" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes. It could also allow one to get rid of the grasping on the 'Dharma realm' ("Dharmadhātu" in Sanskrit), the 'Dharma-nature' ("Dharmatā" in Sanskrit), the 'nature of no illusion', the 'immutable nature', the 'universal nature', the 'immortal nature', the 'inherent dharma', the 'abiding dharma-nature', the 'region of reality', the 'visible vault of space', the 'realm beyond thoughts and words' ("Acintyadhātu" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes. Such 'Prajnaparamita' allows one to get rid of the grasping on all schools of **mantras** ("Dharani mukhani" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes. It also allows one to get rid of the grasping of all schools of **right concentrations** ("Samādhis" in Sanskrit), and thus it increases one's antidotes.

It means that for those who are able to learn and realize such "wisdom", they can also get rid of the grasping on all kinds of "emptiness" (a total of **twenty kinds of "emptiness"**). Similarly, for those who are able to learn and realize such "wisdom", they can also get rid of the grasping on the realizing of one's "own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas". There is one sentence which also mentions that for those who are able to learn and realize such "wisdom", they can also **get rid of the grasping on all kinds of mantras** ("Dharani" in Sanskrit), and all kinds of **right concentrations** ("Samādhis" in Sanskrit).

"Not Grasping" does not mean that one just "lies down somewhere, doing nothing, and care less about anything". In fact, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has taught us what are the benefits for learning and realizing on the wisdom of "emptiness, dharma nature, own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas, mantras and meditation" in

the first place, in order to enable all sentient beings to understand and comprehend the true nature of "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness", and to keep them away from falling into the two extremes of "Existence" and "Voidness". Only after that that the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has further told us that **the real wisdom is "to learn and realize, but without grasping"**. It means that "one should 'not be driven by greed, hatred and ignorance in grasping onto 'existence'. Because of this grasping, one would then 'attach to and reluctant to part from', and even using 'unscrupulous methods in obtaining' what they want. Moreover, one should not be so 'ignorant' as to grasping onto the idea that 'everything is emptiness', such that one would be 'like an idiot' to just simply "lie down somewhere, doing nothing and care less about anything". **Actually, how could one be able to learn and realize such "real wisdom"**?

In Volume 101, the **fourth** section of Chapter 29 of "**Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra**", translated by the Venerable Tripitaka Master (Tripitakacharya) Xuanzang at the behest of the King of the Tang Dynasty, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni further explains that [0568b11]:



"For those virtuous men and women that never depart from the 'Buddha-wisdom' ("Sarvajña" in Sanskrit) and the 'Buddha-wisdom mind', they will apply the skillful means of "nothing obtainable"..... Such 'Prajnaparamita' is a **Great Spiritual Mantra**. Such 'Prajnaparamita' is a **Great Bright Mantra**. Such 'Prajnaparamita' is a **Most Supreme Mantra**. Such 'Prajnaparamita' is an **Unequalled Mantra**. Such 'Prajnaparamita' is the **King of All Mantras**. It is the most supreme, most splendid with nothing to surpass it. It has great magical powers to subdue anything, and not to be subdued by anything

else..... Thus, when learning such a **King of Great Mantra** of 'Prajnaparamita', virtuous men and women should not obtain the 'emptiness of the inner' ("adhyātma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), and also should not obtain the 'emptiness of the outer' ("bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of inner and

outer' ("adhyātma-bahirdhā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of emptiness' ("śūnyatā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the enormity' ("mahā-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of ultimate reality' ("paramārtha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the conditioned' ("saṃskṛta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unconditioned' ("asaṃskṛta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness beyond limits' ("atyanta-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the absence of beginning and end' ("anavarāgra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness without nonfocus' ("anavakāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the indestructible' ("nirvikāra-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of essential nature' ("prakṛti-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of individual characteristics' ("svalaksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of common characteristics' ("sāmānya-laksana-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of all phenomena' ("sarva-dharma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of the unapprehendable' ("anupalambha-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of immateriality' ("abhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of its own nature' ("svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), the 'emptiness of immaterial own nature' ("abhāva-svabhāva-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit). In not obtaining anything from the 'emptiness of the inner' ("adhyātma-śūnyatā" in Sanskrit), one will not be able to harm oneself, harm others, and all other things. Idem! These virtuous men and women when learning such a King of Great Mantra of 'Prajnaparamita' should not obtain the 'true nature' ("Bhutatathata" in Sanskrit), and also should not obtain the 'Dharma realm' ("Dharmadhātu" in Sanskrit), the 'Dharma-nature' ("Dharmatā" in Sanskrit), the 'nature of no illusion', the 'immutable nature', the 'universal nature', the 'immortal nature', the 'inherent dharma', the 'abiding dharma-nature', the 'region of reality', the 'visible vault of space', the 'realm beyond thoughts and words' ("Acintyadhātu" in Sanskrit). As 'nothing obtainable' from the 'true nature' ("Bhutatathata" in Sanskrit) and so on, one will not be able to harm oneself, harm others, and all other things....."

It means that this wisdom is the "Great Spiritual Mantra, Great Bright Mantra, Most Supreme Mantra, Unequalled Mantra, and King of All Mantras". In order to learn and realize such wisdom, one should begin with this mantra. And what is the "oral-pith instruction" for learning and realizing this mantra? It is by applying the "skillful means of 'nothing obtainable'" so that one would not be grasping onto the benefits that come from such wisdom. In this way, one would be able to realize one's "own nature, the true existence of, and

the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas", and will approach to accomplish the "utmost, right and perfect enlightenment" ("Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi" in Sanskrit), which is the greatest benefit of "attaining Buddhahood". It is because of the fact that there is "nothing obtainable", and so there are no "karmas" to be attached, and thus no karmic entanglements with any sentient beings, and also no inner attachments." In this way, one would not do anything harmful to oneself, to others, and to all other things", and so on. Obviously, after the "attainment of Buddhahood", it does not mean to just "lie down somewhere, doing nothing, and care less about anything". ("Karmic forces" are the "tractions". "Karmic Web" of Networking: due to the virtuous and wicked behaviors in past countless lifetimes, a mutually-intertwining and influencing connection between the "mental strengths" of both oneself and of others has been formed. This mutually-affected network of tractions is known as the "karmic web of networking". Please refer to the VCD on "The Inconceivable Law of Karma", published by Dudjom Buddhist Association).

How to Take the Short Cut in "Attaining Buddhahood"?

In Volume 101, the fifth section of Chapter 29 of "Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra", translated by the Venerable Tripitaka Master (Tripitakacharya) Xuanzang at the behest of the King of the Tang Dynasty, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni further explains that [0570a09]: "For those virtuous men and women who learn such a King of Great Mantra of 'Prajnaparamita', they have nothing obtainable from me and the Holy Dharma, and yet they will attain the 'utmost, right and perfect enlightenment'. To comprehend the differences in the minds of these sentient beings, and act in turning the Wheel of the supreme Dharma accordingly so as to benefit both their minds and activities. Why is this so? This is because the past Maha-Bodhisattvas had relied upon such a King of Great Mantra of 'Prajnaparamita' in learning and practicing diligently. As a result, they have already attained the 'utmost, right and perfect enlightenment', and are turning the splendid Dharma wheel to enlighten countless sentient beings."

It means that: "by using the skillful means of 'nothing obtainable' in practicing this mantra, though it is 'nothing obtainable', yet because of this, one could then attain the "utmost, right and perfect enlightenment", which is the "attainment of Buddhahood". And because of their diligently



practicing this mantra, all the past Bodhisattvas have “attained Buddhahood”. With that, they have widely transmitted the Holy Dharma to enlighten countless sentient beings, and they have been acting **most proactively**.” It is clearly stated in the “Sutras” that the recitation of this “**Great Bright Mantra**” is the short cut to “attain Buddhahood”. There have been countless Dharma practitioners who, having diligently reciting this mantra, have “attained Buddhahood” in past kalpas.

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has explained the subtle relationship between “voidness” and “existence”, and how one could handle about them, in the “Sutras” in a very thorough manner without anything vague. **As to the functions of “mantras”, there have been even greater acknowledgments on them, without any belittlements at all. It even mentions that “All the wisdom in ‘attaining Buddhahood’ is contained in this ‘mantra’”.**

There have been **countless numbers** of people who have studied this “**Heart Sutra**” in the past thousand years, and yet most of them have merely spent all of their efforts in trying to understand the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings. Unfortunately, they have missed the **very core of the “oral-pith instruction” on the “Heart Sutra”: its Mantra**. No matter how hard worldly people try to deeply understand the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings in the “**Heart Sutra**”, they still have used their mundane limited wisdom in trying to understand the infinite “own nature, the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas”. And because of the fact that they are using their secular limited wisdom, with their lack of understanding on

the abstruseness of “Mantras”, and so they have used their “arrogant, frivolous, and short-sighted” knowledge and understanding in criticizing the practice of reciting “Mantras”.

These people’s ignorant criticisms and attacks have not only blocked and hindered the “eyes” of the “minds” of the latecomers, but also have committed a serious “sin of slandering the Dharma”, which is totally against the teachings of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni and all the other Buddhas. Some of these people are even role models for the common people as being “monks”, and they are influencing the “wisdom lives” of countless people. Though some other aspects of these people have been regarded as role models and are admirable, yet because of their “sins of slandering the Dharma”, the destruction of their own futures cannot be underestimated. This will further put themselves and their followers to suffer beyond redemption in countless eons. **Indeed, what a great pity this is!**

In fact, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has already clearly stated, right at the very beginning, that the true core of the “**Heart Sutra**” is **the wisdom that enables all practitioners to “attain Buddhahood”, which is this “Great Bright Mantra”**. This is because the “sound frequency” of this mantra is strong enough to initiate the manifestation of the “primordial nature” of all sentient beings, such that it **enables them to rely on this boundless wisdom to attain the “utmost, right and perfect enlightenment”, which is the “attainment of Buddhahood”**. For those who have studied it inside out, but still cannot understand and have no way to realize the wisdom, it will turn out that the mere focusing on this “**Great Bright Mantra**” will enable one to **spark up one’s wisdom**. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni already clearly stated this right at the very beginning, and has nothing to hide away. It is only because those Dharma practitioners who think themselves to be very clever that they will **run counter to** the teachings of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

The entire “**Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra**” has used the way of “spiritual guidance” (**tri**) to thoroughly explain the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings, in order to lay down a path for Dharma practitioners to recite this “**Great Bright Mantra**”. To recite this “**Great Bright Mantra**” **in accordance with the Holy Dharma**, one **should begin** by using the correct principle of “emptiness” and its meanings as the “principal mindset” in order that there might be hopes for one’s success. As such, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has

used very meaningful and heartfelt words repeatedly to explain the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings, with the key to its success still remains in relying upon the recitation of this “Great Bright Mantra”. In other words, the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings is actually the “Spiritual Guidance” (Tri), while the reciting of this “Great Bright Mantra” is, indeed, the “Oral-pith instruction” (Man-ngan).

If one is not using the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings as the “principal mindset” in reciting this “Great Bright Mantra”, then the wisdom so manifested would still contain some kinds of impurities, which is not much better than the situation of the “parrot’s recitation of mantras”, and so it will be very difficult for one to manifest one’s “primordial nature”. If one is unable to manifest one’s “primordial nature”, then it will never have the real wisdom in order to attain the “utmost, right and perfect enlightenment” of “attaining Buddhahood”.

If one merely understands the principle of “emptiness” and its meanings, but does not recite this “Great Bright Mantra”, it will be analogous to having a famous and excellently-function car, yet without the key to start off the engine. On the other hand, if one not only has the correct principle of “emptiness” and its meanings as the “principal mindset”, but also has the techniques and even “oral-pith instructions” on the recitations of the “Mantras”. With these, if one would diligently practice this “Great Bright Mantra”, then one must be able to “attain Buddhahood” as according to the revelations of the “Sutras”.

Therefore, the meaning of the “Endurance Dharani” is this: “if one is able to recite this kind of ‘mantras’ skillfully, to the very firm level without losing anything so as to enter into the level of ‘Right Concentration’, such that this will enable the energy of ‘resonance’ of ‘this kind of mantras’ to give rein to its ultimate level, which will further enable one’s ‘primordial nature’ to manifest itself so as to have



mutual ‘verification and endorsement’ of the ‘true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas’. This further confirms by profoundly realizing and ratifying the achievement of one’s ‘realizing the true existence of, and the real meanings behind, the various Dharmas’, in a decisive and firm manner without any doubts whatsoever”. As such, one will definitely be able to “attain Buddhahood”.

Hoping that the “Great Bright Mantra” of this kind of “Endurance Dharani” could be taken seriously by all concerned, and also praying and aspiring that all those Dharma practitioners who can recite this mantra “in accordance with the Holy

Dharma” will continue on until they will eventually succeed. In this way, we sincerely wish that will be no more people who will “slander on the ‘mantras’ and the ‘Holy Dharma’” again in this secular world!

Besides the mysteries of the “resonance” and the “operations of particles”, are there any other deeper meanings in the recitations of “Mantras, Buddha’s Holy Names, or the Sutras”? Are there any differences in the recitations of “Mantras, Buddha’s Holy Names, or the Sutras”? Which of them would have a greater strength? What kinds of benefits will they have? What are the differences in the techniques of reciting them? There are two levels when producing human sounds, namely: “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 practice methods for the recitations of “Mantras, Buddha’s Holy Names, or the Sutras”? To what degrees and levels do these practice methods influence one’s “mental strength”? What is the highest level of objective that can be achieved through these methods? What is the length of time that one has to spend on these methods? 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 Dharma Practice (1)” has already been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues 1 to 10).

The Essence of Teachings:

Emptiness— Neither Existence Nor Voidness (23)

By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye

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

(Lecture delivered : July 10, 2003)



Excerpt of Last Chapter

In the process of one's Dharma practice, there are the four different aspects of the View, Meditation, Action, and Fruit that one needs to be fully aware of. It is only with the different levels of realization that one may finally be able to attain the different types of "Fruitings" for one's spiritual development and attainment.

Yet, at the very beginning, before the practicing of any "Vajrayana" teachings, it is very important that one has to start off with the most basic and fundamental **"common preliminary practices"** (also known as the **"Four Thoughts that Turn One's Mind Towards the Holy Dharma"**) so as to develop a strong "mind of renunciation", with the "taking of refuge" in the "Triple Gems" (**"Triratna" in Sanskrit**), in order to establish a firm and solid foundation for one's further spiritual development.

Only after that foundation has been well established before one can then slowly go forward towards the development of the "altruistic mind" (or **"Bodhicitta" in Sanskrit**), together with a "right view on Emptiness" (of **neither existence nor voidness**), in order to prepare oneself to have the right mentality and the inclination/disposition for the further elevation in one's spiritual development.

With that, the **"uncommon preliminary practices"** will be the most essential and necessary Dharma practices for one to go for before entering into the door of "Vajrayana". These "uncommon preliminary practices" are there to help us in cultivating humility, devotion and faith to the gurus, lineages and their teachings, and are thus contributing towards the cultivation of beneficial factors for our own eternal happiness; while at the same time it helps to purify our negative and harmful factors.

As a whole, the "uncommon preliminary practices" are there to prepare ourselves to become suitable vessels in receiving further teachings from our compassionate Gurus (including the **"uncommon preliminary practice" of "Guru Yoga"**) along the paths of liberation and enlightenment.

Stages for Dharma Practices in Vajrayana Buddhism (2)

It is only that one has fulfilled the "uncommon preliminary practices" that one has been prepared by now to become a suitable vessel to go for higher levels of Dharma practices, usually starting with the

process of initiations (empowerments, “Abhiseka” in Sanskrit, or “Wang” in Tibetan) (2). In fact, it was only that one has fulfilled the “uncommon preliminary practices” that one can then go forward towards the more advanced practices on the “Three Roots” of the “Lama, Yidam and Khandro” (3), and so on.

The different kinds of initiations are there to help us to reveal our own “Buddha Nature” (“Tathagatagarbha” in Sanskrit) within ourselves, in order that we can be empowered to further receive and practice the various teachings so as to attain the fruits of the “Four Kayas” (four bodies or four dimensions) of Buddhahood. Here I will only mention their names and some general ideas, without going into details, on each one of them.

The first initiation is the “Vase Empowerment” (“Kalaśābhiseka” in Sanskrit, or “Bum pa'i dbang” in Tibetan). It practices the “Development Stage” (“Kye-rim” in Tibetan) of visualization, and applies the “View of the Mind-Only”. The obscurations of the “channels” (“tsa” in Tibetan) of one’s karmic body are cleansed, and one’s body is purified and blessed with the enlightened “vajra body”. It sows the seed for the attainment of the perfect state of a ‘completely matured vidyadhara’, and enables the Dharma practitioner to attain the “nirmanakaya” level of realization. The fruit that it will accomplish is to become the “Nirmanakaya Buddha” (4).

The second initiation is the “Secret Empowerment” (“Guhyābhiseka” in Sanskrit, or “Gsang ba'i dbang” in Tibetan). It practices the “insubstantial aspect” of the “Completion Stage” (“Dzog-rim” in Tibetan), and applies the “View of the Middle-Way” in which both the view and the function are simultaneously important for application. The obscurations of the “vital airs” (“lung” in Tibetan) of one’s karmic speech are cleansed, and one’s speech is purified and blessed with the enlightened “vajra speech”. It sows the seed for the attainment of the perfect state of a ‘vidyadhara with power over life’, and enables the Dharma practitioner to attain the “sambhogakaya” level of realization. The fruit that it will accomplish is to become the “Sambhogakaya Buddha” (5).

The third initiation is the “Prajna (transcendent knowledge)-Wisdom Empowerment”

(“Prajñājñānābhiseka” in Sanskrit, or “Shes-rab ye-shes kyi dbang” in Tibetan). It practices the “substantial aspect” of the “Completion Stage” (“Dzog-rim” in Tibetan) in terms of “tsa-lung-thigle” and “inner-heat” (“tum-mo” in Tibetan), and applies the “View of the Secret Mantra” in which the “Union of Bliss and Emptiness” is emphasized. The obscurations of the “essential fluids and seeds” (“thig-le” in Tibetan) of one’s karmic mind are cleansed, and one’s mind is purified and blessed with the enlightened “vajra mind”. While basing upon the “Unification of View and Action”, it sows the seed for the attainment of the perfect state of a ‘mahamudra vidyadhara’, and enables the Dharma practitioner to attain the “dharmakaya” level of realization. The fruit that it will accomplish is to become the “Dharmakaya Buddha” (6).

The fourth initiation is the “Precious Word Empowerment” (“tshig dbang rinpoche” in Tibetan). The “Precious Word Empowerment” practices the “Great Perfection” (“Dzog-pa Chen-po” in Tibetan), and applies the “View of the Intrinsic Purity” in which the “Indivisibility of Awareness and Emptiness” is emphasized, and that the “Substance, Form and Function” of everything in this whole universe is an “indivisible unity”. The two kinds of obscurations are completely cleansed and purified, and one is blessed to be inseparable with the enlightened “qualities and



activities” of all Buddhas. It sows the seed for the attainment of the perfect state of a ‘spontaneously accomplished vidyadhara’, and enables the Dharma practitioner to attain the “svabhavikakaya” level of realization, which is based on the unification of “Substance, Form and Function” of “all dharmas within space” (“[Dharmadhatu](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)), so as to ultimately realize them as truly an “indivisible unity” as a whole. The fruit that it will accomplish is to become the “[svabhavikakaya Buddha](#)” (7).

We are now coming to the end of this talk, and thank you so much for your kind attention. Here, we would

like to specially dedicate all the merits of this talk, if any, to the great health and longevity of our Most Beloved Wish-fulfilling Crowning Jewel and Root Guru ([Tsawai Lama](#)) His Holiness Chadrak Gyendun Rinpoche, so that the Lotus Feet of His Holiness will remain unshakable and stand firm in this universe for thousands of aeons, and continuously uphold the Victory Banner of the Holy Dharma and turn the Wheel of the Holy Dharma, for the ultimate benefits of enlightenment for all our motherly sentient beings, as limitless as the sky! 🙏

SARWA MANGALAM !

Notes:

- (2) “[Empowerment](#)” is the process of initiation to ripen or mature one’s own “[Buddha Nature](#)” (“[Tathagatagarbha](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) by the awakening of one’s “primordial wisdom” within oneself. There are four levels of “empowerments” in “Tibetan Buddhism”, which will enable the Dharma practitioner to attain the four levels of realization, and to achieve the fruits of the “Four Kayas” of Buddhahood.
- (3) The “[Three Roots](#)” (“[Tsa sum](#)” in [Tibetan](#)) are: (i) the “[Lama](#)” (or “[Guru](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) is the “root of blessing”; (ii) the “[Yidam](#)” (or “[Ishtadevata](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) is the “root of accomplishments”; and (iii) the “[Khandroma](#)” (or “[Dakini](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) or “[Chokiyong](#)” (or “[Dharmapala](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) is the “root of activity” or the “root of protection” respectively.
- (4) “[Nirmanakaya](#)” (“[Sprul pa'i sku](#)” in [Tibetan](#)) - the “[Emanation Body](#)” (or the “[body of manifestation](#)”), which is the visible physical forms of all Buddhas, such as the historical Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.
- (5) “[Sambhogakaya](#)” (“[Longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku](#)” in [Tibetan](#)) - the “[Body of Perfect Enjoyment](#)” (or “[perfect endowment](#)”), by which the Buddhas exist as transcendental beings with clear lights, as some kind of primordial archetypal deities that manifest themselves in light-rays.
- (6) “[Dharmakaya](#)” (“[Chos kyi sku](#)” in [Tibetan](#)) - the “[Truth Body](#)”, by which the Buddhas are in essence the primordial nature of the “[Ultimate Reality](#)”, or of intrinsic “[Emptiness](#)” (“[Shunyata](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)), which is the unconditioned, the Absolute Reality of all phenomena.

- (7) “[Svabhavikakaya](#)” (“[Ngo bo nyid kyi sku](#)” in [Tibetan](#)) - the inseparable “[Union of the Three Kayas](#)” is known as the “[Svabhavikakaya](#)”, sometimes known as the “[Fourth Kaya](#)”. The fact that the mind is by nature empty, and that it is in fact the space in which all phenomena appear (“[Dharmadhatu](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)), which is beyond origination and is therefore unceasing in nature. In this way, we can train in treating confusion as the “[Four Kayas](#)”, which is how they actually are. If we were to use the metaphor of having the “[Dharmakaya](#)” as the vapour, the “[Sambhogakaya](#)” as the fluid of water, and the “[Nirmanakaya](#)” as the ice, then the “[Svabhavikakaya](#)” is the essential nature of them all -- that is, the very nature of “[water-ness](#)” itself (or H_2O in scientific term). This method is known as the “[unexcelled protection of Emptiness](#)” (“[Shunyata](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)), since the attainment of “[Perfect Enlightenment](#)” (or “[Buddhahood](#)”) is to realize this “[ultimate reality](#)” of “[all dharmas within space](#)” (“[Dharmadhatu](#)” in [Sanskrit](#)) – the true realm of “[Emptiness](#)” – the essence on “[Neither Existence Nor Voidness](#)”.

-- THE END --

End-of-Life Care (4)

Foreword

Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye
Acharya Pema Lhadren

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, paramedical 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 fourth article. **Wish for the Increase of Wholesome Merits !**

To Prepare for One’s Death – “Advance Directive”

by Yeshe Drolma

She is now a retiree, and before her retirement, she was a civil servant who had worked in a number of government departments responsible for management duties of various kinds. Her qualifications include: Dip. MS, M.B.A., M.A., PgD in End-of-Life Care.

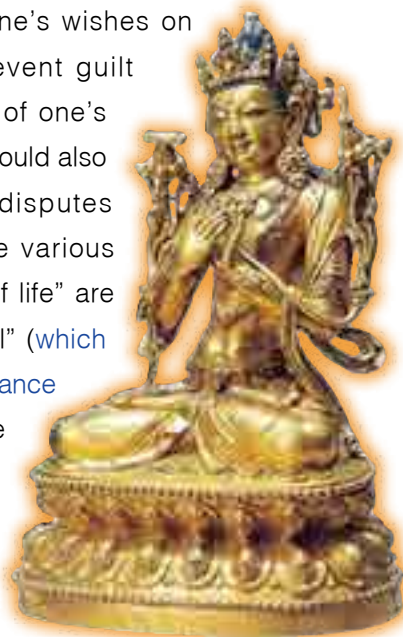
To Prepare for One’s Death – “Advance Directive”

Death is part of life. No one can change this fact, or escape from it. However, many of the Hong Kong people still regard death as a taboo, and would usually adopt an avoidance approach to deal with it. Unless they have illnesses, they would rarely make any preparations for their deaths.

In recent years, a number of organizations have promoted “life and death education” and related training in the community. As a result, there are more people who would face death more positively, and would thus proactively prepare for it. One of the specific approaches that most of them would follow is to plan for the remaining days of their lives in order to prepare for their deaths.

This specific approach would include conducting a “life review” for participants with a view to identify their own “inspirations of life”. The life experience of each person is different. The important point of the “life review” is to help participants to recognize the efforts that they have put into their life processes, so that they could be appreciative of their efforts made and thus enhance their life values. This review process would, in turn, help them to identify the “meanings of their existence” such that they would learn to become more grateful and appreciative.

This approach also includes three important aspects, namely: the “token of life”, the “living will” and the “life wisdom”. The “token of life” will include aspects like making a “will” which are the wishes on the arrangements for how one’s incomes, properties and assets will be given to people that one has named as beneficiaries; one’s funeral and/or burial arrangements, the obituary, and so on. To provide clear instructions on one’s wishes on these aspects will prevent guilt and stress on the part of one’s beloved ones, and this would also obviate any possible disputes among them. While the various aspects on the “token of life” are important, the “living will” (which is also known as the “advance directive”), and the “life wisdom” (which is on “relationship closure”), would be equally important. The “advance



directive” is to let one’s health-care team, as well as one’s family and/or friends to know how you feel about certain aspects of medical treatments and the forms of health care that one has chosen to receive in the future. “Life wisdom” is taking the opportunity of expressing your gratitude, appreciation and forgiveness on those people that are important in one’s life. Relationship reconciliation is important in the “end-of-life stage” as it enables one to draw a perfect ending to one’s relationships with others. (1)

While many people would have heard of, or have an understanding on, the various aspects on the “token of life” and the “life wisdom”, relatively speaking, they would be less familiar with the idea of making an “advance directive”. Upon their making of an “advance directive”, they would need to be provided with more information in order to help them better understand the problems involved. Due to this reason, we attempt to prepare a summary on this subject, together with its latest development, as a general reference for our readers.

“Advance Directive”

In recent years, the Government has studied and considered the introduction of the concept of “advance directives” in Hong Kong. The Law Reform Commission (LRC) published a report entitled *Substitute Decision-making and Advanced Directives in Relation to Medical Treatment* (herein simply called as “the Report”) in August 2006.

“The Report” aims to review, inter alia, the law in relating to the giving of advance directives by persons when

mentally competent as to the forms of health care or medical treatment which they would like to receive at a future time when they are no longer competent mentally.

In response to the LRC’s recommendations, the Food



and Health Bureau has further issued a “*Consultation Paper on the Introduction of the Concept of Advance Directives in Hong Kong*” (2) on 23 December, 2009 to further consult on the views of various stakeholders. The consultation period started from 23 December, 2009 and ended on 22 March, 2010, for a period of three months.

What Is An “Advance Directive”?

An “advance directive” for health care is a statement usually in writing, in which a person tells his family members and doctors what healthcare treatments he would like to receive at a future time when he is no longer mentally competent (e.g. when he is terminally ill, or in a coma, etc), including the refusal of life-sustaining treatments. For example, a person with terminal cancer may wish to specify that he does not want to receive “cardiopulmonary resuscitation” (CPR) when his heart stops.

The making of “advance directives” provides an avenue for an individual to exercise his right of self-determination, and make known his choices for his own health care in the eventuality that he may no longer be able to make such a decision. The “advance directive” thus can provide the individual’s family members a clear indication of the individual’s own wishes. It also helps doctors to fulfill their professional responsibility to their patients.



“Advance directive” is not applicable only to those with terminal illnesses. As serious injuries or illnesses can happen suddenly to anyone, and so one may consider making an “advance directive” when one is still in good health.

When To Make An “Advance Directive”?

An adult, who has the necessary mental capacity to make his own healthcare decisions, is free to make an “advance directive”. When he makes the “advance directive”, he must be free from undue influence, and be properly informed of the implications of making the directive. Otherwise, the directive is invalid.

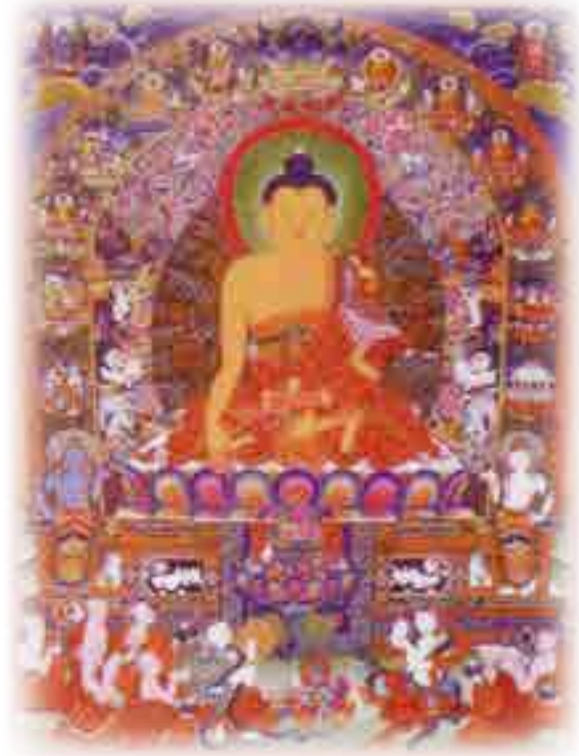
When Will An “Advance Directive” Become Operative?

According to the recommendation of the LRC, one’s “advance directive” will become operative only when one is in one of the following three conditions:

- (a) terminally ill;
- (b) in a state of irreversible coma; or
- (c) in a persistent vegetative state.

Does The Making of “Advance Directives” Same As “Euthanasia”?

“Advance directives” are totally unrelated to “euthanasia”. According to the existing *Code of Professional Conduct for the Guidance of Registered Medical Practitioners* of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, “euthanasia” is defined as “direct intentional killing of a person as part of the medical care being offered.” Hence, “euthanasia” is neither medically ethical nor legal in Hong Kong, and therefore no one in Hong Kong can indicate a wish for performing “euthanasia” in one’s “advance directive”. Even if a person expressively requests for such an illegal behavior to be conducted, healthcare professionals should in no way act as instructed.



Legal Status of “Advance Directives”

According to the Consultative Paper, Hong Kong has neither statute nor case law on the legal status of “advance directives”. Notwithstanding that there is currently no legislation governing “advance directives” in Hong Kong, any person is free to make an “advance directive” in Hong Kong if he so wishes.

Having regard to the existing *Code of Professional Conduct* and the principle of self-determination, even in the absence of express statute or ruling on the legal status of “advance directives” in Hong Kong, doctors are required to respect the wish of a patient expressed through the “advance directives”, even if they are contrary to their personal beliefs, unless the directives involve unlawful acts (such as “euthanasia”).

Government’s Position on “Advance Directives”

In the above-mentioned Consultative Paper, the Government has clearly stated its position on this subject. The Government recognizes that the concept

of “advance directives” is fairly new to the community, and that Hong Kong people are not yet familiar with this concept. The Government also recognizes that “advance directives” touch upon a wide range of issues beyond its legal and practical aspects, which warrant very careful consideration and deliberation. The Government thus agrees with the LRC’s view that it would be premature to attempt to formulate a statutory framework, and to embark on any legislative process for “advance directives”, without greater public awareness of the issues involved.

It is also said in the Consultative Paper that the Government also recognizes that the making of an “advance directive” is entirely a personal decision, and that a person is already free at present to make an “advance directive” if he so wishes. Respecting the individual’s freedom of making such a decision, the Government has no intention at this stage to actively advocate or encourage the public to make “advance directives”. It should remain an individual’s choice and decision of making an “advance directive” if he so wishes. However, the question of how to enhance the public’s understanding of “advance directives”, and how to make the necessary information available for those who wish to make such directives, would be considered further.



Future Developments

As the consultation period has ended, the Food and Health Bureau is compiling the views from the different parties concerned. It is trusted that, in the near future, the Government will prepare a package which will contain basic information about “advance directives”, with some commonly asked questions, as well as a “model form” to be adapted from the one as recommended by the LRC for future usage by anyone who wishes to make an “advance directive”. When such additional information is available, it is expected that this subject would be more widely discussed, and more of the Hong Kong people would have a better understanding on it. This will be particularly helpful to those who have the intention of making such an “advance directive”.

References:

- (1) Please refer to the website of *Project Enable*, under the auspices of the University of Hong Kong’s Centre on Behavioral Health, with its URL at: <http://www.enable.hk/>
- (2) *Consultative Paper on the Introduction of the Concept of Advance Directives in Hong Kong*, published by the Food and Health Bureau, HKSAR Government, on 23 December, 2009.

EPILOGUE

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

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

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