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How to distinguish among all religions and practices on "which could help sentient beings to be liberated from the fetters of the cycle of karmic existence"?

The Wonderful and Efficacious Merits on the Reciting of Sutras

Different Stages in Approaching Death and Its "Transformation of the Consciousness"

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English Version

Life can be nurtured and elevated. We try to make life more rich and complete!

Dudjom Buddhist Association

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Life can be nurtured and elevated. We try to make life more rich and complete!

**Mourning for those who died in the Philippine
hostage incident on 23.8.2010
and in all natural disasters and tragic accidents**

**A lamp has been offered before the
altar of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities
for forty nine days**

**We earnestly hope that they will be reborn in
Buddha's pure land and light up more
happy lives in the heavenly realm**



**A lamp has been offered before the altar of
the Buddha of Medicine**

**We earnestly hope that Mr Leung Chung-hok, Jason will soon regain
consciousness and have a speedy recovery**

Sincere wishes of the Dudjom Buddhist Association



The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (30)

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

- Different Stages in Approaching Death and Its “Transformation of Consciousness”
- How Should Those Care-Givers of Kin and Kith Receive and Deal With the “Signals of Death” for a Dying Person?
- What Is the Most Appropriate Way in Listening To and Observing the Abnormal Behaviors of the Patient?

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 credi-

tors 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?



Different Stages in Approaching Death and Its “Transformation of Consciousness”

In fact, how does the arising of the different stages in approaching death and its “transformation of the consciousness” affect the thoughts and behaviors of dying patients? What are their relationships with the “scenes at the moment of death”? How should the family and kin and kith who take care of the dying patients respond to the “transformation of consciousness” and the change of “scenes at the moment of death” for guiding the emotions and spiritual direction of the dying patients? Could the “transformation of consciousness” and the change of “scenes at the moment of death” be complementary to each other? Furthermore, the “disintegration of the Four Elements” of the physical body also affects the “transformation of consciousness”, as well as the change of “scenes at the moment of death”. Hence, how should one support and provide guidance to a dying patient in order to reduce or resolve the predicament from these problems?

The end of life represents the “spiritual body” is about to depart from the materialistic “physical body”. A “spiritual body” consists of all the different “states of consciousness”, and thus during the different stages that it is about to depart from the “physical body”, till its completion of the whole process, extraordinary “transformation of consciousness” is induced, due to a great deal of energy being released and transformed. This sort of transformation frequently hap-

pens to those who are seriously-ill, or in dying patients. They would go through certain settings and matters that resembled those of the “near-death survivors”, and so their emotions would be triggered for drastic changes and volatilities.

Since most people are lacking of knowledge in this aspect, and so some of the seriously-ill or dying patients are deemed as troublesome and should be isolated, or be considered as mentally ill that should be confined in a psychiatric hospital. If the family concerned is superstitious, the patient might even

be sent for exorcism. (Please refer to a case in the article “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 29 of the “Lake of Lotus”.) Therefore, the real “life and death education” must be advocated comprehensively, and should not just merely on certain aspects of “life education”, so that this group of a very significant number of people, who are suffering at the end of their lives, who have previously been ignored could now be rescued. In this way, the whole human race that will have to face death inevitably could now, indeed,

be helped as well.

In order to help the dying persons, no matter caregivers or professional counselors must have to know the various characteristics on the changes of the different “states of consciousness”, as well as to realize the five stages on the “transformation of consciousness”. Even for a dying person, it is much better for one to know and realize the five stages on the “transformation of mental consciousness” if one want one’s own family members to face “death” in a relatively relaxed attitude. In this way, it could even help oneself



to turn grief into strength, while **uplifting** one's spiritual conditions, in order to deal with the forthcoming choices and settings for one's own "rebirth" in a better environment.

The First Stage: A stage of light buoyance, with struggling in one's mentality and preparation for detachment from one's physical body

In the last chapter, it had been discussed that there are four kinds of conditions of consciousness for all human beings. (Please refer to the article "The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice" in the Issue 26, the "Lake of Lotus".) They are:

1. **Beta β waves** – the "conscious condition" of daily living;
2. **Alpha α waves** – the relaxed "consciousness condition", such as in entering into the elementary stage of 'visualization', or at the first stage of "mental concentration"; or the condition when the "spiritual body" is **slowly separating** from the "physical body";
3. **Theta θ waves** – the peaceful "conscious condition" of having entered into higher levels of "visualization", or at the deeper levels of "mental concentration";
4. **Delta δ waves** – slow "conscious condition" of not having any dreams, and in a stage of slow-wave deep sleep.

When a person's freedom of movements has now been controlled by sickness, such as the changing of the usual postures of sitting and standing to frequently lying in a bed, very often the conscious conditions of the **beta wave** would then be mingled with the relaxed conscious conditions of **alpha waves**. Even dur-

ing daytimes, the settings of a dream state would be intercepting with those of daily conscious conditions. This kind of 'semi-dreaming and semi-awakening' condition is the initial stage on the **slow separation** of the "spiritual body" from the "physical body". Many "near-death survivors" had similar experiences.

A person who has suffered from serious illnesses would better understand this sort of conditions. A dying person who is situated in this kind of condition would feel the kind of buoyance experience. At times, the person just **could not be able to distinguish the reality from dreaming**. One's "consciousness" hovers to and fro in-between the boundary of "life and death". Sometimes, it is due to the **continuing influence from a dream**, and so a dying person would continue the dialogues and behaviors as in the settings of a dream. In this way, the care-givers might think that the dying patient has some problems of mental disorder, and would then become frightened or sorrowful.



Sometimes it is due to the gradual deterioration of the physical body of a dying person that causes **the releases of energies, and so the consciousness of the dying person becomes even more loosened**. All those suppressed emotions on the "persistence of human life and perception of death" and especially the "acceptance or not of one's own death", all of which that have been embedded in one's "sub-conscious", would suddenly emerge to the level of one's daily "consciousness". **Such kind of thrusts might come so suddenly and unpredictably that the dying person is emotionally out of control**. Things that the dying person might have only thought about, but would not dare to do or speak out in the past, would no longer be restrained and could thus be actually car-

ried out in acts or in words. This sort of losing control originated from the fact that one's "consciousness" is in a loosened state, which renders no help to the self-controlling ability of the dying person.

The different issues, in terms of people, affairs and matters, that **one would rather care less** in the past would suddenly become **so unbearable to be separated** from them. However, since there is not much time left and it is no longer feasible to reverse the settings, and so the dying person might have a feeling of being **forced** to a dead end. As such, the person might **act to retaliate** in the ways of either beating up, or yelling at, people, throwing stuffs, and so on. Or one might **give vent to** the extreme feelings of disgruntling and frustrating through acts of crying, screaming or roaring.

Such responses are all classified as the **"signals of death"** in the first stage. The question would then be: how should the care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors, receive and deal with those signals in order to help the dying person, as well as themselves, to go through this difficult stage?

How Should Those Care-Givers of Kin and Kith Receive and Deal With the "Signals of Death" for a Dying Person?

The dying person's "perception of death", especially in "whether one is accepting or rejecting one's own death", is an indicator on the strengths or weaknesses, as well as on the degrees of expression, of these signals. Care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors, must have to realize that the **receptiveness, responses, and capabilities on the sensory**

organs of a dying person **have all been changed** in this stage. At this moment, the most important point for one to do is to "accept and understand" what the dying person has been doing and narrating, including his unusual behaviors. Then, with further analysis on his "conscious condition" behind those words and deeds, one can couple this with appropriate guidance

so as to lead the dying person out of his disoriented predicament, and to further guide the dying person towards the **locus of spiritual uplifting and elevation**. These kind of proceedings are, indeed, most important.

Under many circumstances, it is pitiful to note that many care-givers, kin and kith and medical staff take a rather different perspective on those patients with violent responses as "trouble-makers, or patients of delirium or of disorientation". Either they

would be suppressed for their behaviors, or be isolated, or else they will be subjected to being scolded, or even put in a psychiatric ward or hospital. To them, such practices on the patients are considered to be humanistic, sympathetic and correct. If the care-givers, kin and kith and medical staff in the hospitals would **suitably respect the "death signals" that were received from, and given out by, the dying patients**, they could be able to help these dying patients to break through their serious spiritual obstructions, and to uplift their poor spiritual conditions to strong self-directing levels. This would create extremely significant influences upon the dying persons' choices of selection on the settings for their future rebirths.

Therefore, when a dying person is **approaching the "first stage of death"**, the care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors should carry out the following five steps:

1. **Accepting and Understanding**



2. [Listening and Observing](#)
3. [Analyzing and Adopting](#)
4. [Leading Out and Guiding In](#)
5. [Accompanying with Unspoken Consensus](#)

1. [Accepting and Understanding](#) – Believing in and realizing that the unusual words and deeds of the dying person is such kind of “[signals of death](#)”, which represents that the “physical body” of the dying person starts changing in such a way that the “‘spiritual body’ is [slowly departing](#) from the ‘physical body’”.

Since the [release of energy is rather different from the normal conditions](#), the sensory organs of the dying person would link up with the [alpha waves](#) of the relaxed “state of consciousness”, thus the “reality” and the “dream settings” would have been [mutually infiltrated and mingled together](#). In this way, the “sub-conscious” of the dying person would enter into the level of “consciousness” with one’s acts and words to be under its control, and so the dying person would perform things that he/she normally would not do.



The most important thing to do at this moment is to “accept and understand” the dying person, with the worst thing is to “scold and reject” him/her, while the “isolation” of the patient is the cruelest treatment of all. Even if there are no other alternatives available, supports and counseling should be enhanced immediately so as to work out an avenue for him/her to “leave the predicament”. [In bringing the dying person out of his/her spiritual plight is the most urgent priority](#). The worst situation that should be prohibited is the carrying out of “exorcism” of ghosts or demons for the dying person. There are several adverse effects in so doing:

- (i) The dying person might think that something has really gone wrong with oneself, and so becoming more anxious. This makes the situation

on the [mutually-entanglement of the “reality” and the “dream settings” to become even further chaotic](#).

- (ii) Since the “sub-conscious” of the dying person has gone up to the level of “consciousness”, he or she would be scared of the most frightful matters in one’s lifetime, as well as all the horrifying scenes and plots that happened in dreams and in films. Due to this kind of horror that happens in one’s own mind, the dying person is “unable to distinguish the reality from the unreal situations”, and so believe in them as the real settings. Therefore, when the dying person comes across those rites of “exorcism” of ghosts or demons that were performed by wizards, it would cause the dying person to become even more confused, resulting in the dying person to [become really “mentally-ill” when being extremely irritated on his/her nervous system](#).

- (iii) The kind of “exorcism” of ghosts or demons that were performed by wizards might [induce more supernatural beings of complicated species coming forth to take advantages during the chaotic situation, thus causing the dying person of a weak mind to become very disturbed](#). Even for those people who had “virtuous karmas” originally and would supposedly have been able to transmigrate to better environments, but due to this kind of interruption in which whose “vicious karmas” were now being induced, resulting in that they might be reborn in worse environments.

If the family members really want to carry out activities that may help the dying person, it is most advisable to invite those genuine Buddhist practitioners to perform the different kinds of “rites of blessings, freeing of lives, removal of hindrances, smoke offerings,

lamp offerings”, and then dedicate all the merits to the dying person for the continuous induction or increase of one’s “positive energy”, instead of carrying out “exorcism” of ghosts or demons. The **best resolution is to calm the “mind and sub-conscious” of the dying person, so that he or she would feel “peaceful, comfortable and consolable”.**

In fact, if a person rushes to learn how to deal with “death” at the end of one’s life, or hurries to learn the key points when there is a rising need in providing “end-of-life” care to a dying family member, the outcomes usually would be discounted, or in an ineffective way, since these were usually done under straitened situations. In order to have great confidence in achieving the expected objectives and effects, one must take time to **receive correct training on all facets of “life and death education”** while one is still alive.

In the training of Dharma practices in “Vajrayana”, it will turn all the frightening and fearful features into defensive “deities” or “Dharma protectors”, so that it will not leave the invasive features of demons in one’s own “consciousness”. Since it has been **proactive in removing the adverse concepts and definitions of demons radically from one’s “consciousness”**, and so even when one is facing real death, **qualified** “Vajrayana” practitioners will not be lost or become frightened while in a dream or during the “transformation of consciousness”. Neither will they need to undergo “exorcism” of ghosts or demons. **This is one of the secrets of “Vajrayana”.**

2. Listening and Observing – The care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors, while accepting and understanding the dying person, should further listen to the messages deep down from the heart of the dying person, as well as to observe his/her behaviors. In the “sub-conscious” of a dying person, there stashes “issues of desires, regrets, compunctions, scary things, hatred, ignorance, things undone”, which are unknown to other people and even to the dying person himself/herself. These “notions” might then be manifested in the deeds of the dying person at this stage. However, these might not be directly expressed, but might be manifested by those unusual behaviors and gestures.



By listening to the messages deep down from the heart of a dying person, it is for the sake of a better assessment on those “notions” that were concealed behind those behaviors. This makes it possible for one to have further analysis and adoption of appropriate methods in order to assist the dying person in the uplifting of his/her spiritual condition. **When the dying person feels being respected, with one’s words and deeds to be accepted, it would be much easier for one to reveal one’s own “notions”.** There would be much better chances for their emotions to be soothed, due to the supports and recognitions given by the kin and kith. **This would initiate a very good and important first step.**

However, when a dying person is in a disoriented state, the person would not know what to do due to his/her not knowing oneself. The person would keep on carrying out some incomprehensible words and deeds. Under such conditions, the care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors must keep on listening to and observing the dying person very

patiently. As long as the dying person's words and deeds are still tolerable, it is suggested that the dying person should be further supported and recognized in carrying on those abnormal words and deeds, so that one's "negative energy" could be released continuously.

Do not take this sort of methods in the release of "negative energies" lightly as this could be a pivotal moment for the dying person who cannot afford to miss this kind of opportunity at this very late stage. If it is well managed, the dying person could walk out of the painful predicament in a more relaxing way. Then, at the junction of the cross-road for the next "rebirth", the person would have sufficient "positive energy" for one's transmigration into a better spiritual domain. On the other hand, if it is poorly managed, or that this golden opportunity at this very late stage has been missed, the unreleased "negative energy" being confined would significantly affect the dying person's "transmigration" or the posthumous environment of one's rebirth.

Therefore, the more the dying person vents out, the better will be the results, as long as the situations are well under control. During this kind of "crisis", whether the "danger" could be turned into an "opportunity", and whether the "bad things" could be changed into "good things" will all have to depend upon the caregivers, kin and kith and professional counselors as to whether they would know how to correctly deal with the case.

In what way can the listening and observing be deemed to be most appropriate? The following case can be taken as a reference point.

What Is the Most Appropriate Way in Listening To and Observing the Abnormal Behaviors of the Patient?

Case 34

An aged person, who has always been authoritative in the family, was sent to a government hospital by his children due to his shortness of breath. When he was admitted to the hospital, he was in a state of "semi-awakening and semi-dreaming". He was put on an oxygen mask, and was administered with medical devices by medical personnel of the casualty department. He started yelling and tried to remove the intravenous drip and devices from his body. He kept yelling to his children: "Unfilial, unfilial." Nobody could realize what he meant, but just to leave him to the nurses who had tied him onto the bed for medical treatments.

As such, he was tied onto the bed for over half-a-day. Although he had struggled hard, it was just futile. Whenever his children came visiting him, without exceptions

they were all being scolded with the words: "Unfilial, Unfilial, Get out!" Next day, a friend, who was well respected by the elder, came for a visit. When she entered into the room and saw that the elder was being tied onto the bed, she knew that something was wrong, and she must seek for some kind of a resolution.

Since the elder had a lot of respect for this friend, and though he was very tired, he started chatting with her. After clarifying what had happened, the friend attempted to understand the unusual behaviors of the elder. Why did he want to remove the intravenous drip



and devices from his body? Why did he start yelling his children, condemning them as unfilial and asked them to go away whenever he saw them? This elder had been known as astute and wise all through the years, and had practiced the Dharma for decades. He loved his children and had never scolded or beaten them up. **What made him changed all of a sudden? How to resolve the situation?**

The conversations with the elder were around some miscellaneous topics without a main theme, and so the friend could not find out the reason behind it all. However, **there was one important point**. The elder implored her to untie him: "Would you untie me please? I beg you!" The friend had never heard of this strong elder to be so casual in asking for help. It was most unusual, indeed, that he had now asked for help from her. On the contrary, this friend asked the elder: "If you can promise me that, after you are untied, you will not remove the intravenous drip and the medical devices, then I can promise you that I will make the nurses to untie you."

The elder promised her right away. Thus, the friend asked a nurse to untie the elder. At the beginning, the nurse hesitated. But then, she was softened by the guarantee offered by the friend. She then untied the elder. Right after the nurse went away, immediately the elder wanted to remove the intravenous drip and medical device. The friend said: "Aren't you a Dharma practitioner? Why can't you endure with the situation?" The elder replied: **"Please don't say these words to me**. I am suffering badly, don't you know? You should ask the nurses if they can remove these from me."

As a result, the nurse said that if the patient really

felt suffering, then the devices could be removed temporarily. Thus, the elder finally could relax for a while. Nevertheless, whenever the children came to visit him, this elder kept on yelling: "Unfilial, Unfilial, Get out!" As this friend knew the elder very well, she understood that **"there must be a reason behind everything"**. So, she knew that there must be reasons behind these abnormal behaviors of this elder.

Due to the trust upon her by the elder, he begged for her help and revealed the reasons: "I am suffering badly. You **should not have confined** my behaviors, but you **should seek for a way out** to help me." Since she knew the elder so well and realized that he was a humble Dharma practitioner who has "observed the precepts seriously", his children must



have done something wrong in order that he kept on scolding them as unfilial. Yet, having obstructed by the limited wisdom of his children, as well as of his own persistence in the keeping of his precepts, he did not elaborate on any of the details to his children. She saw that the elder was being put in an open patient ward, where he could be seen by the general populace with his body not being covered with proper clothing. He was tied onto the bed without any kind of "dignity". **It was,**

indeed, not really a proper way of filial piety from his children for not being able to take proper care of their father. Since he was in a state of "semi-awakening and semi-dreaming" while he was being hospitalized, his "state of consciousness" was kept on changing. Furthermore, the sensitivity of his body was many times higher than that of the ordinary people, due to his practices of the "channels, winds and wisdom drops". When injections were administered, he would feel extremely painful. That was the main reason why the elder kept on ruffling to remove the intravenous

drip and the devices from his body, and continuously scolded his children.

Upon repeated considerations and analyses, this friend had come up with a way to resolve the situation. She requested his children to transfer the elder to a private hospital for treatment, and had explained to them why “the caring provided there was not adequate enough” for the elder. The outcome was satisfactory. The elder had gotten **proper caring that satisfied** him. He received his medical treatments in a very dignified way, and so he has recovered very promptly. In the process of treatment, there was no unhappy incidence ever since, and no more condemnation on unfilial manner.

In the entire course, the elder had not uttered any words that he was not happy with the inattentive caring by his children. Neither had he requested to be transferred to a private hospital. The only obvious word was “unfilial”, and that he did not want to see his children. Whenever they were in his sight, he would yell to scold them. His behaviors were **totally opposite** to those of his past.

This friend could only look for information from simple dialogues and through careful observations in order to come up with a personal analysis. With that, she offered her suggestions and resolutions, all of which had rightly pointed to the critical points of the whole problem. Hence, the problem was finally resolved very smoothly and easily. It was also due to the trust on this friend by the elder that he was **willing to ask for her help** to untie him. As such, the situation had not gone worse. **Accepting and understanding, listening and observing are really important guidelines for the caring of patients that should not be overlooked.** Otherwise, if things have gone wrong, then it would be too late for regrets. The elder was so obstinate that

he would rather die in the hospital, but did not want to make a plea to his children about his own wish.

Under the transformation on the “state of consciousness”, regardless of whether the patient is a Dharma practitioner, or just an ordinary person, **one would have different kinds of reactions, or that one may show signs of abnormal behaviors.** All of these are, indeed, normal phenomena, and are **not rare** at all. There is no need for surprise. The most important thing is whether the care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors can handle the situation properly. If these handling methods can become **a general**

kind of education, then this will bring enormous benefits to all of mankind, so that both **the lives and spirits of all mankind can be uplifted and elevated.** Hence, the advocacy of this **“life and death education”** is, indeed, all too important!

The next steps would be “analyzing and adopting, leading out and guiding in, accompanying with unspoken consensus”, as well as other stages on approaching death. In the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, we

will continue to further explore and share these with the readers..... (To be Continued) 🗝️

(Remarks: (1) The newly-released book on “The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (1)” has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meanings of the Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 1 to 10. (2) “The Meanings of Near-death Experiences (2) – The Key Points at the Moment of Death and the Essential Revelations of the Tibetan Book of the Dead” has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meanings of the Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 11 to 20.)



The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (30)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren
Translated by Byron K.K. Yiu

Why Should One Recite and Chant the "Buddhist Sutras"?

The Operation and Abstruseness of the "Mind Phenomena"

How to distinguish among all religions and practices on "which could help sentient beings to be liberated from the fetters of the cycle of karmic existence"?

The Wonderful and Efficacious Merits on the Reciting of Sutras

Excerpt of Last Issue

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

1. **Praying for worldly desires** – For example: to seek for oneself and one's own relatives to have "longevity, recovery from illness, success in one's career, good marriage, wealth increase, averting disasters and relief from sufferings, as well as reunion with those deceased loved ones". Also, there are those who hope to get the "ease of heart and security at the present life", etc.; or



for “fame, wealth, respect” in order to study Buddhism; as well as for those who put in efforts to practice the Dharma.

2. **Rebirth in the good realms** – For example: to hope and pray for rebirth in the heavenly realm, or in the human realm, and not to fall into the evil realms (of animals, hungry ghosts and hells).

3. **Liberation from the tractions of the “cycle of karmic existence”** – to hope and pray for the **freedom** in deciding for oneself as to whether one would be reborn into the six realms (of heavens, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hells), or whether to remain in the highest level of the “Realm of Form”, such as the “Akanistha” (the “Heaven at the End-of-Form-Realm”), which is beyond the control of the tractions. (Please refer to the explanations on the “Three Realms” in the article on the “Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death: The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

4. **Attainment of Buddhahood** – The recovery of one’s “Primordial Nature” and the originally possessed and boundless capabilities, which are free from any bondages and to remain in the “Dharma Realm”. (The “Nature of the Mind”, also known as the “Buddha Nature”, or the “Primordial Nature”, refers to the **original** possession of that most crystal clarity of **awareness**. Please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 4 & 5 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

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

1. **Prayers** – Including confessions, repentance of one’s conducts, and in the making of aspirations and wishes;

2. **Recitations** – mantras, Buddhas’ Holy Names, or sutras

3. **Visualizations** – themes include the formulae for different types of “meditation”, or even the making use of the internal functions of one’s body for coordination.



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

The previous five chapters have clearly explained the effects and mysteries that the sound has produced upon people (Please refer to the articles on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practices” of Issues 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 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 mantra does not necessarily have to be words that could be

translated or understood, particularly those mantra which are meant for the following purposes:

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



The last few chapters (in particular please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”) have mentioned that the merits of having received the “relevant teachings” in the

recitation of mantras are remarkable and vast. 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 (please refer to the article on the “Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 28 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



Why Should One Recite and Chant the “Buddhist Sutras”?

“Buddhist Sutras”, as ancient books and records, actually stored the boundless wisdom of the Lord Buddha. By the using of words to show the Lord Buddha’s wisdom to the world, it also wishes to let all sentient beings to truly understand the kind of wisdom

that was unveiled by those words, so as to know how to apply them. Unfortunately, in achieving such kinds of results are not easy things, except for those ripe sentient beings who have the past causes and merits, and they also should have the wisdom seeds within their **unconscious**. Thus, even though people have been trying to abandon the ancient words, and have changed them into modern terminologies, it is still unable to make this wish come true.

Yet, are there **alternative ways** to make this wish come true? For those who have already gotten the wisdom seeds in their **unconscious** and for those who do not, when reciting and chanting the **“Buddhist Sutras”**, would there be any difference between them? As a matter of fact, the Buddhist Dharma reveals that **sentient beings have different levels of “consciousness”, and their structures, usages and**

ways of evolution cannot deviate from the “mind phenomena”. (Please refer to the DVD on **“The Teachings on Authentic Practice in Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism (6): The Abstruseness of the “Mind Phenomena”** – Lecture Delivered on 28 June 2008, and the article on **“The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences”** in Issue 15 of the **“Lake of Lotus”**). If one would like to understand more about the recitations of the

“Buddhist Sutras” such that one could recognize the difference between those who already have the wisdom seeds within their **unconscious** and those who do not, and at the same time learn whether there are alternative ways available, so as to be able to make the wish come true, then one should have to understand the operation and abstruseness of the **“Mind Phenomena”** in advance.

The Operation and Abstruseness of the “Mind Phenomena”

Buddhism considers the **“mind”** as the **cardinal subject of all our spiritual functions**. There are eight different kinds of functions of the **“mind”**, and the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni called it as the **“mind phenomena”** (the **“citta”** in Sanskrit). Among the eight different functions of the **“mind”**, the **most basic and fundamental** of them all is the **“Eighth Consciousness”** (or **“Alaya-vijnana”** in Sanskrit). **“Alaya”** is a Sanskrit word meaning **“storehouse”**. The Chinese **“Discourse on the Chapter on the Elaboration of the Profound Meanings of Mahayana”** has mentioned that **“‘Consciousness’ is another name for the ‘Mind’”**. Hence, **‘Consciousness’ is the ‘Mind’**. In simple terms, **‘Consciousness’ is a kind of ‘Energy’**.



The characteristic of the **“Eighth Consciousness”** is like **a warehouse, or the hard disk of a computer**. All kinds of matters and affairs that had occurred in one’s past countless lifetimes would have been stored in the **“Eighth Consciousness”**, regardless of whether they are good or bad. The **“Eighth Consciousness”** is a place for the stashing of all karmic forces of all sentient beings (the **web of “karmic forces”**: due to both virtuous and wicked deeds amassed through **countless past lifetimes**, the linkages of the mental strength of both one’s inner self and of others are crisscrossing and inter-influencing each other, so as to form the network of tractions. This is known as the **“karmic network”**. Please refer to the DVD on **“The Inconceivable Law of Karma”**, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association) and is the **cardinal subject for the “cycle**



of karmic existence” (or “**Samsara**” in Sanskrit). It has existed ever since time immemorial, and will last forever without an end. Even though it goes through endless cycles of various lifetimes, it will never be deteriorated or annihilated.

The “Eighth Consciousness” is the combination of one’s “intrinsic nature” with the “mundane deluded mind”, a fusion into oneness of both “awareness” and “attachment to ignorance”, and so all sentient beings will have the ability of “self-awareness”. Every thought or notion, or every word or deed, will form “a seed of karmic force”, and so it is called a “karmic seed”, or simply “seed” (or “**bija**” in Sanskrit), and can be conceived of as some kind of a “mental strength” with memory functions to be stored inside the “Eighth Consciousness”.



Since the “Eighth Consciousness” is merely responsible for the storage function, it does not have the function of differentiation. However, the “habitual nature” of all sentient beings is fond of looking outwards to explore and grasp onto concepts and things of the external environment. For the convenience of operation, another kind of function, namely the “**Seventh Consciousness**” (or “**Manas-vijnana**” in Sanskrit), is thus derived from the “Eighth Consciousness” through one’s “mental strength”. “**Manas**” is a Sanskrit word meaning calculation or conjecture, which are the functions of the “Mind”, and is the noumenon of one’s “**Mental Consciousness**” (or “**Mano-vijnana**” in Sanskrit, or simply the “Sixth Consciousness”).

As the “Seventh Consciousness” is rooted from the “Eighth Consciousness” and only comes into being for the fulfillment of desires, it is the foundation for

the “mental strength of desires”. In this way, it is influenced by the “mental strengths of greed, hatred and ignorance” that has been stored inside the “Eighth Consciousness” and grasps onto the “images projected by these negative forces”, thus deeming

it that there is the existence of an “ego” or a “selfhood” (known as “ego attachment” in Buddhism). In the course of a lifetime, the distorted “nature of mind”, which was addicted to one’s own “ego”, has gradually been formed. It consistently and ceaselessly plots for only selfish gains and benefits of self-interest and self-protection. Therefore, the “Seventh Consciousness” could be considered as the center for handling selfishness and self-concern. In this way, it makes the “intrinsic nature” of the “Eighth Consciousness” to become more dim and blurred, as well as more deeply hidden.

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

The “Sixth Consciousness” is the integral center of all psychological and mental activities. All our sensations of “seeing, hearing, feelings”, as well as “perceptions, cognitions, thoughts and judgments” of all sorts are guided and directed by the “Sixth Consciousness”. In western psychology, the “Sixth Consciousness” belongs to

the level of **“consciousness”**, while the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness” belong to the domain of the **“unconscious”**. Due to the fact that the “Seventh Consciousness” is the “root of the Mental Consciousness”, while the “Eighth Consciousness” is the basic ground and root of all phenomena (or **“dharma”** in Sanskrit) of the universe, hence **all** the activities of the “Sixth Consciousness” (or the various discriminations associated with the “Mental Consciousness”) are undoubtedly **influenced by both** the **“Seventh Consciousness”** and the **“Eighth Consciousness”**.

As such, in order to let the “Sixth Consciousness” to manage so many **examinations and judgments** of things, it will require quite a number of “instruments” to help **collect** the necessary **information and data**. Hence, some more functions have been derived from the “Sixth Consciousness”, namely: the

“First Consciousness” (or the discriminations associated with the “Eye Consciousness”), the **“Second Consciousness”** (or the discriminations associated with the “Ear Consciousness”), the **“Third Consciousness”** (or the discriminations associated with the “Nose Consciousness”), the **“Fourth Consciousness”** (or the discriminations associated with the “Tongue Consciousness”), and the **“Fifth Consciousness”** (or the discriminations associated with the “Body Consciousness”).

All these **five** kinds of discriminations or **“consciousnesses”** (or **“vijñāna”** in Sanskrit) are, indeed, the **five kinds of “energies”** that are relying

upon the **five “sense organs or faculties”** (or **“indriya”** in Sanskrit), namely: the eyes, the ears, the noses, the tongues and the bodies, for the collections of the **five “sense data”** (or **“visaya”** in Sanskrit) from the externals, namely: the forms (**the shape and imagery of a substance**), sounds, odors, tastes and the tactile sensations, which are the five kinds of sensations and perceptions. The “Sixth Consciousness” also relies upon the “mental organ” for the distinctions of “all kinds of phenomena” (**mundane worldly matters**) known as “sense data and/or conceptual objects”.



After having collected all sorts of information and data, in accordance with the **habitual guidance and influences** of both the “Seventh Consciousness” and the “Eighth Consciousness” as its main criteria, the “Sixth Consciousness” would then **classify** these information and data under its own **“subjective judgments”**, or even **distortion**

respectively, and then hand them over to the “Seventh Consciousness” with its provisions of the conclusive information and data. The “Seventh Consciousness” would then act as a “messenger”, and then further pass on these information and data to the “Eighth Consciousness” for storage.

The “Eighth Consciousness” stores lots of distorted “cognitions”, and so the “Buddhist Dharma” has called these as the **“obstructions due to knowledge”**. The knowledge “being recognized” is, indeed, different from the truth, and it will form a “hindrance” to **prevent** oneself from **returning** to one’s own “real nature”; that is, to prevent oneself from the

“attainment of Buddhahood”.

“Mind” is the origin of our own nature: which is originally **oneness, singleness and united**, such that it has the boundless and greatest power. However, by “grasping” onto certain subtle “points of consciousness”, the “First to Eighth Consciousnesses” has been gradually derived and created. It then mixed with matters to form all the various different kinds of sentient beings. Therefore, one should get rid of all the “grasping”, even the most subtle “point of consciousness”, in order to facilitate the fusion of the “First to Eighth Consciousnesses”, so as to combine and return to the original **oneness, singleness and united “Own Nature”**, whereby one could be liberated from the ‘cycle of karmic existence’ and eventually to “attain Buddhahood”. This is the **essence** of all practices, and is really the **ultimate goal**.

How to distinguish among all religions and practices on “which could help sentient beings to be liberated from the fetters of the cycle of karmic existence”?

If one intends to combine the “Sixth and Seventh Consciousnesses” and the “Eighth Consciousness” to become an organic whole, then one should install a “fusion programming” within one’s mind in advance. By **knowing that the “First to Eighth Consciousnesses” come from one origin, and that one should return to the original state; we call this as the “Cognition and Programming” of the**



“Oneness”. Therefore, within the procedures of certain practice rituals of “Vajrayana”, it will let all the bodies, including all “cognitions”, to be “transformed” and to be “combined”. This is an **extremely important** practice and programming whereby one could distinguish among all religions, schools and practices on “which could help sentient beings to be liberated from the fetters of the cycle of karmic existence”. **Which one is useful and which is not? This is the way for one to distinguish them. But there are only a few Buddhists, or Dharma practitioners, who can truly know how to use this criterion to distinguish them. Clearly, this indicates that the standards of contemporary Buddhism is getting worse and worse, to the extent that it becomes purely complied with the conventions of this secular world, while signaling its coming to the final stage of its ending.**

These “Mind Phenomena” actually follows the sentient beings’ “minds” to continuously “grasping”. Indeed, this has evolved through numerous lifetimes and countless periods of “time”. Just like “The Theory of Evolution”, this evolutionary process takes a long long time to develop, and thus it will also require a long long time to reverse its process. Therefore, the Lord Buddha Sakyamuni states that the ordinary practices of the “Exoteric Buddhism” will require “three asamkhya kalpas” of time to enable oneself to return to one’s “Own Nature” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. (“Three Great Kalpas”: a kalpa refers to a period of time, a “small kalpa” is equal to the time required for an universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation” . Twenty “small kalpas” equal to one “medium kalpa” and four “medium kalpas” equal to a “great kalpa”. And one asamkhya kalpa is equivalent to the 10^{51} time of a universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”. Thus, three asamkhya kalpas is actually an immeasurable long time, as time required for each universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration,

annihilation” is different.)

Are there any shortcuts? As long as those teachings contain the important element of “Emptiness”, then they should have **certain degrees** of relevant programmings. According to the revelations of the **“Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra”** (that is, the **“Large Sutra on the Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom”**), turning the “Mind Phenomena” to the “Buddha’s Own Nature” requires one to enter into the twenty different levels of “Emptiness” (please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 28 of the “Lake of Lotus”). As for “Vajrayana” practices, if they do not lead one astray in becoming

superstitious on the various forms and manifestations, but instead to concentrate on one’s “mind training”, together with the programming of “Emptiness” within the practice rituals as supplementary, then the chances of

success will be much higher. If this can be further coordinated with the teachings of the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**, then the shortcut will naturally be revealed. (Please refer to the DVD on “Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness”, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association). If relying on the Exoteric Buddhist way of “Sutra chanting” for one’s practice, and if those Sutras include the teachings of “Emptiness”, then one would have the chance to return to one’s “Own Nature”. For those Sutras that contain the teachings of “Emptiness”, the **“Heart Sutra”** is definitely the best known and the most popular one. As regards to the merits in the chanting and reciting of Sutras, the first and foremost thing is **to arouse one’s inner original great wisdom** so that one would be able to return to one’s “Own Nature”.



While, secondly, it can help to make contacts with all the Buddhas, which is most loved by worldly people as they could then receive blessings from the Buddhas, as well as to get protections from the protectors.

The Wonderful and Efficacious Merits on the Reciting of Sutras

With no doubts, there are numerous cases, from the past up till the present, that have revealed the wonderful and efficacious merits on the reciting of sutras, and the following is just another real case recently.

Case Two

This is a sensational case, yet it also causes great sadness. It happened on 23 August 2010 in the Philippines. It is known as the Manila hostage crisis, which ended with eight hostages being killed with three other seriously injured. Miss Li Ying Quan is one of those survivors, and she has recently published an article, describing the incident in **“Mingpao”**. Within this article, Miss Li Ying Quan has mentioned that she had been reciting the **“Heart Sutra”** when she was in dire peril. Ultimately, and luckily, she and her mother were able to get off safely. Herein we quoted some of the paragraphs from this article as follows:

“Mingpao Exclusive” (29 August 2010): “ ... I hid underneath the chair and escaped from the gun shooting. At that instant, I couldn’t believe that the story appearing in movies was now happening to me. I could see my mother, who was also hiding underneath the chair on the other row, and I felt a bit of ease. After the first round of gun shoot, the coach was extremely quite. At the same time, there were booming rounds of thunder, together with rain kept hitting on the coach roof. It was such a great contrast with the dead silence that reigned inside the coach. It was extremely dark, except when

the gunman had discovered that someone was still alive, that he kept on his gun shooting with the lights of firing, accompanied by their sounds. I saw blue lights of firing penetrating the creeping body of a tour's member, who was now motionless and was not making even a sound of groan. After quite sometime, the roaring sounds of gun shooting resounded, accompanied with the incessant sounds of the coach being hit. All in all, it reminded those alive that they could be shot to death within the next second.

By seeing those dead bodies, my mind naturally recited “gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha” (the “Mantra” of the “**Heart Sutra**”). By so doing, I wish those tour's members who had died were able to go to the ‘Other Shore’ promptly, which has been my thinking habit whenever I saw

some living beings at their moments of death. Not intending to, but I think, are they really dead? A few minutes ago, they were still alive, and now were their souls still hovering around inside the coach? Slowly, I recited the “**Prajñaparamita Hridaya Sutra**” many times, chewing each and every word again and again. “Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the Perfect Wisdom clearly saw that all five Skandhas are empty and passed beyond all suffering ... Because the Bodhisattva is the Perfect Wisdom of Emptiness, his mind has no hindrance. Having no hindrance, there is no fear and far from all fantasies and...” Definitely, I believed I still have hindrances, as though my mind was reciting the ‘**Heart Sutra**’ for many times, but I still thought of the many things that I wish to do, but had not been done yet. And I still thought of my lovely family members and friends. It is beyond doubt that it would be good if I could survive. After all these, I was no longer that

frightened as when it got started. But I was deeply worried about my mother to be discovered as alive by the gunman because she was coughing after two tear bomb attacks. The gun fight would seem to have never ended as it lasted for such a long time. I felt that lots of blood had wet my hairs and body, all came from other people's blood.

But who knows when the blood may come from myself by the next second. The next few days after being rescued, I can still smell the smell of blood.”

(Web link to the article at URL: <http://news.mingpao.com/20100829/vza1h.htm>)

It is because of Miss Li Ying Quan's true understanding on the meaning of “Non-grasping” within the “**Heart Sutra**” such that she could generate a kind of wisdom of composure amidst the crisis, and also possesses

the “**altruistic mind**” (“**Bodhicitta**” in Sanskrit) of wishing the deaths to be liberated. Indeed, these had led her through all those unbearable sufferings. The good practice of “offering my best wishes whenever I saw some living beings at their moments of death by reciting the “**Heart Sutra**”” has, indeed, trained her own mindset with “the main programming” of “benefiting both oneself and others”, which also helps Miss Li Ying Quan to accumulate countless merits. Her compassionate mind and acts not only can touch upon all people's hearts and minds, but it can also link up with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and their protectors. Thus, Miss Li Ying



Quan and her beloved mother could become one of those few survivors. Clearly, this is a phenomenon in which **virtues breed miracles**.

Love goes far, that reaches boundless, enables you to fill with virtues, to be never exhausted; Not grasping, let go for limitless, enables you to return to one's own nature, limitless powers.

The above-mentioned case enables people to deeply realize what merits in the reciting of Sutras can be. If one has already possessed these wisdom seeds within their **unconscious**, then a kind of compassion will naturally **arise deep down inside one's mind**, and will become a habit of helping oneself and others. Therefore, not only will the merits in the reciting of Sutras are to be able to increase sharply, it is often also being able to **make wishes come true at the fastest pace**. And, most importantly, **it is extremely efficacious**.

If one's main practice is in the reciting of Sutras, whereby the Sutras being recited **contain the teachings of "Emptiness"**, then these Dharma practitioners could be able to return to one's "Own Nature" at the pace much faster than those who do not have these wisdom seeds sown in their **unconscious**. Thus, one does not need to wait for such a long "time" as three "asamkhyā kalpas" in order to return to one's "Own Nature".

Why is that? It is because in western psychology, the "Sixth Consciousness" belongs to the level of **"consciousness"**, while the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" belong to the domain of the **"unconscious"**. Due to the fact that the "Seventh Consciousness" is the "root" of the "Mental Consciousness", while the "Eighth Consciousness" is the "basic ground and root" of all phenomena (or "dharmas" in Sanskrit) of the universe, hence **all** the activities of the "Sixth Consciousness" (or the various discriminations associated with the "Mental Consciousness") are doubtlessly **influenced by**

both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness". Thus, when one is using the "Sixth Consciousness" to recite the Sutras, then it could reverse the direction of influence by producing an effect on both the **"Seventh Consciousness"** and the **"Eighth Consciousness"**. More importantly, if there also exist the wisdom seeds being sown in one's **"unconscious"**, in which concerted actions could also be taken with them. Then, the degree of influence will be much faster and easier when comparing with those whose **"unconscious"** do not have the wisdom seeds. It is all because these peoples had already gotten the "wisdom rooted in their past lifetimes". The following Sutra is a testimony on the above explanation.

"Five hundred years after the Lord Buddha had left this human realm by entering into Parinirvana, for those people who have kept their vows and created their virtues, having read these sessions and sentences (of the Sutras), and have generated their faiths toward the Sutras by believing that these are indeed the truths, then it is known that these people have not only cultivated their virtuous roots in one Buddha, two Buddhas, three Buddhas, four Buddhas and five Buddhas, these people have indeed already cultivated virtuous roots in countless tens of millions of Buddhas (that means these wisdom seeds have already been sown in the "unconscious" of these people). Therefore, when these people who hear about these sessions and sentences (of these Sutras), and can



generate a thought of pure faith in accordance with the Lord Buddha's knowledge and view, Subhūti, and in just an instant, these sentient beings could make contacts with all Buddhas and can thus have such countless virtues and merits."



However, if there are no such wisdom seeds being sown within one's **unconscious**, and one has to merely rely upon the chanting and reciting of the **"Buddhist's Sutras"** for one's practice, **would there be other ways to help out?** The answer is "Yes", but the paces will definitely slower than those Dharma practitioners who already have wisdom seeds being sown in their **unconscious**, and it will even be slower than those who have followed the shortcuts on the **"Mind Training"** of "Vajrayana" practices.

Other ways in reciting the "Sutras" include:

1. **Reciting Sutras intensively and in a continuous manner in order to influence** – Influencing both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" to open their main gates.
2. **Using a special heart-easing rhythm to recite Sutras** – the resonance of the heart-easing rhythm will enable both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" to open their main gates.
3. **Keep up the pure thought arisen from the Sutra until one enter the meditation state** – pure thought lead to the meditation state enables both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" to open their main gates.

These three ways of reciting Sutras enable the "Sixth Consciousness" to influence both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", which quickly let the Sutra's wisdom to **replace or suppress** the bad seeds within both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", so that it could remedy the flaw of lacking such wisdom seeds within the **unconscious**. To combine the "Sixth Consciousness" and both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", so as to go for the direction in "returning to one's Own Nature", and to **replace or suppress** the bad seeds within both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", **is certainly an inevitable stage.**

Though every sentient being originally already has the "Wisdom of Buddha Nature", but if they have too many erroneous information hidden in the **"unconscious"** of both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", which means that they have a large amount of "obstructions due to knowledge", such that this will hinder them from the recovery of one's "Own Nature". In order to let the original wisdom inside oneself to arise, the first thing that one needs to do is to **eliminate the obstructions**. Then, further add the kind of **"hormones"** that could stimulate one's own inner wisdom, that is, those "wisdom that has been mentioned in the Buddhist's Sutras". Therefore, one needs to **"replace first, apply later, then let go, lastly totally let go, and merging into Emptiness"**.



Many people have gotten the **illusive notion of “visualizing Emptiness and attaining Buddhahood within an instant”**, but in fact, there are twenty different levels of “Emptiness”, and so this is not what ordinary people would conceive of as the “emptiness of everything -- **insensate emptiness**”, which is indeed most laughable. Thus, do not be “so foolishly self-conceited and make oneself a laughing stock”. Instead, it would be much better to practice in such a way as to keep your own feet on the ground, and try to **find a “Guru” who truly understands the Buddhist Dharma!** Please do not find those



gurus that will only **use empty words to deceive others**, only know how to give “empowerment” rituals and only give the so-called “blessings” to others. Do not let one’s own brain **to be so full of those rubbish information**, but not even a taste of the kind of wisdom that were contained in the Buddhist Sutras. Because by doing so, it not only would **“not allow oneself to achieve Emptiness”**, but will also block off the arising of one’s own inner wisdom. Then, only at the moment of one’s own death that one starts to realize that one has been cheated all along by those gurus who only know how to give “empowerment” rituals. Yet, those rituals seem not to be effective at all, and then one will start to become “panic” inside oneself. It will, indeed, be **“not knowing how to die”** for oneself, but, sorry, **it will be too late for regrets** by then!

of Sutras are most profound. Other than the above-mentioned merits, there are other splendid merits that we will continue to explore in the next issue.

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 “subconscious” 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 objective that can be achieved through these

methods? What is the length of time that one has to spend on these methods?... **(To be Continued)** 🔑

(Note: The newly released books on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (1)” and “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (2) – Seven Methods of Strengthening One’s Mind to Counteract Adversities” have already been published. The content for “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (1)” includes the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice from Issues 1 to 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”, while “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (2) – Seven Methods of Strengthening One’s Mind to Counteract Adversities” includes the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice from Issues 11 to 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

According to the Sutras, the merits in the reciting



The Essence of Teachings:

Everything Comes from the Mind (2)

By Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren
Translated by Anne W.M. Chow

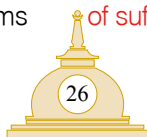
Earth Realm, Water Realm, Fire Realm, Wind Realm, Space Realm, Consciousness Realm

All Sentient Beings Are Coming From the Same Source – Different Interpretations Held by Buddhism & Science

Earth Realm, Water Realm, Fire Realm, Wind Realm, Space Realm, Consciousness Realm

In the “**Agamas Sutra**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni said “My body consists of the earth realm, water realm, fire realm, wind realm, space realm and consciousness realm”. The Lord Buddha had used his body as an example for illustration. Why did he say such things? This was because, at that time, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had tried to explain some phenomena in a way that is simple and easy to understand. Hence, he had divided the components of a human being into six types, similar to what scientists have said in terms

of “atoms” and “molecules”, etc. Since the scientists are experimenting with their research studies, they would analyze and decompose the materials into fine particles. However, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni was not a scientist, and he was not conducting any research studies. He was only trying to explain the phenomena to help us understand and know the types of environments that we are in, as well as what are the phenomena that are currently appearing before us. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni hoped that, through the understanding of these kinds of phenomena, we will be able to believe in and to start practicing the teachings that he had taught, so that we will be able to get away from the bondages of sufferings.



What does the “earth realm” mean? This is referring to the **relatively hard materials** in our body, like the bones. The “water realm” refers to the **water, secretions and liquids** in our body. The “heat” and the “energies” inside our bodies are called the “**fire realm**”. The “vapour” and “breath” within our body is called the “**wind realm**”. The “space” among the various organs inside our bodies is called the “**space realm**”. According to the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s teachings, we also have a “**consciousness realm**”, which is the **mind** that is inside our material body (Buddhist teachings consider that the “mind” is the main focus of our spiritual function. It is said in “Taisho Tripitaka” that the “consciousness” is another name for the “mind”. Thus, “consciousness” is “mind”. To put in simple terms, the “conscious mind” is a kind of energy), **which is the most controversial issue among scientists**. In fact, scientists have mentioned all of the above realms, except that they have used different terminologies to describe them. What they have talked about were basically the same kind of things, the only controversial area is the “consciousness realm”.



All Sentient Beings Are Coming From the Same Source – Different Interpretations Held by Buddhism & Science

The views of the Buddhist teachings are that all the sentient beings, irrespective of their types, are in fact coming from the same source. All of them possess the “Buddha nature”. **They can all attain “Buddhahood” through Dharma practice, and it only depends upon whether or not they have the opportunity and conditions to practise.**

In the “**Original Vows of Bodhisattva Sutra**”, the Lord Buddha had said: “Sentient beings are my parents, sentient beings are my brothers and sisters,..... I was a rabbit in one of my lives. I was a deer in one of my lives. I was a worm in one of my lives, and so on....” Many people had misunderstood the whole idea of this sentence of the Lord Buddha. They were thinking that the reason why the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said such kinds of things was because he would want us to learn about Buddhism, to give rise to a merciful heart. He asked us to treat all sentient beings nicely because they had all been our kind parents, brothers



and sisters, and so we should have a kind heart towards them all! In fact, what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said was the truth of everything, and he did not lie to us at all. He was talking about certain true phenomena, and was not just saying this for a particular reason. In fact, in the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni's many previous lives, many of the sentient beings had once



been his parents, they had also been his brothers and sisters. He had been in different forms and types of sentient beings in his many previous lives. This is a fact and a true phenomenon.

What, then, are the viewpoints of the scientists? Scientists would use DNA for comparison. They have discovered that all **human beings**, including **all animals** and even plants, were coming from the **same source**, and have branched out in their evolutionary processes. **Science has recognized that all living beings are from the same source, which is a fact.** Scientists also found out that **even plants had emotional reactions**. If that is the case, plants are also one type of sentient beings! Would it be a problem if we are on vegetarian diet and we eat plants? One does not have to be over grasping on this point. In fact, there are differences between plants and animals. Animals have blood and flesh. Their forms and behaviours are quite similar to human beings. They know how to grumble when you want to kill them. They will struggle and try to run away for their lives. You will feel the very strong emotional reactions shown by them. However, plants do not have blood. The juices that you see within the plants are not like the blood within our bodies. They would not grumble and would not make any strong reactions. For the stimulations of sentient beings'

emotions, those that are evoked by the animals are strongest. If you saw a living being which has shown such a strong reaction in front of you, yet you still kill it and eat it, this would strongly hurt your merciful mind. It would be very difficult for you to be successful in your Dharma practice. Although plants are one type of sentient beings, the degree of their emotional reactions is not that strong.

We had mentioned in the last lesson that one of the disciples of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni was in possession of **"supernatural power"**. (A kind of

"supernatural power" refers to a kind of **"mental strength"** that exists **"naturally in one's mind"**, which is part of the **"Primordial nature of wisdom"**, with the ability to thoroughly penetrate and realize all things without any obstructions.) The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni asked him not to look into the water when he drank them because there were many lives inside the water. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had not resorted to trickery in cheating his disciple. It was because if one did not drink any water one would die from thirst. If that was the case, he would not be able to practice if he died. If he could not practice, he would not be able to have more capabilities to help more people in the future. In view of this, you will know the reason that you can exist is because your life is being supported by many sentient beings, and this would allow you continue to live and practice in order to benefit them. Thus, **you are indebted with all the numerous sentient beings**. You are entangled with them by numerous causes which are interrelated in innumerable ways. You have to put in double efforts to practice and to give rise to more mercifulness. If one day you can have achievement in your practice, you will be able to repay their kindness by helping out more sentient beings. **If you can insist on maintaining this kind of attitude, it would not be a self-deceiving method, but a more practical one.....** (To Be Continued) 🧐

End-of-Life Care (6)

Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye
Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren



Foreword

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

In order to transform this ideal into reality, the two of us started to establish the “Dudjom Buddhist Association (International)” in Hong Kong ten years ago (January 1998). Then, three years ago, the “Inaugural Issue” of the English-Chinese bimonthly magazine – the “Lake of Lotus” – was published in January 2006, and one year ago in June 2008, we have sent four of our disciples

who possessed either bachelor's degrees and/ or master's degrees, or even with a physician's qualification, to study for the program on **Postgraduate Diploma in End-of-Life Care**, offered by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Owing to the “Bodhicitta” of these four disciples, together with their characters of “being respectful to both the Teachers and the Teachings”, they have now graduated as scheduled. In the past few issues, they have **shared the valuable knowledge with those people who are interested in this topic**. We would like to **express our sincere thankfulness** to them.



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

first postgraduate program of this kind among all the universities in Hong Kong.

The targets for its student intake are mainly for medical personnel, but due to the fact that the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong wanted to offer this kind of service as **an integrated holistic service of love and care** to patients of terminal stage and of chronic diseases, and in order to promote this kind of service in a

holistic manner, non-medical individuals such as social workers are also accepted to the course. However, the applicant must be a recognized degree holder.

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

therapists, clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, dieticians, social workers, volunteers, and so on, in order to cater for the proper services to the patients concerned.



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

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

On top of lectures, students are required to attend **three rounds of attachments** in hospitals, and to submit three case reports after that. These four disciples



who have recently graduated from this program have written articles for the “Lake of Lotus” to introduce relevant information for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings. This is the last article in this series.

Wish for the Increase of Wholesome Merits !

End-of -Life Care Before Death-----A Clinical Perspective (3)

By Sangye Namgyal

[He is a private medical practitioner for about 20 years, and has the following professional qualifications: MBChB, DCH, DOM, PgDip in Com Psych Med, Dip Med, DFM, PgDip in End-of-Life Care, Cert. of Cont Med Edu, M.Sc. in Corporate Governance & Directorship, NLP Practitioner.]

Multiple Symptoms and Symptom Patterns in “End-of-Life Care”

As mentioned previously, patient suffering from multiple symptoms are common in advanced cancer. Some cancer symptoms are silent which need to be asked about in order to be elicited. Patients usually not initiate themselves. While others symptoms

are readily apparent. Some symptoms also tend to occurred in clusters, such as pain, constipation and confusion. Other examples are early fatigue, cough and dyspnoea. Another interesting fact is that symptoms pattern in the last 1-2 weeks of life is also different from those symptoms in

late advance stage. Examples include weight loss fatigue, cachexia and anorexia. They occur more frequently in the last 1-2 weeks of life while pain occurs less frequently in this period. This pattern is also true in local experience according to a Caritas Medical Center study. (1)



Common symptoms in advanced cancer include pain, dyspnoea, bowel obstruction, nausea, vomiting, constipation, anorexia and unhealed cancer wound. As pain management is covered in the

previous paper, this paper will concentrate on other symptoms and their control in late advance cancer stage.

Ways to approach late advance cancer symptoms other than pain include oncology approach or symptom control approach. For oncology treatment, it includes palliative radiotherapy and chemotherapy. The purposes of the radiotherapy are pain relief and tumor growth retardation. Palliative radiotherapy

is usually used to treat metastasis, spinal cord compression, tumor growth and bleeding. Palliative chemotherapy is used to minimize tumor size and progress.

Dyspnoea is very common in advanced cancer. The aim of treating dyspnoea is to treat the medically reversible causes and symptoms control. Medically reversible causes include pleural effusion and chest infection. For pleural effusion, the effusion is drained. For chest infection, antibiotics are used to treat them. At the same time that the causes are treated, symptomatic control of dyspnoea is also needed. Oxygen is used if blood oxygen is low. As anxiety cause dyspnoea, other supportive measures which lessen patient anxiety including reassurance and support are important. Patient anxiety is treated by drugs and psychological methods. Better air current is also observed. Medications to relieve dyspnoea such as morphine and anxiolytics can be used.

Malignant bowel obstruction can cause vomit, bowel distension, abdominal pain and constipation. Ryles tube is used for acute decompression of gut. Patient is usually treated conservatively. Surgery is not usually indicated

in advanced peritoneal disease because patient may not bear the risk and burden of surgery. Diet adjustment is made with low residue or fluid diet to minimize the volume and loading of the gut. Medical treatment is helpful in treating symptoms of vomit, abdominal pain and constipation.

Simple medicines are also offered to relieve nausea, constipation, bowel obstruction and anorexia.

Unhealed cancer wounds can be treated by special dressing or radiotherapy.

In the control of symptoms in terminal care, doctor works very hard to control patient symptoms, prolong their lives and make better quality of life for the patients before death.



Reference:

(1) Kwok OL, Doris Tse, et al. Palliative Medicine, 2005

-The End-