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What are the "Risks and Opportunities" in the "Posthumous World"?

What are the "Genuine Buddhism" and Its "Corresponding Training on Death"?

What Are The "Non-Attaining" Methods For "Wonderful Mental Visualization"?

What Are The Characteristics of Dharma Practitioners Endowed with The "Clarity of Dharma Eyes"?

**Buddha of Bamiyan, Afghanistan
(before destruction)**

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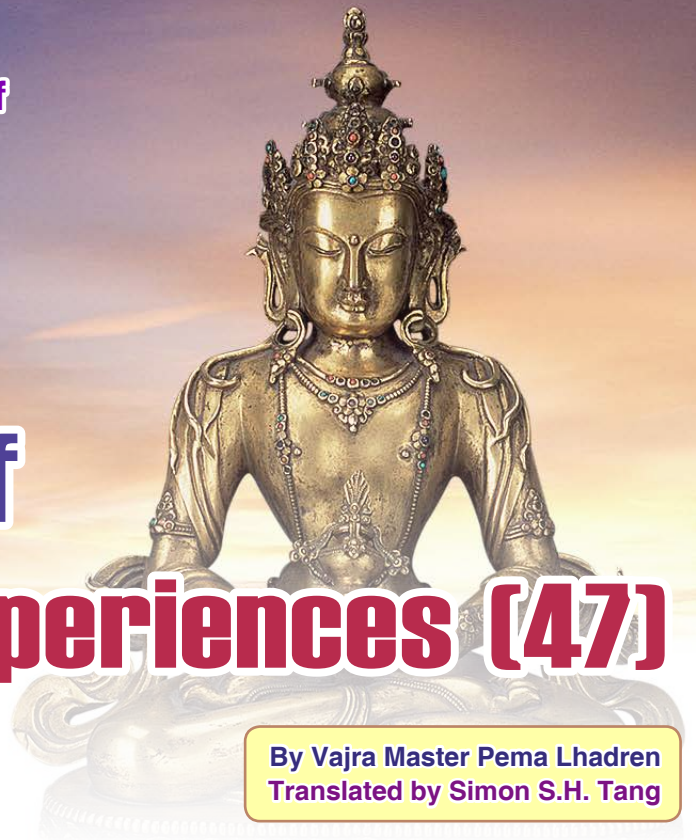
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The Profound Abstruseness of
Life and Death



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

The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (47)

- What are the “Risks and Opportunities” in the “Posthumous World”?
- What are the “Genuine Buddhism” and Its “Corresponding Training on Death”?

Excerpt of Last Chapter:

Various Reasons on the Formation of Different Scenes at the "Moment of Death"

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

1. The “Separation of the Four Elements” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”, including all kinds of memories) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the ‘Separation of the Four Elements’ in



the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death” (please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issues 8 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

2. The “Endorphins Inside the Brain” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the “endorphins inside the brain” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death” (please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
3. The “Karmic Forces” – the “main cause” (the internal “consciousness” and “sub-consciousness”) conjoins with the “auxiliary conditions” (the “karmic forces” of the external circumstances) in forming the “scenes at the moment of death”. This can be further classified into the following two kinds:
 - i. Wholesome Ones – arising from: (a) virtuous retributions (please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 21 of the “Lake of Lotus”); and (b) the efforts of one’s Dharma practice (the main theme of this article in this issue).
 - ii. Unwholesome Ones – arising from: (a) vicious retributions; and (b) the forces of karmic creditors in seeking compensations on one’s karmic debts.

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

1. Protectors or avengers:
 - (i) good ones – saw kith and kin who had passed away, unknown protectors, deities or Buddhas coming to fetch for oneself.
 - (ii) bad ones – being besieged by a crowd of ferocious persons or beasts, and going along in company with groups of people who looked confused.
2. Strange places:
 - (i) good ones – saw pavilions, balconies, buildings, flower fields, rivers, light zones, towns or cities.
 - (ii) bad ones – saw wilderness, forests, darkness, caverns, hells.
3. Messy Issues that cannot be recalled clearly.

How would the Buddhist point of view comment on these phenomena? According to the Buddhist teachings, it was said that rebirth would take place within forty-nine days after a person has passed away, then why would a dying person see the kith and kin who had passed away long time ago still coming to fetch for him or her? Why had not the kith and kin taken rebirths after so many years posthumously? Are the appearances of these deceased persons



merely the illusions of the person who is going to die? Or were they really true? Are there any other reasons? Are those strange places the destinations where they are going to be reborn into? Under what circumstances would the normal rebirth of a dying person be negatively encumbered? Is there any way to help a deceased person to avert sufferings and elevate to a better place of rebirth?

Human beings have four kinds of conditions of consciousness ([please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)) as follows:

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

In fact, how does the arising of the different stages in approaching death and its “transformation of consciousness” affect the thoughts and behaviors of dying patients? What are their relationships with the “scenes at the moment of death”? ([Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 29 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)) How should the family and kin and kith who take care of the dying patients respond to the “transformation of consciousness” and change of “scenes at the moment of death” for guiding the emotions and spiritual direction of the dying patients? Could the “transformation of consciousness” and the change of “scenes at the moment of death” be complementary to each other? Furthermore, the **“disintegration of the Four Elements”** of the physical body **also affects** the “transformation of consciousness”, as well as on the change of the “scenes at the moment of death”. Hence, how should one support and provide guidance to a dying patient in order to **reduce or resolve** the predicament from these problems?



What is the Ultimate Assistance in the First Stage of Approaching Death?

The care-givers, kin and kith and professional counselors should perform the following steps when a dying person is approaching the “first stage of death”:

1. **Accepting and Understanding** (please refer to Issue 30 of the "Lake of Lotus");
2. **Listening and Observing** (please refer to Issue 30 of the "Lake of Lotus");
3. **Analyzing and Adopting** (please refer to Issues 31, 32 and 33 of the "Lake of Lotus");
4. **Leading Out and Guiding In** (please refer to Issue 34 of the "Lake of Lotus");
5. **Accompanying with Unspoken Consensus** (please refer to Issues 35-40 of the "Lake of Lotus").

The General Change of the dying persons' Emotions

(Please refer back to Issue 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

What is the Ultimate Assistance in the Second Stage of Approaching Death?

(Please refer back to Issue 42 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

The Secret of “Flash-back” During the Third Stage of Approaching Death

(Please refer back to Issue 43 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Various Adventures While Progressing towards the Fourth Stage of Death

(Please refer back to Issue 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

The Actual Departure When Approaching the Fifth Stage of Death

(Please refer back to Issue 45 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Scenes at Death and Revelation of Sharing Death Experiences

(Please refer back to Issue 46 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

What are the “Risks and Opportunities” in the “Posthumous World”?

To all living beings, “death” is inevitable. No matter it is for oneself or for the need of caring the relatives and friends who are approaching “death”, one should have certain understanding about the process of “death”, as well as the risks and opportunities of the “posthumous world”. Otherwise, **all sorts of regrets, and risky situations rather than opportunities**, would certainly arise. After all, **opportunities are for those persons who are prepared for it.**



In fact, what are the “risks” and what are the “opportunities”? The “risks” are in that a deceased person would have ample opportunities to go into the “realms of hungry ghosts, animals and hells”. Are there any evidences?

In Chapter Eight of the “Gasping with Admiration on the Hell King Yama”, in the **“The Sutra on the Aspirations of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had alerted peoples of the world (**Jambudvīpa**) by saying that: “Even for those philanthropists of this world, when they approach the end of their lives, there will be hundreds and thousands of demons and specters from the inferior domains who will disguise themselves as their parents or relatives in order to fetch them to the inferior realms (**namely: hells, hungry ghosts and animal realms**), not to mention those who have committed unwholesome and evil deeds.”

However, there are many NDE survivors who said that once they entered into the spiritual world, what they saw were all beautiful environments and sage people, and that their feelings were overwhelmingly very good. Then, how could there be any “risks”? There are also NDE researchers who know that there are really some dangerous and horrifying cases. As such, **even though they would not say that ALL the “near-death experiences” are good, they still interpreted that MOST of the NDEs are good ones.**

In fact, is this kind of saying trustworthy? Would it be a sufficient argument to draw a conclusion about the whole “posthumous world”, and the “circumstances of transmigration” basing upon reports of **those NDE survivors who survived merely after “entering into the initial stage of death”**? Besides the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s statements, are there any other explanations from other sage practitioners about the “posthumous world”? Do their explanations give details in the stages for both the “posthumous world” and the “circumstances in transmigration”? Can these descriptions help to explain why “most of the near-death experiences are good”?

Of course,. there are other explanations. According to the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**, most of the deceased persons encounter good environments when entering into the initial stage of the spiritual world. They would **see different kinds of light**. The reason for the generation of lights is owing to the **nature of** the deceased person’s own **self**. This term is also known as the **‘intrinsic nature’**, the **“Buddha Nature”**, or the **‘nature of awareness’**. It is the natural manifestation of temporary freedom from the rein of “karmic forces” due to one’s detachment from the physical body. Going from the process on the manifestation of this ‘intrinsic nature’, to another process on the transformation of energies, it will manifest in the form of brightness. This makes the deceased having a good feeling of being embraced by the brightness.



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This kind of brightness manifested from the ‘intrinsic nature’ stashes infinite supernatural ability. This can help the deceased to enter into the heavens of high level where in general all other living beings will have no way to reach them. They can even enter into the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit) where only those who have achieved 100% perfect awareness of Buddhahood can enter into. It is only at this very particular moment that the deceased beings might have the opportunity to enter into. Therefore, many NDE survivors are able to take advantage of this opportunity to ‘sense’ the indescribable wonderfulness in the environments of the heavens and the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit). However, it also makes people to have the **misunderstanding** that the “posthumous world” is not horrifying at all, but is only so splendid.

Why is it mentioned that there is such kind of a **misunderstanding**? It is because most people who have not received **training on such high levels as “Emptiness: neither existence nor voidness”** in Buddhism, they will have **no way to master** the **essences** of staying in the heavens and the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit). One who **lacks such kind of quality in one’s “nature of the mind”** would have to retreat out of the realms of the heavens and the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit) since they are mutually exclusive. After revival from death, these NDE survivors who already had a peek on “such beautiful scenery never experienced before”, if they can only retain their memories for a while, they would then retrospectively reported and retained those beautiful scenes, and would thus expect that they can return to those beautiful environments again when they really die in the future. Their descriptions, as well as themselves, DO NOT take death as a scary thing.

So, in fact, is death really scary? According to the “**Tibetan Book of the Dead**”, most of the living beings would not be able to realize and master such a “swiftly fleeting moment” on the **occurrence of the “light of one’s intrinsic nature”**, and would result in being expelled from such an exquisite environment. Then, they would enter into the actual “posthumous world”. In the later stages of death, the deceased would also see various kinds of lights. The difference is that the lights that are coming from either the “virtuous or non-virtuous magnetic fields” are **having special attracting forces**. Many living beings who have not received **corresponding training** would then be attracted by these different lights, as according to one’s own karmic preferences, and would thus **enter into either those “virtuous or non-virtuous realms” for their future rebirths**. Their sufferings in such cyclic rebirths will continue on, and this is difficult to stop.

As such, we learn that the scary point about death is that: if a living being has not received the **corresponding training**, no matter how good the environment of the heavens, or the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit), that the individual comes across in the initial stage of death, it is **inevitable** for them to be reborn again in the suffering cycle of karmic existence. Furthermore, as what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had already alerted peoples of the world (**Jambudvīpa**), in Chapter Eight of the “Gasping with Admiration on the Hell King Yama” in the “**The Sutra on the Aspirations of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva**” that: “Even for those philanthropists of this world, when they approach the end of their lives, there will be hundreds and thousands of demons and specters from the inferior domains who will disguise themselves as their parents or relatives in order to fetch them to the inferior realms (**namely: hells, hungry ghosts and animal realms**), not to mention those who have committed unwholesome and evil deeds.” That is, indeed, the scary part of death.



The elaboration on this principle is not to scare sentient beings so to cause them to live in worries. To explain this principle is to help sentient beings to better understand that they should not just adopt the “ostrich policy in trying to avert the dangers”. Only by adopting the proper methods to deal with the situations, as well as in receiving appropriate training, could avert the calamities, and can then enter into (or even stay) in the exquisite environments of the heavens and the Realm of Truth (“Dharmadhatu” in Sanskrit). Opportunities forever will be left to those who are well prepared for them. It is an inevitable consequence, and so one could have the chance of survival only if he or she can correctly face death squarely and takes it seriously.

What are the “Genuine Buddhism” and Its “Corresponding Training on Death”?

The question is what is the correct attitude towards death and to face it squarely? The answer to this is genuine and “authentic Buddhism” and its “corresponding training on death”. So, what is genuine and “authentic Buddhism” and its “corresponding training on death”? The questions are:

1. Realm of Truth (“Dharmadhatu” in Sanskrit) -- Teachings that possess “Emptiness: neither existences nor voidness”, which is the “Ultimate Truth” : most authentic and thorough Buddhist teachings. This is sufficient to lead sentient beings to enter into, and to stay, in this Realm of Truth (“Dharmadhatu” in Sanskrit).
2. Realm of Heavens -- Teachings that possess “precepts, mental concentration and wisdom”. If one can not bridge it with the “Ultimate Truth”, it is still in the ‘conditional realm of truth’ : that is, not ultimate yet absolutely correct Buddhist teachings, which is sufficient to let sentient beings enter into, and to stay in, the Realm of Heavens.
3. Corresponding Training on Death – with clear guidelines which can be classified into various stages in accord with the processes and phenomena in the posthumous world, as well as relevant methods of corresponding practices, all of which will be sufficient to allow the sentient beings to avert all sorts of traps in the spiritual domain, and in allowing them to enter into, and to stay in, the Realm of Heavens.

Merely reliance upon the Buddhist knowledge about “conditional truth” and “ultimate truth”, with mental concentration, but then the lacking of a “comprehensive corresponding training on death” would still expose sentient beings to the situation of carelessly falling into traps in the spiritual domain, and thus wasting their efforts at the last moment. However, those with a “comprehensive corresponding training on death”, but then the lacking of the Buddhist knowledge about “conditional truth” and “ultimate truth”, with mental concentration, will definitely be hard to enter into, and to stay in, the “Realm of Heavens”, or the Realm of Truth (“Dharmadhatu” in Sanskrit).

The aforesaid three points are mutually depending upon each other, and are having reciprocating relationships with each other. One of the reasons that the current propagation of Buddhism is not considered as being “comprehensive



and in-depth” in that their **corresponding teachings on the after-death conditions** are rather thin and very weak. At most, their practices are merely “collaborative **chanting** when someone passes away”, but not in assisting through “**mental contemplation**”, and not to mention that other guidance on the various after-death stages is **completely lacking**. As such, a Buddhist practitioner has no way to **solidly master** the methods of “averting dangers and self-rescuing”. The deceased can merely be chanting the Buddhas’ Holy Names, while waiting for the arrival of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the posthumous world which is plotted with risks everywhere. However, how can one distinguish whether the Buddha or Bodhisattva who has come to fetch for the deceased is **a real or a false one**? There are **no guidance or clues** at all. (About the relevant guidance pertaining to the three stages after death in the “**Tibetan Book of the Dead**”, please refer to the articles on “The Meaning of Near-death Experiences” in the Issues 8, 14, 19 and 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”.)

However, some Buddhists were having good signs at the end of their lives, such as the seeing of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or of Lights, felt painless, etc. These were usually **being exaggerated and embellished** to substantiate the faith of other Buddhist practitioners. For instance, the following statements are often seen on the websites:

1. A group of people who attended collaborative chanting, and only one of them claimed that he or she had seen brightness for a few seconds, and there was an image of Buddha in the light, which is mentioned as the evidence of the deceased’s rebirth to the Pure-Land.
2. After a Buddhist has just passed away, his master arrived and touched upon the top of his head by saying that it was still warm, thus mentioning this as an evidence of the deceased’s rebirth to the Pure-Land.
3. After a Buddhist has passed away for 12 hours, the body was still soft and the top of one’s head was slightly warm. Others who joined the collaborative chanting said that it was an evidence of the deceased’s “rebirth to the Pure-Land”.
4. Some Buddhists said that they had smelled the “special fragrant that filled the whole room” when the deceased passed away, which was meant to be an evidence of the deceased’s “rebirth to the Pure-Land”.

If the deceased person has passed away in a condition of peacefulness and calmness, the internal secretions might be helpful in the maintenance of softness of the body. Yet, this cannot be said to be an evidence of the deceased’s “rebirth to the Pure-Land”. All sorts of such sayings are **not real and true** evidences of “rebirths to the Pure-Land”. Although this might be helpful in soothing the emotions of the family members, relatives and friends of the deceased, as well as in substantiating the faiths of other Buddhist practitioners, yet too much **exaggeration and embellishment** is **not appropriate** anyway. The auspicious appearances and extraordinary scenes are the phenomena of the **transformation of energies of Nature**, and they do not necessarily mean to be the evidence or proof of “good Buddhist practices with success in the ‘rebirth to the Pure-Land’”. Many NDE survivors who are not Buddhists, and did not carry out Buddhist





practices, also **have similar auspicious appearances and extraordinary situations**. These auspicious appearances and extraordinary situations **do not necessarily mean** that the deceased has been reborn into a good realm. It can only be said that he or she was situated in a good environment at that particular stage. However, it does not imply that he or she would also be situated in as good a circumstance as in the next stage, due to the fact that the **“posthumous world” is highly varied and is hard to predict as to what is going to happen next**.

In **misbelieving** that the deceased have already been ‘reborn to the Pure-Land’, many people **stop assisting** the deceased one **for at least 49 days** after his/her death, in the way of either doing Dharma practices, or helping with philanthropic works, and dedicated these merits for the dead person. As such, the deceased might have been left alone helplessly in the highly varied posthumous risks, which is extremely common. Therefore, similar kind of misunderstanding or misleading behaviours should be corrected.

As a Dharma practitioner who is supposed to give **sympathetic understanding** to the well-being of sentient beings, one must **honestly** inform those who would be facing death, or their relatives and friends who will be carrying out Buddhist practices for them, on the **correct** information of the “posthumous world and its operating environments”. On the other hand, if these people were to be **misled**, then they might just **take it lightly**, resulting in letting the deceased to be transmigrated to an inferior realm, which would be an extremely miserable matter. Throughout the course of his life in teaching Buddhist doctrines, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had **honestly** informed all those who would be facing death, or those who would be carrying out Dharma practices, that **death and transmigration is a “crucial juncture of life and death” in one’s lifetime**. A slight trace of underestimation, or over optimism, of this important juncture might lead to a tragedy which is hard to reverse.

Many NDE survivors and researchers are also being **misled** by the “manifestation of the energy of intrinsic nature”, and so they would deem that “death is not a scary thing”. No matter the statements of the NDE survivors, or those who shared the experiences of death, all of them pointed out that there are **seven elements in death** which would be experienced by the deceased persons. Although only very few of them would experience all seven of those elements, they can confirm that these seven elements do have symbolic meanings when defining what is meant by death.

Among which, the most profound element that they believe is the **“experience of light”**.



Case 53:

A male who has kept company with his dying wife said: “The room was **extraordinarily** lit up with light suddenly. The brightness was making people uncomfortable. The light was too bright, such that I have to close my eyes. However, this could not shade the light enough. But the light had soothing effects. Within the light, I could feel the presence of my wife. Physically she has left me; but spiritually, she is still with me.”

This case clearly showed one of the phenomena of the **“energy transformation in Nature”**: appearance of light, which also matches the description in the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”**. The two major characters in this case were ordinary western people. They were not Buddhists. However, if this case had happened among some **superstitious** people who claimed to be Buddhist, or some Buddhists or organizations that did not understand **genuine Buddhism and science**, this would be exaggerated and embellished as an evidence of “someone having achieved enlightenment, have been ‘reborn to the Pure-Land’, or even have attained Buddhahood”.

Therefore Albert Einstein, the famous scientist, said that:

**Science without religion is lame.
Religion without science is blind.**

For those readers who would like to have the answers, please visit the **‘Video Series on the Posthumous World’** on **YouTube**. You will be greatly inspired with wisdom. The following is the link to those videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist>

.....(To be Continued)

[Remarks:

1. The newly-released book on **“The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (1)”** has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meanings of the Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 1 to 10 of the “Lake of Lotus”.
2. The newly-released book on **“The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (2) – The Key Points at the Moment of Death and the Essential Revelations of the Tibetan Book of the Dead”** has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meaning of the Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 11 to 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”.
3. The newly-released book on **“The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (3) – The Various Ways of Realization and Rescue of Dying Kith and Kin”** has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” from Issues 21 to 30 of the “Lake of Lotus”.]



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The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (47)

The Mind-Training Episode (10)

By Vajra Master Pema Lhadren Translated by Fong Wei

- What Are The “Non-Attaining” Methods For “Wonderful Mental Visualization”?
- What Are The Characteristics of Dharma Practitioners Endowed with The “Clarity of Dharma Eyes”?

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 “Mind-Training Episode”

The focus of “mind-training” is on how to “visualize one’s mind”. Starting from [Issue No.38 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#), the various articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” have clearly described those who are able to “visualize the mind” could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain “Buddhahood”, and is the important guideline in the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**. Then comes the question as to how to “visualize one’s mind”? Whether it will be fine by just “visualizing” oneself as the Buddha or the “deity”?

What are the contents and procedures of one’s “Visualization”? In modern terminology, it is the question of how to proceed with the programming of one’s “visualization” in order to be most effective? **There are countless and endless methods of “visualization”, and so which kinds of them are correct? To which levels of “visualization” do they belong? What kind of situations are they specifically for? How are their effectiveness being demonstrated? Are there any opposing effects, or side effects?** A series of such questions are the “important points for consideration” in choosing one’s method of “mental visualization” ([please refer to the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues 38 to 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#)).

In the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the due process and conditions of **“Mental Visualization”**. Hence, this Sutra can be said to be a pivotal point and convergence of all kinds of “mental visualization” methods, and is also the foundational basis for all the Dharma practices which can help all sentient beings to swiftly attain Buddhahood.

Then what actually are the grading/levels, procedures and conditions for these methods of “mental visualization” in Dharma practices? Can one jump some of the steps in these practices? Before further explanations are given, let us first have a look at the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”** to see how the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had generally classified the “mental visualization” methods, from shallow to deep, and from the foundational basis to progressive elevation:

1. **Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude**
(Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in [Issues 40 to 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”](#));
2. **Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires;**
3. **Averting the Delusive Mind;**
4. **Visualization of Entry into the Holy Wisdom;**
5. **Visualization Method of the Mind Ground;**
6. **Mental Visualization on the Bodhicitta; and**
7. **Visualization on the Three Great Secret Dharmas.**



In the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the “Mental Visualization” method for the “Mind Ground Visualization on the Requit of the Four Kinds of Gratitude”. These four kinds of gratitude and kindness that require one’s requital are:

1. **Filial Gratitude to Parents** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 40 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
2. **Gratitude to all Sentient Beings** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 41 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
3. **Gratitude to the King** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 42 of the “Lake of Lotus”); and
4. **Gratitude to the Three Jewels** -
 - (i) **The Gratitude to the “Buddha Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 43 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
 - (ii) **The Gratitude to the “Dharma Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
 - (iii) **The Gratitude to the “Sangha Jewel”** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 45 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
5. **The methods for repaying the Four Kinds of Gratitude and Kindness** : -
 - (i) The differences in the requital of gratitude under the ten kinds of **Almsgiving, Close and True Paramitas** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 46 of the “Lake of Lotus”);
 - (ii) The gratitude requital method through the **Emptiness on the Nature of the Three Wheels of Actions** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 47 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

What Are The “Non-Attaining” Methods For “Wonderful Mental Visualization”?

“Mental Visualization” is extremely important and is the **only method** for Dharma practice. With regard to the foundational base of “Mental Visualization”, one must first **understand and repay** the four kinds of gratitude and kindness. Yet the requital methods are not those that the ordinary people would generally think of by doing everything they can with their physical bodies for repayment. Instead, it is an interplay of a special “Mental Visualization” method with some specific behavioral actions in making the requital.





This special “Mental Visualization” method is known as **“Non-Attainment”**. The “specific behavioral actions” refer to the pronouncement of any “Four-Verses Hymn of the True Teachings” to any sentient beings which is adequate enough to germinate and arouse their awakened mind in order to accomplish the “Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment of Buddhahood”, and in doing so, one has “no attachment in one’s mind” before and after such a deed, no arrogance, no self-complacency, no worries, then these can then be recognized as the correct behavioral actions for the **“true repayment of the four kinds of kindness and gratitude”**. These behavioral actions belong to an outer-worldly method for “repaying the four kinds of gratitude and kindness”. Of course, one still needs to “requit the four kinds of gratitude and kindness” with one’s utmost worldly minds and abilities, and to interplay them with one’s “non-attaining” mentality in order to make them complete and perfect.

After the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had explained the aforesaid method to the 500 elders, one of the elders named Elder Zhiguang (literally means **“Wisdom Light”**) came up with his son who was always rebellious to his parents. He beseeched the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni to explain again the method for “repaying the four kinds of gratitude and kindness”, particularly the part on filial piety, so as to put his son back onto the right track again. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni thus specifically enlightened them according to their respective levels of standard, on the “non-attaining” practising mode, which is known as the **“Emptiness on the Nature of the Three Wheels of Actions”**.

In Volume One on the Preface Section No.1 [0300a22] of the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us (in modern terminologies) as follows: [Those men or women with virtuous minds, if they practice precisely and diligently the ten methods to reach the Buddhahood level for the sake of attaining the “Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment” (Buddhahood), and feel that they have got some gains for themselves, then such situation cannot be regarded as the “requital of the four kind of gratitude and kindness”.



If someone has made a virtuous deed in an instant moment and **does not feel** that one has got **some personal gains in one's mind**, then this situation is known as the "requital of the four kinds of gratitude and kindness". Why is it so? It is because whatever matters and things that come by, all the "Buddhas – the Enlightened beings" are able to do such thing as **"not thinking that they have got any kind of gains in their minds"** and because of this, they have attained the "Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment" (**Buddhahood**), and used this method to teach and inspire all sentient beings.

If there are sentient beings with pure conviction who can, upon hearing this method for the "requital of the four kind of gratitude and kindness" as expounded in this Sutra, come to believe, understand, accept, abide by, practice, uphold, and explain it to all sentient beings, and write it down for circulation, teaching and guiding them the "non-attaining" practicing mode to manifest the **"Emptiness on the Nature of the Three Wheels of Actions"**, such a situation is already regarded as the "requital of the four kinds of gratitude and kindness", even though these sentient beings have only used the words of a "Four-Verses Hymn of the True Teachings" to express the **"Emptiness on the Nature of the Three Wheels of Actions"** privately to one person, in order to remove one's crooked and evil views for the orientation of one's mind towards "Enlightenment".

Why is it so? It is because **in future**, this sentient being should be able to attain the "Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment" (**Buddhahood**), and can teach countless sentient beings directly or indirectly, making them to enter into the Path of Enlightenment such that the seeds of the "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha" will become inexhaustive forever.

Upon hearing these teaching methods on the recited verses, Elder Zhiguang accomplished the **"Forbearance Samadhi: the Meditation of Endurance"** with the arousal of a **detached mind** from the world, which enabled him to attain the **non-regressive determination**. [The "Forbearance Samadhi" is "the Meditation of Endurance" which refers to one's **calm endurance and patience** in the midst of the worldly filths without being disturbed or contaminated, while understanding and knowing that worldly glories and **disgrace** are not something to be cling onto, and was determined to abandon this filthy world by adopting the **meditational method** of Dharma practice. This unshakable mind is known as the "Forbearance Samadhi: the **Meditation of Endurance**", which means "the attainment of strong and steadfast mental concentration (**meditational power**) to depart this world through one's **endurance of the worldly shame**."]]

At that time, the sentient beings present there (**about 8,000 people**) all acquired this mental concentration (**meditational power**) with the arousal of their "Awakened Mind" to attain the "Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment" (**Buddhahood**). Approximately **48,000 people** had also acquired **some kind of a mental concentration (meditational power)** which enabled them to stay away from dusts and dirt to attain the "Clarity



of Dharma Eyes". (The "Clarity of Dharma Eyes" refers to one's abilities and mental concentration (meditational power) to distinguish, in the midst of flying dusts and smoky fogs, what is "right from wrong, true Dharma from false and evil Dharmas, pure from contaminated, and also to see through at first glance, which kind of Dharmas belong to the "True Dharma, Pure Dharma", and what are the "non-Dharma, contaminated Dharma". This is known as the "Clarity of Dharma Eyes").

This is exactly what it means to be *".... There is no wisdom, and there is no attainment whatsoever. Because there is nothing to be attained...."* as expounded in the "Heart Sutra". The above message has brought out the most fundamental point of it.

What Are The Characteristics Of Dharma Practitioners Endowed with The "Clarity of Dharma Eyes"?

It is not difficult to know who has attained the "Clarity of Dharma Eyes". It can be done simply by looking at the degree of clarity in one's interpretations of the Buddhist teachings. Dharma practitioners who are endowed with the "Clarity of Dharma Eyes" will not give explanations of the Buddhist teachings just on the surface level, but rather in an extremely meticulous, thorough, detailed, clear, rational way, uncovering and revealing them layers by layers in an organized manner. The best example is the kind of explanations and illustrations of the Buddhist sutras that were given by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, who is fully endowed with all such characteristics.

For the general Dharma practitioners who are not yet endowed with the "Clarity of Dharma Eyes", their explanations of the Buddhist teachings are usually confined to their literal interpretations at the surface level, which are rough and sketchy, not in-depth, and not able to display the true meanings and substances of the Buddhist teachings. The causal Buddhist worshippers may be content with this. Yet it will be far from it, for those who truly strive for accomplishments in their Dharma practices, in a way that can be sufficient enough for them to get liberated from the cycle of karmic existence. It is hard even to use these surface-level interpretations to differentiate "right from wrong" accurately in the worldly manner without deviations.

In judging what standard a Dharma practitioner belongs to, in terms of the levels in Dharma practice, the most important measuring yardstick is to test this practitioner's "spiritual attainments". The most obvious, truly without fail, and basic "spiritual attainments" is the attainment of the "Clarity of Dharma Eyes". It is a kind of "realization" which all Dharma practitioners should be endowed with. This "mental concentration" (meditational power) is the foundational base for all kinds of Dharma practices, and the lack of which will render Dharma practitioners little hope for rapid elevation in their Dharma practices, and even having difficulties in achieving any kinds of accomplishments. Also, they would easily



get vague and flawed when explaining the Buddhist teachings to other people. If any Dharma practitioners who are lacking this kind of “mental concentration” (meditational power) would assume the role of “Gurus” in guiding others in their Dharma practices, their followers will be more easily to have such phenomena as “deviations in the nature of their minds, the missing out of essential points, derailed and going astray into wrong paths, getting deranged”. The main reason to account for it is simply that: for those Dharma practitioners who are lacking this kind of “mental concentration” (meditational power), they are unable to distinguish between the “right and wrong, the deviations and the essential points” in their own teachings.

Unfortunately, in this Degenerated Era nowadays, a lot of preachers and gurus of Buddhism are not endowed with this attainment on the “Clarity of Dharma Eyes”. They often misinterpreted the Buddhist teachings, especially in relations to the deepest levels of the Buddhist teachings on such topics as “Emptiness, Intrinsic Nature”. Even for the basic propagating methods, some of the preachers and gurus are still not able to use simple languages, or simple written words, to explain the Buddhist teachings to the general public. They just rely solely on “pronouncing superstition, displaying ritual performances, making phony ways” to attract believers and followers. With the advanced information technology nowadays, the general believers can have very easy access to a large amount of Buddhist information, which is very difficult for them to distinguish between true and false teachings, resulting in countless number of victims. Thus, the propagation of Buddhist Dharma nowadays has entered into an era of unprecedented crisis. The distorted Buddhist Dharma is simply marked as “This is what the Buddhist Dharma is all about !”

The genuine propagation of the Buddhist Dharma have to rely upon the transmission of true and accurate knowledge and insights. Therefore, the propagation method should be for the teachings to be based on the genuine knowledge and views as expounded in the sutras and scriptures, and preached in such a way of spreading the genuine knowledge and views in order that these can penetrate directly and deeply into people’s minds. This would ensure no distortions to the genuine Buddhist Dharma. If its propagation method takes the form of ceremonial rituals, supernatural powers,



ritual performances of any sort, then it will only lead to such consequences as doing harms to sentient beings, as well as in jeopardizing the retention, preservation and propagation of the Buddhist Dharma.

In recent years, there are people claiming to have supernatural powers that can put them in direct communications and responses with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. They vaunt, through radio and TV channels, their abilities to save people by using their magical powers, saying that **THIS IS the propagation of the Buddhist Dharma**. They go even further by launching a world tour to make public performances on their magical powers, claiming that in no more than 20 seconds, they can see who are being haunted and followed by ghosts, or foresee somebody's future, or give some remote blessings just by looking at someone's picture. They even brought along a group of people to be their witnesses.

For those who perform magical powers publicly, the problem does not lie on their "performances" only. The main point is that many of those people, who are at the receiving end of the radio and TV channels, do not know what the Buddha Dharma is all about. **Captivated** by such kind of performances, they will be led astray to an even more **illusory, grasping and desirous direction for gains**. This would not only endanger one's "wisdom life" by heading gradually to a wrong track, it also spreads out like an epidemic, setting a scene for their **so-called "Buddha Dharma"** to be perceived as such on what is performed on stage. Eventually, while more and more people are seemingly made to believe that **THIS IS Buddhism**, their behaviorial actions are actually "associated with demons", using "performances" and implorations in their so-called practices of the Holy Dharma.

Why are they "associated with the demons"? This is because there are those who claim themselves to have supernatural power of "clairvoyance" are, in fact, keeping and raising demons so that they can obtain certain information from the "Ghost" realm, while using them in the "Human" realm. Hence, **people adopting such information would be directly or indirectly linked to the "Ghost" realm, and would soon be reborn directly to the "Ghost" realm after their deaths**. This, together with the limited abilities of the ghosts and their positions in the **negative and evil magnetic fields**, the information so provided will distort the "karmic forces of causes and effects" of those information-users, leading to an **even worse** fruitions and karmic retributions. This is, indeed, **most unwise**. If this is what Buddhism is supposed to be perceived by others, it would mean that this so-called Buddhism has retained such an image to others in its outer forms only, but NOT the real contents of it. In other words, **this is not the true and genuine Buddhism as taught by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni Himself!**

There were records of incidents on supernatural powers in ancient times, but they were not at such level as "public performances". Besides, eight out of ten (**i.e. the majority**) of these incidents were **distorted hearsay versions**. More importantly, people **knowing "supernatural powers" do not mean that they can understand the Buddhist Dharma**, as many of the outsiders (**non-Buddhists**) are also capable of acquiring "supernatural powers". However, as they do not understand "the nature of Emptiness", therefore, even when they do possess the "supernatural powers", they



are still unable to become liberated from the tractional forces of the cycle of karmic existence due to the hindrances of such "supernatural powers", resulting in their continuous rebirths in the ocean of sufferings endlessly. Those who understand the Buddha Dharma must know that "performing magical powers" would constitute an obstacle to one's liberation from the cycle of karmic existence, and that it is also an act of "violating the precepts", and thus they would not easily err or break this discipline. Even the enlightened Lord Buddha Shakyamuni also acted in the same way by restraining all his disciples from doing so in order not to affect the propagation of the true and genuine Buddhist Dharma, and not resulting in the harming of both oneself and others. Therefore, whoever propagate the Buddhist Dharma in the form of "displaying magical powers" are like the "worms inside the lion's belly" that would deteriorate and destroy the Buddhist Dharma. They are those people who claim themselves to be teaching Buddhism, yet they are not but, in fact, only in disguise.

As a Dharma practitioner, one must, when seeing such situations, observe the precepts, turn away from such kind of "magical power performances", and urge others to stay away as well. One should also vigorously pray for, and assist in, the propagation of the Buddhist Dharma in a proper manner. In doing so, one would be able to make great merits and obtain the virtuous fruitions of not going astray (in practices) with quick attainments of the Buddhist fruitions. If one ignores this, then one will accumulate the bad fruitions of lacking guidance in one's own Dharma practice, going astray easily, and having difficulties in attaining Buddhahood in future. Among the "Four Major Precepts" of



the "Bodhisattva Precepts", it is stipulated that "one who adulterates the Mahayana teachings, while seeking to pronounce supposedly look-like Dharma" is a grave and severe transgression of such a precept. In order not to transgress this root precept, one must first stay away from these "performances of magical powers".

Dharma practitioners should be able to distinguish between virtues and unwholesomeness, and to take corresponding actions accordingly. They must also observe the precepts. These are all the essential points for successful Dharma practices. Then, how important is the "observance of precepts" to all Dharma practitioners? As pointed out by Guru Padmasambhava, the Founding Father of Tibetan Buddhism, "Vajrayana Dharma practitioners are like a snake inside a bamboo shoot, it can only either climb up or go down". The basic premise for this quote is that for all Vajrayana practitioners, they must fully observe the precepts. Otherwise, they will be like a snake inside a bamboo shoot, fending for itself either by ascending or descending, there is no third outlet.



Moreover, if the precepts are observed and upheld, the Tantric practitioners will be like flying celestial beings that can ascend and descend freely, attaining achievements swiftly. Comparing to the exoteric Dharma practitioners, even if they have observed and upheld the precepts, they would still require “three Asankhya-kalpas” periods of time in order to attain Buddhahood, due to the **constraints of their Dharma practice methods**, and there is no fast track at all. In fact, irrespective of either exoteric or esoteric Buddhism, Dharma practitioners would **face the same consequence as a result of their non-observance of the precepts, that is, their downfalls**. The difference only lies in the fact that: for the exoteric Dharma practitioners of not observing the precepts, they would fall comparatively more slower; while for the Tantric practitioners, their downfalls will be much faster due to the add-in catalyst of their “mental strength”. Nonetheless, as one’s “mental strength” can be re-orientated instantly, it could afford an opportunity to climb up quickly, thus giving one **greater dominion and more chances for elevation**. The key point lies in “whether one has observed the precepts”, rather than on whether they are practicing exoteric or esoteric Buddhism. All Buddhist Dharma practitioners **should not get confused with this issue**. (The “three Asankhya-kalpas” - A “kalpa” refers to a period of time. A “small kalpa” is equal to the time required for a universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”. Twenty “small kalpas” are equal to one “medium kalpa” and four “medium kalpas” to one “big kalpa”. One “Asankhya-kalpa” = 10^{51} times of the time required to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”. “Three Asankhya-kalpas” is an unknown prolonged period of time because the durations required for individual universe to undergo its process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation” are different.)

A more significant difference is that for those Tantric practitioners, **if they observe and uphold the precepts, they would only rise and transcend quickly without falling down**. As for the exoteric Dharma practitioners who observe and uphold the precepts, they would only go up more **slowly** and not fall down. The crux of the problem is therefore its slow process during which there might be other variables that would creep in which make one difficult to rise up again. In any one lifetime throughout the “three Asankhya-kalpas” periods of time, there are chances for one to transgress the precepts, **resulting in one’s downfall and re-birth in a vicious cycle, and then ceases to rise up**. Yet, for the Tantric practitioners, if they do **observe and uphold the precepts**, they would only elevate swiftly, thus **reducing greatly the chance for other variables to occur in the course of time**.

Those people who do not understand the principles of Tantric Dharma practices should not criticize them. Before making any criticisms and/or comments, one **should first try to understand them in a holistic and comprehensive manner**. It is because any casual comments will **obstruct other people from learning a fast method for achievement**. The **karmic retributions** for defaming Tantric Buddhism is one’s own downfall to the **Vajra Hell** where it is difficult for one to get out. Hence, in obstructing others (**from learning**), one is actually obstructing oneself as well. It is very unfortunate and **unworthy** to do so. Whether one’s Dharma practice is obstruction-free and can accomplish quick results or not will have to depend upon the **necessary condition of discerning where the “truth and the key points” lie**.

As Dharma practitioners of the Right Path, one should not be afraid of the malicious and unjustified remarks made against Tantric Buddhism. In face of the superstitious kind of supernatural power performances, one should treat them as magic shows which are deceptive sleight of hand ([legerdemain](#)), and should not even see them. One should be highly committed in [praying vigorously, helping out in the propagation of the Buddhist Dharma in the Right Path, and should not be lazy](#). Accomplishments come when one has no fear to face anything. If one is afraid of failures, then it is the beginning of failure itself. Having no fear and the commitment to shoulder responsibilities are the signs and requisite conditions for successful achievements. [The methods for Dharma practice should be robust and correct, while the precepts should be observed. Otherwise, one would have to turn round and round until the “three Asankhya-kalpas” periods of time.](#) Do you think it is good to go round and round slowly in a circle like this?

[If one does not want to go round and round in one’s Dharma practice, one must understand how to apply and use the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s enlightenment on the “Emptiness on the Nature of the Three Wheels of Actions” in our everyday life. In other words, one has to understand and know what is the aforesaid “non-attaining” method for Dharma practice? With regard to the Vajrayana Buddhism, one has to understand and know what are the practising methods for the “Great Perfection \(Dzogchen\)”? \(To be Continued\).](#)

(Notes:

1. The newly released book on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice \(1\)”](#) has already been published. The content includes the articles on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice”](#) from Issues No. 1 to 10 of the [“Lake of Lotus”](#).
2. The newly released book on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice \(2\) - Seven Methods of Strengthening One's Mind to Counteract Adversities”](#) has already been published. The content includes the articles on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice”](#) from Issues No. 11 to 20 of the [“Lake of Lotus”](#).
3. The newly released book on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice \(3\) - One of the Pivotal Points in Practising the Holy Dharma: The Mysteries and Usage of the Mantras and Sounds”](#) has already been published. The content includes the articles on [“The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice”](#) from Issues No. 21 to 30 of the [“Lake of Lotus”](#).)



Synopsis of Each Chapter

The Skills in the Setting-up of “Plans”

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

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

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

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

Designated Elements & Conditions in Determining What to “Adopt and Abandon”

- (i) **Importance:** To what extent would the “plan” help in achieving the “objective”? To what extent would this “objective”, in which one is prepared to achieve, help in achieving the major objective”?.....(please refer to Issue 5 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (ii) **The Price to be Paid:** Life is short and limited. All the resources that you presently possess could be lost at any moment. One must clearly understand the characteristics of the “Combination of Resources” and its relations with Destiny in one’s own life before making any changes, to realize the price that one has to pay for the different “plans”, and then go through the processes of elimination and deployment in order to “adopt and abandon” in these various “plans”. In this way, this would enable the limited resources to become “ever-renewing, inexhaustible and of unusual value for money” within a limited framework of time and space..... (please refer to Issue 6 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (iii) **Strength and Weakness:** Every person has his/her own strengths, merits, skills, as well as his/her weaknesses



and the Achilles' heel (weakest point). In order to achieve success of any "objective" or of any "plan", one must be very clear of one's own strengths and weaknesses; and then through various skillful arrangements, try to complement and make use of one's strengths and weaknesses **in designing the contents and procedures of the "plans"**. This is an "important strategy" in eliminating and deploying the "plans", and thus should not be underestimated.....(please refer to Issue 7 of the "Lake of Lotus").

- (iv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (1):** In drawing up any "plan", one must take into account the "planning of time". The "principles for the usages and wastages of time" must be clear, and have to be linked up with the effectiveness of the "plan". Hence, **time should be spent on those "plans" which are most effective and can bring the highest rate of return**. One should prioritize one's different "plans" according to the long or short durations of time used and their relative effectiveness. "Plans" that require one to put in a lot of time and effort, but with low rates of return and low effectiveness, should be scrapped. One should refine and improve one's "plans" by making reference to the "principles for the usages and wastages of time". This is a **major direction** in the selecting, eliminating and refining process of one's "plans".....(please refer to Issue 8 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (v) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (2):** Due to the simple fact that one has only very limited time and energy in one's lifetime, and if one's own objective is either to be "liberated from the cycle of transmigration" (known as "Samsara" in Sanskrit), or to attain "full enlightenment" ("Buddhahood") within this very life, then your "planning of time" and the "principles for the usages and wastages of time" for this life will become one of the critical points in determining whether you would succeed or fail. Hence one must be **very cautious and rational** about this. If your objective is "to be reborn into the Buddha's Pure Land" within this lifetime, then you would have had **greater flexibility in the handling of** your "planning of time" and the "principles for the usages and wastages of time", but they still should **not be neglected**. Hence, what will be the most wise and effective way in the "planning of time" for one's life while one is on the path for Dharma practice?.....(please refer to Issue 9 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (vi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (3):** Does it mean that if one is unable to undergo "long-term retreat", one would not be able to achieve the "objective" to become "liberated from Samsara or in attaining Buddhahood within this lifetime"? If you want to know the answer, please answer the following three questions first and to know about the "three essential factors" in the application of Buddhist teaching in our "Daily Living"..... (please refer to Issue 10 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (vii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (4): Wrong "Planning of Time":** It is no easy matter at all for one to be able to master the keys to success of "Dharma Practices" in one's "daily living" in order to have achievements, as well as to be able to achieve the "objective" of becoming "liberated from Samsara or in attaining Buddhahood within this lifetime". Even if one does possess the three best conditions (please refer to Issue 10 of the "Lake of Lotus"), it will still be unavoidable that one can fall prey and become lost again in this "tidal sea of sorrow in Samsara", as one goes through this **undulated waves of ever-changing life cycle**. If one tries not to fall again, and instead wants to further consolidate upon one's own foundation, one of the best methods is to **merge one's own "Dharma practices" into one's "daily living"** so as to ensure one's mastering of the "Planning of Time".



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

- (viii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (5): The “Planning of Time” in One’s “Daily Living” (1) -- Linking up by the Main Theme, and Getting Through the Sequences of Events:** How can the “planning of time” in one’s “daily living” **be designed** so as to avoid the various wrong doings? How should we practice the “Holy Dharma” so as to make the “effectiveness of Dharma practices during meditation” be linked up and **steadily sustained** with that in “post-meditation daily living” so as to further it and let it become **fully “developed”**? If one wants the “success” to be speed up, how should it be planned so as to **remove those obstacles** that will hinder the “effectiveness”? How can the **sequence** of incidents to be traced out of those confusions, and the **key** positions to be found in solving the problems? How can a consensus be reached between one’s “cognitions” and “reality” so that the **“contradictions” can be resolved**? How can the **“devotion, pure state of mind and dedication”** of Dharma practices “during meditation” be linked up and be sustained with that in the “post-meditation daily living” with a **correct “state of mind”**?(please refer to the Issue 12 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (ix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (6): The Skilful Usages of the “Main Theme” and the “Sequences of Events”:** The **“cardinal mentality”** is the major key in deciding on all things, and so the **“planning of one’s Dharma practices”** in one’s “daily living” has to use the “cardinal mentality” as the “main theme” to link up the “static states of Dharma practices” with the “dynamic states of Dharma practices”, by connecting their “common points” so as to get through the rigid dichotomy in one’s “planning of time,” and thus opening and tidying up the disordered “sequences of events” in order to synergize the contradictions of these two and to make them to become complementary to each other, while using the “cardinal mentality” as the basis all through. This is, indeed, the **“main points of planning”** for one’s Dharma practices in “daily living”. Yet, how one focuses on the **“cardinal mentality”** and the **“planning of time”** would become the **main key points for one’s “successes and/or failures”**.....(please refer to the Issue 13 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (x) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (7): Flexibility in the Using of One’s “Mentality” for One’s Dharma Practice:** While practicing the Dharma during the undulated waves of “daily living”, one can hardly sustain one’s “meditational power” and the **degree of the steadiness** of one’s “Dharma practice’ by **relying solely on “Emptiness”**. In order to be able to continuously enhance and elevate one’s Dharma practice in “daily living”, one must have **to adopt “Emptiness” as the unchanging and everlasting “cardinal mentality”**. One further needs to flexibly make use of the “three main essential points” of one’s Dharma practice in “daily living” so as to **train one’s own “mind”** in addressing the problems of one’s “daily living”, as well as to transform one’s “emotions and feelings” in becoming the “driving force for one’s Dharma practice”.....(please refer to the Issue 14 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



- (xi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (8): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (1):** In the undulated journey in the course of one’s lifetime, it is **unavoidable** that one would meet with many adversities. If you encounter these adversities and could not handle them properly, they would become the **obstacles** to all of your plans and objectives. Regardless of what “time and effectiveness” that you may have, they would be **completely** disturbed and delayed, and would hardly function properly. Thus, when one can skillfully adopt the strategy of getting through the obstacles by linking up the “Main Theme and the Sequences of Events”, and when one has set up the principles for **choosing** one’s “Cardinal Mentality” and also for the “Three Essential Factors” within one’s “mind”, one should at the same time follow the criteria for one’s “Dharma practices in times of adversities” as the **procedures for handling the situations**.....(please refer to the Issue 15 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (9): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (2):** Among the criteria for “Dharma Practices in times of Adversities”, one should pay attention and **adhere** to the following **procedures**: 1) to alienate from one’s role; 2) to remain calm; 3) to analyze accurately; 4) to act within one’s own capacities – this can be regarded as the “time planning for one’s Dharma practice during adversities”; 5) to take advantage of the different circumstances; 6) to learn from one’s own experiences; and 7) to elevate one’s own awareness, with particular reference to 3) to analyze accurately.....(please refer to the Issue 16 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (10): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (3):** In times of favorable circumstances, it would be easy for one to achieve success regardless of what one does. One would **naturally** be successful without having to wait for the right opportunities, neither does one have to make any planning. This is because this will be the time for **the arrival of the “achieved rewards”**. The good deeds that you have accumulated in the past are the best planning for the “achieved rewards.” However, in times of adversities, no matter what one does, one would have encountered many obstacles and have one’s head badly battered. If one simply goes along naturally, it would lead one to a dead end. This is because, in times of adversities, it is the time **for the coming of one’s retributions due to one’s past bad deeds**. If one does not remain calm, wait for the right opportunity, and plan appropriately, it would be difficult for one to get out from the plight. The question, then, is **when will be the best time** to get out from the plight? And what would be considered as the **appropriate planning**.....(please refer to the Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus”)?
- (xiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (11): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (4) – Making use of the Circumstances:** The characteristics for being in adversities are that one would be **beset with difficulties and will be unable to cope with the situations**. If one has to make use of the circumstances of that particular situation and time so as to break through the obstacles is basically an **extremely difficult matter to achieve**. Since it is **all that difficult**, the conditions that one would have to consider in order to complement the whole situation would be particularly even more so. There is an old Chinese saying that “Hero makes the trend of his time, and the trend of the time makes its own Hero”. After all, ‘the trend of the time and the environment’ together is one of the major elements for one’s success and failure. Hence, it is also **a necessary element** for one to get out from the plight by making use of the circumstances to break away from adversities. If one is to make use of the circumstances, one would adopt one of the following situations: (1) to **quietly wait**



for the favourable circumstances to arise; (2) to **make use of** the existing circumstances; and (3) to **build up** favourable circumstances.....(please refer to the Issue 18 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (12): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities”(5) -- Learn One’s Lessons from Past Experiences:** Failure is not necessarily a miserable thing. It can only be said as a blueprint which reflects on a series of **merits and weaknesses**. If one can learn one’s lessons well from past experiences in finding out the “reasons for one’s failures, as well as the **personal behavioral formulae** that led to such failures”, one’s “**wisdom of self-enhancement**” will be elevated by applying proper remedies to revise these **extremely concealed** and improper formulae, this would help to bring about one’s success in the next occasion. During this process of “self-enhancement”, it would enable one to live more happily and to have a direction, to have more meanings and values, and to be more proactive. In this way, what one would regard as failures have, in fact, now been changed into successes, and have brought about the essential elements for one’s future successes. The “state of invincibility” is the most lonely and painful experience. Too many successes and for too long will only make one to lose one’s sense of direction, and to easily lose oneself in one’s own “ego”. As such, one **would not be able to find out and revise the poor formulae**, and oneself would thus be easily bogged down in the mire of having too much “self-pride” and strong “arrogance” within one’s own “ego”, never being able **to see the real world in its totality**. In this regard, such kind of continuous successes can only be said to be **an extremely big failure**.....(please refer to the Issue 19 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (13): Criteria for “Dharma Practices in Times of Adversities” (6) – Enhancing One’s Awareness:** Many a times the formation of one’s mistakes and failures are due to the inadequacy of one’s own “awareness”. The biggest drawback was one’s own failure lied in not “being aware” of what and where had gone wrong in one’s own “behavioral formulae”. This would result in one’s repeating, or even expanding, of one’s mistakes and failures endlessly. Being faulty or carelessness for a short while is not the main cause for one’s mistakes and failures. **The main and real cause is the existence of deviations and defects in both the consciousness and the subconscious of one’s own “behavioral formulae”**. This would lead to a chain of wrong behaviors, which would form **an orbit which would lead to further failures, and that one would find it hard to depart from it**. Along with this orbit of failures, it would further extend to many more faults and carelessness, and the end result would be more and greater failures. Hence, to “enhance one’s awareness” is not only to elevate one’s attentiveness, such that the frequency of one’s making mistakes due to carelessness would be reduced, but the more important aspect is whether to have the ability for one’s “self-reflection”, for observing the minute details, and to carefully find out the deviations and defects in one’s own “behavioral formulae”.....(please refer to the Issue 20 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xvii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (14): Simplifying the Complexities, Finding the Keys -** Due to the fact that one’s life span is **temporary and impermanent**, and so when one design and draw up a plan for one’s own Dharma practice, one should need to include the “factor of time and effectiveness”, all the more, as **the primary important point for one’s consideration**. Apart from having the “right mindset and criteria” in handling periods of “adversities or prosperities” so that one would be able to “master the factor of time” more accurately and to have **an edge, what other principles that one should need to pay attention to?** No matter what kinds of the “planning of time” that one has, they are bound to have both strengths and weaknesses. It



is unavoidable that there will be some faults. However, the appropriate “planning of time” should be able to reduce or lighten all kinds of faults and be able to speed up the process in the showing of “success”. An appropriate “planning of time” must make use of the following principles in its design: 1. Linking up by the Main theme, and getting through the sequences of events – target: daily living before one’s death (please refer to Issue 21 of “Lake of Lotus”); 2. Simplifying the complexities, finding the keys – target: the wrestling ground of energies after one’s death; 3. Differentiation on the order of importance, Proper handling of the interferences –target: the wrestling ground of energies after one’s death.....(please refer to Issue 21 of “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (15): Mastering of Time and Choice of Methods** – Irrespective of the objectives of one’s Dharma practice, one must choose the appropriate “methods of Dharma practice” that correspond with one’s objectives. The amount of time spent on these “methods of Dharma practice”, and the effects that one can achieve through them, are the key and critical points as to whether or not one can achieve the objectives, and so one should analyze them in more details. In order to have a quick and accurate way to analyze and measure the various “methods of Dharma practice”, one must first “bring out the chief points” on the “objectives” of the various practices, as well as the effective elements of the “methods of Dharma practice”, before one can correspondingly discuss and analyze the issues.....(please refer to Issue 22 of “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (16): The Highest Objective that “Prayers” can Achieve** – On the side of effectiveness, even though they consist the element of one’s “mental strength”, but since “prayers” do not involve any practice on “Emptiness”, and so they are neither direct enough, nor have they included any programming for the practicing of “Emptiness” that could counter-act the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic exercise”. Hence, though prayers can produce some effects, the highest level that they can achieve would only be limited to the “materialization of requests for worldly desires”, or for the “rebirths in some virtuous realms”. One would not be able to achieve the two objectives of: (1) liberation from the tractional forces of the “cycle of karmic existence”; and (2) the attainment of “Complete Enlightenment” (“Buddhahood”). Hence, “prayers” will not be able to become the major item of Dharma practice in Buddhism, and that it can only be a supplementary method of Dharma practice.....(please refer to Issue 23 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (17): The Mystery of the Blessings of the Sound in the Recitations of “Mantras, Buddhas’ Names or Sutras”** – The practice method of using sound to recite “mantras, names of Holy Deities, and scriptures” is one of the practice methods that have been adopted by most religions and ceremonies in this secular world. Does it consist of other deeper meanings? What are some of the effects that will be produced from this kind of practice methods? What are the degrees of influence that this has upon one’s own “mental strength”? What is the highest level of objective that it can achieve? What is the length of time that it will take up in order to achieve the objective?.....(Please refer to Issue 24 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (18): How to Make Different Mantras to Produce Effects** – the effects and energies that are produced from the “resonance” of sound can make the “electrons” at the outer layer of the “atom” to move over to the other “atom” next to it, or else the two “atoms” can share the same “electrons”. This kind of mechanism can help make “atoms” to become bondings in forming “molecules”, or other types of “compounds”. Through this process, different types of materials can then be connected,



consolidated and formed. Yet, what types of pronunciation of “sounds” could match such particular effects?(Please refer to Issue 25 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xxii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (19): **What is the meaning of having received the “relevant trainings” in the recitation of mantras in order that merits would be arisen which are remarkable and vast, particularly in the enhancement of one’s own wisdom which would be very significant, and would not be lost in one’s numerous lifetimes?** – There are numerous mentions of the “Dharani Samadhi”, the “Dharani Seal Samadhi” and the “one hundred and eight kinds of “Samadhis” in the different “Buddhist Sutras”, and so what are they? These are referring to the different “Mantras” within the hundred types of “Right Concentrations”, and so what is the mysterious rationale behind them? Should “mantras” be translated? What are the merits that can be arisen from the “relevant trainings” in the recitation of “mantras”?(Please refer to Issue 26 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxiii) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (20): **How to Give Rise to the Wonderful Merits in “Pacifying/Averting Adversities” by Reciting the “Mantra Dharani”?** – There are many more conditions that need to be coordinated in order to give rise to the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” by reciting the “Mantra Dharani”, as it would involve the “collective karma” of all those who are involved, that is, the “karmas” of each and every one that would be affected by those adversities combined together. As such, it would be much more complicated than the “karma” involved in both the “Dharma Dharani” and the “Meaning Dharani”, as for the latter two only the “karma” of the Dharma practitioner himself/herself would be involved. Hence, it would be relatively much easier to give rise to the merits of both the “Dharma Dharani” and the “Meaning Dharani”, and the level of “meditational power” that is required to match these Dharani is relatively lower. On the other hand, the level of “meditational power” that is required to match the giving rise of the merits of “pacifying/averting adversities” of the “Mantra Dharani” would be correspondingly higher.....(please refer to the Issue 27 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxiv) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (21): **The wonderful merits of the recitation of “Endurance Dharani”** – How to generate the merits of “Endurance Dharani”? “Endurance” has two meanings: one represents the “Endorsement Abler”, and the other represents a “Decision”. The “Endorsement Abler” means that “after the verification and endorsement, one has been confirmed to have such an attainment”. As for the “Decision”, it indicates that one has “surely and profoundly realized, and has thus affirmatively achieved a certain level of attainment, in a decisive and firm manner without any doubts”.....(please refer to the Issue 28 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxv) The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (22): **How to set up an all-rounded protection shield** - In the “Sutra on the Holy Names of the Buddhas”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has proclaimed the Holy Names of thousands of Buddhas. If counting the compressed abbreviations, such as “Namo to the eight hundred billions of those designated Buddhas of the Second Kalpa who are having the same names with the same Dharma states” and so on, then the Holy Names of the Buddhas being mentioned are actually infinite in numbers. Hence, if all sentient beings could follow exactly what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has told us to recite and chant, then the causes of connections being sown with all the Buddhas could also be infinite. In the future, sentient beings could be taught by such a vast number of Buddhas, and could also receive



sky-like protections from countless Buddhas and related protectors, such that it will definitely keep sentient beings away from all karmic obstacles, and certainly they will be able to practise peacefully without disasters, difficulties and hindrances, until they will finally attain Buddhahood. In other words, the recitation and chanting of the Buddhas' Holy Names is a kind of Dharma practice with the nature of "praying, being blessed and protected". Yet, it does take a longer period of time and is a bit indirect.....(please refer to the Issue No. 29 of the "Lake of Lotus").

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

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

(xxviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (24): How could one extend the life of a dying relative? How to use the four levels to help and save patients?** – When the signs of death of patients are shown and even unveiling that one is going to enter into the initial stage of either virtuous or evil judgment, that means even though this person has not yet formally died, he or she was already stepping into the edge at the "margin of life and death". As this is a critical position, that whether one could "recover from death, and to extend one's life" or not will have to depend upon how many merits this patient could have aroused or being induced at that very moment. (please refer to the Issue No.32 of the "Lake of Lotus").

(xxix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (25) : How to directly elevate the functions and merits of one's own mind?** - Sound is a vibration with frequency. If the airflow and muscles of one's body are blown up to make the vocal cord vibrate, the sound so produced will have certain impact on the body, regardless of whether it has any meaning. This includes the impact on the spiritual level. Different degrees of sound would, of course,



have different degrees of impact. Therefore, among the Buddhist practice methods, sound has been included as one of the important dimensions for its Dharma practices. What are the comprehensive merits of this kind of Dharma practice? (please refer to the Issue No.33 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

- (xxx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (26): The skills of chanting need to be adjusted and changed in accordance with “the characteristics of one’s habitual tendencies, features of karma, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentration** - Whether the “resonant frequency” of a particular “Mantra, Buddha’s Holy Name, or the Sutra” is suitable for the reciting person, whether it matches the “the characteristics of habitual tendencies, features of karmas, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentrations” of the reciting person and so on is a major factor that influences the effects. If the reciting person understands his own “ characteristics of habitual tendencies, features of karmas, orientations of aspirations, degrees of mental concentrations” so well that he knows how to choose a “Mantra, Buddha’s Holy Name, or the Sutra” that is most suitable for himself to recite, then the skills of recitations will become the only major factor that influences the effects. Are there then differences in the skills for reciting the “Mantras, Buddhas’ Holy Names, or the Sutras”?..... (please refer to the Issue No.34 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (27): How to Use the “Sound of Mantra” to Transcend All Limitations of Dharma Practice** - “The Power of the Resonating Voice” is sufficient enough to make the long progress period of one’s Dharma practice to become a rapid achievement of goals. Why is it so? The most important key point for one’s real Holy Dharma practice is on one’s “mind training”. And the highest level of one’s “Mind” is to restore the state of **“Emptiness: Neither existence nor voidness”**. Then what is the “vibration frequency” that is closest to this state? A good mastery and application of this special “vibration frequency” is undoubtedly the “shortcut” for one to enter this state of condition. Therefore, the arising of human sounds, regardless of whether they come from the “conscious” level or from the “subconscious” level, will be extremely useful in one’s Dharma practice, if one knows how to use them.....(please refer to the Issue No.35 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (28): The interrelationships of the sounds of the human body with one’s Dharma practice and with that of the “Consciousness” and the “Subconscious”** - Other than for the use of talking, the sounds of human beings can also be used to express emotions, such as laughter, crying, moaning, sighs, cries of grief and even yawning etc. They all have the various functions to relieve our emotions, stress and tensions. Some of them are generated as the functions of one’s “conscious” level while others are generated as the function of one’s “unconscious” level. Therefore, the origins for giving rise to the sounds of human beings can be divided into those coming from the “conscious” level and those from the “unconscious” level. Can their interrelationships render assistance to one’s Dharma practice? (please refer to the Issue No.36 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (29): The use of the “core basic sound”. Its usefulness to sentient beings in elevating their lives and in practising the Holy Dharma** - The “core basic sound” represents the pure and natural sound of its original nature of each individual sentient being. From the physical structure to the spiritual dimension, their inter-dependence and co-existence are inseparable from the relationships on the movements of the “molecules” and “bio-energy”. Thus, the “vibration frequency” so generated will be that



kind of “frequency vibration” that controls and affects the physical and mental conditions of that particular sentient being. When this kind of “frequency of vibration” expands to become sounds, this can be used to elevate both the physical and spiritual states of that particular sentient being..... (please refer to the Issue No.37 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

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

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

(xxxvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (32): What are the methods of “Mental Visualization”?** – The previous two chapters have clearly described those who are able to “visualize the mind” could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain “Buddhahood”, and this is also the important guideline in the **“Mahayan Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**. Then comes the question as to how to “visualize one’s mind”? Whether it will be fine by just “visualizing” oneself as he Buddha or the “diety”? What are the contents and procedures of one’s “Visualization”? In modern terminology, it is the question of how to proceed with the programming of one’s “visualization” in order to be most effective? There are countless and endless methods of “visualization”, and so which kinds of them are correct? To what levels of “visualization” do they belong? What kind of situations are they specifically for? How are their effectiveness being demonstrated? Are there any opposing effects, or side effects? A series of such questions are the “important points for consideration” in choosing one’s method of “mental visualization”. (please refer to the Issue No.40 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



- (xxxvii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (33): The “Training of Mind” From the Core and Foundational Basis of One’s “Awareness”** - In the “**Mahayan Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the “Mental Visualization” method for the “Mind Ground Visualization on the Requit of the Four Kinds of Gratitude”. On the face of it, such kind of “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude” appears to be of a high degree of difficulty. Yet, in terms of meanings and principles, it is indeed extremely deep and far-reaching. In view of the high degree of difficulty, the five hundred elders who were present at that time in hearing the Lord Buddha’s preaching all said in unison that “It is very difficult (to practise)!” , but then the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this is a must. So are there any other solutions? Before further solutions are quoted, let us first look at how, apart from the “Filial Gratitude to Parents”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had preached on the other three of “the four kinds of Gratitude”, namely the “Gratitude to all Sentient Beings, Gratitude to the King, and Gratitude to the Three Jewels”, and see whether they are also equally difficult to be repaid?.. (please refer to the Issue No.41 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxviii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (34) - What is actually the “Gratitude to the King” that needs to be repaid by sentient beings as requested by the Lord Buddha?** - The mindsets and thinking patterns of most sentient beings today in this contemporary world focus mostly on the “self-centered, free and equal” kind of “liberated, confrontational and anti-authority” behavioural programming. It seems to be an extremely difficult thing to ask them to understand what is meant by the “Gratitude to the King”, and even request them to make requital in their behaviours. Our current “century thinking” nowadays is “No king but elections”. Is this kind of thinking actually a counterbalance to what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said without any commonality? (please refer to the Issue No.42 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxix) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (35) - The “Buddha Jewel” has “Three Bodies”. What are their merits? The “Sambhogabaya (Enjoyment Body)” of a Buddha has two forms. What are their characteristics? What do the ten kinds of special “Manifested Body of a Buddha” represent?** - In Volume One on the Preface Section No.1 [0294b22] of the “**Mahayan Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us that: “Because you worldly people ‘do not visualize your own minds’ (that is not using visualization for mind training), therefore you are subject to the cycle of karmic existence endlessly, drifting and floating in the Ocean of Life and Death. As all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are able ‘to visualize Their minds’ (for mind-training), they can thus cross the Ocean of Life and Death to reach to the other shore in the Pure Land either to get liberated from the cycle of karmic existence or get entry into the “Dharma Realm”. The Buddhas of the past world, the present world and the future world all practised their Holy Dharma in this way”. From this, one can see that “Mental Visualization” is extremely important and is the only method for Dharma practice. With regard to the foundational base of “Mental Visualization”, one must first understand and repay the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, among which, the “Gratitude to the Three Jewels” can be said to be of “prime importance”. The “Gratitude to the Three Jewels” refers respectively to “the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel, the Gratitude to the Dharma Jewel, and the Gratitude to the Sangha Jewel”. Let us first talk about “the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel”. The “Buddhas” appear to be very perfect, unreachable and also difficult to communicate as they are very far away from the sentient beings. Then how is “the Gratitude to the Buddha Jewel” formed and how “deep” and “wide” is it? (please refer to the Issue No.43 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



- (xxxx) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (36) – There are “Four Kinds” of “Dharma Jewel”. What are Their Merits? Who Are the “Gurus” of the Various Buddhas of the Worlds of the Three Times?** : Among the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, the “Dharma Jewel” is the teacher/mentor of various Buddhas of the Worlds of the Three Times. So how important is it actually? As all Buddhas have to rely on the “Dharma Jewel” to attain “Buddhahood”, then what actually are the substances of the “Dharma Jewel”? What are the efficacies of the “Dharma Jewel”, and how “deep” and “wide” is it?(please refer to the Issue No. 44 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxxi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (37) - The Lord Buddha said that there are four kinds of “Sangha Jewel”. What are they? Are those Dharma practitioners not undergoing “Pabbajja” to be regarded as the “Sangha Jewel”? What are the real reasons for the “Sangha Jewel” to be able to save and help sentient beings?** : Among the four kinds of gratitude and kindness, the “Sangha Jewel” is the treasure that is most accessible to and easy for sentient beings to produce virtuous merits in this worldly realm. Whether or not sentient beings can benefit quickly from difficulties and miseries, whether or not they can become liberated speedily from the cycle of karmic existence, whether or not they can attain “Buddhahood” swiftly would all depend on the existence of the “Sangha Jewel”. So actually how important is the “Sangha Jewel” to the sentient beings? What actually are the substances of the “Sangha Jewel”, and how “deep” and “wide” is it?..... (please refer to the Issue No. 45 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxixii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (38) - The Lord Buddha said that “Jewels” have ten kinds of meanings. What are they? How could one repay the “Four Kinds of Gratitude” without affecting one’s Dharma practice on “Emptiness”?** : The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni remarked that the repayment for these four kinds of gratitude is of very high degree of difficulty! As such, would it form a kind of “attached mind” that will affect one’s Dharma practice on “Emptiness”? How could one actually practise the “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude”? The five hundred elders all said that “It is very difficult (to practise)!”, but then the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this is a must. So are there any other solutions? (please refer to the Issue No. 46 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxixiii) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (39) – What are the “Non-Attaining” methods for “Wonderful Mental Visualization”? What are the characteristics of Dharma practitioners endowed with the “Clarity of Dharma Eyes”?** : “Mental Visualization” is extremely important and is the only method for Dharma practice. With regard to the foundational base of “Mental Visualization”, one must first understand and repay the four kinds of gratitude and kindness. Yet the requital methods are not those that the ordinary people could generally think of by doing everything they can with their physical bodies for repayment. Instead, it is an interplay of a special “mental visualization” method with some specific behavioral actions in making the requital. This special “mental visualization” method is known as “Non-Attainment”. Then what are the “specific behavioral actions”? (please refer to the Issue No. 47 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



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