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and Conditions for
"Mental Visualization"?**

**What Are The Foundational
"Concentration Powers"
One Must Have for
"Mental Visualization"?**

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at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka

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**The Profound Abstruseness of
Life and Death**



The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences [49]

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

- **To Which One of the “Six Realms” will a Human Most Easily Be Reborn After One’s Death?**
- **Why Those with “Hypnotized Memories of Past Lives” Cannot Find Memories of Having Been Reborn into “Realms of Animals, Ghosts and Hells”?**

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” and Its “Corresponding Training on Death”?

(Please refer back to Issue 47 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

Who are the Protectors in the “Posthumous World”? What is Meant by “Liberation”?

(Please refer back to Issue 48 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



To Which One of the “Six Realms” will a Human Most Easily Be Reborn After One’s Death?

In the last chapter, it was mentioned about the advantages of being a Buddhist. The answer is that: the most important advantage is “being able to elevate on the levels of one’s transmigration”. There might be many people who do not think so, as they simply think that it should be alright if one is to be reborn as a human being again? If so, why is it needed to “elevate on the levels of one’s transmigration”? This kind of wrong thinking mainly comes from the idea that people have concerning death, simply because most of them do not believe that “death is terrifying”, and that they also believe that “their future rebirths to be human beings again is not difficult at all”.

Since over half of the NDE- (near-death experiences) survivors have claimed that they have good memories about the situations of the “posthumous world”; and in some special cases, their memories seem to be so extremely pleasant that many more sentient beings have been misled to believe that “death is not a scary thing at all”. Many NDE-survivors have indicated that once they have entered into the spiritual world, all they have encountered were sages and splendid environments, such that their feelings were so excellent, then where comes the dangers? Some NDE researchers knew very well that there actually existed dangerous and terrifying cases, and even though they would not dare to say that “ALL the NDEs are good ones”, but then they simply interpreted that “the majority of NDE cases were good ones”.

So, can we really believe in this kind of saying? In fact, could one infer that the entire “posthumous world” and the “situations of transmigration” can be based merely upon the opinions of those NDE survivors who had been “revived to lives after their short stays in the early phase of death”? According to the “Tibetan Book of the Dead”, most of the people who had entered into the early phases of death would have good encounters, and that they would see different kinds of lights. The reason for the induction of lights comes from the “natural intrinsic nature” of the deceased persons’ own selves, or simply known as either “Intrinsic Nature”, or “Buddha Nature”, or “Awareness”. It exposes naturally when being detached from the physical body, and temporarily extricating from the reins of “karmic forces”. In the process on the exposure of this “intrinsic nature”, in which the transformation of energies would take place, it will manifest in the form of lights, such that the deceased persons would have the wonderful feelings of being surrounded in brightness.

This sort of brightness coming from the exposure of one’s “intrinsic nature”, which embeds unlimited amounts of supernatural powers. It might be able to lead the deceased persons into high levels of Heavenly Realms, where





in general sentient beings would not have been able to reach them. There is also the possibility that, at this very moment, all the sentient beings might **have the opportunity** for entry into the spiritual domain known as the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit), in which only those who have reached perfect enlightenment (**for whom we called the “Buddhas”**) can enter into. Hence, many NDE survivors can have this opportunity to sense and recognize the inexpressibly wonderful feelings of the Heavenly Realms, or the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit). Yet, this also makes many sentient beings to have **misunderstood** that the “posthumous world” need not be scary, but instead it should only be a beautiful one.

According to the “**Tibetan Book of the Dead**”, the majority of sentient beings would be **expelled out** of this blissful environment, if they are **unable to realize and handle** the “fleeting moment” of “intrinsic brightness”, and have to enter into the real “posthumous world”. At

the later phases of death, the deceased persons would again be seeing different kinds of lights. The main difference between these lights of this later phases, as compared with those of the earlier phase, is that these different kinds of lights are now coming from the lights of different “virtuous or non-virtuous magnetic fields”, with their **special kind of attractive forces**. Many sentient beings who have never received any **corresponding training** to deal with it would be **linked** to the lights of these attractive forces, as according to each individual’s karmic preferences. As such, these deceased persons would then enter into these “virtuous or non-virtuous realms” for their rebirths, and will continue to suffer in the “**cycle of karmic existence**” (“**Samsara**” in Sanskrit) endlessly.

From here, the scary point of death is that: for those sentient beings who have never have any corresponding training in dealing with this kind of situation, regardless of how splendid the heavenly environment, or the **Realm of Truth** (“**Dharmadhatu**” in Sanskrit), is at the early phase of death, the person would **inevitably** have to be reborn into this ocean of suffering of the cycle of karmic existence. As such, is this “cyclical rebirth” scary or not? According to the statements of many people who, having been hypnotized in order to recall their memories of previous lifetimes, recalled that they have had many periods of lives in which they were reborn as human beings, but there were **no** memories of their being reborn into the “realms of animals, ghosts and hells”. Would it, then, become an evidence to show that what the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said, “it is hard to become a human being, and that many sentient beings would be reborn into the different realms of life existence, including those of animals, ghosts and hells” was not right?

With the moral conducts of the Lord Buddha Shakymuni, who has been revered and esteemed as the “**Most Noble One**” in this world, and thus there is **no necessity for Him to telling lies**. In order to share His own **painful experiences** of having successfully broken away from the forces of this cycle of karmic existence, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had frankly informed his disciples and believers on the facts of his previous lives concerning the pains and sufferings



that He had gone through: He had fallen into the “Realm of Animal” as a deer mother, and had to be **on her knees** to a hunter, **begging in tears** for the freeing of her two deer-sons, as well as the **key points of escaping from the body of an animal**.

In the **“Sutra of Buddha’s Relating About the Mother Deer”**, the Lord Buddha told his disciple Ananda: “In my past life, what I had done was so industrious and laborious. During which time, I was having the body of a deer and had two deer-sons, who are now the present Luoyun and Arhat Zhulimu. The then king is now my present disciple Sariputra. The then hunter is now you, Ananda. The main reason why I could be able to escape from the animal’s body, and be able to enter into the path on the spreading of the Buddhist teachings was due to the fact that I had endeavored without any reservations to **develop the cause of virtuous actions**, but without the slightest **attachment** onto the **merits**. Although I was in the “Realm of Animals”, but I **did not forget the mind of a Bodhisattva**. I took different practical ways to benefit all the sentient beings, and broadly brought them much security and relief, in achieving peace and happiness. The merits so accumulated were sufficient enough to induce my swift attainment of Buddhahood as a sage. As such, the **mind of utmost honesty, loyalty and faith** cannot be absent.”

Once entering into the “Realm of Animals”, one would be constrained physically by the animal’s brain of low intelligence, as well as by the inferior habits of immorality, and as such, it is in general hard for animals to be able to accumulate merits, and that by the “nature of their minds” they would tend to decline day by day. With such kind of situations, it would usually be even more difficult for them to be “elevated on the levels of their transmigrations”, resulting in their rebirths to be in even more worse situations. The “Realm of Animals” is **“easy to get into, but difficult to get out”**. To exit out of the “Realm of Animals”, one must upgrade one’s own “nature of mind”. In order to elevate one’s own “nature of mind”, one must not forget about the **“awakened mind”** (**“Bodhicitta” in Sanskrit**) of a Bodhisattva, and must possess utmost honesty, as well as faith and loyalty, so as to have reasonable thoughts in weighting whether all of one’s deeds will be beneficial to all sentient beings or not. It was because the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni possessed all of these important requirements that he could easily exit from the “Realm of Animals”, which is **“easy to get into, but difficult to get out”**.

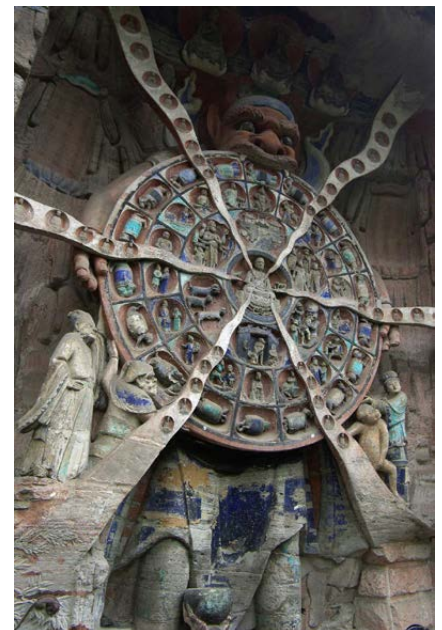
Why is it that the “Realm of Animals” has always been **“easy to get into, but difficult to get out”**? It is because the operating Laws of Nature are always governed by the “nature of mind”. After death, all sentient beings will be detaching



from their “physical bodies”, and without any materials for attachment. The unsteady and drifting “nature of minds” cause all sentient beings who have **not received training** to deal with the situations would find themselves **hard to accommodate** with. As such, due to the elements of “greed, hatred and ignorance” in one’s “nature of minds”, all sentient beings would attempt to seek for materials available for their attachments, in order to fix the unsteady and drifting conditions that they face. Yet, as all sentient beings’ “nature of minds” in general tend to prefer the coarse negative energies of “unruliness, greed and ignorance”, resulting in their being guided by such “nature of minds” to attach onto materials.

For the “Realm of Animals”, it also possesses this special feature in its “magnetic fields”, and moreover, it is of **great numbers** which is even many many times more than that of human beings’. **This sort of “magnetic fields” covers extremely large spectrum of areas and realms, and they are very close to the “magnetic fields” of human beings**’. Thus, when the deceased persons choose to select materials for their attachments after death, they are extremely easy to be **attracted to each other**, and thus become transmigrated into the “Realm of Animals”. But even though the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni possessed the kind-heartedness of a Bodhisattva, it was still very hard for him to avoid such a condition before His attainment of Buddhahood. His kind-heartedness of a Bodhisattva has already been cultivated long time ago before His attainment of Buddhahood, and was not cultivated only after he was in the “Realm of Animals”, but then he still could not **avoid the “karmic tractions”**. Even though His “nature of mind” was still good, and would not automatically drawn into the “magnetic fields” of those coarse energies of “unruliness, greed and ignorance”, he was still **inevitably attracted and drafted into the wide-spectrum covering “magnetic fields” of the “Realm of Animals”**. Due to his perfectly kind “nature of mind”, even though he has entered into the “Realm of Animals”, he was born as a deer **(and not that of any other fierce beasts)** which was helpful to him in exiting from that predicament.

If the question is asked: which realm of existence among the “Six Realms” **(namely: the realms of heavens, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts and hells)** is the most easiest one for human beings to be reborn into after death, the answer to this is the “Realm of Animals”, since its “magnetic fields” are **too close to human beings, and they cover extremely large spectrum of areas, as if like a “net engulfing the space above and earth below”**. Furthermore, since the **morality** of human beings **deteriorates** day by day, and the “nature of minds” are getting worse and worse. This has nothing to do with the improved standards of education, which does not necessarily help to elevate people’s “nature of mind”; but on the contrary, people are getting more and more selfish, and only seeking for personal gains and rewards. The kind of **“pure honesty, faith and loyalty”** have all gone, but instead only “witty greediness” has been increased greatly.



Why Those with “Hypnotized Memories of Past Lives” Cannot Find Memories of Having Been Reborn into “Realms of Animals, Ghosts and Hells”?

According to the recalls of many people who had been “hypnotized for memories of past lives”, they had been reborn as human beings for many lives. However, they had **no** recalls on memories of rebirths into the “realms of animals, ghosts and hells”. Why is it like that?

The present methods and capability of hypnotism are extremely limited. In most cases of early stage, the memories sought for were about rebirths as human beings. Yet, the time intervals in-between each of the past lives seemed to be quite long. For some people, the time intervals in between the life before and the life afterwards could be as long as several hundred years. As such, **where would those people be during this long period of time in-between?** Not until most recently, some people unintentionally discovered that they can use hypnosis to bring people into **deeper levels** of memories under hypnotism.

In the memories of deep levels, there store the memories of experiences in the “spiritual domain” during the periods of **after deaths but before rebirths**. Since the density of material structures in the “spiritual domain” is much more sparse, and so the special features of the relevant “magnetic fields” have large differences from that of human beings which are of much more dense material structures. The relevant sentient beings in those realms would store up their memories of experiences in accord with the special features of those particular types of “magnetic fields”. These memories were then stored in separate locations different from that which stored the memories for their past lives as human beings. Because of this, in the early stage of hypnotism when it was **not yet mature**, only memories of most recent periods of time and close to that of human “magnetic fields” could be explored. As a result, many people under hypnotization for the search of their “memories of past lives” could only see themselves being reborn as human beings for each of their lives. It was then wrongly interpreted and misunderstood that there exists no “spiritual domain”, neither are there the existence of ghosts or hells. There were also no records of human beings being reincarnated as animals.

The main reason for the classification of the six types of life existences, or the Six Realms, in that the special features of the relevant “magnetic fields” can be categorized into six kinds. They **have six main attractive forces** to various kinds of sentient beings with different “nature of minds” and different “karmic preferences”. When a sentient being is drawn into a particular realm, and in accordance with that person’s “nature of mind”, it will then further develops into different kinds with different forms. For example, since the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had a virtuous “nature of mind”, and so even though he was reborn into the “Realm of Animals”, he was only reborn as a deer, and not as a cruel fierce beast. And so memories of existence in these six kinds of “magnetic fields” would be duly stored in the elements of memory in different locations.



If sentient beings would like to explore the memories of relevant experiences being stored in those Six Realms, just like the case of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, they must work through intensive mental concentrations for their appearance. At this moment, hypnotization can only explore very **limited kinds of memories**. And hence, evidences from hypnotization are not sufficient to disprove the teachings by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni that: “it is difficult to be reborn as human beings, and most sentient beings would be reborn into various life existences, including those realms of animals, ghosts, and hells”. On the contrary, **many NDE survivors recalled their personal posthumous experiences** which rendered **sufficient proof** to the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni’s teachings: “A human body is precious. Sentient beings could transmigrate to various life existences, including those realms of heavens, humans, Asuras, animals, ghosts and hells” **to be correct**.

Once entering the “Realm of Animals”, if the person forgets all the virtuous thoughts and left with a faint mind of mercifulness, could those people who own animals can assist them to depart from the animals’ bodies when they die? There are ways for it. Readers with such kind-heartedness would like to know more details, please visit the Dudjom Buddhist Association TV Channel on YouTube for the episode on “Would people be reincarnated as animals? How to help your pets to exit from the “Realm of Animals”?

Website: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHJ0DgTmiRo&feature=youtube>

Besides that, in fact, how difficult would it be to be reincarnated again as a human being?(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 (49)

The Mind-Training Episode (12)

By Vajra Master Pema Lhadren Translated by Fong Wei

- What Are The Methods, Focus, Composition, Process and Conditions for “Mental Visualization”?
- What Are The Foundational “Concentration Powers” One Must Have for “Mental Visualization”?

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”).
 - (iii) The fruitions of requital in teaching sentient beings the “Mind Ground Visualization on the Requit of the Four Kinds of Gratitude” (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 48 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
 - (iv) The reasons for one to take rebirth again after entry into the “Pure Land” (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 48 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



What Are The Methods, Focus, Composition, Process and Conditions for “Mental Visualization”?



The main focus of one's "mind-training" is on how to "visualize one's mind". 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**". The question is on how to "visualize one's mind"? Whether it will be fine by just "visualizing" oneself as the Buddha or "deity"? As expounded by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni in the "**Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**", while there are many kinds of "mental visualization" methods, boundless and immeasurable, the important point remains that the **ultimate** "visualizing" focus of this "mental visualization" method must be in accord with the **"non-attainment" on the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness"**. Otherwise, they will be "futile".

The contents and steps of one's "visualization" can be increased or decreased according to the degree of acceptance by sentient beings, but when the "visualization" programming is in process, it must contain the **ingredient of the "non-attainment" on the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness"** in order to make it most effective and correct. Otherwise, it will only be a **"deviated visualization programming"** arising from a "minute difference yet making a huge mistake".

As for the required process and conditions of one's "mental visualization", they should preferably be done in a **step-by-step manner** by first consolidating the foundation of one's "mind-training" before it can progress to a higher level. Otherwise, the **opposing effects, or side effects, will continue to emerge, rendering "slow and counter-productive" results to Dharma practitioners.**

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 Dharma practices which can help all sentient beings to **swiftly attain Buddhahood**.

As regards the levels, practicing process and conditions for these "mental visualization" methods, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us in the "**Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**" that they should be **(implemented) progressively from shallow to deep, and from the foundational basis to gradual elevation**. The first level is known as the "Requital of Gratitude" Level, which is an **extremely fast** practice method to accumulate abundant merits to eradicate one's endless obstacles. Many people seeking quick success would consider that the "Requital



of Gratitude" is a superfluous and slow practice method, and a "mental visualization" method that advocates only on "visualizing the appearance of the deities", chanting mantras, making mudras ([hand gestures](#)), and so on. Yet at the end, because of the **poor quality** of their "minds", the more they practise, the more arrogant they would become. Eventually, they cannot override the causal effects of the "Inconceivable strength of the Law of Karma" and **"evil minds equal to even worse karmas"**, resulting in their **downfalls for their rebirths at a much faster speed**. All their efforts in Dharma practices have thus become **"self-destructive", ridiculous and foolish deeds**.

Why did the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni use the "Requital of Gratitude" as the first level of the "mental visualization" method? The reason is very simple, it is because the "behavioral programming in the requital of gratitude" is the best formula to elevate one's "quality of mind". Any "idea in mind" to "acknowledge gratitude, to feel indebted to gratitude and to repay for gratitude" will make "one's heart" soft and full of the elements of positive energy. Any "idea in mind" that "fails to acknowledge gratitude, fails to feel indebted to gratitude and fails to repay for gratitude" is a "greedy" kind of "hard-core and wicked heart" which is full of **destructive negative energies**.

In order to succeed in "mental visualization" and to get rid of all the tracking and entanglements of karmic forces to eventually achieve "Buddhahood", one must first elevate and enhance the "quality of one's mind". It is **with an excellent "quality of mind" that is sufficient enough for one to converge on the "non-attainment" status of the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness"**, and also sufficient for one to get rid of all the tracking and entanglements of karmic forces to **eventually achieve "Buddhahood"**. The quickest way to make one's "mind" to become soft and full of the elements of positive energy is not the so-called "blessings, supernatural powers", nor the "affection" that contains the ingredients of "greed, hatred and ignorance". It is rather one's "willing desire to pay and repay" with a "most sincere heart to requite gratitude". This mind **not only can touch** one's "karmic debtors, friends and relatives", but **can also educate** others. Most importantly, the "strengths in commitment and endurance" of one's "own mind" are broadened and expanded to an extent as to enable **a smooth interface, and an unimpeded perfect running** of the "mental visualization" programming.

The "karmic debtors, friends and relatives" would "let you go" because they "have succeeded in chasing the debts". Other people are touched by you and "give you a helping hand". Your "own mind", which becomes unimpeded because you have "let go of your greed, hatred and ignorance", will help you to succeed in "mental visualization", as well as to converge more easily on the **"non-attainment" status of the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness"**.

Therefore, when the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni taught people on "mental visualization", the first requirement must be for the sentient beings to **take "requital of gratitude" as the first level of training, which is also the most**



fundamental and most important "quality of mind". This, together with the "mental visualization" element of the "non-attainment" of the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness", is the foundational basis of the Dharma Door for the "Real Mind-Training" as required by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

From the foundational basis of "mental visualization" to each and every set of the "visualization programming", whether their contents to be absolutely correct, or whether they are embedded with deviations, or even contain traps that can mislead sentient beings to be reborn into extremely bad zones? To the Dharma practitioners, all these "mental visualization" methods and "visualizing programming" are extremely important. Making a wrong choice is equivalent to taking "self-destruction" speedily like offering a lamb to a tiger's mouth in spite of one's thousands of years' diligent Dharma practices".

Then, how could one distinguish among so many of these "mental visualization" methods and "visualization programming"? The answer is that "only those practitioners who know the genuine Buddhist Dharma and authentic Dharma practices have the abilities to distinguish them, and to give guidelines on one's Dharma practices". Just think about when someone who only tries to persuade you to be merciful, only talks about the Buddhist principles and Buddhist stories at a shallow level, but is not even able to explain clearly, or understand well, the truths of the "operation laws of the Dharma Realm" as expounded in the "Heart Sutra", how would he be able to distinguish among so many of these "mental visualization" methods and "visualizing programming", and to give guidelines on one's Dharma practices? (Regarding the truths of the "narrations of the operation laws of the Dharma Realm in the "Heart Sutra", please refer to the <Mind-Training Episode No. 7: Essence on the "Heart Sutra", the inter-relationships between the "Integration as One Entity" after Death, and the "Mind-Training, Nature of Emptiness"> on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efEbsot_eGI&feature=c4-overview&list=UUubIbecNzN3EBksL6Txragg, or visit the YouTube TV Channel of the Dudjom Buddhist Association at <http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist> for further viewing.)

Many people, who are either self-proclaimed, or were being addressed, as "Gurus", or "Rinpoches", or even so-called "Dharma Kings", know only how to perform Buddhist rituals, and/or explain some Buddhism terminologies and Buddhist teachings at a very shallow level. Hence, these people do not even know how to distinguish among so many of these "mental visualization" methods and "visualization programming", simply because if they do know how to distinguish them, they would have naturally explained the Buddhist teachings at a much deeper level. This is not about the question of "whether one has the abilities to express clearly, nor whether one is articulate or not". Rather, this totally involves the most basic and fundamental big problem of whether such kinds of persons have a thorough understanding on the deep levels of the Buddhist teachings. Whoever does not understand well would naturally be "unable to tell reasonably", and also "unable to speak out".

For the Dharma practitioners of exoteric Buddhism, most of them would concentrate on the studying of the Buddhist principles, and thus be able to explain some Buddhist terminologies and Buddhist teachings at a **rather shallow level**. However, they **lack the wisdom of authentic Dharma practice in order to have a deeper level of understanding on the Buddhist teachings**, and thus they are unable to distinguish among so many of these "mental visualization" methods and "visualization programming".

As for the Tantric Dharma practitioners, they are divided into two types: (i) one type is for those who only know how to perform rituals and practise ritualistic ceremonies, but they do not understand the principles of the Buddhist teachings, and thus only engaging in "blind practices and trainings" of various sorts, **without being able to understand** the Buddhist teachings at a deeper level from the wisdom of authentic Dharma practice; and in particular, on the "integration of both the theoretical understanding with authentic Dharma practice in the "Nature of Emptiness"; (ii) another type is for those who mainly concentrate in the studying of the "Buddhist scriptures of both the Sutras and Tantras", but have neglected the important aspects of authentic Dharma practices. They too are **unable to give clear explanations and guidelines** at a deeper level of the Buddhist teachings.

Especially in the process of propagating the "Esoteric Buddhism", you will find **lots of** so-called "gurus", doing **a lot of** rituals, empowerments and ceremonies, but too few explanations on the Buddhist Dharma, be it even at a very shallow level of the Buddhist teachings. It is really rare to have deeper levels of explanations on the Buddhist teachings, very rare, indeed. You can only see the deepest levels of explanations on the Buddhist teachings from such **top-notch** Great Masters and Great Realizers with their **writings**, such as **His Holiness Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche II (Jigdral Yeshe Dorje Rinpoche)**, the contemporary hundred-years-old **His Holiness Kyabje Chadral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche**, **His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (Tashi Paljor Rinpoche)** of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism,.....as well as many other great accomplishees, whose writings are at **amazingly profound depths**.

Therefore, in order to distinguish among which kinds of gurus are **competent enough to guide you** on your Dharma practices **without deviations**, the method is very simple, that is, to first look at their writings, listen to the levels and standards of their explanations on the Buddhist teachings. If these gurus just **could not even be able to write clearly, nor to speak out clearly**, and even does not know how to write or tell, that means that their abilities are very much limited indeed, and they are **not equipped with the abilities** to distinguish among so many of these "mental visualization" methods and "visualization programming". They probably only know to adopt a "reciting" style in teaching you the ritualistic procedures, such that you would most likely do the "blind practices and trainings" with them together. You can imagine that a **"deviated visualization programming"**, arising from a "minute difference, yet making a huge mistake", will appear upon you and how dangerous you are being caught up in such a situation? Therefore, it would be better not to follow those "gurus" who do not understand the Buddhist Dharma.



**HH Chatral Rinpoche (left),
HH Dudjom Rinpoche (centre), and
HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (right)**



What Are The Foundational “Concentration Powers” One Must Have for “Mental Visualization”?



With the "requisite of gratitude" as the foundational basis for the "mental visualization" method, one can smoothly develop a variety of "concentration powers" as needed by Dharma practitioners. With these "concentration powers", it will then be sufficient to form a "platform for one to rely on" in order to display the "in-born" **wisdom** that is originally possessed" by all sentient beings. Then, what are the most foundational "concentration powers" for "mental visualization"?

In the last chapter (please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 48 of the “Lake of Lotus”), it was mentioned that there are several types of “endurances” as mentioned in the above scripture that refer to certain levels of “mental concentration”. Among these, the **“Five Endurances”** are as follows:

1. **Endurance in Subdueness** – For those Dharma practitioners who make a bodhisattva vow at the beginner stage, they need to **subdue** their **minds** in order to bear with the good and adverse situations. This is the **“Mental concentration on subduing the mind”**;
2. **Endurance in Confidence** – This is a kind of mental concentration built upon one’s firm **confidence** with strong belief and determination;
3. **Endurance in Meekness** – The ability to subdue one’s mind has reached a certain level that one is able to endure naturally any situations and conditions, without having to suppress hardly one’s emotions. At this time, one’s mind becomes **gentle, soft, virtuous and smooth**. It is known as the **“Mental concentration on meekness”**;
4. **Endurance of Non-birth** – Those in this holy position have thorough understanding on the principle that everything is “non-existent (**non-birth**) by itself”. All beings with either conscience, or without conscience, have their appropriate causes and conditions for their existences. They have **“no self-existence”** of their own, and their true forms are “emptiness”. Therefore, their enduring minds do not waive and remain calm within this “Law of Non-Existence”, in order to personally accomplish this kind of **“Mental concentration of ‘Non-Existence’”**;
5. **Endurance on the Stillness of Extinction** – Saintly persons in the Resultant position have achieved complete realization of the state on the **“Stillness of extinction of Nirvana”**, meaning that they have possessed the **“Mental concentration of the ‘Right Meditation’”** which will enable them to gain entry into the “Dharma Realm”.

The first to the third types (**of Endurances**) are the foundational “concentration powers” that Dharma practitioners must possess. The fourth type is the foundational “concentration powers” need to be possessed by the “intermediate level



and high level” of Dharma practitioners. The fifth type is for those of an ultimately high level of “concentration powers”. The first to the fifth types of “concentration powers” can be nurtured by using the “Precepts” as a **balustrade**. As for the fourth and fifth types, they must rely on the **interacted effects** of the three components of “the proper **precepts**, the already mature **mental concentration** of the first to the third types (of **Endurances**), and the **wisdom**” working together at the same time, in order that it is sufficient to produce a stable, mature and corresponding concentration powers. As for the **method for the “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude”**, it is the requisite foundational basis for nurturing these five types of “concentration powers”, and it **has excellent and speedy effects**, especially on the **nurturing of the “Endurance in Subdueness” and the “Endurance in Meekness”**.

In the **“Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on some methods concerning the nurturing of **“concentration powers”**, which is the second level of training in “mental visualization”: the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires”..... **(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”](#)).



- (xxxxii) **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”).
- (xxxxiii) **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”).
- (xxxxiv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (40) –What Are the Fruitions of Requit in Teaching Sentient Beings the “Mind Ground Visualization on the Requit of the Four Kinds of Gratitude”? Would One Still Be Born Again After Entry to the “Pure Land”?** : What are the fruitions of requital for “repaying the four kinds of gratitude and kindness”? It depends on what kind of good deeds one is making since each of the fruitions of requital is different. There are many kinds of virtuous actions, then actually what kind of virtuous deeds sentient beings should make to enable them to attain “Buddhahood” ultimately? The word “liberation” is often mistaken as an “attainment of Buddhahood”, or being permanently free from the containment/ restraints of “karmic forces”. Such harmful misunderstanding would make Dharma practitioners go astray easily (please refer to the Issue No. 48 of the “Lake of Lotus”).
- (xxxxv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (41) –What Are the Methods, Focus, Composition, Process and Conditions for “Mental Visualization”? What Are The Foundational “Concentration Powers” One Must Have for “Mental Visualization”?** : The focus of “mind-training” is on how to “visualize one’s mind”. Those who are able to “visualize the mind” could achieve complete liberation and swiftly attain “Buddhahood”, and is the important guideline in the **“Mahayana Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**. The question is on how to “visualize one’s mind”? Whether it will be fine by just “visualizing” oneself as the Buddha or “deity”? As expounded by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni in the **“Mahayana Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation”**, while there are many kinds of “mental visualization” methods, boundless and immeasurable, the important point remains that the **ultimate “visualizing”** focus of this “mental visualization” method must be in accord with the **“non-attainment” on the “Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness”**. Otherwise, they will be “futile” (please refer to the Issue No. 49 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



EPILOGUE

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

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