

# མཚོ་པདྨ། Lake of Lotus

Issue No. 50

March 2014

Bimonthly

**Can "Rebirths" be Avoided  
After One's Death?**

**"Automatic & Gradual  
Transforming Patterns of  
Rebirths" Without "Purposely  
Linked to Materials"**

**What Are the Differences  
Between "Mental Visualization"  
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**How Do The "Five Aggregates  
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Inaugurated in January 2006

Opening hours: Mon to Sat  
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**The Profound Abstruseness of  
Life and Death**

# The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (50)

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

- **Can “Rebirths” be Avoided After One’s Death?**
- **“Automatic & Gradual Transforming Patterns of Rebirths” Without “Purposely Linked to Materials”**

## 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  $\beta$  waves** – the “conscious condition” of daily living;
2. **Alpha  $\alpha$  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  $\theta$  waves** – the peaceful “conscious condition” of having entered into higher levels of “visualization”, or at the deeper levels of “mental concentration”;
4. **Delta  $\delta$  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?

(Please refer back to Issue 49 of the “Lake of Lotus”).



## Can “Rebirths” be Avoided After One’s Death?

A question has been raised in the last chapter about which realm, among the “Six Realms”, is the easiest for human beings to be reborn into? The answer is the “Realm of Animals”. The magnetic fields of the “Realm of Animals” is **too close to those of human beings with a wide spectrum of coverage, as if like a “net engulfing the space above and earth below”**. Furthermore, as the standards of **morality** of modern human beings **deteriorate**, their “nature of minds” are getting worse and worse. Even though there are improved standards of education, it does not necessarily help to elevate people’s “nature of minds”; but instead, people are getting more and more selfish, and only seeking for personal gains and rewards. With this lack of **“pure honesty, faith and loyalty”**, what are increasingly more are their “witty and shameless greediness” and “villain and guiltless hatred”.

The operating Laws of Nature **has** always **been guided by the “nature of mind”**. When sentient beings depart from their physical bodies after deaths, there is no support for their wavering “nature of minds”. The unsteady and drifting “nature of minds” cause all sentient beings, who have **not been duly trained and don’t know what to do** in dealing with the new 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.

The magnetic fields of the “Realm of Animals” rightly has this sort of special characteristics. Moreover, **its number is huge**, which is even many many more times 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 deaths, 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 only as a deer (**and not that of any other fierce beasts**) which was **helpful** to him in exiting from that predicament later on.

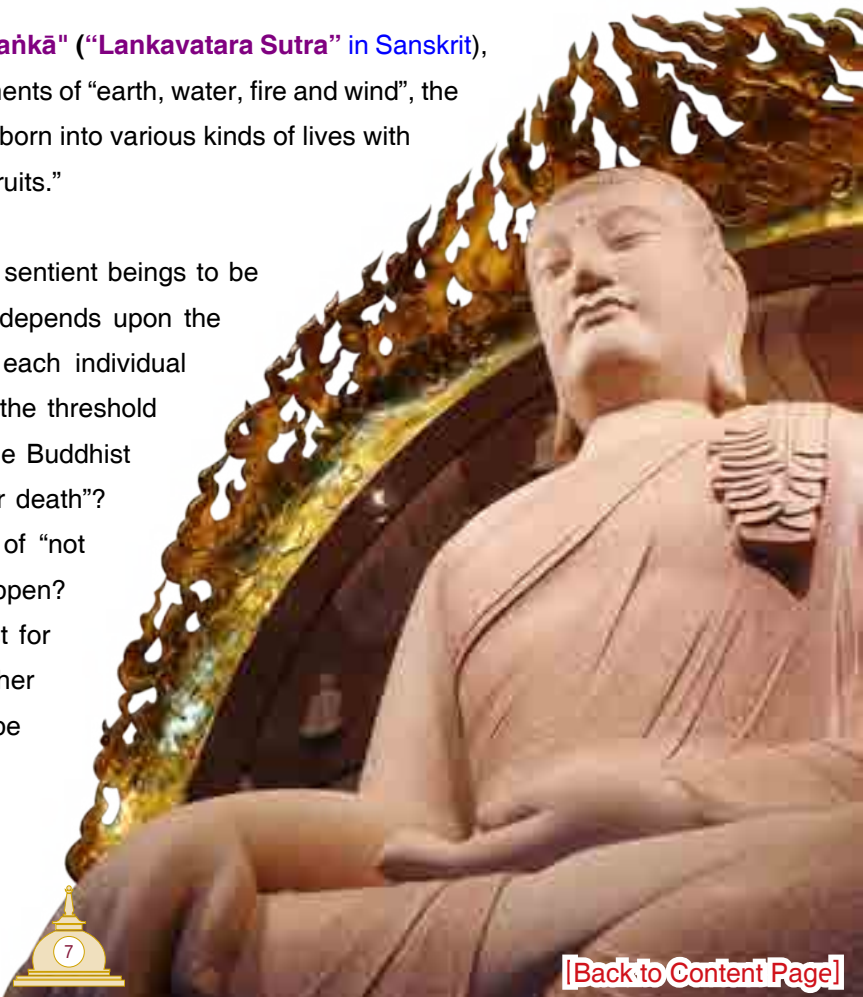


Since the operational Laws of Nature is **governed by the “nature of mind”**, the mechanism of **“rebirths”** works in a way that sentient beings do not want this “wavering and drifting condition” to happen, and so they just change in accordance with their own “changing nature of minds”. Furthermore, as these sentient beings **have long desired** to be attached to their physical bodies that they previously possessed, and so this desire of theirs in their “minds” to re-possess physical bodies would further **trigger** their “thoughts” of longing to be linked up with materials again, to be followed by their new **“rebirths”**. In such case, is it true that if one’s “thoughts” have been changed into “not to link up with any materials”, would one then be able to avoid “rebirth” to take place? And if so, from then on, would one no longer need to be transmigrated again, does it really work that way?

If the operational Laws of Nature is so simple, then Dharma practices would also become very simple, and the Buddhist teachings would not have been so profound, complicated and difficult to understand. The issue lies in the **“inconceivability of karmas resulting from causes and effects”** which would make things much more complicated. When the “thoughts” of sentient beings have been altered to that of “not to link up with any materials”, in order to avert the occurrence of “rebirths”, the **“winds of karmas”**, which have strong attractive forces and highly **permeated in all directions** (or simply known as the **“karmic winds”** in Buddhist terminology), are **much more powerful and stronger** than the strengths of “thoughts” of those sentient beings who are not “trained correctly”. **At an instant**, all sentient beings could be dragged into the “channels of rebirths”, and they are helpless and would not have **the slightest bit of resistance**. Hence, all those sentient beings who have not been “correctly trained” **definitely could not be able** to avoid “rebirths” after their deaths in this “cycle of karmic existence”.

In Volume 9 of the **“Scripture of the Descent into Laṅkā”** (**“Lankavatara Sutra”** in Sanskrit), it was mentioned that: “in making use of the four elements of “earth, water, fire and wind”, the ‘karmic winds’ would help all sentient beings to be reborn into various kinds of lives with materialistic bases, as if what happened to ripened fruits.”

In fact, when would this “karmic wind that compels sentient beings to be reborn” be generated? The answer is that: “it all depends upon the retributions of the various causes and effects of each individual sentient being”. There is no universal standard on the threshold of time period. If so, then why is it mentioned in the Buddhist literatures that “rebirth will take place 49 days after death”? If those sentient beings persist on the “thoughts” of “not being linked with any materials”, then what would happen? If the “Realm of Animals” is the realm most easiest for human beings to be reborn into, then which is the other “realm” that would, without being “purposely linked”, be automatically transformed into “rebirths”?





## **"Automatic & Gradual Transforming Patterns of Rebirths" Without "Purposely Linked to Materials"**

Some people who could recall the episodes of the periods from "deaths to rebirths", either from their memories via hypnotism, or with memories by birth, they would generally tend to have the following experiences during that period, and also nearing the stage of rebirth:

1. Same **habitual mode of thinking patterns** as that while still alive;
2. Same **habitual mode of behavioural patterns** as that while still alive;
3. Having lived under such conditions for a certain period of time, while **the length of this period of time would differ from one person to another person**. Some might have huge differences;
4. **Without any sign of omen**, rebirth takes place. At an instant, it is no longer possible to return to the situation before one's rebirth, and has been reborn as a human being.

The above situation can be said to be a very fortunate one. Even if the living condition is not too good upon one's rebirth, it is still to be reborn in the "Realm of Human Beings". It is, indeed, extremely difficult for one to be reborn as a human being. Many Buddhist literatures have described about its difficulties. Why is this so? Putting aside the rate of birth in the "Realm of Human Beings", there is such a huge difference when compared with that of the "Realm of Animals". Take another look at another realm of the "Realm of Hungry Ghosts", in which sentient beings can also **very easily enter into**. Then, one would realize and understand that it is extremely difficult for one's rebirth as a human being. To be able to be reborn as human beings are extremely fortunate, indeed.

Why is the "Realm of Hungry Ghosts" an **extremely easy realm** for sentient beings **to enter into**? When a person dies, with the departure of its spiritual body from one's physical body (**even though only its spiritual body exists, because of the fact that**), one's **habitual modes** of thoughts and behavioural patterns would not have been changed. Both of these sorts of **habitual modes** of thoughts and behavioural patterns have the "effects of tractions", which is the effect that the **"nature of one's mind as the cause, while the tractions as the effects"**.

Under this sort of effect of the **"nature of one's mind as the cause, while the tractions as the effects"**, it is **no longer under the rule** of the "Law of Causes and Effects" during the early phase of one's death (**in general usually around seven days after one's death**), due to the hundred percent on the recovery of one's "nature of mind". However, the purity of one's "nature of mind" deteriorates as time goes by, if the deceased has not received the **"correct education and training"**. The process of

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deterioration would occur within 14 days after death. (For more details, please refer to the Issues 9 to 11 of the DVDs on the “Practical Course on both Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism”, published by the Dudjom Buddhism Association). After the completion of this process of deterioration, the “nature of minds” of these sentient beings would resume back to the “habitual conditions of greed, hatred and ignorance” as when they were alive.

After this process, the “habitual conditions of greed, hatred and ignorance” is now **totally ruled by the “Law of Causes and Effects”**. As such, each individual’s rebirth would soon be prepared within a period of 35 days (**beginning at 14 days after death, for a total time-span of 49 days**), depending on the **degree of purity of their “natures of minds” would be, as well as on the various “karmic causes” that they had accumulated in their past countless lifetimes**. However, the **actual time length** of this period of 49 days is not the same for each individual, which will be based upon the time mechanisms of the “realm” that the individual currently dies, as well as that of the “realm” that one would soon be reborn into later on.

Basically, **the first half** of the 49-days’ period is in accord with the time mechanism of the “realm” where the deceased currently exists. **The second half** of the 49-days’ period is in accord with the time mechanism of the “realm” that the deceased would soon be reborn into. The time mechanisms so involved will be **affected by both the “nature of mind” and the “thoughts” of these sentient beings, such that variations do occur** among different sentient beings. This is what is known as “impermanence” in the Buddhist teachings. Thus, there is a universal principle of time mechanism of 49-days, on the one hand; and yet there are the processes of changes that might occur in-between this time-period due to the variations in the different “realms”, on the other hand. As a result, there will exist a great deal of variations and differences for this 49-days’ period, just like having the same human facial appearance, yet with the form and shape of the eyes, ears, mouths and noses as not all the same.

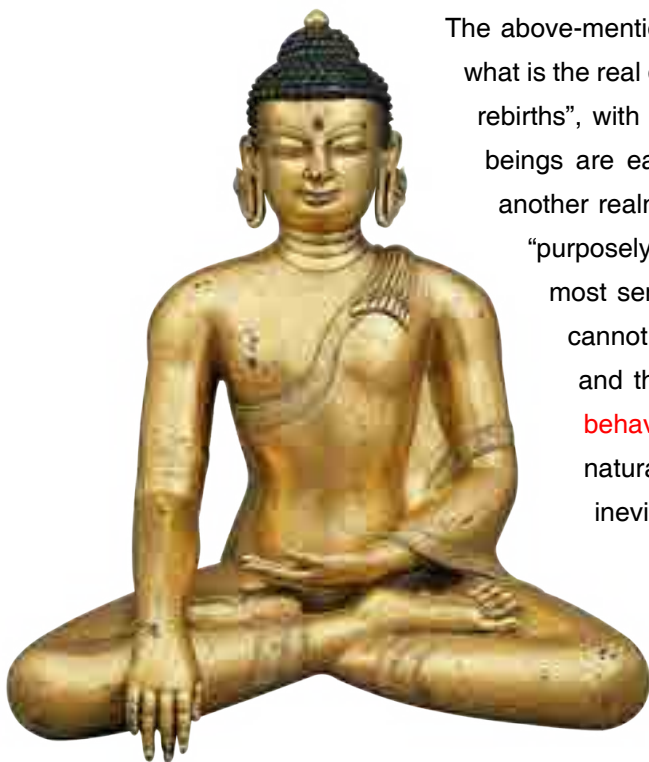
In the latter half of this period of 49-days, since sentient beings’ “spiritual bodies” are being affected by the influences of their **“natures of minds due to their habitual greed, hatred and ignorance” and their “thoughts”**, it starts to resume the process of **linking up again with the “karmic causes” of one’s past lives**. At the same time, these **“karmic causes” would trigger various “karmic effects”**. This kind of serially “interactive causes and effects” would gradually condense the sparsely materials onto one’s “spiritual body” without being self-aware of this. With this kind of sparsely-materialistic bodily formation, those sentient beings are easy to enter into the “realms of heavens, Asura, ghosts and hells”, which are composed of similarly sparse material structures. In general, a day in the time mechanism of these kind of realms could be equivalent to tens of thousands of years or more in the scale of human time-frame. As such, the period on the latter half of the 49-days can be **inconceivably long**.



In fact, to which “realm” would one enter into? It all depends upon the sentient being’s “nature of mind” and one’s “karmic causes”. The issue is this: there are too many “karmic causes”, some of which were good ones, while there were also bad ones as well. As to which of the “causes” will be triggered off for retribution first will have to “depend upon one’s nature of mind at that particular moment”, as well as the “karmic winds” which will blow oneself towards a certain direction for that particular “realm” to which one will be reborn later on. One’s “nature of mind” will influence one’s “karmic causes”, and thus the **direction and intensity** of one’s “karmic winds” could be altered. The key lies in **“when”** should this “process of alteration” take place? Improper timing would surely bring one to failure.

Sentient beings, without having **“correct education and training”** while they were still alive, would tend to adopt their past **habitual modes** of thinking and behavioural patterns accordingly during this critical moment. The longer the second half of the 49-days, the more will be the materialistic condensation onto one’s spiritual body as was induced by one’s “nature of mind”. The issue is that: as those sentient beings’ “natures of minds” deteriorate rapidly, with respect to their decline on the “standards of morality and norms”, their material beings so condensed will most likely to be those of the “realms of ghost and hells”, with the **majority of them having negative energies**.

Therefore, even though there are some sentient beings who **persist** on the “thought” of “not linking with any kind of materials”, they are still hard to get away from the consequences as a result of their **habitual modes** of thinking and behavioural patterns, resulting in having their “bodies of ghosts” to be formed gradually and naturally. Although they can still enter into the human world at the beginning to pay visits to their friends and relatives, after the period of 49-days when they enter into the **deeper level** of the “Realm of Ghosts”, they would no longer be able to enter into the human world again. They would suffer **hunger, bound by oppression and darkness**. The longer the latter half of the 49-days, **the deeper the levels** of the “Realm of Ghosts” have been reached by them.



The above-mentioned has often been misunderstood by a great many people as to what is the real difference between those “ghosts” that were manifested “before their rebirths”, with those “ghosts” that were manifested “after their rebirths”? Sentient beings are easiest to be fallen into the “Realm of Animals”. Yet, there is also another realm that one could be **automatically transformed** to be reborn without “purposely linked”, which is the “Realm of Ghosts”. This is also the realm where most sentient beings will be extremely easy to enter into, as most of them cannot avoid the **“habitual nature of mind with greed, hatred and ignorance”** and their **“thoughts”**, together with their **“habitual modes of thinking and behavioural patterns with greed, hatred and ignorance”**. Just like the natural calamities, the operational “Laws of Nature” are so merciless and inevitable. Besides the taking up of Dharma practices of Buddhism in order to lead sentient beings to become totally liberated from the cycle of karmic existence, there are no other methods available.





However, would it be the case that by carrying out Dharma practices of Buddhism, it can utterly resolve the bindings of the cycle of karmic existence? The problem lies in the fact that all sentient beings are so much fill with “the thought of greediness”, and prefer to gain rewards without any efforts. When they hear of such items as “supernatural powers, blessing for fortunes or ability, great Dharma methods, great Rinpoches”, they would think that there is no need for one’s Dharma practice, nor for the training of one’s own mind, not even to mention on the “observance of precepts and disciplines”. They would think that by the using of such “short-cuts”, they would be able to avoid those “wicked karmic winds” of theirs. When they hear of such an idea as “sudden enlightenment” (“Satori” in Japanese Zen), they would think that this is a “short-cut” to avoid their rebirths in the cycle of karmic existence.

One only has to think about this issue carefully, then you would be able to know that this is just impossible. Sentient beings would not be able to find such “great masters, or great Rinpoches who will never fell sick or not die”, nor would they be able to find “great masters, or great Rinpoches who can stand against natural calamities”. Even if they could find those “great masters, or great Rinpoches who carry out their Dharma practices, training of the mind, and the observance of precepts and disciplines in firm and solid manners” who have no way to get rid of “impermanence”, then why do those sentient beings still continue to indulge in their sweet dreams of “being superstitious on blessings, without paying any efforts on their training of the mind, and the observance of precepts and disciplines” without being awoken from it? Why don’t they face the question of “reincarnation after death” seriously and squarely, and take an attitude on the proper belief with correct Dharma practices so as to resolve this problem of reincarnation once and for all? Perhaps, there are some sentient beings who would consider that the worst situation for them would be to be reborn again as human beings. As such, how difficult will it be for one 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”.]



## Summary on the Key Points of Each Issue

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- The Different Phases of “Death”
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# ***The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (50)***

## **The Mind-Training Episode (13)**

By Vajra Master Pema Lhadren Translated by Fong Wei

- What Are the Differences Between "Mental Visualization" and "Sadhana Practices"?
- How Can One Nurture High Quality of One's "Nature of Mind" in the Mundane World?
- How Do The "Five Aggregates (Panca-Skandhas)" Influence One's "Nature of The Mind"?

### **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”).
  - (iv) **The “Jewels” Have Ten Kinds of Meanings** (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 46 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 **fruits 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 Differences Between "Mental Visualization" and "Sadhana Practices"?



"Dharma practices" must have to be based mainly upon one's "mind-training", rather than merely on the "Sadhana practices". Even for the practicing of "ritual procedures" ("Sadhanas" in Sanskrit), the ultimate purpose is one's "mind-training", irrespective of which Buddhas, or which Buddha Fields, one is trying to visualize. It is only by "mind-training" that is adequate enough to allow one to **release the great strengths of one's "Intrinsic Nature"**, to restore one's autonomous power, so as to change one's own karmic forces for a smooth entry into the Buddha Field or to "attain Buddhahood". All kinds of "supernatural powers and blessings" cannot accomplish this important task. Rather, one may end up losing a great opportunity to restore the powers of one's "Intrinsic Nature", **due to "superstitions" and can make things worse.**

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", which is the most important guideline in the "Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation". In the last chapter (please refer to the article on "The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice" in Issue 49 of the "Lake of Lotus"), it was mentioned that:

1. The focus of "Dharma practices" - "Mind-training"
2. The method for "Mind-training" - "Mental Visualization"
3. The composition of "Mental Visualization" - "Emptiness : Neither Existence Nor Voidness" (Please refer to the DVD on "Emptiness : Neither Existence Nor Voidness", or visit the Dudjom Buddhist Association's YouTube TV Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist> for viewing)
4. The process of "Mental Visualization" – progress gradually from shallow to deep, and from the foundational basis to gradual elevation.
5. The foundational basis of "Mental Visualization" - to nurture and develop "the Mind for Requit of Gratuities", including the adoption of "Emptiness : Neither Existence Nor Voidness" in one's nurturing.
6. The conditions for "Mental Visualization" - using "Precepts" as an aid to nurture one's "Mental Concentration" of the "Five Endurances" (\*Note 1 for the "Five Endurances").
7. The success of "Mental Visualization" - using "Precepts" to acquire one's "Mental Concentration", then from "Mental Concentration" in giving rise to one's "Wisdom", through "Wisdom" one becomes aware of the "Emptiness: Neither Existence Nor Voidness", in order to achieve the "Unsurpassed, Well-Balanced and Equally-Abiding, Complete and Perfect Enlightenment" in order to attain "Buddhahood".



In addition to seeking for lots of "empowerments" greedily, many people, who are learning and practising "Esoteric Buddhism", are also very fond of **collecting** Buddhist images and "Sadhanas" like "philately". Within these "Sadhanas", the "visualization of dieties" requires one to contemplate and visualize upon the "dieties" with one's "mind". "A diety" means the "**Main Buddha** of a particular practice", which usually refers to one's mindfulness and contemplation on certain Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The procedures of such kind of contemplation and visualization, together with the steps in chanting and reciting, are all set out in sequences to be the "ritual procedures", which are more commonly known as the "**Sadhanas**". Whether such a set of "ritual procedure" is well-structured, **proper and complete** or not will have to depend upon whether its contents have contained the above-mentioned seven elements, which **should exist in its contents even at a shallow level. Otherwise, it is just a set of incomplete and imperfect "ritual procedures"**.

Many of those "ambitious" people with greedy "nature of minds" would only care about collecting the Buddhist images and "Sadhanas", but not in the practicing of them very often. Even if they do practice them, they would only choose those "Sadhanas on Dieties" that are "prestigious enough, fierce enough and strong enough" to practise. In the process of their practices, they usually would only focus on the appearances and external looks of that particular "diety", instead of the "inner qualities on the nature of mind" of that particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. It should be noted that many of the "Dieties" of "Esoteric Buddhism", who are "prestigious enough, fierce enough and strong enough", would often appear ferociously. As such, the more practices done by these practitioners who **only concern themselves with the external (appearances) but disregard the internal (qualities)**, the more worsening their "nature of minds" would become. Besides, many of the "gurus" do not pay much attention to the importance of "Precepts", thus enabling their followers to develop **unknowingly** those "poor qualities on their nature of minds" by becoming arrogant, indulgent, ruthless, capricious, imperious, greedy, wicked, egoistic, self-righteous, and so on, drawing them all the more closer to the characteristics and types of the "Realms of Ghost and Hells".

**"Sadhanas" without "Precepts" are like having no "balustrades"**. Those who are practising and holding onto them do not actually know the limits of **"Withholding"**: what not to be done" and **"Upholding"**: what must be done". They would think that they themselves are really those "dieties" who are fearless, who do not need to observe any precepts, neither are there any precepts for them to observe, and that there are "nothing that cannot be done".

In fact, an "authentic guru" must know that any transmission of "Sadhanas" should be **accompanied by** certain degrees of one's commitments in complying with the "Precepts" and the "Samayas". In other words, in teaching the "Sadhanas" to their disciples without requiring them to observe the necessary "Precepts" and "Samayas", this would mean that this transmitter **does not even know** the "true and authentic Buddhist Dharma", and thus **is not considered an "authentic and real guru"**.



These so-called "gurus" who **have no regards** towards the "Precepts" and "Samayas" are training a group of **arrogant and self-indulgent people**, who just think of themselves as "the most prestigious, fierce and powerful dieties". This is **not beneficial** to the propagation of the Buddhist Dharma, but will only cause many more people to have swift downfalls to lower rebirths. In recent times, there is an entertainment magazine in Hong Kong which frequently publishes travel articles written by some people who have self-proclaimed themselves to have been "Esoteric Buddhist practitioners" for very long time. In each and every issue of it, these people have been advocating and publicizing "supernatural powers, blessings, superstition, mysteries" of all kinds. The main author was propagating how powerful "Esoteric Buddhism" can be, while holding a "huge male genitalia" by saying that "whoever wants a son, surely one will get it". These are the **specific appalling examples which are way beyond our imaginations**. These are, indeed, the **"black sheep of the family"** who have put their "ignorant and shameless" characters in disguise as representatives of the "Esoteric Buddhism", thus **tarnishing rapidly the image** of "Esoteric Buddhism" by making it to become extremely poor and lowly. Those "superstitious believers", who have been recruited under such kind of publicity, are those who are **only fond of "greed, hatred and ignorance"**, which goes directly contradictory to the real faith and authentic "Buddhism of the Right Path". No wonder why there are those people who (**were originally interested in "Tibetan Buddhism"**), not just shake their heads, but are now being held back because of this. This also enables some of those Exoteric Buddhist followers who (**are specifically against "Esoteric Buddhism"**) have openly criticized plausibly on "Esoteric Buddhism" by saying that it is not Buddhism, but is a "cult" instead.

Therefore, all Buddhist learners should not only learn **how to look for those "gurus" who can truly understand the real and authentic Buddhist teachings**, but also know **how to find the authentic Buddhist Dharma centres** in order not to **wrongly enter** into those "filthy" places filled with **"wicked natures of minds, evil magnetic fields, and negative energies"**. In addition, they also need to know **how to choose those "Sadhanas" that are suitable for their own Dharma practices**, as well as to **know what are the main focus of the "Sadhanas" that they are practising**. Otherwise, once their "nature of minds" have turned bad, they will only be fallen into the lower planes for transmigrations, and **there is no exception at all**. One **should be very cautious and careful about this!**

As the Operating Laws of Nature are principally **guided by the "Nature of Minds"**, the cause for getting "transmigrations" is due to sentient beings' own dislike in their "minds" concerning the "erratic" "turnings and drifting of one's "Nature of Mind", as well as due to their **attachment** and clinging onto the physical bodies that they have once possessed or want to possess, thereby **triggering** their "minds" to link up and connect with material substances in taking **transmigrations**. (Please refer to the article on "The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences" in Issues 49 and 50 of the "Lake of Lotus" concerning the main points on "The Nature of Minds in Guiding The Categories of One's Transmigration". )





## How Can One Nurture High Quality Of “ Nature Of Mind” in the Mundane World?



Since the good or bad "nature of minds" is so important as to influence the inclinations and directions of one's "transmigrations", and also influence the success rate on one's liberation from the shackles of the cycle of karmic existence, then how would one nurture an excellent quality of the "nature of minds" in this worldly life which is so full of earthly desires? "Sadhana Practices" belong to the "meditational" Dharma practice, whereas "mind-training" belongs to the "post-meditational" Dharma practice. How could one

link up "mind-training" with "Sadhana Practices", so as to blend them together as one while operating in "all behavioral programming", which is the most important point for one's "success and failure for all kinds of Dharma practices".

In the “**Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**”, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the “Mental Visualization” method for the “Repulsion of Desires “. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni considered that the reason for sentient beings’ not being able to nurture high quality of "nature of minds" is because worldly people have wrong interpretation and understanding of worldly desires, for which they have grasped onto very tightly, thus causing endless "rebirths in the cycle of karmic existences". In order to cultivate excellent quality on the "nature of minds", the first step would be for one to have the “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitudes” in order to **broaden one's “capacity of the mind”**, as well as to enhance and elevate on the “softness of one's mind”. The second step is to remove the “heavy impurities in one's mind” and to correct the wrong concepts. Therefore, by acquiring the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires”, one should first have a correct knowledge and understanding on the **dangers of worldly desires**, and then to further “develop a strong dislike of desires (**in their minds**) so as let go of them” before one can succeed.

What are the things that sentient beings love most? The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened us on the steps of the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires” with reference to those things that sentient beings love most.

### 1. One's own self -

What sentient beings love most is "their own selves", including their physical bodies, relatives, wealth. (**The inclination**) to re-possess one's own physical body after one's death has **become the first element that prompts one to take “transmigrations”**. Yet, where would one's "rebirth" go to this time? Are the environments there good or not? How do their physical appearances look like? All sentient beings will eventually find is that what they have chosen, or hoped for, have not really appeared. What follow them would still be "birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish".



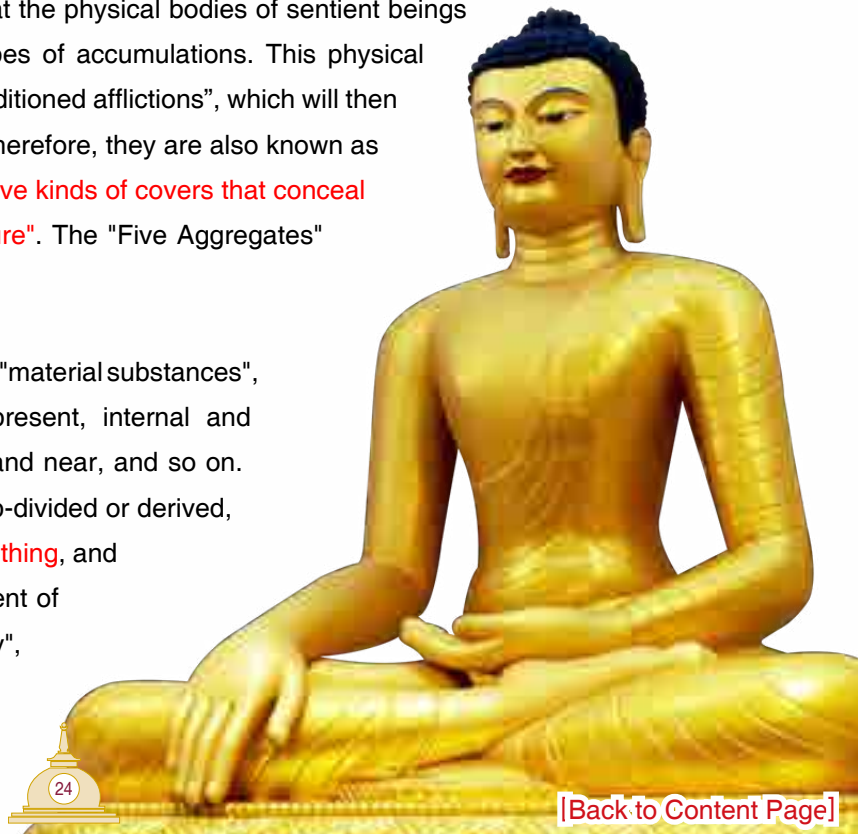
In the “**Mahâyâna Sutra of Mind Ground Contemplation**” [0307a25], the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had propagated that (in modern terminologies): [Sentient beings with good faith, this “lodging house” (referring here to the “dwelling place”) that you have constructed is a physical body that is formed by the combination of the “Five Aggregates (“**Panca-Skandha**” in Sanskrit)”, namely: the Form Aggregate (**Rupa-Skandha**), Sensation Aggregate (**Vedana-Skandha**), Perception Aggregate (**Samjna-Skandha**), Mental Formation Aggregate (**Samskara-Skanda**) and Consciousness Aggregate (**Vijnana-Skandha**)”. The Master of this physical body is your “Original Consciousness”. Are there any wise man who would like a “Conditioned House”? Only the “**Comfortable Treasure Palace of Enlightenment (Bodhi)**” (referring here to the “**Non-Conditioned House**”) would enable one to relinquish “birth, old age, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish”].

Why are the "Five Aggregates" a combination of elements that constitute the physical bodies of all sentient beings? What are these "Five Aggregates"? Why is it that the physical body formed by the combination of these "Five Aggregates" is considered as a "Conditioned House", which all wise men will not like? How come that it is the "Comfortable Treasure Palace of Enlightenment (Bodhi)" which belongs to the "Non-Conditioned House", can enable one to relinquish “birth, old age, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish”? Why is it that the nurturance of **excellent quality on the "nature of minds"** comes when one has acquired the **correct knowledge and understanding** on the Operating Laws of Nature?

## How Do the “Five Aggregates (Panca-Skandhas)” Influence One’s “Nature of the Mind”?

Let us first explain what the “**Five Aggregates**” are. “Aggregates” (“**Skandhas**” in Sanskrit)” means “Accumulations, conglomeration”. Thus, it means that the physical bodies of sentient beings are conglomerated and combined by these five types of accumulations. This physical body would then collect, gather and accumulate “conditioned afflictions”, which will then lead to immeasurable cycles of “lives and deaths”. Therefore, they are also known as the “**Five Shades**”, meaning the conglomeration of **“five kinds of covers that conceal one’s own “Awareness/Intrinsic Nature/Buddha Nature”**”. The “Five Aggregates” refer to the followings:

- (1) **Form Aggregate (Rupa-Skandha)** - “Form” means “material substances”, including those of the past, the future, the present, internal and external, crude and refined, good and bad, far and near, and so on. No matter how the “material substances” are sub-divided or derived, all sentient beings should **only need to know one thing**, and that is, after your death, once your “every moment of thought” has a desire to have a “physical body”,



then there will form the “accumulations, conglomeration” of “material substances”. Even though you do not want to have a “physical body”, your “winds of karmic forces” will cause you to “accumulate and conglomerate” “material substances” in forming a physical body for your transmigrations. (\*\*Note 2 for “Karmic Forces”). In simple terms, the “Form Aggregate” is to let you to have a physical body of a “combination of material substances”. All material bodies that are formed by the “Form Aggregate” must undergo the “Impermanence” process of “Formation, Persistence, Disintegration, Annihilation”. As such, it would inevitably render sentient beings to suffer “birth, old age, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish”. This kind of material body is known as the “Conditioned House”. How could one avoid such kind of process on the “aggregation of material substances” is also the main focus for nurturing good quality on the “nature of minds”. It is because with this good quality on the “nature of minds”, together with the appropriate and correct trainings on Dharma practices, one can avoid this process of “aggregation of material substances”. It is only in the “Comfortable Treasure Palace of Enlightenment (Bodhi)”, which is known as the “Non-Conditioned House”, that one can relinquish all the sufferings of “birth, old age, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish”.

- (2) **Sensation Aggregate (Vedana-Skandha)** – “Sensations” mean feelings and experiences, including those of the past, the future, the present, internal and external, crude and refined, good and bad, far and near, and so on. “Sensation” is the function of the “Mind” in relations to one’s capacity to bear with external objects under any kind of phenomenon. These feelings are accumulated by means of six kinds of instruments, or also known as the “Six Sense Organs/Faculties” (or “indriya” in Sanskrit), namely : “the eyes, ears, noses, tongues, bodies, and the mental organs”. “Faculties” refer to “sense organs”. The “energies and discerning abilities” upon which the operations and functioning of these six kinds of instruments will rely are known as the “Six Consciousness” (or “vijana” in Sanskrit), namely : “the Eye Consciousness, the Ear Consciousness, the Nose Consciousness, the Tongue Consciousness, the Body Consciousness, and the Mind Consciousness”. They correspond and react to the Six kinds of “Dusts”, or “Objects”, that can contaminate one’s “intrinsic nature”, and exist in the worldly “phenomena”. These are also known as the “Six Senses Data” (or “visaya” in Sanskrit), namely: “the forms, sounds, odours, tastes, tactile sensations, and Phenomena Sensation”. (“Phenomena Sensation” refers to “all kinds of phenomena” in the world, that is the mundane worldly matters which are known as “Phenomena Sensation”), the interactions of which will then produce six kinds of feelings known as the “Six Sensations”, namely: “the sensation of eye contacts, the sensation of ear contacts, the sensation of nose contacts, the sensation of tongue contacts, the sensation of bodily contacts, and the sensation of mental contacts”. These kinds of “feelings and sensations” will be later sent to the “Consciousness Aggregate” (Vijnana-Skandha), in order to form all the different “aggregates: accumulations”





to be connected together, in producing the inter-related influences of becoming real “karmic forces”. It is this “Sensation Aggregate” which makes one’s “nature of mind” to deteriorate and decline gradually, paving the way for one’s future “transmigrations”. Thus, in order to cultivate the high-quality of one’s “nature of mind”, one must start working on this “Sensation Aggregate”. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had thus recommended that the second stage for one’s “Mental Visualization” method should be the using of the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires” so as to relinquish one’s contacts with the “Six Senses Data”, in order to cut off the “accumulations of evil causes” for future “rebirths”. (Please refer to the article on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” in Issue 30 of the “Lake of Lotus” concerning the operations and abstruseness of the “Mind Phenomena”).

(3) **Perception Aggregate (Samjna-Skandha)** – “Perception” means “conception, cognition, thinking”. It takes the various characteristics and features from the good, bad, disgusting, affectionate phenomena in order to form all sorts of “perceptions”. Its accumulation and collection methods are mainly by the six kinds of “perceptions” which are produced when “Consciousness” corresponds and reacts to the “Six Senses Data”. These are known as the “Six Perceptions”, namely: “the form perceptions, sound perceptions, odour perceptions, taste perceptions, tactile perceptions, and Dharma perceptions”. They include those “perceptions” of the past, the future, the present, internal and external, crude and refined, good and bad, far and near, and so on. These kinds of “perceptions”, which have been twisted and distorted by “Consciousness” and the “Six Senses Data”, will be sent to the “Consciousness Aggregate” (Vijnana-Skandha), in order to form all the different “aggregates: accumulations” to be connected together, in producing the inter-related influences of becoming real “karmic forces”. It is this “Perception Aggregate” which makes one’s “nature of mind” to deteriorate and decline gradually, paving the way for one’s future “transmigrations”. Thus, in order to cultivate the high-quality of one’s “nature of mind”, one must start working on this “Perception Aggregate”. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had thus recommended that the second stage for one’s “Mental Visualization” method should be the using of the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires” so as to adjust one’s “Consciousness” and to relinquish one’s contacts with the “Six Senses Data”, in order to cut off the “accumulations of evil causes” for future “rebirths”.

(4) **Mental Formation Aggregate (Samskara-Skanda)** – “Mental Formation” refers to “the actions and deeds made by one’s body, speech and mind”. These behavioural actions, including those of the past, the future, the present, internal and external, crude and refined, good and bad, far and near, and so on, will cause all sorts of “virtuous, non-virtuous, neutral” “karmas”. The accumulation and collection methods for “Mental Formation” are usually under the influences and urges of the “Sensation Aggregate, Perception Aggregate, Consciousness Aggregate”,

and then to be accomplished by one's "Form Body of material substances" (through the actions and deeds of one's body, speech and mind) in becoming real "karmic forces". Such "karmic forces" so accumulated will then cyclically influence and control the degree and progress of the accumulations made by the "Five Aggregates", thus intensifying and accelerating the effects in the worsening of one's "nature of mind", and thus causing one's further downfalls for lower "rebirths". Thus, in order to cultivate the high-quality of one's "nature of mind", one must stop the formation of this "Mental Formation Aggregate". The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had recommended that the second stage for one's "Mental Visualization" method should be the using of the "Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires", so as to relinquish one's contacts with the "Six Senses Data", in order to abate and diminish the degrees and progresses of accumulations of the "Sensation Aggregate, Perception Aggregate, and Consciousness Aggregate", in order to cut off the "accumulations of evil causes" for future "rebirths".

- (5) **Consciousness Aggregate (Vijnana-Skandha)** – "Consciousness" means "discernment", that is the function of "Consciousness" to distinguish those objects and environments that are faced by oneself, in order to start off with further actions to accumulate and collect. The "Consciousness Aggregate" includes the "Consciousness" of the past, the future, the present, internal and external, crude and refined, good and bad, far and near, and so on. The accumulation and collection methods for "Consciousness" are usually by the using of the "Six Sense Organs/Faculties" (or "indriya" in Sanskrit, of "the eyes, ears, noses, tongues, bodies, and mental organs") to operate on their originally- possessed "Six Consciousnesses" (the Eye Consciousness, the Ear Consciousness, the Nose Consciousness, the Tongue Consciousness, the Body Consciousness, the Mental Consciousness) to "discern and differentiate" the "Six Senses Data" (from the externals, namely: the forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, and Phenomena Sensation) for further increasing accumulations. According to the functions of the "Consciousness", it can be further sub-divided into eight different kinds. The "Mental Consciousness", also known as the "Sixth Consciousness", is the integral center of all psychological and mental activities. All our sensations of "seeing, hearing, feeling", and our "perceptions, cognitions, thoughts and judgments" of all sorts are mainly guided and directed by the "Sixth Consciousness". In western psychology, this "Sixth Consciousness" belongs to the level of one's "consciousness". Moreover, "the Eye Consciousness, the Ear Consciousness, the Nose Consciousness, the Tongue Consciousness, the Body Consciousness" are to be respectively known as the "First Consciousness" (or the discriminations associated with the "Eye Consciousness"), the "Second Consciousness" (or the discriminations associated with the "Ear Consciousness"), the "Third Consciousness" (or the discriminations associated with the "Nose Consciousness"), the "Fourth Consciousness" (or the discriminations associated with the "Tongue Consciousness"), the Fifth Consciousness" (or the discriminations associated with the "Body



Consciousness"). Given that this "Consciousness Aggregate" is like the mastermind of one's integral center, therefore, it is deemed to be the key position in the nurturing of the good quality in one's "nature of mind". So long as its newly collected data are subject to stringent screening criteria, one can then guard against and prevent any new contaminations. Together with the addition of proper and right thinking to correct one's misconceptions, the old distorted and crooked data can then be amended, or they can be deleted by way of one's "repentance and confession" (this is subject to the degree and timeliness of one's "repentance and confession" with other factors). This has an extremely important influence on the elevation of one's "nature of mind".

Buddhism considers the "mind" as the cardinal subject of all our spiritual functions. There are eight different kinds of functions of the "mind", and the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had called it as the "mind phenomena" (the "citta" in Sanskrit. For more details, please refer to the DVD on "The Teachings on Authentic Practice in Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism: Session 6). Among the eight different functions of the "mind", the most basic and fundamental of them all is the "Eighth Consciousness" (or "Alaya-vijnana" in Sanskrit). "Alaya" is a Sanskrit word meaning "storehouse". The Chinese text "Discourse of the Chapter on the Elaboration of the Profound Meanings of Mahayana" has mentioned that "Consciousness" is another name for the "Mind". In simple terms, "Consciousness" is a kind of "Energy".

The characteristic of the "Eight Consciousness" is like a warehouse, or the hard disk of a computer. All kinds of matters and affairs, that had occurred in one's past countless lifetimes regardless of whether they were good or bad, would have been stored in the "Eighth Consciousness". The "Eighth Consciousness" is a place for the stashing of all "karmic forces" of sentient beings, and is the cardinal subject for the "cycle of karmic existence" (or "Samsara" in Sanskrit). It has existed ever since time immemorial, and will last forever without an end. Even though it goes through endless cycles of various lifetimes, it will never be deteriorated or annihilated. Master Xuanzang described the "Eight Consciousness" as "it is the last to depart, and yet it is the first to come as the Master" -- meaning that the "Eight Consciousness" leaves only after the decay of the old physical body when one dies, yet it enters into the mother's womb long before one's rebirth of the new physical body for the next life. Whether it is to "come" or "go", this "Eight Consciousness" is "the Governor, the Master" of this physical body. (\*\*Note 2 on "Karmic forces").



The "Eighth Consciousness" is a combination of one's "intrinsic nature" with the "mundane deluded mind", a fusion of both "awareness" and "attachment to ignorance" into one, and thus all sentient beings do have the ability of "self-awareness". Every moment of thought, or every word or deed, will form "a seed of karmic force" known as "karmic seed", or simply "seed" (or "bija" in Sanskrit), and can be conceived of as some kind of a "mental strength" with memory functions to be stored inside the "Eighth Consciousness". Hence, the "Eighth Consciousness" can be said to be the "warehouse" of the "Consciousness Aggregate".







Since the "Eighth Consciousness" is merely responsible for the function of storage, it does not have the function of **differentiation**. However, the habitual "nature of minds" of all sentient beings is **fond of looking outwards to explore and grasp onto concepts and things of the external environment, and to accumulate and gather information**. For the convenience of operation, another kind of function is thus derived from the "Eighth Consciousness" through one's "mental strength", to be known as the **"Seventh Consciousness"** (or **"Manas-vijnana" in Sanskrit**). "Manas" is a Sanskrit word meaning "calculations or conjectures", which are the functions of one's **"Mind"**, and is the "noumenon" of one's "Mental Consciousness" (or **"Mano-vijnana" in Sanskrit, or simply the "Sixth Consciousness"**). The main function of the "Seventh Consciousness" is to **"examine, judge, perceive and calculate", which is a kind of "discernment"** specializing in **differentiating critical "examinations and calculations"** of the "good, bad, beautiful, ugly", and so on.

As the "Seventh Consciousness" is rooted from the "Eight Consciousness", and only comes into being for the fulfillment of **desires**, it is the foundation for the **"mental strength of desires"**. In this way, it is influenced by the "mental strengths of greed, hatred and ignorance" that has been stored inside the "Eight Consciousness", and grasps onto the "images projected by these negative forces", thus deeming it that there is the **existence of an "ego" or a "selfhood"** (known as **"ego attachment" in Buddhism**). In the course of a lifetime, one's distorted "nature of mind", due to one's attachment to one's own "ego", has gradually been formed. It **consistently and ceaselessly plots for** only selfish gains and benefits of self-interest and self-protection. Hence, this "Seventh Consciousness", which belongs to the **"contaminated part"** of the "Eighth Consciousness", could be considered as the **center for handling selfishness and self-concern**, and thus making the "intrinsic nature" of the "Eight Consciousness" to become **more dim and blurred**, and more **deeply hidden**. In other words, the "Seventh Consciousness" is derived from the **"contaminated part"** of the "Eighth Consciousness", yet it then **further contaminates the "Eighth Consciousness"** by its functions, and thus **both are inter-penetrating and influencing each other**.

When a person's "nature of selfishness and self-concern" has become even more and more aggravated, one would then wish to obtain and garner even more gains and benefits for oneself from the **external environments**, and so the **"Sixth Consciousness"** (or **"Mano-vijnana" in Sanskrit, or simply the "Mental Consciousness"**) is formed out of the "Seventh Consciousness" (or **"Manas"**) so as to play out the **"function of application"**. Both are parts of one's "Mental Consciousness", with the "Seventh Consciousness" as its "noumenon", while the "Sixth Consciousness" is its "function of application".



The "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" belong to the domain of one's "unconscious". Due to the fact that the "Seventh Consciousness" is the "root of one's Mental Consciousness", while the "Eighth Consciousness" is the "basic ground and root" of all the phenomena (or "dharma" in Sanskrit) of the universe. Hence, all the activities of the "Sixth Consciousness" (or the various discriminations associated with the "Mental Consciousness") are doubtlessly totally influenced by both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness".

After having collected all sorts of information and data through the "First to the Fifth Consciousnesses (of "the Eye Consciousness, the Ear Consciousness, the Nose Consciousness, the Tongue Consciousness, and the Body Consciousness"), in accordance with the habitual guidance and influences of both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness" as its main criteria, the "Sixth Consciousness" would then classify these information and data under its own "subjective discriminations and judgments", and then hand them over to the "Seventh Consciousness" for further "examinations, calculations", or even distortions respectively. In this way, the "Seventh Consciousness" would act as a "messenger" to further pass on these information and data to the "Eighth Consciousness" for storage.

The "Eighth Consciousness" thus stores lots of distorted "cognitions and perceptions", and so the "Buddhist Dharma" has called these as the "obstacles due to one's knowledge", as the knowledge so "recognized" is, indeed, different from the truth, and thus it will form some kind of a "hindrance" in preventing oneself from the recovering of one's own "real intrinsic nature"; that is, to prevent oneself from the "attainment of Buddhahood".

Due to the inter-connecting effects of both the "Seventh Consciousness" and the "Eighth Consciousness", all sentient beings, out of their "self-attachments", have come up with the idea that "I have a physical body, which represents 'Me'". Thus, after sentient beings' death, even though they can respond to the Evolutionary Laws of Nature in recovering the boundless powers of their "Self Nature/Intrinsic Nature" in an instant, they still intend to restore "a physical body" simply because this concept of "ego" is too deep-rooted. It also causes the "Consciousness Aggregate" to produce the function of "blocking and obstructing the Self Nature", so as to immediately conceal and hide away the already-recovered boundless great powers of the "Self Nature", and weaken its abilities. As the "Consciousness Aggregate" continues to be strengthened, this kind of concealed and weakened abilities would get worse and worse. With the help of this "Consciousness Aggregate", the "karmic winds" would then resume their operations, such that the "Five Aggregates" can re-make their connections as usual, pushing sentient beings into their roads towards "transmigrations". It is in this way that the "karmic cycle of existences" continues on ceaselessly, and so sentient beings cannot find a "way to escape" from this ocean of sufferings of "life and deaths" again and again.





The origin of our “Mind” is our own “Self-Nature”, which is originally **oneness, purity and united**, such that it has the boundless and greatest power. However, by “grasping” onto certain subtle “points of consciousness”, the “First to Eighth Consciousnesses” have all been gradually derived and created. This then further intermingled with matters to form all sorts of sentient beings. Therefore, one should get rid of all the **“grasping, accumulations”**, even the most subtle “points of consciousness”, in order to facilitate the fusion of the “First to Eighth Consciousnesses”, so as to combine together as one and thus return to the original **oneness, purity and united “Self Nature”**, whereby one could be liberated from the “cycle of karmic existence”, and eventually to “attain Buddhahood”. This is the **essence** of all Dharma practices, and is really the **ultimate goal**.

These kinds of “Mind Phenomena” actually follow all sentient beings’ “minds” to continuously “grasping and accumulating”, and thus have evolved through countless past lifetimes in countless “time” periods. Just like “The Theory of Evolution”, this

evolutionary process takes a very long long time to evolve and develop, and thus it will also require a very long long time to “reverse its process”, in order to go back to its origin. Therefore, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had stated that the ordinary practices of the “Exoteric Buddhism” will require “three asamkhyā kalpas” of time to enable oneself to return to one’s own “Self Nature” in order to “attain Buddhahood”. (**“Three Great Kalpas”: a kalpa refers to a period of time, a “small kalpa” is equal to the time required for an universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”. Twenty “small kalpas” equal to one “medium kalpa” and four “medium kalpas” equal to a “great kalpa”. And one asamkhyā kalpa is equivalent to the  $10^{51}$  time of a universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation”. Thus, three asamkhyā kalpas is actually an immeasurable long period of time, as the time required for each universe to go through the process of “formation, persistence, disintegration, annihilation” will be different.**)

As enlightened by the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, once the sentient beings understand this **series of connections and link-ups, as well as their evolving procedures**, they will then know where **the key positions lie for dismantling the “karmic cycles of transmigrations”**. The key positions are in the **“dissolution of the Five Aggregates”, and the recovery of one’s own “Self Nature/Buddha Nature/Awareness”**. This is because the physical body, thus constituted by the “Five Aggregates”, contains “self-attachment of ego” and is a **false “self”**, which will evolve slowly in a conditioned way, step by step, into a physical body for “karmic cycles of transmigrations”. That is why the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had enlightened that “All the wise men do not like the “Conditioned House”. Only the “Comfortable Treasure Palace of Enlightenment (**Bodhi**)”, which exists in “one hundred percent of awareness”, is free from any “self-attachment





of ego”, and without any physical bodies. The best choice for all wise men would be the “Comfortable Treasure Palace of Enlightenment (Bodhi)” in the “Realm of Truth” (“Dharmadhatu” in Sanskrit), and thus is known as the “Non-Conditioned House”, in which one can relinquish “birth, old age, illness, death, sorrow, grief and anguish”.

So how can one “dismantle the Five Aggregates” swiftly without having to spend the “Three Great Kalpas” of time? What are the ways for one to “dismantle the Five Aggregates” so as to remove this “self-attachment of ego”? How could one **recover one’s own “Self Nature/Buddha Nature/Awareness”**? What other things are needed, in addition to the “Mental Visualization on the Requit of Gratitude” and the “Mental Visualization on the Repulsion of Desires”, in order to nurture the good quality on the “nature of minds”? ..... (To be Continued).

\* **Note 1:** The **“Five Endurances”** are namely:

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”.





**\*\*Note 2: "Karmic Forces":**

"Karmic forces are tractions. The web of "karmic forces: Due to both virtuous and wicked deeds amassed through countless past lifetimes, the linkages of the mental strength of both one's inner self and of others are crisscrossing and inter-influencing each other, so as to form the network of tractions. This is known as the "karmic network. Please refer to the DVD on "The Inconceivable Law of Karma, published by the Dudjom Buddhist Association, or visit the Dudjom Buddhist Association YouTube TV Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/DudjomBuddhist> for viewing.

**(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".)



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## 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”](#)).

(xxxii) **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”](#)).

(xxxiii) **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”](#)).

(xxxiiii) **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”).
- (xxxxvi) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (42) –What are the differences between "Mental Visualization" and "Practices on Ritual Procedures"? How Can One Nurture High Quality Of “ Nature Of Mind” in the Worldly Mundane World? How Do the “Five Aggregates (Panca-Skandhas)” Influence One’s “Nature of the Mind”?** : “Dharma practices” must be based principally on one’s “mind-training”, rather than merely on the practice of “Sadhanas”. Even for “Sadhanas Practices”, the ultimate purpose is on one’s “mind-training”, irrespective of which Buddhas or which Buddha Fields one is to visualize. It is only by “mind training” that it is adequate to make you release the great strengths of one’s own “Intrinsic Nature”, to restore one’s autonomous power so as to change one’s own karmic forces for a smooth entry into the Buddha Field or to “attain Buddhahood”. All kinds of “supernatural powers and blessings” cannot accomplish this important task. Rather, one may end up losing an opportunity to restore the powers of one’s “Intrinsic Nature” due to “superstition” (please refer to the Issue No. 50 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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