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Lake of Lotus

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"Mental Concentration"**

**The Shortcuts for the
"Attainment of
Buddhahood" in the
"Tibetan Book of the
Dead"**

**Do the "Pure Lands"
Exist Forever?**

**Three Methods to
Break Away from
Adversities by
Making Use of the
Circumstances**



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The Heart Nectar of the Saints -- A Prayer of Aspiration Which Comprises the Essential Points of the Oral Teachings (4)



by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

The **solitary place**, like a medicinal prairie in the summer,
If I do not stay on it, there is no way for the good qualities to grow.
When I **stay** in the **mountains**, **without wandering into** the **black towns**,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.



This **desire for comfort**, like a misery ghost lodged in the home,
If I am not free of it, painful thirst of needs will never be extinguished.
Without **making offerings**, **as to a god**, to the demon who undermines me,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.



This **alert Mindfulness**, like the lock on a castle gate,
If it is lacking, the movements of illusion will not cease.
At **the coming of the thief**, not leaving the latch unfastened,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.



The **true Nature**, unchanging like the sky,
If I do not realize it, the ground of the **Right View** will not be established.
Without fastening myself in iron chains,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.

This **Awareness**, like an immaculate crystal,
If I do not **see it**, the clinging onto the efforts of meditation cannot be dissolved.
Having this **inseparable companion**, **without seeking for another**,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.



This **Natural Mind**, like an old friend,
If I do not recognize it, all my activities will only be **deluded** (**as false Dharma**).
Without groping **in the darkness with my closed eyes**,
May I sincerely practise the Supreme Dharma.



His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche



His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

In short, if I do not **give up** the concerns of this life,
There is no way to practise the Dharma for the benefit
of the next life.
Having decided to show **great kindness** to myself,
May whatever I do **transform** itself into the Supreme
Dharma.



To have wrong views towards the Guru's instructions
that **accord with the Dharma**,
To lose faith in the Deity when bad karma emerges,
To discontinue the Sadhana and practices when
adverse circumstances arise,
May such obstacles will not occur at the approach of
accomplishment.



All these **activities** have no more sense than making
a tour of a desert,
All these **efforts** are the very cause for the stiffening of
my own character.



His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche



His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

All these **thinking** only adds on confusions to my
delusions,
What worldly people consider to be the Dharma is but
the cause to bind myself.



All these **actions** produce no results,
All these **ideas** do not have a single target,
All these **numerous wants** will never be realized,
Having given up all these, may I be able to practise
the Oral Instructions.



If we want to do it, let us call to **witness** the words of
the Victorious Ones,
If we think we can really do it, let us **merge** our own
minds with the Dharma,
If we think we will practice, let us **follow** the **examples**
of the past Saints.
You spoiled brats, is there any other way?



Taking a **humble** position, and to be **contented** with
the richness of the Treasure.
Free from the bindings of the eight worldly concerns,
and be **persevere and steadfast** in one's practice,
May the **Guru's blessings** enter into me, and may my
realization become equal to space.
May we become the **inheritors** of the Kingdom of
Samantabhadra.



*Thus having united the meanings of the adamantine
words of the past Saints, I have written this as my own
prayer -- Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (His Holiness Dudjom
Rinpoche II).* 🏴



His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

The Contemporary Mahasiddha with Many Prophecies --- Our Lord of Refuge, His Holiness Chadrak Sangye Dorje Rinpoche (13)

by His Holiness' Humble Disciples Yeshe Thaye & Pema Lhadren



Namo Gurubhya!

We bow down at the Lotus Feet of our most beloved Lord of Refuge, the precious Wish-fulfilling Gem!

Palden Tsa'wai Lama Channo!

Glorious Root Guru, please pay heed to us, and bless us with your Body, Speech and Mind!

Emaho!

How wonderful and marvelous! With such an exceptional and rare opportunity to hear such a story!

Spiritual Advice for Dharma Practitioners



His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche

His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche had further advised us: "There are **three kinds of Dharma practitioners**: firstly, there are those who look like practitioners **outwardly**, but inwardly they are not real practitioners; secondly, there are those who talk very high but there is no realization at all for them, such that their **"views" and "actions" never match**; thirdly, there are those who do not look like practitioners outwardly, but who are in fact genuine practitioners inside, as their **"views" and "actions" match together as one**." These words of wisdom have given us a **yardstick** to measure all Dharma practitioners in this Degenerate Age!



Guru Rinpoche

Because of the attractiveness of materialistic hedonism in this world with so many different “traps”, many people have the kind of “**utilitarian mentality**” in looking for “**short-cuts**”, and thus they are easily led astray by all kinds of “**fast food**” systems of the so-called Dharma teachings. In trying to convince them of the **urgency** of liberation from the “cycle of karmic existence” (**Samsara**) is not an easy matter, even though the skillful means of Vajrayana teachings are already “short-cuts” among “short-cuts”! Those “who want to reap the rewards but would not want to pay for the price” would hope to find a realized Master in order that they can receive his **blessings**, by making offerings to him, even though they would pay lip service by saying that they are helping to spread the Holy Dharma for others’ sake. In fact, they hope to be blessed so that he and his whole family can have a prosperous living, that his children and grandchildren are flourishing and well, that they are all cured of any illnesses and be dispelled of all obstacles and disasters, to be healthy and long-lived, and that they will be blessed and saved when they were dead, and to have a good future life!

If according to the “**Law of Cause and Effect**”, all such kind of hopes will not be effective solely by replying upon blessings, unless one can diligently practice the Holy Dharma. Yet, only a very few people can understand this basic and fundamental idea! **Because there is a huge “demand” for blessings, and that is why there are so many “supply” of “false teachers” nowadays!** In fact, we can now see that there are

“more supplies of ‘teachers’ than the demands” for them!

In a nutshell, if one meets a truly great realized and accomplished Master, yet if one does not ask for his teachings and then diligently practice his Holy Dharma, but only ask for his blessings in this life and at the moment of death, the best that one will reap is to be reborn in the “Three Upper Realms” (of either humans, gods or demi-gods). Then, one will have to flow with one’s own karmas in the “cycle of karmic existence”, and may again end up in the “Three Lower Realms” (of either hell, hungry ghosts or animals).

The Importance of the “Spiritual Master”

Hence, if one does not practice the Holy Dharma but only want to receive blessings, the chance of hoping to become liberated from this “cycle of karmic existence” (**Samsara**) is indeed very slim, and is **almost impossible!** Even though the skillful means of Vajrayana teachings are “short-cuts” for liberation, it will take years and decades of trainings and practices in order to have any results. Hence, we should try to practise as soon as possible, or else we might feel regret in the future. Nowadays, His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche is such an excellent example for us in



His Holiness Chadrak Rinpoche



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche

order that we can follow his footsteps of practice so as to benefit both oneself and others. It is well said in a Chinese poem: “Without a strong and severe winter, the chill of which penetrates into the bones, one cannot smell the fragrance of the blossoming plumrose flowers in springtime.”

As it is, indeed, a “rarity for us to have this precious human body”, and so if we do not take advantage of this by finding the Path for Liberation, very soon we will find ourselves to be “on our death beds”. There is a Dharma practitioner who **had sighed** and said to us before: “For me, just to be able to find the correct Path of Liberation has already taken me many years to do so; by the time that I am certain that the Vajrayana teachings are the most supreme, it then took me more than a decade in order to find a Genuine Guru; after I had practised the Holy Dharma, it will again take many years of trainings and practices before I will be able to get some results. By that time, I think I am already very near to my own death!”

The most venerable Patrul Rinpoche in “**The Way of Great Perfection**” mentions the following spiritual advice: “No sutra, tantra, or sastra speaks of any being ever attaining perfect Buddhahood without having followed a Spiritual Teacher. We can see for ourselves that nobody has ever developed all the accomplishments of the stages and paths by relying on their own efforts and abilities alone.... First you followed a supreme Master and obeyed him; then you practised, undertaking great hardships; **finally, your**

mind and your Teacher’s Mind became one, and you inherited the Lineage. Peerless Teacher, I bow down at Your Lotus Feet!”

Even for the Lord Buddha himself, he also had had many teachers before. **The searching for an Authentic Guru is the first gateway, and also the most important gateway, towards the Path of Liberation.** No doubt, His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche has been recognized, by all the great Dharma practitioners of our times, as a great realized and accomplished Master and a Holy Saint. It will save you a lot of times and efforts, as well as doubts and searches, if you can follow His Holiness as a disciple. The only problem is whether His Holiness will think that you are a “good enough” and ripe vessel for His precious teachings? ❦

....(To be Continued)

Human birth is hard to get at, but death comes at any moment, Sufferings and dangers of the cyclic existence are immense, Natural circulation of causes and effects in chain reactions, The best way for liberation is to search for the Genuine Guru!



His Holiness Chadrul Rinpoche During Pilgrimages in India



The Profound Abstruseness of Life and Death :

The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences (18)

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

The Reasons for the Loss of Essences on the Buddhist Teachings

It was stated in the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”** of “Tibetan Buddhism” that there are **shortcuts** for either “rebirths in the Pure Lands, or liberation from the cycle of karmic existence” (**Samsara**), or for the “attainment of Buddhahood”. This objective could be achieved without ascetic practices, or having suffered pains in the lower limbs (**due to the cross-legged meditation posture for long periods of time**), and **not having to wait** for countless lifetimes of Dharma practices. It was so mentioned in the **“Tibetan Book of the Dead”** that “a deceased person could see the brightness after death, and if the person **knows how to identify** it, and then **‘dissolve** into it’, he or she would gain liberation and ‘attain Buddhahood’”.

However, there were no explanations as to how to “dissolve into brightness”, and so this has misled a lot of people in **thinking that** it would be **quite simple** to do so. Is it really true that if a person who proceeds towards the “blazing light” and averts the soft dim light, then this would be the method for leading to one’s success? After advancing towards the “blazing light”, what kinds of scenes would then occur? It is an **issue** that all Dharma practitioners, including those of “Vajrayana Buddhism”, **do not realize**.

They all would think that once they stride towards the “blazing light”, they would automatically result in either “rebirths in the Pure Lands, or liberation from the cycle of karmic existence” (**Samsara**), or for the “attainment of Buddhahood”. However, in many cases of “Near-Death Experience” (NDE) survivors, it was shown that those people who strode towards the “blazing light” were **promptly** withdrawn from it.

Would the “dissolution into brightness” lead to one’s liberation and the “attainment of Buddhahood”? Is it really that simple? What are the evidences to prove that **this is not so simple**? Was the **“dissolution** into brightness” equivalent to the **“recognition** of brightness”? Would it then lead to one’s “attainment of Buddhahood”? The previously-mentioned case of Satana, a disciple of Hinduism, is an extremely **precious and rarely pellucid and vivid** case of revelation. It is, indeed, a strong evidence to prove that the “dissolution into brightness” is not the **immediate liberation** (from **Samsara**), nor is it the “attainment of Buddhahood”. In

fact, the “dissolution into brightness” is not equivalent to the “recognition of brightness”.

A more confirmed evidence, which **should not be overlooked** by all Dharma practitioners, is the **process** upon which the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had **entered into “Maha-parinirvana”**. Since the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni has already “attained Buddhahood”, even though His physical body had deceased and with His capabilities as being the Buddha, His spiritual condition **still needed** to be elevated and **went through** a sequence of processes before His spiritual body could enter into “Maha-parinirvana”, which was the process of the “dissolution into the Dharmadhatu”. In other words, one would also need to go through **the same process in order to “attain Buddhahood”**, which is a direct proof that the “dissolution into brightness” does not imply an immediate “attainment of Buddhahood”. This also proves that the “dissolution into brightness” is **not the same** as the “recognition of brightness”, and hence not the same for the “attainment of Buddhahood”. A Dharma practitioner must have to enter into the different high levels of “spiritual domains” as the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, and then **relying upon the correct “oral-pith instructions, power of mental concentration and cognition” in order to enter into the condition of the “true nature of Emptiness”**, before one can actually “attain Buddhahood”.

In our last chapter, according to the descriptions in the “**Digha-nikaya**” of the “**Sutta Pitaka**” of the “**Pali Canon**” as well as in the “**Maha-Parinirvana Suttas of the Southern Lineage**”, it has been clearly introduced that the **paths** upon which the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had gone through when entering into “Maha-parinirvana” (**that is, the “dissolution into the Dharmadhatu”**). As a matter of fact, all these paths are of the various **high levels of “spiritual domains”**, which are the **upper tiers** of the “Three Realms” (**Triloka**) and “Nine Lands” (**Gati**). Our last chapter has also pellucidly introduced those various high levels of “spiritual domains”, which are the **specific terminologies of “meditational practices”** that have been mentioned quite often in the “**Buddhist Suttas**”. In the past, many spiritual practitioners did not quite understand what the “**Nine Levels of Samadhis**” really are. What are their applications for? What are the “meditational practices” from the “**First Dhyana**” up to the “**Fourth Dhyana**”? What are their applications for? and so on (**please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-death-Experiences” in Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus” for more detailed explanations**).

At the same time, most of the spiritual practitioners do not understand the **close relationship** between the various “states of mental concentration” and the “Three Realms and Nine Lands”. Due to this lack of understanding, different explanations on these

various issues were put forth and thus became **very much diversified**, such that each of the parties would have its own independent definition, and each would merely quote their own definition and explanation from the books. Yet, **how to apply** this close relationship between the “Nine Levels of Samadhis” with the “Three Realms and Nine Lands”? This is **really out of the question!** (**Please refer to the article on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in the Issue 17 of the “Lake of Lotus” for more detailed explanations**).

The kind of situation has also caused the propagation of the “Buddhist teachings” to become **rather superficial**. It has given others the impression that the genuine “Buddhist teachings” are **abstruse and difficult to understand**. Consequentially, most of the “Buddhist teachings” had been **abandoned** during applications, and were only left with those emphases on “compassion and charity works”. This has been glorified as the “**reform of Buddhism**”, but, in fact, it was an “**evacuation (of the essences) of Buddhism**”. Hence, the **pure essences** of Buddhism had been buried for good, while what remained were merely the various “terminologies and definitions” that could not be **put into practice and application**. The “Buddhist teachings”, thus, became “empty talks” and the **wordy phrases of “Chan”**. As a result, it is better than nothing, and so the “Buddhist teachings” are now being used **to appease the unrest minds**. So, many people are **intoxicated** in this myth of “the **empty talks** to be taken as the Buddhist teachings”, which is really **extremely far away** from the genuine “**Path of Liberation**”!

Even with such a spiritual practitioner as Satana who, having possessed **supreme capability and spiritual know-how**, had entered into the various high levels of “spiritual domains” via “shortcuts”, but still had to end up in failure, and withdrew from the brightness and the entire “Realm of the Heavens”. Therefore, as for those people who were addicted in the “**empty talks** of the Buddhist teachings”, they must have to **awaken** from this myth, and thus should no longer resist the pragmatic ways of “Vajrayana” Buddhist practices with firm foundations. They should no longer abide by their “act of ostrich” (**by putting their heads into the sand as if nobody would have seen them**), which would **not only hinder one’s self but also others**. For those people who have “broad and open minds” with “wider visions and horizons”, they might want to review the case of Satana in order to **enhance one’s impression and to expand one’s domain for contemplation**.

Case 19

Satana was a native inhabitant in America (that is, an American Indian) who **possessed the “psychic abilities”**. She had studied in India, and she had studied in great depths on the teachings of Hinduism.

She could be said to be a spiritual practitioner whose practices are based upon the teachings of Hinduism.

During her stay in India for her pursuit of spiritual studies, she had paid a visit to her friend at one time. Due to courtesy, she dared not refuse the offer of a glass of cold tap water by her friend. After taking it for a while, she felt extremely uncomfortable in her whole body. She went home and her condition deteriorated very quickly. In less than two hours, she had developed high fever and her mind was unclear. She suffered and struggled in bed. A large portion of the pink bedspread was being wet by her sweat.

The following is her self-narration:

“At first, I found myself sitting at the rear of the bed with both legs crossed. This was my usual sitting posture while I was in India. I was looking at my ‘other self’ whose body was tossing, turning to and fro in bed, and was fallen into coma. I saw that the bedspread was now green in color, which was a color of healing, and so I knew that my body could recover. The ‘self’ who sat at the rear of the bed looking at my body in coma was completely relaxed. I called this relaxed body the ‘observer’.

This ‘observer’ suddenly sensed some sort of a ‘lingqi’ (an invisible existence of an essence of energy) upon its left shoulder. Through my experiences and knowledge during trainings in meditation, I knew this ‘lingqi’ was the ‘eye-witness’. Let me explain it: this ‘eye-witness’ could be said to be my second body, which had no cognitive ability and could not communicate with my other body, the ‘observer’. The ‘eye-witness’ did not have any thoughts, and so it merely has no cognitive ability and comprehension. It was only an ‘eye-witness’. I knew some wizards who said that the ‘God of Death’ would stand on the left shoulder, and I so believed that this second body of the ‘eye-witness’ was what they were referring to.

Once I sensed that there was this ‘lingqi’ upon my left shoulder, I was forcefully dragged into the ‘eye-witness’ immediately. From that moment onwards, I moved swiftly because I knew that I had to chase after that ‘beam of light’, and should not be interrupted by any other things. As all other matters had already been finished, so I should not think of them any longer. I told myself to use all of my might to chase after the light. Hence, I dashed off towards that ‘beam of bright Light’. When I floated up in the air, I found that what surrounded me were the dainty scenes of great elegance. They were so beautiful that I couldn’t help lingering around, almost forgotten to move forward. I could ‘achieve everything that I would think of’ and ‘could do anything at my own will’! The beauty of tints and sounds were so diversified and exquisitely

touching that it has greatly exceeded what mundane people could have thought of them. I believed that many of the inspirations of many great musicians and artists must have come from here. I am very sure that all those who had crossed the threshold and entered into this place would want to stay behind, simply because it was just too beautiful.

However, I knew that I must have to maintain my ‘attentiveness’ and sustain to enter into that ‘beam of light’, and should not be stalled by the scenic beauty. I unceasingly penetrated through that ‘beam of light’, passed through it, and then kept on overtaking it. At first, I had transcended the ‘time’ element, and finally I had also transcended the ‘space’ element, and thus had arrived at a certain ‘point without space’. At the same time, I had also transcended any kind of ‘physical body’, and had just left behind my ‘self-awareness’. In abandoning the ‘physical body’, I felt freedom without the slightest bondage. Not until I had abandoned my ‘physical body’, I had always thought that there was no such thing as ‘flawless perfection’ in this world, but then by now I could actually be able to realize this.

When I further penetrated through that ‘beam of light’, I entered into a state of ecstasy. It was not a joy but a state of ecstasy which was beyond any descriptions. I continued to move onward in overtaking it, and even transcended the level of ‘experience’ itself. At that very moment, I had discovered some sort of a freedom which was ‘without any emotions and experiences’. It even went so far as of having simply without the existence of the “self”. When I proceeded even further in overtaking it, it had become a state without a ‘single consciousness’ while existed only in a endless and boundless vast expanse. My ‘point of consciousness’ was just like a tiny drop of water that has been completely dissolved in the vast great ocean.

I then returned back to my ‘physical body’. When I woke up in the hospital, I noticed that I had the ‘self-awareness’ and my mind was very clear. I realized that there was no “separated individuality”, and that all things had been “combined into one” in union. The first thing in my mind after waking up was that I must have to remember the direction of each and every stage, so



that I could inform others as to how to proceed.”

The Meaning of “Mental Concentration”

The authentic “Buddhist teachings” do not depart from the evolutionary process of Nature and its Natural Laws. When He had attained the “perfect enlightenment” (Sanskrit: “Buddhahood”), with the recovery of one’s “primordial nature” and all its associated great capabilities, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni personally experienced the evolutionary process of Nature and its Natural Laws, the abstruseness of which were all well beyond our words of comprehension. (“Primordial Nature”: The Nature that originally possessed which is the most crystal clear characteristic of Enlightenment. Please refer to the detailed explanations on the “primordial nature” and the “Dharmakaya” in the articles on “The Meaning of Near-Death Experiences” in Issues 4 and 5 of the “Lake of Lotus”. “Dharmadhatu”: The boundless domain of the “Dharmakaya”.)

In order to truly depict the real situation, the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had described and classified the activities of the “mind” (Sanskrit: “Cittadharma”) in details, differentiating the various levels of categories that had evolved into different “consciousnesses of multiple tiers”, as well as the situations for the different manifestations of all living beings, so as to show the abstruseness of the origin of living beings. (Please refer to the detailed explanations on the activities of the “mind” and “consciousness” in the article on “The Meaning of Near-Death-Experiences” in Issue 15 of the “Lake of Lotus”.)

The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had directed all sentient beings to ‘abandon their desires’ and to practice ‘meditational practices’ for both condensation and precipitation of the already differentiated levels of ‘mental conditions’, so as to recover the “primordial nature” which is conglutinate with the original purity. The Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had said that this kind of Dharma practice belongs to “exoteric Buddhism”. It would take unpredictably and immeasurably long periods of “Three Great Asankhya-kalpas” for one’s true ‘liberation from Samsara’ and for the ‘attainment of Buddhahood’. This is correct and is a normal procedure in line with the Laws of Nature. (“Asankhya-kalpa” is equivalent to the time period of 10 to the power 51 for a universe to go through the four major processes of ‘formation, existence, deterioration and annihilation’.)

In Volume 47 of the “Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra”: “the Lord Buddha has said that there are four results from the practice of meditation. Firstly, with the practice of ‘Samadhi’ (mental concentration),

a practitioner would attain current rejoicing bliss. Secondly, with the practice of ‘Samadhi’, a practitioner would attain the right knowledge, and cognitions about life and death of sentient beings. Thirdly, with the practice of ‘Samadhi’, a practitioner would attain the discriminating wisdom for defining all phenomena. Fourthly, with the practice of ‘Samadhi’, a practitioner would exhaust the vexations (that is, the exhaustion of emotional afflictions)” (“Tai Sho Tripitaka” Vol. 25, 400a5 ~8). Please also refer to Volume 7 of the “Abhidharma-samgiti-paryaya-pada Sastra” (“Tai Sho Tripitaka” Vol. 26, 395c8~28), Volume 28 of the “Abhidharma-kosa-bhasya” (“Tai Sho Tripitaka” Vol. 29, 150a16~b4), and Volume 12 of the “Yogacara-bhumi Sastra” (“Tai Sho Tripitaka” Vol. 30, 339a11~23), all of which have mentioned the four merits on the practice of “Samadhi”, namely:

- (1) attainment of the current sustained bliss;
- (2) attainment of supreme vision and cognition;
- (3) attainment of discriminating wisdom for the definition of all phenomena; and
- (4) attainment of exhaustion of vexations permanently.

However, the problem lies in the fact that the practice on Samadhi is no easy task. Not only can the meditation postures hurt one’s lower limbs, but also that there are different “formats of ‘Samadhi’” for different “conditions of Samadhi”. The most difficult part of it lies in that it is not easy to master the “formats of ‘Samadhi’”, and that it is extremely easy to go astray. To a Dharma practitioner, a lesser severe outcome could be without any accomplishments after a long period of hard practice, while a more severe outcome would be the falling into the condition of “nothingness” (or “voidness”), and would thus be trapped in the “realm of nothingness”. People who have been trapped in this “realm of nothingness” are usually those that have gone astray during the formats of “condensation and dissolution”. After all, the ‘practice of Samadhi’ is a crucial topic in Dharma practice, as a Dharma practitioner must have to rely upon the “strength of mental concentration” for the purification and dissolution of one’s “consciousness”, in order to enter into the upper “Realms of Heavens” with the same levels of purification. Therefore, the ‘condition of Samadhi’ represents a certain level of capability and a certain kind of stable mental condition, such that only those sentient beings with such kinds of capabilities and mental conditions can enter into those spiritual realms and domains of upper levels that are sufficient enough for one’s ‘liberation from Samsara’.

The finer the levels of achievements on the dissolution

of one's "mental consciousness", the stronger will one's "mental concentration" be required, and certainly **the more difficult it will be**. Therefore, the "shortcuts" that are mentioned in "Vajrayana Buddhism" have become the **"gem of all gems"**. Why has "Vajrayana Buddhism" mentioned that there are various "shortcuts" for one's "rebirth to the Pure Lands", or to achieve "liberation from Samsara", or for the "attainment of Buddhahood"? The "rebirths to the Pure Lands", or in achieving "liberation from Samsara", or for the "attainment of Buddhahood" all require the nurturance of very high levels of "mental strengths" in meditation, which is a very difficult task. Then, **why does** "Vajrayana Buddhism" still proclaim that there are "shortcuts"?

The Shortcuts for the "Attainment of Buddhahood" in the "Tibetan Book of the Dead"

The shortcuts, as mentioned in the **"Tibetan Book of the Dead"** of "Tibetan Buddhism", refer to those "time slits" that are **positioned** as the **key points, turning points and starting points** of the physical and chemical changes of Nature. Those conditions are the important moments for the possible recovery of one's "primordial nature". These crucial moments are, indeed, the "entrances of the shortcuts" for one's 'liberation of Samsara'. For instance, a deceased person might be able to see the brightness after death, so that if such a person knows how to differentiate on the brightness, and then try to "dissolve into brightness", one may be able to enter into the "shortcut". However, it does not mean that one would be able to "attain Buddhahood" immediately. The "shortcut" basically means that a person can ascend onto the "spiritual domains" of higher levels without having gone through harsh ascetic practices of the various kinds of "mental concentration". Hence, after entering into the "shortcut", a Dharma practitioner will **still need to** rely upon the correct "oral-pith instructions, strong mental concentration, and cognition" in order to enter into the correct "condition of Emptiness" before one can "attain Buddhahood".

It is **not easy**, indeed, to gradually condense and dissolve the whole range of Consciousnesses (**Sanskrit: "Cittadharma"**), in the sequence from "the eighth consciousness to the first consciousness", in order to become one. Firstly, it will need countless lifetimes of Dharma practices for the **alteration of one's mental formats and patterns (of thoughts)**. Secondly, one must have good fortunate retributions in order to gain the formats and patterns of "correct Emptiness" (**Sanskrit: "Shunyata"**), together with high levels of "mental concentration", in order for one to be able to condense and dissolve the diversified range

of Consciousnesses (**Sanskrit: "Cittadharma"**) into union, and enter into the **"Realm of Oneness"**.

Therefore, **another level of meaning** for "shortcuts" is that **the majority of one's mental formats and patterns (of thoughts)** could be **easily altered** without having gone through harsh ascetic practices of the various kinds of "mental concentration". The special point for entering into these kinds of "spiritual domains of highest levels" is to "possess all the special characteristics of the 'highest levels of spiritual domains'". For instance, there are cases of "no constraints on the physical body, the feeling of egolessness, automatic eagerness of dissolution into the 'Dharmadhuta'", and so on. This is simply because, during the moments of physical changes, the "Buddhata/primordial nature" could be **recovered swiftly** and be resumed to a certain "starting point". Hence, most of the formats could then be **recovered automatically**, which is a characteristic that is lacking in other spiritual practices.

Therefore, for those Dharma practitioners who could not immediately "attain Buddhahood" will long for entering into those "Pure Lands" that are possessing those characteristics, so that their future **journey** in "attaining Buddhahood" could be **shortened**. There are many different levels of "Pure Lands" as there are with the different tiers of the "Realms of Heavens". In the different levels, there are different Buddhas in educating and training those sentient beings whose "fortunate retribution, capability and wisdom" of each individual also varies. During the critical moments of physical changes, the "Buddhata/primordial nature" could thus be swiftly recovered and resumed to certain "starting points", which have hierarchies and priorities.

At the **original, or "first" starting point**, the most original "Buddhata/primordial nature" will manifest itself. If a Dharma practitioner can enter into "brightness" at the most original starting point, in congruence with the format of "correct condition of Emptiness", one would then be able to recover the ultimate nature of the "Buddhata/primordial nature" and thus attain the **"Buddhahood of Dharmakaya"**. If a Dharma practitioner can enter into "brightness" from the **"second" starting point**, in congruence with the format of "correct condition of Emptiness", one would then be able to recover the "Buddhata/ primordial nature" associated with a **lesser energy capacity**, and thus attain the **"Buddhahood of Samboghakaya"**. If a Dharma practitioner can enter into "brightness" from the **"third" starting point**, in congruence with the format of "correct condition of Emptiness", one would then be able to recover the "Buddhata/primordial nature" associated with **even lower energy capacity**, and thus attain the **"Buddhahood of Nirmanakaya"**.

If the “Buddhahood of Dharmakaya” is attained, the Dharma practitioner would be able to **freely alter the formats on the manifestations of energy capacities** to become either the “Buddhahood of Samboghakaya”, or the “Buddhahood of Nirmanakaya”, **at anytime**. If the “Buddhahood of Samboghakaya” is attained, the Dharma practitioner would be able to freely alter the formats on the manifestations of energy capacities to become the “Buddhahood of Nirmanakaya” at anytime. On the other hand, it will need the Dharma practitioner to **further improve and perfect** on one’s format of “correct condition of Emptiness”, before one can attain the “Buddhahood of Dharmakaya”. If the “Buddhahood of Nirmanakaya” is attained, the Dharma practitioner would be able to freely, at anytime, alter the formats on the manifestations of energy capacities to form an “Emanation Body” of **different material structures and shapes**. On the other hand, it will need the Dharma practitioner to **further improve and perfect** on one’s format of “correct condition of Emptiness”, before one can either attain the “Buddhahood of Samboghakaya”, or the “Buddhahood of Dharmakaya”.

If a Dharma practitioner can enter into “brightness” from the “fourth” starting point and thereafter, one would then be able to enter into the **different levels** of either the “Realms of Heavens”, or the “Pure Lands” where different Buddhas are dwelling. In other words, the possessions of the different levels of “mental concentration”, or the different levels of “condensation and dissolution”, would derive different levels of results. The main difference between the different levels of the “Realms of Heavens” with the different levels of the “Pure Lands” where different Buddhas are dwelling is that the “Realms of Heavens” are still exposed to the tractions of “karmic forces” and their dwellers are still subject to the “sufferings of Samsara”. Though the “Pure Lands” where Buddhas dwell upon are **still within the arena of the tractions of “karmic forces”**, yet due to the teachings and protections of the Buddhas, their dwellers can calmly settle down in their Dharma practices, and can be **temporarily freed** from the interferences of the tractions of “karmic forces” and the “sufferings of Samsara”. Furthermore, there are opportunities and conditions available to them for further spiritual elevations.

In being **temporarily freed** from the interferences of the tractions of “karmic forces” and the “sufferings of Samsara” will still **have to depend upon** the spiritual levels of the different “Pure Lands” where those sentient beings are dwelling. For a “Pure Land” where its level is relatively low, it would **still be subjected to destructions by the “three kinds of catastrophes”** (as the Lord Buddha had taught us, time and again, that there is **nothing permanent in this whole universe**). Therefore, whether a deceased person would be freed from the “sufferings of Samsara” forever after one’s rebirth into

a “Pure Land” will still have to depend upon **the levels of one’s “mental concentration”** in locating one’s own dwelling. In other words, **all in all, Dharma practice is a must!** However, a Dharma practitioner can take a shortcut as a **way of swift spiritual elevation**. Taking shortcuts does not mean that one is not required to practice the Dharma, neither would it be possible for one to become liberated from Samsara without those important “oral-pith instructions, mental concentration and correct cognition”. The case of Satana is the best example and evidence for illustration.

Do the “Pure Lands” Exist Forever?

In Part 4, Section 9 (0137b11) of **“The Three Catastrophes” Chapter** in Volume 21 (30) of the **“Dirghagama Sutra”**, it was said: “The Lord Buddha told the Bhiksu (monks) that there are three kinds of catastrophes in the universe. What are these three? The first one is blazing disaster, the second one is flooding disaster and third one is cyclonic disaster. There are ceilings to these three kinds of catastrophes. Which are these three? Firstly, it is the “Light-Sound Heaven” (**Abhasvara Deva**); secondly, it is the “Universal-Purity Heaven” (**Subhaktvtsna Deva**); and, thirdly, it is the “Broad-Fruition Heaven” (**Brhatphala Deva**). When a conflagration breaks out, at most it can go up to the “Light-Sound Heaven” (**Abhasvara Deva**), where it is the upper limit for the conflagration. When a flood occurs, at most it can go up to the “Universal-Purity Heaven” (**Subhaktvtsna Deva**), where it is the upper limit for the flooding. When a cyclone arises, at most it goes up to the “Broad-Fruition Heaven” (**Brhatphala Deva**), where it is the upper limit for the cyclone.

The **“Sutra of Creation and Destruction”** in Volume 604 of the **“Dirghagama Sutra”** has said: “The Lord Buddha told the Bhiksu (monks) that there are three catastrophes causing drastic changes to the universe. What are those three? Firstly, it is the change due to a blaze. Secondly, it is the change due to flooding. Thirdly, it is the change due to cyclone.... the ‘Three Thousand Great Chilocosms’ would all burnt out without anything left.” The meaning of the Sutra is this: the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni had made a revelation to the Bhiksu that there would be drastic changes in the universe due to three kinds of catastrophes. Which are the three? The first one is conflagration. The second one is big flood. The third one is cyclone. All these three catastrophes do have their limitations. Which are the three limitations? The first one is the “Light-Sound Heaven” (**Abhasvara Deva**). The second one is the “Universal-Purity Heaven” (**Subhaktvtsna Deva**) and the third one is the “Broad-Fruition Heaven” (**Brhatphala Deva**). When a conflagration breaks out, it could go up to the “Light-Sound Heaven” (**Abhasvara**

Deva) where it is the ultimate boundary (for confining the blaze). If a flood occurs, it could go up to the “Universal-Purity Heaven” (**Subhaktvtsna Deva**) where it is the ultimate boundary (for confining the flood). If a cyclone arises, it could go up to the “Broad-Fruition Heaven” (**Brhatphala Deva**) where it is the ultimate boundary (for confining the cyclone).

In **scientific** explanation, these three kinds of catastrophes are the main causes on the **destruction of the universe**. The conflagration refers to the explosion of the “big bang”, in which the energy could thrust its way and reach up to the “Light-Sound Heaven” (**Abhasvara Deva**), which is the highest heaven of the “Second Dhyana Heaven”, and then destroy it. The flooding disaster refers to those “streams of debris and energy/magnetic currents” that are generated after the explosion of the “big bang”, thus creating an impact as if like the “water currents”. These **wind currents** in forming the further **enhancement of those energies** could splash its way and reach up to the “Universal-Purity Heaven” (**Subhaktvtsna Deva**), which is the highest heaven of the “Third Dhyana Heaven”, and then destroy it. The cyclonic disaster refers to those “whirling currents and residual explosions” formed by the different **pressures**, which in turn causes the further **enhancement of those energies**. These energies thus formed could further expand, thrust its way and reach up to the “Broad-Fruition Heaven” (**Brhatphala Deva**), which is located at the “Fourth Dhyana Heaven”, and then destroy it.

Rupaloka (The Realm of Form) – The **Second Dhyana Heaven**, comprising of three heavens --

1. **Parittabhas**
(Minor-Light Heaven)
2. **Apramanabha**
(Infinite-Light Heaven)
3. **Abhasvara**
(Light-Sound Heaven)

The Disaster of Conflagration

Rupaloka (The Realm of Form) - The **Third Dhyana Heaven**, comprising of three heavens --

1. **Partasubha**
(Minor-Purity Heaven)
2. **Aprmanasubha**
(Infinite-Purity Heaven)
3. **Subhaktvtsna**
(Universal-Purity Heaven)

The Disaster of Flooding

Rupaloka (The Realm of Form) – The **Fourth Dhyana Heaven**, comprising of nine heavens --

1. **Anabhraka**
(Cloudless Heaven)
2. **Punyaprasava**
(Blissful-Birth Heaven)
3. **Brhatphala**
(Broad-Fruition Heaven)
4. **Asanjnisattva**
(No-Thought Heaven)
5. **Avrha**
(No Vexation Heaven)
6. **Atupa**
(No Heat Heaven)
7. **Sudrsa**
(Well Appearing Heaven)
8. **Sudarsana**
(Beautiful Appearance Heaven)
9. **Akanistha**
(End-of-Form Heaven)

The Disaster of Cyclone

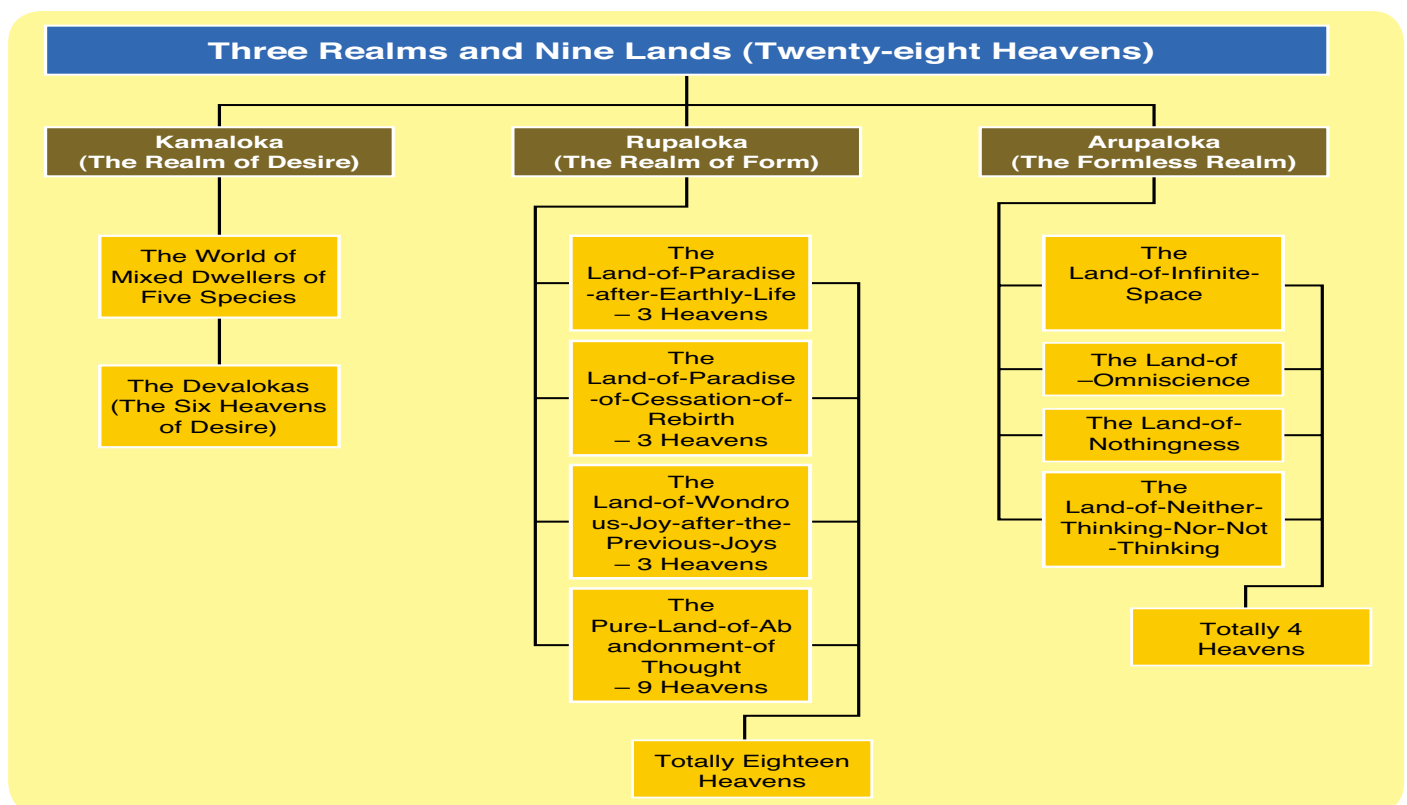
Five-Heaven-of-Not-Returning

With the exception of the “Five-Heaven-of-Not-Returning” which, being located at the highest levels of the “Fourth Dhyana Heaven”, could **be freed from such kinds of catastrophes**, the rest of the world would all be totally destroyed. In other words, before the “Three Catastrophes” will fall upon us, a Dharma practitioner must have to elevate oneself to a “spiritual domain” of the higher levels through Dharma practice so to avert oneself from the “sufferings of Samsara”. Otherwise, one might further descend to a realm of lower levels and would thus be further subjected to the “sufferings of Samsara” again. This point has clearly explained **the importance of Dharma practice**. Even if a Dharma practitioner could take “rebirth in a Pure Land”, it would still have to depend upon the **levels of “Samadhi and Emptiness” (Shunyata) that one could master**, and there is **no such a thing as “pure luck”**. The so-called “shortcut” is only an “entrance” (**to the path of liberation**). Although it is the “entrance”, many Dharma practitioners still hope that they could be able to enter into the highest levels of “spiritual domains” through it, such as in attaining the “Fourth Dhyana” to be the best. Even though a Dharma practitioner could not “attain Buddhahood” immediately, one would still save a great deal of time, in the scale of countless “kalpas”, for one’s Dharma practice, and would thus be able to **automatically readjust** those wrong formats since countless lifetimes in an amazing speed. In this way, a **deep and sturdy foundation has been laid** for the future successful “attainment of Buddhahood”. This is, indeed, a **strategy of wisdom** which can be “either aggressive or defensive”.

Thus, it is a very important subject matter as to **how to select** the methods for one's Dharma practice because the practice method represents a **format of continuous practice**. If there are any discrepancies or deviations in the formats, the consequences would be worse than just failures. Furthermore, the Dharma practitioner might be trapped in the "domain of nothingness", or risking oneself in entering into "dangerous realms" by mistakes. Hence, **how to select** a "Guru" ("**spiritual master**") or mentor who can guide one's Dharma practice becomes the **first priority** among the various important issues involved. If a "Guru" ("**spiritual master**") or mentor who, in guiding one's Dharma practices, has an **evil mind**, and would like to use **despicable acts** to angle for power, position, fame and glory, wealth and interests, even if he does possess the teachings, it will still be a **waste of efforts (in practicing)** and is **dangerous** for one (**to follow**). Those followers would **fall down** into the "lower realms" due to **their involvements** in these kinds of "negative karmic magnetic fields". This is because the spiritual elevation of one's "mind" will have to rely upon the "quality of the positive energies within one's mind" and their magnetic fields. One "would not get beans by planting melon seeds". The "negative energies within one's own mind" would only **lead to one's downfall** into the "lower realms" (**of hell, hungry ghost and animals**), which is just the natural law of Nature **without any exceptions**.

Therefore, please do not be blindly superstitious about "blessings" and thus do not put in efforts for one's Dharma practice. Neither should one give up one's study of the "Buddhist teachings". Please do not

try to turn away from "Authentic Gurus" (or "**spiritual masters**") and just "blindly endeavor for one's own spiritual practice", thus becoming conceited and arrogant. Do not be **blindly superstitious on those "false gurus"** as this is just like the committing of "spiritual suicide", and will only lead to one's own rapid downfalls (**into the "lower realms"**). Do not simply rely upon the "recitations of mantras or the Holy Names of the Buddhas" and give up practices on "meditation" and the trainings on ones' "mental strength". All the **aforesaid practices** should **all be done together**; otherwise, it will be **too late for one's own regret**. Do not try to be so narrow-minded as to repel those wisdom methods of spiritual practices. A Dharma practitioner must have to seek for "consensus" so as to keep the merits while abandon the shortcomings in the different methods of spiritual practices. One should not blindly accuse and attack other religions, or the different sects (**of the same religion**), in order to protect the interest of one's own sect or religion. A Dharma practitioner should try to understand the **strengths of his/her own** as well as that **of the others**, so to improve the whole lot of Dharma practices in a **rational manner**, by providing evidence and support **basing upon theoretical explanations** for the help and salvation of countless sentient beings. One should not merely aim at the reform (**of Buddhism**), and being disregard for the essences of the "Buddhist teachings". One should **put in great efforts and endeavors to explore the essences of the "Buddhist teachings"**, and should not only pay attention on the breadth of its coverage (**of the "Buddhist teachings"**) at the expense of its **depth**, and thus lose the **genuine meanings of the "Buddhist teachings"**.





The Areas and Questions Pending for Further Discussions

As a matter of fact, are they the same reasons for the occurrence of “Near-death Experiences” (NDEs) as well as the bad scenes at the “brink of death”? In the article on “The Meanings of Near-death Experiences” in Issue 8 of the “Lake of Lotus”, it was mentioned that some scenes at the moment of death had also occurred in some other religions. There were also similar reports of “being besieged by brightness, and saw that Jesus and Mary coming to fetch them.” Why is it like that?

In fact, what do the phenomena of the “scenes at the moment of death” really represent? Whether it represents some worrisome results of miserable ending when encountering some bad scenes? In the descriptions about the twenty-five Dharma practitioners in Issue 8, they were using the same kind of method for their Dharma practice, and they were united together and endeavored with the same efforts in their practices. Yet, various bad scenarios had occurred on their verge of dying. Why is it like that? In fact, what had gone wrong?



In the other religions, there were reports about the coming of “God” to fetch for the deceased persons, and so does it mean that all religions are having the same kind of effect? How to carry out one’s Dharma practice in order to ensure that an “auspicious scene” can occur at the moment of death? If bad scenes had appeared at the moment of death, is there any method of rescue for such kind of emergency?

In fact, what are the required conditions in the methods of “Dharma practice” that are considered as “up-to-the-point” “training on the spiritual elevation”? How can one make a choice amongst the so many methods of “training on the spiritual elevation” when coping with the different stages?

We may conduct another “brain storming session of wisdom” and give these some more thoughts. In the future articles, we will continue and try to verify the answers which can adhere to both science and the Buddhist teachings. How about that? 🙏

..... (To be Continued)

(Note: The newly-released book on “The Meanings of Near-Death Experiences (1)” has been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Meaning of the Near-Death Experiences “from Issues 1 to 10.)





The Application of Wisdom

The Wisdom in Directing One's Dharma Practice (18)

By **Vajra Acharya Pema Lhadren**

Translated by **Amy W.F. Chow**

Excerpt of Last Issue : The Skills in the Setting-up of "Plans"

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

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

1. **Complementarity and the Enhancement of Effectiveness:** The links between "plans" should have compatible, complementary and interdependent effects....(please refer to Issue 4 of the "Lake of Lotus").
2. **A thorough elimination process to decide what to "adopt and abandon":** Irrespective of working out

major, medium-term and small "plans", there must be a process to prioritize and eliminate with regards to some designated elements and conditions. A thorough elimination process to determine what to "adopt and abandon"

Designated Elements & Conditions in Determining What to "Adopt and Abandon"

- (i) **Importance:** To what extent would the "plan" help in achieving the "objective"? To what extent would this "objective", in which one is prepared to achieve, help in achieving the major objective"?..... (please refer to Issue 5 of the "Lake of Lotus").
- (ii) **The Price to be Paid:** Life is short and limited. All the resources that you presently possess could be lost at any moment. One must clearly understand the characteristics of the "Combination of Resources" and its relations with Destiny in one's own life before making any changes, to realize the price that one has to pay for the different "plans", and then go through the processes of elimination and deployment in order to "adopt and abandon" in these

various “plans”. In this way, this would enable the limited resources to become “ever-renewing, inexhaustible and of unusual value for money” within a limited framework of time and space (please refer to Issue 6 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(iii) **Strength and Weakness:** Every person has his/her own strengths, merits, skills, as well as his/her weaknesses and the Achilles’ heel (weakest point). In order to achieve success of any “objective” or of any “plan”, one must be very clear of one’s own strengths and weaknesses; and then through various skillful arrangements, try to complement and make use of one’s strengths and weaknesses in designing the contents and procedures of the “plans”. This is an “important strategy” in eliminating and deploying the “plans”, and thus should not be underestimated (please refer to Issue 7 of the “Lake of Lotus”).

(iv) **The Factors of Time and Effectiveness (1):** In drawing up any “plan”, one must take into account the “planning of time”. The “principles for the usages and wastages of time” must be clear, and have to be linked up with the effectiveness of the “plan”. Hence, time should be spent on those “plans” which are most effective and can bring the highest rate of return. One should prioritize one’s different “plans” according to the long or short durations of time used and their relative effectiveness. “Plans” that require one to put in a lot of time and effort, but with low rates of return and low effectiveness, should be scrapped. One should refine and improve one’s “plans” by making reference to the “principles for the usages and wastages of time”. This is a major direction in the selecting, eliminating and refining 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”).



The Mandala of Five Buddhas

(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.

Three Methods to Break Away from Adversities by Making Use of the Circumstances

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;



Usnisasitatapatra

3. To **build up** favourable circumstances.

1. To quietly wait for the favourable circumstances to arise – to quietly wait for the opportunities is a type of “planning of time”. One should **assess** whether the **environment** would be favourable to one’s getting away from the plight, and if so, the extent of such a favourable condition. This is a type of planning which uses “effectiveness” as the basis for deciding upon “what to adopt and to abandon”. The reason for one to **wait quietly** is because, in times of adversities, one would **desperately wish** to get away from the plight as quickly as possible. This is understandable because adversities represent painfulness. It is quite **natural for people** in adversities to **wish** to do away with the painfulness as soon as possible. Whether one would succeed or fail will very much **depend upon** whether one would be able to “refrain from anxiety and adopt patience”. In order that one can be successful, one would have to go through a “process” which cannot be too fast. If it is too fast, one might have easily missed the favourable opportunities that were **about to arise**. One the other hand, one should not be too slow. Because, if it is too slow, one might also have easily missed the opportunities that **had already arisen**.

If one were to master the rhythms of fast and slow, it will have to depend on two points: the first point is the **opportunity**, and the second point is the **capability**. When the opportunities for getting away from the

plight arise, or when one is in possession of sufficient capabilities, one should then take **extremely swift actions** to enable one to break away from the plight. The best time for one to get away from the plight is, of course, when one is in possession of both the capabilities as well as in mastering the timing of the opportunities. If one is too anxious to be successful, one would normally be impatient about things. As a result, one would make a **wrong assessment** of the situation, resulting in one’s failure.

Take for instance the buying and selling of stocks. When the stock market continues to go up, giving rise to the illusion that that it **would only go up without falling**, the shareholders would normally follow the trend and try to buy the stocks when they are still on the rise, fearing that they might lose out on this good opportunity. If one gains money, one would be obsessed by the lust for having more money, whereby one would care less about one’s own capability and would thus empty all one has, or even borrow money, in order to buy the rising stocks. On the other hand, if the stock market continues to go down, one would normally be most **unwilling to face the cruel reality**. When under such kind of a mindset and of emotional complex, one would refuse to give up hopes, and will thus be desperate in trying to recover one’s capital. One would then continue to keep the stocks, or continue to buy more in order to reduce the unit price of the stocks on hand. It is only when the market has come to the point where the price of the stocks **would only drop** without ever rising, that one would start to realize that a crisis has occurred and **the game was over**, but then not much could be done by this time to save the situation. Even though the prices of the stocks have become so low that they became so worthy of purchasing, one would not be able to buy them any longer simply because one had already exhausted one’s capability, due to one’s having been “too anxious and impatient” about the whole situation, resulting in one’s missing this golden opportunity by the end of the day.

The circumstances include the “**opportunities, vantage grounds and popular supports**”. The “opportunity” refers to the trend of the whole situation. For example, from 2003 to 2006, the stock market as a whole was almost going up without any major falling. This is considered as the “opportunity”. At that time, the stock market was **at the “upward curve” on the “cycle of peaks and troughs”**. The “vantage ground” means to be **situated** in the key position where interests and benefits are transferred, and so it would be easy for one to get interests and benefits. The “popular support” is one of the most important linkages among the different circumstances. The **key** for one’s success and failure lies on whether one can **transform** the



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human resources that one has close contacts with into resources for one's own cooperation.

When one encounters adversities, one would usually be at the position which is the "trough part" of the "cycle of peaks and troughs". One would usually have a general human relationship with others, and be far from the key position where interests and benefits were transferred. That is to say, **one must try whatever means possible** to be more close to the key position where interests and benefits are transferred, and try to improve one's human relationships with others as soon as possible so as to enable the **good opportunities to come**. If one is at the "upward curve" of the "cycle of peaks and troughs", one would have ample capabilities to break away from the plight. This is one of the major points in the practice method of the "Pure-land Buddhist Sect" (**Sukhavati Sect**) – to **wait** for the different Buddhas to come for one's rescue. However, it has the drawback of putting one's faith and trust to chances and windfalls.

2. To make use of the existing circumstances – this refers to the assessment of one's current situations to find out whether there are any commonalities in **one's conditions of getting away from the plight**, whether they can be made use of; and if so, to what extent can these be of use. After having carefully considered the surrounding circumstances, one can take the "opportunities, vantage grounds and popular

supports" as the guiding principle in conducting in-depth research and analysis, so that one can discover the various roadmaps of getting away from the plight. Each of the roadmap of getting away from the plight will have its merits and drawbacks. Some may be in the stage of formation and thus are not yet mature for one's adoption. To compare the merits and drawbacks of them would help one to **devise the timetable and blueprint** of getting away from the plight.

For example: in order for a Dharma practitioner, having determined to become "liberated from the cycle of karmic existence" **as soon as possible**, to choose one's own way of practice methods, one must have to compare the **success rates and the time and efforts required** for different practice methods. Furthermore, one has also to consider **one's own age, the time and resources that one can make use of**. After going through all these considerations, one would then pretty much know that it would be impractical for one to adopt those practice methods that are more "theoretical" in nature. Instead, one should adopt those practice methods that emphasize more on "practices". Despite all these, the chosen practice methods should be most **suitable** for one's own **capabilities and expectations**.

After one has chosen one's own direction, such as the choosing of "Vajrayana" as the way for one's own practice, then one will have to consider which of the "Gurus" will be chosen as one's own guardian and mentor for one's "mind-training" and Dharma practice. This is because the **key** for one's success and failure in one's Dharma practice will depend upon **whether or not** this particular "Guru" possesses the practical experiences and realizations of Dharma practice, the important explanations of "spiritual guidance", as well as the "oral-pith instructions" of various practice methods. For a "Guru" who has the practical experiences and realizations of Dharma practice, not only will he be able to guide the **"nature of the mind"** of his disciples onto the right track and path, thus enabling them to be situated in the **"magnetic fields" of "positive energies"**, he will also be able to teach them to practice on "Emptiness" correctly (through his "spiritual guidance" and "oral-pith instructions"), as well as on the keys to success for one's practical trainings of Dharma practice. All these teachings would be most **direct, accurate and clear**. One would then be able to tell which of the "Gurus" will be able to have firmly **mastered** the ways and means of where **the shortcuts** lie.

For a "Guru" without any practical experiences and realizations of Dharma practice, and without any important explanations of "spiritual guidance" and "oral-pith instructions" of various practice methods behind him, his so-called guidance to his disciples will

mostly be **ambiguous, indirect, superficial, and only of “bookish-theories”** – which are all so far away from the **true reality!** For such a “Guru” without any practical experiences, but only relying on recitations, is no different from engaging oneself in “idle-theorizing” of going to war on paper. He will not be able to make his disciples to **“observe the percepts, practice meditation and to give rise to wisdom”**; neither can he be able to guide them towards the great ocean of Dharma practices.

Thus, if one is **fortunate** enough to have a “Guru” with practical experiences of Dharma practice, one would then have the **best circumstances** – one will have the best guarantee for one’s “opportunities, vantage grounds and popular supports”. One should **treasure all these best circumstances!** The remaining efforts will be on: how to make use of one’s “opportunities” so as to be **always** close to one’s own “Guru”; how to make use of one’s “vantage grounds” so as to receive teachings **directly**; and how to make use of one’s “popular supports” so as to gain **the faith and trust of, as well as the likeness by, your Guru** without getting jealousies and discriminations from the others. If one can make good use of all these circumstances, the roadmaps for one’s “liberation from the cycle of karmic existence”, as well as those in getting away from the plight, will be **simple and easy to master**.

3. To build up favourable circumstances – “Hero makes the trend of his time” illustrates a major point: that is, **“circumstances” can be created to match with the “timing”**, such that one does not have to wait for long without **any certainty of success**. This is also one of the **major important points for “Vajrayana” Dharma practices**. When one is in adversities, one would easily get anxious, perplexed and so became demoralized, thus giving rise to the thought of “giving up”. Thus, one should have a mindset with a strong and **firm belief** that “so long that one can be patient and bear all the obstacles for the time being, one must eventually have the great opportunity to be freed and reborn once again”. Only with this thinking of **“never to give up”** will one be able to have **a whole new perspective and environment** that one could hardly imagine. Hence, adversity is not to be frightful; what is really frightful is for one’s **mind** to be bogged down in a **fatalistic** position. **“To be or not to be, that is the question?”**

There is no unbeatable hero in this whole wide world; yet there are only those heroes who “will never admit failures in their lives”, and that “even when they failed, they will rise up again to create new trends of the times”. Hence, the definition of a “hero” is not based on the fact that one has never failed. But, instead, it is defined upon the conditions that “one would keep

on fighting, despite repeated failures, such that there is always **a gleam of hope in one’s mind**”. The real definition for a “hero” is that he/she is “one who will always fight till the very end, and who has the high spirit of being able to break new grounds”.

How would a “Hero makes the trend of his time”? One would have taken into account the current circumstances and their features, and adopt the method of “using a small amount of efforts in getting great results” at **the key positions**. This would enhance and elevate the circumstances and their features of the time in **multiples**. The direction of this enhancement and elevation would be **beneficial** to the objectives that one has designed for oneself. Hence, it is just reasonable to know that one would get away from the plight at the end of the day.

The “Vajrayana” Dharma practices are the same in that: when one is being placed in different situations, one could take into account of the circumstances and their features of the time, and then try to adopt the method of “using a small amount of efforts in getting great results”, **at the key positions**, in order to **proactively transform** the current circumstances and their features into an environment for one’s “liberation from the cycle of karmic existence”. One will even be more **proactive** by taking the initiative of “transferring oneself” to the “Buddha-fields” of the different Buddhas. This is, indeed, a method of liberation through **“self-created circumstance and trend of the time”**. This is really great, and is full of wisdom. Such an approach would bring the **essence** of the “making



Guru Rinpoche



Black Manjusri

use of the circumstances” into play “most vividly and thoroughly”.

For the next issue of the “Lake of Lotus”, we can further explore on the remaining **criteria** and the **flexible use** of the “mindset” for one’s practice methods. 🗝️

...(To be continued)

Waiting, why is it always difficult to bear?

Capability, why is it always difficult to accumulate?

Initiative, why it still fails despite repeated fighting?

Oh! Child! **Waiting**, one would require a calm and sensible mind with a strong will. When one has the firm belief that one has already mastered the roadmap for getting out of the plight, one should **not be bewildered by the illusions, or to be tied up with impetuosity** and being forced to take rush actions. Please give rise to your originally-possessed boundless wisdom so as to **steady your mind**. The time for getting out of the plight **would definitely appear! Be patient!** Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! **Capability**, like its name, requires one to be **practical and realistic** to cultivate

and accumulate one’s **capabilities**. It takes time for one’s capabilities to coagulate, like the solidification of the glaciers, and it will take a long period of time in order to consolidate. The capabilities for one’s Dharma practice should also be **accumulated bit by bit** to prepare for one’s getting out of the plight in future. Please **work hard!** Wish you can remember this by heart!

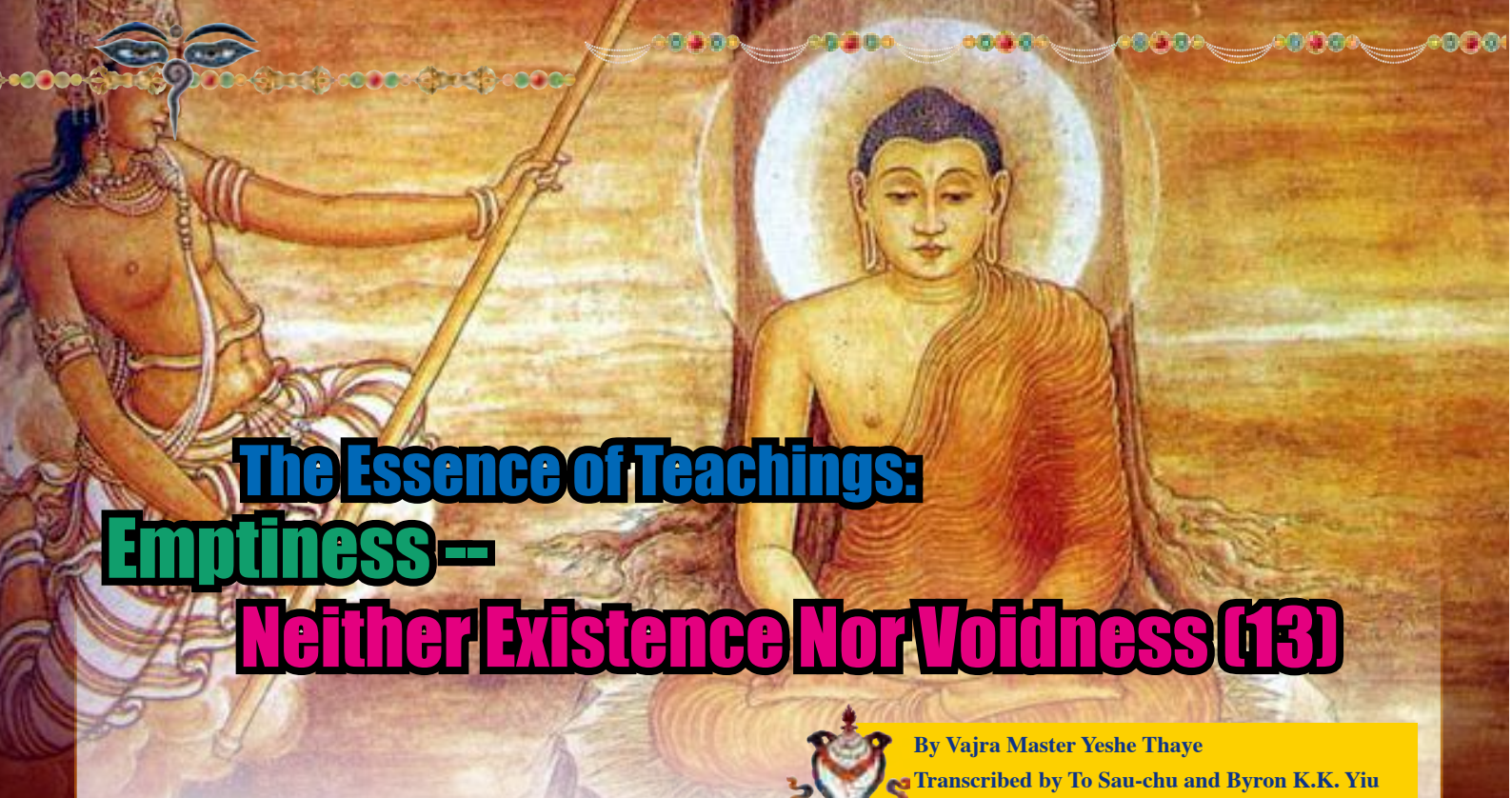
Oh! Child! **Initiative** is the dynamic of self-salvation, and is also **the mother of all hopes and opportunities**. Without it, one would be like floating in the sea without any support, and would be at the disposal of one’s own destiny. All Dharma practices have to be based upon one’s own abilities. Please **add the programming of initiative** for your practice, and you will definitely be able to **save yourself!** Please do not place your high hopes on things that are **passive** and without any certainty for success. Otherwise, you may feel **regretful** when it is already **too late. Get up please!** Wish you can remember this by heart!

Oh! Child! Wish the Lord Buddha will guide you! And enable you to **give rise to the bright intrinsic nature of Enlightenment!**

(Note: The newly released book on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice (1)” has already been published. Its contents include the articles on “The Wisdom in Directing One’s Dharma Practice” from Issues 1 to 10.)



Vairocana



The Essence of Teachings: Emptiness -- Neither Existence Nor Voidness (13)



By Vajra Master Yeshe Thaye
Transcribed by To Sau-chu and Byron K.K. Yiu
(Lecture delivered : July 10, 2003)

Neither Creation Nor Destruction

The Lord Buddha had taught that all sentient beings have the 'Buddha-Nature' within themselves, and that all things in the universe have their own 'Intrinsic Nature'. Our own 'Intrinsic Nature' is "neither created nor destroyed", and it is present ever since the beginningless time immemorial, and it has never been destroyed.

There is a classic story of the famous Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and Saint Milarepa, who had gone through various hardships and difficulties during his Dharma practices. Due to his own previous karmic obscurations, he encountered many delusions. Among these, there was one incident that, when he had almost successfully achieved a certain level of attainment, he suddenly saw many evil spirits coming from the sky roaming loudly to take his life. It could be said that these evil spirits were trying to disturb his practices, and they were not illusions at all.

When common people see illusions, or phenomena of different realms, they will be afraid. When they were afraid, they will lose all of their 'meditational stabilities' that were just achieved through various practices. They will also lose the phenomena of different realms that they have realized within an instant. As such, they will even forget what is considered as "Emptiness"? But, for the Saint Milarepa, he had firmly remembered the truth of the Holy Dharma.

He thought to himself: "Now that I am still on the path of practice, and is already very close to its success. If only just crossing a line, then I will succeed. Therefore, I should not turn all my previous labors to nothing. My

Guru had told me before that: "Our 'Intrinsic Nature' is 'neither created nor destroyed', and so it will never be destroyed." In other words, these evil spirits can never kill me. Since my 'Intrinsic Nature' can never be destroyed, even though these evil spirits might kill my body, they will never be able to kill my spirit. Hence, at the very 'moment of death' when they kill my body, if I can still maintain my 'meditational stability', then it can help me to go where I want to go. Then I can be liberated from this 'cycle of karmic existence', or I can even attain 'Buddhahood'."

The Overcoming of Our Own "Minds"

Because of his remembrance of his Guru's words on 'Neither Creation Nor Destruction', immediately his fears had calmed down, and he could continue on to concentrate with his 'meditational practice'. Whereupon, the delusions of evil spirits simply disappeared in a split second. Due to the maintenance of his 'meditational stability' of his practice, Milarepa was able to elevate to a higher level of realization.

Hence, through our Dharma practices, we will have to subdue the 'evils' within our own 'minds'. So, what are these 'evils' within our 'minds' and how are they created? In fact, these 'evils' are the bad inclinations of our own 'minds', being accumulated through our countless lifetimes since time immemorial, that are hidden in our 'eighth consciousness'. They had been created by the bad 'Karmic Seeds' and are then



reflected upon us as various 'karmic obscurations'.

In other words, Milarepa's enemies, relatives and karmic creditors have reckoned that he was so close to success that they had **intentionally come** to harass him. As a Dharma practitioner, if you are afraid of such kinds of illusions, then all the attainments that have previously been achieved through practices will **totally collapse**. Just one statement of "Neither Creation Nor Destruction" has saved the Dharma practices of Milarepa. Thus, the Lord Buddha had mentioned, time and again, that the 'Buddha Nature' is innate and inborn, and that it is of "Emptiness", which is '**Neither Existence Nor Voidness**', and is 'Neither Creation Nor Destruction'.

Some of the past great masters have said: "Remember when I first started to learn the Buddhist Dharma, I knew nothing at all. The Buddhist sutras are so difficult to comprehend, like the statement of "**Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form**" in the "**Heart Sutra**". Basically, I didn't know what they really mean. But, then I still memorized them by heart. The old-fashioned masters had taught me this method that if I do not understand them, I should memorize them firmly by heart. I knew nothing and did not comprehend, but I only knew how to memorize them firmly. But, **without knowing the reason why**, after I have recited them for more than ten to twenty years, I can now come to **understand** something. Besides, when I saw some phenomena, I would then associate them with some of the contents inside the Buddhist sutras like the "**Heart Sutra**" and "**Diamond Sutra**". All of a sudden, because of that particular phenomenon, I can now come to understand the meanings of that certain part of the sutras. I now finally understand

why my masters had asked me to recite the sutras. Previously, I used to think that their method is just too old-fashioned, and believe that the Buddhist sutras should be for comprehension and not just for recitation. But, actually, there are some reasons for recitations. When the time comes that no matter how someone tries hard to explain them to you, but you still do not understand them, then it is time for you to recite them. After having recited and firmly memorized them by heart, and then **wait for the right moments when some 'causes and conditions', wisdom, levels of realms** or other phenomena do come in and thus make the right connections with them together, '**realization**' or '**satori**' ('**sudden enlightenment**') will then emerge."

1. As such, if you do not understand some Buddhist sutras, you can start reciting them, like the recitation of the "**Heart Sutra**". Just like the Tibetan Saint Milarepa, as he did not learn much, neither did he read many Buddhist sutras, but then he just relied upon 'each sentence' that he had learned by heart from his Master for his Dharma practices. His Master had taught him many 'ritual texts' (**sadhanas**) of Vajrayana, such as how to practice by the using of the 'channels, winds and drops' (**tsa, lung, thigle**). But there were relatively few teachings to him in terms of scriptural aspect. Yet, the Tibetan Saint Milarepa had memorized 'each sentence' that his Master had taught him, and these teachings had been **deeply** imprinted and ingrained in his mind. He had remembered his Master had told him about 'Neither Creation Nor Destruction', and because of this sentence which had led him to pass through one of the important barriers of his Dharma practices. Therefore, we **should not belittle the effects of recitation**. 🌀

.... (To be Continued)



EPILOGUE

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

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

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