

# Dynamics of the Mind



*Reverend Ming-An Chen*

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*Translation of a Dharma talk delivered in Mandarin  
by Reverend Ming-An Chen  
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Reverend Ming-An Chen

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## About the Author

Reverend Ming-An Chen is a disciple and the Dharma heir of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, founder of Buddhahood Lineage World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism). His Dharma name, Hui-Ming, means 'wisdom-clarity'.

Born into an impoverished family in 1954 in Taiwan, Reverend Chen had to drop out at the age of 10 to herd cattle and help support his family despite excelling at school. At 17, the compassionate vows he made in his past lives sprouted, compelling him to search for an enlightened monastic teacher to fulfil his wish of becoming a monk. Unfortunately, his search was in vain. Being the first-born, he was strongly urged by his parents to marry so as to carry on the family line. At 27, he established the Loving-Kindness Charity to help the poor and needy.

At 29, Reverend Chen met Venerable Master Shen-Kai for the first time at the Venerable's monastery. As if they had known each other from previous lives, the Venerable's first words to him were, "You have finally arrived!" Reverend Chen stayed at the monastery for three days. While watching roses bloom and wilt in the garden, he profoundly understood the essence of the Buddhadharma.

At that moment, he was instantly awakened and the boundary between time and space vanished entirely.

Upon leaving the monastery, Reverend Chen shaved his head and proceeded to seek his parents' permission to become a monk. However, his parents strongly objected and threatened suicide, he realised his wish to monkhood was impossible. Instead, he decided to devote his time and efforts to support his Teacher in spreading Humanity Vehicle Buddhism, and to lead fellow practitioners in their cultivation and practice. He served as President of the Laity Support Dharma Bodhisattva Association for 10 years, and has since guided many practitioners in their cultivation and practice. He currently holds the honoured title of Permanent President of Cheng-Chuan Buddhist Association.

Venerable Master Shen-Kai, despite old age and illness, was still concerned about the wisdom life of sentient beings. Before he passed away in August 1996, he made a call from USA, to Reverend Chen in Taiwan, and specifically instructed him to continue the lineage and to spread the Prajña-Dharma, citing "No one but you can take over this duty."

Since then, Reverend Chen has braved all kinds of difficulties and obstacles in following his Teacher's wishes.

Always dedicated to cultivation and the enlightenment of sentient beings, he has been tirelessly carrying on the lineage and legacy of his Teacher in the practice of the Bodhisattva Way and the transmission of the Great Dharma. For the past 40 years, he has been preaching the Buddha's teachings ceaselessly and wholeheartedly, guiding people to understand and realise their innate Buddha-nature.

His profound wisdom is much sought after and he travels widely to impart Prajñā teachings in America, Australia, Singapore and Taiwan. Through his talks and Q&A sessions, Reverend Chen explains the profound Buddhadharma with ease and simplicity by putting them into the context of everyday life; making his teachings easy to comprehend and relate to. Reverend Chen's strong and confident words never fail to captivate his audience. His words of wisdom fall freely like Dharma rain, deeply awakening people to its very essence and enlightening their minds with the blossoming of wisdom. Thus, people are given the right views and understanding to apply the Buddhadharma in their daily lives so as to progress diligently on their path of cultivation.

Reverend Chen sets himself to be a role model. He lives simply and unassumingly, completely at ease in all the roles that he plays in life, be it farming in the fields, cooking in the kitchen, teaching on stage or giving advice.

He hopes to inspire more people to strengthen their inner stillness, and to purify their mind by building on their self-awareness through constant observation of the mind, thereby attaining greater ease and wisdom to meet life's challenges.

Reverend Chen wrote a Zen poem describing himself in this world:

*“Clad in this mortal flesh,  
cruising through this human world with ease.  
Nothing will remain,  
even others’ verdicts on right and wrong.  
Where is Dharma?  
Its presence depends on pure awareness.”*

體悟修證佛法  
會成為你的智慧  
叫做慧命

陳明安老師法語



The realisation and attainment  
of Buddhadharma  
becomes your wisdom,  
it is called wisdom life.





## Foreword

### **Practising the Bodhisattva Way in this human world**

Humanity Vehicle (Jen Chen) Buddhism (人乘佛教) places human beings at its core. It aims to purify the human mind back to its original pure-awareness state. With strengthened ability to maintain self-awareness, we eradicate self-serving temperaments and habits, develop virtue and morality in conduct and speech, guide each other through wisdom and compassion, and cultivate to attain Bodhisattvahood and to practise the Bodhisattva Way in this human world for the enlightenment and liberation of sentient beings, thus creating a blissful and harmonious world for all. This is Humanity Vehicle.

In order to spread the Buddhadharma in this human world, Venerable Master Shen-Kai initiated the promotion of Humanity Vehicle Buddhism, one of five vehicles of teachings expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha. Thus, it can be said that Venerable Master Shen-Kai was the first person in history to promote Humanity Vehicle Buddhism.

What is meant by attaining Buddhahood through

Humanity Vehicle (人乘入佛)? It means that since you have encountered the Buddhadharma in this human world and attained Bodhisattvahood, then you have to attain Buddhahood in this human world by your compassionate vows to return lifetime after lifetime.

Why would you vow to return lifetime after lifetime? Because it is in this human world that you have acquired the Buddhadharma and practised the Bodhisattva Way. This means that all sentient beings in this human world would have supported and made offerings to you. As all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have compassionate vows to guide all sentient beings to awakening, isn't this world full of sentient beings who await your guidance?

Since your causal conditions are fulfilled in this human world, you should earnestly guide sentient beings here. In particular, the Buddhist scripture states that Maitreya Bodhisattva will attain Buddhahood in this human world. Let us come together to build a pure land here to welcome the birth of next Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, and this human world will be a Pure Land. If you know how to purify your mind now, your mind is now a pure land. If you are cultivating, you are already practising the Bodhisattva Way.

*Reverend Ming-An Chen*

# **Buddhahood Lineage**

## **World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism**

### **(Jen Chen Buddhism)**

In his lifetime, Śākyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism taught a total of five vehicles of teachings:

1. Humanity Vehicle (pronounced Jen Chen 人乘 in Mandarin)
2. Deva Vehicle
3. Śrāvaka Vehicle
4. Pratyekabuddha Vehicle
5. Bodhisattva Vehicle

‘Vehicle’ is used in analogy to a mode of conveyance; like a car, ship or airplane which delivers people from one place to another. Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) is the teachings of wisdom that Śākyamuni Buddha preached to humanity.

The word ‘Buddha’ means ‘pure awareness, fully awakened, fully enlightened’. In the Lotus Sutra, it is stated that, “In the Buddha lands of the ten directions, there is only one vehicle of teaching. There is no second or third, unless you are speaking of the expedient teachings of the Buddha.” Śākyamuni Buddha expounded five vehicles of teachings

to cater for sentient beings' different causal conditions and levels of understanding. Ultimately, there is only one vehicle – the vehicle that leads to supreme enlightenment: Buddhahood Vehicle.

As such, the Buddhahood Lineage was established in hope that we may emulate the Buddha in his cultivation, enhance our self-awareness, attain our innate Buddha-nature and practise Humanity Vehicle Buddhism. By observing Five Precepts<sup>1</sup> and performing Ten Virtuous Deeds<sup>2</sup>, we lay foundations which ensure our rebirth in human form lifetime after lifetime, so that we may continually practise the Bodhisattva Way and eventually attain Buddhahood. Thus, Buddhahood Lineage World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) promotes the original teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha. We pay homage to Śākyamuni Buddha and practise the Way of Bodhisattvas.

The objective of Buddhahood Lineage is to promote Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism), to purify the human mind, unfold the wisdom of humanity,

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<sup>1</sup> **Five Precepts:** Refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and consumption of intoxicants.

<sup>2</sup> **Ten Virtuous Deeds:** Refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, salacious talk, divisive speech, mean or slanderous speech, greed, anger and hatred, and foolishness and ignorance.

and establish a far-reaching culture of bliss that transforms our impure world into a blissful pure land.

*Dharma Translation Council*  
*Jen Chen Buddhism*  
*(Humanity Vehicle Buddhism)*



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# Chapter 1

## The Underlying Meaning of Buddha-Nature

*Buddha: Pure Awareness*

*Nature: Empty and pure quality*

*Buddha* means Pure Awareness; Buddha-nature is Pure Awareness-nature. One who attains liberation is an enlightened one, and Buddhahood is attained only when three conditions are fulfilled:

1. Perfect self-awareness,
2. Perfect awareness of sentient beings' minds and their causal conditions, and
3. Perfect oneness with the infinite Buddha-nature

Pure Awareness-nature is Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature has inexhaustible benefits and is innate within us. Although we use it every day, we do not realise and are unaware of it. This is because we do not understand what our 'Mind' and our 'Awareness-nature' are.

# The Distinction between Buddha-Nature and Mind

Awareness enables us to know that we are having a stomachache and that something is amiss. This pure awareness is our Buddha-nature; it is a natural awareness. When we begin to think, “Oh this is so painful! Will I die?” These are thoughts and our mind has started to discern.

Our awareness also lets us know we are hungry; it is very natural. The moment we *know* we are hungry, we want to eat and will start to think, “Hmm... shall I have rice or noodles?” We start to differentiate and make choices; that is our mind. It is thus essential to have a thorough understanding of our mind and our Buddha-nature so we are not confused by our own ignorance.

Many people claim, “Mind is *Buddha*, *Buddha* is mind.” However, only the enlightened ones can truly understand and qualify this statement. As we have not attained enlightenment and liberation, we are unable to distinguish between them. As such, it is very important for us to understand the difference between our Buddha-nature and our mind.

When we have attachments and desires, these desires will further extend to endless streams of thinking which are

our thoughts, and that is our mind. As soon as thoughts arise in our mind and we latch onto them, we are limited by those thoughts, and are confined and controlled by them. As a result, we will never experience our Buddha-nature because Buddha-nature is pure awareness, it essentially has no thought.

For example, if you slap your arm, which comes first? Awareness or pain? You are definitely aware first, then pain follows. This *knowing* is your pure awareness and the subsequent ‘pain’ is your thought.

A Buddhist practitioner for more than ten years once said to me, “Teacher! Please tell me where my Buddha-nature is. I have been practising for so many years but I’m still unable to find it.”

“Very well! Bring me a needle and I shall help you find it.”

“Why do you need a needle?” He asked apprehensively.

“Trust me, I’ll help you find it.”

When he handed me the needle, I took it and immediately pricked his hand.

“Ouch!” He cried.

“Why ‘ouch’?”

“It hurts!”

“That’s right!” I replied, “That ‘ouch’ is a natural expression of pain from your pure awareness and ‘it hurts’ is your thought.”

Why did he cry ‘ouch’ the moment I pricked his hand? Because it hurt. When your hand is pricked by a needle, you naturally *know* if it is painful. This is your pure awareness, it naturally *knows*. If there is no awareness, you will be like a dead person who is unable to respond to anything presented before you because you are no longer conscious.

Buddha-nature is Pure Awareness-nature, its quality is eternally pure and unalterable. Your Buddha-nature is with you in every moment and you have been using it all along – your eyes naturally see, your ears naturally hear, your tongue naturally knows whether something is hot or cold. However, when it is hot and you complain,

“This burns!”

This is your thought.

“This is too cold, I don’t want to eat it!”

These are thoughts too.

It is as Venerable Master Shen-Kai said, “When your feet are sore, you will spontaneously sit without giving it a thought as soon as you see a chair.”

Similarly, when you are about to fall, you will naturally hold on to something to keep from falling. This is a very natural response. At that moment, do you have time to think, analyse the situation and tell yourself, “I must hold on to something”? It would be too late for all that. The natural instinct to hold on to something to prevent from falling is your pure awareness. But as soon as you regain your balance and think, “Oh lucky me! I didn’t fall.” This is the differentiating mind.

It is important to understand that Buddha-nature is Pure Awareness-nature and we all have this pure awareness-nature in us. Just as Śākyamuni Buddha said, “Excellent! Excellent! All sentient beings are complete with Buddha-nature. Everyone is capable of attaining Buddhahood.” You must never underestimate the pure awareness of your Buddha-nature. Although you are still unenlightened and

have not attained liberation, your pure awareness is ever present. It enables you to function in your daily life and allows you to feel, to sense and to perceive. You will also need the pure awareness of your Buddha-nature to attain enlightenment in the end. Why? How does a practitioner, who has cultivated to a level where he has attained purity of mind, *know* that he is in that state of purity if he does not have that awareness? Similarly, for a practitioner who has cultivated to a state of emptiness, how does he *know* that is emptiness and what emptiness is without that awareness?

Therefore, you must not underestimate this pure awareness. All beings (from unenlightened to enlightened) are not separated from this pure awareness. Why? If Śākyamuni Buddha, the Enlightened One, were here with us (the unenlightened ones), and someone said, “It’s time for lunch. Śākyamuni Buddha, please have lunch.” Wouldn’t the Buddha hear? Doesn’t he have awareness? The Buddha is the same as we are. If I were to hit both you and the Buddha, the Buddha would feel the sensation of being hit just as you would. But the difference is that for him, dualistic mind does not arise and therefore, neither do feelings of hostility. But if I hit you for no reason, you will become angry and suspicious of me because your mind has been affected. However, the Buddha’s mind is completely unaffected. His is a pure mind and that pure mind is *Buddha*. Those who have attained enlightenment

and liberation are as such – *mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind.*

However, before we attain enlightenment, mind is mind; *Buddha is Buddha.* The two are different as we have not attained our Buddha-nature and are limited by our thinking mind. The moment we follow our thoughts, we are confined. How then can we attain our boundless Buddha-nature?

This is merely a brief introduction to Buddha-nature and these illustrations cannot fully portray the profundity of boundless Buddha-nature; it can only provide a shallow understanding of Buddha-nature.

## **Cultivate the Mind**

In the process of cultivation, many practitioners ask how they should cultivate. I tell them, “You have to cultivate the mind!”

Why the mind? Because all things and phenomena are created by the mind. Your mind can become a world of utmost bliss or a world of hell. When all is going well, your inner state is as happy as being in a blissful world. When you experience worry, distress, pain and helplessness, your



inner state is akin to being in hell. As the Buddhist saying goes, “*Sins originate from the mind and cease by the mind.*” Therefore, it is fundamental to cultivate the root cause – the mind.

What is the benefit of learning Buddhism if a practitioner does not understand his own mind? All that he knows is merely a form of knowledge. It is akin to you watching me eat. You will not know how the food tastes or be satisfied merely by watching me eat. It is also like going to a mall, immersing in the crowd and getting sore feet after walking all day, but returning home empty-handed. Thus, in learning Buddhism, one must cultivate the mind. If you do not understand your own mind, you have not truly comprehended the Dharma and have yet to enter the doors of Dharma.

To understand the mind, it is necessary to know the different levels of the mind.

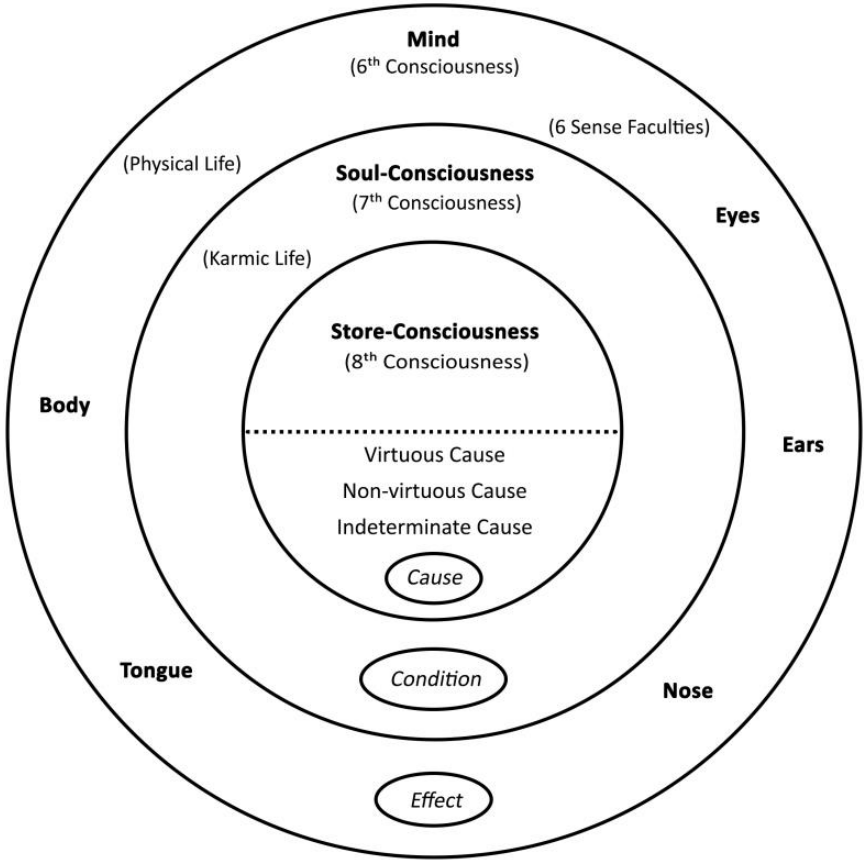
The diagram (on page 10) illustrates the following:

Six Sense Faculties (六根): Of the six sense faculties, the Mind is the leader. It is also known as the 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (六识) or *Mano-vijñāna*. These six sense faculties are desire-driven.

7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (七识): Also known as *Mānas-vijñāna* or the Soul-Consciousness. The 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness has emotions.

8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (八识): Also known as *Ālaya-vijñāna* or Store-Consciousness. The 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is responsible for storing all virtuous and non-virtuous karmic seeds.

These are the three levels of your mind. All your worries, distress and suffering are generated by the mind. All your happiness, joy and blessings are also generated by the mind. The mind is truly powerful and amazing.



## **Leader of our Six Sense Faculties – The Mind**

The outermost layer of the diagram (page 10) is your physical body. Our physical body has six sense faculties, namely eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. The six sense faculties refer to the innate faculty of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and thought, and all our actions rely on the function of our six sense faculties.

Of the six sense faculties, the Mind is the most powerful. This is because the mind leads our five senses. Our five senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body) are tangible – our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our nose can smell, our tongue can taste and our body can touch. But are you able to locate your mind? No, it is not possible. The five senses are the vanguards and the mind is like the commander-in-chief nestled at base camp. It controls everything.

Everything that your eyes see is reported to the mind. If you go blind and can no longer see, your mind is still able to recall the things you have seen before and bring forth those images. When your ears have gone deaf, your mind is still able to recall what you have heard in the past and bring forth the memory. All five senses function this way as they follow the command of the mind. All sensory information received by the five senses are condensed and

reported to the mind.

When a person passes away, he will not be able to respond to his family calling out to him because his five senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body) are no longer able to function. However, if he refuses to let go of his attachment to his loved ones, it will bring tears to his eyes because his Mind-Consciousness can still sense their grief.

When a person dies, the mind is the last to die. That is why it is the most powerful. This Mind, also known as the Mind-Consciousness, is the ruler of our physical body. As such, of the six sense faculties, the mind is the leader.

## Chapter 2

### How is the Mind-Consciousness formed?

*Form: function of the six sense faculties*

*Phenomena: all external circumstances and occurrences*

*Consciousness: function of recognising and discerning,*

*bringing about a habitual mindset or thinking pattern  
known as the Mind-Consciousness*

### Form: Function of the Six Sense Faculties

How is the Mind-Consciousness formed? If you place an item before a newborn, his eyes naturally see but he does not know what the object is.

Form is the function of the six sense faculties. With these six sense faculties, your eyes can see, your ears can hear, your nose can smell, your tongue can taste and your body can touch. A baby is complete with these six sense faculties the moment it is born. However, as these faculties have yet to mature, a baby cannot decipher what it is seeing

even though its eyes can see. Hence, the mind of a baby is said to be innocent because a baby is ignorant and unable to decipher. That is why when a child unintentionally kills someone, the judge will not find him guilty. On the contrary, if an adult unintentionally kills someone, he will be charged as guilty for his recklessness.

So where does your mind come from and how does it become your karmic hindrance and worry?

## **Phenomena: All External Circumstances and Occurrences**

When a child is about three to four months old, a father presents a lollipop saying, “Son, look here! Daddy is giving you a lollipop!” As they play, the child watches the lollipop and listens to what is being said at the same time. He starts to recognise, “Oh, so this is a lollipop...”

The father then puts the lollipop into the child’s mouth and says, “Oh son, this lollipop is so sweet!” Now that the child has tasted it, he retains the memory of this taste. “Oh, so this taste is sweet.” He remembers this.

Another four months go by and the child is now seven months old. As soon as he sees a lollipop and you do

not give it to him, he will cry. Why? Because he has seen the lollipop and wants to eat it. The lollipop is a phenomenon, one of all external phenomena encountered.

## **Consciousness: Function of Recognising and Discerning**

The child is able to identify with the external phenomenon (the lollipop) because he has been told what it is and he has tasted it. He is therefore able to recognise it. This consciousness is the function of recognising and discerning.

For example, when you see and hear what is being taught at school, you remember it. This brings about the function of recognising and discerning, which in turn produces a habitual mindset or thinking pattern known as Mind-Consciousness. This is how the mind is formed.

Here is another example. If you have never tasted liquor, you would not know how it tastes. However, once you have tasted it, you know. “Wow, so this is how liquor tastes! I feel good!” You remember it. The next time you see liquor, you want it because you already know how liquor tastes and how it makes you feel. Over time, you unwittingly acquire a drinking habit. This is the process by



which we grow up.

When our eyes see external things, our ears hear sounds, our tongues taste and so on, our Mind-Consciousness recognises and discerns all of these, and registers them in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. This is how our mindsets or thinking patterns are formed – it is our mind, and we live our lives with our habitual mindsets.

Throughout your life, you have tasted food from various restaurants and would have developed a preference. As soon as you are hungry, you start to think, “I feel like having noodles, let’s go to that restaurant. It has the best noodles!” But if you find that the restaurant has ceased to operate, you will be disappointed and vexed. “What a pity!” This is vexation in the mind and this is how we all live. From an innocent little child without much exposure to external influences, we gradually develop habitual tendencies over the years from our pursuit of necessities and luxuries in life. Some may even become addicted to drugs due to unfavourable influences. If one had not been exposed to drugs, would one take them? It is certain causal conditions that have exposed him to drugs and combinations of other causal conditions that have enticed him into trying it, that unwittingly resulted in an addiction.

All sensory information received by the six sense

faculties are evaluated and discerned by the Mind-Consciousness. As mentioned, you know whether a particular dish is to your liking or not. The mind will then make choices, “This restaurant has the best noodles” and you remember it. Your mind differentiates all the noodles you have tasted and concludes that a particular restaurant is the best.

When your eyes see clothing, you think, “These clothes are beautiful!” You will have your favourite piece in mind. Has a differentiation been made? Yes.

When your ears hear people talking, your mind differentiates and decides who among them has the gentlest and most delicate voice. The same discrimination applies to your nose. When you catch a whiff of perfume, you go, “That smells nice!” When you smell fart, you think, “That stinks!”

The same applies to our body. When we lie in bed, we think, “The bed is so soft and comfortable.” If we lie on a wooden plank, we think, “This is so hard!” Even the body discriminates. These discriminations are actually the mind differentiating. When you lie down, there was first a sensation followed by differentiation in the mind. All these are then condensed in the mind and become a memory stored in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Why is it stored?

For instance, you and I were from the same school and I constantly bullied you. When you were enjoying an ice cream or eating candy, I snatched it from you. Back then, you loathed me immensely. As such, you retained those memories. We have since parted ways and have not seen each other in thirty years. While you may seem to have forgotten about me during this period, the memory had been stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. When you see me again, the sight of me will trigger all your memories of being bullied. “When we were at school, you snatched my ice-cream and candy. You were detestable.” Would you not remember this?

It does not mean that just because you have forgotten about the past, it has completely vanished. Many people say, “Once I forget, nothing matters anymore” or “It won’t matter once I let it go”.

Is it really that simple? If it were, try getting punched and see if you can truly forget. Ordinary unenlightened beings are unable to completely forget because without attaining a certain stage in your cultivation where you have the ability to completely let go of your emotions without a trace, you will not be able to completely forget what has happened. You have merely forgotten about it temporarily. When a causal condition arises for you to encounter it again, those memory seeds will immediately re-emerge

from your mind.

Similarly, you once caught a whiff of a fragrance but have not smelled it in a long time. One day, you happen to smell it again, “This smells familiar. Where have I smelled this before?” You immediately recall the experience. We might temporarily forget but everything has been stored in our 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is the Store-Consciousness. It is a memory storehouse and its function is to store, just like the hard-drive of a computer. Everything you have done is recorded and saved onto the hard-drive, nothing more and nothing less. That is why the law of cause and effect is absolutely precise and accurate; it does not miss by even the slightest iota.

An example of this is that you have just bought a house and are unsure of which is the key to the door. You would instantly think, “I shall ask the previous owner.” Why? Because you remember speaking to him and so you immediately recall, “He definitely knows which one it is.” Has this memory been stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness? It certainly has. You may have forgotten or are unable to recall, but it is only temporary. It is all stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness.



## Chapter 3

### Cause, Condition and Effect of our Present Life

As our six sense faculties come into contact with the external conditions, all causes and effects of these experiences are stored in our 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Thus, this body, which is called the 'physical life', is the cause, condition and effect of our present life. Because our physical life comes into contact with external forms and phenomena, it gives rise to consciousness that recognises and discerns, thereby producing our habitual mindset. This process is known as cause, condition and effect. Why?

*Cause:* Without the function of the six sense faculties of your physical body, can you generate any virtuous and non-virtuous karmic causes? No. Therefore, the basis for one to generate causes, conditions and effects in this world is to be a living being. This human form (that is, the physical body) must exist. Our physical body, which is made up of the six sense faculties, is known as *Cause*. This physical body is the cause and effect of our present life.

*Condition:* When you come into contact with all external circumstances and things, it causes you to either be deluded by your attachments or to form habitual tendencies. These are known as *Conditions*. As the encounters of each individual are not the same, each individual therefore thinks differently. This is known as *Natural Equality*.

*Effect:* The 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (the discerning mind) affirms the function of our six sense faculties and the external phenomena that we encounter, and then recognises and discerns to produce an outcome. If we were to give this process a more scientifically advanced term, it can be called *DNA of your ideology*. Your ideology has been formed.

## **DNA of your Ideology**

In big cities, it is not uncommon to see homeless yet able-bodied people sleeping on the street. For some individuals, instead of getting a job to earn a living, they would rather beg for money. No matter how much money you offer him, he will not work. Why? It is because he is used to his way of life. His way of thinking is fixed in that manner. Only if you are able to impart better ideologies and perspectives to elevate his way of thinking, will it be

possible for him to alter his mindset for the better, and only then will his Mind-Consciousness be transformed.

Similarly, your current mindset is also fixed. If you do not receive better teachings, you will live your life based on the current mentality and attitude that you have. However, if you are able to receive better ideologies and teachings, you are able to elevate your current state. Your mindset, way of life and habits will change for the better.

As such, the outer ring of the diagram (page 10) which comprises the six sense faculties give rise to an ongoing cycle of cause, condition and effect. This is known as the Mind-Consciousness. It is through the functioning of this Mind-Consciousness that discerns and attaches that all virtuous and non-virtuous habitual seeds are stored in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness.





## Chapter 4

### **7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness: Soul-Consciousness**

### **8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness: Store-Consciousness**

The final result of all causes, conditions and effects is our mind and spirit. If whatever we encounter, see and learn is good, our mindset will be positive. On the contrary, if whatever we encounter, see and learn is bad, our outcome will definitely be negative. That is why we often hear people say, “You have a really good mindset” or “There is a problem with your way of thinking”. All our actions are based on our mindset and this applies to every individual. Different mindsets result in different actions and therefore, different karmic causes and effects. This is natural equality.

The different karmic effects are registered in our 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness and will affect our Soul-Consciousness. Some people would say, “Who cares, nothing matters once I die!” If it truly does not matter, then people can kill and commit arson as they desire. One may think, “There is neither karmic cause and effect, nor sin. Besides, I am not afraid of death!” But is it true that everything

does not matter? No, it matters because the karmic seeds are still stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness and the karmic imprints in your mind are yet to be exhausted. One day when your body dies and your present life ends, your Soul-Consciousness (7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness) will emerge. Based on your past attachments to virtuous and non-virtuous habitual tendencies, your Soul-Consciousness will retrieve the virtuous and non-virtuous karmic seeds from your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness to bring about your rebirth.

Note that the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness are closely related as the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is a level deeper than the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Likewise, the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (commonly known as the subconscious state) is a level deeper than the 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness, which is the shallowest level of our consciousness.

Many people have said, “Reverend Chen, only you can see the Soul-Consciousness. Who else will believe that it really exists?”

Let me explain:

When you are asleep at night, the physical body lies unconsciously in bed and you dream. While dreaming, there is an ‘I’ in the dream. The ‘self’ lying in bed is unconscious like a dead person, while the ‘I’ in the dream

does not have a physical body but is capable of feeling happiness, anger, fear, anxiety, sorrow and joy. When you find money or gems in your dream, you are overjoyed. But if you are chased by a dog, you are frightened.

So my question is: The 'I' in your dream does not have a physical body, so why are you overjoyed when you find money? Can you spend that money? Likewise, without a physical body, can the dog bite you? So why are you frightened in your dream? It is because all that you have encountered in life are registered in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness through your recognising and discerning. Your love for money and fear of being bitten by dogs have become habitual tendencies. It is similar to running away when you see a barking dog in real life. Isn't it strange that without a physical body in your dream, you are overjoyed for having found money and fearful of being bitten by a dog? This is because you have subconsciously stored these imprints from your daily life, and that is why even in your dreams, you are happy to find money but fear being bitten by a dog.

We have stored all that we recognise and discern from our daily life into our 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. While we are still alive, all that we recognise and discern will influence and form our habitual way of thinking. Thinking itself has no physical form and is non-material, and so is

7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (Soul-Consciousness). It is precisely because the Soul-Consciousness is non-material that it is able to connect. When the physical body dies, the Soul-Consciousness (commonly known as ‘soul’) emerges.

“Is there really a soul?”

Yes, there is.

When a person dies, the soul is akin to the state in his dreams. You hear of such true accounts in the media: A grandfather had died but no one in his family knew where his body was. One day, the grandson dreamt his grandfather came to him, “Grandson, I have drowned at XXX. Quickly search for my body!” They went to search and sure enough, found and retrieved his body from the exact location as told in the dream. Why was the dream so accurate?

When you are asleep, the physical body becomes unconscious, just like a dead person. You have entered the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness which is of the same realm as the soul of the deceased. That is why communication is possible between the two, and it is also how some people see their deceased relatives, elders or parents in their dreams.

So if one thinks that everything does not matter

when he dies, he is wrong. It does not end there and death cannot end all problems. Not only will it not solve any problem, these problems may even recur. This is because the *effect* (outcome) produced by the six sense faculties is imported into the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness, which becomes the *cause*. Take a fruit as an analogy. The outer appearance is the *effect* (fruit) and the seed inside is the *cause*. When the fruit is produced, the *effect* (fruit) itself creates a new *cause* (seed). Essentially, the cause becomes the effect, and that effect once again creates a new cause. Our 8<sup>th</sup> consciousness is like mother earth embedded with countless seeds. When a causal condition ripens one day, the seed will sprout again.

Therefore, when a person dies, although the Soul-Consciousness does not have a physical body, it still has emotions of happiness, anger, fear, anxiety, sorrow and joy. In short, it has feelings and will follow its preferred interests to take rebirth.

What are these preferred interests? They are what you are most attached to and what you loved most during your lifetime. The karmic seed which you like the most and are most attached to, will take precedence in sprouting because it is the most powerful. That is why when you die, your Soul-Consciousness follows your preferred interests to take rebirth.

It is just like people who feel bored after work and want to engage in leisure activities. If you like to gamble, you will think, “Who should I play card games with?” This seed sprouts immediately. Some people have an interest in drinking, “I have nothing on, let’s go for a drink.” These are preferred interests. Therefore, the Soul-Consciousness (7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness) has preferred interests, and these are *conditions*.

Why *conditions*? Because a person will follow the *cause* he likes most, to do what he likes most.

What is the *cause*? They are the seeds stored in his 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness and the one that he prefers most will be retrieved first. Take for instance, you like to drink and own a cellar with all kinds of liquor. You will definitely choose the bottle you like most. Similarly with a refrigerator full of food, you will choose the food you like most. This is why we are easily influenced by external circumstances and our perceptions change in accordance with it. As you encounter external circumstances, you make choices.

To illustrate, think of when you first had Taiwan currency – you would have thought it to be the best currency. But as soon as you learn of the US currency, you start to think that the US dollar is better than the Taiwanese dollar. So does your mind and perception

change as external situations change? Yes. But what is the most fundamental within you? In this situation, it is the recognising and discerning of the value of currencies. Yet, this will also alter with changes in external causal conditions. This is one's preferred interest.

## **How does good rebirth happen?**

All good and bad you have committed in the past have been stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Therefore, within your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness are virtuous karmic seeds (善因), non-virtuous karmic seeds (恶因) and indeterminate karmic seeds (*Abyākata* 无记因). Indeterminate seeds are causes that are neither virtuous nor non-virtuous. For example, sometimes in meditation, you may experience a sudden jerk of your body as though you have been startled, and yet it does not seem so. Is it virtuous or non-virtuous? It is neither. If you were to try to describe that state, you are neither able to ascertain or recall, nor be able to pin-point exactly what it was. This is because it does not represent anything. It is an indeterminate cause.

Thus, your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness consists of three things: virtuous, non-virtuous and indeterminate karmic causes. The 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness stores many virtuous and non-virtuous causes. If your habitual mindset tends towards



virtue, you will retrieve virtuous seeds and be reborn in a virtuous place. Your rebirth is therefore determined by your deep-rooted habitual tendencies, preferred interests and the virtuous and non-virtuous causes you have committed during your lifetime. No one forced you to be reborn nor brought you here. You came by your own will.

Since you came by your own will, why didn't you seek rebirth in a wealthy or highly educated family? Why were you born to an ordinary family? This is because you had no choice at all. Why not? Because you were unable to control yourself from following your karmic imprints and all that you had committed in your lifetime had been stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Cause and effect is naturally equal and that is why there is a Buddhist saying, "You reap what you sow. Plant beans and harvest beans; sow melons and reap melons. The law of cause and effect is without the slightest discrepancy." It is not that there are no karmic effects from your actions, but rather, the time and conditions have not yet ripened.

As you are reborn, all that you had done in your previous lives combine to form new causes, conditions and effects of your present life. All that you experience and attach to in your daily life are again stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. This creates a cyclic cause and effect whereby the effect (outcome) creates a new cause which

is once again stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. When a person dies, his soul will be led by the karmic causes stored in his 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness to his next rebirth. This is why you reap what you have sowed. Thus, regardless of the positive or negative causal conditions you encounter in your lifetime, there is nothing to begrudge or resent.

“I have married a good spouse.” Congratulations, you must have created extensive positive affinities, good causal conditions and blessings in your past lives. So you have married a good spouse. “I have married a bad spouse in this life.” That is unfortunate. You must have created negative affinities and negative causal conditions in your past lives, so you have married a bad spouse in this life. You need to understand that the choice was yours to begin with, no one forced you into it. Ultimately, we are all responsible for our own karmic actions which produce a chain of reactions that lead to the outcomes we face in our life.

Many people tend to blame and complain others when they encounter adversities and setbacks. In reality, there is nothing to blame or complain about. In fact, the more you blame, the worse it gets. Why? Because the more you complain and blame, the more vexed and negative you will be. When bearing this karmic retribution, you are in fact exhausting the karmic cause and effect created

in the past. However, if you blame and resent others while bearing this karmic retribution, the current effect will once again become a new cause.

For example, I killed someone in a past life. In this lifetime, our paths cross again and he is determined to claim this life debt. This karmic cause and effect between us will be exhausted if I do not harbour resentment and vengeance. However, as I am unwilling to die, I arise a sense of vengeance, “I will not spare you for the suffering you have caused me!” I am unaware of the fact that I owed him a life debt from the past. Hence, if our paths cross again in a future life, I will want his life. Thus, I have unwittingly created a new karmic cause while bearing this karmic effect. This is how the ceaseless cycle of karmic causes and effects lead to endless transmigrations.

As such, we should willingly bear all that happens to us in this life. There is no need to be overly excited about the good things, as it merely means that we have sowed many virtuous karmic seeds in our past lives which have now become our blessings. The world’s biggest blue diamond was found in South Africa by a farmer while ploughing his field and that is his blessing. The land is so vast and yet, it was he who found it, not us. His blessings are greater than ours. Likewise, when one laments, “How did she get to marry such a good husband but not me” or

“How did he get to marry such a beautiful wife but not me”, it is the same principle.

In the same way, if someone takes advantage of you or swindles your money, you are still unable to reclaim your losses even if you harbour hatred. In fact, that will only worsen the animosity between both of you and further increase your distress. Of the billions of people in this world, why did that person choose to swindle you? It is because of the cycle of karmic cause and effect which is completely accurate without the slightest discrepancy. The karmic cause will definitely ripen when the conditions are complete, and no one can escape from this universal law of cause and effect. Otherwise, there will be no true justice in this world and people can kill and commit arson as they wish.

Therefore, in learning and practising Buddhism, the first and foremost is to bring out your pure awareness so as to understand your mind. Through this, you will realise there is considerable relationship between your awareness and your mind. While your Buddha-nature is always present, you neither realise nor know how to apply it. Why not? Because you seek and cling on to external conditions every day: “Seeing this makes me feel this way... Hearing those words makes me feel that way...” You have been directing your awareness (*Buddha*) outwards, that is why

you are unable to uncover your own Buddha-nature.

You are on the right path if you observe inwardly rather than focus your attention on external phenomena. This is *Awareness of the Mind*. Having your *Buddha* observe your own mind is to ‘*Be with Buddha*’ (与佛同在). If your *Buddha* is not observing your mind, then you are being with your ignorant mind; you are not being with *Buddha*. This is why an enlightened and liberated person once said, “Such a big temple but there is no *Buddha* inside.” A practitioner who does not observe his mind is akin to a temple with no Buddha. His inner state is not dignified, nor is he able to conduct himself with dignity and respect. As such, we must observe our mind with pure awareness.

As mentioned, all virtuous or non-virtuous deeds you have committed in the past are stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. After many years, you may have forgotten about it. But when you encounter certain conditions, you are reminded of the past, instantly bringing the good and bad of the past to the present. The *causes* of the past, coupled with the current *conditions*, have now become the *effect*. So, has this cause and effect been completely exhausted and eradicated? No, it still exists. When faced with the karmic cause and effect, it can only be completely exhausted if you are able to completely let go and remain unaffected internally. Essentially, there is nothing to be

overly excited about when you gain something, or to agonise over when you face a negative encounter. Willingly bear and shoulder all that happens with a calm and pure mind. One should be at ease with all causal conditions, be at ease with gains and losses, and always maintain a state of equanimity. Only when your inner mind is in the state of non-increasing and non-decreasing will you be truly at ease.



# Chapter 5

## Self-Awareness — Self-Realisation

When your mind is in the state of non-increasing and non-decreasing, there are no vexations and worries. When you are vexed and worried, there is an increase in distress in your mind. Similarly, when you are very happy, there is an increase in an emotion too. If we can remain unaffected and at ease when we encounter distressing or exciting circumstances, then naturally, there are no waves of thoughts in our mind. In this state of purity and clarity, the brightness and ease of our innate Buddha-nature will gradually reveal itself.

Now that you understand *Buddha* is your pure awareness, you should not direct your awareness outwardly such that you are constantly dwelling on and following your feelings and thoughts as you experience external conditions. Rather, have inward self-awareness. If you aspire to attain Buddhahood like Śākyamuni Buddha, the first requisite is that you maintain constant self-awareness — self-realisation. This is the ability to observe your mind clearly with pure awareness. If you are able to observe your mind thoroughly, then you have succeeded.



Note that your awareness merely *observes* your mind. Previously, your awareness was directed outwards as you see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Now, you no longer direct your awareness outwardly to follow your feelings and engage with your thoughts. Instead, you transform this habit by directing the awareness inwards, nurturing your self-awareness by observing your mind with luminous clarity. You are aware of the thoughts in your mind.

What is your mind currently thinking?

What is your mind up to?

You must be absolutely clear of every single thought that arises without any oversight. You must not allow any thought to pass without being aware of it. Your luminous awareness illuminates every single thought so that you are not deceived by your own mind.

This is akin to a thief who is about to steal. If you are watching him, will he steal? When a mouse wants to come out but a cat is watching the hole, will the mouse stick its head out? As it is being watched, the mouse is so scared that it does not dare cause any trouble.

What then, is the use of observing your mind? Formerly, your inner mind has bad habitual seeds.

However, as your self-awareness (your *Buddha*) observes the arising and ceasing of thoughts in your inner mind, over time, thoughts of causing trouble or carrying out unwholesome deeds will cease. After a period of time, these bad habitual seeds will be completely purified and the mental activities in your mind will also become powerless, thus having no influence over you. You must not underestimate the power of such cultivation.

Before we strengthen our ability to observe with pure awareness, we have been relying on the mind to act and behave: “I feel this... I feel that...” We simply go with our feelings and thoughts. But the moment we develop our self-awareness, it is no longer the same. Our luminous awareness observes *every single thought* before we act, thereby correcting our mindset for the better. As our mind gradually transforms, our conduct becomes more proper and upright.

In the past, you were unaware. You did not know where your mind or Buddha-nature was. Now that you know, you should bring out your own Buddha-nature to observe the inner arising and ceasing of thoughts in your mind. Constantly observe your inner mind and given time, the mental activities in your mind will become less powerful. One day, your mind will be completely tamed by your luminous awareness and will no longer have any

effect on you. You become the master of your mind as the ability of your luminous awareness becomes sharper and sharper. On the other hand, if your mind is more powerful, your ability of self-awareness becomes slow and dull.

Thus, the clearer your awareness observes your mind, the less powerful your mind becomes, and the less it is able to affect and influence you. One day, when there is no more thought in your mind, your pure awareness is very sharp and luminous. Just like a lamp – when it is switched off, you are unable to clearly see dust inside the house. This is an analogy for a mind without luminous awareness. There is a tendency for it to follow its feelings to do a little good and a little bad. The preceding thought may have been virtuous, but the subsequent thought is unwholesome. Being unaware, you act upon it.

Now that you have luminous awareness, it is as if the light has been switched on, “Wow, there is so much dust and rubbish.” This pure awareness is akin to the lamp lighting up the room, illuminating your inner mind.

“Oh my mind is so filthy... I never knew. I always thought I was a noble person. I have been wearing beautiful clothes on the outside, but never knowing I was so filthy on the inside. Now that I have luminous awareness, I shall quickly correct myself so I am beautiful, both

inside and out.”

This is true cultivation.

Cultivation is to improve our character and integrity which have to be created from within. The qualities of a person are also elevated from within; it is not about external beautiful or handsome appearances. A person with wisdom and depth of character will always be appreciated and admired by many. It would not merely be a passing phase of his life. This is the mark of a truly successful person.

## **Luminous Awareness Tames the Six Sense Faculties**

When your awareness becomes extremely sharp, it can tame the six sense faculties. Of the six sense faculties, the mind is the leader. So when this differentiating mind is tamed, it will not have any effect on you. Why? When you observe introspectively and a bad thought emerges, the bad thought will not dare create any trouble and will cease on its own because you are observing it. It is akin to a thief who is about to steal. Because he knows he is being watched, he does not dare take action and the thought of stealing is dispelled.

By the same principle, when a good or bad thought arises in your mind and is illuminated by your pure awareness, the thought naturally ceases. As the sutra states, ‘The arising of a thought is merely a causal condition, the ceasing of a thought is also a causal condition. All arising and ceasing are causal conditions, but Buddha-nature is not a causal condition.’

So, if a good thought arises and your awareness illuminates it, remind yourself to act on it. In this way, you will do a lot of virtuous deeds and no unwholesome deeds. In doing so, you are not only exhausting your own karmic cause and effect, but are continually elevating yourself. You are wiser because you do virtuous deeds and do not commit unwholesome deeds; you are exhausting your karmic cause and effect because when any unwholesome thought arises, you let it cease on its own rather than follow and act upon it. When virtuous thoughts arise, you are also aware of them and continue to do good. This is a wise way of cultivation. Just as the sutra states, you are ‘being at ease with all conditions’. You are able to make wise choices and are no longer ignorant. Conversely, if a (good or bad) thought arises and you are unaware of it, you act upon it; only to realise after the act is done, “Oh no... I have made a mistake!” That is too late.

Do thoughts arise before you take action, or do

actions occur before thoughts arise? Thought precedes all actions – it is the same for everyone. When a thought emerges and you are observing it, you are seeing it with clarity before deciding on the course of action. As such, you will not do any wrong unless it is a deliberate act. Or perhaps, you did not actually observe those thoughts clearly.

Hence, the fundamental basis of cultivation lies in the mind.



## Chapter 6

### **Luminous Awareness Permeates the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness – The Preliminary Attainment of Bodhi**

When the physical body dies, one who does not cultivate will simply follow his karmic imprints. However, it is different if you have cultivated to a level where you have tamed your six sense faculties and none of your thoughts have power over you.

Although the 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (the Mind) is able to exercise rational control, it is very different as we go deeper into the subconscious state because the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (Soul-Consciousness) is beyond rational control. Take dreaming for example: When you are dreaming, don't you dream until the very end? Can you decide in the midst of your dream, "I don't want to dream anymore, I want to wake up!" You will definitely dream until the very end with no way of controlling your dreams unless you have cultivated quite well. On the other hand, the 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is still capable of taking control while you function in your daily life. If you realised you have made a mistake in the



midst of doing something, you are able to stop yourself. You still have the rationality to control yourself. However, this seems impossible to do so in your dreams. No matter how good or bad a dream, you will continue to dream until you wake up. By the time you wake up and realise it is only a dream, it is too late. While in dream state, you have no rationality to control your dream.

But do you know how powerful it is to cultivate self-awareness? When you are able to tame your six sense faculties, the power and ability of your luminous awareness will be so profoundly sharpened that it can permeate the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. What happens when your self-awareness permeates the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness? If you conscientiously practise meditation to achieve very deep stillness and luminous awareness, you will discover that there is an 'I' in the dream, and a 'self' observing the 'I' in the dream. The 'self' is the observer – your luminous awareness; and the power of your luminous awareness will permeate the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. In order to attain enlightenment and liberation, you must be able to completely tame the mental activities of your 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Only then will you become an enlightened one.

When your luminous awareness has tamed the six sense faculties, it will permeate the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness – the Soul-Consciousness. When you are dreaming, it is as if

there is an *observer* watching yourself dream. If the 'I' is being fiercely chased by a murderer in your dream and you lack the ability to maintain a steady state of luminous awareness, you will lose your self-awareness and be fearful.

“Argh! This is so scary!”

You will be frightened and immediately awakened by your nightmare. On the contrary, if your ability to maintain luminous awareness has been cultivated to a level of profound stability, you merely *observe* and are completely unaffected by your dream.

There are two 'I's. The 'self', which *observes*, is your luminous awareness. It is your *Buddha* – the true 'self'. The 'I' in your dream state, on the other hand, is a manifestation of illusory thoughts from your karmic imprints. If you are about to be killed in your dream and the luminously aware 'self' remains indifferent, completely unaffected and at ease, then you have successfully overcome the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. This state is similar to the luminous awareness in the 6<sup>th</sup> Consciousness which merely *observes* the arising thoughts and remains completely unaffected and at ease. In this way, your luminous awareness has permeated the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness.

What have you overcome? You have overcome the

phenomena of illusory thoughts. Once you have truly overcome these phenomena, dreams will have no effect on you. From here on, any dream is unable to delude you – the luminously aware ‘self’. You no longer have dreams and at this level of your cultivation, you have successfully tamed the six sense faculties and the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (emotions). In doing so, you have succeeded in the preliminary attainment of Bodhi.

One who has attained the stage of Arhathood is said to have ceased the emotions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness and the desires of the six sense faculties – this is the preliminary attainment of Bodhi. When you reach this level in your cultivation, you are very close to attaining liberation. This is because the six sense faculties can no longer affect or disturb your inner state, and the emotions of your 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness are no longer able to drag you with them – aren’t you then an enlightened and liberated being? When you reach this stage of your cultivation you have attained Arhathood at the very least. If you have previously made Bodhisattva vows in the journey of your cultivation, you will be able to attain the first stage of Bodhisattvahood. However, it is only possible to completely purify all virtuous, non-virtuous and indeterminate karmic seeds in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness when one reaches Buddhahood. Therefore, the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is the *Cause*, the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is the *Condition*, and the physical body (six

sense faculties) is the *Effect*. Why are they cause, condition and effect?

## **Bodhisattvas are Wary of Karmic Causes; Unenlightened Sentient Beings are Wary of Karmic Effects**

We have six sense faculties. This physical body has to bear karmic *effects* – it has to go through birth, aging, sickness and death.

Why is the Soul-Consciousness said to be a condition? Although the Soul-Consciousness no longer has a physical body, it still follows its habitual tendencies and interests, and it still dreams. This is called preferred interests. Your internal preferred interests have the habitual inclination to attach to and pursue external conditions. For example, acting on the desire to drink wine, you call on friends to drink. Similarly, if you feel like gambling, you invite your friends to gamble. This is *condition* – it embodies your preferred interests and habitual tendencies.

Due to the functioning of the 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness which pursues preferred interests and habitual tendencies, it results in the further extraction of karmic seeds from the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness which either brings about the next

rebirth, or manifests as dreams through the retrieval of more karmic imprints.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is the *cause*. Every virtuous, non-virtuous and indeterminate karmic cause that you have committed since aeons of past lives is stored in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. Your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness can only be completely purified when Buddhahood is attained. The attainment of Buddhahood is the '*Attainment of Ultimate Nirvana*' (no residual karmic seeds) because the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is completely purified. On the other hand, the attainment of Arhathood and Bodhisattvahood is known as '*Attainment of Nirvana with Residual Karmic Seeds*' because there are still many karmic seeds in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. One day when Buddhahood is attained, all residual karmic seeds in the 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness are completely purified and Ultimate Nirvana is reached.

'Bodhisattvas are wary of karmic *causes*'. What karmic causes are they wary of? They are wary of the karmic causes stored in their 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness. On one hand, they exhaust their residual karmic causes and effects, and on the other hand, they carry out their Bodhisattva vows and aspirations in guiding the masses to enlightenment and liberation by returning lifetime after lifetime. Only then can the residual karmic causes in their 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness be completely purified and they eventually attain perfect

Buddhahood.

What about unenlightened sentient beings? They are wary of karmic *effects*. They utilise their physical body to habitually pursue gains and benefits, indulge in desires and worldly pleasures, and suffer in the face of adversities. It is through suffering to the extent that they can no longer bear it that they finally awaken to the cause of their suffering. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, have the wisdom to know that they have to exhaust all residual karmic *causes* stored in their 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness, be it positive or negative. At the same time, they have the awareness to not create any new unwholesome karmic cause. That is why Bodhisattvas are wary of karmic causes, while unenlightened sentient beings are wary of karmic effects.

Therefore, it is very important that you cultivate conscientiously to purify your mind and strengthen your ability of self-awareness as your karmic causes, conditions and effects will influence and determine the journey of your life and its outcome.



## Chapter 7

### **A Mind that Aligns with Pure Awareness is Truly the Beginning of Cultivation**

Now that you understand what your *Buddha* is, how should your *Buddha* watch over your inner being? Thought is the inner being; only when your mind aligns with your pure awareness are you truly on the path of cultivation. If your mind goes one way and your *Buddha* (pure awareness) goes another way, such that your *Buddha* and mind are so far apart, they cannot possibly be in alignment. In that way, how can you achieve luminous clarity of mind, and attain your pure nature which is empty and boundless? It can only be attained when your pure mind and pure awareness are aligned.

If you are still doubtful as to where your Buddha-nature is, let me illustrate with an analogy:

*Pointing to whiteboard that has diagram [on page 10] drawn on it.*

Your Buddha-nature is like this whiteboard. You can



draw anything on it. Everything is within your Buddha-nature.

*Pointing to diagram [page 10] on whiteboard.*

This is the mind. It is within your Buddha-nature. Our Buddha-nature is absolute reality – it is limitless and boundless, omnipresent, all-permeating and complete.

## **The Most Compassionate *Buddha***

Although you have never noticed it, your Buddha-nature is complete, omnipresent and all-permeating in all levels of your consciousness. It has been present all this while but you never knew to apply it. Instead, you have always directed your awareness outwardly by clinging to and pursuing external phenomena. As soon as you see and hear something, you start to feel this and that; you start to think of this and that. That is not your Buddha-nature, it is your feelings and perceptions. Buddha-nature is pure awareness, it is limitless and boundless; it is eternally pure and unalterable. Therefore, having Buddha-nature and not knowing how to apply it is akin to having money in your pocket and not knowing how to use it.

As Śākyamuni Buddha clearly stated, “All Buddhas

and Bodhisattvas have Buddha-nature, and so do all sentient beings.” Now that you know you have Buddha-nature and have understood the meaning of Buddha-nature, apply it! Otherwise, it would truly be pitiful. We keep seeking external Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but never realised that within ourselves is a most compassionate *Buddha*.

Why is our *Buddha* the most compassionate? When you are up in the heavens as a heavenly being, your Buddha-nature is with you as a heavenly being. Why is that so? It is because a heavenly being also has awareness. Otherwise, how can a heavenly being function? Similarly, whether you are human or an ant, your Buddha-nature is also with you. This is why your *Buddha* is the most compassionate. Although all external Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions are as compassionate as your innate *Buddha*, they will leave you one day. However, your own Buddha-nature has never once left you since aeons passed, yet you never realised it has always been there. This is why you are unable to achieve luminous clarity of your mind and attain your pure nature. Now that you understand this, immediately cultivate to eradicate your ignorance and your undesirable habitual tendencies. You will then be able to experience your Buddha-nature and eventually attain it.

*Buddha* is like an enormous radiant sun, so is Śākyamuni Buddha. He has no ignorance and his boundless

brightness permeates the infinite space. All of us have the same enormous radiant sun (our Buddha-nature), but it is often obscured by our dark clouds of ignorance. Once we eradicate our dark clouds of ignorance, we will be able to see the sun (Buddha-nature), and it is just as enormous and bright. There is nothing anyone can do if you do not want to remove these dark clouds. It is like seeing the doctor when you are sick. The doctor can diagnose your illness and prescribe medication for you, but if you choose not to take the medicine, there is nothing the doctor can do.

Having understood this, you must start to cultivate diligently. There is no benefit in learning if you do not apply what you have learned to your own cultivation and practice. Many might say, “I hear what you say and I understand it.” But what is that understanding? It is merely an intellectual understanding rather than something you have truly internalised, experienced and tasted for yourself. It is like you watching me eat – you will not feel full by merely watching. That is why it is most important that you put it into practice.

So how do we set about cultivating? Start at the source – our mind. All vexations, worries and sufferings arise from the mind. Therefore, the mind is the fundamental source. To cultivate at the source is to *observe* your mind.

How do you observe your mind? Observe it with your *Buddha*. Using your *Buddha* to observe your mind is to align your mind with your *Buddha*.

To further elaborate, the teachings expounded by all Buddhas are called Buddhadharma. *Buddha* is pure awareness and dharma is the mind. Why is dharma the mind? It is because all dharma arise by the mind and cease by the mind. So if dharma isn't the mind, what is it? We need to purify the mind back to its original pure-awareness state. Therefore, it is essential to have your *Buddha* and mind aligned as one. That is, have your pure awareness constantly observe your mind. This is Buddhadharma. When your *Buddha* and mind are aligned as one, it is complete with all Buddhadharma. As you continue to cultivate and practise, you will truly comprehend everything about the Buddhadharma.

In short, you must remain in one with *Buddha*, but at the same time, you must not repel the mind. This is the right way.

**Unconditioned Great Loving-Kindness (无缘大慈)**  
**Oneness with Great Compassion (同体大悲)**

The *Buddha* that is innate in all of us is truly

compassionate. Many misunderstand that the expression ‘Unconditioned Great Loving-Kindness, Oneness with Great Compassion’ refers to Guan Yin Bodhisattva (also known as Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva in Sanskrit). This interpretation is incorrect. In fact, this phrase describes your Buddha-nature; your pure nature. Regardless of how you transmigrate in the karmic cycle of birth and death, it has no bearing on your Buddha-nature. Your Buddha-nature neither increases nor decreases, neither arises nor ceases, and is neither impure nor pure. That is why you are able to rely on your Buddha-nature to exist.

It is written in the Buddhist scriptures, “The arising of a thought is a causal condition, the ceasing of a thought is also a causal condition; all arising and ceasing are causal conditions, but Buddha-nature is not a causal condition.”

Hence, as your Buddha-nature is not within the cycle of cause-condition-effect, it is therefore not conditioned. In order to express this truth, it is therefore termed ‘unconditioned’. Arising and ceasing are causal conditions, and it is because of causal conditions that all arising and ceasing occur, including our physical existence. However, as our Buddha-nature neither arises nor ceases, and neither increases nor decreases, it has allowed us to depend on it since aeons passed. Even when we go through arising and ceasing (in the mind), our Buddha-nature

neither arises nor ceases. As it has never left us nor can be conditioned, that is why it is expressed as ‘Unconditioned Great Loving-Kindness’.

What about the phrase, ‘Oneness with Great Compassion’? When we are undergoing pain and suffering, our Buddha-nature is still with us. It allows us to depend on it to feel, to sense and to perceive. It does not turn its back on us or leave us even when we are shrouded with distress and worries. This is ‘Oneness with Great Compassion’.

The underlying meaning of these phrases is meant to awaken and enlighten sentient beings. It is not something to brag or debate about. To be able to explain the true meaning of the Buddha’s teachings requires true cultivation and attainment.

As mentioned earlier, your *Buddha* is the most compassionate. There is no other that can match the compassion of your own Buddha-nature. All Buddhas of the past, present and future may leave you, but your *Buddha* will never leave you even for a moment. When you are alive, your *Buddha* is with you. Even after your physical body dies and you turn into a soul that exists in a different dimension, you will still have feelings of happiness, anger, sorrow and joy, and your *Buddha* is still with you within your soul. Even if you become a ghost-being, your *Buddha*

is still within you, allowing you to have consciousness and to be aware of your existence. Otherwise, you will instantly extinguish. Can you now see how compassionate your *Buddha* is?

## **Conclusion**

To recap, the six sense faculties make up our physical life (refer to diagram on page 10). The 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness is called the karmic life, a life with karmic hindrances. If you have more virtuous karmic seeds in your 8<sup>th</sup> Consciousness, you will tend to retrieve virtuous seeds and head towards a virtuous path. This is ‘good karma’. If you have more negative karmic seeds, your 7<sup>th</sup> Consciousness (*condition*) will lead you to follow those seeds to your next rebirth. This is ‘bad karma’ or ‘a life of negativity’.

Many people say, “I have never seen Buddha in my life, neither have I seen cause and effect. Everything comes to an end when life ends.” The truth is, death will not end everything or resolve anything. Personally, I have done many wrongful acts in the past but ever since I embraced Buddhism, I have wholeheartedly repented and reflected on all my past wrongdoings. I have turned over a new leaf by leading a righteous life. Had I not changed, I would have been trapped in the ceaseless cycle of my own negative

karmic causes and effects. As such, it is important that we embark upon a path of cultivation and practice towards brightness, enlightenment and liberation.

The content of this talk only explains the preliminary stage of Humanity Vehicle Buddhism 人乘佛教 (Jen Chen Buddhism). There will be more profound teachings to come. However, if you do not cultivate conscientiously at this stage, you will not be able to comprehend the *Mother of Great Wisdom Dharma* when this teaching is transmitted in the future.

It is just as Venerable Master Shen-Kai said, “In the past, the *Mother of Great Wisdom Dharma* was only transmitted from one patriarch to the next.” If we do not have the sharp capability for attainment, we would not qualify to be transmitted this Great Dharma. It is purely because of the great compassion of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, who hoped to awaken every being he encountered and wished to give us a chance, that he transmitted the *Mother of Great Wisdom Dharma* to us so we may realise our Buddha-nature and eventually attain it. This *Mother of Great Wisdom Dharma* goes beyond all conceptual knowledge and thinking. It is extremely deep and powerful, yet transcendent and liberating.

What has been taught today is only the preliminary



stage and it gives you an understanding of the attainment of Arhats. The *Mother of Great Wisdom Dharma* will enable you to understand the attainment of Bodhisattvas.

Since you have the casual condition to receive this teaching today, you must seize this precious opportunity and put the teachings into practice.

**Blessings for your contribution**  
**“The gift of Dharma excels all gifts.”**

*In wisdom and blessings may you grow  
Peace and happiness your life bestow  
Afflictions overcome and soon disappear  
Brightness and bliss shall prevail  
Blessed you will be with bright descendants  
Indeed, you will be filled with  
boundless benedictions.*

This book would not have been possible without the devoted efforts of the Dharma Translation Council of Jen Chen Buddhism (Humanity Vehicle Buddhism) and the contribution of many generous donors. It took months of dedicated labour to complete this task. Nonetheless, every member of the team worked joyously. They are ever grateful for the exceptional opportunity to contribute to a noble cause that creates the causal conditions for fellow humans to benefit from the Buddhadharmā, and be inspired to live blissful and meaningful lives.

If you also wish to join this effort in creating a blissful pure land on earth, you are most welcome to support the costs of publication and distribution. In this way, Buddha’s teachings may spread far and wide so that many more

people can benefit from the brightness of wisdom, be inspired to work in unison to purify the human mind, and to build a blissful pure land for humanity.

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## **Dynamics of the Mind**

*“Buddha is like an enormous radiant sun. He has no ignorance and his boundless brightness permeates the infinite space. All of us have the same enormous radiant sun, but it is often obscured by our dark clouds of ignorance. Once we eradicate our dark clouds of ignorance, we will be able to see the sun, and it is just as enormous and bright.”*

In this book, Reverend Ming-An Chen provides the fundamental basis for cultivation – the need to understand the significant relationship between our Buddha-nature and the mind, the resulting interplay of causes, conditions and effects, and how it all comes together to influence the journey of our life and determine its outcome.

Many of us continually seek external Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, yet never realising that within ourselves is a most compassionate Buddha. This book will help us discover that.