



AWAKENING  
*the sleeping*  
MIND

*2nd Edition*

*Venerable Master Shen-Kai*

**AWAKENING  
THE SLEEPING MIND**

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Venerable Master Shen-Kai

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## **Preface**

This book contains extracts of Venerable Master Shen-Kai's answers to questions that people raised during his talks in various countries around the world. Venerable Master Shen-Kai is the teacher of the Buddhahood Lineage World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism).

Venerable Master Shen-Kai guided people to understand that the culture of Buddhism is a culture of bliss, and taught us how to create true happiness and live blissful lives. In his talks, the Venerable Master always had a way of expounding the profound Buddhadharma in simple terms and with clarity. Rather than delivering his talks from prepared notes, Master usually adopted a question-and-answer approach. In this way, he ensured that his teachings would suit the audiences' needs, prevailing conditions and levels of understanding.

Master's enlightening words of wisdom flow freely. Like a sprinkle of Dharma dew, they gently touch upon us, awakening our minds with wisdom like the blossoming of a flower.

The contents of this book do not present exhaustive analyses of the subjects discussed, but offer the Dharma according to the causalities of the audiences at that particular time. This book provides translations

*Venerable Master Shen-Kai*

of the answers as they were given by the Venerable Master. Inevitably, similar answers will be found in different parts of the book as care has been taken to retain them to ensure that the explanations are complete.

May the wisdom of this book inspire your Bodhi mind and enhance your inner brightness and clarity. May you be with Buddha.

*Dharma Translation Council*

*World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism)*

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## **About the Author**

Venerable Master Shen-Kai was born in 1918, in Guizhou, China. From a very early age, he showed extraordinary qualities which revealed wisdom and compassion beyond his years. At a tender age of five, he was able to treat illnesses with herbal remedies. By the time he was seven, his advanced literary ability and insight were evident; standing on Lotus Mountain with his school teacher, gazing over the lands below, he spontaneously composed a piece of poetry which described ‘seeing through the illusion of worldly life’. The Venerable Master was enlightened at twelve. In the years that followed, he rapidly advanced through his formal education and graduated from Zhejiang University. By the age of 20, he was head of a county.

The Venerable Master was a tranquil and humble person who readily radiated a natural warmth that put people at ease. His sole concern was always for the peace and lasting happiness of sentient beings. He studied many religions and was so deeply inspired by Buddhism that he became a monk and devoted his life to creating bliss for humanity, rejuvenating Buddhism and benefiting society. He wrote more than a hundred books on Buddhist practice and established Jen Chen Buddhism centres in many countries. Also, he accepted invitations from all over the world to give Dharma talks. For his talks, he would open the floor

to the audience so they could ask whatever questions they had, and he would guide them according to their various conditions and levels of understanding. With the wisdom of an enlightened teacher, he would convey the profound Dharma with such simplicity and clarity that they instantly awakened to the very essence of it. Thus, he struck a powerful chord with people everywhere. People were filled with inner joy, illumination and an inspiration to unfold their own wisdom through practice of the Bodhisattva Way. To this day, Venerable Master Shen-Kai's books and magazines on Humanity Vehicle Buddhism continue to be published and received globally.

Having been the first to promote Humanity Vehicle (pronounced *Jen Chen*' in Chinese) as expounded by Buddha, Venerable Master Shen-Kai is honoured as 'The promoting teacher of World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism'. And in gratitude of his dedication in bringing a bliss culture to humanity, the Venerable Master is also revered by many people across nations as the 'Bodhisattva of Bliss'.

With true spirit of a Bodhisattva, the Venerable Master worked tirelessly in hope that all beings part from suffering, that the earth becomes a blissful pure land, that humanity achieves happiness and everyone attains enlightenment. His compassionate vows were magnanimous and far-reaching. Never seeking peace and happiness for himself alone, he vowed to return

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to our world lifetime upon lifetime to guide humanity to purify their mind. Venerable Master Shen-Kai hoped that many more Bodhisattvas-to-be will be inspired to join in the effort to bring about a bright and blissful world for all; the Pure Land where we will welcome the birth and supreme enlightenment of Maitreya, our next Buddha.



*Venerable Master Shen-Kai  
Teacher of Buddhahood Lineage  
World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism*



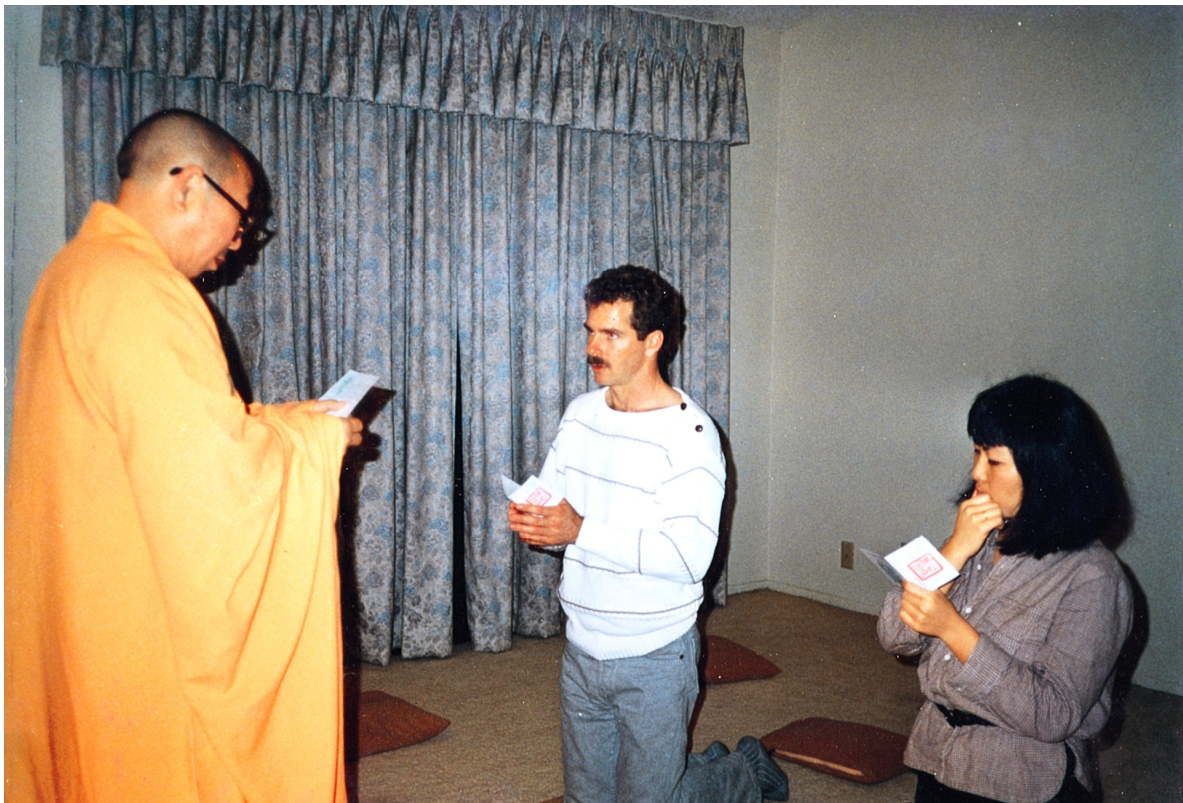
*Venerable Master Shen-Kai leads ordained and lay disciples in a Dharma assembly in Taiwan.*



*Hundreds of devoted Buddhist practitioners attend Precepts-taking and meditation retreat.*



*Venerable Master Shen-Kai gives a Dharma talk to devotees in Taiwan.*



*A refuge-taking service being conducted in America for people wishing to be Buddhists.*



*At the entrance of his monastery, Venerable Master Shen-Kai's calligraphy - Purify the mind of humanity.*

## **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' in Chinese)
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 'fully awakened and enlightened'. In the Lotus Sūtra 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 were only speaking of the expedient teachings of the Buddha.*" Buddha expounded five vehicles of teachings to cater for sentient beings' different conditions and levels of understanding. But from the ultimate point of view there is only one vehicle - the vehicle that leads to supreme enlightenment: Buddhahood Vehicle.

## *Awakening the Sleeping Mind*

The Buddhahood Lineage was established in hope that we may emulate the Buddha in his cultivation, inspire our self-awareness, attain our innate pure nature and practise Humanity Vehicle Buddhism. By observing five precepts<sup>1</sup> and performing ten virtuous deeds<sup>2</sup>, we lay foundations ensuring our rebirth in human form lifetime after lifetime, so that we may continually practise the Bodhisattva Way and eventually attain Buddhahood.

Buddhahood Lineage World Humanity Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) promotes the original teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha. We pay homage to Śākyamuni Buddha and practise the Way of Bodhisattvas.

The object of Buddhahood Lineage is to promote Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism), to purify the human mind, unfold the innate wisdom of humanity and establish a far-reaching culture of bliss that transforms our impure world into a blissful pure land.

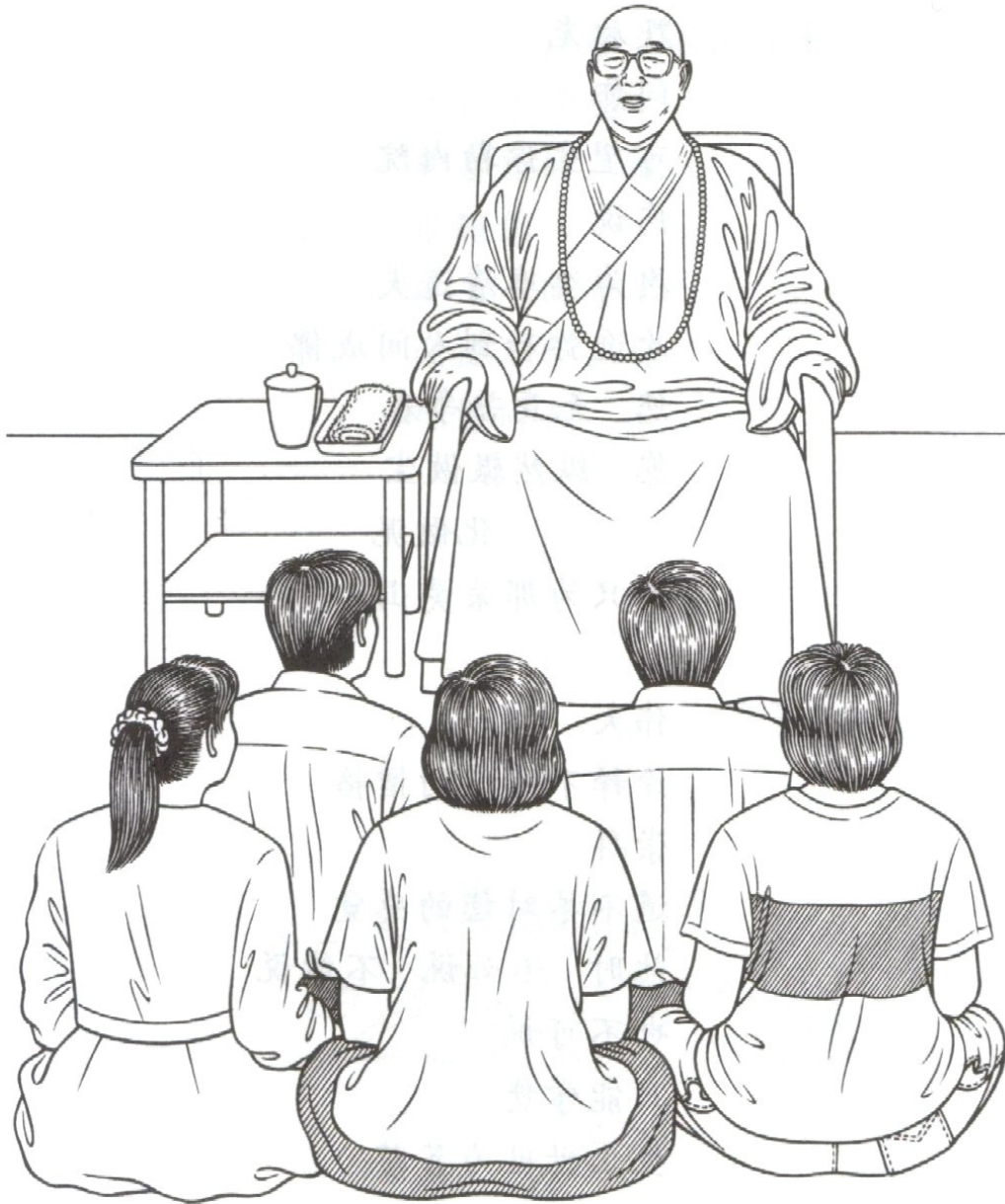
*Venerable Master Shen-Kai*

*Part One*

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*Cultivating Your  
Wisdom and Happiness*

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*Wisdom and brightness are innate in every one of us. It is our human potential to be enlightened. When our wisdom unfolds, it is like flicking on the light-switch in our dark room. Suddenly everything becomes bright and clear. However, if we do not cultivate ourselves, we will never be enlightened.*

*Happiness is a birthright of everyone. Yet why are we unhappy? Who is responsible? How can we distance from suffering and live life with bliss and happiness? The Buddha told us that our happiness is ruined by our five sicknesses of life. He revealed to us the simple way to true bliss in life.*

**“Wisdom is the key to happiness.”**

**~Venerable Master Shen-Kai~**

## **Why is there no happiness in life?**

Happiness is the birthright of every human being in the world. However, we are unhappy because we have greed, anger, ignorance, egoistic arrogance and suspicion. With these five sicknesses, we destroy our own happiness.

From greed, anger, ignorance, egoistic arrogance and suspicion come the occurrences of all kinds of unwholesome events, e.g. killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, the consumption of intoxicants, etc. Our happiness is thus ruined by our own five sicknesses of life. The purpose of learning and practising Buddhism is to eradicate these sicknesses of humanity. After we have eliminated these sicknesses, we need to diligently learn and practise Buddhism, and cultivate our blessings again. In this way, we will be able to regain our happiness.

The purpose of learning Buddhism is to nurture our own happiness and enable ourselves to achieve the best and most wonderful blessings. At the same time, we must not undermine other people's happiness. We must also enable them to acquire the best and most wonderful blessings, just as we do for ourselves.

## **Why learn from Buddha?**

Buddha is the Supreme Enlightened One. We, humans, are sentient beings. Sentient beings have afflictive emotions, ignorance and foolishness. Therefore, we need to have wisdom, to be neither ignorant nor foolish. Thus, we need to learn from the Buddha.

We need to comprehend the meaning of *'Buddha'*. *'Buddha'* means *'awakened and enlightened'*. From dawn till dusk, we ordinary sentient beings have afflictive emotions, distress and pain. There is much darkness in us, and thus our sea of suffering is boundless. It is only by learning and practising what the Buddha taught that we can part with suffering, distress and afflictive emotions, and attain ultimate bliss. Therefore, we all need to learn from Buddha.

## **What are the benefits of learning and practising Buddhism?**

The benefit of learning and practising Buddhism is described in the sūtras as *"Parting from afflictions and gaining happiness"*. This kind of happiness can only be gotten if we attain liberation.

If we think that liberation can only occur after death, in rebirth to the Western Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, then our thinking would neither be wholly

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right nor wrong. As a matter of fact, while we are *alive* we need to be liberated at every moment. Then, when we die we can also be liberated.

It is very simple to practise the method of liberation. For example, if someone scolds you, you respond with, “Thank you”. This way, you are liberated. But if someone scolds you and you react with wide glaring eyes and scold him in retaliation, then you are not being liberated. At this moment, you should surpass it by being positive and understanding, thinking, “When he scolds me, I see him as my parent who scolds me only out of concern for me.” Alternatively, viewing him as a child making a nuisance of himself, you ignore his attitudes. If you don’t know to maintain a positive understanding to surpass the situation, but instead take him as an enemy, then a fight will erupt. Everyday, no matter what situations we encounter, if we always maintain a positive outlook and transcend them, we can be liberated.

These simple teachings are in the sūtras, but many people have distorted the Buddhadharma (teachings of Buddha) into superstitious belief. This is indeed a pity! When we apply Buddhadharma in our daily lives, we distance ourselves from suffering and gain happiness.

**What is the wisdom of Buddha? How can we unfold our Buddha-wisdom?**

The unfolding of our Buddha-wisdom requires that we have pure awareness. When self-awakening, awakening others, and the practice of the Bodhisattva Way have reached complete perfection, Buddhahood is attained. But pure awareness is no simple matter. There is advance awareness (i.e. being aware of consequences *before* the event), retrospective awareness (i.e. being aware of consequences *after* the event) and unawareness (i.e. being ignorant of the event and its consequences). With advance awareness, you know ahead of time whether suffering or happiness will result, before the action is even committed.

Thus, the saying goes that “*Bodhisattvas are wary of causes, sentient beings are wary of consequences*”. For any situation, a Bodhisattva knows whether the cause is virtuous or wicked. Aware of the cause, he makes the necessary corrections in the cause itself. He does not wait until he is suffering the bitter consequences and is full of complaints before making the changes. It would be too late then.

In contrast, sentient beings are wary of the consequences rather than the causes. Before an incident, some people like to behave like heroes, taunting others, “Who do you think you are, huh? You think you’re so great? What do you want?!” Then, they

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pull out their knives and murder people, or beat them up, or quarrel ... until the law catches up with them and throws them into prison. Oh! They will wail their laments then! Why hadn't you known better right from the start? If you had been aware in advance, and you hadn't behaved as such, then wouldn't everything be fine?

### **How should a lay Buddhist cultivate?**

What is cultivation? If a vehicle has become faulty, it needs repair. Anything that becomes faulty needs repair. The same goes for humans. When a human being has gone bad, he needs 'repair', i.e. he needs to cultivate himself. Some people might comment, "This person is very bad, he needs to be fixed!" It is good if a person does not speak harsh words to others. But if he begins to do so, then he needs to cultivate himself. Someone with too many bad habits who likes to harm others needs to cultivate himself. If he were imprisoned, then he could cultivate in prison. After soul-searching and introspection, when he is rehabilitated, he will regain his freedom.

Actually, human beings were originally free, but we lost our freedom when we began having bad habitual tendencies. Fix this and we are once again free. Like a vehicle that was originally in good operating condition, if it becomes faulty, it will be fine again after a repair.

Not only do we need to cultivate, but we also need to maintain it. We must maintain the goodness in us.

If you like to beat other people up, then after you have been 'fixed' by them you would never dare to do it again. Then you have to maintain that. This is called '*to cultivate and maintain*'. If you don't understand this principle, then even if you think you have been a 'practitioner' your whole life, actually you still do not know how to cultivate yourself.

**A pure mind, hence a Buddha Pure Land. How do we make our mind pure?**

*'A pure mind, hence a Pure Land.'* This is the teaching expounded in Buddhism. Heaven and hell are created by our mind. Since a positive virtuous mind creates heaven and a negative unwholesome mind creates hell, then let us not create hell but instead create heaven.

In learning and practising Buddhism, the first thing to do is to purify our mind. How do we do this? Any wandering thought that arises in the mind must be totally cleared. Then the mind will become pure. By clearing all the negative karmic seeds in the deepest subtle eighth consciousness, our mind is purified. When each and every one of us has a pure mind, we do not engage in wild thoughts or foolish fancies; nor do we commit various kinds of outrage. Then the

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family is also purified. When each and every one in the family has a pure mind, then the society is purified. When each and every person in society has a pure mind, then the country is purified. When the minds of the citizens of each and every country are pure, then our world will also be purified. But really, to get to the heart of the matter, purifying the human mind can only be accomplished by ourselves through practising as the Buddha had done. In the last decades, I have been interested in many religions. But through all my research I have come to the realisation that it is only through Buddhism that we can purify our mind.

### **What are the teachings of Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism)?**

Śākyamuni Buddha lived in this world for 81 years. He spent 49 years expounding the Dharma, during which he taught five vehicles of Buddhism, namely, (1) Humanity Vehicle (Jen Chen), (2) Deva Vehicle, (3) Śrāvaka Vehicle, (4) Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, and (5) Bodhisattva Vehicle. The word '*vehicle*' or '*Chen*' (乘) is analogous to a means of conveyance such as a ship, car, aeroplane or any form of transportation. Śākyamuni Buddha appeared in human form to attain Buddhahood in this world, mainly to advocate Humanity Vehicle Buddhism. Not only did Śākyamuni Buddha appear in human form to attain Buddhahood, but likewise, there will be one thousand Buddhas in

the present period of our earth, the Kalpa of Virtue. They too appear in human form to attain Buddhahood.

Actually, the teachings of Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) are very simple: purify the human mind, purify the world and transform this Sahā world into a Pure Land. (This world in which we live is called the Sahā World or ‘*World of Enduring Suffering*’ because we must endure suffering in order to survive.) Thus, the teachings of Humanity Vehicle Buddhism are methods to purify the human mind.

**What are the differences between the Buddhadharma and the ways of the world?**

This is an excellent question. The Buddhist sūtras state,

*“Buddhadharma exists in this world  
and one does not separate from this world  
to attain enlightenment.”*

If it parts from the ways of the world, it would not be Buddhadharma. Although Buddhadharma is in this world, in every family and in every person’s living environment, we still stubbornly cling on to our own delusions and wrong views, refusing to be awakened. We are ignorant that this is the Buddhadharma.

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The Buddhadharma is a method for awakening, and the teachings of pure awareness and enlightenment. It enables everyone of us to be awakened and enlightened. This is called Buddhadharma. Conversely, when we do not have such pure awareness and enlightenment, and we do not know of such a teaching, this is what we know as *'ways of the world'*.

If the Buddhadharma is in the Buddha Land, it is the way of the world of the Buddha Land. Similarly, if all of us learn and practise the teachings of the Buddha and everyone becomes a Bodhisattva, then the Buddhadharma becomes the way of our world. Because sentient beings like us stubbornly cling on to our delusions and wrong views and refuse to be awakened, we are attached to all kinds of suffering, distress and afflictive emotions, mistaking wrong for right, false for truth, and suffering for enjoyment. Thus, these have become the worldly ways of our world.

### **What is the ultimate Buddhadharma?**

When one has truly and thoroughly parted from suffering, distress and afflictive emotions, and has attained the sublime state of purity, tranquillity, brightness and bliss, only then is that the ultimate Buddhadharma.

**What is the difference between society educated by Buddhism, and Buddhism secularised by society?**

A society educated by Buddhism is what Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) advocates. There are many things that we, as humans, have not done well; our minds are not well cultivated and our conduct is not good. This is why we need to learn from the Buddha and purify our mind. Thus, we advocate a 'society educated by Buddhism'. Our lives need to be educated by Buddhism. In the same way, the family also needs to be educated by Buddhism. It is not Buddhism being secularised by the society.

There are people who advocate 'Buddhism secularised by society'. I have come across pop-songs written with Buddhist scriptures such as the Heart Sūtra, Ten Little Mantras and other Buddhist mantras. Performing these as an exhilarating show on stage is really inappropriate. This is an example of 'Buddhism secularised by society'. Buddhism is originally pure, and the sūtra and mantras are meant to help us cultivate and purify the mind. However, having been transformed into pop-songs, and with all the irreverent thumping beats, it can be said that the spirit of Buddhism is undermined. This is where the two differ.

**How should a Buddhist apply supramundane spirit whilst performing his work in the world?**

Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) advocates the application of supramundane spirit in addressing worldly matters. What does this mean? '*Supramundane spirit*' is the way to liberation, and '*performing his work in the world*' means practising the Bodhisattva Way. Supramundane spirit is not separated from all things and events of our world. Needless to say, with regards to the ways of our world, we should of course '*abstain from all evil*' (i.e. we do not commit any kind of evil deeds) and '*perform all virtue*' (i.e. we must perform any kind of virtuous deeds). Take for example, the donation of money for a virtuous cause. If we make a donation to a Buddhist temple and perform the giving with a pure mind free from the form of giver, receiver and act of giving, then that is supramundane spirit. If we use a lot of money to do many good deeds and perform all these in such supramundane spirit, then we are practising '*selflessly benefitting others*'. On the other hand, if we make a donation to erect a pillar in a Buddhist temple and request that our name and status be inscribed onto it, then this is not applying supramundane spirit in doing worldly work.

We need to perform many, many virtuous deeds. But having done them, we need to remain in accord with the Dharma. We mustn't go contrary to the

Buddhadharma. This is what is meant by using supramundane spirit to do worldly work. In this way, our society can attain true harmony, peace, bliss and happiness.

This is only an example to illustrate the teaching. By applying the principle of this example to life's many other situations, you will be able to understand. If we were to speak of this in greater detail, perhaps we would not be able to finish in a month!

**How do we practise the method of ‘viewing matters with positive perspective and right understanding’?**

*‘Viewing matters with positive perspective and right understanding’* is a method of practice that Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) advocates. People in this world either do not understand, misunderstand or are confused. When we distance from such wrong understanding and confusion, we will then have right interpretation and positive perspective.

Let us have an example for illustration. A husband and wife have always gotten along very well with each other. But today, the husband comes home a little later than usual and his wife misunderstands. She becomes suspicious, “Huh! Did you go looking for your

## *Awakening the Sleeping Mind*

girlfriend today? You've come home so late!" Oh no, this is misunderstanding!

If your husband is a little late, then doing your duty as his wife, you could ask him, "Oh, you've come home quite late today, has anything happened while you were out? The car didn't break down, did it?"

You might as well view things in this positive perspective. Even if your husband had some bad habits, he would be ashamed and correct himself. Thus, your right understanding can heal many of your husband's ills. On the other hand, if you misunderstood the circumstances, you could drive him crazy when nothing had been the problem to begin with. He might think, "Sigh, this sort of a wife, I might as well ignore you altogether!" The same principle applies in other circumstances. Regardless of whom we are dealing with, may it be friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbours or anybody for that matter, if we are able to view matters with positive perspective and right understanding, then wherever we go, we can be joyous.

**We learn and practise Buddhism to liberate ourselves from suffering, worries and afflictions; but how should we practise so that we do not become even more troubled as we learn?**

Do not learn and practise Buddhism blindly. If you learn blindly, it is as if the lights have been switched off in your house and you are sitting in a dark. If you practise blindly without a teacher guiding you along, then of course, the more you practise the more troubled you may become. If there is a teacher giving you guidance in how to practise and how to unfold your wisdom, then when you have wisdom, you will no longer be troubled.

There are many heretical groups that spread their teachings under the banner of Buddhism. But in truth, they do not know what Buddhism really is. If we practise following their way, then of course the more we practise, the more troubled we get. Moreover, we could end up ‘practising’ our way to hell.

Thus, it is important to learn and practise under the guidance of a wise teacher and emulate his/her ways. When we truly understand the correct principles of cultivation, we must put them into practice. Then naturally, the more we practise the happier and brighter we will be.

**Is there any difference between emulating the Buddha and studying Buddhism?**

There is a very significant difference. The study of Buddhism includes translating Buddhist scriptures and sūtras, producing literary works, commentaries and doing research on Buddhism. Emulating Buddha on the other hand, is practising according to Buddha's way. How Buddha cultivates, we cultivate. How Buddha practises, we practise. Buddha teaches us to practise the Bodhisattva Way, therefore we practise the Bodhisattva Way. In this way, we too become Buddhas in the future.

**What is the importance of 'practice' to a Buddhist?**

'*Practice*' has a very broad scope, but to Buddhists it is vitally important to practise the way of Buddha. If you know a lot of theories but do not practise, then the theories do not serve you any purpose. If you are a qualified medical doctor learned in the medical sciences, you ought to practise medicine to help diagnose and cure people of their sicknesses. Only then is your learning of any use. Otherwise, you are not practising what you have learned. If you learned architecture but refuse to do any drafting or designing for people, then you are not making use of the training and education that you have received. If Buddhists like ourselves, and even monastics as well, only talk of the

many theories but do not put them into actual practice, then that would be as good as not knowing the theories. For instance, as Buddhists we know we should not cast verbal abuse. So we practise not to scold others, and instead, use words of kindness, praise and consolation. In this way, what we have learned is useful. This is *'practice'*.

With regards to *'cultivation and practice'*, to 'cultivate' is to eliminate our undesirable habits and conduct; and to 'practise' is to walk the Bodhisattva Way. Thus, where do we practise? In our conduct and in the midst of our actions! Whether we are scolding people or beating people up, we are in action. Now, if we refrain from scolding and hitting others, we have eliminated our undesirable actions and maintained our good conduct. This is cultivation and practice.

### **What is the method of ultimate cultivation?**

What is ultimate cultivation? This is not an easy matter. I have yet to reach the ultimate, so if you want me to speak of the ultimate Dharma, I am lost for words. However, I know of one way by which we can cultivate. And it is this: *'let go'*. From this moment on, you begin to let go, and continue to let go until you become Buddha. After you have become Buddha, let go of Buddhahood. When you have let go of even the form of Buddhahood, then surely that is the ultimate.

**How can a Buddhist practise such that he fulfils supporting and protecting the Dharma as well as cultivating himself?**

What should one do to be a true Buddhist practitioner? This is a very important question. To be a Buddhist practitioner, one needs to take refuge in the Triple Treasures - Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; learn and practise what the Buddha taught; practise the Bodhisattva Way; safeguard and support the Triple Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha); observe the Five Precepts<sup>6</sup> and perform the Ten Virtuous Deeds<sup>2</sup>; abstain from committing evil or unwholesome karma; do all virtuous karma; and purify one's mind. In this way, one is truly a Buddhist practitioner.

As a Buddhist practitioner, you decide on and commit to one Buddhist temple and one teacher. When you think that this teacher is worthy of your devotion and support, and what the Buddhist temple does is worthy of your support and protection, then you should give your support conscientiously and wholeheartedly.

To cultivate oneself is to eradicate one's self-serving habitual tendencies and unwholesome conduct, to perform all that is virtuous and to purify one's mind. In addition, one needs to practise the Bodhisattva Way. This is what it means to support and protect the Dharma, as well as cultivate oneself in accord with Buddha's Way.

**We often hear people say, “If we do not commit bad deeds but instead often help others, then what need is there to learn Buddhism?” How should we elucidate such a perception?**

There are people who say, “It is enough that I do good deeds. Why should I believe in Buddhism? I only need to do good deeds; what do I stand to gain by taking refuge in Buddhism and learning to practise?”

Actually, although they proclaim that it suffices to have a good heart, they do not know just how good their heart should be.

Even with the greatest goodness of heart, one may at most rise to the heavens to enjoy heavenly blessings and happiness. But one is still not liberated. To attain liberation, we need to learn and practise the way of Buddha and aspire for liberation. Good and bad, we need to liberate ourselves from them. Whether heaven, hell, or anything else, we need to be liberated from it all. That is the object of learning and practising Buddhism. If you do not realise that learning and practising Buddhism is for the sake of liberation, but think that it is only about doing good deeds, then at very best, you can only ascend to the realm of heaven in your next life.

**What are merits and blessings? Is being a vegetarian considered meritorious? How does one practise in accord with the Dharma?**

Merits and blessings are two different matters. Blessings are cultivated by using material or other means to benefit other people. It is a blessing when we benefit others. Merit is different. When we practise to a state where there are neither arisings nor ceasings in our minds, only then is it merit.

What merit is there in being vegetarian? To observe vegetarianism is to abstain from taking lives. In refraining from killing whilst also cultivating ourselves, our merits are very great indeed. However, despite being vegetarian and abstaining from taking lives, if we were to aid others in their killing, then that is still considered in violation of precept.

**How should we overcome the many thoughts that arise in our mind? Is the cause of all these thoughts the karma that we take with us through lifetime after lifetime?**

Originally there was no thought, so why do you have them now? Observe where these thoughts come from, and let them return to whence they came. Your thoughts are very troublesome. Where are they coming from? They were not there originally. You

constantly observe where these thoughts arise from. Everyday, you observe your mind. Since thoughts come from the mind, you should observe your mind. Originally, there were no thoughts. Why do you have so many thoughts? Let them return to wherever they came from. If that does not work, then ignore them and they will go away.

### **Why learn and practise Buddhism?**

First and foremost, we need to understand the meaning of the word '*Buddha*'. 'Buddha' was a Sanskrit term used in India long ago. Translated into the Chinese language, it has the meaning of 'pure awareness, awakening and enlightenment'. When we are learning and practising Buddhism, the most important thing is to learn to have the enlightenment and wisdom of Buddha. Take for example that you go and have some alcohol. Feeling that your drink was good, you continue drinking one after another. However, you lack the awareness to realise that drinking in fact isn't good. The confused and disordered state that results from your alcohol consumption can lead to bad consequences.

On the other hand, if you are aware and enlightened, you know that it is better not to drink.

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**The basic requirement of practising Buddhism is to have a mind of equality, great loving kindness and compassion. However, I feel that I am still unable to treat all sentient beings the way Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and my teacher do - with such great equality, loving kindness and compassion. Hence I am deeply remorseful. Please enlighten me.**

You ask a very good question. Although presently you cannot yet achieve loving kindness, compassion and equality of mind, you are already aware that you need to. The worst thing for people is to have no sense of remorse. Since you already feel remorseful, that means that you already have some awakening. It is a worry when people are not even aware that they have committed many evil or unwholesome deeds. But for you, you are aware of the arising of thoughts and emotions in your mind. This is a kind of enlightenment. This is a rare and precious achievement that is indeed excellent and praiseworthy. Since you already know the need to have this perspective, I believe that very soon you will be able to conduct yourself accordingly. I congratulate you.

**‘All things arise by the aggregation of causes and conditions; all things cease by the dispersion of causes and conditions.’ How do we apply this Law of Causality?**

Let us use the family as an example to illustrate the Law of Causality. A family is established as a result of aggregations of causes and conditions. Since this family has already been brought about by these various causes and conditions, we should therefore live harmoniously and joyfully as a family. Fulfilling this positive causality for the family will leave us with no regrets in the future.

We should not reckon that just because ‘*all forms are empty*’, you are ‘*empty*’, I am ‘*empty*’, we are all ‘*empty*’, so we don’t need to care about anything at all. This is wrong. Since all things result from aggregations of causes and conditions, we must make good use of these causes and conditions.

Let us look at another example. This bouquet of flowers has come into being because I am here to give a Dharma talk. Therefore, we should place this bouquet nicely on the table for everyone to appreciate. While we are admiring the flowers, if a person comes along and declares, “Sigh, all conditioned things are empty in nature. What use is there in having such a beautiful bouquet of flowers?” And then this person removes it and throws it away. This person may not be

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of sound mind. Now, because you know of the Law of Causality, you say that the flowers are empty. However, you are still physically here. You, a *'person'*, have not emptied away! How could you say that the flowers are empty? Therefore, you should diligently learn and practise what the Buddha taught. First *'empty'* the inner sentient being (i.e. the thinking in our mind, our opinions and attachments), and then you will not find that things in the world are contradictory.

So, from this we learn that the contradictions we see in this world stem from our failure to properly grasp the principles. Because, when the principles have not been correctly understood, there cannot be coherence in their application to affairs of the world. This leads to a lack of roundedness and harmony in the way we deal with things.



*Venerable Master Shen-Kai*

*Part Two*

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*Karma and Life After Death*



*In death, we are not like a flame extinguished so that there is nothing left of us. We will be reborn according to our karma. Karma is action. Every deed we commit through our body, speech and mind, whether it be virtuous or wicked, right or wrong, is karma.*

*Indeed, Karma has a very intimate influence on our life, our death, as well as our life after death.*

**"By oneself indeed is evil done,  
By oneself is one defiled;  
By oneself is evil left undone,  
By oneself indeed is one purified;  
Purity and impurity depend on oneself,  
No one can purify another."**

**~Words of the Buddha~**

### **What is karma?**

Karma, meaning ‘action’, refers to the deeds we commit through our body, speech and mind. It encompasses all aspects of our conduct, both virtuous and evil, right and wrong. Actions performed in past lives are called ‘*past karma*’. Deeds done in the present life are ‘*present karma*’. The acts of an individual are called ‘*individual karma*’, while those committed collectively by a group are called ‘*common karma*’.

### **Will we become ghosts when we die? How does karma affect our rebirth?**

Sentient beings transmigrate in six realms<sup>4</sup> due to the causes and conditions of their karmic forces. In his present life, if a person does not commit evil deeds through his body, speech and mind, but instead performs virtuous deeds, then he will be able to retain a human form in his next life. If a person is wealthy, he would have planted virtuous causes by being generous and giving during his previous life. If a person is of dignified countenance, he would have practised tolerance and harmony with others, or offered fresh flowers to Buddha. If a person lives a long and healthy life and is seldom sick, in his previous life he would have performed virtuous deeds such as abstaining from killing and hurting other beings.

If a person does a lot of virtuous deeds and accumulates a lot of merits, he will be able to enjoy celestial blessings in the heaven realm. However, if he does many good deeds but is hot-tempered and quarrelsome, then he shall be reborn in the asura realm. The aforementioned human, heaven and asura realms are collectively called the ‘three virtuous realms’.

If a person is always committing evil deeds through his body, speech and mind, then after he dies, he will fall into the animal, hungry ghost or the hell realm to suffer his retributions.

Therefore, it is not for certain that a person will become a ghost after he dies, but there is a possibility that he does. It depends on the karma he has committed whilst alive.

### **How do karmic hindrances come about?**

*‘Hindrance’* is obstruction and obscuration. Ignorance is the root cause of evil or negative karma. Ignorance gives rise to afflictions, which in turn cause the mind to become unwholesome or impure. An impure mind is sluggish and makes a person lose his zeal and diligence in his practice. Without zeal and diligence, he does not practise Dhyāna-samādhi<sup>3</sup>. Because of his lack of practice, he distances from the path of enlightenment. Therefore, afflictions can obstruct a

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practitioner from transcending a mundane state to attain the supramundane state of enlightenment and wisdom.

Since time immemorial, due to greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, suspicion and all sorts of afflictions, people have been creating karma. The workings of all our karmic forces from the positive and negative actions we have committed then follow us in rebirths lifetime after lifetime, as we transmigrate in six realms<sup>4</sup> of existence and receive our karmic effects.

Take for example, someone has sown a seed of monasticism in his past life. In his present lifetime, he meets an enlightened teacher. The seed begins to sprout and thoughts of monk-hood are rekindled. However, he may nonetheless be prevented from realising his wish, due to the effect of certain negative karma that he had committed during his past life presently manifesting. This is karmic hindrance.

### **How does our negative karma arise?**

All sentient beings have karmic transgressions. Where do these transgressions come from? They arise from the impurity of our three karmas, i.e. our own bodily actions, speech and thoughts. Our body carries out actions such as killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. Our mouth commits lying, salacious talk, divisive

speech, and mean and slanderous speech. Our mind breeds thoughts of greed, anger and ignorance. These three types of impure karma create transgressions of the Ten Evil Deeds<sup>5</sup>. Because everybody has transgressions, this world has become a sea of suffering; a world where everyone has to endure suffering in order to survive.

### **How do we cleanse ourselves of negative karma?**

If we want to clear our karmic transgressions, we need to achieve purity of three karmas of body, speech and mind, such that there is no greed, no anger, no ignorance, no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no divisive speech, no mean and slanderous speech, no lying and no salacious talk. If we can perform these Ten Virtuous Deeds<sup>2</sup> in our daily lives, then we can ascend into heavenly realms, and the Earth can be transformed into a heaven. However, there are simply too few people who know how to cultivate in this way.

### **What is ‘Māra’ ? How does it cause hindrances?**

Mó (魔) or ‘*Māra*’ has the meaning of ‘snatching away a person’s life, hindering virtuous deeds, disturbing and harassing people, and damaging Buddhist monasteries’. *Māra*-hindrances are obstructions to

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practitioners of the Bodhi Path. In the course of his cultivation, a Buddhist practitioner encounters numerous troubles and obstructions that arise both from his internal and external environments. If his resolve is not firm, then meeting with just a little bit of karmic hindrances can raise worrisome concerns and apprehensions, such that he loses faith in his practice on the Bodhi Path. Then, taking advantage of his weaknesses, the army of Māra enters. By various means, it tempts him, delivers blows to him and provokes him so that he may lose his clarity of mind and confidence in the Buddhadharma. As a result, for the rest of his life, he may become lost in the sea of worldly desires, and bask in the fires of lust and desire for lifetime after lifetime, mistaking desires for happiness, oblivious to the horrors of the fiery inferno of Three Worlds of Existence<sup>6</sup>. Thus, Māra-hindrances can terminate a person's wisdom-life.

Therefore, a practitioner needs to always have remorse, compassion and repentance arising in his heart. Towards all people, he should be compassionate and kind. He should be modest, respectful and polite, whilst nurturing humility as his self-cultivation. He should always give convenience to others, and exercise his wisdom in accommodating other beings. Additionally, his words should offer consolation and encouragement, and he should not be attached to the form of *'self'* or *'others'* when dealing with people or other matters. In this way, he will eliminate the

hindrances of his karma, and gain the respect and admiration of everyone. As there will be no way in for the Māra, it will then retreat in the face of its difficulties.

### **What is the difference between karmic hindrances and Māra-hindrances?**

Karmic hindrances can obstruct a person's path of learning and practising the way to enlightenment, whereas Māra-hindrances can terminate a person's wisdom-life. Māra-hindrances arise from karmic hindrances.

### **How can we eliminate our negative karma?**

Disasters and calamities are prevalent in this world of enduring suffering, the Sahā World. Almost everyone has karmic transgressions because people are unaware that they need to cultivate themselves. They are also unaware that they need to lessen and eliminate their karmic transgressions.

Why do sins and vices exist in this world? It is because people lack wisdom. Believing in the teachings of the Buddha, practising the three-step-one-prostration method, paying respects and prostrating before the Buddha are amongst the best methods of lessening

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and eliminating our karmic transgressions. These can enable humanity to acquire brightness and dissolve darkness.

### **Can rebirth take place regardless of the type of karma we have?**

Yes. We can be reborn regardless of the type of karma that we have. Which realm you are reborn to depends on what kind of karma you are carrying with you. If in your lifetime, you widely perform the Ten Virtuous Deeds (i.e. to refrain from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) salacious talk, (6) divisive speech, (7) mean and slandering speech, (8) greed, (9) anger and hatred, and (10) wrong views), practise giving, cultivate your blessings and are filial to your parents, then after you die you will bring the virtuous karma with you and be reborn in the realm of heavens. On the other hand, if you kill, rob and commit wicked evil deeds, you will bring the evil karma with you and be reborn in the realms of hell. If you always quarrel, fight and contest fiercely with others, you bring this type of karma with you to the realm of asura. If you are usually superstitious, worship ghost-deities and engage in superstitious practices, then after you die, you will be reborn in the realm of ghost-deities. If you are a foolish and ignorant person, then you bring the foolish and ignorant karma with you to be reborn in the realm of

animals. Thus, this is what it means to carry your karma in rebirth to the next life.

With karma, you can be reborn. But if you wish to be reborn in the Buddha Pure Land, then it is only possible by cultivating pure karma. (Pure karma comes from performing deeds with an untainted pure mind.)

**How should people practise so that they will have a good ending in life and face no obstructions in rebirth?**

There are many methods of practice. But to practise, we cannot be lacking in virtuous roots, blessings and causalities. One can choose any of 84,000 methods of Buddhist practice and practise deeply that chosen method. The most important thing is that we practise until liberation is attained. After you are liberated, your body does not suffer during illnesses. You know when you are due to pass away and where your next destination will be. If you practise to the highest level of attainment, you go without a form of departure and you come without a form of arrival. It's better to know your own departure and arrival. You do not need anyone to tell you. But it is not a simple matter to practise to this level! Therefore, we have to practise diligently. We can enter into any method of Buddhist practice. There are many methods of practice in Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism),

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and you can be successful practising by any one of these methods.

### **After a person dies, approximately how many days does it take for him to be reborn?**

After a person dies and before he is reborn, he becomes a *Zhōng yīng shēn* (中阴身). *Zhōng yīng shēn* is an intermediate existence between death in this life and rebirth in the next. When ordinary people die, they are not immediately reborn. There is a short period of one to 49 days between death and the next birth, during which the soul is of a dank gaseous form. It is a soul-consciousness without physical body, invisible to most ordinary people. There is a 49-day period for rebirth to take place. Although it is stated as 49 days, rebirth does not necessarily take place on the 49<sup>th</sup> day. A person of great virtuous roots who has performed great virtuous deeds ascends immediately to the heavens as soon as he dies. And a person who has been a dreadful sinner in his lifetime descends immediately to hell. However, for the average person who has neither been virtuous nor evil in his lifetime, the conditions for rebirth are not predetermined. Hence, such a person searches for the condition for his rebirth within the 49 days. The 49-day period is divided into terms of 7 days. If the condition for rebirth arises during any of these 7-day terms, he can be reborn. Which realm will he be reborn to? That is

determined by his conduct during his lifetime. If all seven 7-day terms expire but he still finds no condition for rebirth, then he naturally enters into the realm of ghosts.

**During this 49-day period, how can we help the deceased to be reborn in a virtuous realm?**

After human beings die, they have a *Zhōng yīng shēn* (中阴身), which is their soul. Upon death, doers of great virtuous deeds ascend immediately to heaven, while doers of great evil deeds descend immediately to hell. But the average person who has neither been virtuous nor evil will go in search of conditions for rebirth during the 49-day period.

You can seek the assistance of highly cultivated Buddhist Sangha<sup>7</sup> to perform merits for such a person to lessen his karmic transgressions so as to help him be reborn to a virtuous realm. In this way, no matter which realm he is reborn to, his karmic transgressions will be reduced. If you perform merits on his behalf, he will be able to receive the effects of such a virtuous act even if he should descend into hell. And if he should ascend to heaven, performing merits for him would add to his heavenly blessings.

**Why does the soul of the deceased still cause disturbances? Which realm is that from?**

Within 49 days of a person's death, he either rises to the realm of heavens, or is reborn in the human realm, or the ghost realm, or the animal realm, or even down in the hell realm. This is called transmigration in the six realms. If within the 49-day period, the deceased does not find the condition for rebirth, then he naturally falls into the realm of ghosts. Being in the ghost realm, some ghosts create disturbances for others. You asked me which realm that is from. It is the ghost realm. Thus, I wish to advise all of you to practise diligently. In the future, rise to heaven or even seek liberation from the cycle of transmigration. One should never harbour such thoughts as, "So-and-so owes me money. Even if I were to become a ghost, I would still search for him to seek my repayment!" That is not good. In this way, not only will you be unable to become liberated, but you also have to become a ghost. How very pitiful! There is another opinion that is even more seriously wrong: "So-and-so owes me money and refuses to repay it. In my next lifetime, I want to be reborn as his child to ruin his family and to take his money!" You absolutely must never think in this way, because before you can cause anybody any harm, you have already harmed yourself.

**After my father died, he did not bless me with peace. What can I do about it?**

It has not been peaceful at home since your father died. You need to ask yourself if your conduct towards him in the past had been filial. If you had been filial, but nonetheless your home has not been peaceful after your father passed away, then perhaps he has some responsibility to bear. But if you had not been filial to him, and he disturbs your peace after he dies, then you ought to do some soul-searching. Actually, after someone has died we do not even know which realm they have transmigrated to. So if you have no peace, perhaps it has to do with other causes and effects. It doesn't seem quite right to throw the blame to your father. If you suspect that your father is not blessing you with peace, then you ought to quickly and diligently chant the name of Buddha, and tell him, "Oh father, maybe in the past you did not recite the name of Buddha and did not ask Buddha to guide you to a rebirth in a virtuous realm. Perhaps you have not been reborn and are still in the ghost realm. So I shall hurry to recite the name of Buddha for you."

Do this for him. When he moves on, you will find peace again.

**What causes people to become ghosts when they die?**

When people die, they do not always become ghosts. Depending on each individual's karmic forces, one may ascend to heaven, or be reborn as a human being, or become an asura or animal, or even descend into hell.

There are numerous factors that can cause one to be reborn in the realm of ghosts. If, at his dying moment, a person still clutches on tightly, unable to let go, he may worry, "My assets have not been willed to my son. My daughter has not gotten married. My daughter-in-law has not borne me a grandson". Such a person is likely to descend into the ghost realm.

On their deathbeds, some people may recall the money still owed to them. In a fit of anger, they may swear, "Even if I become a ghost, I'll seek my repayment." People with such thoughts will definitely become ghosts.

**What are the differences between human beings and ghosts?**

Ghosts and human beings co-exist on this Earth. The difference is that human beings live in brightness whereas ghosts live in darkness. Sentient beings of the

ghost realm are similar to humans in that they have different races and nationalities. And like animals, they can be categorised into thousands upon thousands of different kinds. According to their different karmic forces, each ghost experiences vastly different circumstances in its existence. But they have one thing in common: all ghosts fall into this realm to suffer because their greed is intense, emotional attachments are deep-rooted, bad habits are numerous and they have strong inclinations to committing evil deeds.

The hungry ghosts are the best representatives of the suffering that ghosts have to endure. Their bellies are as bloated as earthen pots, their throats are as constricted as the eyes of needles and their mouths constantly emit fire. As such, even though they hunger they cannot eat, and even though they thirst, they cannot drink. Always feeling searing fires burning their bodies, they suffer intensely. Because hungry ghosts form the majority in the ghost realm, the ghost realm is also known as the realm of hungry ghosts.

There is another type of ghosts called 'ghost-deities'. They are like the rich people of the human realm who possess power and influence. Because of their bad karma, they have been reborn into the ghost realm. However, because they have also done good deeds and cultivated blessings, they are better off than others in terms of blessings. Thus, they are also called 'wealthy ghost' or 'blessed ghost'. Superstitious people

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generally regard them as gods or deities and revere them. Across the world, those ghosts that like being worshiped with human or animal sacrificial offerings fall mainly into this category. These include shrine ghosts, shrewd and clever spirits and powerful fearsome ghosts.

However, regardless of deity or ghost, their primary causalities and secondary dependent causalities are inferior to those of human beings. Hence, to become ghosts after we die really is a great misfortune.

### **If people descend to hell or become ghosts due to their past evil deeds, are they doomed forever?**

If people commit extremely evil deeds, they will descend to hell in their next life to become hell ghosts. There, the suffering that they have to bear will be many times worse than what is experienced by the hungry ghosts. In Buddhism, there is a Bodhisattva with the greatest vows and paramount loving-kindness and compassion, named Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (地藏 *Dì Zàng*). Because of his profound sympathy for those who suffer in hell, for aeons of lifetimes he is always guiding beings in hell, so that they may sooner be reborn to more virtuous realms or even to the Buddha Pure Land. Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha vowed, “As long as hell is not empty, I shall not become

Buddha. Only when all sentient beings are guided and delivered, will I attain supreme enlightenment.”

**How does Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) relate to the vows of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (地藏 *Di Zàng*)?**

For many kalpas, Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (地藏 *Di Zàng*) has been in hell guiding and saving ghosts. Meanwhile, my vow is to be here on Earth, lifetime after lifetime, guiding and saving human beings. While Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha delivers sentient beings out of hell, I preach teachings of the Buddha in this human world so that human beings do not fall to hell. While Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha guides ghosts to become humans, my vow is to guide human beings so that they do not become ghosts; to guide people to cultivate and liberate themselves out of transmigration in the six realms<sup>4</sup>; to guide them to be reborn in the Pure Land of Buddha; and to guide them to become people of virtue, enlightened beings, Bodhisattvas and even Buddhas.

If there were no Humanity Vehicle Bodhisattva practitioners in this world guiding people to cultivate themselves, then people would be unaware of the Buddhadharma and the importance of practice. With such ignorance, it would be easy for people to commit evil deeds and descend to the hell realm. Then, how

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could hell ever become empty of sentient beings? And how would Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha attain Buddhahood? Therefore, the promotion of World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism) actually has very strong and deep causalities with Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha.

### **Does Buddhism guide the living or the dead to salvation?**

Everyone. Buddhism guides and saves everyone.

### **When a person dies, why do we chant “Amitābha Buddha”?**

When a person is dying, he experiences extreme suffering. Chanting “Amitābha Buddha” provides him with a spiritual reliance, thus relieving some of his suffering. Helping him chant in this way reinforces his faith and his wish to be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha. Thus, for the dying person, chanting during his dying moments is very important and helpful.

**Is it true that a Buddhist cannot be reborn in the Buddha Pure Land if he was not cremated?**

In my opinion, there is no relationship between rebirth and burial or cremation, because it is the soul and not the corpse that is reborn. It does not matter however the dead body is dealt with. Burial, cremation and sea-burial are all acceptable.

**After a person dies, is there nothing left of him?**

We cannot say that after a person dies there is nothing left of him. Even though everything that you can see of this world is gone - your property, house, spouse, children, career etc, all of it is gone, and your status and reputation are all gone as well, but the following holds true:

*'Although ten thousand ships of possessions cannot accompany you, your karma does.'*

So, if you have the karma for rebirth in heaven, you will be reborn in heaven after you die. If your karma is to be a human being, then you will be reborn in the human realm. If it is foolish and ignorant karma, then you will transmigrate into the animal realm. If you are superstitious, rebirth will be in the ghost realm. And extremely evil karma will lead to a rebirth in hell. Therefore, it cannot be said that when a person dies,

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he is like a flame extinguished, and upon death, everything is over and there is nothing left.

### **Should animals be killed to hasten their rebirth to another realm?**

Speaking of life, everyone wishes to live. All sentient beings wish to live. Hence there is a saying, *Heaven holds the virtue of valuing life*. Not only do we human beings like to live, but so do all living things, such as flies and insects too. They all seek to live. They also have their own desires. We must not see killing them as enabling them to be reborn into another realm. Reversing the situation, if somebody were to kill you, which realm would you be reborn to? If you were killed by another person and you were engulfed by hatred at that moment, although your killer would descend to hell, so would you. Of course, this too would be a rebirth into another realm.

As to your question, we need to comprehend that when you kill the creature, your descent to hell is the matter of concern, rather than the creature being reborn into another realm. Of course, if it had cultivated in its past life, and you have killed it in this life, there is a possibility that it gets to be reborn as a human being. However, if you become an animal as a result of your foolishness while your victim becomes a human being, then it may come his turn to kill you.

Thus, this kind of mutual animosity and vengeance is never-ending. We must never, never think in this way.

### **What is the difference between Nirvāna and death?**

Because sentient beings have arisings (birth) and ceasings (death) in the mind, they experience the form of birth and death. Nirvāna is the state of suchness, of having surpassed the state of arising and ceasing of the mind, and maintaining the state of non-arising and non-ceasing, non-defilement and non-purity, non-increasing and non-decreasing. Only Buddha could be said to have entered the ultimate Nirvāna. When ordinary human beings die, their *Zhōng yīng shēn* (中阴身) transmigrates to other realms within 49 days. Nirvāna is to already be liberated; there is neither birth and death, nor transmigration.



## Endnotes

### <sup>1</sup> Five Precepts

Refrain from:

- Killing
- Stealing
- Sexual misconduct
- Lying
- Consuming intoxicants

### <sup>2</sup> Ten Virtuous Deeds

- No killing
- No stealing
- No sexual misconduct
- No lying
- No salacious talk
- No divisive speech
- No mean or slanderous speech
- No greed
- No anger and hatred
- No foolishness and ignorance

### <sup>3</sup> Dhyāna-samādhi (禪定 in Chinese)

When all the thinking and thoughts are completely purified to emptiness, our original pure nature is revealed. This original pure nature is sustained and unmoved.

### <sup>4</sup> Six Realms

Three good realms:

- Heaven realm
- Asura realm
- Human realm

Three evil realms:

- Animal realm
- Ghost realm
- Hell realm

**<sup>5</sup> Ten Evil Deeds**

- Killing
- Stealing
- Sexual misconduct
- Lying
- Salacious speech
- Divisive speech
- Mean or slanderous speech
- Greed
- Anger and hatred
- Foolishness and ignorance

**<sup>6</sup> Three Worlds of Existence**

- World of Desires
- World of Form
- World of Formless

**<sup>7</sup> Sangha**

The community of Buddhist monks and nuns.



**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 if not for the devoted effort of the Dharma Translation Council of World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen 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 uncommon opportunity to contribute to a noble cause that provides the opportunity for our fellow human beings to benefit from Buddhadharma and be inspired to live blissful and meaningful lives.

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way, Buddha's teachings may spread far and wide so that more and more people can benefit from the brightness of wisdom, and be inspired to work in unison, to purify the human mind and build a blissful pure land for humanity.

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There are very few of us who are actually clear-minded and awake. Mostly, we exist in slumber, unmindfully grasping on to what is known in Buddhism as the Five Desires and Six Dusts of life.

Happiness is a birthright of everyone. Yet, why is there no happiness in life? When we die, is that the end of us? What is karma and how does it affect our life now and hereafter? Who is responsible? How can we distance from suffering and live life with bliss and happiness?

*Awakening the Sleeping Mind* is a small collection of answers that were given by Venerable Master Shen-Kai, teacher of the Buddhahood Lineage World Humanity Vehicle Buddhism (Jen Chen Buddhism), during his talks in many countries. In characteristically clear and simple language, the Venerable Master provides illuminating insights into the reality of life and death, and offers practical guidance on how to apply the ancient wisdom of the Buddha to our everyday lives.

*“Wisdom is the key to happiness.”*

*Venerable Master Shen-Kai*