

# The Source of Life is Calling

## 『生命故鄉的呼喚』

Follow your Heart to where your Home is

Let Your Heart Be *Alive*

The Profound Beauty in the Garden of Life

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### Chapter Ten

## The Gracefulness and Embarrassments of Life

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We all have great potential to live better. We should not let ourselves get drowned by these embarrassments of life. We should manifest the immense potential and inner strength within us. But first, we must learn how to handle failures and disappointments. If we do not know how to identify the problem and communicate, even a minor trouble will become a major crisis.

This is not a matter of being accommodating, but it knows how to deal with the problem. This problem does not only concern two people. Maybe their upbringing or their parents' parenting style has affected their situation. They can seek advice from others and then try to incorporate the solution into their daily lives.

In the example listed above, I believe that this young husband must have grown up in a predominantly male family if he thinks that the toilet seat should always be left up after use. Whereas, the wife must have come from a female dominated family for her to believe her approach is right. Each of them is convinced that they are correct and thus they are unable to resolve this issue.

This is a very common phenomenon. In this complicated society where people have many prejudices and biases, together with inflexibilities of attitude, can you image the deficiencies in their structural elements of life? One is biased towards this end and the other, the opposite end. When the two of them encounter 'earthquakes', conflicts happen on a daily basis. They are always in confrontation and in a state of instability. Under such circumstances, this young couple is not ready for marriage. Each must first learn how to act like an adult, how to be the head of the household, how to assume their respective roles, how to be parents for their children.

There are all kinds of educational courses in our society, but none of them prepares us to be an adult. Kids grow up and they get married without knowing how to become an adult.

There are a lot of adjustments in transitioning from being dependent on your parents to becoming independent within your own household. As an adult, you will have to do everything yourself. Mom

will no longer be there to pick up and do your dirty laundry, dinner will not be waiting for you when you come home and there will be no groceries in the fridge unless you have gone shopping for them. If you cannot take care of yourself, you will have problems when you get married, because you do not understand what it means or takes to be independent and run your own home.

Getting married is much more than the wedding celebration! It takes proper preparation. Are you ready? Do you know how to take care of children once they are born? How will you care for them while you are working? How are you going to handle any unexpected curve balls that life throws at you without causing a major crisis?

Nowadays, many young people get married or have children without a true understanding of their mutual responsibilities and privileges. Before they get married, it would best for them to discuss issues such as how the household tasks will be shared, parenting and managing their finances etc.

An “adult” means someone who is responsible for their own decisions regardless of the outcome. Gone will be the days when your parents would pay your bills. You are responsible for your finances. But unfortunately, we do not have a comprehensive program that will teach us how to become an independent adult. This is a major topic that deserves serious concern. And it is a pity that many people are blind to this issue.

Our Buddhist forum has been pushing this adult education program, to promote development of a healthy character, life and psychological well being. When we possess a healthy attitude towards life, we can establish a stable home. This is the kind of education each young person needs in this society.

However, in our busy world, the parents have no time or energy to do this because they are so busy with making a living in order to survive and provide for the family. When they come home after work, they are exhausted. Furthermore, the current social and educational structures are not conducive to such teaching. This is why we must support and promote education on living. This will allow us to live in the real world and develop a true understanding of living. It will help us welcome a healthy attitude towards life instead of being driven by illusive desires and the resulting pain.

Life has its share of ups and downs. But the down times should not overwhelm our entire life. However, the sadness/ sorrow brought on by the “down time” can be infectious and poison us as well as those around us. Therefore, we must learn, as well as be able to teach our children, to become independent and take responsibilities for our actions, i.e., do not blame others for what is happening to us. We need to teach our children to live a healthy life, to make proper adjustments in crises.

As we learn, promote and encourage this education on living for ourselves and others, we will become stronger and healthier in our approach to life. We are fortifying our immunity to handle sadness/ sorrow, so we can be filled with the DNA for happiness-optimism. This will contain the spread of the DNA for negative-pessimism, so it can be dealt with effectively.

No one can sail through life without being touched by sad or negative events. We only get stronger by learning how to deal with adversity. It is therefore more important for us to learn to deal with the consequences brought on by these challenges than learning how to prevent them from happening.

As we all know, death and sickness are life events which we cannot avoid. So, the issue is how do we live our life when we are going through these difficult times?

Please remember this principle - as long as we work earnestly and diligently together in the realm of promoting this education on living, it will generate amazing power to enable others to have more relaxed, care-free and happier lives, and to realize the gracefulness of life!

## *Chapter Eleven*

### **Discard the DNA of Vexation**



(In this chapter, the term “vexation” is used in the sense of distress, troubles, misery, aggravation and anxiety in life.)

There is a gene for the “vexation” in life that causes all the pain and suffering in human beings. Vexation can affect the well-being of an individual as well as that of a society. Over the course of history, many professionals and specialists have tried to relieve human suffering, but none of those medical, psychological, social or biological approaches have been entirely successful as they are not able to address the root cause of the problem. These approaches can only at best resolve the symptoms but are unable to eliminate vexation once and for all. What can be done to prevent vexation from coming back to haunt us?

For thousands of years philosophers, theologians, sociologists and psychologists have been working very hard on this aspect of ameliorating human welfare: some suggested to tackle the issues individually; some have suggest to handle it by means of social reforms and refining social structures; some through external factors, while other through internal mental behavior. The approaches are numerous: Spartanism, socialism, communism, concentration camps and caste systems are developed to handle the issue by external means. Education systems are established to create standards of behavior. Some people advocate spiritual or mental solutions.

To tell you the truth, vexation is unavoidable in this world. How is vexation being generated? Some people believe it is brought on by karma, while others say it is caused by “original sin” or Eve’s eating the forbidden fruit. The cause is immaterial now as long as you will ultimately reside in heaven, God’s kingdom or the Pure Land, to be free from all these sufferings or vexation. Regardless of whether these viewpoints are correct, they demonstrate how ancient saints have exhausted their resources in order to solve the problem of vexation. Some people emphasize on the social aspect of the problem as they work to settle the injustice of society; while others, realizing that the root cause of suffering cannot be cured, place their hopes in the next life, in order to assuage their present difficulties, torments and anguish.

Throughout time, human beings have tried to relieve their suffering in different ways without much success. The nature of an individual or group effort changes with the passing of time and history. For specific races, time or society, some remedies are effective, even though they may not be

conclusive. For example, many people are now finally accepting folk practices in medicine such as acupuncture, spooning, cupping and reflexology etc. Each modality has its curative effects in specific situations, but they are far from being a panacea. If one modality could cure everything, why would there be so many therapies. When many people say a treatment works, the patients may be the subject of self induction (hypnosis) and believe the treatment is helpful; this phenomenon is worrisome and it is a manifestation of vexation.

What causes vexation? Some believe vexation is generated by excessive desires, some by a lack of wisdom, some by the presence of “Greed, Hatred and Ignorance”, some by the absence of “Discipline, Concentration and Wisdom”, some by a disbelief in God or by not taking Refuge in the Three Gems. Let’s leave all these beliefs aside, let go of our attitudes in order to contemplate and explore more clearly the root cause of vexation.

We often hear others say, “Everything is going wrong!” or that “It never rains but it pours!” Is it possible to experience disasters all the time? In truth, maybe one or two percent of happenings do not go the way we want. Why, then, are we overwhelmed by this feeling of doom? It is the DNA of vexation in our lives that cause us to have these delusions.

The same situation that traumatizes some people may not disturb others. For example, some people will be distressed if they are not married by 28 or 29 years old, while others are enjoying being single at 40. This means that individuals who care about marriage will be tormented by being single and those who do not care will not be affected. There is no explanation of this discrepancy because it is a fundamental question of “Being/Life”. Some lines of reasoning point to individual differences in personality, physical health, and the level of karma or determination. These lines of reasoning are meaningless as they do not address the common question of “where does the DNA of vexation in the human race derive from?”

The gene of vexation originates in the relativity of human nature; in other words, delusive life originates from relativity. In Traditional Chinese culture, filial piety (respect for one’s parents and ancestors) is of utmost importance. There are three ways to dishonoring our parents and the worst way

is through not having a descendant. Therefore, being single generates great anxiety because it is linked to dishonoring one's parents. But even if you want to be married, the opportunity may not be there! This will cause "stress". When we compare the impression in the mind and the actual happenings in reality, vexation arises because two forces exist in opposing or confrontational positions. These confrontational positions cause vexation in this world.

Fifty years ago, there were minimal distractions from materialistic gadgets and people were living a relatively simple life. Back then, ordinary citizens had modest desires as there was little to compare themselves with and choices were few, which amounted to no confrontational positions in life. Buying one piece of new clothing for New Year would be quite sufficient; demands and expectations were pretty low. Three meals per day with food on the table would bring satisfaction. But now with the prevalence of consumer goods, we are always stressed to "keep up with the Joneses". The selection of brands, quality and quantity leads to competition and trend setting. Thus, disaster arises. The urge to keep pace with others often brings "anxiety". A new product is for sale and you would rather die than not purchase it in time. You have to be in on the trends.

To be "trendy" is a form of "relativity" in human nature; "Others have, I haven't". If the trendy thinking is: you have, I do not have, and those who "do not have" are the trendy ones, then those "who have" will think it is disgraceful "to have". Too bad that our society does not think as such! "To have" is glorious and "not to have" is shameful. That is why those who "do not have" keep on pursuing, which is the origination of vexation. Conversely, if everybody gives up on "having", then there will be no ground in which vexation can arise.

Vexation arises as material desires increase... Whether the confrontational positions are in terms of forms or formlessness, vexation can take place. This helps us to understand that vexation arises from our confrontational positions with the external environment, be it other people, things, or ideas.

Why does someone die of heartbreak? It is because he or she cannot accept another ideology. In an extreme scenario, when a person's expectations are radically different than what is presented to him, he

can die from heartbreak, or suffer a heart attack. One person's win always means someone else's loss. So, why did the loser commit suicide? Why are we so upset when the candidate we supported had lost? We are bound by expectations and ideology, so when our candidate lost, our confrontational positions are also lost and we become distressed. This is an extreme case.

If we observe life from a micro point of view, as in the life of a married couple, they too, often have confrontational positions on events in life. When this happens, there is the potential for vexation to arise which will rock the happiness and future of the family. So how should the couple harmonize and collaborate? Getting rid of vexation will be the basic motive for the couple to avoid confrontation. Similarly, like the parent and child who do not see eye to eye, if they are unable to accept and respect each other's differences, then "confrontation leading to vexation" is unavoidable and never-ending.

How do we deal with this "confrontational nature" in ourselves? First, we must allow our "hurt" to heal. Otherwise, the associated pain can permeate other aspects of our lives, overwhelming our view on the real situation resulting in an exaggerated response. This is how vexation can affect us. If we do not understand this, we will not understand how the other aspects of our lives will be affected. So, the world will be free of worries if we stop bringing them on ourselves.

Let us look at some examples:

It is the end of a work day. You are at home alone looking at the clock, waiting for your husband to arrive. "He should be home by now, where is he?" So, you start to worry. In fact, he may just be caught up in bad traffic, or, perhaps he got stopped by the neighbor outside the door. But, you caused yourself to feel stressed, you allowed yourself to be afflicted.

... to be continued in next issue.

