

# 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

By Venerable Haiyun Jimeng



Translated by Scarlett Chan  
Hua Zang Workshop – Sunflower Group



### Chapter Seven

## The Quadrants of life

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We should live within the second quadrant of life, i.e., within the Body of Truth and Wisdom, which surpasses the illusions and limitations from the first quadrant of life. This does not mean we will become immortal. There is nothing we can do when the physical substances deteriorate. But, we have the ability to reduce the rate of deterioration of our physical form. Prior to my last engagement, I was in extreme pain. But the pain has passed. Look at me now, a totally different person! Who will say I look sick?

We should take it easy with any physiological symptoms, and once we are within the spiritual realm, these symptoms will require even less attention. Through the course of cultivation, we will come to realize that the illusive world of the physical body lies in one quadrant, whereas the Ultimate Wisdom and Truth lie in another quadrant, in the spiritual realm.

How do we transcend from the first quadrant into the second quadrant of life? From a Buddhist perspective, besides the second quadrant of life, there are “N+1” quadrants of life. The second quadrant of life is only the beginning. How we attain achievement within these infinite realms ending in the N+1 state of ultimate perfection depends on how much effort we put into our cultivation.

In our first quadrant of life, we may embroil ourselves within the narrow focus of how others have treated or mistreated us. Once we enter into the second sphere towards the N+1 quadrant of life and discover the limitless horizon, those issues become miniscule and irrelevant. When practitioners can see everything clearly, why would they be bothered with just some opinionated and judgmental reactions? In order to transcend ourselves and enter into the spiritual realm of true existence, we must first understand all things living around us, the relationship of our current affairs to true existence and the growth it is undertaking.

It was written in the classical sutras that one should give away their “head, eyes, brain, spinal cord, country, spouse, children” as alms or for charitable causes! When we live within the limitations of our first quadrant of life, we would ask, “How can that be possible? That is illegal!” But, within the second sphere of life, perceptions become different. Within our first quadrant of life, there is no escape from the restrictions imposed by our sociological, physical environments and

psychological conditions. But in our second quadrant of life, we can be freed, even though the “form” is still there, we will not be confined by biological and psychological boundaries. This is the essential key to true existence!

Let me try to explain what life is from another perspective. When we talk about life, most people will consider it as chronological i.e., from the day of our birth to the day of our death. If you lived for the entire hundred years of the century, your life is the chronicle of what happened to your physical form within the social milieu and historical time frame during these one hundred years. This is the “illusory life”. (Note that the “form” is also projected via the physiological functions it performs, and the psychological presentation shaped by the education and environment. These are the paradigms that the form operates under.)

Let’s say we live for one hundred years. It will be a painful and illusive existence for most of us because we have to struggle to fulfill so many desires like money, power, fame and lust. No matter how much we have accomplished, there is always something beyond our reach. After success and power, we may want family, health, loyalty, stability and love, the list never ends and it is not under our control. Then all is gone when we die. Is this a perfect life?

This social reality exists within our “first quadrant of life”. Living within this quadrant will only limit our thinking. To jump out of this quadrant, we have to be able to determine what we would like to accomplish in this present life and what to complete in our next life? Are you capable of doing that? If so, your thinking will have no boundary.

Unfortunately, most of us cannot accept this ideology because the “greed” element in our trait constantly propels us to fulfill all our desires in this life. That is why someone would marry and take one or even more mistresses. He did not take his wife as his partner for this life, to love and care for, and save the mistresses as his spouse for his subsequent lives. If he did, there would be no confrontation. But he did not, and that is how so many social and marital problems are created.

Can we make a resolution to just to do one thing well in this life? If we do not have the good merits and favorable conditions to take on many things, why not wait for our future lives to complete those tasks? Many great women dedicated their lives to look after their children or an elderly member in the family. Why did they give up everything to attend to the needs of a disabled family member? Do they not have aspirations for their careers, other desires or want a more enriched family life? Dedication to one goal at a time will achieve greatness!

Most people want to fulfill all their desires within this life. Consequently, this brings pain and suffering when these desires cannot be fulfilled. We do not need to rush to achieve all of our goals. Just choose one and make it happen. Rushing to fulfilling all of our desires in one lifetime will only bring stress and disappointment.

Taking the path towards true existence is walking the path of truth. We must differentiate what is illusive and what is authentic in life and experience the authentic through the illusionary.



## *Chapter Eight*

# **The Hidden Treasures of Life**

Let us talk about the “Treasures of Life” in this chapter. Our life has the promise of infinite potential, but because of our ignorance, we confine our scope of living only to that of illusions. So what is wrong with our thinking mode?

First, let us look at how we introduce ourselves to each other. Instead of introducing “me” (the

person) to you, you will be given my profile -- filled with all kinds of information like telephone number, address, age, hobbies, work, business title, income etc. So you are given my demographics (“my”) but not who I really “am”. You will gather up all this information to arrive at a conclusion as to my nature, personality or worth. You do not “see” who I really am, the person in front of you, but you differentiate or size me up according to what I possess.

Let’s reflect! We all tend to fall into this habit when we introduce ourselves. This is how all relationships begin. When a couple first meet, he is interested not in whom she really is but her background or worthiness. What a distasteful way to initiate our communication with each other! When Romeo met Juliet, did he ask for her profile before deciding if he would love her? Did Juliet do the same? Of course not! Don’t you think this is terribly sad? Yet, this happens too often in our day-to-day dealings with other people.

A successful relationship is based on sincerity, which is built on how you and I treat each other. However, we are incapable of communicating “directly”, and have to be introduced through names and possessions. A barrier is established in introduction through names. Eventually we may be misguided by that barrier, and fail to see the real person. Thus there is a tendency of falling in love with someone’s assets or fame instead of the person himself or herself.

Celebrities carefully nurture their images. Most of their fans are mesmerized by the images that they project or their achievements, and not by their real talent or abilities. The images of these people are only their façade, not their real persons. We name this phenomenon of misconception – the “pronoun” (my, his, her, its, our, your, their) mode of thinking, as versus the “being” (am, is, was, are, were) mode of thinking.

We are commonly living within the “pronoun” thinking mode, which is the illusive life. What is the authentic life? Apply the “being” thinking mode. “I am...” any more words are superfluous. “I am...” and that suffices. The other person will

make the connection. Any introductions that are made through a medium and not directly are all illusive.

Some employers adopt a unique approach in hiring. They disregard resumes and interview their prospective employees in person to see if they have the “right feel or fit” for the company. Cooperation and interpersonal relationship depends substantially on the “feeling” we have for each other. This feeling is the intrinsic nature of life. This feeling and intuition is the true treasures in life. One who lives in this world without this quality and intuition is just a piece of moving meat, capable of eating, excreting and sleeping. Without intuition, life is a series of purposeless activities. That is not living at all! To live intuitively is to embrace life’s momentum and vitality.

How to bring out life’s momentum and vitality? Life will be utterly mundane if it consists of only getting up in the morning at the sound of the alarm clock and dashing to bed every night exhausted after a day of work. This is no different than the robots following their programs! What is the meaning in such a living? How boring and uninspiring is this kind of living!

Why are we alive? Why are we here in this world? What are we searching for? Where is the treasure of life?

Our topic of discussion is the existence of life. Let’s start with the explanation of the “perspective on life”.

“The perspective on life” is different from “the perspective on living”. Let’s look at this analogy – the orange and the orange tree. Fruit has a life of its own, how does this fruit practice generosity? If you tell the orange in the tree: “Be generous, everything is illusive so share all you have.” If the orange decides to sacrifice itself by stopping to take in nutrients and sharing the nutrients it has with other oranges on the same tree, this orange will just shrivel up and die. This is the common perspective of life that most of us are familiar with. This orange has sacrificed its own life, yet the benefit it produces is rather limited, that is a “fractional perspective on life”.

A complete perspective on life is not the same; it defines life in terms of the whole orange tree. Thus each orange in the tree lives vigorously and healthily to benefit the whole. Only in this way can it manifest generosity. Each flower, each fruit on this tree can then grow well. Isn't that true generosity? Let's take a look! Isn't it silly to practice generosity from the standpoint of an orange when the maximum benefit it reaps is very insignificant?

There are no great social crusaders nowadays because people are confined by the "fractional perspective on life". They practice generosity from the standpoint of the orange instead of the orange tree. What we need is the generosity of the orange tree as the perspective of life. Only then can the sacrifice be meaningful. How should we sacrifice? We must live vividly; live well with courage and progression: continuously taking in nutrients and prosper, delivering enough supplies to each flower so that each will bear healthy fruit, which in turn will benefit the whole tree.

We should have an endless perspective on life; we should take the standpoint of the tree. Otherwise, life will come to an end. What can we achieve in a limited life span? A century of living is analogous to the life of an orange; its sacrifice brings minimal impact. Regardless of how brilliant you are, your greatness will only amount to that of an orange. We should live from the standpoint of the tree, with endless modes of thinking and perspectives on life. It will not matter if we give out all the fruits in this harvest, in the next harvest, with favorable conditions and environment, there will be another bunch of fruits to offer.

In the Huayen Sutra, the Bodhisattvas who have made great sacrifices over their many lifetimes have the all-encompassing perspective on life. They can make their sacrifices over and over again; they can offer any part of their body, property or family. How do they do that? By taking the standpoint of the tree, by offering the leaves, bunches, flowers and fruits every year. There will be new leaves, flowers and fruits coming out, which is the endless perspective on life.

At this moment you will realize the magnitude in living. Yet we restrict ourselves with the fractional perspective on life. When you see yourself as an orange, how can you let go? You will be clinging on to everything since you have such a limited space and capacity.

Can we break through this fractional and illusive perspective of an orange to live with the broad and authentic perspective of the orange tree? Only then can we experience the bottomless and infinite power of the life force. This life force is inexhaustible and boundless. When we reach this state, we have truly discovered the treasure of life. Otherwise if we live under the illusive perspective of an orange, we are confined to suffering, misery and trouble.

The fractional perspective on life will cause us to feel insecure and fragile, dangling like the threads of the lotus root, in a life full of doubt and worries. How dangerous! Will we always get what we want? If we get it, will we lose it? Isn't it tragic that we cannot enjoy what we have? Why can't we live "in the moment"? Why can't we set our course of life in a comprehensive way?

We are too obsessed with a target or goal. Once we are attached to the target, we feel pain when the target is out of reach, and more pain if the target is within reach and we have to hold on to it. What should we do? I strongly urge you to assure or confirm your position in life (as discussed in Chapter 4: This is not the same as social status in society. It begins with "developing your bodhicitta" and having an attitude of "faith and confidence towards life".) . After we have this clear confirmation, we can start living life in an all-encompassing manner.

... to be continued in next issue

