



So, how was your trip?

Neng Sheng – Milwaukee, U.S.A.

My wife's best friend David just passed away, after a long battle with cancer. She is devastated, as they have been friends for more than twenty-five years. I tried to comfort her, but I really didn't know what to say. What can you say when someone who you have loved and cherished is suddenly gone, and you do not have another chance to hug or to touch them anymore? All I could tell her was that he had a good life, and as family friends, we did a lot of fun things together. And moreover, he had accepted that his time had come, and he went peacefully.

"Remember the Shakespeare play that we all went to a few years ago"? I tried to say whatever it took to comfort her. "It was performed at an outdoor theatre. And it was so windy that evening, that it was all the actors and actresses could do to hold on to their costumes so they wouldn't flip up and show their undergarments." She started to smile. "And how about the time that we went to the Farmers' Market, the corn on the cob looked so good that we bought a couple dozen, and ate them all in one sitting. And none of us could move for a couple of hours?" And she started to giggle. "Well," I continued, "sometimes, we just have to think more about the good times that we've had, than to dwell on our losses. It just makes it more bearable." And she nodded; yet the tears were still running.

Giving birth, aging, ailing, and dying are the unavoidable steps of our circle of life. Yet, it is what we make of our life (enjoying life) that makes dying (our destination) more acceptable. I read a cute cartoon a while back - a few smiling kids were riding on horseback, each carrying a basket of fresh picked flowers and fruit. The horse was galloping magnificently, and the kids were having the time of their lives, laughing and giggling. And at the bottom was this caption – **LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION**. It was a simple cartoon, the horse and the kids were as cute as can be, yet, and the message has never left me.

Now that I am studying Buddhism, the message has become clearer. While we are all working at gathering wealth, and showing off our successful status, we seem to forget what we are really living for. I keep asking myself, "**So, how was your trip?**" And then, I cannot help but admit that I have joined so many others in focusing on what I should have, rather than paying attention to what I do have. Sad, isn't it? But I am glad that after studying many Haiyun HeShang's books, life starts to have more meaning, and a lot of questions that have been puzzling me for a long while start to develop their own answers.

Yes, it is amazing, a lot of us do not really know how to live (or understand the true meaning of life), and a lot more of us do not know much about death (and I am one of them). So, we just keep marching through the passage of life, doing what we think is acceptable to society. Then, when all of a sudden we reach the end of the road, carrying the entire luggage that we have accumulated in our lifetime, then we ask ourselves, "Now what"? When the voice comes from above and asks, "**So, how was your trip?**" All we can say is, "I don't know, but look at my luggage. Isn't it impressive"? Of course, I am speaking for myself. It wasn't until I had taken refuge that my thoughts and philosophy began to change.

I started writing this article for the Huayen Quarterly Journal a while back, and amazingly, I had the opportunity to visit my buddies in Toronto before I finished writing. In Toronto, we had a grand old time - singing, dancing and dining. Yet, my dharma friend Tammy insisted that I should go for a meditation session led by Olivia, and that was some experience!

After all the exercise, walking and sitting, Olivia started to talk about dying. It was such a strange coincidence! The whole time I was writing “**So, how was your trip?**”, which is about doing what we can to enlighten ourselves, doing what is right to enhance our minds and bodies, and learning how to enjoy our journey; and Olivia was explaining how we should accept death, and what to do to prepare ourselves if and when it happens. It was such an eye opener! And when I got home, my wife asked me, “**So, how was your trip?**” That was when I gave her the answer that made her smile. “It was a great trip”, I said, “I have learned how to die when the time comes. And I think I know what to say to our dear friend David.”



Haiyun HeShang's Dharma Words:

A Radiant Death

How to cherish Life and accept a radiant Death?
When we look at life and death in a linear fashion,
we only see the segment of one lifetime,
with "birth as the beginning and death as the end".

However, if we regard Life as endless cycles of becoming,
the most important task is to ensure that
our cycle of Life and Death evolve into a higher plane.
The awakening of our True Nature gives us the impetus for
this evolution and we will realize that Life is eternal.

海雲和上法語：

讓「死」很美...

如何珍惜「生」而讓「死」很美呢？
觀念要成為一個圓圈，前後要能銜接起來。
當你不能銜接起來之時，就變成分段的生命了，就只有由「生開始，死結束」這一段。
假如你是圓形的思惟模式，重點在於如何使這個圓圈一直往上升；
而上升的因素從人性的覺悟開始，成為一個永恆的生命。