

Record of Impermanence

Yutang Lin

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Foreword

Yutang Lin

Two days ago disciple Ben Jing (Original Purity) proposed to design a "Record of Impermanence" so that faithful ones may follow what I described in my work "Keeping a 'Record of Impermanence'" in using it to write down names or descriptions of deceased ones to beseech blessing from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for their salvation. I fully agreed to the proposal, and asked him to design a draft for my review. Next morning at 5:30 a.m. I saw this book in a dream; its size is the same as books that we used to print, but thin with only about twenty some pages, and yet the front and back covers are of high quality.

In the dream I walked in front, while disciple Hai Ning (Ocean Calm) (in dreams a person's name usually conveys its meaning, and need not refers to that person; here the meaning could be that the ocean of suffering calmed, signifying sentient beings attain emancipation) followed behind me with his hands upholding the book. We went upstairs to ask Patriarch Kalu Rinpoche to review it. (In Chinese name for Kalu Rinpoche, the words have the meaning of adding nectars. And during this dream I forgot that Patriarch Kalu Rinpoche entered Nirvana for years already.) As we entered the chamber I saw Guru was sound asleep, so I was about to turn around and leave; suddenly,

Guru opened his eyes, and came down from his bed to pick up eye-glasses, and then went up into bed again to read it. Right then I woke up. This Dharma dream clearly indicates that the publication of this book will benefit the public, so I put it down on paper.

This book contains holy images and mantra sheets as sources of blessing, and includes photos of Patriarch Chen performing Powa service at a cemetery and that of mine; it also includes my work "Keeping a 'Record of Impermanence'" to illustrate on how to make proper uses of it and on benefits of using it. The blank tables at the end are for filling in references to deceased beings.

May faithful ones who come across it will take it seriously and start to make proper uses of it so that beings awaiting emancipation from Samsara will gain opportunities to attain rebirth in Pureland! May the number of beings in Pureland multiply, while that of beings in oceans of suffering decline!

Written in Chinese on September 9, 2016
Translated into English on September 12, 2016
El Cerrito, California



Holy image of Amitabha Buddha as drawn by Rev. Dao Zheng

Keeping a "Record of Impermanence"

Dr. Yutang Lin

On February 10, 1988 it occurred to me that keeping a record of the names of all those deceased people whom I had met in person would help awaken in me a keen sense of impermanence. To a full-time Buddhist practitioner like me it would be very beneficial. I found a small blue-covered 1987 daily notebook in my drawer, so I made use of this unused but outdated notebook. On the first page I entitled it *A Record of Impermanence* and in the daily blank I filled in names that I remembered.

As I put down each name, past events began to emerge in my mind one by one. There were some whose names were no longer remembered, so instead I put down a name for the relationship; some whose names were unknown to me, so I put down a brief description; and some even passed away before they were named. Some I met only once; some I was with for years. Some whose death came as a surprise from thousands of miles away; while others' were a gradual daily face-to-face good-bye. Some died of sudden illness; while others died of lingering sickness. Some committed suicide because of difficulty in school; while others because of an unhappy marriage. Some were murdered by business partners; while others were killed by romantic competitors. Some died in the womb; some

died in infancy; some died a teenager, like a flower in bud; some died suddenly in their prime years; some died in the snare of old age and sickness; some died in the quietness of a long and peaceful life. At age forty-one I, as just one individual, had witnessed such a vast variety of cases of impermanence.

Facing the fact of impermanence and considering that every moment there are thousands of people passing away, I intuitively realized the futility of worldly arguments and competitions. How I wished to use such a transient and precious life-time to offer some positive contributions to the world!

I put this *Record of Impermanence*, with its pages open, on the altar near the lotus seat of Green Tara—a transformation of the great compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Guan Yin). I lit an incense stick and prayed that these deceased ones would be blessed by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, especially by the Green Tara, and thereby attain liberation from the sufferings of transmigration.

That night, just before I fell asleep, as my thoughts had quieted down, suddenly I sensed that I had held a subtle delusive thought in the past that death was not my problem. Such a delusive thought might well be present in the minds of many of us without our realizing its presence. After all, death seems to be so distant from the reality of our on-going daily life.

Earlier that day I came to face the concrete cases of impermanence and thereby unintentionally shattered the delusive thought I had carried. Delusive thoughts are hiding deep down in our consciousness and obscuring our perspectives, hence they are hardly recognizable. Only at the moment of their shattering can we get a fleeting glimpse of them.

Immediately following this intuitive realization came another: At the moment of death we are to separate from everything in the world. This may be obvious to anyone who reflects on death; nevertheless, I had never had such an awareness arising from the depth of my mind. We need to practice being detached from all things lest we suffer at the end. Otherwise, as we look back, at the moment of death, we will realize that our lives have been infested with worries and quarrels over insignificant trivialities. What a waste it is! Whenever I am entangled by sorrows in my mind I would think: If this is the final moment of my life and I am entangled by these matters, would my life be worthwhile? Such a reflection usually pulls me right out from my sorrows, and the sky looks blue and sunny again!

The next morning I discovered that the incense stick I had lit and offered for my prayer, although completely burned, remained whole with its body turning in a recurving way and its head pointing toward the right hand of the statue of Green Tara. Her right hand extends downward with an open palm, signifying her

salvation activities. I took a picture of it and the photo is reprinted at the end of this article. In this photo the blue cover of my **Record of Impermanence** can be seen at the seat of the Green Tara. To me, this inspiring occurrence indicated Buddha's compassionate blessing in answer to my prayers for the deceased ones, and approval of the practice of keeping a **Record of Impermanence**.

Since that day I have continued to keep my records of impermanence. Whenever people ask me to do Powa (a Buddhist tantric practice to transfer the consciousness of deceased ones to the Pureland of Buddha) I also enter the name of the deceased in my book. Although I had not met all of them in person, by doing Powa for them I established a wonderful Dharma connection. Besides, Powa is for the benefit of the deceased ones, and naturally reminds us of the reality of impermanence, of its immediacy and unpredictability. (By the way, sometimes when I did Powa for deceased people, I saw them appear before me.) Some of the names in the record were entered sporadically later because only then they sparked my memory. This shows that although impermanence of life is a reality, nevertheless, in our normal daily life it is very easy for us to neglect and forget about it. The practice of keeping a **Record of Impermanence** would constantly remind us of the reality of impermanence, lest we indulge ourselves in insignificant worldly pursuits and suffer from resulting turmoil. It would

help safeguard the purity and freshness of our minds so that wholesome ideas would sprout and grow into kindness and compassionate activities.

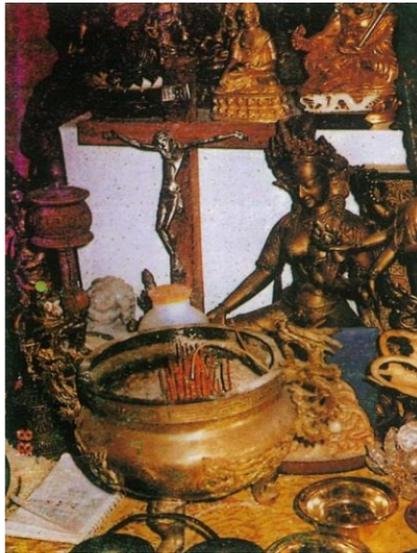
To learn arithmetic thoroughly we should not only be able to do exercises in the book but also be able to apply it in real-life situations. Keeping a **Record of Impermanence** is not only to practice Buddha's teaching of being mindful of impermanence but also to connect the teaching with our personal experiences to benefit us on a down-to-earth level. Only by unifying the theoretical with the practical can we actually receive the essence of Buddha's teachings. Since the cases of impermanence that we put into writing are ones that we have actually witnessed, been personally involved in, and even suffered for, they have tremendous impact on us and carry with them supreme power of persuasion. My awakening to the presence of delusive thoughts in me is a good example of the effectiveness of this practice.

There are many practices of impermanence in Buddhism. For example, meditations on death (to meditate on the certainty of death's arrival, the unpredictability of the time of death, one's helplessness and loneliness at the moment of death, etc.), observation on the changing scenes of our mental activities, chanting Buddha's name near someone who is passing away, and visiting cemeteries to pray for the dead. Keeping a record of impermanence can be an

easy but helpful addition to the other practices. This record is to be placed on the altar so that the deceased ones are under the blessing of Buddha and thereby we may practice an act of great compassion. As we write down the names, we do not distinguish between friends or foes, family members or acquaintances; therefore, it is also a practice of equal-love-for-all.

I hope that everyone who reads this article will adopt this practice and thereby share its effective benefits.

Originally written in Chinese on April 4, 1988
Chin-Ming Festival, the Chinese Memorial Day
Translated on May 8, 1992
both in El Cerrito, CA, U.S.A.



Free Powa Service for Deceased Beings

Powa is a Buddhist Tantric practice to help the consciousness of deceased beings to gain rebirth in the Pureland of Amitabha Buddha. Since 1987, Dr. Yutang Lin has performed over 3947 times the Powa ritual as a free service to the public. Dr. Lin has been doing this once every other day up to end of 2010, and currently he is performing this service twice every week. If you would like him to perform this service for some deceased beings, please send in their names through the following email address:

info@yogichen.org

Lineage blessings through Dr. Lin will go out to all Powa or prayer requests as soon as they are sent. Dr. Lin will read them but will not reply to them so as to reduce the workload of his Dharma services.

Requesting Powa for Ancestors

Yutang Lin

The list of ancestors' names offered for Powa service;
Soon tranquillity prevailed in communion with beings.
Deceased beings are urgently expecting rescuing help;
Relatives and enemies saved for all to share liberation.

Comment:

Dr. Juan Bulnes, a devoted Buddhist for decades, had never thought about requesting Powa service for ancestors that were long gone, although he did do so for his parents when they departed. Recently he came across some website devoted to his family name, and gathered therefrom a list of some of his ancestors' names from many generations back. So he emailed the list to me for Powa service, just as an addition to his daily practice of so doing for many deceased beings that came to his attention. As soon as that email was sent, he felt a sense of tranquillity and gratitude as if he were in communion with all lives in the universe, and the feeling lasted for about ten minutes.

In my reply to him I told him: When some ancestors are still in need of rescuing help, then it is often the case that the descendants would continuously encounter many kinds of obstacles. This is because the deceased would like very much to receive help and

they could only try in such manners to communicate to the descendants. Therefore, requesting Powa service for ancestors could pacify the lives of the descendants; it could also help the descendants eventually to become free from transmigration. Similarly, requesting Powa service for all one's karmic relatives, creditors and enemies that are deceased is also very beneficial to all involved.

Written in Chinese and translated on December 24,
2002
El Cerrito, California



Patriarch Chen performing Powa at a cemetery



Guru Lin performing Three-Kaya Powa at a cemetery



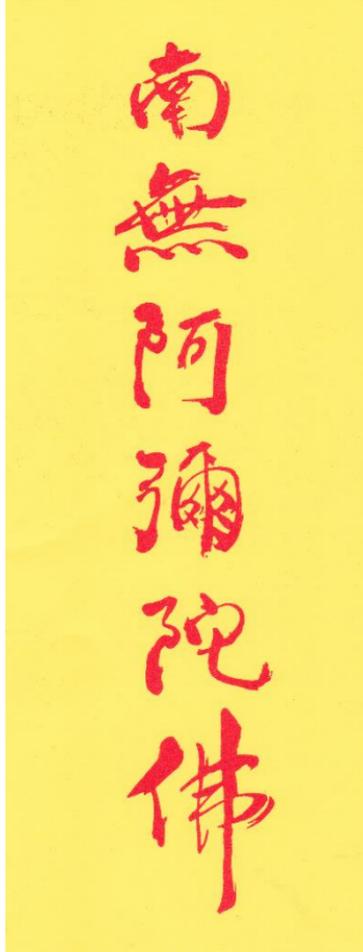
Salutation to the Holy Gurus, Yidams, Dakinis and Protectors
of the Dharma Lineage of Adi Buddha Mandala!

The Mantra Sheet of "Namo Amitabha Buddha"

Once in a dream I saw a female ghost, and I wrote with my hand the six Chinese characters meaning "Namo Amitabha Buddha" in the space toward her. She disappeared immediately and blue sky appeared. I figured from that experience that my writing of this holy epithet could help ghosts to attain liberation. So I wrote it and had it printed in red ink on yellow sheets. One thousand copies were printed for free distribution. Many inspirational results had occurred through their uses.

For details please visit website:

<http://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/efiles/e0/e0040.html>



Mantra sheet of "Namo Amitabha Buddha"

The Mantra Sheet of "Om Mani Pedme Hong"

Once in a dream I saw this sheet appeared vertically in space even though it was not made and I did not have any idea of making it. In the dream I recognized that it was my own writing of the "Om Mani Pedme Hong" mantra of Guan Yin in six Chinese characters. The sheet started to burn from below. When the sheet was completely burned down a small statue of Protector Wei Tuo appeared. I understood it as the blessing from Protector Wei Tuo that I should make this mantra sheet available for people to use. When people have small worldly problems, they can simply burn this mantra sheet to ask for help, and Bodhisattva Wei Tuo will grant his blessings to such matters so that people don't need to come take up my time and attention. Tens of thousands of this sheet have been distributed freely and I got responses from people thanking me for its wonderful help. After several years of its distribution, I saw in a dream that it should be venerated on the altar. Hence I have framed it and put it up on the wall of my altar room.

Some people who had experienced the benefits of the above mentioned sacred objects had asked me to give permission for them to make copies on their own for free distribution to benefit more beings. As long as the intention is pure and the copies are freely distributed

such copies will carry the same blessings as obtained directly from me.

March 13, 2002
El Cerrito, California



Mantra sheet of "Om Mani Padme Hong"

Patriarch Chen's webpage:
www.originalpurity.org
www.yogichen.org

Guru Lin's webpage:
www.yogilin.net
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Under the guidance of Guru Lin
Based on the Chinese Version
Compiled by disciple Ji Hu

Constantly recall the grace of all sentient beings

Repeatedly record Impermanence in this collection



Each念眾生恩
常記無常薄

The image shows two vertical columns of Chinese calligraphy in black ink on a light background. The right column contains the characters 'Each念眾生恩' (Each念眾生恩) and the left column contains '常記無常薄' (常記無常薄). The characters are written in a fluid, cursive style.