

# **THE TRENDS IN MODERN SCIENCE AND BUDDHISM**

By Historing Tan

## **1. The Verification Of The Buddha's Teaching In Modern Science**

### **(A) The Verification of Buddha-Nature in all Sentient Beings**

Psychologists have learnt that the mental activities of human beings can be divided into parts; the conscious part and the subconscious part, the former being greatly influenced by the latter. It is noted that the sub-conscious part is more powerful than the conscious part. Based on this fact Soviet scientists have developed the theory of sleeping – therapy purporting the learning process to be much easily completed in sleeping than in awakening. Psychologists have also discovered that there is an ego bedded in the depth of sub-consciousness and that there is a super-ego bedded in the depth of the ego. The power of the super-ego is so steady that it is not restricted by the boundary of time and space. This means that the super-ego possesses the faculties of telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience and precognition. All these faculties are almost identical to the attitudes of the Buddha-nature as stated by the Buddha.

Russian Psychiatrists have revealed that telepathy and precognition have been verified as facts under strictly controlled experiments. For example: to read newspaper with the fingertip and to look through a thick wall with a toe.

In 1964 it was reported in the Straits Times that a Dutchman had discovered with the faculty of clairvoyance the corpse of a little girl lying under a tree beside a river, and he informed the police in Norway by telephone. The same story was published by Sin Chew Jit Poh on August 3, 1966. A Japanese psychiatrist had also shown his psychic power publicly in front of a crowd of correspondents in Tokyo and Okinawa.

Facts about the E.S.P. (Extra-Sensory Perception) which has been widely discovered in the world are numerous; and these strongly verify that every man has Buddha-nature in his own mind.

Besides emotional feelings, many animals exhibit certain degree of intelligence. Some animals not only possess sensory organs superior to those of human beings but also possess the sixth sense that no man can equal. Some insects can precognise the change of weather; some use the profound scent for corresponding; some transmit rather weak electrical impulses to send messages.

Though their behaviour is strongly governed by their instincts, the presence of intelligence indicates the presence of Buddha-nature.

Furthermore, the study of heredity and memory by scientists has revealed the unusual fact that the protein molecule of R.N.A. and D.N.A., though very minute in size, does possess the wonderful power of memory. It can retain the character of its ancestors even receding to thousands of years ago. With these protein molecules, an elephant begets an elephant, a human being begets a human being, golden hair gives rise to golden hair, yellow skin produces yellow skin; even the form and the characteristics do not differ. A minute particle like the protein molecule does possess in itself such wonderful power of memory and intelligence, how much more will it be so in the case of a bigger cell which aggregates in itself millions of protein molecules? And still how much billions of such cells? Does this not clearly indicate that every sentient being does have the Buddha-nature?

### **(B) The Verification of Reincarnation**

There are two well-known principles in physics: one being the conservation of mass and the other, the conservation of energy. In 1957, I made a reasoning on the basis of the metabolism of the protein molecules in the brain cell to prove the principle of the conservation of consciousness. This reasoning is now repeated as follows:

The psychologists, who had studied the memory of human thought declared that memory was preserved in the protein molecules of the brain cell: while the physiologists using radio-isotope to study the structure of the human body have found that nearly ninety eight percent of the cell are to be changed once in a year and the protein molecules in the brain cell are to be metabolised almost entirely once in one day or two days. The power of memory however, is preserved to reflect impressions of many decades ago; and if applied with the hypnotised method, it can recall happenings of the past generations and those of the previous life. So we cannot help asking what way do the protein molecules transfer their memory to the newly-born ones while they are dying away? This makes the scientists to conclude that the protein molecules in the brain cell might have passed their memory over to the newly-born ones through electric impulses. Then the following conclusions will be inevitable: if memory can be conserved in the electric energy, why should the consciousness, which produces memory and imagination, not be possible to be conserved in the space which is full of electricity?

This has been discussed from the theoretical point of view. However, facts about reincarnation, are innumerable for us to relate. Many cases of

reincarnation are recorded by the psychical societies in U.K. and in U.S.A. Meanwhile, the consciousness can leave the body and travel to somewhere else through hypnotism; and the spirit can depart from the body as some yogis have done. According to a report published in the newspaper in 1966, there is an Indian boy who was alleged to have reincarnation from a British soldier. Bridey Murphy's experiment is another well-known story written in books and shown in the cinemas.

## **2. The Principle Of Cause And Effect And The Theory Of Karma**

One of the distinguished principles in science is called the principle of cause and effect. The scientists' observation on the relation between cause and effect was usually limited to the obvious process of reasoning. They saw it from the material point of view. Most of them did not believe in the existence of the spiritual plane, the possibility of the conservation of consciousness and the ability of reincarnation. They paid no attention to the theory of karma.

The recent trends of thought have apparently been changed with the founding of the theory of our dimensional continuation, the process of splitting atoms into energy, and the appearance of the para-psychological phenomena. Gradually the philosophical view of the universe favours the thought of Monoism. With the vanishing of borderline between science and metaphysics, and that between the organic and the inorganic, the establishment of the identify of matter with mind, the existing of the universal mind and the functioning of karma are much more understandable and believable than ever.

The Buddha knew that every phenomenon in the universe, whether it was mental or material, had to be directed in line with the principle of cause and effect because He possessed the vision beyond the barrier of time and space. He was capable of not only penetrating through the boundless and limitless process of reasoning, but also seeing without the slightest omission the boundless and limitless relation between the mental cause and effect. He therefore said:

“The deeds of mortal perish not,  
Even in hundreds of million ages,  
When the appropriate affinity presents,  
Then do the deeds of men bear fruit”

This means that the effect of every known or unknown action, though may seem dormant for millions of years, will eventually make its consequences felt.

The Buddha said, “When you beget an idea, a seed has been sown deep into subconscious mind.” Again He said: “When an idea appears in the mind, the

three planes in the universe tremble.” This means that even an infinitesimal cause will be having a great effect in the long run and that an infinitesimal part will affect the universe as a whole.

Some of the most profound-thinking scientists had said that if an atom were abstracted from the universe, the whole universe would be entirely affected. If this turns out to be true, it verifies well the saying of the Buddha that three planes in the universe would be trembling when an idea appears in one’s mind.

As the Buddhists view the relation of cause and effect in a further and wider scope, they pay much more attention to the cause that will produce an unavoidable effect which makes one inescapable from the result for what one has done.

One important aspect closely related to the theory of karma is vegetarianism. As cannibalism causes much harmful effect to the body, such as eating too much will harden the arteries and cause a great deal of radioactive materials to be stored in the marrow, those who take too much meat might be more susceptible to cancers.

According to the study of a German scientist, if the body of an animal is stabbed with a knife, an intensified hatred will arise in its mind and a poisonous secretion will be poured into the blood stream. The muscles of its body are to be pervaded with this kind of poisonous substance through circulation of blood. When we eat its meat, the poisonous substance gets into our body. As a result, our mind will be defiled in accordance with the principle of cause and effect, and the arising of avaricious and beastly desires will become irresistible. By the functioning of karma, the cause will take effect when conditions are favourable. In some circumstances, this may burst into an unreasonable and most hateful action, thus causing obstruction to the development of our inherent wisdom to its appreciable capacity and eventually leading us to the road of destruction. Such arguments were more or less unbelievable in the past; but with the results of recent experiments, they have thoroughly been proved to be reasonable and true.

One such experiment was conducted by Professor James V. McConnell of the University of Michigan. It appeared to be a miracle when he discovered that an untrained flatworm possessed similar ability of a well-trained flatworm after the former had received an injection of certain hormone extracted from the latter. It meant that the untrained flatworm could also respond to light or electrical simulation just like the trained one. This has clearly proved that memory can be preserved not only in the protein molecules, but also in the hormone. So when we eat the meat of an animal having hormones of hatred and poisonous

secretion, our body will be built up with materials that are harmful and inferior to our own. According to the relation of body and mind, our mind will then be defiled and be occupied with instinctive desires full of hatred and hostility. That was why scientists from various countries still had to say with a sigh at the assembly to commemorate the Centennial Anniversary of Charles Darwin in 1958 that beastly instincts still remained in the human mind in this twentieth century. These beastly instincts threaten the chance of survival of an individual or a collective front.

So it is of significance to listen to the following warning: *“If you wish to know about the cause of wars in this mundane world, you just need to turn your ears to the bitter crying from the slaughter house during midnight.”* These words represent no common admonition that used to remind us of human morality, but reflect a shining truth which had been discovered with insight from the relation of cause and effect. Wars are originated from unwise thought which arises from defile minds. So long as the meat-eating habit is practised by human beings, the human mind cannot be easily purified.

No saint was not emancipated from the fetters of selfishness and avaricious desire. To discover the universal truth by eliminating the mundane desire is a precious principle which is to be eternally appreciated by wise men. However, Buddhism has presented an eminent way, the Buddha Dhamma, which has recently proved from the progressive study of human psychology. The Buddha Dhamma, is considered to be the most reliable and practical way for man to strive for the realisation of the most profound wisdom.

Many great thinkers have recently been aware that, beyond the realm of the five senses together with their products such as experience, reasoning and logical reduction, there also exist the super-experienced intuition and enlightenment. Only with both of these well-developed can man penetrate the real nature of the universe. By means of Buddha Dharma, we may effectively attain to the highest stage of unexcelled wisdom.

Hence, studying the teaching already verified by the Buddha will not only be useful for the discovery of new scientific theory and invention, but also be helpful to the efforts in seeking eternal peace in this world and the road to the survival of mankind.

Although knowledge is powerful, wisdom is much more precious for human life in universe.

May peace be with all!

Pattra.

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