

TO AWAKENING, PART 16

The Study of Supernatural Power

So far, we have introduced to you scientific studies in the areas of “the existence of the soul,” “people who remember their past lives,” “people recall past lives through hypnosis,” and “studies of life in different dimensions via sound and image.” Now let us present to you the studies of people who possess supernatural powers. With the ability to see the past and predict the future, they are called “psychics” and have made great contributions to scientific research about reincarnation. Some even had a great influence on mainstream scientific research due to their supernatural power having cured unknown and complicated diseases that the general medical methods had no effect on.

The Cases of Miracle Worker Cayce

One such psychic was Edgar Cayce, 1877 to 1945. He was able to go into a hypnotic trance without assistance. He often said that the patients’ illnesses in their current lives were caused by events in their past lives and he believed that the root cause of illness involved reincarnation. He had a high profile because of his success in curing patients.

Once, a mother in Kentucky whose baby was born with a seizure disorder contacted Cayce for help. Three specialists were giving her child treatments, but he was getting worse and doctors predicted he would die. Cayce received guidance during a trance advising the mother to give the baby a poisonous extract from the atropa belladonna plant.

The doctors strongly opposed the idea of giving the child a poisonous drug, but the desperate mother insisted on following Cayce’s advice. Soon after taking the medicine, this boy slowly stopped twitching. He fully recovered from the disease shortly after. This was a miracle in the history of medicine!

Cayce treated 14,000 cases in his lifetime, many with great success, but his practices came under scrutiny by skeptics, such as Harvard University psychologist Dr. Hugo Münsterberg. They thought that Cayce might be setting up a scam to fish for fortune and fame, but in the end they were all convinced that he indeed had supernatural power. A scholar, Gina Cerminara, PhD, after doing research on Cayce’s 2,500 cases related to reincarnation, wrote a book titled *Many Mansions: The Edgar*

Cayce Story on Reincarnation. In addition, a special museum in the U.S. was dedicated to him, and a foundation continues to do this type of work in his name.

Cayce sometimes observed the patients' past lives to find the root cause of the illness in this life. He usually called the root cause "karma." He described karma as such: Karma is like the boomerang, the weapon that Australian aboriginal people use. When one throws out a boomerang to strike a flying object, such as a bird, the boomerang will return to the person who threw it. So we will get good rewards when doing good deeds and will receive evil retribution otherwise.

The Definition and Origin of Supernatural Power

According to dictionaries, supernatural power refers to force or power that can be attributed beyond the scope of natural laws and cannot be explained by science. In Buddhism, supernatural powers specifically refer to the supernal powers* of unimpeded abilities (*Skt. Abhijñā), generally divided into six types of powers. These six types of supernal powers include celestial vision, celestial hearing, knowing others' minds, knowing previous lifetimes, unimpeded bodily action, and the extinction of defilements.

Supernal powers are mysterious and very enviable for many people. But where do supernal powers come from? The most famous revelation would be the verse of Master Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch in Chinese Zen Buddhism:
"Who could have expected that self-nature* is innately pure? (*Intrinsic nature, Skt. svabhāva, dharmatā)
Who could have expected that self-nature is innately neither arising nor ceasing?
Who could have expected that self-nature is innately perfectly replete in itself?
Who could have expected that self-nature is innately immovable?
Who could have expected that self-nature can produce all phenomena in the universe?"

This verse was stated by Master Hui Neng at the moment of his enlightenment, in which "who could have expected that self-nature is innately perfectly replete in itself," explicitly tells us that our self-nature perfectly possesses everything like a Buddha has, such as wisdom, virtues, appearance, even wealth and supernal power. You may ask, since it is possessed by all sentient beings, why don't we have them now?

That is a very good question! In fact, thousands of years ago Shakyamuni Buddha had answered it for us. When Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, He uttered, "All beings possess the same wisdom, virtues, and

laksana* (*distinctive bodily traits) as a Tathagata but cannot prove and attain them due to their delusion and attachment.” Tathagata is one of Buddha’s ten epithets, so we all possess Buddha nature but have lost it through our delusion and attachment.

How Do We Obtain Supernal Power and Discern a Buddha from a Demon

Now we know that delusion and attachment are two reasons for us to lose our wisdom, virtues, and all capabilities of a Buddha, it is reasonable to say that, when we eliminate our attachments and delusions, all our capabilities will be recovered. In other words, the purer our minds are, the more our Buddha nature will be recovered. This truth will indeed help substantially with our spiritual practice.

According to Master Chin Kung, the contemporary mentor in Pure Land School, there are four types of sentient beings who possess supernal powers:

The first type is beings who get retribution from being transmigrated to the realms of heaven or hungry ghosts. They immediately possess some degree of the five kinds of supernal powers.

The second type is people who recover supernal power by cultivating a pure mind. The degree of their powers is determined by how pure their mind is.

The third type are the beings in the realms of fairies and demons, they use medicine to help them recover the abilities but can only recover relatively small abilities. They can accurately predict things only in the near future, about three months.

The last type are those who were possessed by spiritual beings. This supernal power does not come from themselves. When the spiritual beings leave, they no longer have the power. This is very common. There are good and evil spiritual beings; good ones accrue their merits by transferring powers to help others, while evil ones play tricks on you, making you suffer.

If we try to discern Buddhas from demons by their supernal power, there is no way to see their differences. That’s why Buddhas, in order to avoid confusion for all beings, do not use supernal powers but give teachings about the truth of life and the universe to help them awaken, while demons do not use teaching methods because they are not enlightened to the level of transcending reincarnation to understand the truth of life and the universe. This is how we can discern a Buddha from a demon.

In Chinese history, there were many cases of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva manifesting supernal powers, and after His identity being revealed He left the world immediately. So we can speculate that, if someone's identity has been exposed but he still lingers in the world, he must be a false one, not a real Buddha or Bodhisattva.

Many patriarchs in history admonished us not to be obsessed with supernal power when learning Buddhism, because you then create opportunities for demons and can easily be controlled by them. Once you are controlled by a demon, it is very difficult to escape from them, your life would be turned upside down and you would receive excruciating misery.

Therefore, we must be clear about this truth and never be curious about supernal power, we should simply practice a pure mind conscientiously.

Please stay tuned to find out Edgar Cayce's secret of curing patients' illnesses and helping them change destiny.