

## TO AWAKENING, PART 7

In the last part, we have mentioned people who remembered their past lives, but most of us do not remember our past lives, why? Before we discuss this issue, let us see two very interesting cases in Chinese history—two Confucian scholars who predicted their next lives yet forgot their past lives.

### Confucian Master Wang Yangming's Déjà Vu

Let me share a historical story here: Confucian Master Wang Yangming was a famous scholar in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). In his time, he was well-respected by the people and he discovered that he was reincarnated from a senior monk. How?

When Wang Yangming 王陽明 was fifty years old, he went to visit the Jinshan Temple 金山寺 in Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. After entering the temple, he had a feeling of déjà vu. He then went walking randomly in the temple. When he approached the front door of a retreat room, he noticed that the door and windows were closed tightly, and there was even a strip of paper sealing the door. He felt that he had lived in this retreat room in the past.

He asked a monk to open the door for him, so he could enter and take a look. But the monk said, “We are really sorry, we cannot do that. You are welcome to go to any other place in the temple, but not this retreat room.”

“Why?”

“Because fifty years ago, our former abbot went to nirvana here. His whole-body relic is still kept in this room. His flesh body is still sitting there and has not decayed. In order to protect this relic, we do not allow anybody to enter.”

But Wang Yangming was very insistent. “I implore you, I must enter and take a look.” Since he was a well-known scholar and was also well-respected in the Buddhist circle, the monk finally agreed to let him take a look.

**The One Who Opens the Door  
Is the One Closed the Door**

When the door opened, Mr. Wang stepped inside and saw an old monk sitting straight up on a meditation mat, already gone to nirvana. The true body relic was very dignified. When turning around, he saw something written on the wall. This is the poem that the abbot wrote before he went to nirvana:

Fifty years later Wang Yangming,  
the one who opens the door is the one who closed the door.  
The soul comes back after it left, we then believe,  
the soul is really eternal like Zen Buddhism claims.

In Buddhism, the soul refers to consciousness. People call it “soul.” The abbot even gave the name of the one who would come back. This skill is amazing and genuine—he could predict the future and knew that he would come back fifty years later as someone named Wang Yangming! This is supernal power! But even though he possessed such an authentic skill, he still was reincarnated. And he did not remember his previous life even though he was a great practitioner—an abbot with well-respected knowledge and virtues.

### **Even Great Practitioners Can't Always Remember Previous Lives**

Based on this story and many records throughout history, we have reason to believe that people who are well-respected with a high status were definitely a true practitioner in his past life. It is a pity that this abbot did not recite Amitabha and vow to be reborn into the Pure Land. As a result, he still had to be reincarnated. With this genuine skill, if he had vowed to be reborn into the Pure Land, he would undoubtedly have transcended the endless birth-death sea of samsara.

According to Buddhist sutras, Pure Land Buddhism is a method that is extremely difficult to believe. What is the difficult part?

First of all, it is very difficult to encounter.

Secondly, it is also difficult to believe even after encountering it.

Furthermore, even if someone tells you, you might still not believe in it and not be willing to recite Amitabha at the moment of death.

As such, suffering from reincarnation is inevitable. And it will cause confusion between the two lives. Just like this senior monk, a genuine practitioner of a

bodhisattva, would forget the experiences of their past lives. It really is a pity because those skills he had cultivated were all interrupted.

What is a bodhisattva? It is Sanskrit. “Bodhi” means “enlightenment,” and “sattva” means “living being.” Thus, a being who has been awakened and seeks enlightenment, or an enlightened being is called a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva who dedicates his or her efforts to the salvation of other beings is the model practitioner in the Mahāyāna tradition.

In this life, we have known that there is a Pure Land Method which can help us to transcend the endless sufferings of the six paths reincarnation. We should seize this opportunity to obtain understanding and achieve the monumental task of liberating ourselves from the cycle of birth and death in this life.

### **Lulao’s Prophecy and the Proof of His Rebirth**

Another story is also recorded in official Chinese history. In the Tang Dynasty, there was a person named Tsui Xian (崔賢) from Shandong Province. He grew up with noble aspirations and was highly educated. In the first year of the Yuanhe元和 era of Emperor Xianzong, this young man passed the two highest levels of Imperial exams, Juren (舉人) and Jinshi (進士), in the same year. His official career reached the high-ranking position of “Shiyushi(侍御史),” similar to today’s position of a general prosecutor. He was specifically in charge of prosecuting criminal cases. With a charismatic personality, Tsui Xian was a righteous person and was very smart at making decisions with criminal cases. He earned the reputation of being guarded by deities because he dealt with those cases like a god and was very accurate.

Tsui Xian’s father was Cui Rui (崔瑞), also an imperial officer. One day, a practitioner came to his house. This practitioner called himself “Lulao,” which means Senior Lu. Lulao had reached a very high level in his practice—he could predict the future and know the past. Tsui Rui respected Lulao and invited him to stay at his home.

After a period of time, Lulao told Tsui Rui it was time for him to leave. He said, “I am leaving, but we have a very deep affinity in the future. After I finish this life, I will reincarnate into your family and become your son. There will be proof!” “What will that be?” Tsui Rui asked. Lulao pointed to a mole beneath his mouth and said, “This will be our proof.” He left after giving his word.

Later, Tsui Rui had a son, Tsui Xian. Sure enough, he had a birthmark—a mole beneath his mouth. His son also grew up to look and act like Lulao. So his father nicknamed him “Lulao,” to commemorate this practitioner.

## **Why Do We Forget Our Past Lives?**

These two stories both indicate to us that, even if we have practiced to a very advanced level to have a genuine skill of predicting the future and knowing the past, we will still be reincarnated if we don't transcend the six realms. After reincarnation, most people forget their past life due to the extreme sufferings of the prison-like pain, hanging upside-down, in a mother's womb. Unless, some people, who are like the story we mentioned in Part 6, Venerable Chao Kung—reviving a baby or fetus body—did not go through the prison-like torment in the fetus, they thus remember their previous life.

I saw a documentary film produced by the American Discovery channel in Hong Kong when I was on the way here.

Thanks to the advanced technology nowadays, film makers used a three-dimensional ray to film the complete activities of a baby inside a mother's womb, so we were able to see the baby's suffering. Being soaked in the amniotic fluid in the mother's womb upside down for almost ten months must be a distressing torment. During this suffering, a baby will forget the events of his previous life because the pain drives out his memories.

In the next part, we are going to discuss why it is so easy for us to pick up bad habits but difficult to maintain good ones through the stories of where reincarnation and biology intersect.