

Everlasting Happiness,  
as Buddha Attains 3

**Presented by Venerable Da Shi**

**Translated by  
The Dharma Committee  
Miao You Pu Ti Yuan (Singapore)**

## Preface

Buddha came into this world to lead all sentient beings away from suffering and towards enlightenment. He forsook his throne and worldly possessions for the pursuit of enlightenment. It was his wish to guide all sentient beings in their understanding of the karmic cycle and the path to Nirvana. After his passing into Parinirvana, his teachings were collected and compiled by his followers.

It is Venerable Da Shi's wish to continue the Buddha's teachings, spread the seeds of compassion, and carry on his wish for all sentient beings to attain Nirvana. Since his ordination, Venerable Da Shi has been actively involved in the teaching of the Dharma in many places, including Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. In 2004/2005, Venerable Da Shi was invited by the Life Television Station in Taiwan to present talks on various Dharma topics. This book was written based on the consolidated content of Venerable Da Shi's televised talks, in hope that his compassionate wish would be furthered through the spreading of the Dharma.

## Foreword

### ***EVERLASTING HAPPINESS, AS BUDDHA ATTAINS***

#### **Editorial Notes**

The Buddha was born into this world out of great compassion with the aim to help all mortal beings avoid sufferings and attain endless bliss.

The world of mortal beings is full of suffering. It is a surreal world of endless desires and yet fulfillment of all desires is impossible. We have to work hard to find fulfillment but it is all transient. It is like a trap where we relentlessly pursue wealth, appearance, fame, gastronomic satisfaction, and excessive sleep without ever pondering what all these could lead to. We repeatedly go through birth, aging, sickness, and death and in this continuous cyclic existence, we suffer immeasurably.

The Buddha is like an expert doctor with the ability to diagnose and treat all kinds of ailments. Indeed, he dispenses

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eighty four thousands procedures for as much trouble that mortal beings could possibly face in this world. All these are found in the Buddha's teachings. If we practice his teachings with complete faith and realization, besides saving ourselves from suffering in this life, we can also find liberation in time to come.

There are very few fortunate beings that have the chance to hear the Buddha's teachings. The number of people who are able to hear and learn the Buddha's Dharma teachings is said to be like the amount of soil caught in one's nail if one were to use hands to dig into the ground.

***Everlasting Happiness, as Buddha Attains*** is translated from a Chinese compilation of Venerable Da Shi's Dharma teachings on television in Taiwan, R.O.C. He has used the Agama Sutra as the central focus of these teachings, supplemented by relevant Dharma from Mahayana Sutras, including the Prajna Sutras, the Middle Way, the Maha-prajna-paramita-Sastra, the Dasabhumika-Vibhasa-Sastra, the Saddharma-Pundarika, etc. for better understanding. Through his skillful narration and explanation, Venerable Da Shi has made the Buddha's Dharma very easy to understand and at the same time, interesting. There are also many citations of examples where one can apply in one's life and practice.

It is the wish of Venerable Da Shi that these teachings should reach out to more people, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. For Buddhists who have sought refuge in the Triple Gem, these teachings serve to strengthen their understanding of the Dharma and improve practices. For non-Buddhists, may it serve as a guide to attain true bliss.

There are a total of six chapters in this book, dwelling on three main themes. Buddhist Philosophy of Life explains where we would head to after death and how rebirth would take place. Buddhist Cosmology explains the universe perceived and the cosmic space and time dimension associated with it. The Unequivocal Understanding about Life and Death explains the importance for us to know the karmic deeds and forces, and how they affect our rebirth. This is the third installment of a translated series and it will also be made available on our website at [www.mypty.sg](http://www.mypty.sg). Other topics in the series will be published progressively in subsequent books.

The Dharma introduced in this series is in the Chinese Mahayana tradition, the text of which are translated from Sanskrit scriptures. Hence, Sanskrit has been used for the names and specific Buddhist terminologies in the text. Readers can find help from the footnote on the relevant page and the Glossary at the end of the book for explanation of

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common Buddhist terms (first appearance in italics in the text) and concepts.

The Dharma Editorial Committee at Miao You Pu Ti Yuan in Singapore wishes all readers blissful fulfillments in reading.

*@@@ This work is an effort to uphold and support Venerable Da Shi's great vow of spreading the Dharma in gratitude of the Buddha's compassion. Please help to spread the wisdom and cheers of the Dharma by passing this book on to someone else should you feel that you do not need it anymore. As the Buddha taught, the gift of the Dharma excels all gifts! May all have the chance to know the Buddha's Dharma! @@@*

***The Dharma Editorial Team***

***Miao You Pu Ti Yuan (Singapore)***

## Buddhist Philosophy of Life (1)

**Where did we come from at birth? And where will we go to after death?**

As Buddhists, we would be concerned with the questions: Where did we come from at birth? Where will we go to upon our death? We ought to have confidence of and know where we will go to at the end of this life.

### Example

There was a very wealthy landlord who employed many coolies and servants. Amongst them was a man with lower intelligence. How stupid was he?



~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

For instance, though the landlord instructed him: “Go buy an air ticket to Kuala Lumpur”, the man would end up buying a ticket to Singapore instead.

The man thought to himself: “Since the two cities share the same rhyme ending syllabus i.e. "pur/pore", it doesn't matter which ticket I purchase!” Eventually when he returned with the wrong ticket, he was severally reprimanded by the landlord.

Similarly, if he was asked to buy an inbound ticket to Taipei, he would get the inbound ticket to Tai Chung which would never get to Taipei.

The landlord was always angry because of this servant. But due to the life-long employment policy in China, he was unable to terminate his employment. Thus the landlord had to teach the servant – as the proverbial saying goes: It is abuse when one condemns the other without even attempting to teach the latter. So the landlord thought of a way to teach him.

The landlord told the servant: “I want to give you a present. Come to my resting place today.”

So the servant went to the landlord's resting place as instructed. The landlord then gave him an extremely grandiose plaque which made the servant very happy.

The landlord said to him, "You can hang this plaque over your chest."

When the servant saw the inscriptions, "I am the stupidest person", on the plaque he became very furious. But he could not let out his anger on his employer, and so he obediently hung the plaque over his chest as told.

Just then, the landlord added, "If you found a person who is stupider than you, you can pass this plaque to him. And you will no longer be the stupidest person."

Hearing this, the servant immediately thought to himself, "Oh! Thankfully there is still hope for redemption!"

So with the plaque hung over his chest, the servant went around asking people he met, "Are you the stupidest person?"

The people replied, "You are indeed stupider than me by asking this question."

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

The servant went about asking everyone this question including his friends. All of the people he asked were smarter than him and none of them was stupider than him. A few years later, he was still the stupidest person.

As time went by, the landlord got older. One day, he fell so ill that he was bedbound. Many people paid him visits.

Everyone who visited the landlord asked, “Landlord, are you getting better?” “Have you recovered from your illness?” The landlord was unable to respond as he was so frail that he was dying soon.

This servant also went to visit the landlord. “Landlord, how are you?” he asked.

The landlord said, “I will be leaving soon.”

The servant replied, “You are leaving! Where are you leaving to?”

The landlord responded, “I don’t know either.”

“Do you want me to prepare anything for you?”, asked the servant.

“I don’t know what I have to prepare too.”, the landlord rejoined.

At that moment, the servant was very puzzled and could not fathom what the matter was with the landlord that day.

The servant thought: “The landlord said he was leaving, and I wanted to help him get an air ticket or a bus ticket. But he said he did not know where he would be going to. All this while I have been helping him to prepare his things, but today he said he did not know what he should bring. What is wrong with the landlord today? Since the landlord did not give any instructions, I will not prepare anything then.”

So the servant turned around to leave. As he made his way to the door, a thought struck his mind and he ran back to the landlord’s bedside delightedly.

“Landlord! Landlord! I discovered a secret.”

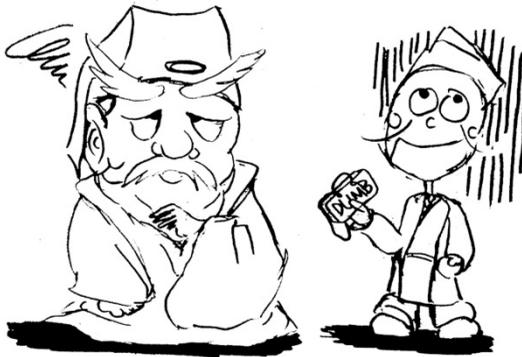
The landlord asked breathlessly, “What’s the secret?”

“I found someone who is stupider than me”, answered the servant.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

“Really? Pass your plaque to him then. And congratulations to you! Who is that person?” the landlord inquired.

Elatedly, the servant revealed, “Landlord, the person is none other than you.”



“What? Me?!” The landlord was so enraged that he nearly collapsed from his fury. “Why am I stupider than you?”

“Well, because I always know where I am going to and what I should bring along with me. But now, landlord, you don’t even know where you are going to. And you also don’t know what to bring along with you. Are you not therefore stupider than me? Here, this plaque is for you”, the servant explained.

The landlord, already frail and feeble, was almost infuriated to death.

This is a story and a light-hearted joke. But the moral of this story is indeed profound. We are, in a way, similar to the landlord. When we are sick, old and dying, do we know where we are heading to in our next life? No, we don't.

What will we bring with us from this life? What are the preparations we have done? What kind of karmic deeds have we laid down and prepared? Where are we going to?

Are we bringing with us wholesome karmic deeds or unwholesome ones? In which realm will we take our next rebirth? Are we prepared? We are unsure about these.

Are we not therefore the most foolish beings? It seems like each of us ought to wear the plaque with the inscriptions "I am the stupidest person". But as Buddhists who have taken refuge in the *Triple Gem* and are seeking the *Buddha's* wisdom, we will not become the stupidest person but instead will become the wisest person once we understand the Buddhist philosophy of life.

## **Of the six realms of *Samsara*, which realm would you choose to take rebirth in?**

The six realms are: the hell realm; the hungry ghost realm; the animal realm; the asura realm; the human realm; and the heavenly realm.

In which realm would you choose to take rebirth? If you had chosen to take rebirth in any one of these realms, what significance does it entail?

When faced with the question: In which realm would you wish to take rebirth? At this juncture, some of you might remain silent and not be able to give an answer. What does the silence signify? Does it signify you are just like the landlord i.e. clueless as to where to go and hence will choose the "seventh realm" – that is, the realm of "cluelessness"? That would be terrible!

Here, allow me to suggest and remind everyone that we could at least choose the "eighth realm"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that there are only six realms of existence in Buddhism. The "seventh", "eighth" and "ninth" realms are used by the author as a figure of speech and continuation from the description of the six realms.

And what is the "eighth realm"? The "eighth realm" is the *Eightfold Noble Path*. So where does the Eightfold Noble Path ultimately lead us to?

The Eightfold Noble Path leads to *Nirvana* – that is, a state of no *defilements*, of no pain and suffering, of true happiness.

If we broaden and deepen our mind, we would then choose the "ninth realm". Where can we find the "ninth realm"? The "ninth realm" is the *Bodhisattva* path.

The goal of a Bodhisattva is to attain Buddhahood and *Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi*. And we have the ability to steer ourselves towards this path.

Thus, if faced again with the question: Of the hell realm; the hungry ghost realm; the animal realm; the asura realm; the human realm; the heavenly realm, where would you want to take rebirth? Now you do not have to reply with respect to any of the six realms. Instead, your answer would be: I want the "eighth realm"; the Eightfold Noble Path.

Alternatively, your reply may be: The "ninth realm – the Bodhisattva path". We must seek Nirvana and aim for Buddhahood.

Do not take rebirth in the "seventh realm" – that is, the "cluelessness" realm. If you can set a right target and properly decide on the right path, you may be reborn into the heavenly realm in your next life. And you can then go to the other worlds. This way, you are a clear-headed person unlike the most foolish landlord.

### **Do we need a good "feng shui" or auspicious place for our tomb upon our passing?**

Many Chinese believe in geomancy or "feng shui" and this is not right. Some people might think: "Such and such a place has very good geomancy, thus when I die, I want to stay there."

Many advertisements claim that some places have very good positive aura, good "feng shui" or "double dragon holding the pearl" etc. The purpose of which is to entice you into placing your cremation urns at those places.

Would you think thus: "I want to stay there when I pass away"? If you did, then what form would you take? It is the form of ghost! Is it enjoyable to be a ghost? To take such a form is indeed great suffering! A hungry ghost lives a life span of

70,000 years. If it is an existence with happiness, then it is at least better to live a long life. But to suffer so much with no happiness, what is there to live for such a long time?

Isn't it terribly pitiful to be a ghost that guards over one's own corpse or one's own ashes? If so, then do not crave staying there.

You must be resolute in taking the path leading to the "eighth" or "ninth" realm. Do not take rebirth in the "seventh" realm or in any of the lower six realms. This indeed is the Buddhist philosophy of life – in the mass of arising and passing away, we must be aware of where we wish to go. We need to understand the causal relationship that leads one to take rebirth in either of these nine realms so that we may know where we will be going to in the future.

### **Will the physical body be reborn along with us in our next life?**

Will this body of ours be reborn along with us in our next life? Definitely not. Upon the death of the body, it will undergo decadence and cremation. And so it is impossible for the body to be reborn along with us to the next life. A wise person will

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

understand this: Since this body cannot be reborn along with him to the next life, why expend so much unnecessary energy or spend too much effort on this body?

When feeding the body, we tend to be overly particular about the taste and texture of the food, desiring to feed the body well. But what is the use of adorning the body when we cannot bring it along with us in our next rebirth?

Thus, our true focus should not be on keeping ourselves busy with this body. But instead, we ought to set our focus on the "mind".

Because the mind is the forerunner of unwholesome and wholesome deeds, therefore we should pay more attention to take care of this "mind".

When our mind generates wholesomeness, we reap wholesome results. Likewise, when it generates unwholesomeness, we reap unwholesome results. Thus we should take care of our mind and not our body.

## **Why is there rebirth into a next life?**

There are three causes and conditions that will result in a rebirth into the next life:

1. Under the influence of our thoughts;
2. Under the influence of our habits;
3. Under the influence of our *karma*.

Wholesome thoughts condition our rebirth to *good existences* such as the human realm or the heavenly realm. Unwholesome thoughts condition our rebirth to the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm or the animal realm. This is the workings of our thoughts as to how they influence our rebirth.

If in our daily life, we develop and cultivate wholesome habits, we will be reborn into the good existences. But cultivating unwholesome habits will condition us for rebirth into *bad existences*. Likewise, generating wholesome karma will lead us to the heavenly realm, and generating unwholesome karma will bring us to the three lower realms.

**1) Under the influence of our thoughts:**

There are times when we generate wholesome thoughts and there are other times when we generate unwholesome thoughts in our mind.

What are wholesome thoughts? Thoughts without greed, anger and ignorance qualify as wholesome thoughts.

Having a mind free from greed, we give generously. Having a mind free from anger, we are kind and compassionate. Having a mind free from ignorance, we have within us confidence and faith in the Triple Gem – that is, the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha* – and we trust the law of cause and effect. This indeed is known as Right Knowledge and *Right View*.

Once we understand this principle and are able to control our mind, we would then be able to sustain a wholesome mind. We may still sometimes generate unwholesome thoughts, but we must take effort to dispel them and not let the unwholesome thoughts fester beyond control.

Example 1

The arising of unwholesome thoughts: Once a Upasaka, who had taken the *five precepts*, walked past a shrub. Suddenly, a snake slithered out from the shrub and frightened the Upasaka so badly that he decided to run away. When he was about to escape, the snake spoke.

It said: “So-and-so Upasaka, please spare a moment.”

“How do you know me?” the Upasaka asked.

“I had already known you in my past life”, replied the snake.

“What could I do for you? Why are you a snake now? It is not good to be a snake”, queried the Upasaka.

“Have you heard of a King named Anavatapta?”, the snake asked.

“Yes, I have! He was always a very generous King and frequently performed good deeds”, replied the Upasaka.

“I am King Anavatapta.”

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

“King, you used to give generously and performed many good deeds, why have you transformed into a snake now?”

“Although I consistently performed charitable deeds, I had a lot of anger in me. During the last moment before my death, a kind attendant was fanning me by my bedside so as to keep me cool. But the attendant accidentally dropped the fan which then fell and hit my face causing me much pain. Immediately, I became very angry but passed away the moment my anger arose. Under the influence of the angry thought, I was reborn as a snake. It is indeed great suffering to be a snake!”

“How do you want me to help you?” asked the Upasaka.

“I hope you could go to a Buddhist temple and request the Venerables to help me transcend to the next life. Please also request the Prince to help me generate merits by chanting the sutras, performing charitable deeds, and seeking repentance so that I may be liberated from this form. Please!”, the snake beseeched.

“Sure! No problem. This is a good deed.” Hearing this, the snake left.

The Upasaka then went to inform the Prince about the snake's request for help in transcending to the next life and performing meritorious deeds on its behalf. After these were performed, the King was liberated from its snake form and returned to thank the Upasaka.

To take rebirth as a snake under the influence of an unwholesome thought at the moment of death is a pity. Nonetheless, by the law of causes and effects, he would reap the results of the merits he had generated, in the past by giving generously, in the future life.

Therefore, we should protect this mind well from unwholesome thoughts and maintain wholesome thoughts at all time.

### Example 2

The arising of wholesome thoughts: There was a murderer who, at the time when he was about to be executed, saw the Buddha and *Bhikshus* collecting alms along the road and walking towards him.

The stateliness of the Buddha was indescribable. The Buddha's wondrous demeanour, excellence, and merits

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

were likewise indescribable beyond words. At best, we could describe the greatness of the Buddha as being akin to the splendid radiance of a thousand suns. And the Bhikshus' demeanour was similarly awe-inspiring. They walked towards the murderer in this manner.

Even the murderer was inspired by the excellence of the Buddha and the Bhikshus that great bliss, joy, and respect arose and filled his mind.

Just as the respectful thought for the Buddha arose in the murderer's mind, the executioner swung the execution blade towards him. Because the murderer's mind was still directed to the Buddha at that point of time, he was reborn in the heavenly realm because of his wholesome thought.

After his rebirth as a *deva* in the heavenly realm, the first thing he did was to find out where he had come from.

"So I came from the execution ground in the human realm."

The second thing he did was to find out why and how he got to be reborn in the heavenly realm. What good deed did he do?

In the end, he realized that because his mind was directed to the Buddha and the Bhikshus which caused a wholesome thought to arise at the point of his execution, he reaped the effect of the wholesome cause which led him to take rebirth in the heavenly realm.

Great bliss and joy arose and filled the deva's mind. And the deva quickly returned to the human realm to do the third thing: to pay gratitude and homage to the Buddha. After paying homage to the Buddha, the Buddha expounded the Dharma to the deva. After the Buddha's exposition of the Dharma, the deva attained the *Pure Dharma Eye* instantly.

Upon attaining the Pure Dharma Eye, the deva attained *Srotapanna*. Thereafter, he would not take rebirth in the hell realm. Despite being a murderer in his previous life, the deva eventually and unexpectedly attained the first stage of fruition because of his rebirth in the heavenly realm and more so because he returned to the human realm to meet the Buddha and to learn the Dharma. Thus, we can observe how the last thought could greatly affect one's merits thereafter!

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

We must therefore protect our mind well; refrain from generating unwholesome thoughts and endeavor to generate wholesome ones. Once wholesome thoughts arise, unwholesome ones recede and disappear.

When does our life end? No one knows as it is unpredictable.

Life is impermanent, we may lose it anytime. We may choke to our death while eating, or we may die from being hit by a car while driving, riding a motorcycle or walking along the road. Therefore we should always protect this mind and not generate any unwholesome thought.

**2) *Under the influence of our habits:***

Wholesome habits cause rebirth in the good existences while unwholesome habits cause rebirth in the bad existences.

Example 1

Unwholesome habits: In the Song dynasty of ancient China, a man named Zhao Zi Ang already foresaw, in his present life, the results of his unwholesome habits. Zhao Zi Ang was so skillful in drawing horses that they looked

extremely lifelike. The paintings were so well-drawn that the horses appeared as though they would gallop out from the paintings.

One day, he was taking a siesta in his bed with the draping bed curtains<sup>2</sup> all drawn up. His wife came to look for him in the bedroom. When she lifted the draping bed curtains and was about to call out for him, she saw not Zhao Zi Ang, but a horse.

Upon seeing the horse lying on the bed, she got a fright and screamed out aloud. The horse turned around and immediately transformed back into Zhao Zi Ang.

The wife asked Zhao Zi Ang: “Why and how did you transform into a horse just now?”

Zhao Zi Ang replied, “No I didn’t! I am Zhao Zi Ang, your husband!”

She said, “But what I saw just now was really a horse.”

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<sup>2</sup> In ancient times, people used curtains to shield the bed whilst they were sleeping to maintain their privacy.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

Zhao Zi Ang was after all a wise person who had virtuous roots.<sup>3</sup> He thought to himself: “I often draw horses and could draw them so well, vivid, and lifelike. They are lifelike to the extent that they appeared as though they could gallop out from the drawings. It is because I understand the horses’ habits so well that my mind has transformed into that of a horse.

I even transformed into a horse in my sleep. If I were to die now, I would definitely be reborn as a horse. This is too frightening! What should I do about this?”

Zhao Zi Ang immediately changed his career at this juncture. If you were him, what would you draw? A wise person would discontinue drawing horses. He would instead draw paintings of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, filling his mind with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Bodhisattvas have great loving-kindness, *great compassion*, immense merits, great wisdom, and great *supernatural powers*. Although they are not yet Buddhas,

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<sup>3</sup> Virtuous roots: positive potentiality. Morally positive habits that bring good retributions. Good actions, with the roots of a tree used as a metaphor for goodness.

they are progressing along the "ninth path" – the Bodhisattva path – which will eventually lead them to attain Buddhahood in the future. So Zhao Zi Ang began to draw Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. That was the problem that Zhao Zi Ang had to deal with during his lifetime<sup>4</sup>.

### Example 2

Unwholesome habits: A common phenomenon can be observed amongst non-Buddhists and Buddhists. Some people enjoy carrying their pet dogs around and kiss them every day. Some even sleep with and bathe their dogs. They treat their dogs way better than they treat their own sons, daughters, or parents.

They spend every day with their dogs and cats, developing such close relationship. They will miss their pets when they go for tours without bringing along their cats or dogs. When they return home, they first take care of their cats, dogs, or pets instead of their children and family members. They will cry when their pets die.

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<sup>4</sup> As opposed to dealing with it only at the moment of death. If he had only discovered it at the moment of death, it would be too late for him to make any positive changes, and he would certainly end up taking rebirth as a horse.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

If you were to die at this point of time, what would you become? As you spend all your time with the pets, you will become their children when you die. Wouldn't it be tragic to be the offspring of cats and dogs?

Usually both your looks and habits would resemble your pets. What else could it be when you die?

Thus, once we understand this principle, we should refrain from keeping pets. It is also the same with the profession you do. If you are a chicken breeder, you will spend most of your time with the chickens. All you see, hear, and think are just the habits of the chickens. So when you take rebirth in the next life, would you not then become a chicken?

Example 3

Wholesome habits: During the Ming dynasty in ancient China, Zhu Yuanzhang and Chen Youliang were fighting against each other over the state. Zhu Yuanzhang eventually won the war. Slowly, he conquered the other warring states and united the country.

At that time, there was a blacksmith whose work involved refining iron ore into steel by heating the iron rods until they became red hot and then hammering them until they became steel. The blacksmith repeated these actions every day. A Venerable who passed by the blacksmith's shop noticed that the man was always busy hammering the irons, and he pitied how the blacksmith passed his life in such a way.

So the Venerable told the blacksmith: "Mr so-and-so, it's such hard work for you! Stop this and join me in the monastic order."

"No I can't! I have to take care of my parents, my wife, and my children. I cannot stop working. It is impossible for me to join the monastic order and practice with you", said the blacksmith.

The Venerable responded: "That's all right! Then you could practice the precepts when working. Is this possible?"

The blacksmith replied: "Yes! Yes! I can take care of my family and practice simultaneously. But how do I do that?"

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

The Venerable then said: "Since you hammer the iron every day, each time your hammer hits the iron, you chant 'Namo Amitabha Buddha'".

"This is easy. I can do that".

"Additionally, do not do any bad deeds. For if you chant the Buddha recitation on the one hand but do bad deeds on the other hand, would that count as chanting the Buddha recitation?"

"I will not do bad deeds. I will work and chant the Buddha recitation simultaneously without taints."

"If you chant the Buddha recitation single-mindedly, you will be reborn in the *Western Pure Land* in the next life. And you would not need to hammer the iron nor endure hardships in this way."

From then on, the blacksmith would chant "Namo Amitabha Buddha" while hammering the iron every day.

A few years later, he told the others: "Friends, I will soon take my leave."

“You are leaving? Where are you going to?”

“I am going to the Western Pure Land. Amitabha Buddha is coming to receive me.”

In the end, everyone saw the blacksmith was still hammering the iron as he passed away. Then he recited a verse:

*“Ding ding dang dang,  
refining iron into steel through a long time.  
Peace is approaching and  
I’m heading for the Western Pure Land.”*

What this meant is that as the blacksmith hammered the iron, producing the "ding ding dang dang" sound, the iron would turn into steel after some time. Peace was approaching because Zhu Yuanzhang had united the country. And the blacksmith himself was heading for the Western Pure Land. That appears to be the meaning of the verse at face value. But on a deeper level, what the verse means is that each time the blacksmith hammered the iron, he was at the same time refining his mind by ‘hammering’ away his mental defilements.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

As the blacksmith hammered the iron, he remained mindful. When an unwholesome thought arose, he would chant "Namo Amitabha Buddha" to dispel the thought. He was able to free his mind from defilements over time as he persistently trained his mind this way. This is akin to hammering the iron – after some time of refinement, the iron would turn into steel.

“I hammer the iron every day to make it turn into steel. When the impurities in the iron are hammered away, the iron will turn into pure steel. My mind is likewise so pure that it is directed only on ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha’. Now my mind is free from defilements, and is blissful and joyful.

My mind is just as peaceful as the peace reigning throughout the country. Now I am ready to take rebirth in the Western Pure Land.”

The man then chanted the verse “Ding ding dang dang, refining iron into steel through a long time. Peace is approaching and I’m heading for the Western Pure Land”, and passed away.

Through his habitual practice, the man only needed a few years to reach such attainment. His simplicity and single-

mindedness in fulfilling his task is something worth our learning.

All our wholesome and unwholesome habits will lead us to our next life. Once we understand this principle, we will know how to conduct ourselves.

### **3) *Under the influence of our karma:***

There are different kinds of karma: wholesome karma; unwholesome karma; karma leading to liberation from Samsara; and karma leading to Buddhahood.

In the more severe case, transgression of the five precepts or performance of the tenfold unmeritorious cause of action could lead one to suffer in hell. In a less severe case, one would suffer in the animal realm. And in the least severe case, one would suffer in the hungry ghost realm.

If one generates some wholesome karma but makes an unwholesome vow, then one will end up in the asura realm. If one upholds the five precepts and practices the ten meritorious deeds well, one will be reborn in the human realm at the very least. One can also take a higher rebirth in the heavens of the World of Sensuous Desires. If

one also practices meditation, one will take rebirth in the World of Form or even in the Formless World.

Once we understand this principle, we will know where we came from and where we would go to upon our death.

### **Through what can we end Samsara?**

Through listening to, learning, thinking, reflecting on, and observing the Four Noble Truths: the Noble Truth of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering; and the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. All these will lead us to final liberation from Samsara.

Through developing Right View on the Four Noble Truths, we can realize a pure vision of the Dharma and end our defilements. This will lead us to attaining Arahatsip. Thereon, we will no longer fall back into Samsara nor do we have to suffer the pains of birth, old age, illness and death.

Through observing the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, and practicing the threefold teachings of (i) precepts, (ii) concentration, and (iii) wisdom, we can attain the stage of Pratyeka Buddha and will not have to undergo Samsara again.

We could emulate the blacksmith in cultivating our mind to be wholesome and refraining our mind from generating unwholesome thoughts. We could emulate him in giving generously, in upholding the precepts, in cultivating merits, and in listening to the Dharma to perfect our wisdom.

If, then, we aspire to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, we would be able to fulfill our aspiration. If we aspire to take rebirth in the Medicine Buddha's Pure Land, we would be able to fulfill this aspiration as well.

There is another kind of person who, besides seeing his own suffering, also sees the suffering of all sentient beings. He willingly endures more suffering in his repeated rebirths so as to salvage and guide sentient beings to end their suffering and help them attain final liberation and happiness. This person is none other than a Bodhisattva.

He generates Bodhicitta, practices the Six Paramitas, grasps the Bhutatathata and fulfills the Ten Stages of Bodhisattva Practice. After he perfects all these, he will be able to attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. When he achieves Buddhahood, he will attain the thirty-two major physical marks (dvatrimsan maha-purusa-laksanani), and eighty minor physical marks (asity-anuvyanjanani). He will also possess the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the four kinds of unobstructed

cognition, and the eighteen distinctive characteristics of a Buddha. He will also be full of great loving-kindness, great compassion, and all-inclusive cognition.

When a Bodhisattva attains Buddhahood, he will have perfectly acquired all the above merits of *Rupa-kaya* and *Dharma-kaya*, thereby completing his cultivation.

### Example 1

Once the Buddha's attendant, Ananda, was very concerned about the progress of the laity's practice in a particular city. So he reported to the Buddha: "World Honored One! In this city, more than ten Upasakas had recently passed away. If I may ask the World Honored One, where have they taken rebirth?"

The Buddha replied: "The few who had passed away recently attained the third fruition – *Anagamin* – and have taken rebirth in the Fourth Dhyana Heavens. (These are the Five Heavens of No-Return: The Heaven of No Anxieties, the Heaven Without Afflictions, the Heaven of Good Sight, the Heaven of Good Appearances and the Heaven of Ultimate Form) Once they have taken rebirth in that realm, they will not return to the World of Sensuous Desires in Samsara. They will attain Arahatsip in the Fourth Dhyana Heavens and attain final liberation there."

Maha Ananda then asked: “There were ten more other people who had passed away before those ten Upasakas. Where have they taken their rebirths?”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Because the ten people had attained the second fruition – *Sakradagamin* – they have taken rebirth in the heavenly realm. They will return to the human realm once more before attaining Arahatsip and final liberation.”

Maha Ananda then queried again: “Very recently, there were some people who had passed away. Where have they taken rebirth?”

The Buddha replied: “All of them attained Srotapanna and have taken rebirth in the heavenly realm. They will return to the human realm and after seven cycles of rebirth alternating between the heavenly realm and human realm, they will attain Arahatsip and final liberation.”

After Maha Ananda queried for the third time, the Buddha said to him: “Oh Ananda! Do you not understand the reason for the arising of the Buddha in this world?”

“The reason for the arising of the Buddha in this world is to help sentient beings end their suffering and attain final

liberation from Samsara. This is the fundamental reason for the arising of the Buddha in this world.

“The World Honored One only teaches sentient beings how to attain liberation from repeated births and deaths. But what you have been asking is where the laity had taken rebirth.

“Do you not think that the questions you have asked are causing disruption to the World Honored One? Would asking these questions not cause stirrings of the mind? The World Honored One expounds the Dharma to benefit sentient beings. Of what good are the questions you asked?”

After hearing what the World Honored One said, Maha Ananda quickly asked for repentance. What is the point of asking about such matters and disturbing the World Honored One from saving and guiding sentient beings? So when the World Honored One reprimanded Maha Ananda, Maha Ananda immediately repented.

Let us now do a self-reflection. Do we often ask the gods for divination to find out where our father, mother, husband, or wife has taken rebirth? “My child was such a good child, where have he taken rebirth?” Would you not be causing disturbance to other people by doing this?

If the gods were as wise as the Buddha, they would say: “Do not disturb me, this is so annoying!”

So as Buddhists, if we were to ask our Venerables about the rebirths our family members have taken, would we not be disturbing the Venerables?

Your Venerable teaches you how to practice and cultivate your mind, how to examine yourself so that you may know your next rebirth. It is best if there is no more repeated birth. Do not ask insignificant and meaningless questions that cause distress to your Venerable. Allow your Venerable to have time to cultivate and you should likewise practice diligently.

## **Where does our karma lead us?**

To be under the influence of the karma means that our next life is greatly affected by the good and bad karma that we have created in our present life.

### Example

The Agama Sutra recorded a conversation between the Buddha and a Brahmin named Lu Tou (鹿头梵志). This conversation sheds light on how we may know where we will take our rebirth.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

Brahmin Lu Tou was an ascetic with supernatural powers. One day, as he was conversing with the Buddha, they came upon a cemetery.

The Buddha picked up a skull and handed it to Brahmin Lu Tou. Brahmin Lu Tou could ascertain whether the skull belonged to a man or a woman simply by tapping it.

“This was a woman”, said Brahmin Lu Tou.

The Buddha asked: “How did this woman die?”

Brahmin Lu Tou replied: “She died of hunger.”

The Buddha said: “Yes! She died of hunger. Where has she taken rebirth after her death?”

“She has taken rebirth in the hungry ghost realm”, answered Brahmin Lu Tou.

“Why has she taken rebirth in the hungry ghost realm?” asked the Buddha.

“Owing to her thinking of water at the moment of her death, she has now taken rebirth in the realm of hungry ghost”, Brahmin Lu Tou explained.

“Yes! Is there any way to prevent her from taking rebirth in the hungry ghost realm?”

“If she had thought of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, and the Triple Gem, she would not have taken rebirth in the hungry ghost realm.”

“Yes”, the Buddha said.

Then, the Buddha handed another skull to Brahmin Lu Tou and asked: “How did this person die?”

“From complications during childbirth.”

“Is there any way to prevent her death?”

“If she had given her body proper food and nourishment, she would not have died.”

“Where has she taken rebirth?”

“She has taken rebirth in the heavenly realm.”

“No. If she died from complications in labor, she ought to have taken rebirth in the lower realms”, the Buddha clarified.

“Oh yes! But why has she taken rebirth in the heavenly realm?”  
Brahmin Lu Tou queried.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~

Brahmin Lu Tou took a closer look and realized that the woman had taken and upheld the precepts. She had upheld the five precepts and the *eight precepts*. Because of the merits of upholding the precepts, she was reborn in the heavenly realm.

The Buddha said: “Yes! Well explained.”

The Buddha then handed yet another skull to Brahmin Lu Tou and said: “Take a look and see who this was.”

“Oh! I cannot tell from this skull where this person has taken rebirth. But this person has obviously died!” exclaimed Brahmin Lu Tou in shock.

Brahmin Lu Tou then sought an explanation from the Buddha: “World Honored One! Whose skull is this?”

The Buddha said: “This skull belonged to an Arahāt who has just entered into Nirvana.”

“So Arahats really do exist!”

Brahmin Lu Tou then asked the Buddha: “World Honored One! May I join the monastic order now? I hope to be able to become an Arahāt just as this person did.”

“Definitely so.”

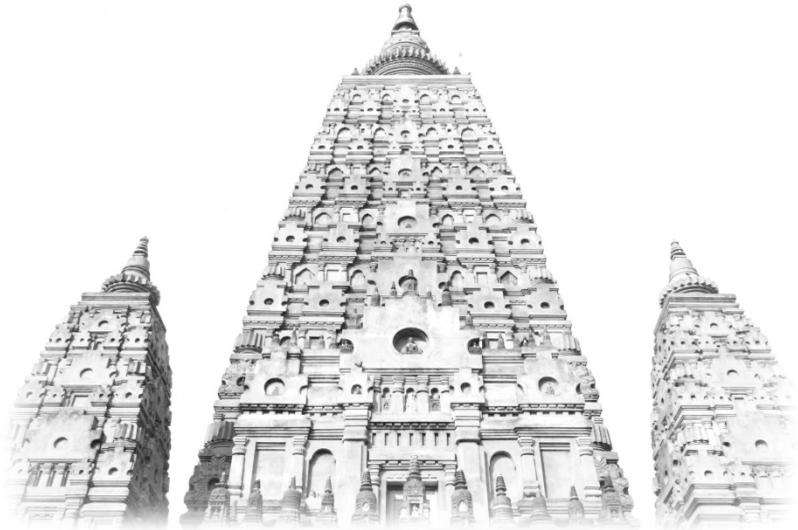
Thereafter, Brahmin Lu Tou became a disciple of the Buddha and joined the monastic order. Not too long after, he attained Arahatsip.



There are some people who, at the last moment of their lives, thought of water and so took rebirth in the hungry ghost realm. There are people who, in their lifetime, upheld the five precepts and eight precepts and so took rebirth in the heavenly realm. There are people who cultivated and practiced and so attained Arahatsip.

In conclusion, our rebirth – be it in the good existences or the lower realms – is influenced by (i) the last thought in our mind at the moment of our death; (ii) our habits; or (iii) our wholesome and unwholesome karma.

~ BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (1) ~



## Glossary

**Altruistic Joy:** Also known as Sympathetic Joy or Mudita. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**Amitabha Buddha:** The Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life, who presides over the Western Pure Land, to which anyone can be reborn through single minded recitation of or meditation on the Buddha's name.

**Anagamin:** One who has attained the third stage of Liberation. Such a person has abandoned sensuous desires. Upon passing from the human realm, he will take rebirth in one of the five special worlds in the World of Form, called the Śuddhāvāsa worlds, or "Pure Abodes", from which he will attain Arahatship and will never return to the human realm. Hence, he is also known as a Non Returner. An Anagamin has abandoned the five lower fetters, out of ten total fetters, that bind beings to the cycle of existence. See also Arahatship.

**Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi:** The Supreme and Complete Enlightenment.

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**Arahat:** One who has traversed the Eightfold Noble Path to reach the fourth and final stage of Liberation, called Arahatship. An Arahat has abandoned all ten fetters that bind beings to the cycle of existence. Also known as the Perfect One. See also Arahatship.

**Arahatship:** The fourth and final stage of Liberation, in which one is fully liberated from Samsara and is no longer subject to death and rebirth. The four stages of Liberation are: The First stage known as Srotapanna; the Second stage known as Sakradagamin; the Third stage known as Anagamin; and the Fourth stage known as Arahat.

**Avici Hell:** Also known as the Hell of Uninterrupted Torture. It is the deepest and worst hell. Those born in this hell suffer, die, and are instantly reborn to suffering without interruption, until they have exhausted the retribution for their evil karma.

**Bad existences:** The three lower realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals; as opposed to the good existences, which are the three realms of humans, asuras, and heavenly beings. See also Six realms of cyclic existence.

**Bardo:** A Tibetan term for the state of existence intermediate between two lives.

**Bhikshu:** A fully ordained male member of the Buddhist Sangha or monk observing 250 Precepts.

**Bhikshuni:** A fully ordained female member of the Buddhist Sangha or nun observing 500 Precepts.

**Bhutatahata:** The true character of reality. The inherent or true nature of phenomena or true suchness. (诸法实相)

**Bodhicitta:** Also known as the Bodhi-mind or the Bodhi-heart, in which "Bodhi" means "enlightened". It is the aspiration to attain supreme Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

**Bodhisattva:** A being who has developed Bodhicitta and is striving for enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

**Brahma King:** The King of the Brahma World.

**Brahma World:** In the widest sense, this is the name of the World of Form; in a narrower sense, it is the collective name of the first three heavens of the World of Form. See also Three planes of existence.

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**Buddha:** The Fully Enlightened One, who possesses perfect wisdom and compassion.

**Chakravartin:** See Wheel Turning Monarch.

**Compassion:** Also known as Karuna. See also Four Divine States of Mind and Great Compassion.

**Cycle of existence:** See Samsara.

**Cyclic existence:** See Samsara.

**Dana:** Charity; benevolence; generosity.

**Defilements:** The mental states of greed, hatred, and delusion which temporarily cloud the mind and manifest in unwholesome actions. These defilements are seen as the very roots of samsaric existence and are known as the three poisons.

**Deva:** A heavenly being.

**Dharma:** The Teachings of the Buddha.

**Dharma-kaya:** The dharma body, the truth body, the reality body.

**Eight precepts:** Observed by lay Buddhists during certain retreats: (1) Do not kill; (2) Do not steal; (3) Do not engage in sexual activities; (4) Do not tell lies; (5) Do not take intoxicants; (6) do not wear bodily adornments, use perfumes, engage in singing and dancing, and watching dances or plays; (7) do not sleep in a raised bed; and (8) do not eat after noon.

**Eightfold Noble Path:** The fundamental teaching of the Buddha that shows the path that leads to the cessation of suffering: (1) Right View or Right Understanding; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

**Eighteen kinds of transformation:** Includes (1) moving objects or even worlds; (2) emitting fire from the body; (3) illuminating innumerable worlds; (4) causing sentient beings in all the six realms to be seen; (5) changing an object into something different; (6) roaming freely by penetrating walls, mountains, water, air, and so on; (7) rolling anything into a minute size; (8) enlarging objects to gigantic proportions; (9) storing up swarms of people, mountains, or earth within the body; (10) entering any group, assuming their forms and voices, preaching to them, and then disappearing; (11) magnifying the body to a thousand fold; (12) hiding this

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magnified metamorphosis; (13) subjecting sentient beings to one's will; (14) controlling the supernatural powers of those below one in spiritual achievements; (15) endowing sentient beings with eloquence; (16) restoring memory to those who forget the Dharma; (17) giving joy to listeners; and (18) lighting up the creatures in all the worlds.

**Eon:** See Kalpa.

**Equanimity:** Also known as Upeksa. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**First Stage of Fruition:** Also known as the first stage of Liberation. One who has attained the first stage of fruition is known as a Srotapanna or Stream Enterer.

**Five aggregates:** Form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness.

**Five desires:** Wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep.

**Five precepts:** (1) Do not kill; (2) Do not steal; (3) Do not engage in sexual misconduct; (4) Do not tell lies; and (5) Do not take intoxicants.

**Five sensual pleasures:** Pleasurable feelings derived from the contact between the five sense bases of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, and the five sense objects of form, sound, odor, flavor, and tactile object.

**Four Divine States of Mind:** (1) Maitri or Loving-kindness; (2) Karuna or Compassion; (3) Mudita or Sympathetic Joy; and (4) Upeksa or Equanimity.

**Four Foundations of Mindfulness:** (1) Contemplation of the body; (2) Contemplation of feelings; (3) Contemplation of the state of mind; and (4) Contemplation of phenomena. See also Right Effort.

**Four Noble Truths:** (1) The noble truth of suffering; (2) The noble truth of the cause of suffering; (3) The noble truth of the cessation of suffering; and (4) The noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

**Good existences:** The three upper realms of humans, asuras and heavenly beings; as opposed to the bad existences of hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals. See also Six realms of cyclic existence.

**Great Compassion:** The aspiration to remove the sufferings and causes of sufferings of all sentient beings.

**Heavens of the Four Deva Kings:** Also known as the Heavens of the Deva Kings of the Four Heavens. This is the first of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. See also Three planes of existence.

**Hell of Screaming:** One of the Eight Hot Hells. The other seven are: the Hell of Thoughts, the Hell of Iron Chains, the Hell of Crushing, the Hell of Great Screaming, the Scorching Hot Hell, the Extreme Scorching Hot Hell, and the Hell of Uninterrupted Torture (also known as the Avici Hell).

**Kalpa:** Also known as Eon. It is often used to denote a very long period of time. There are small, medium, great, and incalculable kalpas. A great kalpa indicates the length of time between the creation and recreation of a universe, spanning the period of the universe's formation, existence, destruction, and non-existence.

**Karma:** The deeds carried out by a person and their effects on the person's future, especially in relation to their succeeding rebirths. Karma can be classified as actions of the body,

speech, and mind, each of which can have the moral quality of wholesomeness, unwholesomeness, or indeterminate.

**Karuna:** Also known as Compassion. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**King Yama:** The King in charge of the hell realm.

**Law of causality:** Also known as the law of cause and effect. This is a fundamental concept within Buddhism governing all situations, in which all actions, which is a cause, will produce a corresponding effect. It is also stated as good begets good, evil begets evil; good will not beget evil, evil will not beget good.

**Law of Dependent Origination:** The principle that phenomena do not come into existence on their own but as a result of causes and conditions.

**Loving-kindness:** Also known as Maitri. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**Maitri:** Also known as Loving-kindness. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

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**Mara:** The Demon King who resides in the Paranirmita Vasavartin Heaven.

**Mudita:** Also known as Altruistic or Sympathetic Joy. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**Naga:** Dragon or serpent. A beneficent divine being who governs the various water bodies, such as seas, lakes, rivers, and springs.

**National Preceptor:** The Religious Adviser to the King equivalent to the position of a Prime Minister.

**Nirmanarati Heaven:** This is the fifth of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. See also Three planes of existence.

**Nirvana:** The perfect state of mind that is free from greed, hatred, and delusion, and hence all suffering. See also Parinirvana and Residue-less nirvana.

**Non Returner:** See Anagamin.

**Once Returner:** See Sakradagamin.

**Paranirmita Vasavartin Heaven:** This is the sixth of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. Mara, the Demon King, resides in this heaven. See also Three planes of existence.

**Parinirvana:** Also known as the Great Nirvana; it indicates the Buddha's entering into the state of residue-less nirvana. See also Nirvana and Residue-less nirvana.

**Perfect One:** See Arahant.

**Prajna:** Wisdom; insight; divine intuition.

**Pratyeka Buddha:** Also known as the Silent Buddha, or Self-enlightened One. The Pratyeka Buddha appears in an era when there is no Buddha or the Buddha's teachings. He lives apart from others and achieves enlightenment through self-contemplation and realization of dependent arising.

**Pure Dharma Eye:** The pure vision of the true Dharma.

**Residue-less nirvana:** Also known as nirvana without residue. It refers to the state of total liberation from all physical and mental conditions. This is in contrast with nirvana with residue, where the body still exists. See also Nirvana and Parinirvana.

**Right Action:** To conduct oneself in moral, peaceful, and honorable ways, that is in keeping with the precepts of not killing, not stealing, and not committing sexual misconduct. See also Eightfold Noble Path and Tenfold meritorious cause of action.

**Right Concentration:** To develop one's meditation according to the four Dhyanas. See also Eightfold Noble Path.

**Right Effort:** To develop the four types of efforts: (1) the effort to get rid of unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen in one's mind, such as the desire to take another's property; (2) the effort to prevent the arising of unwholesome thoughts; (3) the effort to develop wholesome thoughts of loving-kindness and compassion; and (4) the effort to maintain and develop further wholesome thoughts that have already arisen in one's mind. See also Eightfold Noble Path.

**Right Faith:** To develop faith in the Triple Gem and the Four Noble Truths, that through practicing Buddhism, all sentient beings can eventually attain liberation from Samsara.

**Right Livelihood:** To live honorably in a profession which is in no way harmful to sentient beings, and in keeping with the precepts. See also Eightfold Noble Path.

**Right Mindfulness:** To practice the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. See also Four Foundations of Mindfulness and Eightfold Noble Path.

**Right Speech:** To abstain from telling lies, slandering, frivolous speech, and harsh speech. See also Eightfold Noble Path and Tenfold meritorious cause of action.

**Right Thought:** To have only thoughts which are in line with Buddhist teachings. See also Eightfold Noble Path.

**Right Understanding:** See Right View.

**Right View:** To develop the understanding or view that complies with the Buddhist teaching of causality or the law of cause and effect; understanding the Four Noble Truths. See also Eightfold Noble Path and Right Understanding.

**Right View of Dependent Arising:** Also refer to as Law of Dependent Origination. It is the principle that phenomena do not come into existence on their own but as a result of causes and conditions. It is an elaboration of the Principle of Cause and Effect, highlighting the concept of inter-dependency of existence, and also the duality/non-duality.

**Rupa-kaya:** The material body.

**Saha World:** The secular world, which is known as the world that must be endured as it is full of sufferings.

**Sakra:** The King of Trayastrimsat Heaven.

**Sakradagamin:** One who has attained the second stage of Liberation. Such a person, upon passing from the human realm, will take rebirth in the heavenly realms, after which he will be reborn in the human realm one last time to attain Arahathship. Hence he is also known as a Once Returner. A Once Returner has abandoned the first three fetters, out of ten total fetters, that bind beings to the cycle of existence. He is distinguished from the Stream Enterer by the fact that the Once Returner has weakened greed, hatred, and delusion to a greater degree. Therefore, he has fewer than seven rebirths. See also Arahathship.

**Samadhi:** Meditative concentration. Often used to denote the deepest state of pure concentration, in which the mind is free from distraction and totally absorbed in the object of concentration. There are many levels and types of samadhi, such as the Samadhi of Loving-kindness and Compassion.

**Samsara:** Also known as the Cycle of existence or Cyclic Existence. This refers to the endless cycle of suffering caused by birth, death, and rebirth in the six realms of cyclic existence.

**Sangha:** The Buddhist monastic order or community.

**Seven Factors of Enlightenment:** (1) Mindfulness; (2) Discriminative investigation of the Dharma; (3) Effort; (4) Joy; (5) Ease of body and mind; (6) Concentration; and (7) Equanimity.

**Sila:** The precept; code of morality; Buddhist ethics.

**Siksamana:** A female novice nun in waiting observing Six Precepts.

**Six consciousnesses:** The consciousnesses of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

**Six Paramitas:** The Sanskrit word Paramita means to cross over to the other shore. Paramita may also be translated as perfection, perfect realization, or reaching beyond limitation. Through the practice of these six Paramitas, we cross over the sea of suffering (Samsara) to the shore of happiness and

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awakening (Nirvana); we cross over from ignorance and delusion to enlightenment. The six Paramitas refer to:

- The Perfection of Generosity (Dana Paramita),
- The Perfection of Ethics (Sila Paramita),
- The Perfection of Patience (Ksanti Paramita)
- The Perfection of Joyous Effort / Enthusiastic Perseverance (Virya Paramita),
- The Perfection of Concentration (Dhyana Paramita), and
- The Perfection of Wisdom (Prajna Paramita).

**Six realms of cyclic existence:** The realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, asuras, and heavenly beings.

**Six sense bases:** Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

**Six sense objects:** Form, sound, odor, flavor, tactile object, and phenomena.

**Sramenera:** A male novice monk observing Ten Precepts.

**Sramanerika:** A female novice nun observing Ten Precepts.

**Srotapanna:** One who has attained the first stage of Liberation. One who has attained this stage is said to have entered the Stream that leads to Liberation, hence he is also known as a Stream Enterer. Due to the fact that the Stream Enterer has attained an intuitive grasp of Buddhist teachings ("Right View") and has complete confidence in the Triple Gem, he will not be reborn in the three bad existences again, and will take at most seven cycles of rebirths alternating between the heavenly realm and the human realm before attaining the final stage of Liberation, Arahatsip. A Stream Enterer has abandoned the first three fetters, out of ten total fetters, that bind beings to the cycle of existence. See also Arahatsip.

**Stream Enterer:** See Srotapanna.

**Supernatural powers:** The six supernatural powers are: (1) Divine eye or clairvoyance; (2) Divine ear or clairaudience; (3) mental telepathy or ability to read the thoughts of others; (4) psychic travel or telekinesis; (5) knowledge of the past and future; and (6) ending contamination. The first five supernatural powers can be acquired by one who practices deep concentration, but the sixth supernatural power is only attainable when one has attained Arahatsip.

**Sympathetic Joy:** Also known as Altruistic Joy or Mudita. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**Ten directions of space:** The directions of North, South, East, West, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, Zenith, and Nadir, thus covering all spaces.

**Ten epithets:** The ten honorable titles of Buddha. These ten epithets are common to all Buddhas.

- Tathāgata - Thus-Come One or Thus-Gone One,
- Arhat - Worthy of Offerings,
- Samyak-Sambuddha - Equally, Perfectly Enlightened One,
- Vidyācarana-Sampanna - Knowledge and Conduct Perfected,
- Sugata - Well-Arrived One or Well-Gone One. Tathāgata is completely in control of his own births and deaths,
- Lokavid - Understanding the World,
- Anuttara - Unsurpassed One,
- Purusa-Damya-Sārathi - Tamer of Men,
- Śāstā Deva-Manusyānām - Teacher to Gods, Humans, and heavenly beings,
- Buddha-Bhagavān - Buddha the World Honored One.

**Ten Kinds of Mindfulness:** (1) Mindfulness of the Buddha; (2) Mindfulness of the Dharma; (3) Mindfulness of the Sangha; (4) Mindfulness of the Precepts; (5) Mindfulness of Generosity; (6) Mindfulness of the Heavens; (7) Mindfulness of the Cessation of Thoughts; (8) Mindfulness of Breath; (9) Mindfulness of the Impermanence of the Body; and (10) the Mindfulness of Death.

**Ten Stages of Bodhisattva Practice:** According to the Prajna sutras, the ten stages of Bodhisattva Practice are:

- the stage of dry wisdom,
- the stage of nature,
- the stage of the eighth person,
- the stage of insights,
- the stage of diminishment of afflictions,
- the stage of freedom from desire,
- the stage of completion of discernment,
- the stage of the Pratyeka Buddha,
- the stage of the Bodhisattva, and
- the stage of the Buddha.

**Tenfold meritorious cause of action:** (1) Do not kill; (2) Do not steal; (3) Do not engage in sexual misconduct; (4) Do not tell lies; (5) Do not slander; (6) Do not engage in frivolous speech;

(7) Do not engage in harsh speech; (8) Do not bear greed; (9) Do not bear hatred; and (10) Do not stay deluded.

**Three periods:** The past, present, and future.

**Three planes of existence:** The World of Sensuous Desires, the World of Form, and the Formless World. All beings in the six realms of cyclic existence can be found in the World of Sensuous Desires as these beings are plagued by various sensuous desires. Beings in the World of Form have abandoned sensuous desires but still cling on to physical forms, while beings in the Formless World have even relinquished the physical forms and exist only in mental states.

**Three poisons:** See Defilements.

**Trayastrimsat Heaven:** Also known as the Thirty-Three Heavens. It is the second of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. See also Three planes of existence.

**Triple Gem:** The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

**Tusita Heaven:** This is the fourth of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. Maitreya Bodhisattva is currently residing in this heaven, awaiting for the causes and conditions

to ripen for him to descend to the human realm and become the next Buddha to save and liberate all sentient beings. See also Three planes of existence.

**Twelve Links of Dependent Origination:** The twelve links of dependent origination provide a detailed description on the problem of suffering and rebirth. They are: ignorance, mental formation, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, aging and death. There is no existing phenomenon that is not the effect of dependent origination. All phenomena arise dependent upon a number of casual factors, called conditions.

- Ignorance is the condition for mental formation.
- Mental formation is the condition for consciousness.
- Consciousness is the condition for name and form.
- Name and form is the condition for the six senses.
- The six senses are the conditions for contact.
- Contact is the condition for feeling.
- Feeling is the condition for craving.
- Craving is the condition for clinging.
- Clinging is the condition for becoming.
- Becoming is the condition for birth.
- Birth is the condition for aging and death.

~ GLOSSARY ~

**Upekṣa:** Also known as Equanimity. See also Four Divine States of Mind.

**Western Pure Land:** Also known as Sukhavati in Sanskrit. It refers to the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha.

**Wheel Turning Monarch:** Also refer to as Chakravartin. A universal emperor and protector of Buddhism. It is a term used for an ideal universal ruler, who rules ethically and benevolently over the entire world. Wheel turning literally means whose chariot is rolling or whose Dharmachakra (Wheel of the Dharma) is turning everywhere without obstruction.

**Yama Heaven:** This is the third of the six heavens in the World of Sensuous Desires. See also Three planes of existence.

## **About this series**

"Everlasting Happiness, as Buddha Attains" is based on a series of video Dharma teachings presented by Venerable Da Shi. We hope to continue releasing more titles in this series at a later date. You may check our website ([www.mypty.sg](http://www.mypty.sg)) for updates.

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