

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. 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)

Unequivocal understanding about life and death (1)

Why must we have an unequivocal understanding about life and death?

We need to have an "unequivocal understanding about life and death" because sentient beings are ignorant about life and death, and due to this ignorance, we have been repeating the cycle of life and death endlessly. This is too terrifying! Therefore, we must face this most important and fundamental topic.

Confucius said in his Analects "If you do not know about life, how can you know about death?" Why is this so?

This is because everyone, during his life time, from emperors and kings to the general public, seemed to be concerned only with what happens after death. They asked about gods and demons, but not about the common people. They did not show concern over the living conditions of the common

people, whether they were happy or contented with their lives.

Under such circumstances, Confucius therefore showed concern for the living and did not talk about death, hence the saying, “If you do not know about life, how can you know about death?”

However, the Buddha told us: “We must know about life and death, and vice versa.” Once we understand life, we will be able to understand death, and vice versa. This is the difference between the Buddha and the sage of the mundane world.

In the Analects: “Confucius did not talk about demons or gods”, but the Buddha tells us everything, from the hells, animals, ghosts and gods, asuras, humans, to the heavenly realms; from the World of Sensuous Desires, the World of Form, to the Formless World. The Buddha explained all these, including the relationship between life and death, to us thoroughly. He even told us how we could prevent both life and death.

What is the *Bardo*?

We must clearly understand the difference between life and death and the different stages from birth to death so that we would not be confused at the time of death. It would be disastrous if we are still perplexed at the point of death.

Example 1

There was a woman who staunchly upheld the Triple Gem while she was alive. She was also very filial to her parents and always helping others in need. She would always give generously. As she had firm faith in the Buddha and the Dharma taught by the Buddha, she accepted and upheld the precepts. At the time of her death, she saw the celestial palaces and felt very happy. What kind of situation is that?

That is known as the bardo. This is also referred to as the intermediate existence. At the appearance of the bardo, she declared happily: "It's a good thing that I have been practicing generosity, performing meritorious deeds, being filial to my parents, being respectful to the Triple Gem, upholding the precepts, and cultivating myself. Hence, I can take rebirth in the heavenly realm. This is such a joyous thing. It's good that I

had started performing meritorious deeds and cultivating myself earlier on!”

Example 2

Another woman was different. She was very bad-tempered at home and treated her parents unkindly. When her friends advised her: “Let’s go to the temple to worship the Buddha!” She would reply: “I would rather enjoy myself than to waste my time. Why should I follow you?” Hence, she led a life of extravagance and indulgence.

At the time of death, she saw the dark and fearsome hell realm. Fear arose in her only when the Devil of Death came to arrest her; she then thought: “If I had known this earlier, I would have heeded my good friends’ advice to practice generosity and perform meritorious deeds, to take refuge in the Triple Gem, and take the precepts. Why had I not heeded their advice? I had been creating all these karma, now it is too late to regret.”

This is an example of a possible bardo.

What are the four states?

- a. Death existence
- b. Intermediate existence (antarabhava)
- c. Birth existence
- d. Basic existence

When we are dying, the bardo will appear. As we let out our last breath, we are at the death existence; upon death, we enter the intermediate existence.

Taking rebirth from the intermediate existence is known as the birth existence. After the birth existence, it will enter the basic existence. One will remain in the basic existence for some time and this duration varies.

After some time in the basic existence when one's breath ends, it will be in the death existence.

In an instant of the death existence, it will enter the intermediate existence. After some time in the intermediate existence, it will take rebirth and goes into the birth existence. At once from the birth existence, it will enter the basic existence.

This is the process that we go through in the endless cycle of life and death. The Buddha wants us to know about living and dying and vice versa. If we know the circumstances of the intermediate existence, we will know what we should do while we are still alive. This is also the greatest benefit of being a Buddhist.

What are the four verses of impermanence?

The four verses of impermanence often mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures are:

*"There is none born that will not die;
Loftiness will definitely lead to degeneration;
All gatherings are bound to disperse;
All accumulations will eventually dissipate."*

The verses tell us that the sentient world we live in is impermanent, with everything in it arising and ceasing due to causes and conditions. Having read these verses, we will know what we need to do.

1. There is none born that will not die

Whether you are a hell being, an animal, a hungry ghost, an asura, a human being, or a heavenly being from the World of Sensuous Desires, the World of Form, or the Formless World; including Arahats, once one is born, one will definitely die eventually; none can escape this course. A wise person who reads this verse "There is none born that will not die", would generate abhorrence for birth and death.

If we can develop a tinge of such acute observation, our wisdom will rise, and we will become more attuned to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; this is wisdom.

2. Loftiness will definitely lead to degeneration

We can know this through our daily experiences: Loftiness will definitely lead to degeneration.

Example 1

When a person is still a child, he has no status. After his mother gives birth to a younger brother, he will be promoted to become the elder brother; when he grows up and gets married, he becomes a husband; when his wife gives birth to a child, he will become a father, and subsequently to a

grandfather. At his workplace, he may move up the rank and file from a clerk, to a supervisor, a manager, the general manager, and to the president.

As one rises up the rank and file step by step, would one think that one day, one will fall from a position of high status? Why is it so? Without the support of others, would one be able to remain in that position? Who can be there to support one forever? Nobody can possibly support one forever; one's meritorious rewards will also not be able to support one forever; nor is it possible for one's body to support one forever.

Example 2

Even the king, who is high and mighty, also has to give up his throne eventually. There was once a king who practiced generosity and other meritorious acts in his daily life. However, when he fell critically ill, the prince and the ministers dethroned him and enthroned the prince as king. At that time, though the king wanted to do meritorious deeds, he was helpless, and had only half an apple left in his hand.

“Previously everything in this kingdom belongs to me, but at my dying moment, I cannot even offer a dollar for giving.” At that, he lamented saying: “All that I have now is only this half-

eaten apple in my hand. My status has disappeared in a flash." This is "Loftiness will definitely lead to degeneration".

If one has better meritorious rewards, all the greatness will only disappear at the point of death; otherwise, it will disappear half way through one's life. Especially in a democratic era, it could disappear within four or eight years.

When we understand this, a wise person will make use of the little fame and wealth he has to practice generosity and perform meritorious deeds to benefit sentient beings. This is understanding the impermanence of causes and conditions, and seizing the opportunity to cultivate ourselves immediately. It is best to make use of our limited life span to quickly cultivate and practice to be liberated from birth and death.

3. All gatherings are bound to disperse

There is a Chinese saying: "To meet a bosom friend in a distant land." It is indeed joyous to be in the company of good friends and to be able to meet bosom friends in a foreign land. Family gatherings during festive seasons are also happy occasions. However, no matter how far you send a friend off, one still need to part with each other. Thus, "all gatherings are bound to disperse" is inevitable.

When we understand this, we will appreciate that if we do not want to experience the suffering of separation from our loved ones, we must clearly understand that when gathering, it is due to the rise and dissipation of the causes and conditions. Let it rise and dissipate, do not let greed rise, or be attached to the gathering. In this way, even when the gathering ends and it's time to part, there will not be pain of loss.

4. All accumulations will eventually dissipate

Let us look at wealth under normal circumstances. We work hard and diligently accumulate wealth a little at a time, from zero to great wealth. As we watch the balance in our bank account increases from \$10 to \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000, with the addition of each zero behind the figure till it becomes a seven-digit balance, or even a ten-digit balance, we feel great happiness.

But all this wealth does not remain forever, they will disappear eventually, just like what happened during the 921 Great Earthquake in Taiwan.

Some people worked hard all their lives to earn money to buy a piece of land at Mountain Jiufen'er (Taiwan).

Who would have thought that the mountain would collapse? That the house would be buried? That the lovely kids would die? A landed property is supposed to be an immovable property, but it became movable (and moved very tragically!). This is really "all accumulations will eventually be dissipated". Who would have thought that such a major earthquake would occur in Taiwan, with the loss of property and lives.

Hence:

*"There is none born that will not die;
Loftiness will definitely lead to degeneration;
All gatherings are bound to disperse;
All accumulations will eventually dissipate."*

We must quickly liberate ourselves from birth and death, and not remain in Samsara. This is what we have been emphasizing.

What can one expect when the bardo manifests at the point of death?

Before we are liberated from birth and death, we are still in Samsara during which when we are facing death, what is the bardo like, at point of death?

In the "Abhidharma-kosa", there were two verses that goes like this:

*"There is no atman but there are various aggregates,
conditioned by defilement and action,
reincarnating themselves by means of the series of
intermediate existences.*

Taking rebirth like the candle flame, they light up continuously.

*Similarly, the series of intermediate existences grow gradually,
and, by virtue of the defilements and actions,
it continues to another world.*

In this way, there is no beginning in the circle of existence."

A. There is no atman but there are various aggregates

In the sentient being's life stream, there is actually no atman⁹ or self. However, sentient beings stubbornly cling onto the atman, believing that there exists a "me", a "you", and there are "you" and "me".

With people who are agreeable with me, I would like to possess them and become obsessed with them; such is the situation between men and women. But with people who are disagreeable with me, I detest and dislike them. Those who can accommodate me are my friends, otherwise they are my enemies.

Hence, sentient beings live in a world of oppositions, differentiating between you and me. What is a world of oppositions?

Sentient beings in this world pursue three things: lust between men and women; fights and battles; and food.

⁹ "atman" refers to the essence of things that does not depend on others; it is an intrinsic nature. The non-existence of "atman" is selflessness.

1. Pursuing lust between men and women:

When a man and a woman find each other agreeable, familiarity will breed fondness and they will eventually develop feelings for each other: “You belong to me, while I am still mine. I want to possess and own you.” Such is the lust between men and women.

2. Sentient beings are busy fighting for the five desires and their sense of the self endlessly.

3. Sentient beings are busy eating:

Whether it’s in the city or in the rural area, someone is bound to be eating food every second in the 24 hours of a day.

When sentient beings keep themselves busy over these three matters, they are similar to animals:

(a) We can regularly see dogs engage in sexual activities openly in the middle of the road. The dogs have no sense of shame and decency.

(b) Once I was driving on the road, I witnessed a dog passing motion at a road junction, after which it ate up its own stool! It was such a pitiful sight.

(c) Dogs fight among themselves too, biting each other. If they feel dissatisfied, they would fight with each other.

Animals also commit these three acts.

Is it not pitiful, if human beings behave similarly like animals? What should we do then? We should renounce and seek liberation.

The first thing to do when renouncing is to stay away from the lust between men and women.

The second thing is to control the consumption of food: During the Buddha's era, one of the precepts was to consume only one meal a day. If one is not able to uphold this precept, one may have breakfast and lunch, but one must not take three meals a day. If one even takes supper, then there is no difference from other sentient beings.

The third thing is not to engage in fights with others.

Upon renouncing, one relinquishes all desires in the mundane world. There is no need to fight for anything. No need to fight for loved ones, wealth, fame, or status. There is no difference

between a coffee colored robe or a red colored robe, hence there is no need to fight over them.

As such, we can see that when there is fighting or lust, there will be suffering; without lust or fighting, there will be no suffering. It is best that we get rid of these three things: lust between men and women, fights and battles, and greed for food.

Sentient beings do not know where true happiness is. Even though there is really no atman, they fight and lust for things for the sake of the self, creating opposing situations between you and me, that is, you are either friend or foe. Under the influence of defilements creating karma, the origins of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness will rise.

B. Conditioned by defilement and action

Though there is actually no atman, the five aggregates - form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness - can still arise. The arising of these five aggregates is due to the karma created under the influence of defilements which are described earlier as the pursuits for lust between men and women, food, wealth, and fame.

Once karma has been created, the cycle of rebirth begins, hence we say "conditioned by defilement and action".

C. Reincarnating themselves by means of the series of intermediate existences

With the five aggregates conditioned by defilement and action, when a person dies, he will continue to take rebirth in the next life through the intermediate existence. Upon death, the bardo will manifest and look for the conditions and parents for the next life. If one is to be reborn in the human realm, he will go to where his next parents are, and take rebirth. As karma had been created, another life arises; what kind of situation is that?

D. Taking rebirth like the candle flame, they light up continuously. Similarly, the series of intermediate existences grow gradually

When one sees the bardo at the time of dying,
"Because of the lead of this karma, It's like there is a form,
The basic existence is before death, after conception."

When the bardo is about to enter the womb, its original body would already be damaged. When the bardo manifests, one can see the circumstances of its next life.

Let us take the human being as an example: When the parents are together, the bardo will combine with the sperm and egg, and the egg is fertilized. This is analogous to the situation when the candle of the previous life is totally spent, but with a remaining spark, which flew into the appropriated fertilized egg thereby igniting a new life, and a new candle is lit up.

This is how when the candle of this life is expended, the candle of the next life is lit up, and this is known as "Taking rebirth like the candle flame, They light up continuously." Just as when lighting fire, before the fire extinguishes, it is used to kindle another fire, in this way, a fire is projected into another, causing the series to go on continuously. But why is that so?

E. and, by virtue of the defilements and actions

"Defilements" refer to greed, anger, and ignorance; while "actions" refer to the karmic force that will continue endlessly depending on the good and evil karmic deeds created.

F. it continues to another world. In this way the circle of existence is without beginning

This will continue to lead to the cycles of birth and death, to the next life. When did all these actually start? There is no

way to describe when this started. "The circle of existence is without beginning" means that in the cycles of existence, there is no beginning. This is what it is like in the cycle of birth and death which is part of the nine characteristics of the bardo. Having understood this, we will know that we will be subjected to the past good and evil karma created at the point of dying.

Where will "Because of the lead of this karma" lead us to? To the heaven, human, asura, hungry ghost, animal, or hell realm. The direction of the six realms is like a rope leading us to that place. Just like a puppet show, we are being controlled by the thread. It will lead us to the heaven or the hell. Why is this so? It's the karmic deeds that will lead us there.

As such, "Because of the lead of this karma, It's like there is a form," is the stage when the bardo manifests in the form of the next life.

"The basic existence is before death, after conception" refers to taking on the form of the next life; at this time, the bardo will start to look for the next conditions for the next rebirth.

What are the characteristics of the bardo? (The Nine Characteristics of the bardo)

A. The Characteristic of Sight: Equivalent to the Divine Eye

The bardo can see the situation in the six realms but the beings in the six realms cannot see it; for example, when the bardo of the next life manifests, we cannot see that being even though it can see us. As such, that bardo has the vision similar to the Pure Heaven Vision, like the clear vision of the Divine Eye.

If a bardo is to take rebirth into our family, it will be able to see our living conditions. It can see us walking, running or doing anything clearly. Under such circumstances, if it is to take the human form, it will wait for the appropriate causes and conditions to take rebirth.

If the bardo is to become a heavenly being, it will be able to see the bardos of the lower realms: human, asura, hungry ghost, animal, and hell realms; it can even see the karmic bodies clearly. This is called having vision that is equivalent to the Divine Eye.

If the bardo is to take rebirth in the animal realm, it can only see the animal realm and the hell realm. If it is to take rebirth in the hungry ghost realm, it can only see the hungry ghost, the animal and hell realms, but not the human and heavenly realms that are above it. This is because it can only see beings that are in the realms below it, but not those in the realms above it.

As such, the bardo's vision is like the Divine Eye. Once we understand this, would you consider the bardo to be an interesting existence? To be in the intermediate existence would not be an enchanting experience. This is the visionary aspect of the bardo.

B. The Characteristic of Movement: Filled with the impetus of the supernatural power of karma

The speed of movement of the bardo is extremely fast, just like our thoughts. For example, if we think of America now, we will appear in America immediately. Similarly, the bardo can move to America from here based on a single thought. If favorable causes and conditions for rebirth were to be present in America, it can reach there immediately. This is the situation when in the intermediate existence.

Why is this so? This is due to the power of the karmic force. The karmic force will enable it to reach the place immediately. Besides, nothing can restrict or obstruct the bardo, nor hinder its speed of movement. It is not possible to block it with iron or steel gates, as it is not a materialistic substance; even the heavenly beings are unable to block it. The power of karmic forces is unbelievable and will enable the bardo to reach the place it desires immediately. Due to the power of the karmic forces, the bardo can move so swiftly.

C. The Characteristic of Having Complete Sense Bases: All sense bases are complete

The bardo also has eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, i.e. all its six sense bases are complete. In fact, it has already taken on the appearance of its next life, be it as a male or female, or as a being in heaven or in hell.

When the bardo manifests, it would have all the six sense bases, including the male or female organs.

At the point of death, if the pig form appears and you realize that you will become a pig, it would be too late then to regret your past acts. With the ending of the current life, you can only prepare to suffer in the next life. This is the characteristic of having complete sense bases of the bardo.

D. The Characteristic of Not Being Obstructed: Cannot be stopped

With this characteristic, nothing can obstruct the bardo, other than the Diamond Throne of Buddha and the mother's womb into which one has taken rebirth. Nothing can obstruct the bardo.

In the movies, we can see that lead can be used to block Superman's powers. But there is nothing that can obstruct the bardo which can reach wherever it wants to go to immediately. This is the characteristic of Not Being Obstructed of the bardo.

E. The Characteristic of No Turning Back: It cannot be changed (Once the bardo manifests, it is not possible to change its form).

If the bardo takes the form of a pig, you cannot change it into a chicken, nor can it be changed into a heavenly being.

If it is a pig, it is also unable to change into a human being. This is something to be noted of, i.e. it is not possible to change. The only solution is through cultivation after one has taken rebirth in another realm. As such, once the bardo manifests, it is unchangeable.

However, if one is not dead yet, it is still possible to change, i.e. though the bardo has manifested, as long as one has not

breathe one's last breath, it is still possible to change. Once we realize this, we know that in our cultivation or when helping others, it is important to do so quickly before the dying person breathes his last breath.

Otherwise, once the breath stops, it will be suspended in the intermediate existence, seeking the causes and conditions for rebirth. How will we be able to help him, once it has moved on to the next life? We should consider this. This is the characteristic of No Turning Back.

F. The Characteristic of Consumption: Inhaling odor

What does the bardo feed on? It does not consume any food, such as soups, dumplings, noodles, etc.; instead it inhales odors, and feeds on odors.

Normally, we can smell and consume our food, or taste its sweetness or bitterness. But the bardo is unable to do that. It can only inhale the odors of the food. What the bardo smells, whether good or bad, varies based on its karmic retribution; it would be terrible if it is a bardo in the hungry ghost realm.

If we offer it a very nice and fragrant food, and his karmic retribution is insufficient, it would not only be unable to see

or smell the fragrance of the food, it would only get the foul smell. This is how it is like for the hungry ghosts realm.

This same situation applies to the three lower realms. Only beings in the heavenly realm can smell the fragrance due to their good karmic retribution. This is the characteristic of Consumption, inhaling fragrance and foul odor.

G. The Characteristic of Duration: Impermanent

The bardo is unable to remain in the intermediate existence for long; it's probably for a split moment. For example, if we consider a very evil person and a very kind person, the very kind person will take rebirth in the heavenly realm immediately whilst the very evil person will descend to the hell realm promptly.

Others may remain in the intermediate existence for 7 days, 14 days, 21, 28, 35, 42 or 49 days.

Every bardo has the opportunity to take rebirth throughout this period. Technically speaking, it has up to 49 days to take rebirth but it may not necessarily have to wait for 49 days to do so. The exception would be for the Wheel Turning Monarch, who can delay his rebirth till the causes and

conditions ripen for him to appear; but this is an exceptional situation.

H. The Characteristic of Being Driven by Desire: (1) The mind troubled by defilements, goes, through its desire for sex, to the place of its realm of rebirth, (2) Desire for odor or desire for residence.

(1) The mind troubled by defilements, goes, through its desire for sex, to the place of its realm of rebirth.

What is "The mind troubled by defilements, goes, through its desire for sex, to the place of its realm of rebirth"? "The mind troubled by defilements" means a deluded mind. What constitutes a deluded mind?

In the human realm, we know there is the ethical relationship between parents and their children. However, in the intermediate existence, we will be able to see the deluded situation of life.

If the bardo is a human who has manifested into a female form, when it is about to take rebirth, it will witness its parents in intimacy. At this stage, the female form dislikes the mother but feels fondness towards the father, and it will

become angry with the mother but will like the father. Entering the womb under such a condition constitutes a deluded mind.

This is because at that moment, she is not with the parents physically but she has entered the womb thinking that she is with the father.

If it is a female form, upon entering the mother's womb, it will face outside with its back against the mother; if it is a male form, it will like the mother and dislike the father. Hence, the male form inside the womb will face the mother. This is the deranged mind.

When the bardo encounters the situation of intimacy, it will be attracted to it, thinking that it is a participant in the intimacy. This is known as "The mind troubled by defilements, goes, through its desire for sex, to the place of its realm of rebirth". It rushes towards the scene of the five desires. This is with regards to viviparous beings.

(2) Desire for odor or desire for residence.

Birth by moisture or through transformation: beings in the heavenly realm and the hell realm are born through

transformation; they were born due to their respective causes and conditions. Those born in the heavenly realm are attracted by the heavenly odors as all heavenly beings' odors are very strong and fragrant. The odors of hell beings are very foul; though they are also sense objects of odors, they are really very foul, just like the hungry ghosts.

Houseflies, mosquito larvae, mosquitoes are bred in moisture when the various external causes and conditions and water are present. Mosquito larvae are bred in the water, that is, birth by moisture.

All beings born by moisture or through transformation, desire odor. "Desire for odor or desire for residence", these beings are born through their defilements, and hence this is the characteristic of Being Driven by Desire. When the mind is muddled with defilements, it will continue to take rebirth in cyclic existence.

I. The Characteristic of Behavior: Heavenly beings rise, humans, animals, and hungry ghosts move horizontally, while hell beings dive downwards

Bardos behave differently in the way they move: those taking rebirth in the heavenly realm, will move with its head pointing

upwards, while those taking rebirth in the human realm, move horizontally. Similarly, those taking rebirth in the animal and hungry ghost realms move horizontally. Only those heading towards the hell realm will dive headlong downwards. This is what is meant by "Heavenly beings rise, humans, animals, and hungry ghosts move horizontally, while hell beings dive downwards."

What form should we assume, when the bardo manifests?

Now we know the nine characteristics of the bardo:

1. The Characteristic of Sight
2. The Characteristic of Movement
3. The Characteristic of Having Complete Sense Bases
4. The Characteristic of Not Being Obstructed
5. The Characteristic of No Turning Back
6. The Characteristic of Consumption
7. The Characteristic of Duration
8. The Characteristic of Being Driven by Desire
9. The Characteristic of Behavior

~ *UNEQUIVOCAL UNDERSTANDING ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH (1)* ~

With this understanding, we realize that there is only misery once the bardo manifests. Why?

Once we see the form that we will take in the next life, we know that we will be going through the cycle of existence again. Isn't it so?

Hence, if the bardo were to manifest at the point of death, it should take the form of a human or a heavenly being, and not the form of a hell being, an animal, or a hungry ghost. Wouldn't it be tragic if such forms as pigs, goats, cows, horses, ants, cockroaches, etc. were to manifest?

Upon understanding the nine characteristics of the bardo, we know that we must seize the moment to start cultivating and practicing immediately.

How should we practice? Take refuge in the Triple Gem, listen to and learn the Dharma, and develop Right Understanding and Right Views. With Right Understanding and Right Views, we will be able to conduct our bodily, verbal, and mental actions correctly and in accordance with the Dharma.

We must remember to seize the present moment to cultivate till the moment of death, and not wait or procrastinate.

Example:

In the Agama Sutra, there was a rich man in the Sakya clan, named Maha Nan. Once he went to the monastery to ask the Buddha: “Although I believe in the Triple Gem, but in this city, where there are many elephants, cows, and horses moving about, if I were to be killed by them one day, and at the moment of death, I lose my mindfulness and the bardo manifests, to which realm would I go? Wouldn’t it be terrible if I were to descend into the three lower realms?”

The Buddha told Maha Nan: “Rest assured that as you have been practicing regularly, when you die, you would not end up in the bad existences. For example, a tree that grew up gradually from a seed; if the tree is leaning towards the eastern side as it grew, which direction would it fall if it were to be chopped off suddenly?

It will surely fall towards the east. It will not fall towards the west because it has been leaning towards the east. Hence, you do not have to worry about this at all. What you should be worrying about is whether this tree of yours is growing haphazardly, sometimes in this direction, sometimes in the opposite direction, so that it will fall in whichever direction it has been chopped off, leaving one clueless as to which direction it will actually fall. This is truly dangerous.

You have always been in close proximity with the Triple Gem, you are filial to your parents, you always give generously, and perform meritorious deeds. You have been upholding the precepts, and have faith in the Triple Gem. You do not have to worry about going to the three lower realms.”

Once Maha Nan heard this, he became more confident because he had been cultivating and practicing as the Buddha said.

We always say "better be safe than sorry". What if the unexpected happens? This then depends on whether we have been cultivating and practicing habitually. If we have been doing so, and if we were to meet an untimely death, under normal circumstances, one that meets an unexpected death through accident would face the danger of ending up in the three lower realms. But if our practice is second nature to us, we will not end up in the three lower realms. That is why the Buddha explained to us clearly the situation with the bardo.

How can we have an unequivocal understanding about life and death?

In our discussion about life and death, we learnt that we must be careful and be aware of the different situations that may arise when the bardo manifests at the moment of death. We

must constantly remind ourselves that when such a moment arise, we need to let go of everything, be prepared to relinquish everything, and not be attached and cling on to anything at all. As we listen to and learn the Dharma regularly, we will know what exactly we should seize on to. Only then, will we be able to let go of everything.

We must constantly cultivate and practice diligently to end evil deeds and cultivate meritorious deeds. We must always be mindful of the Triple Gem. We must always remember the meritorious deeds that we have performed, and if we aspire to go to the Western Pure Land, we must be able to seize this aspiration to go to the Western Pure Land at all times.

At the moment of death, we must be able to relinquish and let go of everything, including our family and friends, wealth and fame, and single-mindedly keep remembrance on the Triple Gem, our aspiration to go to the Western Pure Land, and all the meritorious deeds we have cultivated in this life. We must know that this body is not important anymore, that it will finally be destroyed and will deteriorate thereafter.

On the other hand, what should we do at another person's deathbed? This is very important, be we the person's parent, child, spouse, and friend, we need to know how to talk to them.

We need to tell them that: “This body will deteriorate eventually, so do not cling on to this body. Instead you should let this body go as you cannot bring it along with you. You must also relinquish all your worries and hindrances as you have cultivated and practiced well in this life.”

Give him more encouragement to help him generate wholesome thoughts. With these wholesome thoughts at the point of death, he will be able to take rebirth in the good existences. If a Venerable is present, and the dying person has taken refuge before, we can remind him again about this; if he has not taken refuge before, quickly help him take refuge, let him develop faith in and remember the Triple Gem, so that he will generate wholesome thoughts; after which introduce him to the Western Pure Land.

Let him know that after taking refuge in the Triple Gem, he has the excellent opportunity to take rebirth in the Western Pure Land, and arouse in him the faith in Amitabha Buddha. Once the wholesome thoughts are generated in him, he will take rebirth in the good existences such as the heavenly realm or even the Western Pure Land. When the bardo takes on a wholesome form at the point of death, it will not descend to the lower realms. Once we are able to grasp this cause and condition, we will know how to handle the situation for ourselves, our parents, even for other people.

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 Arahatsip 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 Arahatsip.

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.

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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.

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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.

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