

Everlasting Happiness,
as Buddha Attains 5

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.

The theme of this book is on Dana. A simple act of giving can lead us towards attaining Buddhahood. Thus, the first step to end suffering and attain everlasting happiness is to practice offering. Through the seven chapters of this book, we learn about the significance and splendid merits of giving. This is the fifth 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 common Buddhist terms (first appearance in italics in the text) and concepts.

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

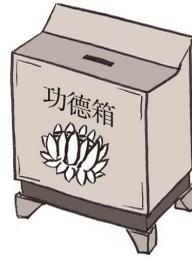
@@@ This work is an effort to uphold and support Venerable Da Shi's great vow of spreading the Dharma in gratitude of the Buddha's compassion. Please help to spread the wisdom and cheers of the Dharma by passing this book on to someone else should you feel that you do not need it anymore. As the Buddha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

Dana – The Practice of Giving (2)

Various forms of giving

Once, a person entered the main shrine hall and paid obeisance to the Buddha. He donated the last bit of his money into a donation box and felt very happy over the next few days.



Even after a decade, whenever he recalled this incident, he was still filled with joy. This shows that giving is such a delightful accomplishment.

On the other hand, one who is reluctant to give will always worry about belongings being stolen.

Therefore, we learn not to be a foolish miser and do the wise thing, which is giving.

The types of items offered, could be classified into the following categories:

- (1) Offering in terms of material wealth – giving money.**
- (2) Sharing Right Dharma expounded by the Buddha or sharing the Right teachings of mundane world.**

The motivation in giving could be further categorized into:

- (1) Respectful giving.**
- (2) Compassionate giving.**

Giving with respect and with compassion can be seen from our body gestures, communications with the recipients, and the bespoken mindset.

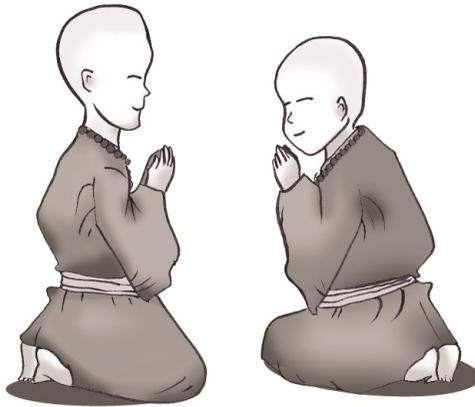
Giving with respect

When a Buddhist meets another person, he greets the person with "*Amitabha Buddha*". This is a form of giving.

- (a) Buddhists greet everyone with warmth and sincerity (through friendly eye contact or facial expressions) while saying "*Namo Amitabha Buddha*". This is a form of honoring and respecting people.

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- (b) The person being greeted by our friendly facial expression would reciprocate and share generously in return. Thus, showing respectful gesture, amiable facial expression, and kind words bring forth good merits.



- (c) Greeting others with "Amitabha Buddha" far exceeds greeting them with other kind words. Why is this so? Greeting others with "Amitabha Buddha" reminds them that there is a Buddha named "Amitabha Buddha" in the *Western Pure World*.

Amitabha Buddha's Western Pure World is filled with supreme bliss. There is no pain or suffering of any kind. This Western Pure World is adorned with glittering gold

and filled with compassionate beings. We are able to cultivate our merits, virtue, and develop our wisdom in Amitabha Buddha's Western Pure World. We also practice for liberation, to be blissful and at ease.

- (d) We sincerely hope that the other person is as virtuous, blessed with countless merits, limitless longevity, and great wisdom as Amitabha Buddha. We also hope that the people he associates with are good and that his world is replete with splendidence and joy. This is our blessing for him.

In this regard, a simple phrase "Amitabha Buddha" is so splendid. The person being greeted would certainly feel joyful when he is able to relate with our kind thoughts.

Example 1

There was a defense officer who treated others well. When receiving deans or other senior officers, he would warmly welcome them by opening their car doors or room doors. Each time his senior officers returned from their holidays, they would tell him to take a break as he was never in contention with others for rest days.

Through this, it shows that a simple act of offering services or giving to others with respect will bring about many good

merits in one's present life, let alone paying respects to the Triple Gem.

Paying obeisance to the Triple Gem can even avert us from disasters.

Example 2

Once, five hundred merchants went out to the ocean in search for treasures. They employed an Upasaka, a layman who had received the *five precepts*, as their guide.

As they were sailing in the ocean, the captain of the ship wondered, "Why are there three suns today?"

The guide replied, "Sir, there is only one sun. The other two must be the eyes of a very big fish known as Makara. This fish is known to have eaten ships sailing in the ocean. Our ship is heading towards a dead end, there is no way out now!"

Just then, the Upasaka thought, "Our only refuge now is the World Honored Tathagatha." Thus, he informed the others to chant "Namo Buddha".

When the fish heard the chants "Namo Buddha", it came to its senses and remembered that it was a Bhikshu who had

transgressed the precepts in its previous life. This led it to take rebirth as a big fish. If it continued to take the lives of sentient beings in its present life, it would certainly take rebirth in the hell realm. So hurriedly, it closed its mouth and the ship sailed away safely.

This fish closed its gigantic mouth tightly and voluntarily starved itself to death. Upon its death, it relinquished its fish form and took rebirth in the heavenly realm.

Unfortunate deaths were avoided because everyone on the ship respected the Buddha and chanted the Buddha's name. Likewise, the fish respected the Buddha and took rebirth in the heavenly realm upon its death. This is an example of giving with respect.

Example 3

One day, a bird perching on a tree branch was listening attentively to an exposition of the Dharma by a Venerable when it was shot dead by a hunter.

This bird took rebirth in the heavenly realm upon its death. Once it had taken rebirth in the heavenly realm, it sought out where it had come from and why it had taken rebirth in the heavenly realm. The heavenly being then realized that it was a

bird in the previous life and was killed by a hunter while listening to the Dharma in the human realm.

So the heavenly being came down to pay respects to the Venerable. The Venerable expounded the Dharma to him and he immediately attained *Srotapanna*.

As the bird was listening to the Dharma attentively and was respectful of the monastic and the Dharma, it took rebirth in the heavenly realm upon its death.

Thus, we see that giving results in fruits of wealth, but being respectful generates the result of taking rebirth in the heavenly realm.

Giving with compassion – Being compassionate to all sentient beings

Example 1

The Buddha was a sentient being in the hell realm in one of his past lives. There and then, he had to pull a cart with another hell being. The latter was scrawny and feeble and could not pull the cart. Hence, he had to suffer whipping from hell wardens.

The *Bodhisattva* who was stronger had sympathy for the other sentient being. He requested the hell warden not to whip the weaker sentient being and said he would help the latter to pull the cart. Enraged with this request, the hell warden picked up a fork and speared it through the *Bodhisattva's* neck. The *Bodhisattva* died but took rebirth in the *Tusita Heaven* due to his wholesome thoughts.

Merely being compassionate towards the weaker sentient being could lead the *Bodhisattva* to take rebirth in the heavenly realm. Indeed, there are many forms of giving.

Showing our concern to or comforting those who are suffering is a form of giving. Presenting a friendly face or kind behavior is also another form of giving. Hence, it is not difficult to give.

Example 2

People deviate from the right or Noble Path if they do not know the Dharma. For instance, we may notice that no one is willing to assist an injured person lying on the side of the road. Instead of giving help by saving the person's life, they stand around as onlookers. The most appropriate thing would be to call for an ambulance to save the injured person as he would bleed to death with time running out.

It is very pitiful if we are unable to offer a helping hand or display compassion. Be it giving with compassion or with respect, we should do our best.

The merits of sharing the Dharma

It has been mentioned that the types of items offered could be categorized as giving of material and monetary donations, and sharing of the Dharma.

In the Dasabhumika-Vibhasa-Sastra, it is said that monastics focus on sharing the Dharma while the laity focus on giving material or monetary donations.

This is because if a monastic focuses on giving material or monetary donations, he would inevitably have to seek for such means, the doing of which makes a monastic no different than a layperson.

In the attempts to earn money for their livelihoods, the laity may at times have to drink with or entertain others. Some may even have to lie.

A monastic does not take any form of intoxicants or tell lies for the sake of getting money for donations and sustenance.

Therefore, a monastic does Dharma offering through expounding the Dharma, leaving the laity to do material and monetary offerings.

Sharing of the Dharma brings about four kinds of merits:

- (1) Merits of True Speech** – We speak in accordance with what Buddha taught when we share the Dharma. We speak the authentic truth and do not lie. This is the meaning of True Speech.
- (2) Merits of selflessness** – We cultivate selflessness and benefit all sentient beings to be liberated through sharing the Dharma.
- (3) Merits of ceasing afflictions** – We achieve inner calmness when we eliminate all kinds of afflictions such as greed, anger, and ignorance.

A person who expounds the Dharma with a pure mind will gradually eliminate afflictions and attain inner peace. This is the excellent merit of cessation of afflictions for those who share the Dharma.

Otherwise, our mind will be tainted if our purpose of expounding the Dharma is to gain respect and means of sustenance from others.

(4) Merits of wisdom – We develop an acute sense of wisdom because we need to contemplate the Dharma deeply when expounding the Dharma. When an issue arises, we are able to resolve the issue from the perspective of the Dharma instead of employing the mindset of the mundane world.

Moreover, we are able to see the needs and learning capabilities of different sentient beings and render the Dharma suitable to their inclinations so as to help them to end suffering and attain everlasting happiness.

Therefore, sharing of the Dharma brings about the four kinds of merits mentioned – merits of true speech, selflessness, cessation of afflictions, and wisdom.

When the cause and conditions arise, a layperson may also share the Dharma with others. Generally, a layperson enjoys greater opportunities in giving material or monetary donations than in sharing Dharma. However, this does not mean that a layperson should limit himself to giving material or monetary donations.

The splendid returns of sharing the Dharma

Before we can share the Dharma, we must cultivate and practice as taught by the Buddha.

Example 1

One day, King Asoka invited a Venerable to his palace to preach the Dharma. King Asoka noticed that the Venerable's body and breath exuded a very distinctive fragrance, and so he suspected that the Venerable had transgressed the precepts by wearing perfume or flower wreaths on his body.

King Asoka then requested the Venerable to rinse his mouth, but still the fragrance remained.

In response, the Venerable told King Asoka, "Great King! The fragrance from my body is a result of my past good deeds. Moreover, this fragrance is only an initial return. The end results will be even more splendid once the merits have ripened."

The king asked, "How did you acquire such fragrance?"

The Venerable replied, "This is because I had already renounced the world and became a Venerable in the time of

Kasyapa Buddha. Since then and throughout many lives, I had been expounding the Dharma to benefit sentient beings in the human and heavenly realms. I have attained the merits of true speech, selflessness, cessation of afflictions, and wisdom. This is why I exude the distinctive fragrance of a lotus flower. When the merits are accomplished, ten qualities will be fulfilled."

- (1) **Good repute** – We will be popular because when we praise the merits of the Buddha, we inspire all sentient beings to feel joy towards the Buddha. Just as everyone knows the Buddha and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, so they also know us as avid Buddhists.
- (2) **Pleasant and dignified appearance** – We will be born with pleasant appearance in the future through praising the merits of the Buddha. This is because we help sentient beings to develop a happy mind that finds joy in seeing the Buddha.
- (3) **Joy and happiness** – We are always joyous and happy. We share the Dharma of karmic cause and effect to others in the hope that they may know that good begets good while evil begets evil. When others cultivate goodness and cease all unwholesome doings, they will experience great joy and likewise, we will feel happy for them.

- (4) We are well-respected by others** – As we praise the merits of the Buddha, we help all sentient beings to generate faith in and respect for the Buddha. Just as they respect the Buddha, they also respect those who praise the Buddha. We will gain respect in this life and future lives. It is very important that we help sentient beings to develop unshakable confidence in the Triple Gem through expounding the Dharma.
- (5) Radiance** – We will gain sovereignty that shines as bright as sunrays. This is because expounding the Dharma enables all beings to attain wisdom, see the light, seek out an aim in their lives, and tread the right path towards liberation. Hence, a Venerable with such characteristic has many followers.
- (6) Well-liked by others** – We will be well-liked and treasured by others. When we praise the merits of the Buddha, we assist all sentient beings in generating a happy mind that aspires towards attaining Buddhahood.
- (7) Great eloquence** – We develop eloquence in speech when we teach the Dharma. We know how to praise the Buddha skillfully so as to help sentient beings understand the merits of the Buddha.

In the Mahayana tradition, every chapter of the sutras such as the Flower Adornment Sutra or the Jewel Repentance Sutra of Emperor Liang often begins with hymns of praise to the Buddha:

"None from the heavens, earth, or the worlds of the ten directions is comparable to The Great Buddha."

*"The Great Buddha's features radiate like thousands of suns;
He is as pure and supreme as the full bright moon;
The Noble One lights up the ten directions
with complete Loving-Kindness, Compassion,
Altruistic Joy and Equanimity for all!"*

Thus, the more we praise Buddha as we understand Buddha's merits, the more eloquent we become.

- (8) Great and Pure wisdom** – We achieve deep wisdom. When we praise the excellent teachings of the Buddha, we become wiser and avoid transgressions or deviations from the Noble Path.
- (9) Eradication of all afflictions and taints** – As we praise the Buddha and his merits, we are able to rid our mind of afflictions. In addition, we help others to reduce their afflictions.

(10) Attain *Nirvana* – With the complete extinguishment of wrong views and mental *defilements*, we cease all afflictions in this life, and is liberated from *Samsara* and attain Nirvana. Such is the present and future karmic returns for expounding the Dharma.

In summary, sharing the Dharma with others brings us the following ten merits – good repute; pleasant and dignified appearance; joy and happiness; respect from others; radiance; well-liked by others; great eloquence; great and pure wisdom; eradication of all afflictions and taints; and attain Nirvana.

Even laypeople may share the Dharma with others. But it must not be done with the intent of attaining fame or receiving offering. If it is done with greed for fame and offering, the sharing of Dharma is tainted by the impure mind. We should take serious view of this.

Example

Once, a Venerable was speaking with an old lady, about seventy years in age. The elderly appeared very jovial and the Venerable asked her, "Have you taken refuge with the Triple Gem yet?"

The old lady replied, "No."

The Venerable asked, "Would you like to take refuge in Amitabha Buddha?"

The old lady remained silent.

The Venerable contemplated on her reaction, "Most elders are usually afraid of death. When they hear people speak of Amitabha Buddha, they will be reminded of funerals where 'Amitabha Buddha' recitations are chanted for the deceased. The old lady fears death and is afraid to take refuge in Amitabha Buddha. She may be more inclined to take refuge in Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva who is known to save and help people in suffering."

So the Venerable asked the old lady again, "Would you like to take refuge in Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva?"

The old lady agreed immediately and took refuge.

Having taken refuge, she asked the Venerable, "Venerable! Who is greater? The Buddha or Bodhisattvas?"

"The Buddha is greater. One must first become a Bodhisattva before attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, the Buddha is greater", the Venerable explained.

Hearing this, the old lady responded, "If so, I would like to chant the name of Amitabha Buddha."

The Venerable then said to her, "Every being is bound to die. It would be great if we go to the Western Pure World upon our death. Only then, we are in the company of the Buddha, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Mahasthama-prapta Bodhisattva, and other great Bodhisattvas. Isn't that wonderful? Since you have taken refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, you must bear in mind that you are a disciple of the Triple Gem."

The old lady was delighted at hearing this.

When attempting to expound the Dharma, we need to observe the cause and conditions carefully, as some people are afraid of death and tend to associate death with Amitabha Buddha. The mere mention of Amitabha Buddha's name generates deep fear in them. Thus, we should try to empathize with them and help them to establish faith in the Triple Gem.

This can be gained through experience. By teaching the Dharma frequently, we would be more adept in handling such situations.

Merits accruing from giving material and monetary offerings

Laity gives primarily through monetary donations. The merits that accrue are:

- (1) Wealth or future rebirth in the human or heavenly realm.**
- (2) Ease in upholding the precepts** – We are able to uphold the precepts with greater ease when we give.

Recall an earlier example where a person donated the money at the shrine hall, and remained happy for many days. He was able to maintain his well-being and did not create any unwholesome *karma* by his speech. He also did not kill or steal from others. He had no reason to steal as he was able to give.

Moreover, this joyous feeling helped him to abstain from committing sexual misconduct and unwholesome karma through body, speech, and impure thoughts.

Here, we see how giving uplifts our mind with joy and peace. It is through giving that makes it easier for a donor to uphold the precepts.

(3) Our merits cannot be taken away – Nobody can take away the merits that we generate through giving.

Example 1

When the golden-hued *Bhikshuni* (金色女比丘尼) attained *Arahatship*, she said that she was once a very ugly servant without any merits in her past life. Her mistress wanted to offer sustenance to a pleasant looking monastic and told her to search for one. However, she was unable to find any Bhikshu who fit her mistress' demands. Instead, she found a Bhikshu who was not very pleasant looking and invited him to accept her mistress' offering.

When the mistress saw the Bhikshu, she was unwilling to give offering and sustenance. So the servant asked the mistress, "Since you do not wish to offer sustenance, may I make the offering instead? Could you please give me the wages and food that I am entitled to for today's work?"



The mistress agreed to her request.

The servant then offered all her food to the Bhikshu. No one knew that the Bhikshu was actually a Pratyeka Buddha and after the Pratyeka Buddha had received the offering, he displayed *eighteen kinds of transformations* in the sky.

Everyone in the city witnessed the *supernatural powers* of the Pratyeka Buddha and all the men thought, "It must be my wife who offered sustenance to this holy man!" So they rushed home to find out if this was true.

Seeing the merits which could have been hers now belonged to her servant, the mistress said, "I will give you two days' wages in exchange for the merits that you made by offering sustenance to the Pratyeka Buddha."

But which foolish person would do the mistress' bidding?

Hence, the mistress made another offer, "I will give you ten days' wages."

"No", the servant rejected.

The mistress tried to entice her servant, "I will give you five hundred pieces of gold."

Again, the servant rejected.

The mistress was even prepared to offer her status as mistress of the household in exchange for the merits. However, the servant was adamant in her stance. When the mistress found that she would never be able to entice the servant in any way, she resorted to the rod, threatening to beat the servant if she did not take her instructions. But the servant would rather be hit to death than to transfer the merits to her mistress.

While the mistress was beating the maid, the master returned home and wondered why his usually polite wife had taken to the rods. Upon questioning, he realized that his wife had missed the opportunity to offer sustenance to the Pratyeka Buddha as a result of her discrimination against the Bhikshu for his unpleasant appearance. He then knew that his wife was foolish and unblessed as compared to his ugly servant. Thus, the master instantly decided to swap the status of his wife and servant.

Wise Buddhist practitioners should know that the merits from giving cannot be taken away by anybody. We should learn from the servant in the story and work hard on giving, grasping every opportunity to give.

Example 2

The dedications towards liberation or attaining Buddhahood, which we make from the merits generated from giving, will be fulfilled.

The Agama Sutra tells the story of Visala, an elder in the time of the Buddha. However, Elder Visala was a believer of heretical teachings and did not get to meet the Buddha. One day, the compassionate Buddha saw that the cause and conditions for Elder Visala's liberation had ripened. Thus, Buddha told one of his Arahat disciples, "My back is aching. I need hot water for bathing."

The Arahat disciple thought, "The body of the World Honored One is as strong as diamond. Why is it hurting? There must be certain cause and conditions for his request of hot water." So the Arahat went into deep meditation and realized that the Buddha wanted to guide and liberate Elder Visala.

The Arahat knew that Elder Visala believed in the big five deities of the heretics. At the moment when the Arahat was contemplating about the big five deities, one of them appeared and transformed himself into the Arahat's attendant. Together, they went to meet the elder.

When the Arahāt and the attendant met the elder, the Arahāt said to the elder, "The World Honored One's back is hurting and he needs hot water for bathing. Would the elder please offer some water?" But the elder was miserly and refused to give.

The attendant also asked the elder to offer some water but the latter did not budge. So the attendant transformed himself into his original form of a deity and repeated the request to the elder. The elder was surprised to know that even the big five deities, to whom he paid respect, were so respectful of the Arahāt and the Buddha. Obliging happily, the elder offered some hot water for the Buddha.

The Buddha said to his audience, "As Elder Visala offered some hot water, he would take rebirth in the *Heavens of the Four Deva Kings*, and from there to the *Trayastrimsat Heaven*, *Yama Heaven*, *Tusita Heaven*, *Nirmanarati Heaven*, and finally to the *Paranirmita Vasavartin Heaven*.

"He will never fall into the three lower realms and will take rebirth in the heavenly and human realms for sixty *kalpas*. Finally, he will eradicate all afflictions and attain liberation. Why is this so? The elder knew that an Arahāt was present in this world when he gave offering. Hence, he generated an aspiration to be liberated in the future, just like the Arahāt."

The mere act of offering hot water was enough to bring the elder such huge merits because he had generated an aspiration to be liberated. That is why he was able to receive such great benefits.

Therefore, whenever we give or perform wholesome deeds, we should generate aspirations for and dedicate merits to attaining *Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi*. In so doing, we would be able to attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, the unsurpassed enlightenment.

Example 3

In one of the Buddha's past lives, he was a golden-hued wild beast. The wild beast was extremely majestic and its body was golden-hued. Its feathers were golden and its tail would glow.

At that time, the king had a dream and saw this strange golden-hued wild beast. He told hunters after waking from his dream, "If any of you could find the golden-hued wild beast, you would be rewarded with a lot of money. Otherwise, all of you shall die."

The hunters were very anxious as they did not know where to look for the creature.

After discussing among themselves, they decided to appoint a person to be responsible for the task and told him never to return if he could not track down the creature.

The person felt helpless when he reached the mountains and sat down and cried. Just then, the golden-hued wild beast appeared. The compassionate golden-hued wild beast saw the crying man and asked, "What worries do you have? How may I help you?"

The man told the golden-hued wild beast the cause of his predicament. Moved by deep compassion, the golden-hued wild beast offered its skin to the man. Its exposed flesh was feasted by eighty-four thousand types of worms.

The golden-hued wild beast told the man, "I have offered you my skin in the hope that you would be able to amass great wealth in this life. In the future, I would like to offer you Dharma so that you would be able to be liberated and attain ultimate peace and joy.

"As for the sentient beings that feasted on my blood and flesh, may they be nourished by the Dharma and enjoy the essence of the Dharma in their future lives.

"As for myself, I hope to attain the ultimate Bodhi and final liberation."

Even as a wild beast while practicing the Bodhisattva path in his past lives, Sakyamuni Buddha would practice giving and generate the aspiration to attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi.

Thus, we can see how the merits from giving bring about ease in upholding precepts, conduce to rebirths in the heavenly realm, and lead to the attainment of Nirvana and Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Nobody can take away these merits from us.

Therefore, we must learn to give happily and diligently. Let us all come together to give our wealth and share the Dharma with others with utmost respect and compassion.

~ DANA – THE PRACTICE OF GIVING (2) ~



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 World, 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 Suddhavaśa 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.

~ GLOSSARY ~

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 two hundred and fifty Precepts.

Bhikshuni: A fully ordained female member of the Buddhist Sangha or nun observing five hundred 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.

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

Cycle of 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 magnified metamorphosis; (13) subjecting sentient beings to one's will; (14) controlling the supernatural powers of those

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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 Altruistic 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.

Four pairs and eight categories of Sravaka practitioners: This refers to Sravaka practitioners who practice the Srotapanna path and those who have attained Srotapannaship; the ones who practice the Sakradagamin path and those who have attained Sakradagaminship; the ones who practice the Anagamin path and those who have attained Anagaminship; the ones who practice the Arahat path and those who have attained Arahatship.

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 cause 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 known as Law of Dependent Origination. It is the principle that phenomena do not come into existence on their own but as a result of cause 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),
- The Perfection of Wisdom (Prajna Paramita).

Six realms: 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.

Sramanera: 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 cliraudience; (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.

- Tathagata - Thus-Come One or Thus-Gone One,
- Arhat - Worthy of Offerings,
- Samyak-Sambuddha - Equally, Perfectly Enlightened One,
- Vidyacarana-Sampanna - Knowledge and Conduct Perfected,
- Sugata - Well-Arrived One or Well-Gone One. Tathagata is completely in control of his own births and deaths,
- Lokavid - Understanding the World,
- Anuttara - Unsurpassed One,
- Purusa-Damyasathi - Tamer of Men,
- Sasta Deva-Manusyanam - Teacher to Gods, Humans, and heavenly beings,
- Buddha-Bhagavan - 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.

Tripitaka: The three main collections of the Buddhist canon – sutra-pitaka (sermons collection), vinaya-pitaka (rules collection), and abhidharma-pitaka (philosophical treatises collection). Also known as the Three Baskets.

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 cause 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.

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

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

Wheel Turning Monarch: Also known 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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