

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](http://www.mypty.sg). Other topics in the series will be published progressively in subsequent books.

The Dharma introduced in this series is in the Chinese Mahayana tradition, the text of which are translated from Sanskrit scriptures. Hence, Sanskrit has been used for the names and specific Buddhist terminologies in the text. Readers can find help from the footnote on the relevant page and the Glossary at the end of the book for explanation of 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 (7)**

### **Giving is the happiest thing to do**

While teaching the Dharma in Southern Taiwan, I once met a layperson who used to be a gangster. At the end of my Dharma teaching, the layperson accompanied me for a stroll along the harbor dyke.

He commented, "Strolling here reminds me of the old days when I spent my time fighting and harming others."

"What is the cause and condition for your change?" I asked.

The layperson replied, "There was a time when I went fishing with a friend. I did not know how to fish and was merely accompanying him. When my friend caught a fish, I saw the fish struggling so badly that an indescribable feeling arose in my mind. My friend, however, was very happy that he caught the fish and put it into the basket.

"After two hours, my friend decided to leave and he threw the fish back into the water. Just then, I noticed something very peculiar. The fish turned back and looked at us before swimming away happily.

"I saw how happy the fish was as it gained a new life. This made me reflect on the fighting and hurting that I had inflicted on others in the past. When they were losing their lives and struggling painfully, was it not similar to the fish being hooked?

"It dawned on me that I could not go on harming others. So I decided to repent and turn over a new leaf. I want to make others happy, just like the fish which got a chance to live.

"Thereafter, I took refuge in the Triple Gem, started learning the Dharma, and accepted the precepts. Now, I am very peaceful and calm."

This story teaches us that giving brings about great joy to the donor.

## **The cause and conditions for multiplying merits**

How might we multiply the merits and virtues of giving using the three cause and conditions that complete a giving?

### **(1) Timely offering**

Giving sincerely at the opportune moment according to right cause and conditions brings about great merits. Giving when the recipient is in need also brings about huge merits.

#### Example

While I was journeying the whole of Taiwan on foot, there was once when it was almost midday and I was feeling tired and hungry after twenty kilometers of walking. A passerby saw me and offered a two-liter bottle of water.

The bag I was carrying was already heavy even without the bottle of water. But to avoid disappointing the donor, I accepted the offering. As a result, I kept drinking along the way so as to reduce the load.

From this story, we learn that we should give at the most opportune moment, taking into consideration the circumstances.

## **(2) Giving in accordance with the needs of the locale**

For instance, in the aftermath of natural disasters, we should offer items that the victims of the affected areas need, instead of giving unsuitable items to them.

## **(3) Giving to travelers**

Travelers may need a place to rest, or some food and water. We should offer these necessities according to their needs.

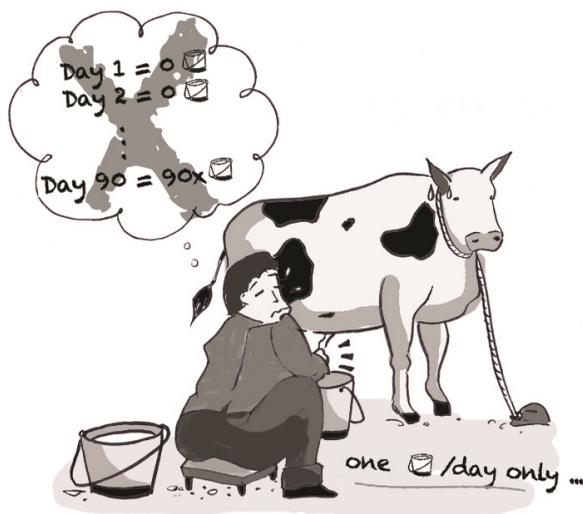
## **(4) Giving continuously**

We should practice offering on a continual basis instead of giving sporadically. There is a vast difference in this.

### Example 1

There was a person who milked cows for a living. One day, he decided to offer sustenance to a monastery. When he learnt that the monastery would hold a three-month Summer Retreat, he thought, "Instead of milking the cow daily and only offering a little milk every day, I should stop daily milking now and milk only on the last day of the retreat. This way, I would be able to collect ninety days' worth of milk at one go and offer to the monastics."

He then waited for the ninetieth day to arrive. However, when he wanted to gather all the milk, he could only collect a day's worth of milk as a cow can only produce a limited quantity of milk a day. Isn't this foolish person similar to us?



We often think, "Let me accumulate a big sum of money before I donate them all."

It does not cross our mind to practice giving a little every day. In fact, the amount accumulated from giving five or ten dollars daily can be quite substantial. Moreover, when we give on a regular basis, the charitable mind is sustained.

If we were to wait till the end of a month or a year before we give, our will to give would weaken over time. In the end, we find it hard to offer a big sum of money in a single donation and end up only giving a little.

Therefore, we should give on a continual basis and not allow the charitable mind to wither and die out.

### Example 2

After King Prasenajit offered sustenance to the Sangha for a three-month Summer Retreat, he told the Buddha, "I suppose I have given enough."

The Buddha said to him, "Throughout cycles of life and death in my past lives, I had offered more than you. However, the merits generated are just like the food we eat, rapidly digested and consumed. The merits that I have now do not come from merely a singular huge donation. Hence, the merits from what you have just given will also be rapidly depleted."

Therefore, we must give continually and never see giving as a taxing or tedious thing to do, likewise when performing meritorious deeds.

**(5) Giving what the recipient needs**

When others seek our help, we should give as needed.

**(6) Offering valuable gifts**

The more valuable the gift, the greater the merits will be.

**(7) Giving to virtuous people**

With regard to the field of merits, we should endeavor to give to virtuous people.

**(8) Offering to the Sangha**

We should also offer to the Sangha or those who uphold the precepts.

**(9) Both the donor and the recipient are virtuous**

The merits produced are tremendous if the donor and recipient are both virtuous.

**(10) Receiving and sending the recipient with respect**

Whether we are receiving or sending people, we should do so with a respectful mind.

### **(11) Offering precious gifts**

Giving precious gifts that are hard to come by also generates great merits.

### **(12) Giving everything that we have**

Some people might feel that they would be left with nothing if they were to give everything they have.

However, it is most wonderful and great if we are truly able to offer everything we have.

Why is it that some people are able to renounce and become monastics? It is because they are able to relinquish everything with a pure mind.

If one still lingers on to his possessions, it would be difficult to renounce successfully.

## **What should the donor take note of when offering?**

### **(1) Offering at opportune moments**

Offering should be done at opportune moments, fitting with suitable cause and conditions.

**(2) Offering pure, clean, and untainted gifts**

Gifts should be of proper quality and are pure and clean. Some people give things which have been left around for a long time or nearing expiry. Such giving is impure.

**(3) Giving in person**

We should give in person and not instruct others to give on our behalf.

**(4) Giving humbly for the sake of liberation**

We should give for the sake of liberation, and for getting rid of self-centered thoughts and arrogance from our mind. We should not give just to flaunt our riches.

**(5) Offering for the sake of liberation, hoping not for returns**

Offering purely for the sake of liberation means that we do not expect any returns from the giving.

**(6) Offering for the sake of liberation and not for rebirth in the heavenly realm**

We should not hope for rebirths in the heavenly realm or human realm when we give. We give purely for the sake of liberation.

**(7) Offering to fertile and not barren fields of merits**

We should endeavor to offer to the best fields of merits such as people who uphold precepts diligently, Arahats, or the Buddha.

**(8) Transferring merits to all sentient beings**

We give not for our own benefit. Throughout the Buddha's past lives, he gave for the sake of attaining Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi for the benefit and welfare of all sentient beings.

**Which is the most splendid and wonderful form of offering?**

The Mahayana sutras mention the most wonderful and splendid form of offering:

**(1) Offering with the right understanding of Ultimate Truth – the essence of the three aspects of giving is nothingness and there is nothing to be attained.**

Once, Maha Sariputra offered a bowl of food to the Buddha. His giving was very wonderful because even though he was no longer subject to future rebirths, and thus would not reap the

great merits and virtues of offering, he continued to offer to the Buddha willingly. This was truly excellent.

The World Honored One accepted Maha Sariputra's offering and subsequently gave it to a dog sitting by his side.

"O' Sariputra, you offered that bowl of rice to the Buddha, the best field of merits. The World Honored One in turn offered that bowl of rice to a dog, a field of merits of the animal realm. Which of these two offerings is more meritorious?" asked the Buddha.

Here, we note that there was no difference in the gift as the same bowl of rice was offered. Similarly, both donors gave with a pure mind as they have already ended all afflictions. The only difference was the recipient – one being the World Honored One and the other being a dog.

Yet, the Buddha explained to Maha Sariputra that the act of offering to the dog by the World Honored One would yield greater merits. Why is this so?

We know that the seed of giving is the fundamental cause while the field of merits is secondary.

So why is the seed of giving by the World Honored One greater?

This is because the Buddha's mind encompasses all sentient beings. The Great Buddha's mind is directed towards the benefit and well-being of all sentient beings, and to enable them to end suffering and attain happiness.

On the other hand, Maha Sariputra eliminated attachment to the ego and the five aggregates through realizing that the primal essence of the five aggregates is nothingness. His mind was not encompassing of all sentient beings as compared to the Buddha. He also did not generate the mind to attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi and had not grasped the Bhutathatata.

Therefore, the merits and virtues of an Arahat are different from that of the Buddha even though both are liberated Noble Ones.

Even though the field of merit is different (one being a dog and the other being the Buddha), the fundamental essence of the donor's minds (the seed of giving) is ultimately different. One is the mind that realizes liberation, while the other is the mind that grasps the Bhutathatata. Hence, the merits and virtues from the two offerings vary.

In this example, the most excellent form of giving is where a liberated sage gives to another liberated sage, just like how Maha Sariputra gave to the Buddha. That was a truly wonderful and splendid form of giving!

## **(2) Offering by a Bodhisattva practitioner**

A Bodhisattva practitioner is selfless and gives for the sake of all sentient beings. Furthermore, a Bodhisattva practitioner, who grasps the Bhutathatata, gives for the benefit of all sentient beings without any expectation of returns.

The Diamond Sutra teaches about the Bodhisattva practice of non-attachment to sense objects of form, sound, odor, flavor, tactile object, and phenomena when practicing giving. Giving with non-attachment will produce tremendous merits and virtues beyond words.

Therefore, we should practice well, not just for our own benefit in this lifetime or future lifetimes but for the sake of all sentient beings. Let us learn to practice non-attachment, not expect to attain anything, and not be attached to forms, sounds, odors, flavors, tactile objects, and phenomena.

### **(3) Giving to develop a dignified mind**

This means giving to develop the seven virtuous assets – having faith in the Triple Gem, observance of precepts, constant self-reflection, endeavor to observe moral shame, learning and listening to the Dharma diligently, practice giving, and cultivating wisdom. These seven virtuous assets will result in a dignified mind.

For example, General Simha was a wise person who had great faith in the Buddha. When he gave offerings, he treated all enlightened and unenlightened monastics equally. He even contemplated of offering only to the Triple Gem and not to heretics who held onto erroneous views.

However, the Buddha explained to him that sentient beings would die if they had no food. Therefore, he should give to them as well.

Although the merits and virtues for giving will differ, a Bodhisattva practitioner would never stop giving even if no merits and virtues are generated.

Hence, the Buddha told General Simha to give to heretics, out of compassion for all sentient beings.

From this, we know that all sentient beings – be they people holding erroneous views or criminals – are equal in the eyes of the Buddha and we should offer equally to all.

This shows the great compassion of Buddha.

#### **(4) Giving to free the mind from miserliness and greed**

The purpose of giving is to cultivate a mind of detachment, free of miserliness and greed. Giving in the hope for a better future life is giving out of greed. It is not done with inclination towards detachment.

#### **(5) Giving to develop a meditative mind**

Giving brings joy to the mind and prevents us from transgressing precepts. Thus, we are free from regrets and worries that result from transgressing the precepts. This joyful mind enables us to focus and eases the cultivation of meditative concentration.

#### **(6) Offering to attain Nirvana**

Nirvana basically means the complete eradication of all afflictions and elimination of attachment to the ego through contemplating the nothingness of the five aggregates.

Now that we know the great merits that giving generates, we should give very willingly and happily indeed.

## **To whom should we give so as to generate unlimited merits?**

### **(1) Practitioners of the three vehicles**

Giving to a Srotapanna, a Sakradagamin, an Anagamin, an Arahat, a Pratyeka Buddha, a Bodhisattva in his final cycle, a Bodhisattva who has perfected patient perserverance through the awareness of the non-arising of phenomena, or the Buddha brings about multiplied merits as their accomplishments grow.

### **(2) Our parents**

Our parents are the supreme field of merits. We should be filial to them, give offerings to them, and not go against their wishes as gratitude for their great kindness in giving birth to us and raising us.

The Buddha told us that carrying our parents on each of our shoulders would not even be enough to repay their great kindness.

In that case, how might we repay their kindness?

The best way to repay the kindness of parents is to aspire for Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. Only when we attain Buddhahood, would we be able to truly help our parents in abandoning suffering and attaining true bliss.

Someone once asked this question, "Are we only repaying the kindness of parents of this life?"

The kindness of parents actually spans innumerable lifetimes. As long as they are still in the cycle of existence, the kindness of parents is not yet repaid.

Throughout infinite cycles of life and death, we have had countless parents. Likewise, there are also countless sentient beings.

Each sentient being might have been our parent, child, or sibling. Therefore, we should regard every man as our father and every woman as our mother. We should repay their parental kindness in nurturing us.

In the Buddha's exposition of the Four Great Types of Kindness, the Kindness of Sentient Beings refers none other

than to the kindness of parents of our past lives. All sentient beings have been going through Samsara throughout countless cycles of life and death and have been parents to one another throughout this protracted cycle. Thus, we are indeed grateful to all sentient beings.

In comparison, the Kindness of Parents refers to the kindness of our parents of this lifetime. We must generate *Bodhicitta* in order to repay the two aforementioned types of kindness, together with the Kindness of the Triple Gem and the Kindness of the Ruler. The ultimate way to truly help sentient beings is to become Buddha, with the intention to save and guide them to liberation – away from suffering and towards everlasting happiness.

### **(3) The sick**

The greatest field of merits among the eight fields of merits is the sick. During the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic in Taiwan, many people disregarded their own safety to help look after the SARS patients. It is extremely meritorious to take care of SARS patients by bringing them comfort and calm in times of pain and fear.

In the Agama Sutra, the Buddha taught us the ways to recover from illness and to take care of the sick.

© **There are five cause and conditions for the sick to recover from their illnesses:**

- (a) **Selective food intake** – A patient should abstain from foods that cannot be consumed.
- (b) **Consumption at appropriate times** – Certain food may not be appropriate to be consumed by a patient. For example, stroke or hyperuricaemia patients must avoid consuming mushrooms, tofu, and soya milk. Inappropriate consumption just to satisfy their cravings can aggravate their ailments.
- (c) **Taking prescribed medications** – Patients must take medications prescribed by the doctor at regular times. The patient should not allow his temperaments to affect the consumption of prescribed medication.
- (d) **Free from worries** – A patient should stop worrying about his health or family because the more worried he is, the harder it is for him to recuperate.

**(e) Showing compassion to the caregiver** – A caregiver wakes up earlier and retires later than the patient. He must also be constantly aware of the patient's health condition. Therefore, the patient must show compassion to the caregiver as it is a very tedious job to look after a patient.

◎ **How to look after the sick?**

**(a) Find the right doctor** – The caregiver must choose the right doctor for the patient.

**(b) Diligent in waking up early and retiring late** – The caregiver should not retire before the patient does. Nor should he sleep even after the patient has awoken. Though it is taxing, this is what is fundamentally required of a caregiver.

**(c) Be a joyous companion and not indulge in too much sleep** – A caregiver should engage the patient in light talks to cheer him up and lighten his mood. Hence, the caregiver will have less time to rest and should not greed for more sleep.

**(d) Share the Dharma with the patient to lessen his anxiety** – A caregiver should share the Dharma with the patient to resolve his worries. He should also not greed for the flowers and fruits that visitors offer to the patient.

**(e) Expounding the Dharma to the patient** – The caregiver should expound the Dharma to the patient to comfort and settle his mind so that he does not have worries and afflictions.

#### **(4) Venerables**

Venerables propagate the Dharma on behalf of Buddha. They teach us the karmic law of cause and effect, the way to be liberated from Samsara, and the path towards Buddhahood. As such, offering sustenance to a Venerable will generate great merits in return.

#### **(5) Bodhisattvas in their final cycle**

A Bodhisattva in his final cycle refers to one who will descend from Tusita Heaven to the human realm in his next life to become a Buddha. Maitreya Bodhisattva and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattava are examples of such Bodhisattvas.

This Bodhisattva is the best and most fertile field of merits as he has been accumulating countless merits over numerous lifetimes and will be Buddha very soon. It is therefore extremely wonderful to offer sustenance to a Bodhisattva who is in his final cycle.

## **(6) A Bhikshu who upholds the precepts**

A Bhikshu who upholds the precepts is able to eradicate the five obstructions and will guard the six sense bases well. His mind is focused and collected, and is able to subdue the four demons, i.e., Klesa-mara, Mrtya-mara, Skandha-mara, and Devaputramara. Thus, a Bhikshu who practices in this manner is a great field of merits.

### Example

We must never judge monastics by their looks when giving offerings to them. There are people who offer only to monastics with dignified appearances or choose only to give to elderly Bhikshus.

There lived a biased king who gave offerings only to elder Bhikshus as he assumed that young Sramaneras had only recently renounced and were not accomplished in their practice. One day, the king sent his chancellor to the monastery to invite the old Bhikshus to accept his offer of sustenance.

The young Sramaneras in the monastery were actually Arahats. They knew that the disdain which the king had for them would result in very unwholesome karma for the king.

So they transformed into old-looking Bhikshus and attended the king's reception.

The king was delighted to see the old Bhikshus and invited them to take the seats. Once the old Bhikshus sat down, they transformed themselves into their original forms. The king found it very strange that the elderly Bhikshus had turned into young Sramaneras.

A young Sramanera said, "Didn't you only invite elderly Bhikshus? We are here to receive your offer of sustenance."

"Yes, I want to offer sustenance to old Bhikshus. But why have you turned into a young Sramanera?" the baffled king asked.

"You are only offering sustenance based on our appearances but not our virtues and merits. This is an unwholesome act. But if you are persistent in such ways, we can only transform ourselves to appear as old Bhikshus", replied the young Sramanera.

The king confessed and repented immediately upon hearing this. He learnt that he should not judge someone by his outward appearance. Instead, he should offer sustenance to old Bhikshus and young Sramaneras equally with a respectful mind.

## **What is the reason for being less privileged?**

When we see a less privileged person, we should reflect on the cause and effect of poverty. We could have been in similar circumstances with no merits in our past lives. However, we are enjoying a little merit in this life only because we had practiced giving. Since merits in the present life are generated due to giving in the past, we should continue to give generously and promptly.

Our mind is impermanent and continuously subject to change. For instance, we might initially plan on giving a million dollars. But as the days pass, the amount might decrease as we think that it is sufficient as long as we have given. With further delay, we might not even give at all, thinking that there will be ample opportunities for giving in the future.

This is how impermanent our mind is. Therefore, it is important to give as soon as the opportune moments arise.

Amongst the three cause and conditions that complete a giving, the field of merits could never be achieved when the mind that wishes to give, weakens and fades away gradually. Our wealth is subject to impermanence by natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes which could wipe

out our entire fortunes instantly. We would be so pathetic then, as no merits could be generated in the future when the three cause and conditions of giving are incomplete.

Thus, we should grasp every cause and condition to give and take heed never to procrastinate in giving.

## **How do we view the practice of giving wisely?**

### Example 1

There was a king who came across a very wealthy man and wanted to acquire the riches belonging to the wealthy man. Thus, he instructed the rich man to list out his properties and wealth.

The wealthy man was a very wise Buddhist. He listed the recipients who received his offerings and all the gifts that he had given, such as the monastics and monasteries that received his offerings, even including animals that received his offerings. He then sent the list to the king.

"I had asked you to list out your properties and wealth. Why have you tendered this list of your charitable deeds to me instead?" asked the king.

The wealthy man replied, "My king, all the properties and wealth may be listed under my name, but in truth, they are subjects of impermanence.

"For instance, a flood, wild fire, landslide, or even a callous digging on the adjoining land would easily destroy all my riches and house. If I encounter a king who plans on high taxes or a bad king, he could easily take away my property too. An unfilial heir would also squander all my riches. Likewise, a robber, thief, or swindler could also take away my riches.

"All in all, all these properties and wealth are subjects of impermanence and belong to the five adversities. Although they are listed under my name, none belongs to me in reality."

"In that case, what do you have to say for this list? Why do you say that the things which you have offered belong to you?" the king probed further.

The wealthy man answered, "This is because the merits of giving cannot be taken away from me. So they truly belong to me."

What a wise man indeed! Let us all learn to give readily to generate merits that truly belong to us.

### Example 2

King Asoka was a very diligent and hardworking person. He built eighty-four thousand Buddhist stupas when he was ruling the whole of India.

King Asoka gave generously throughout his life. However, his prince and chancellors forbade him from giving any further when he was very ill at the close of his life, and only had half an amalaka<sup>4</sup> fruit in his hand.

Facing forbiddance, King Asoka had this to say, "I wish to give even if I have only half of this fruit."

King Asoka felt extremely regretful that he had not offered more previously and was only left with half a fruit now. He then instructed someone to help him to offer whatever he had in his hands to the Sangha as sustenance. After the Sangha pureed the fruit and mixed it with water, each monastic was then given a share of the offering.

Hence, we should start giving early. Similarly, do not wait until we are old, sick, or dying before we learn the Dharma for it is too late by then.

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<sup>4</sup> Also known as Indian Gooseberry; a fruit of good quality.

At our dying moments, nothing really belongs to us anymore and it is too late to do anything. If we were to have children asking for their inheritance, we would truly be left with nothing to give.

### **The connection between the donor and the recipient**

In recent times, when we see people asking for alms, we might deliberate giving to them due to influence from media reports of dishonest people who ask for alms.

How should we think in this situation instead? We should think thus, "A genuine giving is not deterred by dishonesty."

If the recipient deceived us, he would reap unwholesome results for his unwholesome deeds.

The quality of the field of merits should not influence our giving. It is more important that we give with a good intention, just like how Buddha gave the bowl of rice, which was offered by Maha Sariputra, to a dog. The Buddha's mind was pure and encompassing of all sentient beings. The merits of such giving are tremendous.

There are various circumstances involved in giving, as mentioned by Buddha –

- (1) The best giving occurs when both the donor and the recipient have a pure mind.
- (2) Next is the giving where the donor's mind is pure but the recipient is insincere. An example would be giving without knowing that the recipient is deceiving us.
- (3) The third kind of giving would be where the donor is insincere but the recipient's mind is pure. In this scenario, the donor would still reap some merits owing to the recipient's pure mind.
- (4) The last kind of giving is where both the donor and the recipient have an impure mind.

As long as we perceive that the recipient is sincere, the offering would be genuine. Otherwise, we may decide not to proceed with the offering.

However, if we are hesitant, let us practice giving earnestly.

~ DANA – THE PRACTICE OF GIVING (7) ~

This is similar to us making offerings sincerely in front of a wooden Buddha statue. Although it is a piece of wood carving, we regard it as a real Buddha when giving offerings. Thus, such offering will generate merits and virtues.

So in the future, we do not have to ponder too much when we give. Simply give with a pure mind.

Giving helps us to abandon miserliness and greed. It also gives rise to joy in our mind, and improves the cause and conditions for our attainment of Nirvana and Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. This is the intrinsic part of the importance of giving.

Extrinsically speaking, we would often see mottos like the following in schools:

*"One for all, all for one."*

Putting others before ourselves will lead to a peaceful and harmonious society. In turn, others would help us and this results in a world that gives joy.

These great merits are a result of the act of genuine offering.

## 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.

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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 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-Damya-Sarathi - 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.

**Upeksa:** 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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