

Everlasting Happiness,
as Buddha Attains 7

Presented by Venerable Da Shi

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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

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 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.

After learning the teachings of practicing giving (Dana) and upholding precepts (Sila), the next step is to observe the impurities of worldly desires and to seek renunciation. This book focuses on three topics - taking rebirth in the heavenly realm; reflecting on the impurity and ramifications of desires; and the importance of renunciation. This is the seventh 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 accords with the teachings in the Chinese Mahayana tradition, which have originally been 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 footnotes on the relevant

pages and Glossary at the end of this book for explanation of common Buddhist terms (first appearance in italics) and concepts.

@@@ 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! @@@

Miao You Pu Ti Yuan (Singapore)

In Praise of Renunciation



The Blessing of Renunciation

Renunciation brings about happiness and enables one to fully dedicate one's time and energy to the practice of the Dharma. Worldly affairs on the other hand, are fraught with hindrances that impede the learning and practice of the Dharma, hence causing one much unhappiness and dissatisfaction in life. Renunciation is therefore truly worthy of our praise.

Example

At one time, Venerable Nakabara (那伽波罗) was staying in the city of Sarnath. An elderly Brahmin, who was an old acquaintance, visited the well-respected Venerable. Having exchanged friendly greetings, the Brahmin sat to one side.

"Venerable, you seem to be the happiest person here," the Brahmin said with a heavy heart.

"Why do you say so?" Venerable Nakabara asked.

The Brahmin replied, "I am grieved beyond words. Seven days ago, seven of my sons died. All of them were young, brave and strong, with intelligence unparalleled by others. Six days ago, I

lost twelve of my workers. When alive, they were hardworking and never passed a day without diligence in their work. Five days ago, four of my brothers met with their deaths. They were adept in all forms of skills while alive. Four days ago, my parents died of old age, leaving me behind. Three days ago, two of my extremely beautiful and elegant wives lost their lives. Even my trove of treasures and gems stored at home disappeared without a trace yesterday! The extent of my loss and suffering has been so great and unbearable! But unlike me, you are free from all these sorrowful affairs. You exude happiness that comes from the practice of the Right Dharma. Thus, Venerable, you are indeed the happiest person here."

"Why did you not attempt to avoid their deaths?" asked the Venerable.

"Yes I did. I tried many ways to prevent the deaths of my loved ones and the loss of my treasures. I made donations and gave generously at every opportune time; I performed kind deeds, prayed and partook in rituals honoring the deities, and supported the livelihoods of the respectable elders; I recited different chants, learnt divination of the stars, studied herbs and made medicines, and donated food to the poor and hungry. But even as I did all these, I still could not prevent deaths and losses from happening," the Brahmin explained.

Knowing that the Brahmin had not understood and accepted impermanence, Venerable Nakabara said, "Brahmin, providing medicine to the sick, giving food to the poor, and reciting different chants cannot forestall impermanence and death from happening. Likewise, your undertaking of the precepts and offering of flowers to the deities cannot prevent your loved ones from dying even if you have wished for them to live eternally. Dedication of merits generated from supporting the lives of respectable elders and Brahmins and from your practice of the

holy teachings cannot prevent the impermanence of anything, including the deaths of your loved ones."

Venerable Nakabara's words struck the Brahmin deeply.

"Venerable, if that is so, what should I do to be released from all these sufferings?" implored the Brahmin.

"O' good Brahmin, you should understand thus:

*The root of attachments and desires,
Is none other than ignorance,
Causing us to suffer,
Endlessly in cycles.
Weed out ignorance,
Uproot all attachments,
Suffering will cease,
Giving way to peace."*

Inspired by Venerable Nakabara's wise teachings, the Brahmin pronounced, "I now renounce my worldly life and will undertake to practice the path of liberation from suffering!"

And thus the Brahmin began his monastic life under the tutelage of Venerable Nakabara.

Under the guidance of Venerable Nakabara, the Brahmin learnt to meditate and reflect on the true nature of the body. With continuous effort, the Brahmin eventually became a Srotapanna and attained the Pure Dharma Eye. Exerting more intensive efforts in his practice, he attained Arahatship thereafter.

Due to the influence of ignorance, we become afflicted with all kinds of desires and become very attached to our families, properties, and possessions. We are blinded to and unaware of the suffering of cyclic existence. And because we follow after our

desires, our ignorance gets thicker and thicker, leading us to suffer endlessly. If we can uproot ignorance and cease our desires and attachments, we will be freed from all kinds of suffering.

Renunciation is the anchor of our practice and the very key to realizing happiness. The blessing of renunciation is therefore very great. If we reflect on the Buddha's teachings deeply, we would gradually come to see the pitfalls of living the lay life and the merits of living the monastic life.

The Purpose of Renunciation

Seeing the suffering that arises from living the lay life, we should seek renunciation. What then is the purpose of renunciation? Is it for the purpose of accumulating merits to lead a happier future life? No.

Renunciation is for the purpose of putting Dharma into practice in order to realize Nirvana here and now.

Example 1

There was a group of Bhikshus who were quietly dyeing their robes in the offering hall when Mara, the king of demons, transformed himself into a young and strong Brahmin to disrupt the Bhikshus' practice.

"All of you are young and strong. You should be enjoying your lives and be with your families instead of leading this renounced life. Why are you forsaking present pleasures of desires to cultivate future happiness?" Mara daunted.

"We have not forsaken present happiness and renounced for the sake of future happiness. What we have forsaken is future happiness that is still subject to impermanence; we have

renounced so as to realize true happiness in this very life," replied the Bhikshus.

"How so?" asked Mara.

The Bhikshus explained, "As the Buddha says, happiness in the future life is merely suffering in disguise; transient and unbeneficial. Heavenly beings have to meet with suffering when they fall in the hell realm with the exhaustion of their merits.

"We suffer in unhappiness when we do not get the wealth, fame, status, achievements, and possessions that we desire for.

"Living in this mundane world is in and of itself a suffering, the suffering of which is just like the pain we get when our hearts are pierced with knives.



"Renunciants do not have to experience the mental anguishes that lay people have. Their hearts are at ease as a result of their diligent practice in the Dharma.

"As the Buddha's disciples, we cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Endeavors, the Four Ways of Attaining Samadhi, the Five Wholesome Faculties, the Five Powers, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and the Eightfold Noble Path.

"True happiness comes only from the realization of Nirvana. As The Great Buddha says, true happiness

in this life is realized when all defilements are eradicated and when the heart abides in the Bhutatathata at all times.

"The Buddha has taught:

*'Every suffering that arises,
Is caused by our desires.
With the world filled with piercing pain,
Who would indulge in desires again?
Seeing the world as conditioned,
Like a knives-filled dungeon,
The wise strives for escape,
With every step he takes.
Even having countless dimes,
Like a king who rules the sky,
One can never be content,
Even with all at his expense.
Hence practice to see all as equal,
This I say to the wise and eager.'* "

Mara left hastily after knowing that he was not able to disrupt the diligent Bhikshus from their practice. The Bhikshus then sought the Buddha's advice on the Brahmin's sudden disappearance.

"It is Mara, the king of demons, who has come here to disrupt your practice and make you all his dependents by tempting you to return to lay life," explained the Buddha.

Without Right Mindfulness, we will continue to indulge in the Five Desires and Six Sense Objects such as fame and wealth, or partake in politics, even after we have renounced the lay life.

All conditioned phenomena in this mundane world are impermanent, suffering, devoid of self, and empty. Clinging to them only brings about immense suffering. It is wise for us to

abandon them. We must strive to end our attachments to them and practice the Dharma wholeheartedly to eradicate our mental defilements.

The compassionate Buddha had instilled this world with the Right Dharma so that we do not succumb to the temptations of King Mara. Renunciation is therefore not for the purpose of gaining a happier future life, but rather for the purpose of realizing Nirvana.

The Merits of Renunciation

Once in Rajagrha, the Buddha gave praise to the practice of renunciation. The merits are endless for one who renounces. Likewise, if one fulfils one's spouse, children, parents, family and friends, servants, or countrymen's wishes to renounce, the merits from doing so are equally endless as well.

The practice of giving has its merits but they are limited and last for a maximum of only ten lifetimes. Similarly, upholding precepts leads to rebirth in the heavenly realms. A sage who has practiced meditation and attained the Five Supernatural Powers can only take rebirth in the Brahma Heaven at best. Even so, all these merits will eventually be exhausted one day, whereupon one will fall into the three lower realms.

On the contrary, the merits of renunciation are endless. In fact, anyone who renounces will one day realize Nirvana and forever be free from the cycles of birth and death.

The merits of constructing a stupa which reaches the heights of the Trayastrimsat Heaven may be great. But it still pales in comparison to that of renunciation. This is because regardless of the size of the stupa, it is subject to destruction, whereas the practice of renunciation is unparalleled and remains supreme among all wholesome acts.

Similarly, a doctor who heals a hundred blind men or a person who saves a hundred prisoners from losing their sight generates great merits. However, these merits are less than the merits of renunciation or fulfilling others' wishes to renounce. Saving a person's sight only benefits the person during this life as the true nature of the body is that it is impermanent. But renunciation enables one to attain the "Eye of Wisdom" which will never be lost. One will be able to benefit beings in the human and heavenly realms, enjoying infinite joy in the process and ultimately attain Buddhahood.

The practice of renunciation paves the way to realizing Buddhahood and prevents us from becoming the dependents of King Mara; it promotes the propagation of wholesome practice and decreases unwholesome practice, it diminishes unmeritorious karma and increases meritorious karma.

This is why the Buddha gives great praise to the merits of renunciation, equating them to be greater than the heights of Mount Sumeru, deeper than the deepest ocean, and wider than the vastest sky.

If we were to obstruct others from renouncing or had incited monks or nuns to give up renunciation, the unwholesome karmic results that accrue would be infinite. One would take rebirth in the deepest hell, unable to see anything in the pitch of darkness, like a person who cannot see in the darkness of night. One would also be tormented by all sorts of suffering. One would be burnt endlessly by the fires in the hell realm, just like how Mount Sumeru was burnt away in the Kalpa of Destruction.

Self-renunciation and enabling others to renounce generate the greatest merits as renunciation is a cause and condition for attaining Nirvana and leads to freedom from suffering in Samsara.

Renunciants apply the Dharma teachings from the Sutra to purify themselves from the taints of defilements. With the Vinaya as foothold, every step taken is guided by the precepts. Finally, the Sastra acts as the eyes, enabling one to see the good from the bad in this world clearly. Calmly treading the Eightfold Noble Path, one will eventually reach the serenity of Nirvana.

Hence, enabling others to renounce or even self-renunciation is truly meritorious, regardless of one's age.

The cause and conditions of Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi's renunciation in old age and the results of his renunciation

During the time of the Buddha, there was a hundred-year-old man called Siri-vaddhi who lived in Rajagrha. The name Siri-vaddhi means "increment in merits". After contemplating the Buddha's exposition on the profound merits of renunciation, he made the resolve to renounce and practice the Dharma. Thereafter, Siri-vaddhi returned home and informed his family about his intention. They were delighted to know his intention to renounce and urged him to waste no time in going forth. So he left everything behind and set off to Venuvana abode to meet the Buddha.

When Siri-vaddhi reached the abode, the Buddha was expounding the Dharma in other places. Thus, Siri-vaddhi went to see Venerable Sariputra.

Venerable Sariputra observed that the elderly Siri-vaddhi was already one hundred years old and could neither meditate, chant, nor actively teach others to support the Triple Gem. Hence, he told Siri-vaddhi that he was too old to enter monkhood.

Siri-vaddhi then pleaded with five hundred Arahats, including Venerable Maha Kasyapa, Venerable Upali, and Venerable

Aniruddha, to accept him into the order. However, all the Venerables, on knowing that Venerable Sariputra had rejected Siri-vaddhi's request to renounce, also refused likewise.

They said, "If the best doctor pronounces a patient is incurable, all lesser doctors would be incapable of curing him either. Likewise, Venerable Sariputra possesses great wisdom above all; if he does not accede to your ordination, we cannot accede either."

Deeply saddened by the Venerables' rejection, Siri-vaddhi walked out of the abode with his eyes full of tears.

He wailed, "I have never committed grave wrongdoings in this life. Why is my wish to renounce not accepted? Even people from the lower caste, like Upali the barber and Ni Ti (泥提), who clears waste, are permitted to ordain. Likewise, Angulimala has taken countless innocent lives and so has Tuo Se Qi (陀塞奇) the notorious bandit. Yet, they were all ordained. What wrong have I done to deserve such rejection?"

Just as he was crying, the Buddha returned. The Buddha asked, "O' Siri-vaddhi, why are you in tears?"



Hearing the kind and serene voice of the Buddha, Siri-vaddhi lifted his head and saw the Buddha's extraordinary appearance. There and then, he felt as though he was seeing his own father. Feeling extreme joy, Siri-vaddhi respectfully bowed and paid homage to the Buddha.

He said, "World Honored One, it is my sincere wish to renounce.

Villains and people of the lower caste have renounced. Why is it that a person like me, who has not committed any great sin, cannot renounce? I am old and redundant at home. And since I cannot renounce, I would end my life now."

"It is great to renounce! But why are you crying?" asked the Buddha.

Siri-vaddhi replied, "As you were out when I arrived, I went to see the other Venerables to seek their permission for me to renounce. However, they refused."

The Buddha asked, "Who rejected your intention to renunciation? Who had said for certain that 'This person can be renounced and this not'?"

Siri-vaddhi said, "Venerable Sariputra and the other Venerables said so."

Buddha consoled him by saying, "I shall now fulfill your wish to renounce. I had spent three great incalculable kalpas putting the Dharma into practice. Additionally, I accumulated merits diligently throughout one hundred kalpas. Throughout each of my lifetime, I had practiced Dana Paramita by giving generously even when it was deemed impossible to do so. I sacrificed my life and every part of my body, be it limbs, head, brain, eyes, ears, or nose. I gave up my life to save the starving tiger cubs. And to acquire the Dharma, I jumped into the fire-pit, dug holes on my body to light one thousand candles. I donated everything including my country's wealth, my wife, my children, my servants, and all my treasures.

"I offered sustenance to eighty-eight thousand Buddhas during the first great incalculable kalpa and to ninety-nine thousand Buddhas in the following great incalculable kalpa. In the final great incalculable kalpa, I offered sustenance to one hundred

thousand Buddhas, renounced, practiced Sila Paramita and perfected my precepts.

"Only a Buddha has perfected the Six Paramitas. With the perfection of endurance, I sat on the Diamond Throne beneath the Bodhi Tree and defeated the Mara King, hence attaining Buddhahood."

Thereafter, the Buddha told Venerable Maudgalyayana to guide Siri-vaddhi's ordination. Buddha said, "Guide the elder, ordain him, and give him the complete precepts of a Bhikshu (Upasampada). Every person has his own cause and condition for liberation. Some people have karmic affinity with the Buddha and not others, whereas some have karmic affinity with people other than the Buddha."

Venerable Maudgalyayana thought, "Venerable Sariputra did not ordain him because he could not meditate, chant, or encourage others to upkeep the Triple Gem. There must be a cause and condition for The Great Buddha to allow him to renounce."

Thus, Venerable Maudgalyayana ordained the elder Siri-vaddhi and transmitted the complete precepts of a Bhikshu to him.

Siri-vaddhi had in fact sowed the seeds for his liberation in his past life. Just like a fish who has bitten the bait and will eventually be caught; Siri-vaddhi will certainly attain liberation as he has cultivated various meritorious deeds, practiced the Dharma diligently, and read the Sutra, Vinaya, and Sastra in his past life. It is only his old age that prevented him from being able to bow in respect.

After the ordination, Siri-vaddhi became one of the elderly Bhikshus. However, he was only senior in age and not senior in terms of the number of years he was ordained.

In the sramanera precepts, age is used to differentiate seniority. Thus the older the sramanera is, the more senior he is.

However, it is different for Bhikshus. Their seniority is based on the time they were ordained. For example, a fifty-year-old newly ordained Bhikshu would have to pay respect to a twenty-one-year-old Bhikshu if the latter was ordained earlier.

Although Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi was older, he was ordained later than the younger Bhikshus. However, as a result of his habitual tendencies, he was conceited and thought that the younger Bhikshus should respect him for being the oldest.

The younger Bhikshus who were ordained earlier advised him sincerely, "Do not assume obeisance from others based on your age. You are unable to meditate and chant, and yet you are arrogant and disrespect your seniors."

As a result, the elder Bhikshu became very distressed. He remembered how his family members had ignored and provoked him when he was still a lay person. He lamented how, even when he had become a monk and had tried very hard to practice, the younger Bhikshus were still irritating him. He wondered what he had done wrong and as he pondered on the issue, he became more upset. Saddened, he felt that there was no peace, be it at home or in the Sangha. He questioned himself as to what he should do and after some thinking, he decided to end his life at a nearby river.

Having decided thus, he began treading in the direction of the river. There, he removed his robes and hung it on a tree. Before ending his life, he made a vow, "I have no intention to abandon the Triple Gem. I wish only to get rid of this aging body. May all my past generosity, diligence in upholding the precepts and reciting the sutras, and all past wholesome actions help pave my way to be reborn into a wealthy, happy, and peaceful family and

be in association with the Triple Gem. I hope that all these merits I have cultivated will enable me to renounce and practice the Dharma, and be acquainted with a noble teacher who can guide me to attain enlightenment."

Right at this moment, he was seen by Venerable Maudgalyayana who had supernatural power of divine vision and taken back to shore.

The Venerable asked, "Bhikshu! What are you doing? "

"I am thinking of ending my life!"

"Why do you want to do this?"

The Bhikshu thought silently, "When the honorable teacher (*Upadhyaya*) asks, and if one should lie to him, he would suffer from this bad karma in future. Furthermore, my honorable teacher is unsurpassed in supernatural powers and will know if I have deceived him.

In this mundane world, a person who is knowledgeable, wise, truthful, and able to uphold the precepts, will be respected by humans and heavenly beings; if a person is knowledgeable and wise, but is deceitful and not truthful, people will still respect him as he is a teacher; if a person is neither knowledgeable nor wise, but is honest and sincere, he can still be liberated; if a person is ignorant and dishonest, he is the lowest of all beings and will be treated with contempt. When such person speaks, no one will believe him, not even when he speaks the truth.

If I were to be the fourth type of person, one who is neither knowledgeable nor wise, is deceitful and not truthful, everyone will know Siri-vaddhi as a liar and will abhor and spit at me. I must be honest towards the honorable teacher! "

Therefore Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi told the truth about his circumstances.

Venerable Maudgalyayana thought, "I should instill fear in him by showing him the horrors of being in cycles of birth and death. Otherwise he will not achieve anything even though he has renounced."

So Venerable Maudgalyayana said to the elder Bhikshu, "I will bring you to see the world. Hold on to the corner of my robes. Do not let go and focus attentively!"

Siri-vaddhi respectfully obeyed and like a gust of wind, they flew up into the sky with Venerable Maudgalyayana like an eagle and Siri-vaddhi following like a bird being held in an eagle's mouth. They were able to travel at will and in no time, they came to a seaside.

At the seaside, they saw a fresh corpse of beautiful and elegant lady. There was a wriggly worm crawling in and out of its mouth, nose, ear, and eyes.

Venerable Maudgalyayana stood before the corpse and observed silently before leaving. Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi then asked about the cause and conditions for this incident.

Venerable Maudgalyayana replied, "I will tell you at the right time."

They travelled further and saw a lady carrying a pot. She proceeded to fill it up with water and boiled it. When the water was fully boiled, she jumped into the pot. In the boiling pot, all her hair and nails fell off and her flesh broke apart. All that were left were bones. The bones gradually surfaced to the top of the broth. When the wind blew, these bones transformed into a person. This person then stretched her arms into the pot to pick up her own flesh and eat it.

Repulsed at the sight, Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi asked Venerable Maudgalyayana for the cause and conditions for this incident.

Venerable Maudgalyayana replied, "I will tell you at the right time."

Next they saw an enormous being, wailing in great pain as insects crawled all over its body, leaving no place exposed, and bit its flesh. The howls of intense pain rose and fell periodically like the distressful cries from beings trapped in the hell realm.

Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi asked about the cause and conditions and Venerable Maudgalyayana only replied, "I will tell you at the right time."

They travelled even further and met a being with an enormous body. He was constantly attacked by many animal-headed-and-human-bodied creatures and malicious ghosts. With bows in their hands, each shot flaming poisonous arrows at the being. The being's whole body was wounded and scorched by the flaming arrows and was mourning loudly in deep pain.

Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi asked about the cause and conditions and Venerable Maudgalyayana replied again, "I will tell you at the right time."

Next they encountered a big mountain with swords planted on the mountain grounds. They saw a man climb up the mountain, jump down from it, and pierce to death by the swords laid out at the bottom of the mountain. When the wind blew, he returned to life, but only to repeat the same actions again endlessly.

Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi asked for the cause and conditions for this and Venerable Maudgalyayana told him, "I will tell you at the right time."

Again, as they moved on, they chanced upon an enormous mountain of skeletons spanning a height of seven hundred yojana, blocking out sunlight, shrouding the place in complete darkness. Venerable Maudgalyayana started to do walking meditation on top of one of the larger rib bones and Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi followed behind him.

Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi observed that the Venerable was unoccupied and respectfully proceeded to ask about the cause and conditions for this occurrence.

The Venerable said, "The first corpse you saw today by the seaside belonged to a merchant's wife from Rajagrha. She and her husband were deeply in love. Unable to be apart, he brought her along on a trip in search of treasures together with five hundred merchants. She was a narcissistic lady who liked to admire herself in the mirror. On seeing her beautiful face and facial features, pride would arise in her which led to an extreme sense of attachment to her body. One day, while their vessel was sailing in the sea, a huge turtle toppled their vessel. Everyone on board were drowned to death.

"Corpses do not remain in the sea as the sea raksasa would blow all drowned corpses onto the shore. The worm is the rebirth of the lady who had strong attachment to her body. When she died, her unwavering love for her body led to her become a worm that now lingers around its past body. This worm would fall into the hell realm after its life as a worm and its suffering will not cease."

When sentient beings have desires, they would follow their desires and take rebirths accordingly. Nobody wishes to take rebirth in the hell realm but when people commit evil deeds, their karma will lead them to rebirth in the hell realm.

Heinous actions such as stealing from the Triple Gem or parents, or killing a person, will lead to rebirth in the hells of fire. At the moment of death, shivery chills will arise in the person's mind. Consequently, he will desire for warmth and thus, he will follow his desire for heat and take rebirth in the blazing hot hells.

A person will be reborn in the cold hells if he or she commits the following unwholesome deeds: stealing lights in front of Buddha; stealing firewood that belongs to the temples; demolishing the abodes and halls of the Sangha; stealing clothing or possessions from other people in winter; splashing water on others and making them cold; stealing clothing or possessions from others that result in them having to bear the cold. At the time of his or her death, heat will arise within him or her causing him to seek out a cold place. This desire will in turn lead him to take rebirth in the cold hells.

Hence, all beings in the hell realm are born by following their thoughts of desire. However, this thought of desire is dependent on the circumstances and feelings that arise according to each person's own karma.

Greedy and miserly people who stop food supply to those who are hungry, causing them to suffer from hunger and thirst will take rebirth as a hungry ghost. When he dies, the wind element in his body will rise, causing him to have difficulty in swallowing food. When others encourage him to eat, he will get angry and develop disdain towards seeing these foods. With this thought at the moment of death, he will be reborn as a hungry ghost.

Ignorant people who do not have faith in and have criticized the Triple Gem will be reborn in the animal realm, afflicted by illnesses and only able to lie on their stomach and not on their back or sideways. They will also show a dislike towards hearing kind words. Knowing that this person will soon pass on, others will encourage him to be mindful of the Buddha, to listen to the

Dharma and uphold the Eight Precepts, to aspire to see the Buddha, and to offer to the Triple Gem. Unhappy to hear these words that encourage the practice of giving, this person will instead generate an unwholesome thought to not see the Triple Gem. With this final thought, he will take rebirth in the animal realm. Thus, beings in the animal realm are largely ignorant.

If a person has sowed wholesome deeds that lead to rebirth in the human or heavenly realm, he will not face grave illnesses and will abide in mindfulness at the moment of death. At his deathbed, others will encouragingly ask if he is willing to see the Buddha and Bhikshus, to listen to the Dharma, to uphold the Eight Precepts, and to offer sustenance. This person will agree willingly. They will then share the Dharma with him by telling him, "Offering to the Buddha enables one to be Buddha; offering to the Dharma assures that one will be reborn with great wisdom and be able to grasp the Bhutatathata; offering to the Sangha results in one being reborn with great wealth."

Upon hearing this, if the person joyously makes a vow to be able to meet the Triple Gem in future and to attain enlightenment after learning the Dharma, he will take rebirth in the human realm.

A person will have generated the cause for rebirth in the heavenly realm by upholding the precepts with a pure mind, cultivated the tenfold meritorious cause of action, and joyously listening to and learning the Dharma. At the moment of death, he will lie on his back peacefully with a serene appearance and will join his palms as he hears the melodious sounds of the heavenly realm and sees the image of Buddha, the heavenly palaces, and the devas. When he passes on, he will be reborn in the heavenly realm.

"In our second encounter, we saw a lady who would boil a pot of water, jump into it and eat her own flesh. This lady was a

servant in her previous life. In her past life as a maid, she was asked to bring food and offer to one of the Bhikshus who had observed the precepts dutifully during his Varsa for three months. Her mistress had prepared the food by hand herself. Instead of offering it immediately to the Bhikshu, the maid was greedy and secretly ate the delicious food, leaving the left-overs for the Bhikshu.

The mistress saw the maid's appearance and suspected that she had consumed the food meant for the Bhikshus. She questioned the maid on whether she had secretly eaten the food not meant for her.

"No! I have strong faith in the Triple Gem. I am not one who is untrustworthy or deep-rooted with Wrong Views. Why would I consume food that is meant for the Bhikshu beforehand? These are leftovers from the Bhikshu that I have consumed. If I have indeed consumed the food before the Bhikshu, I would eat my own flesh forever."

Due to this cause and condition, this lady is now experiencing the result of her unwholesome karma. Upon her death, she will take rebirth in the hell realm and suffer the end results of her ripened karma.

"Our third encounter was the enormous being that wailed painfully as insects crawled and bit its flesh. This being used to be a monk in charge of Sangha administration in his past life. He had taken things and food that belonged to the Sangha members and gave them to lay people without first seeking the permission. When he died, he became an enormous being and those lay people became the insects that bite and eat his meat. All of them suffer immeasurably."

"In our fourth encounter, we met another enormous being who was shot with flaming poisonous arrows by many animal-

headed-and-human-bodied creatures and malicious ghosts. This being was a hunter in his previous life. As a hunter, he had shot and killed many wild animals. So in this present life, he has to suffer the same karma of being shot and injured. After his death, he will continue to suffer in the hell realm.

"The fifth encounter was seeing a man jump off a big mountain and pierce to death by swords below. This being was a mighty warrior in his past life. He was fearless on the battle grounds and had killed and injured many lives with his swords. As a result, when he was reborn into his present life, he has to suffer from the consequences of jumping from high mountains and be pierced to death by swords. After this life has ended, he will take rebirth in the hell realm for an even longer duration of suffering."

"Finally, we saw an enormous mountain piled up with skeletons spanning a height of seven hundred yojana, blocking out sunlight, shrouding the place in complete darkness. That pile of skeletons was actually your past life, Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi!"

Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi became so terrified that sweat started trickling down his face. He immediately asked about the cause and conditions for his past life.

Venerable Maudgalyayana said:

*"Endless are the cycles of birth and death,
Set in motion by the karma we have,
Be they wholesome or unwholesome,
We are the heirs of our actions done."*

"In the past, there was a king called Dharma-abhivuddhi (曇摩苾提). His name meant increment in Dharma. He was king for a period of twenty years. During this time, he cultivated generosity and upheld the precepts. He was gentle and

compassionate and refrained from taking lives or damaging the possessions of others. He also listened to the Dharma and ruled the country with the authority and appearance of a good king. All his people lived in peace and harmony.

"But one day while playing his chess, his minister brought a convicted murderer to him and inquired what should be done to the murderer. The king, engrossed in his game of chess, said, 'Just follow the laws.'

"As a result, the minister sent the murderer for execution according to the laws. After his game of chess, the king vaguely remembered the case of the murderer and so he asked his minister what happened to the convict.

"The Minister replied, 'My king, we had him executed, following by your instructions.'

"King Dharma-ahbivuddhi felt extremely guilty knowing that he had killed the convict. He thought, 'I have been observing precepts dutifully for the last twenty years. But because of my negligence, I have unwittingly killed a person. This will cause me to take rebirth in the hell realm and endure endless suffering.'

"Aware of the consequences, the king contemplated further, 'There was a king managing this country before I came to the throne. Even after I die, there would be a new king to manage this country. Although I am king, I have taken the life of my people. I am no different from the king of executioners. As I will soon take rebirth in the hell realm, I have no need to continue being king. I should relinquish my kingship and quickly renounce so as to cultivate the path towards liberation.'

"After abdicating the throne, he went to the forest to practice the Dharma until he died and eventually was reborn as the

enormous fish, known as Makara, spanning seven hundred yojana wide.

"Most kings and ministers who had oppressed their people while in power take rebirth as a Makara fish. Innumerable insects feed on its body and as the fish scratches the itch from the bites, it will end up killing the insects, leading to a trail of blood in the ocean. The fish will then take rebirth in the hell realm.

"The body of this particular Makara fish was enormous. It lived in the middle of the ocean and woke up only once every hundred years. When it woke up from its rest, it opened its enormous mouth to drink the seawater to quench its extreme thirst. All the seawater flowed into its mouth like the rivers flowing into the ocean.

"At this moment, there was a group of 500 merchants sailing out in the sea. They were terribly frightened at the sight of the Makara fish drinking the seawater. But very fortunately, there was a firm devotee of the Triple Gem who led the rest of the 499 merchants to chant, 'Namo Buddha, Namo Buddha....' Hearing the chanting rekindled in the Makara fish a realization that it must no longer take any more lives. Hence, the enormous fish quickly closed its mouth. As a result, the sea-water returned to calm and the ship regained balance. It was by chanting the name of the Buddha that the entire ship of merchants was saved from the ordeal of being swallowed alive in the mouth of the Makara fish.

"Then for a very long time, the enormous fish endured thirst and hunger in order not to break the precept of no killing. Eventually it died and took rebirth in Rajagrha.

"The yaksa and raksasa moved the carcass of the Makara fish to shore and over time, the flesh decayed, leaving only the bones.

"King Dharma-abhivuddhi killed a man and suffered the consequence by taking rebirth as the Makara fish. If you were to end your life now, Siri-vaddhi, you will take rebirth in the hell realm and it will be extremely difficult to be liberated from such suffering."

Venerable Siri-vaddhi recalled the lady who was reborn as a worm due to attachment to her body, the consequences of the Bhikshu who transgressed the precepts and gave things belonging to the Sangha to the laity, the maid who lied and stole food meant for a dutiful Bhikshu, the general who killed people and had to suffer repeated deaths from piercing swords, the hunter who injured wild animals and had to suffer endlessly from being pierced by flaming arrows, and his past life as a king who unwittingly killed a convict and had to live a sufferable life as the enormous Makara fish. He also remembered that these beings all had to take rebirth in the hell realm after their present lives ended.

Upon hearing the wise teachings of Venerable Maudgalyayana, Siri-vaddhi felt a deep sense of repulsion at the endless cycles of birth and death. Thus, he contemplated intently on the Dharma teachings in successive order and had Right Mindfulness. He observed the body of the fish that was his previous life and realized that all phenomena are impermanent and will rise and cease. Hence, he developed repulsion towards birth and death, and extinguished all defilements. Subsequently, he attained Arahatsip and possessed the Three Kinds of Supernormal Cognition and the Six Supernatural Powers. He knew that he would no longer suffer from future rebirths as he had completed the holy path in this life.

Venerable Maudgalyayana was delighted to know that his disciple had already attained Arahatsip and said, "I have brought you here using supernatural powers, but now that you have completed your practice, you can very well go back on your own using your supernatural powers."

Both were overjoyed as they flew back to Venuvana abode to see the Buddha, with Venerable Maudgalyayana in front and Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi at the back, like a young bird following its mother.

Many of the younger Bhikshus who were seniors to Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi had no idea that the elderly Bhikshu had already attained Arahathship and hence continued to provoke him with harsh words. However, Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi was calm and remained silent.

The Buddha, clearly knowing that such conceited acts of the younger Bhikshus would create bad karma, said to them, "The elder Siri-vaddhi has attained liberation from the shackles of life and death. He is now an Arahath who possesses the Three Kinds of Supernormal Cognition and the Six Supernatural Powers, and should be offered sustenance. Do not despise him as doing so will result in bad karma. You should seek forgiveness from him instead." Hearing the advice of the Buddha, all the younger Bhikshus felt ashamed of their actions. They hurriedly sought repentance from Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi respectfully and sought Dharma teachings from him.

So Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi reassured and encouraged the younger Bhikshus and preached the Dharma to them. As he preached, all the younger Bhikshus developed repulsion towards birth and death, and after contemplating single-mindedly, they attained Arahathship and realized the joys of Nirvana.

From this story, we learn that Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi had studied the Sutras, Vinaya, and Sastra in his past life before meeting Buddha in the present life. The Buddha knew that he was familiar with the various Dharma teachings and would definitely be able to liberate himself from Samsara. This situation is akin to a fish that has already caught on to the metaphorical hook of the Dharma teachings. As stated in the Sutras, once a fish is caught on to a hook, it will definitely be caught out of the waters.

Likewise, because we learn the Sutras, Vinaya, and Sastra, and cultivate ourselves according to the Dharma, we will definitely be able to get out of this ocean of suffering.

Similarly, Bhikshu Siri-vaddhi had learnt the Dharma and contemplated the teachings, gaining a profound understanding of the Dharma. With the guidance of Buddha and a good teacher such as Venerable Maudgalyayana, he practiced diligently and attained liberation.

Do we not feel that it is wonderful and a blessing to renounce? Are we not full of praises for renunciation?

Having a beautiful face is inconsequential when desires and attachment lead to rebirth as a worm wriggling in and around a dead corpse.

Offering to the Triple Gem is certainly a meritorious deed. But if greed or even a thought of falsehood arises, we will end up in suffering just like the woman who eats her own flesh, liable to even further degradation to the hell realm.

Even if we had the status of a general, we might still take the lives of others. Again, we would have to contend with endless sufferings.

Even as renunciants, if we do not study the Vinaya teachings, we still have to suffer pains and anguish out of our own ignorance when we give possessions of the Triple Gem to the laity.

If we were hunters, we would kill many animals and end up suffering in return.

And if we were kings, we might make wrong decisions and end up having to suffer painful consequences by taking rebirth in the hell realm or becoming a Makara fish.

Therefore, this world is tainted with impure desires. Since desires are the cause of suffering and unhappiness, it is therefore imperative to renounce the worldly life for a higher path that leads towards liberation and happiness.

If we could renounce or help others to renounce, the merits arising from this act would be immeasurable. Renunciation brings about various merits. In the near future, we can achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death whereas in the distant future, we can realize Buddhahood. In the process, we will realize the Thirty-two Major Marks and Eighty Minor Marks, Ten Powers, Four Types of Fearlessness, Four Forms of Unhindered Wisdom of Eloquence, Eighteen Distinctive Characteristics, Great Loving-Kindness and Compassion, and Complete Wisdom.

A renunciant needs to contemplate on the teachings of Dependent Origination and the Four Noble Truths. Through contemplating, he gains Right Understanding and realizes Nirvana. If we were to obstruct people from renouncing, we would be obstructing them from gaining Right Understanding leading to Nirvana. Obstructing people from renouncing is in fact obstructing them from attaining the Dharma-kaya of a Great Buddha. This is a great sin that we must avoid.

As laypeople, we should help others renounce whenever possible so that they can practice the Eightfold Noble Path towards Nirvana. With the attainment of wholesome Right Dharma, the teachings can be passed on and the lineage of the Buddhas can carry on.

It is our duty to work towards Nirvana. Thus may all sentient beings realize the true nature of lay life and see its demerits. And may all sentient beings tread on the path of renunciation.

~ IN PRAISE OF RENUNCIATION ~



Glossary

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 Suddhavasā 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.

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.

Atman: The essence of things that does not depend on others; it is an intrinsic nature. The non-existence of atman is selflessness.

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.

Bhutatathata: 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 worlds of existence.

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.

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 Powers: Obtained through the practice of the Five Wholesome Faculties: (1) Power of Faith; (2) Power of Effort; (3) Power of Mindfulness; (4) Power of Concentration; (5) Power of Wisdom.

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.

Five Wholesome Faculties: (1) Faculty of Faith; (2) Faculty of Effort; (3) Faculty of Mindfulness; (4) Faculty of Concentration; (5) Faculty of Wisdom.

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.

Four Right Endeavors: (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.

Four Ways of Attaining Samadhi: The basis to attain Samadhi: (1) Desire to practice Concentration; (2) Effort; (3) Mindfulness; (4) Contemplation.

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 worlds of existence.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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 worlds 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.

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

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

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

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

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

Right Effort: To develop the Four Right Endeavors. See also Eightfold Noble Path.

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.

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 Arahatsip. 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 Arahatsip.

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.

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 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 lower realms 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.

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

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

Three obstacles: The three obstacles refer to afflictions (klesavarana), karmic deeds (karmavarana), and karmic retribution (vipakavarana). These obstruct our learning of the Dharma.

Three periods: The past, present, and future.

Three poisons: See Defilements.

Three worlds 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.

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 worlds of existence.

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

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

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 worlds of existence.

About this series

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

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