

Everlasting Happiness,
as Buddha Attains 8

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.

This book focuses on six topics in the following chronology: After discovering who "I" truly am in chapter 1, we are able to correctly identify the type of person each of us are and overcome our defilements using the right approach in chapter 2. In chapter 3, upon realizing the disadvantages of being a woman, we learn how to avoid the pitfalls of such a rebirth. Finally in chapters 4 to 6, as we reflect on the innumerable cycles of rebirth that we had gone through, we realize what true bliss is and this gives us the determination to practice the Four Noble Truths and seek liberation.

This book is the eighth 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)

Women: Why O' Why?

The need to understand women

Why would one take rebirth as a woman? What are the shortcomings of being a woman? How does one cultivate in order to be more benevolent?

There is a frequent saying, "One takes rebirth as a woman because one under-cultivates by 500 lifetimes." Is this saying accurate? No; one may take rebirth as a woman if one under-cultivates by just one lifetime. Yet again, is this accurate? In fact, one takes rebirth as a woman if one does not cultivate just one cause and condition.

If we go deeper to understand the problems, shortcomings, and distresses of being a woman, we will wish to be liberated and not want to be reborn as women again.

Example:

In the Buddha's time, there lived a brahmin named Mahetili. Mahetili's daughter, "Yi Ai", not only looked very beautiful, but was also extremely intelligent. She was considered a rarity in this mundane world.

One day, remembering the records of the brahman scriptures, the brahmin Mahetili thought, "Extremely rare and precious are two types of people. What are the two? One is the Tathagatha, the Truthful One, and the Awakened One. And the other is the *Wheel-Turning Monarch*. If a wheel-turning monarch appears in

the mundane world, the corresponding seven treasures will likewise appear. I now have the maiden treasure (referring to his daughter), who is splendidly good-looking, the foremost amongst all maidens. But in this world, there is currently no wheel-turning monarch. I have heard that King Suddhodana's son, Siddhartha, has renounced, cultivated, and attained the 32 major marks and the 80 minor marks of a great man. If he had lived the mundane life, he would have become the wheel-turning monarch. If he would renounce and cultivate, he would attain Buddhahood. I can offer my daughter to this Sramana!"

With this intent, the brahmin brought his daughter to the World Honored One and beseeched, "May I humbly request you, The Great Sramana, to accept this maiden!"

"I have no need of a woman who is attached to desires", replied the Buddha.

Why did the Buddha say this? It is because Brahmin Mahetili's daughter had neither renounced nor attained the *first stage of fruition*.

However, the brahmin repeatedly made his request, "Sramana! Please accept this maiden! There is no other person in this world worthy of this maiden!"

The Buddha replied, "I accept your kind offer. But I have relinquished my mundane life and no longer have any more mundane desires."

Just then, an elderly bhikshu who was fanning the Buddha said, "I humbly request the Buddha to accept this maiden. If the Tathagatha does not require her, please allow her to attend to me."

Immediately, the Buddha chastised the elderly bhikshu, "A monastic should not desire a woman to attend to him."

Then, the Buddha related a story of their past lives, "There was once a merchant leader who led five hundred merchants out into the sea to look for treasures. They encountered a hurricane which stranded them on an island on which five hundred beautiful women lived. Enraptured by these women, these five hundred merchants decided to live with them, wasting their days on drinking and merriment. Unbeknownst to them, these five hundred women were actually the transformations of raksasa demons. Their leader was exceptionally beautiful and had wanted to bewitch the merchant leader.

"But the merchant leader contemplated, 'Strange is this phenomenon! How it is possible for these women to live by themselves on this deserted island stranded in the middle of this ocean? How do they live? They cannot possibly be women from the human realm! They must be demons in transformations.'

"During their time on every 8th, 14th and 15th day of the month, the heavenly king would descend to the human realms and check on the islands.

"And on that day, the heavenly king was passing by and saw the merchants in danger. 'Is there anyone amongst you who want to cross this ocean? I can lend him a helping hand!'

"The merchant leader had climbed up a tree to look for possible means to escape just as the heavenly king was expressing his offer to help. He saw the heavenly king from afar and called out to the latter.

"We are five hundred merchants and we are all stranded on this dangerous place by the hurricane! I earnestly request you to bring us across this ocean.'

"Sure I will. Gather all your merchants here. I will send all of you across safely', replied the heavenly king.

"Feeling relieved, the merchant leader hurried back and gladly told the other merchants of the heavenly king's promise.

"But all the other merchants unanimously rejected, 'Do not worry, merchant leader! We have worked so hard in the mundane world just for the sake of food and clothing, beauties and wealth. Here on this island we have everything we want in great abundance! We have decided that we will remain on this island for now, and we will leave this place at some other time.'

"The merchant leader warned, 'Please don't be foolish, my friends! It is impossible for any human to inhabit this island in the middle of this ocean. How then is it possible for these women to be human beings?'

"But the merchants were adamant. 'Oh leader! There is no need to persuade us anymore, we have no intention to leave.'

"The merchant leader advised them once more, 'These women are actually raksasa demons. If you do not leave now, they will soon devour you! But since all of you insist on staying, please take good care of yourselves.'

"The five hundred merchants bade farewell to their merchant leader, 'May we trouble you to inform our relatives and tell them that we have been held up and will not be returning home so soon.'

"All of you are totally oblivious to the great danger looming ahead. You are so bewitched and insist on staying behind. You will soon be eaten by the demons!', the merchant leader warned again before leaving the island with the heavenly king.

"Just when the merchant leader had crossed the island safely, the raksasa demons devoured the five hundred merchants.

"The raksasa demon queen told the raksasa demons, 'It is almost impossible for one to escape from the lion's mouth, let alone for one to escape from the land of the raksasa demons.'

"Unable to find the merchant leader, the raksasa demon queen flared up in anger. It transformed into a beautiful woman carrying a child and sought audience with King Brahmadata of Varanasi.

"My husband had deserted me and ran away. Great King, you have to help me resolve this matter.'

"Desirous yearning arose in King Brahmadata when he saw the beautiful woman (who was actually the queen of the raksasa demons). And he said to her, 'Your husband is a heartless and unjust person. How could he abandon you?' So the king sent for the merchant leader.

"Did you really desert such a beautiful wife?' the king said, in an interrogative tone.

"Great King! She is not a human, she is a raksasa demon!' the merchant leader responded.

"Just then, the woman interjected, 'Great King! I have not done any wrong. Not only did he desert me, he even accused me of being a raksasa demon.'

"King Brahmadata, desiring to possess the woman, said, 'If you really do not want her any longer, I will keep her for myself.'

"Great King! Do as you wish! But she is indeed a raksasa demon!'

"But King Brahmadata refused to heed the merchant leader's advice and kept the woman by his side. He invited her to stay in

the palace and doted on her. However, in the end, he was eaten up by the raksasa demon queen."

The Buddha then said to the elderly bhikshu, "Did you know that the merchant leader was Bhikshu Sariputra and the heavenly king was the present Tathagatha? The five hundred merchants who died on the raksasa demons' land were the five hundred bhikshus today. You were King Brahmadata who was eaten by the raksasa demon queen. The raksasa demon queen was none other than this woman standing before us now. Do you again wish to be with her?"

The elderly bhikshu was startled at the words of the Buddha.

Fearful of making the same mistake again, he single-mindedly directed his mind and body for cultivation. Diligently, he cultivated the four foundations of mindfulness and the eightfold noble path. Not long after, he eradicated all mental afflictions and attained Arahatsip.

Nine problems of women

According to the Buddha, a woman is associated with the following problems:

- (i) Filthy body - A woman's body sweats when she exercises. Further, the body excretes body fats and grease.

A woman's body also has many other problems. From the point of puberty, she will have to endure the pains of menstruation cycles. Almost one-sixth of her life is spent on dealing with such pains and menstrual filth. During the phase of menopause, her body feels as if it is on burning fire. When we understand all these, we are better able relate to the sufferings of women, and will not desire to be reborn as women again.

(ii) Women have the habit of scolding, insulting and criticizing others, such as their husbands, children and even pets. She also has the habits of nagging, gossiping, and relating the bad things in her family to others.



(iii) Women lack a sense of gratitude. They may not know to repay the kindness of others. They are temperamental and emotional, and as a result, they easily get angry at others who have been kind to them.

(iv) Women get jealous easily and are calculating over the most trivial matters. Some might even consider harming others over the slightest issues, such as Empress Chi of the *Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance Sutra*, who had plotted against the emperor's concubines.

(v) Women are stingy. They are narrow-minded and uncharitable. They also like to be attached to lots of things. For example, a woman will instigate her husband to demand for a share of the property from his parents or siblings.

(vi) Women enjoy going around places, house visiting, shopping and merry making. They find it very hard to settle down or focus on their minds and bodies.

(vii) Women get annoyed over the slightest matters and will harbor the resentment over small issues.

(viii) Women like to tell lies and make divisive speech. They like to carry tales and gossip, speak inappropriately and speak without careful thinking.



(ix) Women speak without considering carefully the consequences of their speech. As a result, they say many wrong things most of the time. They also do not keep to their promises. They are not consistent in their speech and action.

These are the nine problems of women.

In the "*Discourse on the Total Retention of the Adamantine Mind*" which is also known as "*The Treatise on the Sutra of Adamantine Transcendent Wisdom*", and "*A Commentary on the Adamantine Mind*", it was mentioned that there are five shortcomings of being a woman:

- (i) Inability to be the owner of her own body
- (ii) Inability to be the head of a family
- (iii) Inability to be the leader of people
- (iv) Inability to be the leader of all things
- (v) Inability to be the leader of sages

In "*The Lotus Sutra*" and "*The Mahaprajnaparamita-Sastra*", the Buddha said, "Women (in her female form) are unable to be the Wheel-Turning Monarch, King Sakra, *Mara*, *Brahma King* or even to become the Buddha (the Dharma King)."

Thus, if a woman wants to become a Buddha, she must take rebirth as a man in the life that she is to realize Buddhahood.

Three impediments and ten distresses faced by women

In the "*Sujata Sutra*", the Buddha told Sujata that women face three impediments and ten evils.

The three impediments are:

- (i) In her youth, a woman's life is restricted by her parents.
- (ii) In her midlife, a married woman has to listen to her husband's instructions. She needs the husband's protection and her emotions are dependent upon that of her husband. Needing to be highly dependent on others, she does not have personal freedom.
- (iii) In her old age, she has to endure the mistreatment from unfilial daughters-in-law.

The ten distresses that women face are:

- (i) As the mundane world favors boys over girls, most parents do not dote on girls.
- (ii) As women eventually have to be married away, parents will not spend too much effort and time in raising them.
- (iii) Parents are always worried about the marriage of daughters.
- (iv) Women are timid and get frightened easily.
- (v) When a woman is married away, her parents and her will face the suffering of being separated.

- (vi) A woman's emotion is subject to that of her husband's. When he is unhappy, she feels fearful and worried.
- (vii) When a woman is pregnant, her body is heavy and she has to endure a lot of physical discomfort.
- (viii) When a woman gives birth, she has to go through the pains of labor and even miscarriages.
- (ix) A woman is always 'fearful and worried that she will lose her husband's love.
- (x) Women are suspicious and jealous of others, always gossiping about others, always going through the emotions of joy, anger, sadness and happiness. Her mind and body are hardly at ease.

Eight reasons leading women to be reborn as women

In the "*Sutra on the Production of Buddha Images*", the Buddha said to Maitreya Bodhisattva, "Maitreya! There are eight causes and conditions for a woman to be reborn as a woman. What are they?"

- (i) Desiring for a female form.
- (ii) Attaching to the cravings of a woman.
- (iii) Praising the appearances of other women.
- (iv) Dishonestly covering up her wrong deeds.
- (v) Disliking and mistreating her husband.
- (vi) Thinking about other men who are better than her husband.
- (vii) Being ungrateful towards her benefactors.
- (viii) Adorning herself to enchant others.

If a woman is able to eliminate these eight causes and conditions and construct the Buddha images, she will not be reborn as a

woman but will take rebirth as a man until he attains Buddhahood."

(i) **Desiring for a female form.**

Most women desire the female form and want to be reborn as women again. For this, they will surely continue to be women in their next lives or even end up in the three lower realms.

There are some ignorant women who have said that the Eight Precepts of Respect (specifically for nuns) were not laid down by the Buddha.

However, The Great Buddha had established the Eight Precepts of Respect for the long-term welfare of women. If women were able to respect and honor bhikshus, there will be hope for them to be liberated. On the other hand, women who are disrespectful, arrogant and wrathful towards bhikshus will eventually take rebirths in the lower realms.

As such, if we are able to renounce, we should uphold the Eight Precepts of Respect diligently.

In modern society, people are advocating for equality between the genders. This is in fact a manifestation of the desire for female form.

A woman may become wrathful while learning about the problems of women, and protest that men too have their problems and bad habits. This is an instance which shows that women are actually desirous for a female form, as they have identified with this female form and are hence unhappy to hear criticisms of women. Rather than be chastised and told what to do, they prefer telling others what to do. On the other hand, a man who has learnt the problems of women will know that this is a teaching of dharma. Thus, he will use it to remind himself

not to take rebirth as a woman, as well as to help women be liberated from the female form.

So a woman who understands the sufferings of being a woman should hope to be born as a man in her next life and hope for ultimate liberation instead of fighting for women's rights.

(ii) **Attaching to the cravings of a woman.**

If a woman is still attached to the cravings of a woman, she will continue to take rebirth as a woman in the next life.

(a) Craving for rebirth in a wealthy family.

Unlike men who prefer to work hard through their own efforts, women prefer to be born into wealthy families so that they have people to attend to their needs and not have to labor.

(b) Craving for marriage into a wealthy family.

Some women want to marry rich businessmen or officials to satisfy their materialistic cravings.

(c) Craving for an obedient husband who will listen to her instructions.

A woman desires for a husband who obeys her words.

Currently there is a prevalent saying, "Obey the wife and a man will be rich." Men should not believe in this saying. Why? Because women are very emotional and do not speak in accordance with the dharma teachings.

We should become people with faith. But women have many vexations and most of them have greedy, hateful and/or deluded temperaments, also tending to be indecisive as well.

Therefore, men should exercise judgment and discernment based on faith in the Buddha and the dharma, rather than blindly obeying every word or instruction their wives say.

As wives, we should not command or direct our husbands to follow our every instruction. If we persist, we will continue to be reborn as women in the future.

(d) Craving for many sons.

The more sons a woman has, the more powerful she will be and her status in the family will be secured. If she is unable to control her husband, she will control her sons. If her husband does not listen to her instructions, she will dictate her sons to carry out her instructions.

(e) Craving for control in the family.

A woman wants everything to be done as she says; she has control over her husband and is dictatorial and arrogant.

She will decide on what to buy and where to go. The husband's and the family's finances are under her control; everything is in her command. This is a woman's craving to control her family.

These are the five cravings of a woman. If we can understand this, we will know that we have to repent and regret for such wrongdoings and aim to be liberated.

(iii) **Praising the appearances of other women.**

Some women feel proud of their appearances and spend a lot of time looking at themselves in the mirror. They will even claim that a woman must beautify herself diligently for others to adore her. Some women are always beautifying themselves in

the hope to become more beautiful. But in the privacy of their homes, they do not bother with their appearances at all.

Such women who praise their own good looks or the good looks of other women will continue to be reborn as women in their next lives.

(iv) Dishonestly covering up her wrong deeds.

If a woman is dishonest, she will want to cover up her deeds. Even if she actually hates someone, she pretends to be nice and friendly towards that person. A dishonest woman will put up a false front.

A dishonest woman is also a hypocrite. She will not speak her mind and will not keep to her words. She will hide her wrongdoings and not let others know.

In order to gain the affection of their superiors, some women will flatter them by saying, "Without you, this department will not be able to operate smoothly and the company will not be able to expand and profit." However behind the back of their superiors, they actually criticize them vehemently.

Such women do not keep to their words and are very dishonest. They cover up their misdeeds and when questioned, they deny doing such acts.

(v) Disliking and mistreating her husband with despise.

She dislikes her husband, treats him harshly, restricts his living expenses and controls his movements. She always criticizes her husband as lacking in ability and qualifications, as being ugly and poor. She detests her husband and thinks he is unworthy of her.

(vi) **Thinking about other men who are better than her husband.**

A woman always feels that other men – even if they are husbands of other women – are better than her husband. She finds the husbands of other women to be humorous, successful in career, wealthy, good-looking, gentle, attentive and loving to their wives. "Their husbands are so much better than my husband", she thinks.

Some women might even say that they were blinded by love when they chose their husbands. Women who say such words are actually reproaching their husbands. Women who behave like this will continue to be reborn as women.

(vii) **Being ungrateful towards her benefactors.**

Women seldom (sometimes never) repay the kindness of those who have helped her. They may even betray and hurt them. This is because they are capricious.

(viii) **Adorning herself to enchant others.**



There is an ancient saying, "Women beautify themselves for those they love." This means that a woman will beautify herself so that a man will be enchanted by her deceiving looks, similar to the raksasa demon in the story above. We ought to be cautious not to behave in the same manner as the raksasa demon!

Women who adorn themselves to enchant others will certainly be reborn as women again.

Men who beautify themselves for others to love them will also be born as women in their next lives.

The compassionate and merciful Buddha had wanted women to free themselves from mental and physical sufferings. As such, the Buddha taught women to eliminate all the eight causes and conditions leading to rebirth as women.

If women are able to eliminate all the eight causes and conditions, and construct Buddha images, they will be able to break free from the female form and take rebirth as a man until they attain Buddhahood.

Four reasons leading men to be reborn as women:

- (i) **To address Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyeka Buddhas, Arahats, Anagamins, Sakradagamins and Srotapannas in a disrespectful and belittling feminine voice.**

For example, some male actors cross-dress and act as women. Some even act as women to make jokes of the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, the Pratyeka Buddhas and the Arahats. Doing this will make them take rebirths in the three lower realms and as women in the human realm.

Sentient beings in the world of sensuous desires are preoccupied with desires and thus unable to understand that there are enlightened Noble Ones who have eliminated all desires. On the other hand, as Buddhist disciples we have generated similar intentions of renouncing desires, seeking liberation and even to attain Buddhahood. Hence, we have strong faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When others mock the Triple Gem, we must stand firm and not follow mindlessly. Do not be deluded but be an awakened person with

faith. This way, we will not end up in the three lower realms or as a woman in the future life.

As such, men should be heedful not to do such acts of belittling the Noble Ones in a feminine voice. Similarly, women should reflect upon themselves.

(ii) **To maliciously defame and slander someone who has upheld the precepts purely.**

In our society today, reporters often report on scandalous stories and slander people in their papers. Such actions should not be done. We should not participate in the discussion on the faults or transgressions of precepts committed by others. Furthermore, we should not defame or slander someone who is upholding the precepts diligently because doing so will cause us to be reborn in the three lower realms or in the human realm as women.

(iii) **Flattering others and deceiving others with lies.**

In ancient times, eunuchs would flatter the royalties. Presently, there are people who like to flatter others, curry favor with the superiors in the office, to pleasure those who can benefit them, and to deceive the colleagues. These acts are considered as flattery and are deceitful. Men who do such things will take rebirth as women.

(iv) **Jealous of others better than themselves.**

Men who are jealous of others better than themselves will take rebirth as women.

Example:

There was a man who looked very dignified and attracted the attention of everybody wherever he went. One day, a beautiful lady passed by and the people adverted to the lady. This man felt jealous and thought, "I am so good looking but yet they have

turned their attention to that woman. I must think of a way to get all the attention back again."

He knew that he must accrue a lot of merits for his wish to be fulfilled. As there was a Buddha at that time, he made offerings to the Buddha and made the foolish vow that in the future, he would be reborn as the most beautiful maiden in the heavenly and human realms, adored by all beings there.

If he had made a wholesome aspiration to realize Buddhahood with the merits of offering sustenance to the Buddha, he could have been liberated and attained Buddhahood. But he did not do so. Therefore, when he took rebirth in the heavenly realm, he became the most beautiful female celestial being.

Thereafter, she met six Buddhas and a Pratyeka Buddha, and each time offered sustenance. But it was only until she met Sakyamuni Buddha that she had enough merits to renounce, practice, cultivate, and finally attain fruition.

Through her divine vision, she looked into her past lives and saw the foolish vow she had made that led her to take rebirth as a woman and suffer endlessly.

Even when she became a bhikshuni in this final life, she still had to endure much suffering until she attained Arahatsip and became liberated.

To be jealous of others who are better than us will bring about adverse effects on ourselves.

So is it true that women have under-cultivated by five hundred lifetimes? As we have seen, it is because of not eliminating any one cause and condition that would result in the rebirth as a woman. Men who have committed these four misdeeds will not only take rebirth as a woman in the next life but go on to suffer

in the three lower realms in the future. Hence, we should not mock the Noble Ones with a feminine voice and not defame others who have upheld the precepts diligently. We should also not flatter others with our lies. When others are better than us, we should rejoice rather than feel jealous. This way, we will avoid the pitfalls of rebirth as a woman.

Learning to be benevolent

There are three causes and conditions for a woman to cultivate benevolence:

- (i) Take refuge in the Triple Gem, uphold the precepts, listen to and learn the dharma, offer giving, cultivate the four noble truths, the twelve-links of dependent arising, generate the *bodhicitta* mind, practice the six paramitas, and eventually realize Buddhahood. The Buddha appeared in the form of a man, free from sensuous desires. Thus, we should praise the Buddha and respect the Triple Gem. This is the way women can be liberated from their sufferings. Thus, one must have strong faith in the Triple Gem.

- (ii) Be remorseful about and repent our past unwholesome deeds. If we had been men in our past lives but have now been reborn as women, we should feel remorseful that we had, in our past lives, performed the four deeds leading to rebirth as women.

If we are women, we should deeply repent that we are still fallible to the eight causes and conditions that had and will lead us to be reborn as women.

Hence, we should be respectful to the Triple Gem. We must also be sincere and not cover up any wrongdoings. Instead of desiring the female form, we should seek to abandon the female form and eliminate all desires of a woman. We

should also share the dharma rather than praise the beauty of women. Respect one's husband and be willing to go through thick and thin with him, before eventually seeking for rebirth in the Western Pure World. Do not harbor wishes for marriage into wealthy families but endeavor to generate as many meritorious deeds as one can. We should also always repay kindness with gratitude and never use deceitful means to enchant others to gain their adoration. Respect should be given to everyone regardless of whether they have upheld the precepts. Furthermore, we should give praise to those better than us, rejoice in their merits and never use flattery. This is the true way to repent.

Now that we have learnt the way to be liberated from rebirth as a woman, we should stop tainting the mind with defilements. As we have faith in the Triple Gem and have generated the bodhicitta mind, it will be a waste if we still do not want to abandon the unwholesome habits and shortcomings of women.

- (iii) Construct Buddha images. When we have the right opportunity, we should construct Buddha images. Doing so creates boundless merits as one has profound respect for the Triple Gem.

With these three deeds, we continue to practice mindfulness of the Buddha and meditate on the Buddha's 32 major marks, 80 minor marks, the merits of the Buddha's ten powers, four forms of fearlessness, four kinds of unobstructed cognition, eighteen distinctive abilities of the Buddha, great loving-kindness and great compassion, and the Buddha's all-inclusive cognition.

By meditating on the merits of the Buddha's physical body (*rupa-kaya*) and dharma body (*dharma-kaya*), and keeping in mind the various merits of the Buddha, we will be able to

abandon the female form and be reborn with a male form, finally attaining Buddhahood.

Further, the "*Ratnakuta Sutra – Chapter 111*", mentions eight ways to cultivate a future male form:

- (i) Abandon jealousy;
- (ii) Abandon miserliness;
- (iii) Abandon flattery;
- (iv) Abandon hatred;
- (v) Speak only the truth;
- (vi) Abandon abusive speech;
- (vii) Abandon greed and desires; and
- (viii) Abandon all wrong views.

If a woman practices these eight ways, she will be able to relinquish the female form quickly.

There are eight more methods to be reborn in a male form:

- (i) Be respectful of the Buddha and rejoice in the dharma.
- (ii) Be respectful when offering sustenance to the sangha and practitioners who uphold precepts, cultivate patience and learn the dharma diligently.
- (iii) Abandon attachment to loved ones.
- (iv) Uphold the precepts diligently.
- (v) Generate wholesome thoughts towards all beings.
- (vi) Deepen the aspiration to relinquish the female form.
- (vii) Abide in the bodhicitta mind.

(viii) Meditate on the impermanence and illusory nature of the mundane world.

May we all take rebirth in the Western Pure World in the male form and become the disciples of Amitabha Buddha.



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 Suddhavasa worlds, or "Pure Abodes", from which he will attain Arahatsip and will never return to the human realm. Hence, he is also known as a Non Returner. An Anagamin has abandoned the five lower fetters, out of ten total fetters, that bind beings to the cycle of existence. See also Arahatsip.

Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi: The Supreme and Complete Enlightenment.

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

Arahatsip: 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.

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 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 sufferings: (1) Birth; (2) Old age; (3) Sickness; (4) Death; (5) Separation from the persons and things we love; (6) Contacting with what we dislike; (7) Not getting what we desire; and (8) Fiery agonies from the five aggregates.

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 Diligence; (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 Higher Fetters: These five fetters bind beings to the higher worlds of existence, namely the World of Form and Formless World. (1) Attachment to the physical body (rupa-raga); (2) Clinging on to consciousness (arupa-raga); (3) Restlessness; (4) Conceit; (5) Ignorance. See Ten fetters.

Five lower fetters: These five fetters bind beings to the lower world of existence, also known as the World of Sensuous Desires: (1) Thinking that the body is self or ego; (2) View that self-mortification can lead to liberation; (3) Doubt; (4) Sensuous Desires; (5) Anger. One who has abandoned the five lower fetters has attained the third stage of fruition and is known as an Anagamin. See Ten fetters.

Five Powers: Obtained through the practice of the Five Wholesome Faculties: (1) Power of Faith; (2) Power of Diligence; (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 Diligence; (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) Upeksha 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 causes 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 Arahata path and those who have attained Arahataship.

Four Right 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.

Four Ways of Attaining Samadhi: The basis to attain Samadhi: (1) Desire to practice Concentration; (2) Diligence; (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 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 Efforts. 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 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) Diligence; (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.

Ten bhumis: The ten bhumis are the ten stages of Bodhisattvahood. A Bodhisattva has to complete all ten stages before he can become a Buddha.

Ten fetters: The ten fetters bind beings to the cycle of existence in the three worlds. One who has abandoned the ten fetters has attained the fourth stage of fruition and is known as an Arahatsip. The ten fetters consist of the five lower fetters and the five higher fetters: (1) Thinking that the body is self or ego; (2) View that self-mortification can lead to liberation; (3) Doubt; (4) Sensuous Desires; (5) Anger; (6) Attachment

to the physical body (rupa-raga); (7) Clinging on to consciousness (arupa-raga); (8) Restlessness; (9) Conceit; (10) Ignorance.

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.

Thirty-Seven Practices to attain Enlightenment: The thirty-seven practices refer to Four Foundations of Mindfulness, Four Right Efforts, Four Ways of Attaining Samadhi, Five Wholesome Faculties, Five Powers, Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and Eightfold Noble Path.

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.

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