

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)

The Ideal Pursuit in Life

My ideal pursuit

What is the ideal pursuit in life? What should I be looking for?

It is wise should our answers be that the ideal pursuit is to end the cycles of rebirth, and to realize the wonderful teachings on the Four Noble Truths.

Example:

When we buy jades, we will strive to choose a piece of jade that is flawless. The analogy of buying a flawed jade piece is likened to the taking of rebirth in the heavenly realm. Though there is heavenly bliss, the Buddha had said that this is not the true and ultimate happiness.

If we are wise, we will not want to buy a piece of flawed jade.

So what is akin to a flawless piece of jade that we are seeking for? It is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (the third of the four noble truths); the realization of the four types of happiness, namely: (i) the happiness of respite, (ii) the happiness of being a sramana, (iii) the happiness of Nirvana, and (iv) the happiness of Enlightenment.

What are the suffering and happiness that are referred to in the four noble truths? What is the suffering that we are ending and what is the happiness that we are aiming for?

(i) **The Hell Realm: Is there any happiness in the Hell Realm?**

The suffering in the hell realm is limitless. Sentient beings in the hell realm have suffered inexorable pains of scaling treacherous sword mountains and being boiled live in heated cauldrons of oil. The beings in the Hell of Ashen-River are repeatedly washed up and flushed down the river mercilessly, as well as being tossed about recklessly from left to right and right to left. There is absolutely no happiness to experience there.

Beings in the Hell of Boiling Feces suffer from the most unbearably pungent smells and are bitten all over by worms.

In the Avici Hell, the sentient beings are either burnt by fires or are crushed by huge boulders. The fire is all engulfing, leaving the sentient beings entrapped within flames. Evidently, the suffering in the Avici Hell is unspeakably immense.

In the Havava Hell, the suffering is equally indescribable; there is simply no happiness there to speak of.

All the hells in the hell realm are hence akin to poor pieces of jades that are similarly undesirable.

(ii) **Animals have to face the pain of being preyed upon and eaten alive.**

Tadpoles in winter may encounter sudden death if water is lacking. Even if they are grown as frogs, they may be swallowed alive by snakes.

Similarly, fishes are caught and eaten by human beings; birds flying in the sky can be attacked and preyed on by the larger birds, wild beasts, or even netted by human beings to be grilled for food. Hence, isn't an animal's life filled with suffering?

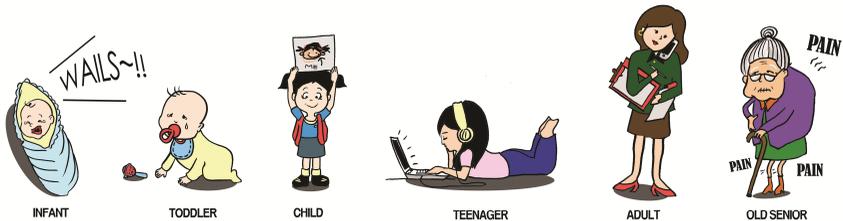
In the food chain, the rat is eaten by the weasel, the weasel eaten by the fox, and the fox in turn is eaten by the tiger. The smaller and weaker animals are eaten by the bigger and stronger creatures. Isn't this suffering?

As illustrated above, the animal realm is filled with the suffering of being swallowed alive.

(iii) **The Hungry Ghost Realm:**

Sentient beings in the hungry ghost realm have throats as thin as needles and stomachs as big as drums. Whatever food that had been placed in their mouths will burst into flames and turn into ashes. They are very hungry yet unable to ingest any food. The suffering of hunger is very immense for them.

(iv) **The Human Realm:**



Is it happy to be a human being? If we were to look and examine our human lives deeply, we would find that it is not joyous being a human being. A wise person would say, "I do not want to become a human being again in my next life!"

The Buddha is very compassionate. He knew that sentient beings suffer immensely, so he showed us the way to take rebirth in the Western Pure World where we can meet the Buddha and listen to the dharma to realize liberation.

(v) **The Heavenly Realm:**

Should we be pursuing rebirths in the heavenly realm? What are the sufferings and the joys in the heavenly realm?

Kama Loka (Heaven of Sensuous Desires):

Heavenly beings have to leave their heavenly abode when their lives there expire. The suffering that the heavenly beings undergo upon the expiration of their heavenly lives comes from having to be separated from persons and things that they love.

Even after Venerable Nanda had renounced his worldly life, he still missed his wife. Knowing his suffering, the compassionate Buddha brought Venerable Nanda to the heavenly realm, where Venerable Nanda came upon a delightful heavenly sight consisting of a group of 500 celestial maidens. The Buddha then brought Venerable Nanda to the hell realm to witness the burning great fires of hell, of which he had to bear after the expiration of lives in the human and heavenly realms. Only then did Venerable Nanda realize that neither the human nor the heavenly realm is desirable.

This insight led Venerable Nanda to practice more diligently toward the attaining of Nirvana so that he could eventually avoid taking rebirth in the tortuous hell realm.

After attaining Arahatsip, Venerable Nanda went to see the Buddha and said, "World-Honored One, I had previously wanted to take rebirth in the heaven where the 500 celestial maidens lived. I now want to relinquish that aspiration, for I have seen that at the expiration of my heavenly life, I will fall into the hell realm to suffer."

To exemplify the realization of this point, Venerable Nanda delivered the following verse:

*"Of little preciousness is the wealth gained in life,
Nor forever lasting is the life in heavens.
Immense is the suffering in hell,
Blissful is the peace of Nirvana!"*

Thus, although there are some joys to be experienced in the Kama Loka, this is short-lived and is ultimately suffering.

Rupa Loka (World of Form):

Heavenly beings in the Rupa Loka experience a lot more joy, but one day, they too will fall into the Kama Loka or the three lower realms upon their deaths.

Example:

Long ago in Magadha, there lived a brahmin by the name of Nigaruddha who had been a diligent practitioner in his past lives. He was knowledgeable, wise and affluent, but had no sons.

For many years he prayed to a tree god for sons. But his prayers had been to no avail. One day, Nigaruddha became so frustrated and said angrily to the tree god, "I have been praying to you for a son all this while. But you haven't been answering my prayers. I will pray to you for only another seven days. If my prayers are not answered by then, I will chop this tree down and burn it!"

The tree god became very worried when he heard this. Hurriedly, the tree god reported this incident to the Four *Deva* Kings who in turn informed King Sakra. Using his divine eye, King Sakra scanned around Jampu Dvipa but could not find anyone who had the merits and benevolence to be reborn as Nigaruddha's son. So King Sakra went to see the Brahma King.

The Brahma King scanned the Brahma Heaven using his divine eye and saw a suitable heavenly being (the past life of Venerable Kasyapa) whose life in the First Dhyana Heaven was nearing expiration.

"Your life here will end soon. Go take rebirth in the human realm as the son of the brahmin Nigaruddha", said the Brahma King to the heavenly being.

But this heavenly being replied, "Brahmins are attached to many wrong views. I do not want to be born into a brahmin family. I want to renounce to end the cycle of birth and death."

Hearing this, King Sakra and the Brahma King assured him, "Do not worry. Even after you have taken rebirth in the human realm, we will continue to protect you so that their wrong views will not delude you. We will make sure that you are able to renounce." With the promises of King Sakra and the Brahma King, the heavenly being finally agreed to take rebirth in the brahmin's family.

This story shows that even heavenly beings in the Rupa Loka will have to undergo the suffering of cyclic existence.

Arupa Loka (Formless World):

Although the consciousness of a heavenly being in the Arupa Loka does not vacillate, it will still rise and cease and the heavenly being have to suffer rounds of cyclic existence.

Example:

There was once a very wise woman who did not encounter a good teacher. At that time, there was a foolish brahmin who taught her, "Everything is empty; there is nothing."

This woman, thinking that she had found the answer to her question, focused her mind on nothing. When her life ended, she took rebirth in the Heaven of Nothingness. But after 60,000 great kalpas, her life ended and she fell straight to the Kama Loka and took rebirth as a sow.

When the Buddha and Venerable Ananda passed by the pigsty and saw the sow feeding her five young piglets, the Buddha smiled. When they arrived back at the monastery, Venerable Ananda asked the Buddha, "Why did the World Honored One smile while passing by the pigsty?"

The World Honored One said, "Did you see the mother pig with the five young piglets? In its previous life, the mother pig met a teacher who did not teach her the proper dharma and hence she took rebirth as a pig. It is a shame that she did not meet a virtuous companion and listened to the right dharma, for if she did, she would have been liberated."

From this story, we know that even heavenly beings in the Arupa Loka will eventually descend to the lower realms upon the expiration of their heavenly lives.

Although there is joy in the three worlds, it is not lasting. Knowing this, we should direct our pursuit to the ultimate, pure happiness of Nirvana.

Example:

On the side of Mount Sumeru was a huge pond where a large naga once lived and practiced the Way.

One day, a man came by the pond and stood at the edge of the pond, holding an alms bowl filled with water. He focused on the naga and started to chant a mantra. At the end of the chant, the water in the pond began boiling. The heat from the boiling water

was so unbearable that the large naga flew out of the scalding waters to the mid-point of Mount Sumeru.

The man, however, continued chanting the mantra, heating up Mount Sumeru from its bottom all through to its peak. The worried naga, which by now had flown to the top of Mount Sumeru, knew that the fiery flames are imminent and searched frantically for a sanctuary. But there seems to be no safe place for him to hide!

Just then, the large naga noticed the water in the alms bowl held by the man and decided that it would be a safe place to hide in. However, as the naga was so huge compared to the alms bowl, it had no choice but to transform itself into a small naga before it swooped right into the bowl of cool water, residing in its newfound safe haven.

The Buddha likened the mantra to the dharma, the man who chants the mantra as the Tathagatha, the alms bowl as representing the sangha, the cool water in the alms bowl as a metaphor for the ultimate peace and joy of Nirvana, the big naga as symbolic of the laity, and the boiling pond as representative of the five sensual desires.

Before a laity can be admitted into the sangha, he must first learn to be polite and humble and put down his pride. Only after he has put aside all his negative traits can he truly enjoy the nectar of pure bliss.

The boiling water in the pond symbolizes the five sensual desires. We fight over these desires and all kinds of sense objects, stoking more fires of mental afflictions and impermanence of the Kama Loka.

Now that we understand this, we should hurriedly seek respite from these fires at the mid-point of Mount Sumeru. The mid-

point of Mount Sumeru symbolizes Rupa Loka, which is also burning with the fires of impermanence. Seeing the insecurity of the Rupa Loka, we continue to practice meditative contemplations of the Arupa Loka. However, the Buddha had told us that even the Arupa Loka is not free from the fires of impermanence.

Just like the naga who saw no other true refuge except in the bowl of cool water, we return to the dharma and establish ourselves in the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four ways of attaining samadhi, the five wholesome faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eightfold noble path to attain Nirvana. Thus, what is the ultimate happiness, the flawless piece of jade that we are seeking? It is none other than Nirvana.

In sum, sentient beings attached to the Arupa Loka, Rupa Loka and the sensuous world of Kama Loka have to suffer mental afflictions and impermanence. However, by awakening to the four noble truths, sentient beings are able to obtain stability and ease and be liberated from cyclic existence.

But the path to liberation is progressive. Therefore, The Great Compassionate Buddha begins to expound the dharma by telling us about the benefits and joy of giving, upholding the precepts, to take rebirth in the heavenly realm. Having understood these and acquiring the right knowledge and right view, we are able to realise that taking rebirth in the human realm and the heavenly realm is also impermanent. Knowing that desires are impure, we seek to be liberated from the five desires and begin to practice the teachings of the Buddha. The right way to pursue liberation is to renounce to be a monastic and practice the four noble truths to attain Arahatsip.

If we think that it is the nature of human beings to suffer, and that there can be no changes to this suffering, then we can only

be entrapped within the rounds of cyclic existence and not be able to liberate ourselves.

Example:

In a cemetery, there once lived a wild jackal that fed off corpses and carcasses. One morning, the jackal went into the village in search for food and was discovered by the villagers.

"Oh no! I've been discovered and there are no other means of escape but to feign death," it thought. The jackal laid on the ground and pretended to be dead, hoping that no one would notice it.

Just then, a villager walked by and saw the jackal. As he needed its tail, the villager chopped off the jackal's tail and returned home to put the tail to use.

Although the jackal was suffering from immense pain, it thought, "Never mind that my tail has been cut off. I still have my body. I shall bear with this pain."

Soon after, another villager passed by and saw that the jackal's ears were in good state. So he used a knife to cut off the jackal's ears and left.

"If I continue playing dead here and bear with this pain, rather than liberate myself from any further suffering, these people might not just want my tail and ears but my heart as well—I might just lose my whole life! I'd better run now!" the jackal thought. Mastering all the remaining strength it had, it jumped up and dashed away from the village as fast as it could. No one was able to catch up with its speed that it was running.

We are just like the jackal, having suffered pains and sufferings of the six realms. If we do not break free from cyclic existence, we may descend into the hell realms to suffer immeasurably.

Therefore, we should exert all our efforts and run for our liberation!

Buddha's teachings: one step at a time

The Buddha first taught us the law of cause-and-effect; wholesome deeds beget wholesome consequences, while unwholesome deeds beget unwholesome consequence. It is therefore important for us to first cultivate and develop right view and right understanding.

Once right view and right understanding are developed, the next step for us is to practice giving, uphold the precepts, and learn the teachings leading to rebirth in the heavenly realms.

We do not stop here, but move further to understand the impurities of five desires. Although taking rebirths in the human or heavenly realms are considered aspirations that are more desirable than rebirths in the three lower realms, we should ultimately still aspire to be liberated from samsara.

Therefore, the way forward is for us to renounce and purify ourselves of the five desires through the true understanding of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way to the end of suffering. When we know suffering, we can liberate ourselves from it. When we know the cause of suffering, we can eliminate it. When we know the cessation of suffering, we can strive to realize it. And when we know the way to the end of suffering, we practice it. This is the entire progressive order of the Buddha's teachings.

In the "*Lotus Sutra*", the Buddha said that the true purpose of the World Honored One arising in this mundane world is to enable all sentient beings to realize Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi.

The Buddha expounded the dharma in a progressive order. The Bodhisattva Vehicle builds on the foundation of the Sravaka

Vehicle. The Sravaka Vehicle leads to the eradication of mental afflictions, building on the law of cause-and-effect for guiding us away from unwholesomeness. The Sravaka Vehicle would give praise to the Bodhisattva Vehicle. If the practitioners of the Bodhisattva Vehicle do not generate the Bodhicitta mind to realize Buddhahood, there will not be any Sravaka Vehicle since only the Buddha is able to teach and guide Arahats. The Buddha is a practitioner of the Bodhisattva Vehicle, and thus a Sravaka practitioner would give praise to a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva would likewise affirm a Sravaka practitioner and the good people in the mundane world.

When we put together the Buddha's teachings and the stages of dharma practice in a progressive manner, we will be certain that the Buddha will affirm us and that the community of Buddha's disciples will respect each other. Through mutual respect and affirmation, we will be able to ensure the continuation of the Buddha's ministry.

Relationship between sentient beings and the Four Noble Truths

We are deluded without the dharma, unable to get out of suffering and the repeated cycle of birth and death. But with the dharma, we find ourselves having the opportunity to break free.

Whenever we encounter suffering, we try to substitute it with some other short-lived happiness without truly identifying the root cause of our suffering. When we are poor, we do not reflect on the causes of our poverty but instead seek for money through various means. If we are lacking in virtues and morals, we may even resort to robbing others. This is the suffering of poverty, but most of us only know to seek for wealth to replace this suffering. Very rarely do we observe our impoverished state through the law of cause-and-effect.

A person born into a poor family would yearn to be rich. He would study hard to get a well-paying job, fight for status and wealth in order to break free from the suffering of poverty. From the worldly perspective, all these may seem the right things to do. However, the Dharma leads us to find the true causes of our suffering so that we can be truly liberated, rather than using happiness to substitute the suffering.

Most people may say, "Every cloud has a silver lining! Happiness will certainly come when suffering ends!" But this is not a right view – happiness may or may not come when suffering ends. What will happen if we endure our suffering till the end? Will we descend to the hell realm? If what most people say is true, then there should always be happiness when suffering ends and there should be no one taking rebirths in the hell realm. But is this really the case? In actuality, there is a high chance that we would end up taking rebirth in the hell realm. Why is this so?

Suffering and happiness are the results of many different causes and conditions. If there is no cause and condition for happiness, then it will be impossible to receive happiness. Therefore, happiness does not necessarily follow when suffering ends.

If we were wise, we would cultivate the cause and conditions for true happiness and eliminate the cause and conditions for all sufferings. We would not seek the happiness of the human realm, the heavenly realm, the realm of form nor the formless realm. But if we cultivate a wholesome mind, we would still be able to enjoy the meritorious rewards of taking rebirth in the human realm or in the heavenly realm though we do not seek for it. This is a very subtle aspect of the law of cause-and-effect.

Therefore, while practicing to seek liberation and attain Nirvana, the meritorious rewards of taking rebirth in the human realm and the heavenly realms will bear fruits first.

All the while, we have been wrongly perceiving what is impermanent to be permanent, wrongly believing that the worldly joy we experience is permanent and everlasting. We incorrectly think that our identities, statuses and powers are forever lasting, when in fact they are all impermanent.

Some day we will have to part with our loved ones either through deaths or separations. We will also lose our wealth, health, youth and beauty. But we often do not see the truth of impermanence. We go about consuming all kinds of health products to retain our health and beauty, only to realize that all these have been done in vain, and are subject to the law of impermanence.

The Noble Truth of Suffering reveals that happiness is impermanent and not everlasting.

But we do not know this truth and think that a permanent happiness will certainly come when suffering ends. Deluded, we may even be willing to endure all kinds of suffering as long as we experience some bits of fleeting happiness. Or we may even hope to be reborn into this world again to enjoy life.

If we understand the Noble Truth of Suffering and realize that this is suffering, we will not want to take rebirth in the human realm to suffer once more again.

Example 1:

We feel great joy when a child is born. But is life itself happy? Life is actually an image of suffering, but we wrongly see it as being joyful. We have lived through countless painful experiences in life but we still (wrongly) wish for others to experience such sufferings. If we are able to see through our delusion and really observe the world, we will wish to be liberated from this suffering.

Example 2:

When we are bored, we go around visiting friends and relatives, gossiping or shopping at many different places. Does doing all these bring us true happiness? At first, we may seem to derive some joy in doing these. But at the end of the day, we still find ourselves bored and lonesome. So doing all these hasn't really eliminated the root cause of our suffering, has it?

Example 3:

Due to ignorance, we gather and accumulate *eight sufferings*, namely: the suffering of birth; of old age; of sickness; of death; of separation from our loved ones; of contacting with what we dislike; of not getting what we desire; and fiery agonies from the five aggregates. We have also accumulated the suffering of taking rebirth in the six realms. Yet we do not even know.

There was once a husband whose wife had passed away. Overwhelmed by the death he bemoaned to the lifeless corpse, "Why have you died so early, leaving me behind all alone?" This is the suffering experienced when we are separated from the persons and things which we love. The man had wrongly thought that his wife had caused his suffering. But in fact, he suffered because of the attachment he had for her. Just like the man, we do not know the cause of our own suffering but often blame others for it.

Example 4:

What is "suffering of contacting with what we dislike"? Is it that we suffer because people do not listen to what we say? No. While there may be many people who do not listen to what we say, we do not hate or dislike them, except for a selective few. Therefore, we suffer because we bear hatred and are angry at these selective few.

Example 5:

We blame others for the suffering we experience when we do not get what we want, accusing them of not being cooperative with us. But in fact, we suffer because we expect something in return from them.

A supervisor feels unhappy when his subordinates are not cooperative. Why? Because the supervisor expects his subordinates to be cooperative with him.

If we do not expect anything at all, we will know how to cooperate with others with a pure and calm mind to meet their needs.

Example 6:

Who gives us the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death? It is actually our own karma.

But we go about complaining about the quality of the air we breathe in and the water we drink. When we are sick, we blame our hospitals for not being able to attend to our ailments. When we die, we blame it on the doctors for their medical incompetence. We rarely reflect that all these are due to our own karma and the law of impermanence.

Therefore, arising from ignorance are endless chaos, problems and sufferings created for self and others. Only if we were to observe deeply, using the dharma to reflect on ourselves, may we become the wise and noble ones.

Don't mistake brass for gold!

What have we wrongly done to seek for liberation and happiness?

Example 1:

Some of us believe that happiness is when we possess wealth and fame, enjoy good food, live in huge lavish mansions, and drive big cars.

Example 2:

Some of us think that happiness is rewarding ourselves with a sumptuous feast after a day of hard work. When we eat, we tend to over-eat, ending up with stomach upsets or intestinal pains. We also fret over putting on weight. How is this happiness when there are so many negative consequences that follow?

Evidently, many of us have wrongly taken the five desires as happiness. But true happiness comes from complete freedom from mental afflictions and all kinds of suffering. If we are able to eradicate our mental afflictions and defilements in this life, we will no longer generate a new bodily form to have to endure suffering in the next life.

Example 3:

There are people who have understood that the five desires do not bring happiness and so they practice meditation, wrongly thinking that it is happiest to abide in the states of meditation. While meditative joy is quite laudable, they do not realize that this meditative joy will also arise and cease and is not the true and ultimate happiness.

Example 4:

Some of us spend a lot of time and resources keeping our bodies healthy so as to gain wealth, fame, power and status. As such,

we go about observing nutritional wellness, exercising, doing chi-gong etc. We wrongly think that diligently working on maintaining our health and bodies in the optimal states is the happiest.

However, doing all of these will not free us from the law of impermanence. The Buddha told us that only if we understand the cause of suffering will we be able to liberate ourselves and realize the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

And what is the way for truly eliminating the cause of suffering? It is the eightfold noble path, which encompasses the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four ways of attaining samadhi, the five wholesome faculties, the five powers, and the seven factors of enlightenment. This is the only path to liberation. This is the path of ancient sages.

By walking on this path, we will one day realize the happiness of respite, the joy of being a Sramana, the bliss of Nirvana, and the happiness of enlightenment—the truly calm and peaceful destination.

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.

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 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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"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.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all who have contributed to the translation of this series of works into English.

Title: EVERLASTING HAPPINESS, AS BUDDHA ATTAINS 8
Presenter: Venerable Da Shi
Publisher: Miao You Pu Ti Yuan (Singapore)
Address: 15 Lorong 29 Geylang
#02-01 PTH Building
Singapore 388069
Contact: (65) 67496460
Website: www.mypty.sg
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Publish date: Dec 2016
ISBN: 978-981-11-1499-1

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