

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)

Once a Mistake, Twice a Fool

Learning from our mistakes

"Once a mistake, twice a fool" suggests that we have to learn from our mistakes and not commit them again. In the time of the Buddha, each precept was established to prevent bhikshus from repeating the same mistake. A wise person is always willing to learn from mistakes and be mindful not to do the same wrongs again.

Example:

There was a man who fell into a pothole as he was not attentive and did not notice the deep pothole lying ahead. He was angry and grumpy and blamed the person who had dug the hole. Unbelievably, he fell thrice into the same pothole. At last, he began to reflect and realized that no one was to be blamed on the cause of his fall except himself. After those few incidents, he was more careful and paid closer attention whenever he approached the pothole.

This scenario is about learning from our mistakes through reflecting upon ourselves. Falling into the same pothole is likened to the repeated cycles of birth and death in the three worlds, which is extremely long and entails repeated struggles to extricate oneself from it. Knowing this suffering, we should not be foolish enough to take rebirths again. Importantly, we should also understand that the cause of the fall was none other than our own ignorance and defilements. Hence, we should not blame others for it.

Entering the holy stream

There are four causes and conditions that lead us to enter the holy stream as a Srotapanna:

- (1) Draw near to and associate with virtuous companions;
- (2) Listen to and learn the dharma;
- (3) Reflect on the dharma heard and learnt; and
- (4) Practice and purify ourselves in accordance with the progressive order of the dharma.

(1) Draw near to and associate with virtuous companions.

With the guidance of virtuous companions, we will be able to develop faith in the Triple Gem and set our practice in the right direction. We will also be able to uphold the precepts, practice meditation, develop our wisdom, eradicate our vexations and attain liberation.

(2) Listen to and learn the dharma.

The main purpose of drawing near to virtuous companions is for us to learn the dharma. The Buddha's teachings are diverse and limitless. When we learn the dharma, we will be able to develop right view and right understanding, and understand more about giving and upholding precepts. It also develops our wisdom to explore and learn the four noble truths.

(3) Reflect on the dharma heard and learnt.

After learning the dharma, we will have to reflect on it, just like how we need to digest our food after eating to obtain its nutrients. If we do not contemplate on the dharma that we have learnt, we will not be able to rely on it to solve the problems that we meet in life.

Example:

In one martial arts story, there was a talented fighter whose martial arts skills were just mediocre. One day, he found a snow lotus from Tianshan. After eating this elixir, he gained an inner strength that is equivalent to 60 years of practice. But he was unable to control this sudden increase in strength. So at that juncture, he settled his inner flows of energies and tried to control it. After a few tries, he had a breakthrough and not only had his inner strength controlled but also became more skillful. And he was thereafter able to use his inner strength at his free will.

Similarly, after listening to and learning about the dharma, our wisdom will be deeper than others who do not learn the dharma. But if we do not contemplate on what we have learnt, it is just like having the additional 60 years of inner strength but not being able to use it appropriately to solve the problems that we meet in life wisely.

(4) Practice and purify ourselves in accordance with the progressive order of the dharma.

When we practice in a progressive order, we will be able to realize the four fruitions or even Buddhahood.

The Buddha had emphasized two important causes and conditions that will enhance our Right View, namely,

- (i) to listen to and learn the dharma; and
- (ii) to reflect on the dharma heard and learnt.

Hence, these two causes and conditions are critical.



The Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths are the fundamental teaching of the Buddha, which he had taught from the time he first expounded the dharma to the five bhikshus at Sarnath, till just before his Parinirvana, where The Buddha had guided Subhadra to his liberation.

The *Sutra on the Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching* says:

*"The moon may be blazing; the sun may turn cold.
But the Four Noble Truths proclaimed by the Buddha,
could never be otherwise."*

The truth of the "Four Noble Truths" cannot be refuted. If we practice according to the four noble truths, we will be able to eradicate all vexations and realize Nirvana.

The word "Four" in the term "Four Noble Truths" refers to the following:

- (1) The Noble Truth of suffering;
- (2) The Noble Truth of the cause of suffering;
- (3) The Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering; and
- (4) The Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

(1) The Noble Truth of Suffering

Besides the suffering of the cycle of birth and death in the six realms, we have to endure the eight sufferings of birth; old age; sickness; death; separation from the persons and things we love; association with what we dislike; not getting what we want; and the fiery agonies from the five aggregates.

The Noble Truth of Suffering has four characteristics: (i) impermanence; (ii) suffering; (iii) not-mine; and (iv) egoless-ness. Suffering is evident from observing the five aggregates which are impermanent in that they arise and cease endlessly. We are unable to control these five aggregates and cannot make them to be at ease, thus we say that they are egoless. As the five aggregates arise and cease according to causes and conditions, they are ultimately not-mine. This is the primal essence of the five aggregates of the body and mind.

(2) The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering

The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering is defilement. When defilements continue to accumulate, there will arise a future life. The four characteristics of the Cause of Suffering are: (i) cause; (ii) condition; (iii) accumulation; and (iv) arising.

(3) The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering tells us that when the cause of the suffering ceases, so does suffering. When

ignorance ceases, the suffering from the five aggregates (body and mind) also ceases. Hence, eradicating the cause of suffering will lead to the end of suffering.

An ancient saying goes:

*"Trees wish for stillness,
yet the winds cease to halt.
Sons yearn to show their gratitude,
yet their parents are here no more."*

The trees wish to be still, but the wind keeps blowing. How do we stop the trees from moving? If there are no trees, everything will be still and tranquil.

Likewise, when all vexations have been eradicated, there will not be another set of five aggregates that arise in the future. This is the sublime tranquility, the sublime quietude! The four characteristics of the Cessation of Suffering are therefore: (i) cessation; (ii) serenity; (iii) wondrous; and (iv) liberation.

(4) The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering

The Eightfold Noble Path is the only way that will lead us to the cessation of all sufferings, bringing us to Nirvana. This is the path taken by the ancient sages who had all realized Nirvana. The four characteristics of this Noble Truth are that: (i) it is a navigable path towards liberation; (ii) it is everlasting and eternally true; (iii) it is realizable with cultivation and practice; and (iv) it is the path to liberation from the three worlds.

What is meant by "Noble"?

The truths are called the "Four Noble Truths" rather than the "Four Truths" because only the Noble Ones of the four fruitions (Srotapannas, Sakradagamins, Anagamins, Arahats),

Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas have awakened to these four truths.

Unlike the Noble Ones, we have not awakened to the four noble truths, not knowing that suffering arises and falls due to causes and conditions.

What is meant by "Truth"?

The word "Truth" means timelessly real, true and unchanging across the three spans of time (past, present and future).

What we read in the news or watch on the television are all events of the past. Elections and politics are events of yesteryears. Even the emperors of ancient China are people of the past. The rise and falls of ancient kingdoms are now a matter of history. Are we then able to call these the Truth? No, because they are matters of the past, not of the present or the future. They are not timelessly real.

But the suffering we experience is very real. Whether in the past, present or future, we will have to undergo the eight kinds of suffering. Our suffering arises because of the deeds done under the influence of ignorance. This Noble Truth of Suffering applies to all sentient beings of the ten directions.

This Truth does not change whether or not there is a Buddha in this world. If we can understand this, we will realize the preciousness of the four noble truths.

If we can eradicate our defilements, we will become Noble Ones who are free from suffering. By practicing the timeless eightfold noble path, we can realize liberation. Cessation is a timeless truth.

Merits of awakening to the Four Noble Truths

A sick man, when cured by his doctor, will feel grateful towards the doctor. Showing gratitude is a basic criterion of being human and is a virtue of one who is learning the dharma.

A doctor cures only our body in this life, relieving us from physical suffering momentarily. But The Great Buddha cures both our body and mind, relieving us from the suffering of rebirths forever. The four noble truths taught by the Buddha are like the cures for our sicknesses. The *four pairs and eight categories of Sravaka practitioners* are like dedicated nurses looking after us, helping us to realize the bliss of ultimate liberation from suffering. Therefore, we are very grateful to the Triple Gem.

If the Buddha had not come to the saha world to teach the four noble truths, we would never have the opportunity to be liberated from the cycles of birth and death. At best, we would only take rebirth as a kind person in the human realm. The merits of awakening to the four noble truths are that all sentient beings can be liberated from sufferings. If we can truly understand this, we would be very willing to learn and practice the four noble truths, to be acquainted with the Triple Gem, to listen to and learn the dharma, and finally to renounce our worldly life. Fundamentally, the exposition of the four noble truths is for the bhikshus to practice.

When a bhikshu listens to and learns the four noble truths, he will first eliminate the suffering and vexations that bind him to the Kama Loka. The suffering and vexations that bind sentient beings to the Kama Loka are like the gates of a city. Sentient beings have been living behind these gates for a very long time and have never stepped out of it before. If the bhikshu is able to eliminate the *five lower fetters*, he will be able to break through these gates.

Once the gates are broken, the next obstacle to overcome is a deep moat surrounding the city. The bhikshu will continue to practice in order to eliminate the *five higher fetters*. Once all the *ten fetters* have been eliminated, the bhikshu will reach the calm and serene state of mind.

Only through awakening to the four noble truths can we liberate ourselves from the four Maras; Mara of death (mrtya-mara), Mara of defilements (klesa-mara), Mara of five aggregates (skandha-mara), the King of Mara of the *Paranirmita Vasavartin Heaven* (devaputramara).

After the Buddha's Parinirvana, his monastic disciples who had realized and understood the dharma continued to share their knowledge and understanding with us, giving us the opportunity to develop right view and right understanding.

To truly repay the debt of gratitude we owe to the Triple Gem is to renounce and dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to the practice, so that we can realize Buddhahood to liberate and guide other sentient beings.



The first five bhikshus awakened to the Four Noble Truths

The Buddha expounded the Four Noble Truths, also known as the Wheel of Dharma, in three tiers.

(a) For sentient beings with good caliber, The Buddha directed the Wheels of Dharma to them as follows:

*"Such is suffering;
Oppressive.
Such is the cause of suffering;
Accumulative.
Such is the cessation of suffering,
Realizable.
Such is the path to the end of suffering,
Walkable."*

Upon hearing this dharma, Venerable Kaundinya realized enlightenment immediately.

(b) For sentient beings with mediocre caliber, The Buddha advised them thus:

*"Such is suffering;
To be known.
Such is the cause of the suffering;
To be eliminated.
Such is cessation of suffering;
To be realized;
Such is the path to the end of suffering;
To be walked."*

The Buddha taught them these dharma to establish their faith in the noble truths. The two bhikshus from Rajagaha who were attached to the joys and desires were liberated upon hearing this teaching.

(c) For the feeble-minded sentient beings who do not have strong faith in the dharma, The Buddha proved these truths to them by elaborating his personal examples:

*"Such is suffering;
I've had it known.
Such is the cause of suffering;
I've had it abandoned.
Such is the cessation of suffering;
I've had it realized.
Such is the path to the end of suffering;
I've had it walked."*

This is how The Buddha eliminated the disbeliefs of the two bhikshus who had hoped to take rebirths in the *Brahma World*, guiding them in this manner.

(A) The four characteristics of suffering: Impermanence, Suffering, Not-mine, Egoless-ness.

The body and mind are impermanent, suffering, not-mine, and ego-less. Knowing suffering, we would wish to abandon suffering. Deeply observing the truth about the body and mind, we may gradually cultivate wisdom. Ultimately when true understanding is developed, wisdom is attained.

(B) The four characteristics of the cause of suffering: cause, condition, accumulation, arising.

Ignorance is the cause of suffering. Hence, we ought to learn and understand whatever that is not yet known to understand the four characteristics of the cause of suffering. Wisdom can then arise and we may begin to understand the cause for the arising of the body and mind, observe the relationship of cause-and-effect, and the reason for cyclic existence.

- (C) How peaceful would it be, if ignorance as well as the sufferings of the body and mind were ceased! If we can see the four characteristics of the cessation of suffering, namely cessation, serenity, wondrous, and liberation, wisdom would arise.
- (D) In order to realize true happiness, there is a need to practice the eightfold noble path. The four characteristics of the way to the end of suffering are (i) the path; (ii) the timelessly true path; (iii) the practice; and (iv) liberation from all sufferings. Realizing these four characteristics, complete insight and wisdom will be attained. With wisdom, we would be able to observe the truth about the body and mind, as well as the preciousness of the eightfold noble path.

This was the first teaching of The Buddha after enlightenment. After receiving The Buddha's first teachings, the bhikshus further observed that: they knew the suffering that ought to be known; the cause of suffering ought to be eliminated; the cessation of suffering ought to be realized; and the path to the end of suffering ought to be walked. This is the second tier of The Buddha's teaching, where wisdom continued to arise.

When the Buddha expounded the dharma for the third time, those bhikshus who cultivated to abandon the suffering; eliminate the cause of the suffering; cease the suffering; and practice the way to cease the suffering have accomplished. At this point, the five bhikshus truly awakened to the four noble truths.

The Buddha guided the five bhikshus when he first expounded the dharma to them. All the five bhikshus attained Arahatship upon hearing The Buddha's teaching of the twelve applications of the four noble truths expounded in the three tiers. It is extremely wondrous that the bhikshus who renounced and became disciples of the Buddha became Arahats by awakening

to the four noble truths. Since the four noble truths enable sentient beings to be liberated from the suffering of birth and death, we should practice it.

The attitude toward learning the dharma

Some of us, when met with bad weather conditions such as typhoons or other problems, will give up attending dharma talks or taking the precepts. Some of us spend so much time eating that we miss out attending the introductory parts of the dharma talks. But as true seekers of liberation, we have to endure hunger or brave through all weathers if we want to listen to the dharma, as it is through hearing and learning the dharma that we gain insights into the sacred path of liberation.

The scriptures state that even if a seeker of truth were to be pierced a hundred times in the morning, mid-day, and evening in order to listen to the dharma, he would still choose to endure these pains rather than to give up learning the dharma. Why? Because listening to and learning the dharma generates boundless causes and conditions for him to be liberated from the more painful cycles of life and death.

As a mark of respect for and sincerity in seeking the dharma, Grand Master Hui Ke of the Zen Sect would rather lose his arm than to give up the pursuit of dharma.

Therefore, if we want to learn the dharma, we must endure and overcome whatever obstacles and sufferings we may encounter.

Importance of listening to and learning the dharma

In the *Sutra on Differentiating the Noble Truths* of the *Madhyamagama*, it is said thus, "Bhikshu Sariputra leads with Right View while Bhikshu Maudgalyayana eradicates defilements completely. Bhikshu Sariputra is like a biological mother to the

young bhikshus, while Bhikshu Maudgalyayana is like an adoptive mother who nurtures and guides them."

The Buddha praised and likened Maha Sariputra to a biological mother because he was able to help the bhikshus develop right view and attain the pure dharma eye (awakening to the dharma). Srotapannas are considered as young children who still require further development and nurturing until they reach adulthood (Arahatship).

The Buddha praised Maha Maudgalyayana for helping and guiding the bhikshus who had developed right view to practice the eightfold noble path until they attained Arahatship.

Besides praising Maha Sariputra and Maha Maudgalyayana, the Buddha also gave praise to Maha Aniruddha, Maha Kimbila, Maha Nandi, Maha Kasyapa, Maha Subhuti, Maha Upali and all the other Arahats and bhikshus.

The Buddha emphasized repeatedly that the Tathagatha is rare and hard to come by, and thus it is important that we meet the Buddha and listen to the dharma.

Example:

When the Buddha was expounding the dharma in Jetavana of Sravasti, he praised the merits of listening to the dharma. For us to become wise practitioners, we must listen to and learn the dharma. It is extraordinary for us to chant the sutras at home as celestial beings and beings in the ghost realm will want to listen to and learn the dharma.

It is even extraordinary for monastics to chant the sutras and recite the stanzas as the heavenly beings will come frequently to listen to and learn the dharma.

In the ancient kingdom of Sravasti, there was a village where people held many wrong views and did not believe in the Triple Gem. One day, a woman called Upasina went to Sravasti to run her errands. She felt great joy when she learnt of the dharma and the Buddha from a local devout Upasaka. Delighted, she decided to pay obeisance to the Buddha.

At that moment, the Buddha was teaching the *five precepts*⁷. Upon hearing this, Upasina felt joy and requested for the five precepts from the Buddha. As she was willing to uphold the precepts diligently for life, the Buddha allowed her to take the precepts.

After receiving the precepts, Upasina said, "I live in a far and remote kingdom. May I implore the World Honored One to teach me the dharma so that I can contemplate them even when I am back home."

The Buddha told her about the "Dhammapada" that had been and would be expounded by the Buddhas of the past, present and future. With this teaching, Upasina returned home happily and started to recite the Dhammapada.

Just then, King Vaisravana (the Northern Deva King of the *Heavens of the Four Deva Kings*) flew past her home with his 1,000 Yaksa followers. When they heard Upasina reciting the Dhammapada, they stopped in mid-air with joined palms and listened attentively to the dharma.

⁷ The five precepts are: not killing, meriting a long life; not stealing, meriting wealth; not committing sexual misconduct, meriting one to be respected and honored by others; not lying, meriting one's words to be trusted by others; and not taking intoxicants, meriting one wisdom in understanding the dharma.

At the end of Upasina's recitation, King Vaisravana said, "Sister! You have recited well. Offering you heavenly treasures would be inappropriate. May you allow me to provide some good advice? Maha Sariputra and Maha Maudgalyayana will be coming to your hometown tomorrow. When you offer sustenance to them, they will bless you. Should you convey my share in this meritorious deed, that would help to increase my merits and influence, and I will also send my followers to protect you."

Upasina wondered who had spoken to her as she could not see anyone in the sky. "Who are you who have spoken to me?" she asked.

The King replied, "I am King Vaisnavara of the Northern Heaven. I had stopped by to listen to the dharma."

"Why do you call me a 'sister'?"

"This is because the Buddha is The Great Dharma King and he is also the compassionate father of all human and heavenly beings. I am an Upasaka disciple of the Buddha and you are an Upasika. Since we are children of the Buddha, I have called you 'sister'," answered King Vaisnavara. Upasina was very happy that the Heavenly King had addressed her as his 'sister'.

The next morning, the servant of Upasina's household went into the forest to gather some woods. When she was there, she saw Maha Maudgalyayana and Maha Sariputra resting in the forest with 500 bhikshus. She paid homage to the two Venerables thrice on behalf of Upasina and invited the two Venerables and the 500 bhikshus to their home to accept their offering of sustenance. Thereafter, she returned home to inform Upasina.

Upasina was extremely happy and rewarded her with jewels. She said, "You had paid homage to Maha Sariputra and Maha Maudgalyayana on my behalf and also invited them to receive

our offering of sustenance. From today onwards, you are free and do not have to be my servant anymore."

Upasina prepared a wide spread of delicacies to offer Maha Sariputra, Maha Maudgalyayana and the bhikshus.

Maha Sariputra praised her, "It is indeed extraordinary that even the Heavenly King will address you as 'sister'."

She smiled and said, "Not only this, I have something more extraordinary to share. Whenever I offer sustenance, the deity in my home will tell me that such and such is an Arahat, an Anagamin, a Sakradagamin, or a Srotapanna. The deity would even tell me whether the person upholds or has broken the precepts, and whether he is wise or foolish. But I continue to offer sustenance to them equally, without differentiating if he is a Noble One, a layperson, or whether or not he has broken the precepts.

"Besides this, I am able to eradicate self-view and attain Srotapanna. Although my husband and children subscribe to wrong view and wrong understanding and get angry when I offer sustenance to the Triple Gem or offer to the poor, I will not be affected by them. I will not retract from giving nor harbor any hatred or anger towards them."

Maha Sariputra praised her and told her that the Buddha will be arriving soon and that she should offer sustenance to the Buddha. Upasina was overjoyed about the news and started to prepare all the offerings, precious incense and sumptuous food to offer to the Buddha. After the offering, the Buddha expounded the dharma to her husband and children as well. All the people in the kingdom began to have faith and respect the Triple Gem.

Because she had listened to and learnt the dharma, Upasina was able to uphold the five precepts, have faith in the Buddha, attain Srotapanna and abide in equanimity. Besides having faith in the Triple Gem, she also enjoyed listening to and learning the dharma. She was even addressed as 'sister' by the Heavenly King who protected her when she was chanting the teachings of the Buddha.

Thus, when listening to and learning the dharma, we must give considerable thoughts to it. We must also be able to recite, memorize and ponder the dharma deeply. We will then be able to reap the benefits by doing so.

It is possible that the Heavenly Kings might also be protecting us, but it is just that we are not aware of it.

Let us hope that we are able to listen to and learn the right dharma, think about it insightfully, recite the sutras and expound the dharma to others. With diligent practice and embodiment of the right dharma in our daily lives, the heavenly beings, The Buddha and the Bodhisattvas will definitely protect us with loving-kindness and compassion.

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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