

SUTRA OF THE EIGHT REALIZATIONS OF GREAT BEINGS

*Translated from Chinese by Buddha Gate Monastery,
San Francisco Branch of Chung Tai Chan Monastery*

Day and night, at all times,
Buddha's disciples should
Mindfully recite and contemplate
The eight realizations of Great Beings.

The First Realization:
All the world is impermanent.
The earth is fragile and perilous.
The four great elements inhere in suffering and
emptiness.

In the five skandhas there is no self.
All that arise, change, and perish,
Are illusive, unreal, and without a master.
Mind is the root of evil;
Body a reservoir of sin.
Thus observing and contemplating,
One gradually breaks free from birth and death.

The Second Realization:
Excessive desire is suffering.
Birth, death, and weariness in life
All originate from greed and desires.
Desiring less, being wu-wei,
Body and mind are at ease and free.

The Third Realization:
The mind is insatiable,
Always seeking, thirsty for more,
Thus increasing our sins.
Bodhisattvas renounce such conduct.
Always remember to follow the way,
Be content and at peace with poverty,
With wisdom as the sole vocation.

The Fourth Realization:
Indolence leads to degradation.
Always practice with diligence,
Vanquish all vexations,
Subdue the four maras,
And escape the prison of the skandhas.

The Fifth Realization:
Ignorance leads to birth and death.
Bodhisattvas are always mindful
To study and learn extensively,
To increase their wisdom
And perfect their eloquence,
So they can teach and enlighten all beings,
And impart great joy to all.

The Sixth Realization:
Poverty and hardship breed resentment,
Creating harm and discord.
Bodhisattvas practice dana,
Beholding the friendly and hostile equally;
They neither harbor grudges
Nor despise malicious people.

The Seventh Realization:
The five desires are perilous.
Even as laity, be not sullied by worldly pleasures;
Think frequently of the three robes,
The tiled bowl, and instruments of Dharma;
Aspire to the monastic life
And cultivate the Way with purity;
Let your actions be noble and sublime,
Showering compassion on all.

The Eighth Realization:
Birth and death are like a blazing fire
Plagued with endless afflictions and suffering.
Vow to cultivate the Mahayana mind,
To bring relief to all;
To take on infinite sufferings for sentient beings,
And lead all to supreme joy.

These are the eight realizations of Great Beings,
Buddhas and bodhisattvas.
They practice the Way with diligence,
Develop compassion, and cultivate wisdom.
They sail the ship of dharmakaya
To the shore of nirvana,
Returning again to samsara
To liberate sentient beings.
With these eight principles,
They point out the Way,
So that all beings may awaken
To the sufferings of life and death,
Relinquish the five desires, and
Cultivate the mind on the noble path.
If Buddha's disciples recite these eight realizations,
In thought after thought,
They will eradicate countless sins,
Advance on the bodhi path,
Promptly attain enlightenment,
Be forever freed from birth and death,
And always abide in joy.

SUTRA OF THE EIGHT REALIZATIONS OF GREAT BEINGS

Day and night, at all times,
Buddha's disciples should
Mindfully recite and contemplate
The eight realizations of Great Beings.

The First Realization:
All the world is impermanent.
The earth is fragile and perilous.
The four great elements inhere in suffering
and emptiness.
In the five skandhas there is no self.
All that arise, change, and perish,
Are illusive, unreal, and without a master.
Mind is the root of evil;
Body a reservoir of sin.
Thus observing and contemplating,
One gradually breaks free from birth and
death.

The Second Realization:
Excessive desire is suffering.
Birth, death, and weariness in life
All originate from greed and desires.
Desiring less, being wu-wei,
Body and mind are at ease and free.

The Third Realization:
The mind is insatiable,
Always seeking, thirsty for more,
Thus increasing our sins.
Bodhisattvas renounce such conduct.
Always remember to follow the way,
Be content and at peace with poverty,
With wisdom as the sole vocation.

The Fourth Realization:
Indolence leads to degradation.
Always practice with diligence,
Vanquish all vexations,
Subdue the four maras,
And escape the prison of the skandhas.

The Fifth Realization:
Ignorance leads to birth and death.
Bodhisattvas are always mindful
To study and learn extensively,
To increase their wisdom
And perfect their eloquence,
So they can teach and enlighten all beings,
And impart great joy to all.

佛說八大人覺經

為佛弟子，常於晝夜，至心誦念，八大人覺。

第一覺悟：世間無常，國土危脆；四大苦空，五陰無我；生滅變異，虛偽無主；心是惡源，形為罪藪。如是觀察，漸離生死。

第二覺知：多欲為苦；生死疲勞，從貪欲起；少欲無為，身心自在。

第三覺知：心無厭足，唯得多求，增長罪惡；菩薩不爾。常念知足，安貧守道，唯慧是業。

第四覺知：懈怠墜落。常行精進，破煩惱惡，摧伏四魔，出陰界獄。

第五覺悟：愚癡生死。菩薩常念：廣學多聞，增長智慧，成就辯才，教化一切，悉以大樂。

Sūtra 佛經: a Buddhist scripture, spoken by the Buddha or certified (to be true) by the Buddha.

Great Beings: Highly enlightened beings; beings with great virtue and deeds; bodhisattvas and Buddhas.

Mindfully: sincerely, with great concentration; whole-heartedly.

Eight Realizations: what one must achieve to become a Great Being such as Buddha.

First Realization: the foundation of the eight realizations; the teaching of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self.

Four great elements 四大: earth (solid or dry matter), water (liquid or wet matter), wind (air or motion), and fire (heat or energy). They comprise all matter.

Inhere in suffering: all worldly things are impermanent, and prone to bring suffering.

Emptiness 空: without independent existence, consistency, or fixed characteristics.

Five skandhas: five aggregates—form, feeling, conception, volition, and consciousness (色受想行識). Ordinary beings take these aggregates to be the “self”.

No self 無我: emptiness of independent, consistent self-identity. What we perceive as “self” is actually an illusive ego.

All that arise...: all composite things are conditional, always changing, and will perish. One should see beyond their appearance. There isn't a master-controller.

Root of evil: all harmful actions come from deluded thoughts.

Reservoir of sin: the body is prone to suffering, a result of past transgressions.

Free from birth and death: to escape the endless rebirth cycle and attain nirvana.

Birth, death: where there is birth there is death; both are suffering. The endless rebirth cycle (“*samsāra*” 生死、輪迴) is a result of desires arising from delusion.

Wu-wei 無為: free from forced effort (but not necessarily no-action), free from clinging and attachments, unconditioned, absolute. It also means inner peace obtained by having no desires, understanding that we are intrinsically complete and lacking nothing.

Sin: misdeeds, actions that lead to harm and suffering.

Bodhisattva 菩薩: one who vows to become a Buddha and, with infinite compassion, liberates countless sentient beings. **Bodhi**: enlightenment, to awaken. **Sattva**: sentient beings, beings with consciousness.

At peace with poverty: the bodhisattva is not distressed by physical hardship; true poverty is poverty of virtue, not material comfort.

Wisdom as sole vocation: “wisdom” means the understanding of truth. To acquire such wisdom is essential for the bodhisattva.

Indolence: sloth or laziness easily leads to moral misconducts.

Practice with diligence: to attain the Way requires diligent effort.

Vexations: *kleśas* 煩惱 (pronounced “kleshas”)—greed, anger, and ignorance; the addictive mental states that vex the mind; causes of suffering; defilement of the mind.

Four māras: maras are obstacles to cultivation. 1. Kleshas 煩惱魔, 2. skandhas 陰魔, 3. death 死魔, 4. deva-mara 天魔, the celestial evil tempter.

Prison: the skandhas are like a prison.

Ignorance: ignorance of the true nature of the “self” and life. From ignorance comes desires and hatred, which in turn lead to samsara.

Study and learn: bodhisattvas need to learn many ways of liberation in order to help wide groups of people.

Eloquence: ability to convey the teaching well and to answer difficult questions.

The Sixth Realization:
Poverty and hardship breed resentment,
Creating harm and discord.
Bodhisattvas practice dana,
Beholding the friendly and hostile equally;
They neither harbor grudges
Nor despise malicious people.

The Seventh Realization:
The five desires are perilous.
Even as laity, be not sullied by worldly
pleasures;
Think frequently of the three robes,
The tiled bowl, and instruments of Dharma;
Aspire to the monastic life
And cultivate the Way with purity;
Let your actions be noble and sublime,
Showering compassion on all.

The Eighth Realization:
Birth and death are like a blazing fire
Plagued with endless afflictions and
suffering.
Vow to cultivate the Mahayana mind,
To bring relief to all;
To take on infinite sufferings for sentient
beings,
And lead all to supreme joy.

These are the eight realizations of Great
Beings,
Buddhas and bodhisattvas.
They practice the Way with diligence,
Develop compassion, and cultivate wisdom.
They sail the ship of dharmakaya
To the shore of nirvana,
Returning again to samsara
To liberate sentient beings.
With these eight principles,
They point out the Way,
So that all beings may awaken
To the sufferings of life and death,
Relinquish the five desires, and
Cultivate the mind on the noble path.
If Buddha's disciples recite these eight
realizations,
In thought after thought,
They will eradicate countless sins,
Advance on the bodhi path,
Promptly attain enlightenment,
Be forever freed from birth and death,
And always abide in joy.

第六覺知：貧苦多怨，橫結惡緣。菩薩布施，等念冤親，不念舊惡，不憎惡人。

第七覺悟：五欲過患。雖為俗人，不染世樂；常念三衣，瓦鉢法器，志願出家，守道清白，梵行高遠，慈悲一切。

第八覺知：生死熾然，苦惱無量。發大乘心，普濟一切。願代眾生受無量苦；令諸眾生畢竟大樂。

如此八事，乃是諸佛菩薩大人之所覺悟。精進行道，慈悲修慧，乘法身船，至涅槃岸，復還生死，度脫眾生。以前八事，開導一切，令諸眾生，覺生死苦，捨離五欲，修心聖道。若佛弟子，誦此八事，於念念中，滅無量罪；進趣菩提，速登正覺，永斷生死，常住快樂。

Ignorance: ignorance of the true nature of the “self” and life. From ignorance comes desires and hatred, which in turn lead to samsara.

Study and learn: bodhisattvas need to learn many ways of liberation in order to help wide groups of people.

Eloquence: ability to convey the teaching well and to answer difficult questions.

Poverty and hardship easily lead to resentment, which in turn may produce otherwise undue and uncalled-for bad karma with many people.

Dāna 布施 (檀那): the practice of charity. One may practice the giving of material things, or donating organs, or the giving of Dharma wisdom, or the giving of comfort and encouragement.

Equal: bodhisattva understands all beings are fundamentally equal; they have no hatred towards evil or malicious people.

Five desires: desire for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. Alternatively, desire for wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep. They are harmful, not pleasurable.

Three robes ...: traditionally Buddhist monks wear only three robes. Tiled bowl: monk’s begging bowl can be tiled or metal. Instruments: used in chanting or Buddhist services. These are symbols of monastic life.

Mahāyāna 大乘 means great (maha) vehicle (yana). It is the path of bodhisattvas and Buddhas, who are devoted to the liberation of all beings. Mahayana mind: the *bodhi* mind, the enlightened mind, the Buddha nature within all of us.

Take on sufferings: a bodhisattva is willing to self-sacrifice for others. But a true sacrifice is to eliminate the ego and help others to eliminate the ego and attain enlightenment.

Sentient beings: all living beings with sentience, including *devas* (gods or heavenly beings 天人), *asuras* (demi-gods 阿修羅), human beings, animals, hungry-ghosts, and hell-beings. Unlike Buddhas and bodhisattvas, they are all trapped in samsara.

Supreme joy: the joy of perfect enlightenment; the joy of nirvana.

Dharmakāya 法身: the Buddha has three bodies (*kaya*), *dharmakaya*, the truth body, which is formless, unborn, our original nature; *sambhogha-kāya* 報身, the bliss body, which can only be seen by great bodhisattvas; and *nirmāna-kāya* 化身, the transformation body, which is the historical Buddha seen by ordinary beings.

Samsāra 生死、輪迴 means “birth-and-death,” referring to reincarnation, that is the endless cycle of birth-and-deaths. By extension it means this world of afflictions and suffering.

Nirvāna 涅槃: the state free from all suffering; ultimate bliss and tranquility.

Thought after thought: one deviant thought can lead to grave peril; one pure thought can eliminate great sin.

Bodhi path 菩提道: the path to awakening, to becoming a Buddha. Therein lies the lasting joy.

Translated from Chinese by Buddha Gate Monastery,
San Francisco Branch of Chung Tai Chan Monastery.

© For free reproduction and distribution.

September 2003 v2.3

南無本師釋迦牟尼佛
Namo Ben Shi Shi Jia Mou Ni Fo
(Namo Fundamental Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha)

SUTRA OPENING GATHA

The Dharma, infinitely profound and subtle,
Is rarely encountered even in a million kalpas.
Now we are able to hear, study, and follow it,
May we fully realize the Tathagatha's true meaning.

無上甚深微妙法 百千萬劫難遭遇 我今見聞得受持 願解如來真實義

REPENTANCE

All the harm I have ever done, since time immemorial,
Are caused by greed, anger, and ignorance,
And produced through my body, speech and will,
Now I confess and amend all.

往昔所造諸惡業 皆由無始貪瞋痴 從身語意之所生 一切罪障皆懺悔

THREE REFUGES

I take refuge in the Buddha, vowing that all sentient beings
Understand the Great Way profoundly, and bring forth the bodhi mind.

I take refuge in the Dharma, vowing that all sentient beings
Deeply enter the Sutra Treasury, and have wisdom vast as the sea.

I take refuge in the Sangha, vowing that all sentient beings
Form together a great assembly, one and all in harmony.

自皈依佛 當願眾生 體解大道 發無上心
自皈依法 當願眾生 深入經藏 智慧如海
自皈依僧 當願眾生 統理大眾 一切無礙 和南聖眾

FOUR GREAT VOWS

Countless are sentient beings, I vow to liberate;
Endless are vexations, I vow to eradicate;
Measureless are the Dharmas, I vow to learn;
Supreme is the Buddha Way, I vow to attain.

眾生無邊誓願度 煩惱無盡誓願斷 法門無量誓願學 佛道無上誓願成