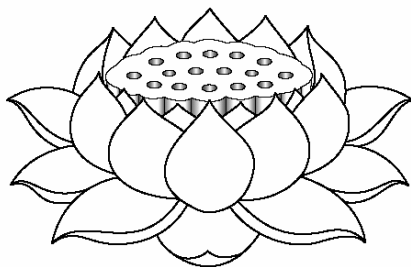


**SUTRA OF THE  
EIGHT REALIZATIONS  
OF GREAT BEINGS**

佛說八大人覺經



Translated by the Chung Tai Translation Committee  
May 2008

From the Chinese translation by  
Shramana An Shi Gao, 2nd Century

Sutra annotations: May 2008

Prior English translations of the sutra by Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh  
and others were used as references.

The Chung Tai Translation Committee comprises of Dharma Masters and lay disciples and convenes regularly. To view or download other sutra translations by CTTC, visit “Dharma Gems” on <http://sunnyvale.ctzen.org>. Comments and suggestions may be sent to [translation@ctzen.org](mailto:translation@ctzen.org)

Namo Fundamental Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

南 無 本 師 釋 迦 牟 尼 佛

**SUTRA OPENING GATHA**

開 經 偈

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 Tathagata'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

**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 empty of effort,  
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 and realms.

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<sup>1</sup> OF  
THE EIGHT REALIZATIONS OF GREAT BEINGS<sup>2</sup>

佛說八大人覺經

Day and night, at all times,  
Buddha's disciples should  
Mindfully<sup>3</sup> recite and contemplate  
The eight realizations<sup>4</sup> of Great Beings.

The First Realization<sup>5</sup>:

All the world is impermanent.

The earth is fragile and perilous.

The four great elements<sup>6</sup> inhere in suffering<sup>7</sup> and  
emptiness<sup>8</sup>.

In the five skandhas<sup>9</sup> there is no self<sup>10</sup>.

All that arise<sup>11</sup>, change, and perish,

Are illusive, unreal, and without a master.

Mind is the root of evil<sup>12</sup>;

Body a reservoir of sin<sup>13</sup>.

Thus observing and contemplating,

One gradually breaks free from birth and death<sup>14</sup>.

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。



- <sup>1</sup> **sutra 佛經**. A Buddhist scripture containing the dialogues or discourses of the Buddha.
- <sup>2</sup> **Great Beings**. Highly enlightened beings; beings with great virtue and deeds; bodhisattvas and buddhas.
- <sup>3</sup> **mindfully**. Sincerely, with great concentration; whole-heartedly.
- <sup>4</sup> **eight realizations**. What one must understand and strive to become a Great Being such as the Buddha.
- <sup>5</sup> **first realization**. The foundation of the eight realizations; the teaching of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self.
- <sup>6</sup> **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.
- <sup>7</sup> **inhere in suffering**. All worldly things are impermanent, and prone to bring suffering.
- <sup>8</sup> **emptiness 空**. Both the self and all phenomena are without independent existence or inherent, fixed characteristics. They are impermanent, mutable, and mutually dependent; their individuality is in appearance only.
- <sup>9</sup> **five skandhas 五蘊**. Five aggregates—form, feeling, conception, volition, and consciousness (色受想行識). Form refers to our body or the physical world, the other four are of the mind. Ordinary beings see themselves as composed of these aggregates. When we analyze them deeper, we find no real substance.
- <sup>10</sup> **no self 無我**. Emptiness of an independent, consistent self or self-identity. What we perceive as “self” is actually an illusive ego.
- <sup>11</sup> **all that arise...** All composite things are conditional, always changing, and perishable. One should see beyond their appearance. There is not a master-controller.
- <sup>12</sup> **root of evil**. All harmful actions come from deluded thoughts.
- <sup>13</sup> **reservoir of sin**. The body is both an instrument of sin and the outcome of past transgressions prone to suffering.
- <sup>14</sup> **free from birth and death**. To escape the endless rebirth cycle and attain nirvana.

The Second Realization:

Excessive desire is suffering.  
Birth, death<sup>15</sup>, and weariness in life  
All originate from greed and desires.  
Desiring less, being empty of effort<sup>16</sup>,  
Body and mind are at ease and free.

The Third Realization:

The mind is insatiable,  
Always seeking, thirsty for more,  
Thus increasing our sins<sup>17</sup>.  
Bodhisattvas<sup>18</sup> renounce such conduct.  
Always remember to follow the Way,  
Be content and at peace with poverty<sup>19</sup>,  
With wisdom as the sole vocation<sup>20</sup>.

The Fourth Realization:

Indolence<sup>21</sup> leads to degradation.  
Always practice with diligence<sup>22</sup>,  
Vanquish all vexations<sup>23</sup>,  
Subdue the four maras<sup>24</sup>,  
And escape the prison<sup>25</sup> of the skandhas and realms.

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。

- <sup>15</sup> **birth, death.** Where there is birth there is death, which is full of suffering. The endless rebirth cycle, known as samsara, is a result of desires arising from delusion.
- <sup>16</sup> **empty of effort (wu-wei) 無為.** Free from contrived effort; free from clinging and attachments; unconditioned; absolute. Being wu-wei also means inner peace obtained by having no desires. Also translated as “unconditioned Dharma” where appropriate.
- <sup>17</sup> **sin.** Misdeeds, actions that lead to harm and suffering.
- <sup>18</sup> **bodhisattvas 菩薩.** One who, with infinite compassion, vows to become a buddha and to liberate countless sentient beings. A bodhisattva practices all six paramitas (perfections), but it is the prajna paramita that ultimately brings true liberation. **Bodhi:** enlightenment, to awaken. **Sattva:** sentient beings, beings with consciousness.
- <sup>19</sup> **at peace with poverty.** The bodhisattva is not distressed by physical hardship; true poverty is poverty of virtue, not material comfort.
- <sup>20</sup> **wisdom as sole vocation.** “Wisdom” means the understanding of the truth. To acquire such wisdom is essential for the bodhisattva.
- <sup>21</sup> **indolence.** Sloth or laziness easily leads to moral misconducts.
- <sup>22</sup> **practice with diligence.** To attain the Way requires diligent effort.
- <sup>23</sup> **Vexations. Klesas 煩惱** (pronounced “kleshas”)— greed, anger, and ignorance; causes of suffering; defilement of the mind; the chronic mental states that vex the mind and distress the body.
- <sup>24</sup> **four maras.** Maras are obstacles to cultivation. 1. Kleshas 煩惱魔, 2. skandhas 陰魔, 3. death 死魔, and 4. deva-mara 天魔, the celestial evil tempter.
- <sup>25</sup> **prison.** The skandhas and realms are like a prison. The “realms” refer to the 18 spheres 十八界: six senses 六根 (eye, ear, etc.), six sense objects 六塵 (form, sound, etc.), and six consciousnesses 六識.

The Fifth Realization:

Ignorance<sup>26</sup> leads to birth and death.

Bodhisattvas are always mindful

To study and learn<sup>27</sup> extensively,

To increase their wisdom

And perfect their eloquence<sup>28</sup>,

So they can teach and enlighten all beings,

And impart great joy to all.

The Sixth Realization:

Poverty and hardship<sup>29</sup> breed resentment,

Creating harm and discord.

Bodhisattvas practice dana<sup>30</sup>,

Beholding the friendly and hostile equally<sup>31</sup>;

They neither harbor grudges

Nor despise malicious people.

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。

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。

- <sup>26</sup> **ignorance.** Ignorance of the true nature of the “self” and life. From ignorance comes desires and hatred, which in turn lead to samsara.
- <sup>27</sup> **study and learn.** Bodhisattvas need to learn many ways of liberation in order to help wide groups of people.
- <sup>28</sup> **eloquence.** Ability to convey the teaching well and to answer difficult questions.
- <sup>29</sup> **poverty and hardship.** Easily lead to resentment, which in turn may produce otherwise undue and uncalled-for bad karma with many people.
- <sup>30</sup> **dana 布施(檀那).** Charity. The first of the six paramitas (perfections) practiced by a bodhisattva. There are 3 types of generosity: giving of material, giving of solace (comfort, protection, removal of fear, etc.), and giving of Dharma.
- <sup>31</sup> **equally.** Bodhisattva understands all beings are fundamentally equal; they have no hatred towards evil or malicious people.

The Seventh Realization:

The five desires<sup>32</sup> are perilous.

Even as laity, be not sullied by worldly pleasures;

Think frequently of the three robes<sup>33</sup>,

The tiled bowl<sup>34</sup>, and instruments<sup>35</sup> 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<sup>36</sup> mind,

To bring relief to all;

To take on infinite sufferings<sup>37</sup> for sentient beings<sup>38</sup>,

And lead all to supreme joy<sup>39</sup>.

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。

- <sup>32</sup> **five desires.** Desire for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. Alternatively, desire for wealth, lust, fame, food, and sleep. They are harmful, not pleasurable.
- <sup>33</sup> **three robes.** Traditionally Buddhist monks wear only three robes.
- <sup>34</sup> **tiled bowl.** Monk's begging bowl can be tiled or metal.
- <sup>35</sup> **instruments.** Implements that are used in Buddhist services or daily life of a Buddhist monk.  
These three are symbols of monastic life.
- <sup>36</sup> **Mahayana 大乘.** The great (*maha*) vehicle (*yana*). It is the bodhisattva path which leads to Buddhahood. This involves devotion to the liberation of all beings and the perfection of wisdom. Mahayana mind: the *bodhi* mind, the enlightened mind, the buddha nature within all of us. To cultivate the Mahayana mind means to commit to the buddha path.
- <sup>37</sup> **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.
- <sup>38</sup> **sentient beings.** All living beings with sentience; beings that have awareness. They include 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, but have the potential to become buddhas.
- <sup>39</sup> **supreme joy.** The joy of perfect enlightenment; the joy of nirvana.

These are the eight realizations of Great Beings,  
Buddhas<sup>40</sup>, and bodhisattvas.

They practice the Way with diligence,

Develop compassion, and cultivate wisdom.

They sail the ship of dharmakaya<sup>41</sup>

To the shore of nirvana<sup>42</sup>,

Returning again to samsara<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>,

They will eradicate countless sins,

Advance on the bodhi path<sup>45</sup>,

Promptly attain enlightenment,

Be forever freed from birth and death,

And always abide in joy.

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。



- <sup>40</sup> **buddhas**. “The enlightened one.” There are many buddhas in the past, present, and future; all sentient beings can become buddhas by practicing prajna paramita.
- <sup>41</sup> **dharmakaya 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 *nirmana-kaya* 化身, the transformation body, which is the historical Buddha seen by ordinary beings.
- <sup>42</sup> **nirvana 涅槃**. The state free from all desires and suffering; ultimate bliss and tranquility.
- <sup>43</sup> **samsara 生死、輪迴**. The relentless cycle of birth and death in which unenlightened beings are deeply entangled. By extension it means this world of afflictions and suffering.
- <sup>44</sup> **thought after thought**. One deviant thought can lead to grave peril; one pure thought can eliminate great sin.
- <sup>45</sup> **bodhi path 菩提道**. The path to awakening, to becoming a Buddha. Therein lies lasting joy.

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## THREE REFUGES

### 三皈依

I take refuge in the Buddha, may all sentient beings  
Understand the Great Way profoundly,  
And bring forth the bodhi mind.

I take refuge in the Dharma, may all sentient beings  
Deeply enter the sutra treasury,  
And have wisdom vast as the sea.

I take refuge in the Sangha, may 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

### 四弘誓願

Countless are sentient beings, I vow to liberate;  
Endless are afflictions, I vow to eradicate;  
Measureless are the Dharmas, I vow to master;  
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

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## REPENTANCE

### 懺悔偈

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

## DEDICATION OF MERITS

### 回向偈

May the merits of our deeds  
Reach every part of the world;  
Sentient beings large and small  
All attain enlightenment.  
Maha-Prajna-Paramita

願以此功德            普及於一切  
我等與眾生            皆共成佛道  
摩訶般若波羅蜜



# 中台禪寺

## Chung Tai Chan Monastery

2 Chung Tai Road, Puli, Nantou 54544, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tel: (886-49) 2930-215 <http://www.ctworld.org> [ctworld@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:ctworld@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

美國大谷精舍  
Chung Tai Zen Center  
of Sunnyvale

750 East Arques Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085, USA  
Tel. (1) 408-733-0750  
<http://sunnyvale.ctzen.org> [sunnyvale@ctzen.org](mailto:sunnyvale@ctzen.org)

美國佛門寺  
Buddha Gate Monastery

3254 Gloria Terrace, Lafayette, CA 94549, USA  
Tel. (1) 925-934-2411  
[www.buddhagate.org](http://www.buddhagate.org) [mail@buddhagate.org](mailto:mail@buddhagate.org)

美國中洲禪寺  
Middle Land Chan Monastery

1173 San Bernardino Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767, USA  
Tel. (1) 909-625-0187  
[www.middleland.org](http://www.middleland.org) [middleland@ctzen.org](mailto:middleland@ctzen.org)

美國佛心寺  
Buddha Mind Monastery

5800 South Anderson Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73150, USA  
Tel. (1) 405-869-0501  
[www.ctbuddhamind.org](http://www.ctbuddhamind.org) [buddhamindokc@gmail.com](mailto:buddhamindokc@gmail.com)

美國普德精舍  
Chung Tai Zen Center  
of Houston

12129 Bellaire Boulevard, Houston, TX 77072, USA  
Tel. (1) 281-568-1568  
[www.cthouston.org](http://www.cthouston.org) [zen@cthouston.org](mailto:zen@cthouston.org)

德州寶塔禪寺  
Texas Pagoda Chan Monastery

100 Chung Tai Road (P.O. Box 1247), Shepherd,  
TX 77371, USA  
Tel. (1) 936-365-2451 or (1)713-560-2889  
[www.ctcmusa.org](http://www.ctcmusa.org) [zen@ctcmusa.org](mailto:zen@ctcmusa.org)

美國佛寶寺  
Buddha Jewel Monastery

7930 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118, USA  
Tel. (1) 206-721-9921  
[www.buddhajewel.org](http://www.buddhajewel.org) [buddhajewel@ctzen.org](mailto:buddhajewel@ctzen.org)

美國法寶寺  
Dharma Jewel Monastery

2550 Henderson Mill Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30345, USA  
Phone: 770-939-5008  
<http://dharmajewel.us> [dharmajewel@ctzen.org](mailto:dharmajewel@ctzen.org)

澳洲寶林禪寺  
Bao Lin Chan Monastery

94A High Street, Glen Iris, VIC. 3146, Australia  
Telephone: 03-9813-8922  
[www.chungtai.org.au](http://www.chungtai.org.au) [baolin@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:baolin@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

日本普東禪寺  
Pudong Chan Monastery

22-2 Shinbashi-cho, Kadoma City, Osaka 571-0048, Japan  
Tel. 06-6902-2400  
<http://jpzen.org/pdeng> [zen@jpzen.org](mailto:zen@jpzen.org)

菲律賓海天禪寺  
Ocean Sky Monastery

716 Jose Abad Santos St, Little Baguio, San Juan,  
Metro Manila, Philippines  
Tel. (632) 723-6132  
<http://ctworld.org/108/oceansky> [oceansky@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:oceansky@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

香港普廣精舍  
Puguang Meditation Center

G/F, Kingstown Mansion, 319-323 Jaffe Road, Wan Chai,  
Hong Kong  
Tel. (852) 2915-6011  
<http://ctworld.org/108/puguang3> [puguang@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:puguang@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

泰國泰佛寺  
Great Buddha Monastery

61/84-86 Mooban Thaveemit, Rama 9 Rd, Bangkok 10320,  
Thailand  
Tel. (66) 2643-2386  
<http://ctworld.org/108/GreatBuddha> [thaifo@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:thaifo@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

奧地利普法精舍  
Chung Tai Zen Center of Linz

Hoerzingerstr. 62 ab, 4020 Linz, Austria  
Tel. (43) 732-944704  
<http://www.ctworld.org/108/pufa> [pufa@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:pufa@mail.ctcm.org.tw)

義大利華義寺  
Hua Yi Si  
Tempio Chinese-Italiano

Via Dell' omo N.142 00155 Roma Italia  
Tel. (39) 06-22428876  
[huayii@mail.ctcm.org.tw](mailto:huayii@mail.ctcm.org.tw)