



## **Essay Writing of Buddhas' Practice Incorporated**



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# **Knowing the ways of suffering and happiness**

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## **Table of contents**

I. Introduction.....	1
II. The definition of knowing the ways of suffering and happiness .....	2
III. Knowing that greed brings ultimate suffering .....	2
IV. Knowing the ultimate happiness of dwelling in the self.....	7
(I) Eliminate greed and get rid of the two obstacles.....	7
(II) Self-nature possesses eternal happiness.....	8
V. Conclusion .....	11
References .....	12

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# I. Introduction

From childhood to adulthood, everyone always thinks that what they say, do, and think is right, and seldom think about it: If it is right, why is it always difficult to get what you want? Is this self-righteousness right? For example: People think that greed is good, so they try their best to greed. Can greed bring good to people? With this problem awareness, the author will focus on "cognitive greed" in this thesis to discuss the knowledge of suffering and happiness. All the points of greed are not really obtained, it is an unreal illusion. But the pain caused by greed is inevitable. Only by dwelling in the self-nature can we obtain unchanging, true and eternal happiness.

This paper is mainly based on sutra literature and facts and is divided into three chapters.

1. The definition of knowing the ways of suffering and happiness.
2. Knowing that greed brings ultimate suffering.
3. Knowing that abiding in one's own nature leads to ultimate happiness.

In this chapter, it is discussed from two perspectives:

- (1) To cut off greed and remove the two obstacles. With the guidance of good knowledge, one can quickly cut off greed and remove the two obstacles and be free from suffering to achieve happiness.
- (2) The Self has eternal peace and happiness.

The final conclusion is a summary of the previous chapters and outlines the value and shortcomings of this paper. I hope that through the research of this paper, readers can have a correct understanding of greed and find the right way to leave suffering and achieve happiness quickly.

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## **II. The definition of knowing the ways of suffering and happiness**

In order to know the way of suffering and happiness, one must first have a correct recognition of knowing, which has the meaning of cognition. In the Han dictionary, it is interpreted as the process of understanding and recognizing objective things.<sup>1</sup> In *the Shurangama Sutra*, it is said that repeated "recognition" is the process of inculcation, which eventually leads to consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In other words, people's knowing of things is the result of repeated inculcation.

The way of knowing suffering and happiness comes from Buddhist practice. Suffering refers to all suffering, the result of one's incorrect actions, which is suffering after all, while happiness refers to knowing the truth about suffering and being able to find the way to eternal happiness. The way of knowing suffering and happiness advocates that in making any decision, one should carefully consider the different outcomes and give importance to the two different kinds of consequences - suffering and happiness. The way of knowing suffering and happiness holds that the wrong kind of knowledge and action leads to suffering and ultimately to suffering, while the right kind of knowledge and action leads to happiness and even eternal happiness.

## **III. Knowing that greed brings ultimate suffering**

The basic principle of Knowing the Way of Suffering and Happiness is that through the recognition of suffering, one can achieve the ultimate peace of mind by eliminating greed, leaving all kinds of suffering, and dwelling in

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<sup>1</sup> Website name: Han Canon, URL: <https://www.zdic.net/hans/%E8%AA%8D%E7%9F%A5>, retrieval date: March 1, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Emperor Prami: Surangama Sutra, Volume 10, Taisho Collection, Volume 19, pages 154-155.

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one's own self-nature. In the following chapter, I will discuss the knowledge of greed which is the "method of suffering".

Greed leads to suffering mainly because it brings about an endless pursuit, like a black hole of greed, into which more and more things are thrown that can never be satisfied, much less truly obtained. On the other hand, greed affects people's behavior patterns, leading to uncontrollable and undesirable behaviors that can harm themselves and others. Therefore, in order to avoid the suffering brought by greed, we must start by correctly understanding greed and changing our desire for greed to the happiness of being at ease with our own nature.

All beings have been in ignorance for no beginning, and what they learn are wrong knowledge and wrong views, they will have wrong cognitions and views on things, develop wrong habits, and thus produce wrong feelings, and finally fall into this trap. Among these feelings and sensations, one cannot escape, which brings endless pain. As stated in Volume 2 of *the Shurangama Sutra*:

You have not yet understood that all the defiling objects that appear, all the illusory, ephemeral phenomena, spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end. Their phenomena aspects are illusory and false, but their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment. Thus, it is throughout, up to the five skandhas and the six entrances, to the twelve places and the eighteen realms; the union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and conditions result in their illusory and false extinction. Who would have thought that production and extinction, coming and going are fundamentally the eternal wonderful light of the Tathagata, the unmoving, all-pervading perfection, the wonderful nature of True Suchness! If within the true and eternal nature one seeks coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, or birth and death, one will never

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find them. <sup>3</sup>

Everything that sentient beings see, hear, feel, and know is a phenomenon in the process of transformation and evolution, and this kind of phenomenon is the result of the harmony of cause and condition, but without cause and condition, there is no such phenomenon.

For example, how much of the delicious food that people once ate still exists? How much of the beautiful clothes that you once wore are still there? A few minutes later, a few hours later, there will be nothing, in fact, in the next second there will be nothing. Last year's today, the year before today, what you ate, what you wore, now do not remember. The illusory feeling can never be recovered.

Let's take the specific case of eating: all beings naturally have a wrong perception of eating, which will bring suffering. Everyone loves delicious food, and when they think of it, they feel good about it, and they can't let go of it, so they want to eat it, thinking that if they eat it, they will get it. If you can really get it after eating it, you don't need to eat it a second time, a third time ..... and countless times after that. From the beginning to the present day, all living beings have eaten an infinite number of things and tasted all kinds of flavors. Even if you eat for tens of thousands of years, in the end you will not be able to find the feeling of eating at the moment, so the satisfaction you think you have at the moment is not really obtained. But because of the desire for these tastes, there is bound to be suffering. For example, it is said in Volume 17 of *Samyuktagama-sutra*:

Because ordinary people are ignorant and ignorant, they are driven by greed when they are touched by the five desires, and they are driven by greed; For these two kinds of feelings, they are caused by the ignorant. Being bound by pleasant feelings will never leave, being bound by painful feelings will never leave, and never being

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<sup>3</sup> Translated by Emperor Prami: Surangama Sutra, Volume 2, Taisho Collection, Volume 19, page 114.

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bound by neither painful nor pleasant feelings will never leave. <sup>4</sup>

Because of their ignorance and foolishness, sentient beings give play to their wrong perceptions and pursue the pleasures of the five desires, giving rise to greed, hatred, and ignorance, and become confused in the feelings of suffering, happiness, and non-suffering and unhappiness. They were bound by them and could not leave after all.

For example, people follow the delusion of greed and want to have more good feelings, so they will be greedy to eat one more bite. But they don't realize that one more bite will consume a lot of blessings and bring a lot of misfortunes. For example, in Volume 1 of "Western Helun", it is said: "One thought of greed in front of your eyes is the seed of a hungry ghost."<sup>5</sup> One thought of greed will plant the cause of hungry ghosts. <sup>6</sup>It is also said in Volume 1 of "Theory of Good and Evil Nature": "For example, if one thought of greed arises, it will be the cause of hell." When one thought of greed arises, the cause of hell will be planted, and one will inevitably suffer from the three evil ways. That is to say, gluttony is currently exchanging its own blessings for the cause of going to the three evil realms in the future. Gluttony itself is suffering, but it is just people's wrong perception, thinking that it is happiness, but in fact, they are exchanging the blessings that have been hard-won for future pain.

Another example: In daily life, people work every day to eat, wear, and live. They have to cook, wash clothes, and clean up every day. They are almost busy with these daily chores 24 hours a day. Because food, clothing, and housing disappeared in a blink of an eye. All living beings have pursued eating, drinking and having fun for countless eons, stuffing food into their mouths, putting on clothes on their bodies, and cleaning every day. All these seem to be felt and obtained, so they keep chasing after them, but in fact they are deceiving themselves. , These have been constantly disappearing while being displayed, and have not brought people real

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<sup>4</sup> Translated by QiuNabaduoluo: Miscellaneous Agama Sutra, Volume 17, Taisho Collection, Volume2, page 120.

<sup>5</sup> Written by Yuan Hongdao: Western Helun, Volume 1, Taisho Collection, Volume47, page 387.

<sup>6</sup> Written by Chuan Deng: On the Good and Evil of Nature, Volume 1, Xin Xu Collection, volume 57, page 380.

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happiness and freedom. Because people need to put in a lot of physical, mental, and energy to create these food, clothing, and housing, and the so-called favorable impression they get is only a few minutes or a few hours. After planning and comparing, you can realize that it is not cost-effective in reality, and these so-called good feelings will also cause countless diseases and sufferings.

For example: people are prone to partial eclipse due to gluttony, which will cause nutritional imbalance in the body and cause various diseases and sufferings. If you eat too much salty food, it will damage the liver and kidney, cause skin aging, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, liver and kidney disease, stroke, respiratory inflammation, obesity and other diseases, and increase the risk of gastric cancer and osteoporosis; eating too much oily food, It will block blood vessels, lead to obesity, and increase the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, atherosclerosis and coronary heart disease; eating too much sugary food will aggravate dementia. <sup>7</sup> It can lead to obesity and dental caries, accelerate skin aging, increase the incidence of cardiovascular disease, and induce diabetes, high blood pressure, gout and other diseases.<sup>8</sup>

Because of greed, people will always think about how to eat more and how not to eat less, which not only wastes time and energy, but also increases physical and mental clumsiness. By analogy, the pain caused by greed is endless. As stated in the Shurangama Sutra: Bodhisattvas will be afraid when they see greed. The Bodhisattva knows that when people are greedy, it is like entering an endless forest of obstructive energy, which will eventually lead to poisoning and death.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, greed is the way of suffering.

To sum up, greed brings ultimate suffering.

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<sup>7</sup> Website name: Scientific Health Care, URL: <https://professorlin.com/2019/02/27/%E7%B3%96%E8%88%87%E5%A4%B1%E6%99%BA%E7%97%87%E7%9A%84%E9%97%9C%E8%81%AF/>, Retrieved March 11, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Website name: Zhihu, URL: <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/505261210>, retrieval date: March 1, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by Emperor Prami: Surangama Sutra, Volume 8, Taisho Collection, Volume 19, page 143.



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## IV. Knowing the ultimate happiness of dwelling in the self

Continuing from the previous chapter, on the basis of recognizing greed as the way of suffering, this chapter will discuss how to cut off greed, get rid of two obstacles, and dwell in the self-nature to obtain ultimate happiness.

### (I) Eliminate greed and get rid of the two obstacles

In the previous section, I analyzed how people, because of their misconceptions, are tempted to covet and thus bring about infinite suffering. In the Mahabharata Sutra, Volume 1, it is said, "The set of meanings, ignorance and love, are the causes of the eight sufferings. This is the cause of suffering. In the nature of extinction, ignorance and love are extinguished and are the cause of suffering. Knowing this, the meaning of extinction is actually extinction."<sup>10</sup> The eight sufferings are all caused by ignorance, greed and fabrication. If all living beings want to get rid of suffering and find happiness, they must get rid of ignorance and cut off craving. Just as it is said in *the Sutra of Forty-Two Sections*: "Those who love and desire are cut off, such as cutting off the four limbs, do not reuse them."<sup>11</sup> After cutting off craving, other afflictions and evil karma will not arise, and there will be no more suffering. Also in the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* said:

All sentient beings develop the five natures from their original greedy desires without obvious differences, and the differences are not equal; depending on the two kinds of obstacles, they appear deep and shallow. What are the two obstacles? One is the obstacles to correct knowledge and views, the other is obstacles to life and death... All sentient beings have attained full enlightenment, and

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<sup>10</sup> Translated by Shi Faxian: Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Volume 1, Taisho Collection, volume 01, page 195.

<sup>11</sup> Translated by Kasyapa Moteng and Falan: The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections, Taisho Collection, volume 17, page 722.

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every time a good teacher acts according to the law of the cause, then the practice will be gradual; No matter how big or small the root is, all living beings can achieve Buddhahood. If all sentient beings seek good friends and meet those who have wrong views, but fail to gain correct enlightenment, it is called heretics. It is called the five gender differences of sentient beings.<sup>12</sup>

All sentient beings manifest five different root natures because of their inherent greed and ignorance. Depending on the reasoning obstacle (the obstacle of knowledge) and the matter obstacle (the obstacle of vexation), they have different depths of root nature. If one encounters a good master and enters the right path of supreme bodhicitta, no matter whether the root nature established in the past is present, absent, large or small, even if no root nature has been established, the good master can help him or her establish it and teach him or her in order to cut off ignorance and greed, eliminate the two obstacles, and all become Buddhas. This shows that with the right guidance of a good knowledge, no matter what the root nature is, one can break down ignorance, cut off greed, eliminate the two obstacles, and be free from suffering and gain happiness.

## **(II) Self-nature possesses eternal happiness**

All living beings are very interested in the illusory world. As long as they like what they see, hear and think at the moment, they will be greedy; If it is contrary to greed, hatred will arise, and all living beings are always in the state of greed or hatred. If you really know that the world is an illusion, just like watching TV, all the movies on the screen are illusions, then you will understand that there is no point in dwelling on them, because all the movies are just a screen after all. In the same way, the self-nature of all living beings is uniquely shining, and all the scenes that are illusory are also unreal, and they are all things in dreams. As recorded in Volume 6 of

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<sup>12</sup> Translated by Buddha Dora: The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, Taisho Collection, volume 17, page 916.

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the *Shurangama Sutra*: Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering. The triple realm, a vision of flowers in space. When hearing reverts, the covering of the sense-organs is gone. The defiling dust gives way to pure and perfect insight. With ultimate purity, the light is penetrating. A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness. Looking at the world from this point of view, everything that happens is just like a dream.<sup>13</sup> As long as you realize that all these things are like dreams and illusions, you can let go of your attachments and stop following illusions, and you will naturally be able to settle down in your own nature and achieve ultimate happiness. This principle is also stated in the "Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment": "Knowing the illusion is leaving, and there is no convenience; leaving the illusion is awakening, and there is no gradual progress. All Bodhisattvas and sentient beings of the last age practice this way, and if they do this, they will be able to leave all illusions forever." ]<sup>14</sup> It can be seen that all these are illusory phenomena, you can leave them alone, and you will naturally be able to dwell in your own nature, maintain spiritual awareness, shine alone, get rid of sticking and binding, and achieve ultimate happiness.

Also, in volume 517 of *the Great Prajna Paramita Sutra*, it is said:

For the sake of all sentient beings like this, in response to the unsurpassed and perfect Bodhi, when I practice the Mahasattva practice of all Bodhisattvas and attain the supreme and perfect enlightenment, I will explain to all sentient beings the Dharma of non-reversal, saying that life and death are impermanent, joyless, and selfless. , There is no net, only nirvana is subtle and quiet, full of all kinds of constant, happy, self, pure and true merits.<sup>15</sup>

Nirvana is the self-nature that does not arise and die, and the self-nature is inherently endowed with eternal, happy, pure, and true qualities. Therefore,

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<sup>13</sup> Translated by Emperor Prami: *Surangama Sutra*, Volume 6, Taisho Collection, Volume 19, page 131.

<sup>14</sup> Translated by Buddha Dora: *The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*, Taisho Collection, volume 17, page 914.

<sup>15</sup> Translated by Xuanzang: *The Great Prajna Paramita Sutra*", Taisho Collection, volume 07, page 647.

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as long as you live in your own nature, you can get ultimate happiness.

It is also said in Volume 9 of the Shurangama Sutra: you should know that as a cultivator sits in the Bodhi Manda, he is doing away with all thoughts. When his thoughts come to an end, there will be nothing on his mind. This state of pure clarity will stay the same whether in movement or stillness, in remembrance or forgetfulness. When he dwells in this place and enters Samadhi.<sup>16</sup> The Buddha taught that when one enters the realm of practice, if one does not follow the delusions internally, and one does not follow the world, karma, and sentient beings externally, once the delusions are cleansed, then many delusions will be left, and the wonderful true heart will be revealed, and its effect will be on everywhere. At this time, you don't follow the moving or still images, and don't care about remembering or forgetting. You just observe everything clearly and stay in such a state.

As for the more detailed method of dwelling in the self-nature, there is an explanation in the Chinese translation of Liu Liqian's "Directly Pointing to the Self-Explanation of the Redness of Awareness.

Do not pursue the traces of the past, abandon the concept of the past, do not welcome the future, cut off the connection of consciousness, do not hold on to the thoughts in front of the eyes, and the mind is like a void. Since there is nothing to cultivate, then don't practice anything. Since there is nothing to be distracted, stick to your righteous thoughts. In this situation of not cultivating and not distracting, just observe everything nakedly, and your awareness will be self-knowledgeable and bright.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, if you don't follow delusions and dwell in your own self-nature directly, you can also obtain eternal and true ultimate happiness.

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<sup>16</sup> Translated by Emperor Prami: Surangama Sutra, Volume 9, Taisho Collection, Volume 19, page 147.

<sup>17</sup>Translated into Chinese by Liu Liqian: Self-Explanation of the Red View of Directly Pointing to Awareness, website name: Buddha Net, URL: <http://www.buddhanet.com.tw/zfrop/tibet/ggab-52.htm>, retrieval date: March 2023 January 11.

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## V. Conclusion

This article first defines the way of knowing suffering and happiness, and then focuses on greed and discusses that knowing greed brings ultimate suffering, and dwelling in oneself can bring ultimate happiness. In particular, it is mentioned that under the guidance of a good mentor, you can quickly cut off greed, get rid of obstacles of affliction, and gain happiness from suffering.

The research value of knowing the way of suffering and happiness is to enable people to understand the Dharma of Suffering and Happiness through a correct understanding of greed. Having greed will cause pain, but leaving greed and dwelling in the self-nature will lead to eternal happiness. The way of knowing suffering and happiness can affect people's mentality and behavior, guide people to face life correctly, pursue a higher quality of life and meaning of life, so as to grasp every moment of life and finally get rid of suffering and achieve ultimate happiness. Therefore, by understanding that greed will bring suffering, and adopting the happiness method, people can finally reach the state of self-nature and ultimate happiness.

Although the author of this article mainly uses classic literature and life examples to demonstrate, it lacks strict logic and strong persuasion. Especially for the chapter of attaining ultimate happiness by dwelling in the self-nature, because the author has no long-term real practice, it only stays in theory, and the discussion is very superficial, which needs to be further improved in the future.

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