

DEALING WITH  
MODERN SOCIAL  
PROBLEMS  
THROUGH THE  
BUDDHA'S  
TEACHINGS

LE HOANG DA

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## DEDICATION

*“Thank you father, mother, brothers and sisters who wholeheartedly encouraged me to finish this book. May many people know the truths about life that the Buddha compassionately taught since time immemorial ,thereby bringing them a peaceful and happy life in this world full of sorrow, happiness and difficulties.”*



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## ***FOREWORDS.***

**W**e are living in a turbulent world. An increasingly civilized and developed society helps people's material life to be increasingly improved, thanks to the support of modern equipment and machines with the era of industry 4.0, the current pinnacle is AI technology. With the development of the internet, our daily necessities have been met quickly and more conveniently than traditional methods of exchange, our entertainment needs are also met in a more diverse and richer way through social media platforms, or online games... But because of that, there are many consequences have been arisen. We seem to be getting busier, everyone hustling, whirling around with their own work and projects to keep up with current social trends. Because of that, we spend less and less time with our loved ones and family. There are more and more consequences for society, especially among young people.

It is undeniable that when the material comfort life is raised, it seems that our spiritual life is less valued. And no matter how modern and developed the human world is, we still cannot change and solve the nature of life. The basic dangers of life are still latent, lurking somewhere and waiting for the right time to come, making us unable to catch up. The Covid-19 pandemic, the earthquake in Turkey, the war between Russia and Ukraine ... are typical examples. It seems that we can never escape from the strict laws of life. Perhaps many of us have thought that the fact that we are living in an increasingly developed world will reduce the risks and dangers from nature and man-made through the intervention of modern machinery systems, and we will be safer. But the truth is quite the

opposite, and it seems that we are feeling more insecure, when even today we still witness terrible disasters such as earthquakes, epidemics, wars... and what will happen in the future when superpowers in the world are in an arms race, especially the recent enrichment of Uranium.

Happiness is something that any of us aspire to and aim for. But happiness will never be present when your mind is full of chaos, worries and insecurity. Especially, in this modern age, the stress and insecurity is increasing when we have to face so many consequences from the surrounding life. Meanwhile, the moral and spiritual values considered as the foundation of a happy life seem to have been neglected or they no longer have a place in today's society. Natural disasters, epidemics ... are the wake-up calls for us from "Mother nature" about the decadence in the lifestyle and dignity of people today.

More than 2600 years ago, in South Asia, there appeared an Enlightened One we commonly call him the Buddha, what he left behind for future generations is a treasure trove of transcendent yet practical teachings that are as profound about life as he himself claimed to be: *"Monks, one person is born in the world for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. What one person? The fully enlightened Buddha. Monks, this is the one person who arises in the world for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans."*<sup>1</sup>

This book is written in the context that our humanity has just experienced the horror of the Covid-19 pandemic, then earthquakes, wars... Realizing that so much insecurity and suffering

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<sup>1</sup> Anguttara Nikaya.

still exist in today's technologically advanced age, the author would like to venture to retell the teachings of the Buddha more than 26 centuries ago, but they are still hold true until now. To give readers a deeper insight into the nature of life. Thence, we can derive valuable spiritual knowledge for our spiritual life in order to minimize the consequences of society at risk of affecting ourselves and firmly face the events of life around us. Forming and promoting a peaceful, happy and intellectual life within each person of us. That is also the small inner wish of the author.

*Le Hoang Da.*



# INTRODUCTION

The Buddha's teachings are as vast as the sky, as deep as the sea. From the time he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree until he entered Nirvana, for 45 years, the Buddha was considered the busiest spiritual teacher at that time. He only slept for about 1 hours a day, the rest of the time he was devoted to propagating the Dharma and saving sentient beings. That is why he left us today a great treasure of teachings, recorded through the detailed account of Venerable Ananda, one of the 10 great disciples of the Buddha at the first Council for gathering Buddha's sutras right after the Buddha entered Nirvana. Venerable Ananda has a superhuman memory, whatever the Buddha said, he memorized it completely without missing a single sentence, That's why we have the Tripitaka<sup>2</sup> as it is today that perhaps spending a lifetime reading would not end.

In the scope of this book, the author only wants to mention the content of the Buddha's teachings that are most practical and close to our lives, in order to bring readers practical benefits through applying the teachings of the great Enlightened One to our own lives in the world full of changes as it is nowadays. This book is for everyone, and anyone can read, practice and apply in real life without having to be a Buddhist monk, because according to the motto of the Buddha once taught: *"My religion is the way lead to the destruction of suffering."* And among us, surely everyone has experienced suffering and troubles in life no matter what situation

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<sup>2</sup> The three divisions of Buddhist scriptures.

you are in.

The book is divided into 5 chapters, the author spends the first 2 chapters talking about the life of the Buddha from the time he was born until he entered Nirvana, and an overview of the Buddha's teachings during his 45 years of propagating the Dharma, drawn from the Nikayas, Agamas, and some other Mahayana sutras. In the hope that a person who has never known Buddhism can still grasp the origin of the Buddha's birth and the foundation of the Buddhist system of teachings. In chapter IV, the author mentions the problems that are happening in modern society that we are currently facing. Especially in chapter V is how we will apply the Buddha's teachings to real life so that we can bring a peaceful, happy and pure life for ourselves in the current social context full of pitfalls and complexities.

Although I have tried my best in compiling and translating the Buddha's teachings, mistakes and omissions are inevitable. So, I ask masters of great virtue to have elation about your forgiveness.

Hopefully, this book will be a handbook for readers whenever you encounter depression, anxiety, or when you face difficulties, obstacles and deadlocks in life. Or at least, it will help you in changing your thinking about life in a more positive way.

***Thank you very much!***

***The season of Vesak 2023 – Buddhist Calendar 2567.***

***Binh Dinh, Vietnam.***

***Le Hoang Da.***

*CHAPTER I:*  
**WHO WAS THE BUDDHA?**



*“The more I know him, the more I love him*

*The more I love him, the more I know him”*

Fausboll.

**B**efore going into the details of this chapter, I would like to assure you that the Buddha is a completely real historical figure. This has been proven by scientists, archaeologists and historians through the excavations of the stone pillars of King Ashoka in the 19th century. According to what has been carved on these pillars more than 25 centuries ago, there was an Enlightened One appeared in the world in South Asia. His life was the embodiment of morality, infinite compassion and a transcendent wisdom, and was also an endless source of inspiration for many Buddhist researchers around the world.

According to Buddhist traditions, there will be two Buddhas, a historical Buddha and a spiritual Buddha, or in other words there are two trends, a mythical Buddha and a demythologized Buddha. Within the scope of this book, I just want to tell you about the Buddha in historical terms with the most objective and honest details. He was a man like us, but an extraordinary man, a great personality. With his own efforts, he practiced and attained Enlightenment, then he founded a new religion more than 2500 years ago and it still exists up to now with the number of followers accounting for about 8% world population.

## **1. THE BIRTH OF THE BUDDHA.**

Currently, Buddhist literature around the world has many different views on the date of Buddha's birth and this issue has been inconsistent until now.

According to the Ceylonese Buddhist tradition, the Buddha was born in 624 BCE,<sup>3</sup> and most researchers agree that the Buddha's birthday may be several years before or after 560 BCE. Here, the

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<sup>3</sup> When did the Buddha live? – Heinz Bechert.



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author agrees with the Venerable Narada Maha Thera<sup>4</sup> and takes 563 BCE as the year in which the Buddha was born.

His father was Sudhodana – the king of the Sakya clan, who ruled a small kingdom in ancient India, and his mother was Queen Maya. He was born in Lumbini, the Rupandehi district of Nepal in present-day.

Seven days after his birth, his mother - Queen Maya passed away. After that, King Sudhodana was married to Mahapajapati Gotami, the younger sister of Queen Maya, she herself took care of the prince until he was an adult.

After the prince was born, there was a leading Indian prophet at the time – the ascetic Asita, one day he looked at the sky and discovered auspicious signs appeared. When he heard that the prince of Capilavastu had been born, he immediately asked to enter the palace. Upon realizing that the prince had all 32 extraordinary signs of a great man<sup>5</sup>, he immediately told King Sudhodana that

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<sup>4</sup> The Buddha and his teachings – Narada Maha Thera.

<sup>5</sup> 1. He has feet with a level sole

2. He has the mark of a thousand-spoke wheel on the soles of his feet

3. He has projecting heels

4. He has long fingers and toes

5. His hands and feet are soft-skinned

6. He has netlike lines on palms and soles

7. He has high raised ankles

8. He has taut calf muscles like an antelope

9. He can touch his knees with the palms of his hands without bending

10. His sexual organs are concealed in a sheath

11. His skin is the color of gold

12. His skin is so fine that no dust can attach to it

13. His body hair are separate with one hair per pore

14. His body hair are blue-black, the color of collyrium, and curls clockwise in rings

15. He has an upright stance like that of brahma

this prince would follow two paths in the future, one to become a great emperor, the other to become a great spiritual leader – a Buddha. He would lead sentient beings out of suffering and afflictions in this human world.

Speaking of which, the oracle fell to his knees at the prince's feet and sobbed. Because he felt sad for his circumstance - old age, weak health, and he could no longer live until the day the prince attained enlightenment, in order to listen to the spiritual teachings from the Awakened One. Seeing one of the most popular prophet of the country had done this, king Sudhodana prostrated himself before the prince too, hastily.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. NAMING CEREMONY.**

After the prince had been born for five days, King Suddhodana ordered to the Naming ceremony be performed, which involved sprinkling water on the top of the prince's head and naming him. According to the tradition of Indian society at that time, the

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16. He has the seven convexities of the flesh
  17. He has an immense torso, like that of a lion
  18. The furrow between his shoulders is filled in
  19. The distance from hand-to-hand and head-to-toe is equal
  20. He has a round and smooth neck
  21. He has sensitive taste-buds
  22. His jaw is like that of lion's
  23. He has a nice smile
  24. His teeth are evenly spaced
  25. His teeth are without gaps in-between
  26. His teeth are quite white
  27. He has a large, long tongue
  28. He has a voice like that of Brahma
  29. He has very blue eyes
  30. He has eyelashes like an ox
  31. He has a white soft wisp of hair in the center of the brow
  32. His head is like a royal turban.

<sup>6</sup> This is the first time, king Sudhodana prostrate himself before the prince.

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Brahmin hermits were the most noble caste, and King Suddhodana had invited the eight most outstanding Brahmin hermits to the palace to participate in the Naming ceremony. In the end, the prince was named Siddhartha Gautama, meaning “he who achieves his aims”.

### **3. SPRING PLANTING FESTIVAL.<sup>7</sup>**

Like many other countries in the East, the Spring Planting Festival is held annually to encourage the people of the country to cultivate crops, as the main economy of these countries is based on agriculture. This is also an opportunity for everyone has fun together for a day before embarking upon a new crop. During this festival, King Suddhodana himself and his officials all went down to the fields to plow with the people. It was this delicate and clever act of King Suddhodana that made people in the whole country respect and love the king and the Sakya royal family.

Prince Siddhartha was accompanied by his father at that time to have fun together. However, unlike everyone else who only knew how to have fun at the festival, he quietly looked at the surrounding scenery. His innocent, sparkling eyes looked from near to far, admiring the poetical beauty of the endless green fields... Suddenly somewhere, below freshly plowed beds were exposing to the sun, revealing worms writhing with their body severed. A flock of small birds swooped down from the sky, they quarreled in biting and pecking at each other, then they clawed the blood-soaked worms and flew away.

Seeing that scene, the prince was deeply moved. Then, in his innocent mind, with the potential of transcendental intelligence was

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<sup>7</sup> It also called “The ploughing festival.”

imprinted with a reflection on the cruel struggle for life of all species... He thought to himself: *“Those little birds, after picking up the worms and flying away, will they have peace? A weasel is waiting somewhere, will jump out to grab, bite, chew, and eat them up. Will that weasel be at peace? Maybe a wolf or a tiger will devour its carcass. Then, some skilled hunter will shoot it down with poisoned arrows... Just like that, this animal eats the other animal to maintain its life, then even their lives are threatened by larger animals. That's it. The survival of the fittest is something cruel and severe. Is it possible that, because of life, everything and every species keep killing each other like that?”*

The prince's heart was filled with sadness. The natural scenery is no longer poetic and beautiful for him now. A gray cloud had passed through the blue sky. The prince sat down and crossed his legs in the lotus position, and gradually entered the state of the first dhyana.<sup>8</sup>

The palace maids, who had the duty to look after the prince, had run away to watch the fun, suddenly remembered for a long time, they ran to find him in panic. Arriving at the jujube tree, they saw the prince sitting cross-legged, meditating, so all rushed to tell King Suddhodana about such a story. The king rushed to the place, seeing the prince seemed very peaceful, he was sitting in meditation as firmly as a mountain. The strange thing is that although the sun had already set its shadow in the late afternoon, the shadow of the old tree where the prince sat remained still, covering the prince like a great canopy.

Faced with that rare sight, the king was filled with admiration, knelt down, folded his hands, and said: *“My dear son, this is the second*

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<sup>8</sup> The first degree of dhyana, which produces rebirth in the first dhyana heaven. This event was a spiritual experience that would help the prince on his path to seek the truth and attain ultimate enlightenment later on.

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*time I prostrate myself before you.”*

### **4. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND.**

As a prince, of course, his educational background was put on top. King Suddhodana invited the most prominent Brahmin teachers of the kingdom entered the palace to be responsible for teaching the prince, and he set up an educational council for him. With his intelligent, shrewd wisdom, in a short time, the prince had learned all the quintessence of the teachers in this council. Finally, one of the prince's teachers represented the king to report to him on the situation about teaching the prince: *“The prince is a scholarly prodigy, there is no subject that the prince does not show his superiority and wisdom. He is the master of the masters, fearing that from now on, we will have nothing to teach the prince again. It takes us a long time, sometime almost a lifetime in researching to gain all the intellectual quintessence. But only a few days to get it, the prince has understood it all. His wisdom was like that, but it was the prince's virtue and humility that made us respect and admire him even more. The prince is the embodiment of what is noble and best in this world.”*

So from the age of 8 to 15, prince Siddhartha thoroughly understood all the three Vedas and the Upanishads of Brahminism.

### **5. THE TIME OF MARRIAGE.**

After winning all 3 competitions in fencing, archery and riding horses in a convincing martial arts competition with opponents who are also princes and royal members of neighboring kingdoms. Prince Siddhartha conquered the heart of Princess Yasodhara of Koliya kingdom, and officially married at the age of 16 according to the customs of ancient India. Through this, we can see, Prince Siddhartha was good at both the art of fighting and writing. He was a masterpiece of humanity, anyone could hardly get over it.

## 6. THE LIFE IN ROYAL PALACE.

After marrying princess Yasodhara. For fear that one day prince Siddhartha would leave the palace as well as his beautiful wife, to seek the truth and enlightenment according to the prophecy of the ascetic Asita. Therefore, his father - king Suddhodana tried everything to create the best and most ideal living environment to bind the prince to the palace, the king didn't want him to come into contact with the world full of suffering outside. Specifically, in the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha detailed this event as follows:

*"I was delicate, excessively delicate. In my father's dwelling three lotus-ponds were made purposely for me. Blue lotuses bloomed in one, red in another, and white in another.*

*Night and day a white parasol was held over me so that I might not be touched by heat or cold, dust, leaves or dew.*

*There were three palaces built for me – one for the cold season, one for the hot season, and one for the rainy season. During the four rainy months, I lived in the palace for the rainy season without ever coming down from it, entertained all the while by female musicians. Just as, in the houses of others, food from the husks of rice together with sour gruel is given to the slaves and workmen, even so, in my father's dwelling, food with rice and meat was given to the slaves and workmen."*<sup>9</sup>

## 7. FOUR TIMES SIGHTSEEING OUTSIDE THE PALACE.

One afternoon, after a lavish party in his private palace, prince Siddhartha felt restless and had trouble with sleeping, so he proposed to one of his favorite musicians: *"Lull me to sleep with a good*

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<sup>9</sup> Anguttara Nikaya.

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*song, remember to use a song you've never sung before”.*

The singer obeyed politely and every word of the song was played softly, melodiously, sometimes low, sometimes high. The song praised the beauty of the world, the faraway lands where she once visited in her childhood, a place full of fragrant flowers and strange kinds of grass, with green foothills stretching to the horizon...

The song captivated the prince. As soon as the singer finished singing, he asked: *“Tell me, is it true that in the outside world, there are still having beautiful places like you have just sung, is it true that there are still more lovely places than these beautiful palaces of mine, please tell me honestly”.*

The girl replied: *“Surely, the palace where you live in is the best, O Prince! However, there are still more beautiful places outside. Cities with beautiful streets, mountains and majestic valleys. There are many things that I have seen, and many things that I have heard. The outside of this splendid and imposing palace remaining places worth for visiting”*

After hearing that, the prince wanted to see with his own eyes these beautiful and poetic landscapes. He had spent for a long time living within the walls of the palaces, so he knew nothing of the outside world. Now, the prince wished to experience once in the life of the outside world with wonders and beautiful sights, so he sent a request to his father for the permission to walk around the capital.

Noticing he could not stop his son's desire, king Suddhodana agreed with the prince's request. But besides that, he ordered all the people in the capital must decorate their houses and roads to make them beautiful and splendid. The elderly and the sick must stay at home all day in the following day, the beggars were moved by the imperial troops to another place away from the capital, to create a

peaceful and joyful scene in the eyes of the prince when walking through here.

### 7.1 On the first journey.

In the next morning, Channa - the servant and charioteer of prince Siddhartha, prepared the beloved horse Kanthaka of the prince, and took him out of the palace. This was the first time in his childhood up to now that he could see the view of Kapilavastu. The people of the capital city were all happy to welcome their beloved prince. The Prince was also very pleased when he witnessed the beauty and splendor outside the palace. His people seemed happy and prosperous. The prince gently waved his hand in response to the love of the people on both sides of the road as he passed by. Suddenly looming in the distance, the prince discovered a man stooping and squirming with a walking stick, he slowly walked over with a sad expression on his face.

*“Channa, who is that person?”* The prince asked, *“why does he walk with a stoop like that and he didn’t cheer like everyone else here either? Why does his face look so depressed?”*

*“It’s just an old man, O Prince.”* Channa replied.

*“An old man?!”* asked the prince again, *“Is that man always old like that, or has it just happened recently?”*

Channa replied, *“No, that man was once a healthy young man like the others you have seen today. But as time goes by, the age is getting older every day, the health is decreasing, the body is stooping, the color of the face withers, the teeth fall out. So now he looks so sad, so depressed.”*

Surprised by the image he saw for the first time in his life, prince Siddhartha asked again: *“That poor man is the only one who suffers from old age? Or do other people have it too?”*



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*“All people have to go through old age. You, your wife, me and everyone in the palace, we are growing old every second, every minute, O Prince. We'll be as old as this man one day.”* Channa replied.

These words made the prince deeply moved. He kept staring at the old man and pondering on him. Then, he said to Channa:

*“Channa, what I saw today, I would rather not see it again. Let's go back to the palace. I don't want to go for a walk anymore.”*

### **7.2 On the second journey.**

The next day, prince Siddhartha rode along with Channa on another street outside the capital city. This time, the two went a little further. While enjoying the beauty of nature, the rows of green bamboo, colorful flowers captivate people's hearts. Suddenly, on a small lane leading to the end of a village, a man was writhing and crying in pain. The prince rushed to him, intending to help him sit up, but Channa quickly put out his hand to stop him.

*“Prince! Please don't touch this man. He is sick and will probably infect you.”*

*“Sick? Why is he sick?”* the prince asked Channa.

*“Yes, people are sick for many reasons. For example, this man, because he was so poor that he did not have enough clothes to wear in this cold season, his body caught a cold and a fever.”*

*“Is it just this man who is sick or everyone in the world is, Channa?”* asked the prince.

*“Everyone can get sick, O Prince! From the young to the old, from the weak to the healthy. Sickness spares no one.”* Channa replied.

Once again, the prince was stunned by this scene. The scene was no longer poetic and beautiful. *“Channa, let's go back to the palace. I don't want to roam anymore.”* Prince Siddhartha said,

### 7.3 On the third journey.

Prince Siddhartha, along with his beloved horse, Kanthaka, left the palace to continue the series of days of wandering outside the palace. This time, in addition to Channa, there was also a troupe of dancers and musicians who went along to entertain the prince. At noon, the prince and his entourage stopped to rest at a romantic riverside. While everyone was happily having lunch together, when suddenly a group of people appeared and passed by. They were carrying a corpse on their shoulders.

*“Channa, why are these people carrying that man, and why is that man lying like a log and not moving at all? Where do they take him to? Why are they crying so painfully?”* Prince Siddhartha asked Channa.

*“The man lying on the stretcher is a dead man, O Prince. Those people are carrying him to the river, and that man is going to be cremated, that's why they're so sad,”* Channa replied.

*“A dead man? What is death and why did he die? Is he the only one who will die or everyone will?”* asked the prince.

*“People die for many reasons. Some people died because of old age and weakness, some people died from diseases, some people died from natural disasters or fires, some people died from being eaten by wild animals, some people died because of the punishment of kings, mandarins, and others die because there is no food to eat... In general, everyone will have to die, death spares no one,”* Channa replied.

The prince's heart was filled with sadness and anxiety when he heard Channa say such things. *“Could it be that I myself, my wife, and my*

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*father will one day have to die, and we will also have to separate from each other? Oh, why is life so fragile? Then where are we going?"* The prince pondered in sorrow for a while and then said to Channa: *"Channa, let's go back, that's enough walking around for today. I want to return to the palace."*

### **7.4 On the final journey.**

After going through three journeys and encountering tragic scenes. This time, even though the prince still came out of the city to go for a walk with Channa. But in his heart, prince Siddhartha was no longer as happy as in the past, because now more or less he had real experiences of the harsh life outside the palace, and everything was not as he imagined. ...

Riding the horse leisurely on the flower-strewn paths, through the old trees, the birds chirping on the foliage is very pleasing to the ears. *"What a peaceful scene,"* the prince said to himself.

*"Channa, look. What is that man doing?"* the prince asked Channa when he suddenly saw a man wearing a monk's robes, holding a bowl to beg for alms. There was a calm, peaceful, and free expression appeared on his face, that the prince had not never seen before.

*"Prince, it's a wandering priest."* Channa replied.

*"A wandering priest? Why has he become a priest...?"*

*"He has become a priest because he wants to find the truth of life, he wants to be freed from the bonds of this worldly and sorrowful life."*

*"Is that so?,"* asked the prince *"This is the image I've been looking for all this time, look at how peaceful and free that person is."*

Then the prince turned to Channa and said: *“Let’s go back, that’s enough for today.”*

## 8. IDEA FOR ESCAPE FROM THE WORLDLY WORLD.

Since returning to the palace after spending four trips outside the capital city with Channa, the prince's heart was filled with sorrows that mixed with joy when thinking of the sufferings and sorrows of the world, along with the transcendent supernatural image of the wandering monk he had just met on the road yesterday. In Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha described the feelings at that time as follows:

*“I myself have to endure birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement. Why am I still so busy chasing after things that the nature is still the same? Having suffered birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilements, we have realized the disadvantage of these, or we have tried to find the unattained, the supreme and absolute state of perfection: Nirvana.*

*Life at home is very cramped, a hiding place for dust and uncleanness. But the life of the monastic is a vast, immense heaven! One who is used to the family life will find it difficult to endure the holy, pious life in all its perfection and purity.”<sup>10</sup>*

In the meantime, news came that Princess Yashodara, his wife, gave birth to a son. For King Suddhodana and his relatives in the palace, this was good news, but for Prince Siddhartha, he lamented: *“Another obstacle, another rope to bind.”* Therefore, he named the baby Rahula – which means tied by a rope.

After being wrapped in tangerine with his beloved wife and

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<sup>10</sup> Majjhima Nikaya.

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newly born son a few days ago. The next day, Prince Siddhartha met his father, King Suddhodana to express his desire to leave home to find his ultimate truth. Because of his love for his son, and because the Prince was also the pride of the Shakyamuni clan, the successor to the throne that King Suddhodana had set, the king did not agree with his decision. The prince then said, *“Your majesty, if you can answer these four questions of mine, I will stay in this palace for the rest of my life.”* King Suddhodana agreed and the Prince asked four questions as follows:

*“How can I stay young forever?”*

*“How can I stay strong without pain?”*

*“How can I live forever and not die?”*

*“How do people stop suffering?”*

Struggling for a long time, King Suddhodana could not answer the Prince's questions above, he sadly looked at the prince and then quietly turned away.

### **9. THE GREAT RENUNCIATION.**

Prince Siddhartha left his father's room and returned to his palace. As he passed the room where the dancers were resting, a chaotic scene appeared. The dancers who were usually beautiful and attractive, now they are so haggard and voluptuous. After a tiring day of work, they returned to their true selves, it turned out that their beautiful faces and passionate dances were just fake and temporary images. This is who they really are, they look dirty and sloppy. Musical instruments and furniture scattered everywhere. Some of them were salivating, some were grinding their teeth in their sleep, some snoring, some chattering...

Looking at the scene in front of him, the Prince sighed. Then, he quietly went to the room of his wife, Princess Yashodara. At this moment, the princess was holding Rahula in her arms, it seemed that both were also fall asleep. The prince looked at his wife and son. Then, he thought, *"I want to hug my son for the last time before leaving the palace, but I am afraid that I will wake Princess Yashodara and Rahula up, so it will be very difficult for me to go away"*. The prince was afraid of his wife's tears, a woman's tears could paralyze and weaken the will of men. Prince Siddhartha stood looking at Yashodara, she was truly a woman for all seasons, not to mention the beauty of her soul as pure as a flawless Mani pearl that was hard to find in the world, she was still radiate the modesty, discreet even though in her sleep. He silently turned away, then came back in, opened the curtain to look at his wife and son once again. Finally, the prince turned and walked away quickly. The love of him for his wife and children was deep and deep. But for the ignorance and suffering of humanity, his compassion was even more profound and immeasurable. Leaving, not because of poor love for his wife and son, but because his love extended to everyone, covering all mankind and sentient beings. After instructing Channa to arrange everything, the prince walked over to his beloved horse Kanthaka caressed and patted: *"This is a long journey, Kanthaka. The trip is very important to me. The trip will determine my life. Please do your best!"*

Having said that, the prince jumped on the horse Kanthaka. Channa ran after him. The prince rode his horse out of the city of Kapilavastu through the east gate and left in the dark.

Out of the city gate, the prince let the horse Kanthaka trot, gliding gently like a cool breeze, like walking on space. Suddenly, a

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bright cloud appeared in front of him. A deva<sup>11</sup> who dressed in luxurious and beautiful clothes appeared, as if to block the way of the prince:

- *"Who are you?"* asked the prince.

- *"I am the king of the Heaven of Free Enjoyment of Others' Manifestations,"* replied the deva.

- *"Why do you come here?"*

That deva was Mara, the great demon king of many blessings and power, ruling over the heavens and all beings, except for the Brahma heaven, he was also the lord of desires. For fear that Prince Siddhartha would leave the palace and become a monk, seeking liberation and attaining unsurpassed bodhi, becoming a Buddha, leading all sentient beings out of the sea of darkness and suffering, full of delusion that he has long dominated. So tonight, he appeared in front of the prince to seduce and prevent him on the path of searching the truths with sweet words.

*"I come here purely with good wills, O Prince. I inform you the good news that within seven days, you will become the Wheel-turning monarch, ruling four continents of the world, supremely rich, noble and powerful."* Mara said.

Prince Siddhartha smiled slightly and replied:

- *"Are you tempting me?"*

- *"No, it's not a temptation, it's a fact. I only tell the truth. With the power to know the past and the future - I'll just tell you that."*

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<sup>11</sup> A Hindu deity, it is also a term for heavenly beings in traditional Buddhist cosmology.

- "Really!" The prince replied. *"Thank you for your kindness! Now get out of my way."*

- *"Where do you go? Why don't you stay in the imperial city, the world's most famous and prestigious throne is waiting for you."*

- *"Hey, I'll let you know. I renounce all the glory of the world, I renounce all the sweet snares of the five senses. I will step out of your power, Mara! I will dispel the darkness of ignorance. I will sound the drum of Non-birth and Immortality, saving the suffering of millions of living beings. No one in this world can stop me. You should go away. Don't try to deceive me anymore. You are darkness, dissolve into your darkness!"*

The demon king knew that it was not easy to sway the prince, a great being who has practiced for countless kalpas, but then he would wait and watched every step of prince Siddhartha, hoping one day he could destroy the prince's quest for enlightenment, so that the world would forever be engulfed in this darkness of delusion, full of afflictions that he was dominating. After thinking that, the demon king slowly disappeared into the void...

By the next morning, the prince had went away far from the city of Kapilavastu. After crossing the Anoma river, he stopped on the sand, shaved off his hair, beard and took off his clothes. Then, he handed the clothes to Channa to bring back to the palace. The prince himself put on a yellow robe. Since then, Prince Siddhartha officially became the ascetic Gotama and accepted all material deprivations, no home, no money, traveling around, living off the charity of the people in everywhere. He used to be a prestigious and glorious prince, with a beautiful wife, good child, a castle, a magnificent, splendid, and extremely rich palace. Now he became a poor monk, wandering aimlessly, bare-headed, barefoot, sun-drenched in rain... This is the great renunciation of Prince



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Siddhartha that Buddhist scriptures often refer to.

### **10. THE JOURNEY OF SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT.**

For a long while wandering around in search of truth, prince Siddhartha also met a few monks and talked together, but no one could answer the knots in his heart for so long. After hearing rumors in Vesali there was an ascetic guru, who was highly reputable and had a fairly high spiritual level. He immediately set out from where he was staying, Anupiya mango grove, and began to move towards Rajagaha capital. After arriving in the city, there he met King Bimbisara - a benevolent king who had great admiration for the virtuous masters. Seeing the poise, radiant look rare in a young monk, ascetic like Prince Siddhartha. King Bimbisara loved him and invited him to the palace to talk together, the king even promised to divide half of the country for the crown prince to rule together, but the prince refused the offer. And after knowing that, he was the prince of the prestigious and glorious city of Kapilavastu, because he wanted to seek the ultimate truth to save sentient beings from the afflictions and sufferings of life that he had given up a beautiful wife, a good child, magnificent palaces... to become an ascetic, wandering monk... the king showed even more admiration and admiration for the virtue of Prince Siddhartha. In the end, the prince had promised to return to see King Bimbisara as soon as he found out the ultimate truth.

After leaving the royal palace, the prince continued his journey to Vesali to find the guru Alara Kalama, following the instructions of a fellow initiate he had met on the way. Here, in a short time, he

learned all his teachings and developed to the third jhana<sup>12</sup> of the formlessness realm - sphere of nothingness, a very deep meditative stage. But after that, he was also not satisfied with this guru's system of practice, after which he left Alara Kalama and continued on his quest for enlightenment. In the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha described this stage as follows:

*“Monks, then I went to Alara Kalama and asked him: ‘Friend Kalama, is it in this way that you declare that you enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma<sup>13</sup> by realizing it for yourself with direct insight?’*

*‘Friend, that is the way I declare that I enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.’*

*‘Friend Kalama, it is in this way that I also enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.’*

*‘Friend, it is a gain for us, it is an excellent gain for us that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for myself with direct insight is the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight is the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for myself with direct insight. So you know the Dhamma that I know, and I know the Dhamma that you know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come, friend, let us now lead this community together.’”<sup>14</sup>*

After leaving the guru Alara Kalama, Prince Siddhartha went to Rajgir to find the second famous guru at that time - Uddaka Ramaputta, and not long after, the brilliant disciple Gotama

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<sup>12</sup> The highest Realms of Three Realms in Buddhist doctrine including World of Desire, World of form and World of Formlessness

<sup>13</sup> Truth or law that affects the whole universe.

<sup>14</sup> Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima Nikaya.

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thoroughly understood all of his teachings and systems of thought. In addition, the prince also attained the highest meditation level of the realm of Formlessness, that is sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This is the highest level of meditation that monks at that time always dreamed of achieving.

However, the ascetic Gotama realized that this is still not the ultimate goal, far from the path of enlightenment. Even though, after attaining this jhana, he had mastered his personal desires, mastered his mind. But that was not enough, what he was looking for so long was a complete, final attainment, an end to all suffering, the cessation of all defilements, craving with supreme wisdom and perfect awakening, that is Nirvana, and no one else has the ability to teach him liberation, the path to the unsurpassed path must be found by himself. So once again, the ascetic Gotama walked away.

*“Monks, thus Uddaka the son of Rāma, my fellow monk, placed me in the position of the teacher and accorded me the highest honour. But I considered: ‘This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct insight, to awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.’ Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, being disappointed with that Dhamma, I left.”<sup>15</sup>*

### **11. THE STRUGGLE OF THE ASCETIC GOTAMA FOR ENLIGHTENMENT.**

After saying goodbye to the two teachers Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, the ascetic Gautama continued to wander and finally reached the Uruvela forest by the Neranjara river. Realizing that this place has a peaceful, quiet scene, a lush forest, a peaceful river flowing through, not far from the village, this is convenient for

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<sup>15</sup> Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima Nikaya.

finding food and suitable for meditation to achieve his ultimate goal, and he decided to stay here to fulfill his aspiration. Later, this monument became known as the forest of Uruvela.

After hearing that Prince Siddhartha had left the palace, ordained and became an ascetic called Gotama, the ascetic Annata Kondanna - one of the eight most outstanding Brahmin priests had participated in the Naming ceremony when prince Siddhartha was born, with the ascetics Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji were four sons of four other clans, also declared ordination, giving up the worldly world to follow the ascetic Gotama. Since then, the ascetic Gotama and “the group of five” Kondanna practiced asceticism most seriously and rigorously, because according to the spiritual tradition of the Indians at that time, if a person who wanted to find the truth, to be liberated and to become a superhuman, he had to go through a period of extreme asceticism and mortification, so the ascetic Gotama and “the group of five” Kondanna whether they liked it or not, had to follow that routine... After 6 years of practicing this extremely austere way of cultivation. Once a noble, handsome and majestic prince of Capilavastu capital, he had become the ascetic Gautama with only skin and bones. This was described by the Buddha in the Majjhima Nikaya as follows:

*“Sariputta, I recall having lived a holy life consisting of four factors: I have been an ascetic, a supreme ascetic; I have been unkempt, supremely unkempt; I have been scrupulous, supremely scrupulous; I have been secluded, supremely secluded.*

*Sariputta, there my practice of asceticism was such that I went naked, rejecting conventions, licking my hands, not coming when asked, not stopping when asked. I did not accept food brought or food specially made or an invitation to a meal; I received nothing from a pot, from a bowl, across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from*

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*a woman giving suck, from a woman lying in the midst of men, from where food was advertised to be distributed, from where a dog was waiting, from where flies were bustling. I accepted no fish or meat, I drank no liquor, wine, or fermented brew.*

*I kept to one house, to one morsel; I kept to two houses, to two morsels; I kept to three houses, to three morsels; I kept to four houses, to four morsels; I kept to five houses, to five morsels; I kept to six houses, to six morsels; I kept to seven houses, to seven morsels.*

*I lived on the food from one donor, from two donors, from three donors, from four donors, from five donors, from six donors, from seven donors; I took food once a day, once every two days, once every three days, once every four days, once every five days, once every six days, once every seven days; thus even up to once every fortnight, I dwelt pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals.*

*I was an eater of greens, eater of millet, eater of wild rice, eater of hide-parings, eater of moss, eater of rice-bran, eater of rice-scum, eater of sesamum flour, eater of grass, eater of cow-dung. I lived on forest roots and fruits; I fed on fallen fruits.*

*I clothed myself in hemp, in hemp-mixed cloth, in shrouds, in refuse rags, in tree bark, in antelope hide, in strips of antelope hide, in kusa-grass fabric, in bark fabric, in wood-shavings fabric, in head-hair wool, in animal wool, in owls' wings.*

*I was one who pulled out hair and beard, pursuing the practice of pulling out hair and beard.*

*I was one who stood continuously, rejecting seats. I was one who squatted continuously, devoted to maintaining the squatting position. I was one who used a mattress of spikes; I made a mattress of spikes my bed.*

*I dwelt pursuing the practice of (ritual) bathing in (cold) water three times*

*daily including in the evening.*

*Thus in such a variety of ways I dwelt pursuing the practice of tormenting and mortifying the body. Sariputta, such was my practice of asceticism.*

*Sariputta, there my pursuit of being unkempt was such that just as the bole of a tinduka tree, accumulating over the years, cakes and flakes off, so too, dust and dirt, accumulating over the years, caked off my body and flaked off. It never occurred to me: 'Let me rub this dust and dirt off with my hand, or let another rub this dust and dirt off with his hand.' Sariputta, such was my practice of being unkempt.*

*Sariputta, my practice of scrupulousness was such that I was always mindful in stepping forwards and stepping backwards. I was full of pity in regard to a drop of water thus: 'Let me not hurt the tiny creatures in the crevices of the ground.' Sariputta, such was my practice of scrupulousness.*

*Sariputta, my practice of seclusion was such that I would plunge into some forest and dwell there. And when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd or someone gathering grass, or sticks, or a woodsman, I would flee from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock. Why was that? So that they should not see me and I should not see them.*

*Sariputta, just as a forest-bred deer, on seeing human beings, flees from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock, so too, when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd or someone gathering grass, or sticks, or a woodsman, I would flee from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock. Sariputta, such was my practice of seclusion.*

*Sariputta, I went on all fours to the cow-pens when the cattle had gone out and the cowherd had left them, and I fed on the dung of the young suckling calves. Sariputta, as long as my own excrement and urine lasted, I fed on my own excrement and urine. Sariputta, such was my practice of great distortion in*

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*feeding.*

*Sariputta, I plunged into some awe-inspiring grove and dwelt there: a grove so awe-inspiring that normally it would make a man's hair stand up if he were not free from lust.*

*Sariputta, when those cold wintry nights came during the eight-day interval of frost, I would dwell by night in the open and by day in the grove. In the last month of the hot season I would dwell by day in the open and by night in the grove.*

*Sariputta, there came to me spontaneously this verse never heard before:*

*The sage has engaged in searching, being heated and chilled, alone in the awe-inspiring grove, naked, no fire to sit beside.*

*Sariputta, I made my bed in a charnel ground supported on a skeleton.*

*Sariputta, cowherd boys came up and spat on me, urinated on me, threw dirt at me, and poked sticks into my ears. Sariputta, yet I do not recall that I ever aroused an evil mind of hate against them.*

*Sariputta, such was my abiding in equanimity.”<sup>16</sup>*

The extreme ways of cultivation made his body become emaciated, decrepit, exhausted, the result of hunger and thirst, and self-mortification. In another passage also in the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha described his condition at that time as follows:

*“As I took such small quantity of solid and liquid food, my body became extremely emaciated. Just as are the joints of knot-grasses or bulrushes, even so were the major and minor parts of my body, owing to lack of food. Just as is the camel's hoof, even so were my hips for want of food. Just as is a string of beads,*

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<sup>16</sup> Maha Sihanada Sutta – Majjhima Nikaya

*even so did my backbone stand out and bend in, for lack of food.*

*Just as the rafters of a dilapidated hall fall this way and that, even so appeared my ribs through lack of sustenance. Just as in a deep well may be seen stars sunk deep in the water, even so did my eye-balls appear deep sunk in their sockets, being devoid of food. Just as a bitter pumpkin, when cut while raw, will by wind and sun get shrivelled and withered, even so did the skin of my head get shrivelled and withered, due to lack of sustenance.*

*And I, intending to touch my belly's skin, would instead seize my backbone. When I intended to touch my backbone, I would seize my belly's skin. So was I that, owing to lack of sufficient food, my belly's skin clung to the backbone, and I, on going to pass excreta or urine, would in that very spot stumble and fall down, for want of food. And I stroked my limbs in order to revive my body. Lo, as I did so, the rotten roots of my body's hairs fell from my body owing to lack of sustenance.*

*The people who saw me said: 'The ascetic Gotama is black.' Some said, 'The ascetic Gotama is not black but blue.' Some others said: 'The ascetic Gotama is neither black nor blue but tawny.' To such an extent was the pure colour of my skin impaired owing to lack of food.”<sup>17</sup>*

Because in order to fulfill his ultimate goal, the ascetic Gotama practiced the mortified cultivation and asceticism most seriously and diligently. However, after a while, he realized that his efforts in practicing this ascetic method were futile. The body was getting weaker and weaker, and sometimes even facing death because of excessive starvation, but the intellect not only didn't generate any more, but also the spirit became tired, haggard... While the ascetic Gotama was struggling to find another direction on his quest for enlightenment, when he suddenly recalled his childhood when his father took him out on the occasion of the Spring Planting festival.

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<sup>17</sup> Majjhima nikaya.



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On this day, he had the opportunity to experience and realize the first jhana state and no longer feel the sense of sensual pleasures.

While reminiscing about this, at that moment a band of musicians passed by, stopping to rest and tune the strings near where he was sitting in meditation. When the strings are slack, no sound will come out, whereas when the strings are too tight, they will break, and no sound will be produced. Somewhere in the middle, neither slack nor tight, the soft, humming sound levels, sometimes low and high resound. Witnessing such a thing, his mind suddenly lit up, appeared the Middle Way, and he affirmed that it would not be possible to have a clear mind, in an exhausted body, emaciated. And finally, he gave up practicing asceticism, returned to a normal diet and practiced the Middle Way, which lay between the two extremes of sensual pleasures and mortification.

As for “the group of five” Kondana, after seeing the ascetic Gotama had given up the practice of extreme mortification and returned to eating normally, they thought he had lost his mind and gave up on his journey to find the truth which they have long shared the same idea, they said to each other:

*“The ascetic Gotama has returned to his taste for luxury, has stopped trying, and has returned to a life of comfort.”*

In the end, they expressed their displeasure and left.

After eating a bowl of porridge cooked with rice and milk offered by a kind girl named Sujata. The ascetic Gotama went down to the Nerañjara river to wash his face and held his bowl in both hands to pray: *“If I can achieve great enlightenment in this life, then let this bowl float upstream, otherwise it will drift down.”* Then he threw the bowl into the river and miraculously, the bowl floated upstream in a

spectacular way. After drifting quite a distance, the bowl gradually sank.

At that moment, there was nothing in the world, but there was something strange in the Dragon's palace. Originally under the palace of the Dragon King, there were three golden bowls of the three past Buddhas, namely Kakusandha Buddha, Konagamana Buddha, Kassapa Buddha. When the the ascetic Gotama's golden bowl sank, drifted back to the Dragon's palace, and hit the first three golden bowls, the resounding sound was heard. Dragon King Kalanaga was sleeping at that time, heard the sound of golden bowls clashing, woke up, smiled and said: "Wow! Just yesterday a Buddha appeared, today another one was born."

After seeing the bowl floating upstream, the ascetic Gotama knew that he would achieve his desired goal, feeling elated and joyful in his heart. He immediately followed the Neranjara river, went to the Bodhgaya area, where there was an ancient Bodhi tree, luxuriant and green foliage. He immediately chose to sit under this tree to practice meditation. At that time, a cowherd boy passed by and saw him struggling to pick up leaves stacked on top of each other to make a seat. He paused, looked at him curiously for a moment, and then said:

*"Hey! The ascetic! Those leaves cannot be spread as a seat, only a few days later they will be bruised and damaged. This grass must be used. This kusa grass will dry for a long time and give off a pleasant aroma. I'll offer it to you!"*

After saying that, the cowherd put down the bundle of grass, struggling to arrange the scattered leaves to be neat and tidy. The boy was very skillful and agile, only a moment later he finished it, looking very beautiful.

- *"Thank you so much!"* Said the ascetic Gotama.

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- *"You're welcome!"*

- *"What is your name? Where do you live?"*

- *"My name is Sothiya, my house is also nearby."*

To the naked eye of the world, this was just a mattress made of ordinary grass, but in the karmic eyes of non-humans, devas and demon kings, this was the Vajra<sup>18</sup> throne, named Ratanapallanka – a dignified blessing treasures which have been accumulated from countless eons of the ascetic Gotama.

After the boy Sothiya left, Siddhartha gently stepped onto the grass mattress and sat down in a meditative posture. A feeling of comfort, softness, plus the scent of grass, he felt very relieved in his heart.

With a pure mind, regulating his breathing, facing east, Siddhartha made several great vows:

*"Even if my blood has dried up, even if only my tendons, bones and skin remain, I will not leave this grass mattress until I have attained enlightenment."*

### **12. ATTAINING ENLIGHTENMENT.**

As soon as the ascetic Gotama finished his vows, the space seemed to wobble, and the earth shook violently. From the Heaven of Free Enjoyment of Others' Manifestations, Mara extremely panicked, his hair standing on end. Feeling that something unusual was happening in the world and would be detrimental to him, he immediately used his divine eyes **to** observe and realized that Prince Siddhartha was sitting in meditation and he was coming very close

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<sup>18</sup> A Sanskrit word meaning both **thunderbolt** and **diamond** and refers to a symbol important to both Hinduism and Buddhism.

to the Buddhahood, about to step out of Mara's power. This is a really bad thing.

Mara – the Demon King thought to himself:

*“Prince Siddhartha is trying to use his tiny light to penetrate the deep darkness of Ignorance, which I have scattered in the world since beginningless time. He really wants to get rid of my power! So today, I will use the supreme power to take the grass mattress, or push him out of that place, then that great vow will not be fulfilled.”*

After thinking that, Mara immediately mobilized all the heavenly soldiers and generals, armed with all kinds of monstrous-shaped weapons with the most dangerous features, rushing down Uruvela, standing in front of the ascetic Gotama.

The demon king riding the elephant Girimekhala took the lead, he turned out to be a thousand arms, with a fierce face, and his subordinates holding all kinds of weapons were displaying their talons, beating drums, banging gongs, shouting loudly, shaking all over the worlds.

*“Attack!”* The Demon king ordered. Immediately, thousands of sharp arrows rushed towards prince Siddhartha, but not a single arrow could reach his body. All of them turned into brilliant lotus flowers that fell in front of him.

The demon king was stunned, surprised, and used the flood weapon. He allowed a torrential downpour of rain to fall on the Bodhi tree where Prince Siddhartha was sitting. But strangely, not a single drop of rain could fall on him.

Enraged, the Demon King used the weapon of embers, he conjured, each fiery flint fell from the air continuously, densely, but all turned into fresh, crimson, brilliant roses around where the

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prince sat.

The Mara's face was red from anger. He continued to use magical powers, manifesting a rain of weapons. From the air, knives, swords, spears, and all weapons with serrate, sharp hooks... rushed down toward the head of Prince Siddhartha. But once again, those weapons turned into metallic flowers of all colors blue, red, yellow, white fell around him.

Then the demon king used divine powers to simultaneously use weapons such as rain of hot ash, rain of burning sand, rain of mud, weapons of dense darkness. But then it was also in vain, all turned into fragrant things, fragrant powder, fragrant water. The space outside was pitch-black, but the place where the prince Siddhartha was sitting under the Bodhi tree was as bright as the full moon.

Having used up all the weapons of his forte but still did not move the lap of prince Siddhartha. The Demon King got angry and shouted at his subordinates.

*“Why do you guys just stand there, why don't you rush in together to stab, slash, hook, chop, saw, and split him up? Why don't you kick him out of that incurable grass mattress?”*

Although these little demons was very afraid of the Demon King's authority, no one dared to approach to prince Siddhartha. Because the spiritual power of him created an invisible protective circle, a solid wall of Paramitas<sup>19</sup>, exuding a supernatural power that

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<sup>19</sup> According to the Sanskrit language, Paramita means crossing-over. Six Paramitas mean the six things that ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana. Six stages of spiritual perfection followed by the Bodhisattva in his progress to Buddhahood.

made them cringe in fear.

Angry at not knowing what to do. Mara rode the elephant Girimekhala approached to prince Siddhartha and started a quarrel.

*“Siddhartha Gautama! Get out of that grass mattress right now, because it's mine!”*

At that time, the prince was temporarily away from his five mental forces,<sup>20</sup> he replied.

*“Hey Mara! In this world, I have never seen anyone as stupid, arrogant and persistent as you, keep following me durably. And in this world, I have never seen anyone say such words as coercive and unreasonable as you. The Kusa grass mattress I'm sitting on was a gift offered to me by a cowherd boy named Sothiya and it turned into a Vajra throne thanks to the Parami blessings that I have accumulated from countless kalpas up to now. And you, out of ambition, blind, desiring to consolidate your position, power, and vanity. Now, you want to come here and compete with me? You are so crazy. Quickly dissolve into the eternal darkness of your stupidity!”*

Seeing that all his weapons were used up without being able to move Prince Siddhartha, the demon king knew that he could not use force against him, but he also did not know how to kick him out of the grass mattress. So, he continued to persist stubbornly in order to be able to argue with the prince.

*“Siddhartha Gautama, please return the grass mattress to me!”*

The prince smiled softly and said:

*“Alright! I'll let yourself be persuaded that you have to lose. Listen to my*

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<sup>20</sup> The powers of five spiritual faculties which are developed through strengthening the five roots. These powers are: Power of Faith, Power of Zeal, Power of Memory, Power of Meditation, Power of Wisdom.

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*question. If this grass mattress is yours, what proof do you have?"*

This time, the Demon King laughed, showing his pride, and replied:

*"All these heavenly soldiers and generals will testify to me."*

All of the demon king's subordinates shouted in unison to cheer him on:

*"Yes, we all testify. The grass mattress belongs to our heavenly master."*

The Demon King, seeing that he was victorious, showed great joy, laughed loudly, and said:

"You said that you had accumulated Paramitas or something... from countless kalpas, the grass mattress turned into a Vajra throne, so who can testify for you?"

The prince said nothing. He reached out his hand and gently touched the ground. Immediately the ground shook violently, emitting a thunderous sound like a storm in the heart of the earth, the rain poured down, the tide rose, rolling in waves and swept away the demon king's subordinates along with their weapons. Mara, who was sitting on Girimekhala's elephant, also wobbled, tilted, and gradually sank into the water. Terrified by the prince's power, the Demon king immediately urged the elephant Girimekhala to turn around and hurriedly fly back to the Heaven of Free Enjoyment of Others' Manifestations without daring to look back.

The fierce battle just now happened invisibly. For the worldly world, everything goes on as usual in the stillness of everyday life. By this time, it was late afternoon, the sun was about to set. Prince Siddhartha looked at the surroundings for a moment and then went

back inside, listening to the mind stream flowing peacefully, still and clear. The prince knew that he would go all night to solve the spiritual problem that had been sobbing for a long time, but now it was about to have a solution.

At midnight, passing the dawn of the full moon day of Vesakha month 588 BCE, in an effort to meditate with a calm and pure mind, on the first watch<sup>21</sup> he attained the supramundane wisdom called the Remembrance of previous lives.<sup>22</sup> He gradually recalled that he had spent countless lifetimes as human beings, uncountable lives as buffaloes, cows, donkeys, horses... so many lives as Yakshas<sup>23</sup>, Asuras<sup>24</sup>, etc...

In the second watch,<sup>25</sup> he meditated, attained the Divine Vision,<sup>26</sup> with this power, he was able to see all the retributions of sentient beings as a result of the bad deeds in past lives that had been created up to now. And they had to accept the consequences of their own actions in present live. In addition, he also saw all the realms in samsara, the six knives such as: heaven, asura, hungry ghosts, hell, and other non-human realms...

In the third watch,<sup>27</sup> when the morning star just appeared, he meditated and attained full enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> With this power, he saw what was the source of the afflictions and sufferings that

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<sup>21</sup> 6 – 10 Pm

<sup>22</sup> Buddha-knowledge of all forms of previous existence of self and others.

<sup>23</sup> Demons in the earth, or in the air, or in the lower heavens; they are malignant, and violent, and devourers.

<sup>24</sup> Enemies of the Gods.

<sup>25</sup> 10 Pm – 2 Pm

<sup>26</sup> Clear vision of a Saint, or supernatural insight which enables him to know the future rebirths of himself and all beings (future mortal conditions), one of the three enlightenments.

<sup>27</sup> 2 – 6 Am.

<sup>28</sup> The realization that the stream of transmigration is ended.



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sentient beings of all species were standing and what was the true nature of all things and phenomena in this world. This was the complete, ultimate, complete enlightenment that he had long sought. It was also at this time that he became a Great Enlightened One – a Buddha. Unconsciously, he uttered a deep, transcendent inner inspiration as marking his great moment:

*“I, who have been seeking the builder of this house (body), failing to attain Enlightenment which would enable me to find him, have wandered through innumerable births in samsara. To be born again and again is, indeed, dukkha!*

*Oh house-builder!*

*You are seen, you shall build no house (for me) again. All your rafters are broken, your roof-tree is destroyed. My mind has reached the unconditioned; the end of craving has been attained.”<sup>29</sup>*

At that time, he was 35 years old and since then, he was the one who brought light to mankind, he went everywhere to ring the bell of no-rebirth, immortality of ultimate enlightenment...

### **13. SEVEN WEEKS AFTER ATTAINING ENLIGHTENMENT:**

After enlightenment, the Buddha continued to sit under the Bodhi tree to contemplate the profound and sublime Dharma that he had just attained. This is the time for him to enjoy wonderful peace and to observe the capacities of sentient beings before setting out to disseminate the Dharma. He stayed here for 7 weeks.

#### **13.1 First week:**

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<sup>29</sup> The Dhammapada Sutta – Verse 153,154.

During this first week after enlightenment, the Buddha sat quietly under the Bodhi tree to enjoy the boundless peace of supreme Enlightenment.

### **13.2 Second week:**

When the sun had just arose, the Buddha released his meditation, he looked at the surrounding scenery, each branch of tree, blade of grass, till the dewdrops... all exuding a poetic beauty that for a long time, he never had a chance to pay attention. Everything here had existed with him, much less the Bodhi tree - the tree of wisdom was the friend who sheltered the sun and rain, and went through the extraordinary and noble battles with him, it was also the witness to his ultimate and complete enlightenment. To show his deep gratitude to this spiritual friend, the Buddha stood staring at the Bodhi tree for a week without blinking. This was also a lesson about the gratitude that the Buddha wanted to send to mankind in the future.

### **13.3 Third week:**

Seeing that the Buddha was still hanging around the Bodhi tree and was not in a hurry to go anywhere, the gods in the heavens doubted whether Prince Siddhartha had attained Buddhahood or not? Knowing this, the Buddha immediately used miraculous powers, created a jade path in midair called Ratana Cankamana from where he stood to the Bodhi tree and walked up and down for seven days on it. Not stopping there, he also used supernatural powers to convey a message to the gods that he was now a great enlightened being with all the qualities, abilities, and a perfect, transcendent wisdom of a Buddha.

### **13.4 Fourth week:**

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In this fourth week, the Buddha used his supernatural powers to create a jade terrace called Ratanaghara, representing the Dharma building, and then dwelt in it to meditate on the full details of the Abhidhamma. While meditating, entering samadhi<sup>30</sup> to see the subtleties and complexities of the mind-stream constantly changing from moment to moment, both the body and mind of Gotama Buddha became clear and pure, emitting a six-colors halo.

### **13.5 Fifth week:**

The Buddha sat under the Ajapala Banyan tree to meditate on the Dharma and enjoy the happiness of true liberation. At weekend, an arrogant Brahmin passing by, saw the Buddha sitting in meditation, stopped and asked:

*“O Monk! Do you know in what respect can one become a saint? In other words, what are the conditions and causes to become a saint?”*

Buddha Gautama replied:

*“Abandoned from all evil, sin, no longer conceited, purified of all defilements, subdued, controlled the six senses, mastered the Dharma and righteous, lived the holy life. He is called a saint.”*

The Buddha's answer seemed to penetrate the mind of the arrogant Brahmin, so he looked puzzled and shy. Then, he bowed his head and walked away.

Also in this week, the Demon king sent his three daughters, Craving, Dissatisfaction and Ambition, down to the Bodhi tree to seduce the Buddha, in order to make him fall and lose the Buddhahood that he had just attained. But once again all attempts

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<sup>30</sup> A term used in Hindu and Buddhist yogic meditation.

of the Demon king failed.

### **13.6 Sixth week.**

The Buddha went to the east and meditated under the Muccalinda tree to enjoy supramundane joy. Suddenly, the cold wind blew stronger and stronger, the sky was dark and gray, thunder and lightning broke out, and it started to rain heavily. At that time, Muccalinda - the Snake King, came up from the bottom of the lake, wound his coils round the Buddha's body seven times, and turned out his seven heads look like seven great canopy coverings, not letting any raindrops can touch the Awakened One's golden body.

After the sky cleared, the rain stopped and the storm passed, the Snake King crouched down and transformed into a young man, he dropped five parts of his body to the ground (his forehead, left knee, right knee, left elbow, right elbow) in front of the Buddha respectfully. The Buddha praised the merits of the Snake king Muccalinda and said a verse:

*"Happy is seclusion to him who is contented, to him who has heard the truth, and to him who sees. Happy is goodwill in this world, and so is restraint towards all beings. Happy in this world is non-attachment, the passing beyond of sense desires. The suppression of the 'I am' conceit is indeed the highest happiness."*<sup>31</sup>

### **13.7 Seventh week.**

The Buddha left the Muccalinda tree and went to sit under the Rajayatana tree to enter the meditative concentration in extinction. From the time he attained the supreme bodhi until now, he had not eaten anything. At that time, there were two merchant brothers

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<sup>31</sup> Muccalinda Vagga - Udana Sutta 10.

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named Tapussa and Bhalika with 500 carts of goods, from Ukkala on the way to river Ganges, passing by the place where Buddha was sitting in meditation. Seeing the monk, who was bright, majestic, and gentle, his face exuded infinite peace and compassion, they both knelt down, then said:

*“We come from far away, offer you this little food. We hope you will use it happily for our long-term benefit.”*

At that moment, the four deva-kings appeared, offering each person to the Buddha each bowl, the Buddha received and used his miracles combined the four bowls into one, and received the cakes and honey from the two merchant brothers.

After eating, the Buddha blessed them, and told them what was Buddha? What was enlightenment, liberation? What was the way lead to liberation...? After listening to the Buddha's short sermon, the two merchants were filled with joy, they immediately knelt down with five five parts of their body to the ground, prostrated themselves before the Buddha, and said:

*“Please allow us to rely on you, to be attached to you with the teaching of releasing from suffering.”*

The Buddha looked at the two merchants and smiled:

*“You two are the first people in the Dharma of Tathagata!<sup>32</sup> So it is more correct to say this. ‘Buddham saranam Gacchami. Dhammam saranam Gacchami.’(I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the Dharma).”*

The two merchants prostrated themselves before the Buddha

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<sup>32</sup> An epithet of the Buddha used by him when speaking of himself. It means the One who has ‘thus gone’ or ‘thus come’.

while repeating his words three times, circumambulating the Buddha three times, then saying goodbye to the Blessed One and continued on their way back to their homeland. Before they left, the Buddha had given these two merchants eight strands of his hair to commemorate him and made a prediction that after he passed away, Buddhism would prevail in the land of these two merchants for many thousands of years.<sup>33</sup>

#### **14. THE DISSEMINATION OF THE DHARMA.**

After the two merchants left for a while, the Buddha wanted to set out to spread and preach the ultimate truths that he had attained and experienced. But he felt hesitant, unwilling to teach the Dharma for everyone. He thought people would never understand the profound and sublime doctrine that he had just discovered, because all sentient beings were being engulfed in the darkness of Ignorance, and the Five desires - Six sense objects... At that moment, Brahma Sahampati had known the Buddha's intention. He immediately appeared, prostrated himself before the Awakened One, bowed his head respectfully. He said to the Buddha with persistence voice:

*"To the Blessed One! I beseech you to go on your way missionary, I beg the Great Compassionate One to sound the drum of the Dharma of immortality. If the miraculous Dharma is not propagated, the three worlds will be burned, and the living beings will be perished. There are sentient beings with more or less dust in their eyes, and if they do not hear the Dharma, they will have to suffer from depression. When the Dharma is preached, those who have a little dust left will easily understand and realize that sublime and unsurpassed truth."*

Seeing that the Blessed One was still contemplating in silence.

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<sup>33</sup> These two merchants are from Myanmar. Currently, eight hairs of the Buddha are being worshiped at the Shwedagon Pagoda. They were considered the treasure, pride and glory of Myanmar people.

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Brahma Sahampati once again bowed his head for the second and third time. The Buddha smiled slightly, nodding in agreement after he used his pure wisdom eye to observe the world and realize that sentient beings had many varieties, many faculties, many minds and different levels. There were sentient beings with a lot of dust in their eyes, and there were beings with little dust in their eyes. There were intelligent and lucid people, there were dark and delusional people. Just like the lotus pond, there were so many white lotuses, pink lotuses, blue lotuses, red lotuses, purple lotuses... They lived alternately and mixed together in the same pond, but some lotus were still in the mud, some had just come out of the mud, some were in the water, and some had reached out of the water to receive sunlight without sticking to a bit of mud...

After contemplating like that, Buddha Gautama declared like a Lion king in the dawn of the great jungle:

*“The door of Non-rebirth and immortality has been opened for all sentient beings. Those who have ears to hear, eyes to see, mind to understand, put their full trust.”*

### **14.1 The first teaching and the establishment of the Sangha.<sup>34</sup>**

The first person whom the Buddha thought of in spreading the profound Dharma that he had just attained was his old teacher in the city of Savatthi - Alara Kalama, but a Deva appeared and informed the Blessed One that he passed away. So the Buddha thought of his second teacher - Udakka Ramaputta, and another Deva told the Buddha that he had just passed away, too the night before. Thus, those who were considered to be superior, with only

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<sup>34</sup> Community of Buddhist monks.

a little sand left in their eyes had all left one by one. Then, the World-Honored One turned his mind to his former five ascetic companions – “the group of Five” Kondanna, after using his celestial eye to observe, the Buddha knew they were in the Deer Park, so he aimed at North West and went to Sarnarth.

On the way, he met a wandering ascetic named Upaka. Seeing the face of the Blessed One bright and radiant, his majestic gait like a lion king, his face exuding gentleness, but full of wisdom. Upaka stepped forward, looked back and forth at the Buddha's face, and then asked:

*“O Sage! Your face is so clear and serene, your complexion so pure and radiant. In whose name do you leave home? Who is your guru? Whose Dharma do you learn?”*

The World-Honored One replied:

*“I have overcome all. I have understood all. I have let go, removed all ties and released all things. I have diligently tried to focus my energy, eradicated all desires at the root (Arhatsip).<sup>35</sup> Who else do I call a guru? No one is my guru. No one stands on an equal footing with me. In this world, even the gods and the Brahmas, no one can compare with me. I’m an Arhat<sup>36</sup> in this world and an unsurpassed guru, indeed! Only I’m a Fully Enlightened One, quiet and pure. I’m going to Kasi to turn the wheel of the Dharma in the middle of the blind world. I will sound the drum of Non-rebirth and Immortality.”*

After listening, the ascetic Upaka said politely:

*“It maybe so, O Sage!”*

Then, he bowed his head, turned to a small lane and walked

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<sup>35</sup> Who attains the fourth stage of Sainthood, and is no more reborn anywhere.

<sup>36</sup> A saintly man.



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away.<sup>37</sup>

The Buddha was completely calm and deliberate, then he slowly continued on his way. After nearly half a month, the Buddha finally set his foot in the Deer Park.

Seeing the Buddha in the distance, walking slowly and deliberately toward “The group of Five”, Kondanna told his fellow initiates:

*“Hey guys! The ascetic Gautama is coming to us. The person who lacked of effort, refused to persevere in the ascetic path, and had returned to a life of comfort and luxury. That ascetic is not worthy of our warm welcome and respectful service. Do not take his bowls and robes. There's also no need to invite him for a drink. But anyway, a seat should be made available, if the ascetic wants to sit, just sit.”*

“The group of five” Kondana determined to do so. But, when the Buddha approached, his majestic demeanor and sublime personality exuded an extraordinary power that made them no longer self-controlled. So no one told anyone, all at once. The one who received the bowl and the robe, the one who went to get water to wash his feet, the one who prepared a seat... Some of the ascetics in the group raised their greetings:

- “O Sage! Have you been healthy for so long?”

- “Are you tired of traveling long distances...?”

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<sup>37</sup> Later, because of the difficulties of his family life, such as suffering because of food and humiliation of his poverty. Upaka remembered his immortal victorious friend - the Blessed One. He went to Jetavana monastery to ask for ordination with the Buddha and attained Arahantship. Then, his wife also left home and attained sainthood.

The Buddha thought it was the time to warn them, he said:

*“Gentlemen! From now on, it is not advisable for all of you to call me by my surname, first name, or by nouns such as sage, monk... I have now attained the Perfect Enlightenment and have become a Buddha, a World-Honored One, and a Fully Enlightened One. The Tathagata come here to preach the Dharma of immortality to you. If you practice according to the teachings of mine, you will soon realize enlightenment in this present life, and will enjoy the supramundane, sacred and pure happiness.”*

The ascetic Kondanna and “the group of Five” answered in disbelief:

*“The Buddhahood<sup>38</sup> – the fruit of Perfect Enlightenment, is the ultimate noble for good men and women who want to leave the family and renounce the world in order to seek it. It is a very holy thing. You have returned to a life of comfort and luxury. In addition to, you have given up all your efforts, how is it possible to attain any sublime wisdom to be worthy of a Saint?”*

The Buddha tried to explain the previous misunderstanding again:

*“O Sages! I have never returned to a life of comfort and luxury. I also never stopped trying to attain my lofty goal diligently and determinedly after you had all left. Thanks to that, now I have attained Buddhahood, the fruit of Perfect Enlightenment, that’s true. Listen! Ascetics, the Tathagata has attained the state of Non-rebirth and immortality, and I will teach the Dharma to all of you. If you practice in accordance with the teachings of the Tathagata, you will soon realize enlightenment and will enjoy infinite peace and happiness right in this life, so the Tathagata has come here.”*

The second time, then the third time, the Buddha repeated the

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<sup>38</sup> The Buddha fruit.

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confirmation, but seeing that “the group of Five” Kondanna were still skeptical and expressed disappointment, the Buddha asked seriously:

*“Hey guys! have you ever heard the Tathagata say something untrue?”*

They all nodded and replied:

*“That's right! the Ascetic Gautama has never said anything untrue.”*

*“And have you ever heard the Tathagata talk about the attainment of the Buddhahood, about the profound and wonderful teaching of the Dharma, about the state of the Non-rebirth and immortality as today?”*

*“That has never been.”*

After confirming, they unconsciously looked at the face, attitude, and gestures of the Blessed One. An angelic, radiant face spreads the aura of a great victor, a calm and steady attitude like mount Meru, as if defying all difficulties and adversities of external influences, along with the deep calmness insight that is hard for anyone in the whole world to have.

Realizing these outstanding features of the Buddha, the ascetic Kondanna – a veteran astrologist suddenly startled. He immediately knelt down and prostrated himself before the Buddha.

*“We are really stupid! Please have mercy on us, and preach to us about that wonderful and profound Dharma.”*

All the five ascetics knelt down together with five parts of their body to the ground in a very respectful and meek manner.

The first sermon that the Buddha preached to “the group of Five” Kondanna, referring to the Four Noble Truths. After

listening, the ascetic Kondanna immediately obtained the fruit of Stream-entry.<sup>39</sup> After listening to the Buddha explain more about the Four Noble Truths, the remaining four people also in turn attained this fruition together.

Ten days later, the Buddha continued to preach to “the group of Five” Kondanna about The Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic, referring to the doctrine of No-self, all five of them attained arhatship.

Since then, the Sangha was officially established and formed the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha). And the group of five bhikkhus<sup>40</sup> who had just attained the fruit of the Unborn and the Immortal were the first disciples of the Buddha. They were: Annata Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji.

#### **14.2 The transformation of Yassa and his friends.**

Yassa was the only son of a rich man in Benares, he was born and raised in wealth and affluence. He was pampered since childhood. When he reached adulthood, Yassa was established three palaces by his father just like Prince Siddhartha in former times. In addition to his main beautiful, dignified, meek wife. Yassa also had dozens of young concubines, beautiful singers and attendants serving tea and wine, singing and dancing to entertain him in lavish banquets...

One day, after having a great dinner with friends, he woke up in the middle of the night and saw his concubines, dancers and singers in loose clothes, smeared on makeup. They were sleeping soundly, some were snoring, some were drooling... It looked like a pile of

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<sup>39</sup> The first fruit of “Stream Winner”. He still has to undergo seven instances of birth and death.

<sup>40</sup> Buddhist monks.

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spoiled meat, it was disgusting. Scary and hideous, Yassa immediately got up and ran out of the house as if trying to escape from some terrible obsession. Yassa walked away and mumbled: *“Oh, Wretched am I! Horrible am I! Unfortunate am I!...”* Yassa kept babbling and walking aimlessly from late night until dawn the next day. Fortunately, those aimless footsteps inadvertently led Yassa to the Deer Park, where the Enlightened One residing here.

At that time, the Buddha was meditating by walking up and down. He heard the Yassa's babbling and lamenting and clearly saw the anguished, tragic mentality of him. The Enlightened One immediately used his magical power to transfer a powerful but pleasing sound which penetrated into Yassa's mind, as the father said to his son with full of love voice:

*“In this place, Yassa! There is no suffering, no horribleness, no damnation, nothing to fear and avoid. Come here and sit down Yassa! The Tathagata will teach you the Dharma.”*

The Buddha's voice was like a wake-up call, pulling Yassa out of a terrible nightmare. He looked around and saw the shadow of a monk looming in the fog. Yassa gently took off his shoes, put them aside, and stepped forward cautiously barefoot. The Buddha smiled and pointed at a rock.

*“Sit down, Yassa! Then you will experience the taste of peace, purity and the happiness of immaculateness.”*

Then the Buddha spoke in a Brahma voice, with his broad and profound wisdom. At first, he talked about the dangers of a debauched lifestyle, which would cause the body to be destroyed, worn out, the mind would become dull and gradually lost its sensitivity and flexibility. Indulging in sensual pleasures only

brought back to us boredom and disgust. If we tried to seek pleasure through the senses, we would face all kinds of suffering... We shouldn't disrelish or shun on one side, and indulge or dream of the other side. Either side is the change, the transformation of suffering...

After listening to the Buddha's lecture about the harmful effects of pursuing the Five Desires, Yassa immediately attained the fruit of Stream-entry. At that time, the Buddha realized that Yassa's mind was well-trained, he continued to explain the Four Noble Truths and the outstanding benefits of the holy life of Renunciation...

Both grateful and emotional, Yassa knelt down to hug the Buddha's feet, he was so choked up that he couldn't say anything...

Meanwhile, at the wealthiest manor in the city of Benares, Yassa's mother was the first to discover her son's disappearance. She hurriedly ran back and forth, soaked through with tears. The father who heard the news was also shocked and extremely worried. The millionaire immediately ordered his servants to disperse to find Yassa, from the alleys in the city to the main roads in the suburbs leading to the forests on the other side of the city. At noon, the servants discovered Yassa's shoes were lying on the grass on the road leading to the Deer Park, they immediately ran back to tell the millionaire. So, he set out to go to the Deer Park at once. Upon arrival, the Buddha was standing at the door, Yassa's father bowed to him, took out his shoes and inquired after his son's news. The Buddha had already known this and he meant to wait. Yassa was sitting next to him, but the Buddha used his magical power to hide him and said:

*"Calm down and sit down, bourgeois! Then, you will meet your son."*

Hearing that, the millionaire was overjoyed, sat down

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obediently. Then the Buddha gave him a short sermon, the bourgeois listened attentively, sometimes he looked at the Buddha. From the dressing style, beard and hair to his gesture and language, all exude something strangely beautiful and noble. His teachings sound so gentle and kind that the bourgeois hadn't been heard a such thing for a long time...

Thanks to his wisdom, after listening to the Dharma period that the Buddha preached to him personally, the bourgeois immediately attained the fruit of Stream-entry. He was so happy, for the first time in his life, he experienced such a profound and powerful inner transformation. At this moment, he seemed to be bathing in a cool stream amidst the scorching heat of a summer noon. To be moved, he knelt down and said to the Buddha:

*"Good deed ! Oh, Honoured Master! Thanks to your blessing and wonderful Dharma period, I have been very cool in spirit and have seen what needs to be done. As if someone have to straighten things that have been overthrown, or to discover a hidden object, or to show the way to the lost, or to hold a lamp to shine in the dark, to for those who have eyes to be able to see. The same in the case of the Dharma that the Blessed One taught in various ways. May I take refuge in the Blessed One and take refuge in that Dharma!"*

Thus, he was the first Buddhist layman to take refuge with the full three thrones of the Three Jewels

Then, the Buddha withdrew his supernatural powers and Yassa appeared in front of the bourgeois. When he saw his son again, he was both happy and sad. But there was an extraordinary peace in his mind at that time, he was no longer hot-tempered, impetuous as usual. Even more strange, his son - Yassa was sitting in front of him also exuded an extraordinary calm. Looking at the bright, radiant

expression of Yassa's face, the bourgeois secretly understood what had happened to his son. His son had changed more profoundly than himself and only the Buddha and the five holy monks knew that the bourgeois' son attained Arahantship while he was listening to the Buddha preach to his father.

Looking at the Buddha, the five holy monks and Yassa quietly, the bourgeois felt a peaceful, relaxed, and warm atmosphere was present there. The bourgeois understood that Yassa was no longer his pampered son, who always immersed himself in the banal pleasures of the worldly world. His son became a stately man, both his body and mind exuded the sublime manifestation. He understood deeply that Yassa had made the right choice, so he bowed his head:

*“Oh, The World-Honored One! The disciple's son has already entered the pure path, and he can't enjoy being in the filthy mud anymore. I had seen that. So tomorrow, may I invite the Blessed One with other holy monks and Yassa come to my house together, so that I have the opportunity to offer a meal at noon.”*

The Buddha accepted the bourgeois' invitation in silence. Waiting for everyone to disappear, Yassa dropped five parts of his body to the ground to prostrate himself before the Buddha and said:

*“Oh, The World-Honored One! Let me live in the holy Sangha, please.”*

Sitting back in the lotus position, the Buddha proved that Yassa was official a bhikkhu, he kindly reminded Yassa:

*“Now, you should live a pure spiritual life for the happiness of Gods and men.”*

Along with Yassa, the total number of arhats increased to six at



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that time. The following day, the Buddha and his six arhat disciples, came to the bourgeois' manor leisurely. Yassa's parents, along with his main wife, personally went to the door to greet the Buddha and Shanga. After that, they quickly arranged and prepared gifts and food, sometimes they glanced at Yassa with a mixed mood of both happiness and sadness.

After having lunch, contemplating that the favourable circumstance had come, the Buddha gave a short sermon. The two wives, both obtained the fruit of Stream-Entry as soon as the Buddha finished his teaching and they completely put their absolute faith in the Three Jewels, so the renunciation of Yassa to become a holy monk had turned into the family's joy. The two wives had also asked for taking refuge in the Three Jewels and became the first two Buddhist laywomen in the Buddha's Congregation.

Venerable Yassa had four close friends. They were Vimala, Subahu, Punnaaji and Gavampati. These four friends of Yassa were also the sons of other prestigious and rich merchant families. When these four people heard their honorable friend had shaved off his hair and beard and put on his yellow robes to live the holy life of a monk, they decided to visit him and expressed their wish to follow his good example. Venerable Yassa led all his four friends to meet the Buddha and after listening to the Dharma all four of them attained arhatship. After that, fifty other friends of Yassa, who were also the sons of other dignified families, went to the Deer Park to listen to the Dharma and all attained arhatship together.

So, only a short time, there were sixty bhikkhus who studied the Dharma with the Blessed One, all had attained arhatship.

### **14.3 Conversion of the aristocrats of the kingdom of**

**Kosala.<sup>41</sup>**

At that time, the Buddha set out and left Benares city. The Deer Park became quietly. He aimed at the Southeast and stepped towards Uruvela. At noon, he crossed the tottering plank bridge to go to a village hidden behind a bamboo bush to beg for alms. The residents who lived here were also simple and kind families, and perhaps they had known the reputation of the monks in the Deer Park, so they make offerings very generously and respectfully. After going for alms, the Buddha sat down to take a rest for a while and then, he began to have lunch. After finishing his meal, the Buddha washed and upturned the bowl on a rock by the stream, he intended to sit down in a meditative posture to rest. Suddenly, there was the rustling of footsteps on dry leaves, a group of thirty young men, dressed in luxurious and noble clothes. They were the princes and descendants of King Pasenadi who ruled over the Kingdom of Kosala. The Buddha sat there intending to wait for that predestined affinity. Because he wanted to spread the Dharma to the kingdom of Kosala in the future, he needed to have important seeds and factors in the short term to create favorable conditions for the dissemination of the dharma to this place.

Seeing a still monk sitting under a tree, a young man in the group stepped forward, politely clasped his hands, and asked:

*“O Monk! Have you seen a girl who was a courtesan passed by here?”*

Owing to the fact that these aristocrats were on their way to go sightseeing, they were going to visit famous landscape, they had brought their wives, children and relatives along with them. In the group there was a prince who was unmarried, so he brought a courtesan with him. That noon, when everyone was resting, the

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<sup>41</sup> An ancient kingdom in Central India, the modern Oude.

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courtesan stole all the gold, silver, and jewels... and then fled. They split up to look for her, and when they came across there, they met the Buddha.

After using the pure celestial eye to examine the fundamental ability of these aristocrats. The Buddha recognized that they were the people who had very little dust in their eyes because they all had come from royal families. With they owns their high qualifications and knowledge, they could understand the Dharma quickly, The Buddha used his loving-kindness to cover everyone, then slowly smiled and said:

*“Oh, noble princes! What do you think? Please reply to the Tathagata. Is it better to find a girl with an evil mind, or is it better to find yourself, find out who you are really?”*

Startle by the philosophical question that these princes and aristocrats seemed to have forgotten for a long time since they sat in the auditorium of Takkasila University to study the doctrines of the Vedas and Upanishads. The Buddha's question liked to awake and pull them out of a dream that had lasted for many years. So no one told anyone, all the people silently and unconsciously looked at the monk who was sitting in meditation with a calm demeanor, a bright smile... Then they looked at each other again and sat down around the Blessed One in turn.

A prince with extensive knowledge, he moderately said:

*“Vedic philosophy and even the Upanishadic doctrine consider this world to be Maya, an illusion, with nothing real. Then, dear sir! The Great Sramama.<sup>42</sup> Is it possible to find the real thing, the real person in each of us?”*

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<sup>42</sup> The great Buddhist monk.

The compassionate Buddha looked around, knew that with such a question, everyone kept watching silently and attentively like that, this assembly was all ready to have ears to hear, have wisdom to understand. Then, he began to develop the problem, he preached in detail, meticulously, thoroughly on the doctrine of the Vedas and Upanishads, which for so long these princes had not found the way to solve the problems in it. Then, he gradually led them to the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths, in which the nature of suffering is always present in each person...

After listening to the Buddha's teaching, the oldest and wisest one among the thirty princes attained the fruit of "Non-Returner",<sup>43</sup> twenty eight more attained the fruit of "Once-Returner",<sup>44</sup> especially the youngest prince, because he was still preoccupied with the courtesan, he had not made any further progress.

The Buddha then further elaborated on the Anamatagga Sutta, which talked about the endless cycle of rebirths. Then all thirty of these aristocrats had attained Arahantship and asked to be ordained together with the Buddha. Later on, they were often called the Paveyyaka bhikkhus.

#### **14.4 Conversion of the three ascetic Kassapa brothers.**

After converting the group of thirty princes and aristocrats of the Kosala kingdom, the Buddha continued on his way to spread the Dharma. One day, he arrived in Uruvela. There were three ascetic Kassapa brothers who were cultivating the traditional sect and worshipping the God of Fire (Agni). They belong to the

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<sup>43</sup> The position of the Way of Cultivation. He no longer has to undergo birth and death in the Desire realm.

<sup>44</sup> The position of the Way of cultivation. He still has to undergo "one birth" in the heavens or "once return" among people.

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intellectual class and practiced their religious lives very seriously. So they were rather popular and many people had respected for them.

The oldest brother had five-hundred disciples who were studying with him and he established the place for practising his religion in the Uruvela forest, so he was called Uruvela Kassapa, the younger brother had three-hundred disciples who were studying with him and he established the place for practising his religion on the banks of the Nadi river, so he was called Nadi Kassapa. The youngest brother had two-hundred disciples who were studying with him and he established the place for practising his religion on the slopes of Mount Gaya, so he was called Gaya Kassapa.

The eldest brother Kassapa is very prestigious, so his two younger brothers wholeheartedly submitted themselves to him and his disciples worshipped him like a god. So, he believed that he had attained Arahantship.

The Buddha asked for directions, found the place for practising religion of the eldest brother Uruvela Kassapa. Seeing a young monk coming from afar, with a brilliant face and refined manner..., Knowing that he was not an ordinary wandering ascetic, the old ascetic Kassapa personally greeted him.

The Buddha expressed the manner of a guru, so he greeted the old ascetic Uruvela Kassapa politely with a reasonable attitude toward an older person. After completing the necessary procedures of a host in welcoming guests. The old ascetic invited the Blessed One to the living room to drink tea and talk.

The two intellectuals had talked together for several hours, but their conversation was still not over. The three great disciples of the old ascetic sat in the back, also listened passionately.

While conversing, the Buddha was quite surprised at the vast knowledge of the chief ascetic. As for the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa, he was even more amazed at the young monk's knowledge and wisdom. So, after the conversation, the old ascetic was shocked because he didn't know where that young monk with a such extensive knowledge and transcendent wisdom come from.

Realizing that it was late, the Buddha asked permission to take leave. He said:

*“At the edge of the forest had a Fire – chamber, where the God of Fire was worshipped, please allow me to stay there for one night”.*

The ascetic Uruvela Kassapa honestly replied:

*“O Sage, Please stay here! There was a huge snake inside the Fire – chamber. It was very dangerous, no one dared to enter that chamber. For the past few days, we had to perform rituals outdoor.”*

The Buddha smiled, he said it was alright and expressed his gratitude to the old ascetic's kindness. Then, he leisurely walked away toward the edge of the forest.

As for the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa, after seeing the Buddha off to rest. He went back to his room to meditate for a while, but his mind could not be as calm as the previous days. He kept thinking about the conversation with the young monk today. It was strange, what I knew about the Vedic and Upanishadic systems of thought, he had also knew, but even more thoroughly and particularly. But it seemed that the young monk had not finished talking yet, and still trying to save my face in front of the disciples. So the old ascetic was bewildered, worried... but he reassured himself that anyway that monk was still too young, and I had already attained Arahantship. Arguing for what? Acceptance for what?...

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As for the Buddha, after returning to the Fire – chamber, he looked inside, the torchlight were lit up. The chamber surrounded by big and small shelves. Many kinds of fresh fruits and flowers were displayed on that shelves along with colorful cloths, zigzag patterns of charms in charcoal ink. A stinking smell was exhaled, maybe the big snake was lying around here somewhere. Calmly as if nothing happened, the Buddha folded his robes four times, spread it out in the middle of the floor. Then, he leisurely sat down to meditate, and spread his loving-kindness.

As a matter of fact, a moment later, a huge snake crawled out, put out its tongue and made a hissing sound. In addition to, it also ejected hot fire and dark poisonous smoke towards the Buddha. The World-Honoured One remained still, a puff of gas was ejected from his loving-kindness like a wall of crystal surrounding him. The snake's smoke, fire, venom, and ferocity became weaker and weaker, its energy gradually sank into the void, and its body grew weaker and weaker. Then, the Buddha said:

*“Hey, you! In the past, due to your bad karma,<sup>45</sup> you had been born with a stinking and dirty animal. Carrying the body of an animal, you had to bear suffering and uncomfortableness like that, you didn't even know it yourself, and you still wanted to harm the Tathagata. I am a Buddha, a Fully Enlightened One. In this world, no one has the ability to harm the Tathagata. Turn your head towards the good, and live a harmless life. The Tathagata will testify for you.”*

The snake quietly lowered its head, seemed to submit itself to the Buddha. The Blessed One reached out his hand to rub the snake's head, then he used supernatural powers, turned the big

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<sup>45</sup> The sum of sb's good and bad actions in one of their lives, believed to decide what will happen to them in the next life

snake into a small one, put it in the bowl and continued to meditate.

Next morning, the Buddha had just came out of the Fire – chamber, he saw the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa and his disciples were standing in the front yard. They feared that the Buddha had already been killed by that giant snake. An insecure expression appeared on the old ascetic's face.

The Buddha expressed his gratitude:

*“Thank you for your concern, the snake was quite ferocious, but now it is gentle and has become harmless. Here! Take a look!”*

Having said that, the Buddha reached into the bowl, caught the small snake and put it at his feet, and he withdrew his supernatural powers. The small snake became more bigger and bigger and returned to its original size. Its body as big as two house - pillars, nearly fifty feet long. It gradually lowered its head, then it coiled and lay obediently at the feet of the Buddha. He said to the snake:

*“Well, where your hometown is, you should go back there, this place is not yours. If you live a harmless life, the next one, you will escape from the appearance of animal. Go away!”*

The big snake obediently crawled into the forest, after a while it disappeared. Everyone held their breath, witnessed the rare event and the supernatural power of the Buddha with their astonishment. As for the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa, he was also very impressed and praised the Buddha lavishly, but he thought to himself: “Anyway, this young man has not yet attained Arahantship.”

Knowing this thought of the chief ascetic, from then on, the Buddha had to use his miraculous powers repeatedly, and Gods in the Heavens also used their abilities to support him in converting the three ascetic brothers Kassapa, in order to help the Buddha's



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propagation of the Dharma to be developed.

At first, the Buddha disentangled the ascetic's old knowledge, then he gradually revealed to him what is the cause of suffering and the way leading to the cessation of suffering in a methodical and meticulous way. Immediately, the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa's mind was bright as if he had awakened after thousands of lifetimes of dense ignorance. In just a brief moment, he attained Arahantship<sup>46</sup> and miraculous powers. The old ascetic was overwhelmed with emotion, and with his great gratitude, he knelt down with five parts of his body to the ground to embrace the Buddha's dusty feet in sobs:

*“With super-spanking knowledge, with clear and unobstructed justifications, with supramundane and miraculous powers. You’re a Buddha indeed, a Tathagata, a World-Honored One, a Fully Enlightened One, only once in every million years. I have known and seen it so clearly now. May the World-Honored One allow me to repent for my unintentional offenses, or due to my ignorance of not-seeing and knowing before.”*

The Buddha let the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa prostrated himself naturally. He smiled slightly and used three types of halo consecutively to conquer the assembly around there, then he bent down to talk to the old ascetic:

*“Hey, Uruvela Kassapa! The Tathagata is a Buddha, a Fully Enlightened One that have you already known. And you have become an Arhat with full of supernatural powers, too. Then, you should turn your mind to know some past lives of the Tathagata to know about the life and conduct of the Tathagata in*

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<sup>46</sup> At that time, the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa really attained Arahantship, but before he met the Buddha, he always mistakenly believed that he had reached that fruition.

*this life. It will be beneficial for the propagation of the Dharma in the future.”*

Obedying the Buddha's order, the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa immediately turned his mind to the past lives, then he turned his mind to the present life of the Buddha. And the behavior of the Buddha from past lives to this life was clearly visible in the mind of the old ascetic.

Then, the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa immediately applied for ordination to officially become a bhikkhu in the Buddha's Sangha. And the following day, all the five-hundred disciples of this old ascetic also applied for ordination at the same time. So the Buddha and the old ascetic discussed together to organize a great bhikkhu ordination was taken place in the North of the Neranjara River.

A few days later, the two brothers of the ascetic Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi and Gaya Kassapa, after knowing their eldest brother and his five-hundred followers had simultaneously become bhikkhus, they immediately went to see the Buddha and also asked for ordination. Thus, in a short time, the Buddha completely converted the three Kassapa brothers and their thousands of followers into a thousand and three bhikkhus.

#### **14.5 Conversion of Sariputta and Maha Moggallana – The General of Dharma and The Foremost One in supernatural power ability.**

Not far from Rajagaha ancient city, there was a village named Nalaka, in which there lived a young, brilliant Brahmin named Upatissa, also known as Sariputta. His father's name was Vanganta, the schoolmaster in charge of Brahmin's school, his mother was Mrs. Rupasari. Sariputta had a close friend named Kolita, also known as Moggallana. Both of them have a beautiful appearance, intelligence and understanding; they were born in the same year,

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same month, same day and same hour. All of them belonged to the rich family in the village, inherited the intellectual lineage and they were all children of praying for.

Because they were both from prestigious families which belonging to the Brahmin class, they were carefully and meticulously equipped with education from their childhood. And with their outstanding intelligence, they both soon thoroughly understood all the doctrines and thoughts of the Vedic and Upanishadic philosophical system. And both of them had become masters at the age of 18 without any trouble.

One day, while playing on a hilltop, they both realized that all material pleasures were temporary, fragile and useless. At the same time, both of the friends decided to renounce the world to find the way of true happiness. So, both of them went to see the ascetic master Sanjaya, but soon they felt dissatisfied with the master's teachings. Then, the two wandered together in searching of many other popular Brahmin masters but they eventually also met all disappointments.

In the end, the two friends decided to return to the village. Then, they continued to pack their bags and set off, parted together. Each of them would follow his own direction and they promised each other that whoever found the Truth first would inform the other.

Meanwhile, the Buddha sent his sixty disciples, all of whom were Arahants to go everywhere to propagate the Buddha Teachings. He himself decided to go towards Rajagaha together with Assaji – the first his disciple of “The group of Five” Kondanna.

So the miraculousness of predestined affinity had come!

That morning, Upatissa was wandering through the city of Rajagaha when he suddenly saw a dignified monk in yellow robe, that monk expressed the majesty and calm in his manners and attitude, from his eyes and gaze revealed a silent and deep inside. That respectable monk walked slowly from house to house, received a little food from everyone in a very compassionate and respectful manner. It is the very sublime but extremely simple personality of the devout monk that strongly attracted Upatissa. He thought to himself, *"I have never met a monk like this. Surely he is one of those who have attained the Arhatship, or at least one of those who are on the path leading to the fruition of No-Rebirth."*

Then Upatissa said to himself: "I should approach him on asking: Why did you renounce the world? Who was your master? And what was that teachings?" However, seeing Venerable Assaji was begging for food quietly, Upatissa did not dare to disturb him.

So Upatissa secretly followed in the footsteps of the Venerable Assaji. In Assaji's mind, he had known that someone was following him and wanted something from him, so when he came to a tall grove of trees with shade, he stopped.

Upatissa knew the intention of Venerable Assaji, he quickly took his mat and placed it on a clean, flat grass. Then he took out a cup which he brought to use, poured some water into it, respectfully offered to the Venerable Assaji with both his hands, then he said:

*"O Venerable! Your five senses are so calm and peaceful. Your complexion was so bright and clear. Please take delight in teaching me, for what purpose do you renounce the world? Who is your teacher, whose teachings are you propagating?"*

After listening attentively to Upatissa's sincere request, the Venerable Assaji humbly replied:

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*“Look here, Sage! I am only a novice Bikkhu,<sup>47</sup> just beginning to step into the Dharma. I am a person with little education, poor reasoning and lack of ability to express, so I am not able to talk about the Dharma clearly.”*

Upatissa still prostrated himself before the Venerable Assaji respectfully:

*“Oh, Venerable! I'm Upatissa. Please just teach me a little bit of the Dharma. Even if it's just a little, I will try to cogitate in many different ways. I am the person who aspires to the Dharma like a drought expect to rain. Please give me a little bit of those teachings. You just need to talk a few summaries. Although it's a summary, it must be the most basic and essential teachings”*

Realizing the Upatissa's sincerity with his desire to learn Dharma, the Venerable Assaji replied slowly:

*“So, young wandering priest! I will succinctly summarize a sublime, but true teaching of the Honoured Master. Use your ears to hear, use your mind to know, see and understand.”*

Then, the Venerable Assaji read a four-lines verse.

*“Of things that proceed from a cause,*

*Their cause the Tathagata has told,*

*And also their cessation:*

*Thus teaches the Great Ascetic.”*

Perhaps the wisdom of Upatissa at that time was skilful enough. So, he immediately grasp that teaching, even though it was only a simple but extremely sublime four-lines verse of the Venerable

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<sup>47</sup> A Buddhist monk.

Assaji. Therefore, when Upatissa heard the first two lines of that verse, he immediately attained the fruit of Stream-Entry.

Upatissa stood still for a long time, his whole body shaking violently. A transcendent state had come to him. To be overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation, Upatissa knelt down, hugged the dusty feet of Venerable Assaji, and said:

*“O Venerable! I found it! How great, miraculous, and unsurpassed is this teaching. Please don't explain any more. For me, that is more than enough for the purpose of a good man who wants to renounce the world and prayed for peace in his life.”*

The Venerable Assaji knew that the young wandering priest had attained the Dharma eye and had clearly seen the way out of the worldly life, he said:

- *“You should go and see the Honoured Master - the Supremely Enlightened One, who has still a treasure of Dharma, only for the wise.”*

- *“O Venerable! Where is the Supremely Enlightened One?”*

- *“He's also nearly here! To the north of the city, in the bamboo forest, where there are many squirrels and rabbits!”*

Upatissa respectfully knelt down to prostrate himself before the Venerable Assaji and then he said goodbye to him.

Since then, the Upatissa's spirituality became more and more grown and his gratitude to Assaji more deeper and deeper. Whenever he heard that Assaji was somewhere, he regularly turned to that direction, clasped his hands in homage, and always turned his head in which when he slept.

After saying goodbye to Venerable Assaji, Upatissa immediately

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set out to find his intimate friend Kolita as promised.

After a few days, the two friends finally met together. Seeing the figure of Upatissa from afar, along with his joyful and radiant face that Kolita had never seen before. He asked Upatissa in surprise:

*“Hey brother! Don't tell me you have found the way of immortality.”*

*“Yes, my dear friend!” Upatissa laughed. “It's so happy for us, for all sentient beings because the way of immortality is really present in this life! Oh, an incomparable World-Honored One, a great Arahant who proclaimed an unheard of great teaching!”*

Then Upatissa read to Kolita the four-lines verse above. After listening, Kolita shook his whole body, immediately attained the fruit of Stream-Entry, and officially entered the Holy Stream like Upatissa.

So, the next day, the two intimate friends set out to go and see the Blessed One. Before starting out, the two returned to visit their old master - Sanjaya, in the hope of persuading him to go together to meet the Blessed One and study the unsurpassed Dharma together. But he refused on the grounds of health, and too old age. But there were many disciples at the monastery willing to accompany them to Veluvana to study with the Buddha.

On that day, the Buddha summoned the monks, he gave a teaching for all of them. His lecture referred to the difficult mission of spreading Dharma in the future. Accordingly, although the defilements of each person were exhausted, they were still need to practice the Four Immeasurable Minds, diligence, patience... And he also announced to the Shanga that day there would be two more bright stars, two preeminent personalities coming to the

Congregation.

The Buddha had just finished speaking, Upatissa and Kolita had come, both were majestic and dignified, followed by several hundred disciples with clean beards, correct clothing, quietly walked in order. The congregation automatically cede a path to them for they come and pay homage to the Blessed One.

After prostrating themselves before the Buddha, Upatissa clasped his hands and said:

*“O World-Honored One! We wandered and drifted for a long time. Fortunately, thanks to the light of the Dharma through your disciple that we found the way to immortality. Now, we come here to ask for refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha and we hope you’ll accept us willingly.”*

The Buddha smiled kindly, he said:

*“Hey, Sariputta, Moggallana! The Tathagata testifies to you and your disciples to be Bhikkhus in this Buddhist Congregation. The Tathagata also intended to wait for the two of you. When the dharma treasures have been seen, the lives of the holy disciples are sacred days and pure virtuous for the sake of themselves, Gods, and humans.”*

The next morning, Moggallana asked the Blessed One's permission to go to a quiet village on the edge of a forest not far from Rajagaha to practice meditation. During this week, in addition to begging for food everyday, he gathered up his mind for his meditation. After being directly instructed by the World-Honored One. He attained Arahantship, and became the foremost disciple in supernatural power ability of the Buddha.

A week after Moggallana had attained Arhatship, the Blessed One created an opportunity for Sariputta to attain this fruit through the conversion of the wandering ascetic Dighanakkha who was also



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Sariputta's maternal uncle. After listening to the Buddha preach to the ascetic Dighanakkha, Sariputra attained Arahantship along with four analytical wisdom, becoming the number one intellectual disciple of the Buddha. Later on, he was often called the General of the Dharma.

That very afternoon, the Buddha summoned the Bhikkhus and ordained the two Sariputta and Moggallana to be the two great disciples of the Blessed One in the Sangha.

### **14.6 The Buddha returned to visit his homeland.**

When hearing that the Buddha was spreading the Dharma in Sravasti,<sup>48</sup> King Suddhodana was anxious to meet the outstanding son of the Sakya clan again, who had now become the Awakened One as the prophecies of the old ascetic Asita of former times. He sent his nine courtiers in nine times to invite the Buddha went back to the city of Kapilavastu. But contrary to the king's expectations, when they met the Buddha, all these nine emissaries were very pleased with their meetings, they all wanted to stay there and listen to the Dharma and finally asked to be ordained as a disciple of the Blessed One.

After all, another courtier of king Suddhodana, named Kaludayi who was a childhood friend of the Buddha, was chosen to be the king's emissary, he had to transmit the request of king Suddhodana to the Blessed One. Like other emissaries, after arriving at Savatthi and meeting the Buddha, he was fortunate to hear the Awakened One's teachings, he also attained Arahantship and asked for becoming a Bikkhu in the Buddha's congregation. But unlike other

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<sup>48</sup> A city of ancient India, was one of the largest cities during Gautama Buddha's lifetime.

emissaries, he still did not forget the important responsibility that king Suddhodana had entrusted to him. He earnestly implored the Buddha to visit his father whom was old and weak at present, and weary of waiting for news of his son day by day...

After listening to Kaludayi explained everything that had happened in the homeland, the Buddha calmly said:

*"I had also a plan to visit my homeland, visit all my relatives when all of predestined affinities were gathered. Perhaps this early spring, Kaludayi! You should stay here for a while, when the Dharma has been seen, it is still necessary to arrange the holy life for compatibility."*

After Kaludayi returned to his homeland to report the news to the king Suddhodana, the Buddha summoned all of the Bikkhus and selected five hundred ones who were ended up all their defilement for setting out to return to the homeland with him. On the long road from Rajaghaha to Kapilavastu, the Buddha divided into short distances, he walked while preaching. Two months later, they arrived.

Arriving at Kapilavastu, the Buddha told Kaludayi that he was not in a hurry to enter the capital, but let him and the assembly of Bhikkhus temporarily stayed in Nigrodharama, viz the ancient banyan forest in the southeast of the capital, there were many large shady trees that used to be frequented by ascetics and wandering priests.

King Suddhodana, the court and descendants of the Sakya clan had heard the news, so they went to Nigrodharama together to pick the Buddha up. However, inherently conceited, the elders of the clan thought. *"Even if he is a Buddha or a Saint, that monk is only in the role of our descendants"*. Therefore, they just stood still or chose somewhere in the back to sit down, ordering the young people to

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come forward to greet the Buddha and his congregation of disciples.

The Buddha had understood everything, but he still walked over to King Suddhodana. Giving the bowl to the attendant Nagita, the Buddha grasped his father's dry and thin hands. After nearly eight years of separation, the king, in spite of his old age, was still lucid and vigorous. Seeing the tears silently flowing down the wrinkled cheeks of his father king, the Buddha was very sympathetic, but he mastered his own emotions, giving his father a very gentle and warm look. Suddenly, the king bowed his head, respectfully clasped his hands in the style and customs of a king when he met a master, a guru, a cardinal.

The Buddha saw the intellectual attitude of his father, he was very pleased with it, and at the same time, he also wanted to convert as well as subdue the arrogant of the royal family. So, he immediately flew up into the air and used his supernatural power called Yamaka Patihariy,<sup>49</sup> caused water and fire to arise at the same time from his pores. Simultaneously, he made a path of jade lying from east to west and practiced meditation by walking up and down on it.

Seeing the miraculous power of the Buddha, King Suddhodana was stunned, amazed in joy and faith was arisen in his mind. Unconsciously, the king knelt down to prostrate himself before the Buddha and exclaimed: "This is the third time, I have prostrated myself before you!"<sup>50</sup> The whole court and Sakya clan from adults to children were also astonished at witnessing the great supernatural of the Buddha, so they all bowed down before the World-Honoured

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<sup>49</sup> This was a supernatural power that only the Buddha has.

<sup>50</sup> The first time, King Suddhodana prostrated himself before the Buddha when prince Sidhartha had just been born, the second time when he saw the little prince was sitting in a meditative posture at the plowing festival and this was the third time.

One respectfully.

When everyone finished paying their homage, the Buddha gradually descended to the ground and sat on a high armchair that had been prepared. All the members of Sakya royal family gathered around the Bless One to listen to his teaching attentively.

While the Buddha was preaching the Dharma, a rain poured down suddenly. The rain was red like blood. A strange rain. The Bless One, the holy monks, those who had begun to have faith upon the Buddha's teaching were absolutely dry; and those who were proud and conceited were as wet as a drowned rat. Everyone in the assembly saw this rare event, they then immediately discussed it with enthusiasm.

Then the Buddha preached the Vesantara Jataka Sutra to many people and his relatives. He taught that a similar case happened in a past life, when he preached the Dharma in front of an assembly of his close relatives. There was also a rain like that, but it was the rain of the seven treasures that flooded the palace. And everyone was very pleased with it.

So, the cause and effect of countless kalpas was taught and explained by the Buddha quite clearly, that made satisfy the assembly so much.

But when parting, the whole members of Sakyas royal family had no one knew that they were supposed to invite the Buddha and the Sangha to come to the palace for the king had opportunity to make offering food to them the following day. As for King Siddhodana, he simply thought: *"If my son doesn't return to the palace, where will he go?"*. So he prepared a banquet for the Buddha very considerably, then he waited for his eminent son in joy and happiness.

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Because there was no personal request, the following day, the Buddha turned his mind to the past. He knew that according to the custom of the Buddhas when returning to visit their relatives, they did not go straight home, but followed the practice of begging for alms. So he informed the Venerable Sariputta that the monks still had to beg for food around the city of Kapilavastu as tradition. After hearing that the Buddha did not enter the palace but led the Sangha begging for alms, King Suddhodana expressed his dissatisfaction, he immediately went and found the Buddha. After finishing his salute, he said to the Buddha in his sulk:

*“My dear son! Why do you hurt our royal’s dignity like that? I feel so humiliate by seeing you beg for alms in the very capital where you usually only go around in a golden palanquin. Could it be that neither me nor the royal family can afford to support to you and your congregation of disciples a meal?”*

Seeing that the king looked surprised, the Buddha replied moderately:

*-“O Great King! The Tathagata never hurt our royal’s dignity and humiliated the royal’s dynasty. Begging for food in front of every house is the tradition and lineage of the Tathagata.”*

*-“But my dear son! Is it right the tradition of our royal’s lineage have to earn a living by begging for food? The Sakya’s lineage is a lineage of heroic warriors, I have never seen anyone in that tradition so humiliated begging.”*

*-“O Great King,” The Buddha said gently “By tradition of heroic Sakya’s lineage, no one has done that; but this is the tradition of the Buddhas in the three periods - the past, present and future. Thousands of Buddhas in the past still went to beg for alms in his first visit to the homeland after attaining Supreme Bodhi.”*

Seeing that his father was both merciful and resentful, the Buddha felt great sympathy for the king. He then preached to King Siddhodana with a verse:

*“Do not neglect the duty of going on alms-round; observe proper practice (in going on alms-round). One who observe proper practice lives happily both in this world and in the next.”*<sup>51</sup>

After listening to the verse, King Siddhodana immediately attained the fruit of Stream-Entry. The king approached the Buddha to receive the bowl, then he invited the Blessed One and the monks came to the palace to attend an offering which was held by the very king.

After the meal was finished, waiting for everyone in the royal family were correctly dressed, the Buddha went to the place that had been prepared for him, he gave a short sermon to the assembly with a verse:

*“Observe Dharma; do not observe improper practice. One who observes Dharma lives happily both in this world and in the next.”*<sup>52</sup>

To be hear the Buddha’s teaching again, this time king Siddhodana attained the fruit of Once – Return, and the Buddha’s stepmother Mahapajapati Gotami attained the fruit of Stream – Entry.

When the Buddha entered the palace, he visited princess Yashodara and his son Rahula. Later on, the Buddha also accepted the princess’s renunciation to become a Bhikkhuni<sup>53</sup> in Buddhist congregation, finally she attained Arahantship. As for Rahula, the

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<sup>51</sup> The Dhammapada Sutra – Verse 168.

<sup>52</sup> The Dhammapada Sutra – Verse 169.

<sup>53</sup> A fully ordained Buddhist nun.

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Buddha let he to become a Bikkhu at the age of 7. Later on, he became one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha who was considered the Foremost One in inconspicuous practice.”

When hearing the news that the Buddha had admitted Rahula to become a Bikkhu in the Sangha, King Suddhodana was extremely sad. Afterward, he suggested that the Buddha should not to accept the ordination of minors into the Sangha without their parental consent. The Buddha agreed to his father's suggestion and this also became one of the Precepts of Buddhism later.

During the time that the Buddha returned to visit his homeland, he also succeeded in persuading his half-brother Nanda to become a Bikkhu, along with another of his cousin Ananda who became the Buddha's attendant and played an important role in spreading the Buddhist scriptures up to now. And it was also thanks to Ananda that the Buddha allowed his stepmother Mahapajapati Gotami and his wife princess Yashodara to become the first Bhikkhunis in the Sangha and both attained Arahantship.

Before King Sudhodana passed away, the Buddha had preached a Dharma lesson to him once again. Then, he attained the fruit of No-Rebirth. He had enjoyed the peaceful and joyful state for seven days before his death. At that time, the Buddha was 40 years old.

### **15. THE TIME OF SPREADING THE DHARMA OF THE BUDDHA.**

After attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha was the busiest spiritual leader at that time. Almost, he only slept for about 2 hours a day. Most of the time he focused on spreading and teaching the Dharma without interruption throughout India. It can be said that the Buddha was brilliantly successful in his mission

of propagating the Dharma. In addition to the wholehearted devotion of the World-Honoured One in his service to all sentient beings, it is also necessary to mention the enthusiastic support from the disciples of all social classes at that time, especially kings, lords, aristocrats and great bourgeois. It is possible to summarize the typical characters who were fervent Dharma protectors, they played an important role during the Buddha's period of propagating the Dharma which was later recorded in the Buddhist scriptures as:

- **Ksatriya caste:** In India, it is the second or warrior and ruling in India during Gautama Buddha's lifetime.

King Bimbisara of the kingdom of Magadha who donated the Veluvana monastery to the Buddha and the Sangha.

King Pasenadi of the Kingdom of Kosala. It can be said that this was the king who respected the Buddha very much, he considered the Blessed One as his kind father. His son was prince Jeta, who in company with the bourgeois Anathapindika donated Jetavana Garden to the Sangha.

- **Vaisya caste:** The third of the four castes of traditional Indian society.

First of all, we have to mention the great benefactor Anathapindika. He, in company with prince Jeta donated Jetavana Garden to the Buddha and the Sangha. According to the Buddhist historical Records, the bourgeois Anathapindika bought this garden by covering its ground with full of gold. He was always an enthusiastic supporter of the Sangha in the four necessities of a monk including food, clothing, dwelling and medicine.

The benefactor Visakha, who created and donated the Pubbarama monastery to the Buddha and the Sangha. This



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monastery was located in the east of Savatthi, where the Buddha spent the six seasons of his Retreat in his lifetime of preaching.

### **16. PARINIRVANA<sup>54</sup> AND THE BUDDHA'S FINAL TEACHINGS TO THE BHIKKHUS.**

For 45 years, serving sentient beings without getting tired. Although the Buddha is the World-Honoured One, a sublime being, he still has the body of the five aggregates<sup>55</sup> like another ordinary human being. So he was still under the influence of the rules of time, his physical body was still affected by sickness and old age. One day, when the Buddha was 80 years old, knowing that it was time to get rid of his temporary body, the Buddha summoned bhikkhus and bhikkhunis at Kushinagar.<sup>56</sup> There, after he received a bowl of mushroom porridge from a blacksmith named Cunda as an offering. He had severe stomach pain, but with a strong will he still walked step by step to the forest with Sala trees. Then he gave the last necessary instructions to the bhikkhus:

*“When the Tathagata has gone Ananda, whoever knows himself to be his light and refuge, does not seek elsewhere. Anyone who knows how to take the True dharma as a lamp, as a refuge, that disciple now and forever, is a true disciple of the Tathagata, he will never go astray.”*

Then the Buddha continued saying:

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<sup>54</sup> The final extinction of the Buddha - It is the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice and implies a release from the cycle of deaths and rebirths as well as the dissolution of all mental aggregates. It was also referred to the death of the Buddha.

<sup>55</sup> They are: form, feeling, perception, action and consciousness that refer to the physical body and mind of individual.

<sup>56</sup> It is now Kasia, about 35 miles to the east of the city of Gorakhpur in Uttarakhand State of northern India.

*“Perhaps Ananda! Some of the monks and nuns are thinking: From now on I will no longer be able to listen to the master's words. I don't have anyone to guide me anymore. But Ananda! Such thoughts are wrong. The teachings and precepts that the Tathagata taught and guided the monks while the Tathagata was still alive will be their teacher when the Tathagata pass away.”*

Turning to the other bhikkhus in the Sangha who were weeping at the eternal passing of their kind father, the Buddha said:

*“This, monks! This is the final teaching of the Tathagata*

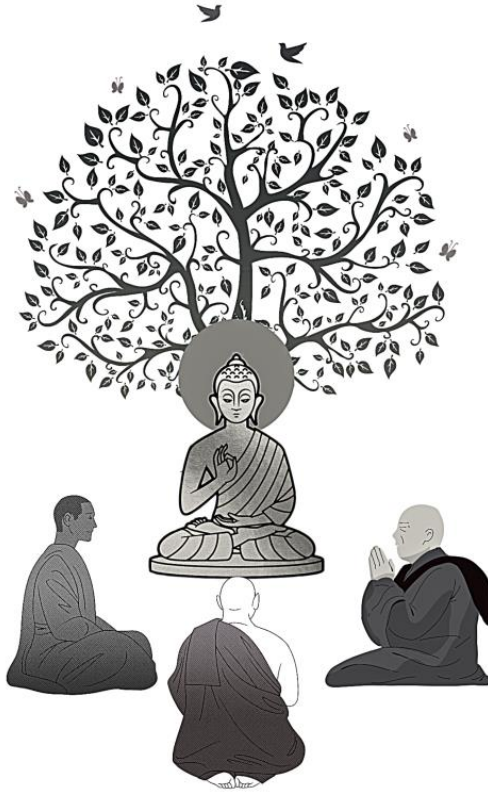
*‘All condition dharmas are impermanent.*

*Be diligent in seeking liberation!’”*

Having said that final recommendation, the Buddha closed his eyes and entered the first, second, third, fourth stage of meditation of the realm of Form and the meditative stages of the realm of Formlessness. Then, the Buddha came out of the meditative stages in turn. Finally, he entered from the first meditative stage to the fourth one of the realm of Form. From there, he passed away and never return to the cycle of death and rebirth again. The Buddha officially entered Parinirvana.

All over the Sala forest suddenly emitted a sweet fragrance as if to pay its last respect to the Enlightened One. Celestial flowers of the gods were scattered all over the golden body of the Blessed One. The atmosphere was sad, quiet but extremely dignified. So the Buddha – the great Enlightened One was no longer present in this world. But his teachings were always a torch, showing the way for us to get out of ‘the sea of suffering’ and ‘the river of ignorance’ in this worldly world.

*CHAPTER II:*  
**WHAT THE BUDDHA  
TAUGHT OR THE  
FOUNDATIONS OF  
BUDDHISM.**



*“Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so also this Dhamma and Discipline has one taste, the taste of liberation.”<sup>57</sup>*

**Gautama Buddha**

**D**uring the 49 years of preaching the Dharma all over the country of India, the Buddha taught thousands of disciples from all walks of life at that time. From the outcasts like the

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<sup>57</sup> Anguttara Nikaya.

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road-sweeper Sunita or the barber Upali... to the nobles like king Bimbisara, Pasenadi and three ascetic brothers Uruvela Kassapa who belong to the highest caste – Brahmins. Because their backgrounds were not the same and their academic knowledge were also different, the Buddha taught them with different methods and skilful means in accordance with their fundamental abilities. Moreover, when a person who had become the Buddha's disciple and officially joined the Sangha, after a period of practice the Dharma and cultivation of virtue, that one would be able to attain the state of a Saint. The Buddha also had to divide into such different level of their abilities so that he gave different teachings accordingly.

Therefore, the Awakened One has left us a huge treasure of Buddhist scriptures that perhaps even a person who spend his lifetime to read won't be able to complete. Although the form of the Buddha's teachings is different, its contents is still the same, the truth is only one, just like there are many ways to go to where you want to go, but there is only one destination. The Buddha's teachings are as vast as the sky, as deep as the ocean. However, as mentioned in the Introduction, within the framework of this chapter, we will not talk about sublime philosophical teachings as well as dogmatic and academic doctrines. I just want to make mention of the profound but close and practical teachings of the Buddha that always exist in the daily lives of each of us more than 26 centuries ago and these teachings are still valid up to now. So that we can apply it to our own lives, bringing a new source of energy, helping you to have the capacity and wisdom to cope with the events and pressures in this modern life.

### **1. LIFE IS IMPERMANENT, ALL THINGS AND PHENOMENA ARE NON SELF.**

### 1.1 Life is impermanent.

From ancient times up to now, mankind has undergone countless changes and transformations. Time is so harsh, it's so suitable to the two famous lines of a poem of a great Vietnamese poet:

*"A turbulent mulberry-field-cover-by-sea period had passed.*

*The things that we saw still deeply pain our hearts."*<sup>58</sup>

Life surrounds us from the smallest things to the biggest ones, from plants to animals. Even we ourselves, from the physical body to the spirit, are impermanent. Is this flower beautiful? Yes, it is right now, but in a few days, will it still be as beautiful as it is now? Of course not. That flowers will eventually wither. It's the same for us, each of us is growing old, weak and sick. Finally, we will lie deep at the bottom of the grave one day. All these things are obvious truths, because life is intrinsically changing. That's the operating rule of our lives. These changes happen every day, every hour, but we often forget or ignore it. More specifically, if you pay attention a little bit, you will realize that our mind never stands still, but it keeps jumping from one thought to another every moment.

The previous thought now it has become the old one, and the present thought after a few moments it will also become the old one, it just keeps changing like an endless stream. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus described this with the famous saying: "*No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man*". The Buddha also described this in more detail and depth through his teaching in the Diamond Sutra: "*The past mind can not be grasped, the present mind can not be grasped, the future mind can not be*

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<sup>58</sup> The Tale of Kieu – Nguyen Du.

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*grasped*". He often used the image of the mind like a monkey passing branches, the thought like a horse running around to express it more specifically.

Our lives, ourselves, everything around us from visible to invisible are all impermanent and fragile. Nothing is solid, eternal. If there is birth, there will be death, if there is tangible, there will be destructive. In the Dhammapada Sutra, the Buddha taught:

*"One who looks upon the world as a bubble and a mirage, him the King of Death sees not."*<sup>59</sup>

Thus, we can see that impermanence is one of the natures of life, its constant change has brought us a lot of sorrow, uncomfortableness, and even suffering. Mr. A is very happy today because he has a dreamlike love with some beautiful girl, but he looks so sad and gloomy on the next day, it turns out that their affair has just broken up. Some Mrs. C is healthy and resourceful today, but she might be found in the hospital in critical condition tomorrow because of a sudden stroke. It's all part of the law of life.

But, when you have read as far as here, please don't be pessimistic, because anything in the world has two sides of it. The impermanent nature of life brings us suffering and discomfort both physically and mentally, but also thanks to it that we have the opportunity to evolve, change and develop. Take the example of the flower above, where does its beauty and brilliance come from? This flower has to go through a process from a seed that was planted in the ground, then must be watered daily to grow into a seedling. After that, it will be fertilized, sprayed with pesticide, over a period of time, the buds will develop and become a beautiful flower as it is

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<sup>59</sup> The Dhammapada – Verse 170.

now. If there is no change, impermanence, how can a silkworm turn into a butterfly? How can our civilization develop as it is today? These are just a few typical examples in life that I want to send to the readers. Impermanence is the essence, the law of life. It's inherently like that, there is good, there is bad, there is a positive side and also a negative side.

It is important for you to know that the Buddha taught about Impermanence, not that he imparted to us a pessimistic, cynical view of life, as people have long misunderstood this teaching of him. The Enlightened One wants us to realize the nature of life so that we can apply it to our own lives. Finding out for yourself the right way, the most accurate and skilful solutions to bring practical benefits to your life. Some people need the principle of impermanence on the negative side to make progress on their spiritual path, some people need the principle of impermanence on the positive side to be their motivation to overcome difficult times and deadlocks in life. Buddha is the Enlightened One, he never said and taught wrongly, only people misunderstood. Because of this, in the Diamond Sutra – one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, the Buddha said: *“Believe in me but do not understand me, that is slandering me.”*

## **1.2 All things and phenomena are non-self.**

What is Selflessness? That is, all things and phenomena in the world do not have a separate entity, everything including ourselves does not have a separate entity but is the whole of the component parts. For example, a bicycle, it is composed of two wheels, handlebars, pedals, saddle, frame, brake levers, lights, etc. If we take each of these parts separately, there is no such thing as a bicycle. We humans, too, are made up of many elements from the smallest cells to larger organs such as hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue,



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etc., which according to Buddhism, each of us individually is made up of the five aggregates, i.e. the physical body and the spirit.

### **2. PEOPLE'S HEARTS ARE ALWAYS INSECURE, AND UNSATISFIED.**

From birth to death, we all seek for ourselves a happy and prosperous life, and in addition we also desire to have a high and noble standing in society. Everyone seems to want to be respected, admired and praised by many people; having a beautiful wife, a good husband and obedient children; owning a strong body, and a good appearance, etc... In general, we have so many pursuits in life both physically and mentally. Yes, that makes perfect sense since we have a right to own those needs.

But the problem that I want to pose here is that even if we can have all the happiness factors mentioned above, we will never feel enough. Mr. A owns a fortune of hundreds of millions of dollars in the bank, and he still wants to increase that fortune to billions of dollars. Mrs. C has a spacious villa in the coastal area, but still wants to have a few more villas at the bottom of the hill. Mr. D has a wife who is both beautiful and talented, but when he goes out and meet some girls who is younger and more beautiful than his wife, he still wants to look at them and secretly dream of owning them. Miss E has a beautiful car, but still wants to own more luxurious cars such as supercars... That is, we are talking about people who already have the conditions; have a relatively stable and peaceful life, but they still have so many desires. Let alone those who have no means, even the poor; how strong are their desires for the necessities of life. But one more problem is raised here, even if you are possessing the above needs, your mind is always worried. Worried about what? Yes, when you are owning yourself the best things in life, you will fear that one

day you will no longer have those things. Mr. A is afraid that the assets in his bank will not be able to be withdrawn or lost for some reason. Mrs. C will take care of later when a tsunami suddenly comes and sweep away everything into the sea, including her villa. Although Mr. D has a good and beautiful wife right next to him, he will be afraid that one day she will change her heart and run after another man, etc. And all those worries are also reasonable because it is entirely possible according to the principle of impermanence that I mentioned above.

### **3. LIFE IS SUFFERING, EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE.**

#### **3.1 Life is suffering.**

It can be said that Buddhism is the path lead to the end of suffering, or in other words, if this world didn't have the sufferings that are always present in the daily lives of each of us, there would be no Buddhism. The Buddha once said: "The tears of living beings are more than the water of the sea". This world is full of sufferings which are uncountable. Some people think that life is also very interesting, yes it is. But the joy, if any, is only temporary, and that joy itself contains the seeds of suffering. For example, when you attend a party, because you are too happy with your close friends, you drink too much. When you leave; you drive in a drunken state, what will happen? The chances of you having a traffic accident are quite high, or you will get a ticket from the traffic warden. So the nature of life is just suffering.

The Buddha recognized the sufferings of human life since he was a prince. After becoming enlightened under the Bodhi tree, he became even more aware of the sufferings of mankind in which beings are forever immersed in temporary pleasures with no way out. Because of the importance of recognizing suffering, the first

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teaching of the Buddha in 49 years of his spreading the Dharma was about suffering and how to end it. According to the Buddhist scriptures, we can divide suffering into 3 types or 8 types of it as follows:

### **A. Three types of suffering: Suffering due to pain, suffering due to change and suffering due to formations.**

#### **A1. Suffering due to pain.**

Each human being himself has been the victim of many sufferings and impurities, the whole body is a sack of skin filled with unclean things including blood, pus, phlegm, excrement, urine, sweat, etc.. If for about a week, we don't take a bath; don't brush our teeth; don't wash our face, we can't stand it. Even if we can bear it, the people around us will probably avoid and refuse to contact us. Moreover, human body is also not strong; on the contrary, it is very fragile. If you are suffocated for a few minutes, or there is no water to drink for a few days, death is certain. Not stopping there; on this suffering, there are other sufferings such as wars, epidemics, natural disasters, fires, etc... Therefore, it is called the suffering due to pain.

#### **A2. Suffering due to change.**

As we mentioned above, life is impermanent. All things and phenomena in the world are changing constantly. From small to great things; from low-level to high-level species; from invisible to visible things, everything must be transformed perpetually. These modifications cause us a lot of discomfort and frustration. So, it is called the suffering due to change.

#### **A3. Suffering due to formations.**

We humans are divided into two parts: the physical body and the mind. In terms of the body, it is always influenced and destroyed by time and external circumstances. In terms of the mind, we are not at peace either, always being driven to achieve life goals, ambitions, personal desires. In addition, there are so many anxieties of livelihood that make the mind always run around without stopping, even when we are lying in bed, the mind is still working. This is called the suffering due to formations.

### **B. Eight types of suffering.**

If we analyze all the sufferings a little more carefully, there will be 8 types of it that are always present in life. These eight types of suffering are generally not outside the three types of suffering above.

What are the eight types of suffering? They are: Suffering of birth, suffering of old age, suffering of disease, suffering of death, suffering due to separation from loved ones, suffering due to meeting with the uncongenial, suffering due to unfulfilled wishes, suffering due to the raging aggregates. Here, we will go into details of each of eight types of these sufferings.

#### **B1. Suffering of birth:**

It is divided into 2 types, suffering at birth, and suffering in life.

##### **✓ *Suffering at birth:***

Those who give birth and those who are born suffer. When a mother begins to become pregnant, it is time to endure discomforts both physically and mentally. Difficulty walking, not having a good appetite, not sleeping well, in addition to abstaining from many different things... When giving birth, the pain is indescribable, the health is exhausted, the body is weak... It is about giving birth

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smoothly, but if there are difficulties when giving birth, it will be even more miserable, sometimes the mother and the child will be in danger of life, not a joke. As for the child, from the moment he was conceived to the moment he was born, he also had to endure many hardships. Experiencing nine months and ten days, he was confined in a dark, cramped mother's womb, even more miserable than in prison. If the mother eat a little spicy food, the child in her womb will feel scorching, if the mother eat too much, the child will be pressed like a dried banana...

### **✓ *Suffering in life:***

In terms of material or spiritual aspect, life is full of suffering. In terms of material life, we humans need a lot of essential demands such as food, clothing, shelter, medicine, transportation, etc. To get these things, we have to work hard and diligently. Those who have the strength, they must devote their labor, sweat and tears, and those who are not strong enough to do the hard work, they must squeeze out their gray matter to earn money to spend their lives.

In terms of spiritual life, it is equally miserable, sometimes even more miserable than the material aspect. As human beings, we cannot avoid being praised, sometimes criticized, sometimes glorious, sometimes humiliated, sometimes despised, shunned, rejected... That's not to mention the pressures in work as well as study. How to avoid being scolded when we make a mistake?... In short, in terms of material or spiritual life, they both bring us a lot of suffering.

### **B2. Suffering of old age:**

People come to old age, the body is worn out, the mind is slow-witted. So we have to suffer from both body and mind.

✓ ***Bodily suffering:***

The older you get, the more your vitality will wear out. Inside, the six internal organs and the five inner parts function weakly. The external senses gradually deteriorate such as blurred vision, deaf ears, stuffy nose, teeth fall, trembling limbs, difficulty walking; everything depends on others. Moreover, every time the weather changes, the elderly will easily catch diseases, such as when it is sunny and suddenly it rains, they may catch a cold then. When it's cold, they'll have joint pain all over the body...

✓ ***Mental suffering:***

As people get older, their wisdom also fades. Hence, they become confused, remember the former, forget the latter. Besides, they speak like lunatics; if they have eaten, they will say they haven't eaten yet; if they haven't eaten, they will say they have already eaten. Sometimes they even talk nonsense and become a joke for the children. It's really suffering due to old age.

**B3. Suffering of disease:**

No matter what kind of pain, from minor disease like toothache, headache... to severe disease like leprosy, tuberculosis, and even cancer, etc., all make people groan and suffer. In addition, when we are sick, we have to involve relatives in care, medicine. They will also feel sad, worried about our state of illness.

**B4. Suffering of death:**

Death always brings fear to us. This fear is already a pain. Let alone, when it's time to stop breathing, we have to endure a lot of terrible pain. People who are about to die often have signs such as rolling eyes, distorted mouth, deaf ears, blurred vision... These pain

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and discomfort are indescribable. Mentally, at this time, we will become puzzled, afraid, and sad because we are about to be separated forever from our loved ones and walk alone into the afterlife. There is no moment in life that is as painful as the moment of death.

### **B5. Suffering due to separation from loved ones:**

Each of us has experienced separation from someone we love in our lives. This feeling is not pleasant at all. Those who leave and those who stay will contract the same sadness. Will this parting, we don't know when we will see each other again or is this the last time we have met and then we will be separated forever? Just thinking about it, our heart already contains a lot of sorrow and pain. Some people, because they are so miserable about leaving their loved ones, they have stopped eating and drinking for a whole week, and made their bodies thin and depressed severely. It shows us that being apart from those we love is also a great suffering.

### **B6. Suffering due to meeting with the uncongenial:**

As we can see above, leaving the person we love is a pain. On the contrary, having to be in close contact with people we don't like is also a pain. Not to mention strangers who are not our relatives and friends. Even with our family members, when there is a quarrel or disagreement happens, of course we also feel uncomfortable when we have to face to face with them every day. Once the siblings in the house have happened friction or discord, they even didn't want to meet each other, let alone outsiders. And living together in the same house in such a state is obviously a pain.

### **B7. Suffering due to unfulfilled wishes:**

We all have our own desires in life. When we was young, we wished to study well to receive a scholarship, to be proud of my friends. When we grew up a little, we wanted to get a good job with a high salary. Then, when we grow up a bit, we wish to build a spacious and lovely house, have a beautiful and reliable wife or a talented and rich husband, have good and gentle children... In general, we have too many dreams and ambitions for ourselves in our life. But when we can't achieve the things we dream of, we show disappointment and discouragement, even deadlock, despair and disorientation. These are the sufferings caused by not achieving our dreams in human life.

### **B8. Suffering due to the raging aggregates:**

Our body of the five aggregates i.e. form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Form indicates our physical body, the remaining four elements are mental, which is always changes every moment. In these five aggregates, there are always contradictions, conflicts and mutual influence. Because of those conflicts, we have to endure many sufferings such as fear of old age, fear of illness, fear of death. Then our senses are immediately dominated and infatuated when contacting with the visual objects that make us suffer because of running after it.

Finally, we hold the body and consider it as our own, trying to protect and pamper it, from which there are countless sorrows and sufferings appeared.

### **3.2 Everything is on fire.**

After the Buddha converted the three brother ascetics Kassapa, he gave a lecture on the topic of fire, which is one of the important teachings of Buddhism:



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*“Monks, the All is aflame. What All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Consciousness at the eye is aflame. Contact at the eye is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.*

*The ear is aflame. Sounds are aflame...*

*The nose is aflame. Aromas are aflame...*

*The tongue is aflame. Flavors are aflame...*

*The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame...*

*The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.”*<sup>60</sup>

The Buddha has shown us clearly what is the cause of all the suffering and afflictions in our lives through the passage above. Those are the three factors: greed, hatred and delusion. Later, the Buddha used the image of fire again as a subject to preach to the bhikkhus in a sutra of Mahayana Buddhism which is the Lotus Sutra, this passage is as follows:

*“Shariputra, suppose that in a country, a city, or a village, there is a great Elder, aged and worn, of limitless wealth, possessing many fields, houses, and*

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<sup>60</sup> Adittapariyaya Sutta – The Fire Sermon.

*servants. His house is spacious and large, having only one door but with a great many people—one hundred, two hundred, even five hundred of them— dwelling within it. Its halls and chambers are decaying and old; its walls are crumbling. The pillars are rotting at their bases; the beams and ridgepoles are toppling dangerously. All at once, throughout the house, a fire breaks out, setting the house ablaze.*

*The Elder's sons, ten, twenty, even thirty of them are inside the house.*

*The Elder, seeing the fire arise from the four sides, is greatly alarmed and makes the following reflection: 'Although I have been able to escape safely through this burning doorway, all my children remain inside the burning house, happily attached to their amusement, unaware, unknowing, not alarmed and not afraid. The fire presses upon them and the pain will sear them, but at heart they do not mind it, nor have they any thought to escape.'*

*Shariputra, the Elder then reflects, 'My body and arms are strong. I might gather them into a cloth pouch or onto a table and take them from the house. This house has only one door and it is narrow and small. My sons are young and immature and as yet know nothing. Attached to their place of play, they may fall and be burnt in the fire. I must tell them of this frightful matter, that the house has caught fire, and they must hurry and come out so as not to be burned'.*

*So thinking, he speaks to his sons, saying, 'Come out, all of you quickly!' Although the father, in his pity, induces them with good words, still all the sons are happily attached to their amusements and play and refuse to believe him. They are not frightened or afraid and have no intention of leaving. What is more, they do not know what is meant by fire, what is meant by house or what is meant by being lost. They merely run from east to west in play, staring at their father.*

*Then, the Elder has this thought, 'The house is already ablaze with a great fire. If my sons and I do not get out in time, we certainly shall be burned. I shall*

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*now devise an expedient device so that my sons can avoid this disaster.'*

*The father, knowing both the predispositions of his sons and the preferences each has for various precious toys and unusual playthings to which they happily responded, speaks to them, saying, 'The things you will love to play with are rare and hard to get. If you do not take them, you will certainly regret it later. Things such as these: a variety of sheep carts, deer carts, and ox carts, are now outside the door for you to play with. All of you should quickly come out of this burning house and I shall give you whatever you want.'*

*Then the children, hearing their father speak of these precious playthings which suited their wishes exactly, eagerly push and shove one another aside in a mad scramble, all fighting to get out of the burning house. At that time, the Elder, seeing that all his sons had gotten out safely and were seated on the ground at the crossroads, is without further obstruction; his mind is at peace and he is filled with joy."*<sup>61</sup>

The above passage shows us that the Buddha was very skillful when using the image of the Elder's sons playing in a burning house, but they still did not know it. Until he lured them out by promising each of them a variety of sheep carts, deer carts, and ox carts. Only then did they run out of there. We are the sons of that Elder. Spending the whole day just concentrating and pursuing the fleeting material interests, along with the trivial, fragile and temporary pleasures of life, without even realizing we have been hanging around in a burning house that we can be burnt to death at any moment.

### **4. THE SAMSARA<sup>62</sup> THEORY.**

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<sup>61</sup> The Lotus Sutra – Chapter 3: The Parable.

<sup>62</sup> The eternal circle of Birth, Death and Rebirth. It is also called Reincarnation.

After Prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, and became a Buddha. The first superpower he obtained was Divine Vision as mentioned in Chapter I. With this power, he saw many of his past lives before becoming an Enlightened One in this one. Through countless lives in the past, he used to be human beings; many lives as animals; innumerable lives as Gods, Saints, and even Yakshas, Asuras...

All of us who are present in this life have also passed through countless lives in different life forms, from low to high. Perhaps in a certain life in the past, you and I used to be soul mates, used to be colleagues, used to be comrades who had gone through fire and water together, used to be friends and relatives...

From ancient times up to now, in the mass media such as newspapers, radio, the internet... we still have occasionally been seeing samples of stories proving reincarnation in real life. Like the stories mentioned in the book ***“Reincarnation, A New Horizon In Science, Religion and Society”*** by professors Sylvia Cranston and Carey Williams. And recently, the book titled ***“Mission to Millboro: A Study in Group Reincarnation”*** by Dr. Marge Rieder, the work is a collection of examples of reincarnation in the US in the 20th century quite elaborately and honestly, with 11 chapters and over 20 well-researched characters.

It shows that, the Buddha with his pure celestial eye, he pointed out to us one of the core natures of human life from more than 2600 years ago that up to now experimental science has just verified. And now, you and I, who are fortunate beings to have the body of a human, have enough wisdom and energy to carry out a great transformation as the Buddha once declared: *“All sentient beings have Buddha nature”*. But only a human being is qualified to become a supremely enlightened being who has got the ability to bring

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benefits for the gods and humans. Therefore, reincarnation is one of the characteristics of Buddhism, it's an important factor and a driving force contributing to the promotion of evolution in a human being.

**5. THE DOCTRINE OF DEPENDENT ORIGIN OR THE TWELVE CONDITIONS OF CAUSE-AND-EFFECT.**

This is one of the specific doctrines that both the two principal Buddhist traditions, Theravada and Mahayana, have included in their main teaching systems. Dependent Origination or the Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect refers to the first cause, or source of the vicious cycle of Samsara as mentioned above. They are: Ignorance, Action, Consciousness, Name and Form, The Six sense organs, Contact, Receiving, Love, Grasping, Existence, Birth or Rebirth, Old age and Death. The Buddha described this doctrine very clearly and meticulously, and we can more obviously visualize his teachings on the doctrine through the diagram below.



*(The diagram of The Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect)*

### 5.1 Ignorance:

The cause of suffering, taking the image of a blind old man leaning on a cane to represent Ignorance. Old man represent samsara without a beginning; blind eyes represent the inability to see the truth; walking with a cane represents ignorance, having no real basis.

### 5.2 Action:

Taking the image of a potter to represent Action. Because of

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ignorance, not realizing the truth of all things, it has made all the actions of the past become the main cause of rebirth in this life.

### **5.3 Consciousness:**

The cause and effect of the past accumulated into consciousness, making it possible for people to enter the womb. Taking the image of a smart and agile monkey to represent Consciousness.

### **5.4 Name and Form:**

The embryonic state of conception; taking the image of a person on a boat to represent Name and Form. The karma created by the previous life has become the retribution of the current pregnancy period.

### **5.5 The Six sense organs:**

Taking the image of an empty house with many rooms to represent The Six sense organs, symbolizes the formation and development of the six senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

### **5.6 Contact:**

Taking the image of touch between men and women to represent Contact. It refers to the contact with the perceived objects.

### **5.7 Receiving:**

After contacting with the perceived objects, there will be a discrimination between suffering and happiness. Taking the image of a tree branch or an arrow which penetrates the eye to represent.

Beginning to experience the sights of the present life.

### **5.8 Love:**

Because there is discrimination so clinging to desire. Taking the image of a banquet to represent Love; desire for pleasure and avoid suffering.

### **5.9 Grasping:**

Because of love, there is no fear of working hard to pursue it. Taking the image of a man picking fruit from a tree to represent Grasping.

### **5.10 Existence:**

Leading to the karma of human life. Taking the image of male and female intercourse to represent Existence. Existence indicates the current power of Karma arising at the last moment of the present life, which can lead to retribution in the next life.

### **5.11 Birth or Rebirth:**

In the moment of conception. Taking the image of a woman giving birth to represent the moment of conception.

### **5.12 Old age and Death:**

Taking the image of an adult carrying heavy objects to represent old age and death. This is the final link of dependent origination. The phenomenon of aging begins at the moment of conception, and gradually leads to death.

Thus we can see that Ignorance is the first link of The Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect that create the reincarnation of all beings. And this cycle of reincarnation continues with each other,



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forming an endless circle. Therefore, the theory of The Twelve Conditions of Cause-and-Effect is also known as ***“The Theory of Dependent Origination”***. It means every thing or phenomenon that arises has a cause, or depending on the causes, a phenomenon is born. We can understand generally about this theory: ***“Because of arising of this, come to arising of that”***. To visualize more specifically, we can take an example in real life as follows:

*Because Mr. A attended the wedding of a colleague at the company, he met a lot of his friends at the party.*

*Because Mr. A met a lot of his friends, he was very happy at the party.*

*Because Mr. A was so happy, he drank a lot of alcohol.*

*Because Mr. A drank a lot of alcohol, he got drunk.*

*Because Mr. A was driving under the influence of alcohol, he caused a traffic accident.*

*Because of a traffic accident, Mr. A was injured.*

*Because of his injuries, he had to go to the hospital.*

### ***On the contrary:***

*If Mr. A hadn't gone to a colleague's wedding party, he wouldn't have drunk a lot of alcohol.*

*If Mr. A hadn't drunk alcohol, he wouldn't have got drunk.*

*If Mr. A hadn't got drunk, he wouldn't have caused the traffic accident.*

*If the traffic accident hadn't happened, Mr. A wouldn't have went to the hospital.*

Through the above example, we can see that all things and phenomena in this world are formed from previous causes and events that occurred and interacted with each other, causing them to arise, and after arising, they anew causes the following event to arise. So all things and phenomena continuously arise from previous events and form a series of events without stopping. The Buddha described this as follows:

*“Inconceivable is the beginning, O disciples, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on, of beings, cloaked in ignorance, tied by craving.”*<sup>63</sup>

Because all things and phenomena continuously arise and affect the formation of the following events, Buddhism believes that there is never a single object that exists independently. Sometimes an object or phenomenon is a combination of many factors both physically and mentally. For example, if I want to have a beautiful set of table and chairs to display in the living room of my house, I must first have wood. After having the wood, I have to saw, cut, chisel that board of wood in pieces, so I have a great need for some tools such as: saws, knives, hammers, axes, nails, etc., and I have to sketch out the shape of that set of table and chairs, then I start to carry out my work to complete it in accordance with the demand that was invented. Thus, to create a set of table and chairs, we need a lot of things.

After knowing that all things and phenomena of life cannot exist independently and separately. Now let's return to The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination as mentioned above to thoroughly understand the teachings of the Blessed One. Let's try to trace back this chain as follows:

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<sup>63</sup> Samyutta Nikaya.

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If there were no Ignorance, there would be no Actions; without Actions, there would be no Consciousness; without Consciousness there would be no Name-and-form; without Name-and-form there would be no Six Sense Organs; without the Six Sense Organs there would be no Contact; without Contact there would be no Receiving; without Receiving there would be no Love; without Love, there would be no Grasping; without Grasping there would be no Existence; without Existence there would be no Birth and Rebirth, without Birth and Rebirth there would be no Old age and Death.

So, if there were no Ignorance, there would be no Suffering in this life. And this is also the main purpose of Buddhist practitioners. That's what the Enlightened One wants us to realize in order to get rid of suffering and find the shore of peace and happiness.

### **6. THE THEORY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT OR THE RETRIBUTION OF KARMA.**

It can be said that this is the theory that covers the system of Buddhist teachings. It is the foundation and core of Buddhism. When talking about Buddhism, we often think of the Law of Cause and Effect as well as Karma.

#### **6.1 The concept of Cause and Effect.**

We can generally understand Cause is the origin, the source or the reason of a matter, while Effect is the result, the consequence of that matter. Cause is the seed, and Effect is the flower, the fruit. Cause and effect are two successive states, where there is a cause, there is an effect, and the effect is born from the cause. If there is no cause, there will be no effect.

#### **6.2 The characteristics of Cause and Effect.**

**A. What the cause was, the effect is like that.**

If we sow a mango seed in the ground, we will later get a mango tree. After a while, this mango tree will flower and give us delicious ripe mangoes. We cannot sow a mango seed and wait for apples or grapes to be harvested. Likewise, a mother elephant will give birth to a baby elephant but cannot give birth to a tiger cub. This is the inherent characteristic of Cause and Effect.

**B. In order that Cause to become Effect, there must be the support of Conditions.**

If we don't sow the mango seed in the ground, but keep it in a plastic bag, this mango seed will never give us any mangoes. If we want to get mangoes from this mango seed, we have to sow it in the ground, then we must take care of it and water it every day. Besides, it is necessary to have natural conditions such as sunshine, climate, temperature combined. Then, the mango seed can germinate and grow into a mango tree and eventually produce mangoes. Thus, the process of evolving from a mango seed to a mango fruit must have conditions. We call this process: Cause, Condition and Effect.

**C. In a Cause has Effects, in an Effect has Causes.**

The mango seed contains the germ of the mango tree, and the mango fruit contains its kernel is the mango seed. Every thing and phenomenon contains in itself both cause and effect. Just as an egg will hatch out a chicken, and a chicken will lay eggs; cause and effect are a consecutive circle without beginning or end. Therefore, we can say that the egg is the Cause, but we can also say that it is the Effect.

**D. The duration of the process from Cause to Effect is not fixed.**

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The time from Cause progress to Effect is not fixed, because it also depends on conditions.

If a mango seed is sowed in the ground, well cared and watered regularly by human hands, along with favorable weather conditions, it will produce fruit faster than a mango tree growing on an arid land and lacking of care and irrigation of human being. So in life, there are some cases in which the people who do unwholesome things become rich, we quickly conclude that there is no Cause and Effect. But that's not the case, those who do unwholesome deeds but get rich because they have done many good deeds in their previous lives. In this life, the time to bear fruit has ripened, so they are enjoying the blessings left by their previous lives. As for the unwholesome deeds that they have created in the present life, they will surely receive their retribution one day, when the conditions are fully converged and the time is ripe. Cause and Effect is the unchanging law of the universe from which no living being can escape its domination.

***CHAPTER III:***  
**WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE  
IN THE BUDDHA?**



*“Now, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness’, then you should*

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*enter and remain in them”.*<sup>64</sup>

**W**hat created an emerging religion, led by a young patriarch, that quickly gained a strong and surpassing influence among all classes of people, in the context of the Vedic and Upanishadic system of philosophy were the foundation of all the disciplines, rituals and culture of Indian society at that time, and its doctrines are still practiced to present-day?

In this chapter, we will go into analyzing the qualities and characteristics of the Buddha, to see that, not without reason, but in a short time, the Buddha attracted a large number of followers of all caste in the society whom were completely put their trust in the teachings of him.

### **1. THE BUDDHA WAS A SPIRITUAL LEADER WITH A GENEROUS AND HONEST SPIRIT.**

This is the first quality of the Buddha that I want to mention, he always abolishes the superstitious or unrealistic ideas and dogmas. The passage above is a typical example. When the Buddha was in the world, India had six heretical gurus and other philosophical thoughts. The Brahma-Net Sutra mentions 62 contemporary Indian doctrines, which created the disorder of religious beliefs at that time. It is worth mentioning that the gurus all expand their doctrines and struggled with each other to attract the followers. They refuted with each other, and claimed that their own doctrines were absolute truth, and the other ones were just wrong views. Facing that situation, there were many believers who were extremely confused, because they didn't know which doctrines were right, which were false and where to rely spiritually to bring them absolute peace.

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<sup>64</sup> Kalama Sutta.

Then the Buddha appeared. He manifested as a human being in the flesh. With his own efforts, he attained enlightenment and became the World-Honored One. He taught and converted everyone by his own virtue. During his 45 years of preaching the Dharma, his entire system of doctrines was based on Empiricism.

The above passage is quoted from the Kalama Sutta. In a situation where there were too many philosophical doctrines coexisting and opposing each other. A group of Kalamas were extremely bewildered because they did not know which system of teachings to trust and rely on as the basis of truth. When they heard that the ascetic Gautama was extolled as an Enlightened One visiting the town, they went to see him in the hope that he would help clear their confusion and doubts. At that time, these Kalamas were not disciples of the Buddha. They came and saw him only as a counselor in order to hear his possible advice to help them clear their doubts and hesitation, but they hadn't considered him as the Tathagata – the Enlightened One, who could show them the spiritual path leading to ultimate liberation. After listening to the Buddha proclaimed ten things that should not be believed in a thorough and detailed way along with a brief lecture, all these Kalamas showed their great respect, admiration and finally, they asked to become Buddhist laymen.

The Buddha always advocated his teaching as coming to see for yourself, not come to hear. In other words, he only taught about practical things in order to be applied to the life of people of all social classes for their long-term benefit, not a bunch of chaotic and complex doctrines in which contained frivolous dogma. He often used the example of a belief without a factual basis as being like a man who was passionately in love with a girl but had absolutely no idea who the girl was? Or like a person who wanted to create a ladder at the crossroads to climb upstairs, but he didn't know how



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high, low or medium the house was and where the direction of that house was?<sup>65</sup> Because the Dharma needs to be practiced and experienced like a man who feels hot or cold by himself when he drinks a glass of water, it cannot be understood only through analysis by thinking; the more you try to analyze it without experiment, the more you will be led to errors and contradictions easily. Thus, the Buddha's point of view was to see the Dharma through the process of self-practice, self-realization, and not based on anyone, or a doctrine without real experience.

Another characteristic of the Buddha is that he never advocated one-sided speech, on the contrary he always encouraged everyone in controversy, but it must be a debate on real matters, which can be applied in real life to bring joy and happiness for everyone, not a debate on unreal and unhelpful matters for their lives. He never had the thought of binding or imposing on anyone, nor exalted himself and criticized others, but only said: *"This is the belief that I am relying on. I feel happy and it's beneficial to my life. Therefore, I want to share it with everyone so that you can achieve the same things; believe it or not, it's depend on you, whether you choose to be a refuge or not, that's your right."*

### **2. THE BUDDHA ALWAYS FOCUSED ON PRACTICAL ISSUES IN THE PRESENT LIFE.**

When the Buddha was alive, among his disciples, there was a man who was very impatient. Following the Buddha for a short time, this disciple was eager to get all the answers about the universe, about the world, about life and death. So, one day, the Buddha told him the story of a man who was penetrated by a poisoned arrow and was seriously injured. When his family wanted to find a surgeon

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<sup>65</sup> Digha Nikaya – Tevijja Sutta.

to help him, the man waved his hand to hinder their intention. He said that before calling the surgeon, he wanted to know who attacked him, and why he did it? What position was he? Where did he come from? Was he tall or short, fat or thin? Was his skin color light or dark? And yet, what kind of bow did he use? Was it made from oleander wood? Also, what material was the bowstring made of? Silk, or hemp? Also, he wanted to know if the feathers of the arrow were made from the feathers of a vulture, a peacock, or a falcon?

Because there were so many thorny questions asked, the family of that injured man didn't have time to find out the answers replying to him. Finally, the man had passed away before he could get an answer for himself.

This story shows us, the Buddha never encouraged his disciples to put their minds on metaphysical, illusory issues that did not bring any practical benefit in practicing the Dharma to bring about the peace and liberation for themselves. If a man who spends all his time searching for answers to those impractical questions, not only will he never be able to solve his core issue, but he will also likely lose his way and to be shaken his morale in the Dharma practice. So, the Buddha often taught his disciples to reflect and meditate on the present life day and night through the verse:

*“Do not pursue the past.*

*Do not lose yourself in the future.*

*The past no longer is.*

*The future has not yet come.*

*Looking deeply at life as it is*

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*in the very here and now,*

*the practitioner dwells*

*in stability and freedom.*

...”<sup>66</sup>

The above verse is the announcement of the real life policy of the Buddha. He advised us not to be nostalgic for what happened in the past, because if we keep remembering events at a certain distant time in the past, it will make our mind become sad, burdensome and stagnant. In addition, we shouldn't think about the future either, because we can never predict what will happen in the future, and only uselessly wasting time. Instead, let's face the real life, and find the way to solve the problems surrounding our daily life, then there will be a content and peaceful life within each of us.

On another occasion, while staying in the Simsapa grove in Kosambi, the Buddha picked up a handful of Simsapa leaves and asked his disciples as follow:

*“Monks, are the leaves in my hand more or less than the leaves in this grove?”*

The bhikkhus replied:

*“The leaves in the Blessed One's hand are few, Lord; the leaves in this forest are more.”*

The Buddha continued:

*“So too, bikkhus, the things that I have known by direct knowledge are*

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<sup>66</sup> Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone.

*more; the things that I have told you are only a few. Why have I not told them? Because they bring no benefit, no advancement in the Holy life, and because they do not lead to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. That is why I have not told them. And what I have told you? This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering. This is what I have told you. Why have I told it? Because it brings benefit, and advancement in the Holy life, and because it lead to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. So bikkhus, let your task be this: This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.”*<sup>67</sup>

Thus we can thoroughly understand the Buddha's thought about a real life that he always focused on; no ambiguity and impracticability; no metaphysics and abstract. All of his teachings are about real things that anyone young or old, rich or poor, can feel.

### **3. THE BUDDHA'S PROFOUND SILENCE.**

Sometimes, the Buddha kept his silence in response to questions throughout his life of preaching the Dharma. There are some people, because of lack of understanding of the meaning of the Buddha's silence, hastily assumed that he could not answer those questions. So, in what cases was the Buddha silent?

When the Buddha knew that the questioner would not be able to understand the answer because of its depth; or the questions mentioned were not in line with his policy of preaching the Dharma; or the questions that are not of real benefit to the practice of the Dharma in order to bring peace to a practitioner's inner peace, he often kept a silent attitude. Because as mentioned above, the

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<sup>67</sup> Samyutta Nikaya.

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Buddha always focused on what is practical for the present life, he did not want his disciples to be immersed in useless questions that did not bring any benefit on the path lead to enlightenment. He often refused to answer the questions such as: Is the universe eternal? Is the universe finite? Does the Tathagata exist after death?...

Another reason for the Buddha's silence is that the language of the world is inherently incapable of conveying fully the profound, sublime meanings of an enlightened being's words which we can only understand and feel through our own practice and experience. I would like to share with you a story that has been handed down in the Zen Sect so that we can all reflect on this.

There was a Zen teacher who had received hundreds of disciples to study with him at his monastery. After a long time, he realized that he was getting older and weaker, so he wanted to choose one of the most outstanding disciples to become his successor.

One day he placed an apple in front of his three most promising disciples, saying:

*“Monks, tell me about the apple. Whoever explains best will go to Kyoto<sup>68</sup> with me.”*

The first disciple talked about the origin of the apple, how the apple was introduced into Japan, and other legends related to the apple...

The second talked about the market price of apples that are made into wine, into desserts, into sauces...

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<sup>68</sup> Formerly the imperial capital of Japan.

The third was silent, saying nothing. He took a knife, cut the apple in pieces, gently lifted the master's jaw and put a piece of apple in his master's mouth.

*"Exactly!"*

The Zen master used his tongue to push the apple's piece to one side of his mouth and continued:

*"We can't use words to describe the apple. You have to put it on your tongue to know. The only way to know about an apple is to chew it with your mouth shut."*

Finally, they all ate the rest of the apple, and the third disciple went to Kyoto with the master.

Through the above story, we can see that if we use the language of the world, we will never taste the wonderful flavor of enlightenment and liberation but only have direct verification through practice. Therefore, in the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha taught:

*"Monks, the Dharma taught by the Tathagata is like a raft crossing a river, the Dharma should still be abandoned, much less what is Non-Dharma"*

When reading the above passage, most of us can't help but be amazed as hearing the Buddha assert that. Once again we see how sincere the Buddha was. When we have crossed the other side of the river, we have to abandon the raft and step ashore, so we have the opportunity to continue to where we need to go. On the contrary, if we insist on holding onto the raft, how can we continue? Even the Dharma, which is the words preached from the golden mouth of the Buddha, the guideline for us to learn and practice to bring benefits of our life. But after having achieved the goal, then we still have to let go of it, let alone what doesn't belong to the

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Dharma. So, did the Buddha need to answer useless, vague and unrealistic questions?

### **4. THE BUDDHA'S POLICY ON EQUALITY FOR ALL CASTES IN SOCIETY.**

Indian society when the Buddha was alive was clearly divided into castes, including 4 castes: Brahmins, Ksatriya (the second caste consisting of kings, lords and rulers – Sakyamuni Buddha belonged to this caste), Vaisya (the third caste – the caste of merchants) and Sudra (the fourth caste consisting of laborers, farmers, servants, slaves...) in which, two noble caste belong to the upper caste, namely Brahmins and Ksatriya. The Buddha himself was born in the Ksatriya caste, but with his compassion and love for sentient beings since his childhood. He was the first spiritual leader to advocate the abolition of that caste system with the immortal statements such as:

*“By birth one is not an outcaste,*

*By birth one is not a Brahmin;*

*By deeds alone one is an outcaste,*

*By deeds alone one is a Brahmin.”*<sup>69</sup>

Owing to the policy of not discriminating against race and caste of the Buddha, in his holy Sangha there were excellent disciples such as Upali, one of the ten outstanding disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha, he was famous for his knowledge and practice of the Vinaya (Commandments). Before becoming a monk, he was a barber boy who belonged to the Sudra caste. Or like Sunita, who was revered

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<sup>69</sup> Sutta Nipata – Vasala Sutta.

by kings and nobles in the country as an Unborn being, came from a sweeper. Even the royal courtesan Ambapali was allowed by the Buddha to join the Sangha and she also attained arahantship later. Beside, Rajumala, a girl in despair. She just wanted to commit suicide, but the Buddha succeeded in converting her to become a Bhikkhuni and attained arahantship, too. She had just been a serf girl before. And there were many similar cases recorded in the Buddhist scriptures of the excellent disciples who before leaving home and becoming the disciples of the Buddha were only people from the lowest caste of Indian society at that time.

This proves that the Buddha was a pioneer in the movement against prejudices about social class distinctions. The door to truth is open to all without any discrimination in Buddhism.

## **5. THE BUDDHA'S POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY.**

It was the Buddha who raised the value and status of women in Indian society at that time. The Buddhist scriptures recorded a short sermon by the Buddha to King Pasenadi of the kingdom of Kosala, after hearing that his wife – the Queen Malika, had just given birth to a baby girl, the king expressed his displeasure. The Buddha knew what the king meant, so he said to him:

*“Some woman too may be better than a man if she is intelligent, virtuous, respectful towards the mother-in-law and is faithful to her husband. Those born to her will be heroes and district leaders, the son of such a good wife might even rule as a king.”<sup>70</sup>*

The Buddha recognized that both male and female genders have their own divinity. And in his teaching, he put each gender in its

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<sup>70</sup> Dhita Sutta – Samyutta Nikaya.



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proper place. He also stated that a woman could achieve enlightenment and liberation as a man. It can be said that the Buddha made a revolution on gender equality when he allowed women to renounce the world and establish the Nun Order which had never been done before by a spiritual leader. That shows, the Buddha was a great teacher, his words always went hand in hand with practice. The Sangha in the time of the Buddha, there were no rich people, poor people, contemptible people, respectable people... but there only existed noble virtues, sublime wisdoms, and outstanding abilities.

### **6. THE BUDDHA'S VIEW ON THE ISSUE OF SUPERNATURAL POWER.**

After attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha gained supernatural powers that we often call miracles such as the ability to see the forms of life of his past lives and that of sentient beings without limits of space and time; the ability to move from one place to another in the blink of an eye; the ability to know the thoughts of others; the ability to hear and understand all the sounds of all living beings...

But from the Buddha attained enlightenment until he entered Parinirvana, he never encouraged his disciples to use these supernatural powers. According to the Blessed One, when a monk practices the precepts fully and seriously. Beside, he also practices meditation assiduously there will come one day, when his wisdom become bright suddenly, he will gain these miraculous powers normally and there's nothing to be proud of that. The Buddha considered it as an inevitable result which will happen in the process of practicing the Dharma persistently and seriously of a practitioner. And he did not regard the attainment of supernatural powers as the

finality, because it still could not solve the core issue of sentient beings how to be permanently freed from the sufferings of samsara.

And this teaching of the Buddha has still been totally correct to the present day. If we lived in the time 100 years ago, communicating with our relatives halfway around the world away from us and being able to talk and see each other's face like now on mobile devices such as Laptop or Smartphone would be an unbelievable thing. And for those who lived in previous centuries compared to modern life as it is now, it must have been a miracle, right? Then, there is nothing strange about miracles, it is just an inevitable process of evolution. Looking back on the Buddha's teachings, we can see they were so profound and practical. These teachings have transcended space and time, they were also in accordance with all times.

## **7. THE BUDDHA HAD ALL THE QUALITIES OF A GREAT AND PERFECT PERSONALITY.**

### **7.1 Great in Courage.**

As a noble prince, with a beautiful wife and good children, prince Sidhartha was pampered and protected outstandingly by his father, he was also the successor to the throne in the future. It can be said that the Buddha, formerly Prince Siddhartha, was the happiest man in the world according to the concept of worldly life. All the best and most outstanding things in life that nearly all of us have to work hard every day to find, he had fully possessed. Fame, position, title, power, money, wealth, a perfect family, being in easy circumstance, living in the most luxurious places, ... All good things were devoted to him, nothing was lacking. If it was an ordinary man, he would certainly try his best to keep and protect these wonderful privileges. But for prince Siddhartha, he refused those privileges and

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left it emphatically, because he realized the truth of the so-called happiness that worldly people often conceive. This is one of the preeminent characteristics of the Buddha. In the situation as prince Siddhartha, it was difficult for anyone to give up such an extremely rich and glorious life to go out to search for the truth that he himself didn't know where to go to find? And could he find it? Therefore, later scholars and historians often call the leaving of prince Siddhartha to seek for enlightenment as a great renunciation. In the Majjhima Nikaya, the Buddha described his sorrow when he left the palace to set out and seek for enlightenment as follows:

*“Aggivessana, later while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.”<sup>71</sup>*

Not stopping there, after giving up all his privileges. Prince Siddhartha began to embark on an arduous, obstructive and dangerous journey that he had never known before. Once a noble, powerful, and glorious prince, now he became a beggar, maintaining his life by going door to door for alms. His clothes are very simple, he only put on a yellow robe to cover his body, but before that he only used the highest quality silk which was brought back from abroad. Then he had to wander out into the deep forests to practice an austere life as the wandering ascetics of that time. The Buddha narrated the early time that he lived in exile in the old forests as follows:

*“I stayed in the sort of places that are awe-inspiring and make your hair stand on end, such as park-shrines, forest-shrines, and tree-shrines. And while*

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<sup>71</sup> Maha-saccaka Sutta – Majjhima Nikaya.

*I was staying there a wild animal would come, or a bird would make a twig fall, or wind would rustle the fallen leaves. The thought would occur to me: 'Is this that fear and terror coming?' Then the thought occurred to me: 'Why do I just keep waiting for fear? What if I were to subdue fear and terror in whatever state they come?' So when fear and terror came when I was walking back and forth, I would not stand or sit or lie down. I would keep walking back and forth until I had subdued that fear and terror. When fear and terror came while I was standing, I would not walk or sit or lie down. I would keep standing until I had subdued that fear and terror. When fear and terror came while I was sitting, I would not lie down or stand up or walk. I would keep sitting until I had subdued that fear and terror. When fear and terror came while I was lying down, I would not sit up or stand or walk. I would keep lying down until I had subdued that fear and terror."*<sup>72</sup>

Facing with so many hardships and dangers, such as the risk of being harmed by wild animals as well as having the endurance of physical pains of practicing an austere life. At that time, prince Sidhartha had nothing but skin and bone. He even practiced asceticism so seriously that he no longer had the strength to urinate or defecate and was about to face death. Finally, thanks to a bowl of porridge offered to him by the kind girl named Sujata, the world was about to welcome an Enlightened One being born.

Thus, we can see, the Buddha was an extraordinary person that the world is hard to find the second one. Therefore, in the Main Hall of Buddhist temples, we often see a plaque hanging with the words ***"Great Shrine Hall"*** which reminds us to remember one of the qualities of the Buddha – the great hero.

## 7.2 Great in Power.

As we all know, through the arduous process of seeking

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<sup>72</sup> Fear and terror Sutta – Majjhima Nikaya 4.

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enlightenment for a period of six long years. At dawn on the 8th day of December lunar month, 588 BCE, when the morning star just appeared. Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment and became a Buddha by his own efforts. To achieve this fruit, he personally fought and conquered both inner and outer demons. After attaining enlightenment, in the process of spreading the Dharma and transforming other beings later, he still had to face many difficulties from jealous and evil elements like his cousin Devadatta or Brahmin masters for their own sake. Among them is the story of Cinca's fake pregnancy, which I would like to summarize here with you to see how our Enlightened One had a solid inner power in the face of all the persecution of the opposing elements because of their jealousies with his brilliant success in the field of transforming sentient beings.

*“A certain group of heretics persuaded Cinca (Cincamanavika), one of their follower to try to find the way to make accusations against the Buddha. Cinca dressed beautifully, then she went to Jetavana monastery at night and slept somewhere in the hall of the heretics. Every early morning, she hurried to the direction of the capital as if she had just come out of Jetavana monastery. Passers-by asked why she was in such a hurry and where she slept last night, to which she timidly answered in the form of a question: ‘Knowing what I’m doing is there any benefit to you?’ Cinca kept repeating this action for a month or more, and then, when she was asked about her strange behavior, she replied as if she confessed. ‘I went to Jetavana monastery and did nothing but slept with the sramana Gautama.’*

*Several months later, she put a bundle of clothes on her belly, tied it around her waist and covered it with her coat, pretending to be pregnant. Then one day, in the auditorium of Jetavana monastery, Cinca walked into the midst of the assembly listening to the Dharma and she said in an impudent tongue:*

*‘Hey, the great Sramana, you preach the Dharma very well. But why don't you pay attention to the pregnancy that you created for me? In addition, why don't you arrange for my confinement either?’*

*It can be said that it is one of the most despicable tricks of the heretics who wanted to put the Buddha in a shameful situation. At that time, after hearing Cinca's slander, the Buddha showed his calm, he slowly replied: ‘Hey, Cinca, what you just said, only Heaven knows, Earth knows, you and I know about that.’*

*At that moment, due to the Buddha's virtue, the Gods in the Heavens made the bundle of cloth on Cinca's belly slipped off suddenly. The faithful who were listening to the Dharma at that time were very angry and chased her out of the monastery immediately. But as soon as she got out of the monastery's gate, the ground under Cinca's feet cracked in two, and she fell into the Avici Hell.<sup>73</sup>”*

Thus, we can see that, as an Enlightened One, the Buddha sometimes still had to face troubles created by evil elements in order to humble his dignity and honor. But with a stable and rigid inner mind, he overcame all in the mindfulness and awareness of an enlightened being by his great power.

### **7.3 Great in Compassion.**

For what and for whom did Prince Siddhartha give up all his supreme privileges to embark on an arduous and challenging journey, then one day he became the Enlightened One of gods and mankind?

Yes, it's all for the sake of all sentient beings. He went out to find out the truth of life, to find out the true face that is hiding behind the so-called happiness that people in the world often

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<sup>73</sup> The last of the eight great hot hells where whose suffers die and reborn incessantly.

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conceive. He wanted to enlighten the world to see that happiness is just a trap, is temporary, is impermanent, is empty and nothingness... At some point, people still have to face separation, loss, suffering, and grief because the nature of life is like that. He gave up his personal happiness, to find the true and eternal happiness for mankind. This is the lesson of great altruism that the Buddha wanted to leave for posterity. I wonder that from ancient times up to now, is there anyone in this world who can do what the Buddha did? Sacrificing his own happiness, giving up his ultimate interests to seek happiness for others. I think, with such great compassion, the Buddha deserved to get the most respectful prostration from all people no matter what they belong to any of backgrounds, classes and races...

***CHAPTER IV:***  
**THE REVERSE SIDE OF  
MODERN CIVILIZED LIFE.**



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**W**e are living in a time when human civilization has made great strides. Over the past ten years, since 2010, we have witnessed and experienced the breakthrough of the industrial revolution 4.0, which now culminates in AI technology. And we cannot deny that this industrial revolution has brought to us the values and conveniences of a material life. It can be said that thanks to the achievements of this revolution, our material life has become much easier and more convenient in almost every field. But, besides that, it also gives rise to countless consequences and troubles that we have to face both physically and mentally. In this chapter, I will list the advantages and consequences of a modern, civilized life that we are living.

## **1. THE ADVANTAGES OF A CIVILIZED AND MODERN SOCIETY THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY.**

### **1.1 Helping us to save time.**

This is the first advantage that I want to mention. Because most of us today, everyone seems to be in a hurry, busy with the hustle and bustle of modern life. A day, a person works from 8 to 10 hours, sometimes up to 12, 13 hours. The remaining time for necessary activities such as eating, sleeping, etc... is only 11 to 12 hours. So, living in a society that we are always immersed in work, there will be no time left for other activities which required for our daily life. And now, with the development of the internet, we just need to sit at home, type on the keyboard of a Smartphone or PC, we can get the goods we need without having to go to the supermarket thanks to online shopping platforms. It is just one of many methods of buying, selling and exchanging goods that save us a lot of time. And there are many other forms such as transferring money, receiving money, exchanging email back and forth, collecting information through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter... This is also a change in the form of access to information in the traditional way such as newspapers or magazines, etc... which help users can update information faster and have more entertainment opportunities.

### **1.2 Reducing human labor.**

The development of new technologies helps us to save a lot of human labor in many fields of production and business. For example, about agriculture. In Vietnam, there is a proverb: "*Having a water buffalo allows one to start a business*". As you know, Vietnam is a country in Southeast Asia, the decisive economy is wet-rice

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cultivation. In the past, when we had no support of machines, the farm work such as ploughing and raking had to rely on the pulling power of the water buffaloes, so there was the above proverb. Now, the image of farmers and buffaloes working together in the green fields is no longer present which have been replaced by tractors and combine harvesters. It can be said that, thanks to these machines, farmers nowadays have saved a lot of energy in plowing, planting and harvesting in the crops. Farm work also becomes more convenient, easier and faster; productivity is also more efficient. In addition, thanks to the application of advanced technologies in biology, people have now conducted tissue modification and created a breeding production process, which is different from the previous process of seeding and extracting plants. This change has made it much easier to create new varieties. In manufacturing companies, thanks to modern equipment and machines as well as high-tech production lines, manual labor has been saved. It has helped to manufacture products faster, more evenly, and better the quality, meet people's consumption needs more effectively...

### **1.3 The quality of human health is improved.**

The combination of medicine and technology is a perfect advance to help people's quality of life continuously improve. With the support of modern equipment, the world's medicine is gradually transforming to become more perfect in the field of diagnosis and treatment for patients.

Currently, the introduction of high-tech gadgets and applications into medicine has been gradually popularized. Such as VR technology that helps train surgeons in practice which can increase up to 230% overall performance (faster and more accurate) compared to other traditional training methods. Patients also have

a lot of benefits from this technology. Thanks to VR, doctors have created pain treatments, distracting patients from painful sensations (by letting patients wear VR technology application glasses and experience soothing and relaxing images/scenes). Thanks to that, the patient's pains are also alleviated and significantly reduced. Then, medical care and monitoring devices like Tricorder help users to supervise and keep track of their body temperatures, ECG, heart rates, oxygen saturation or stress levels accurately. This device will work if it is in contact with our foreheads for about 10 seconds and then it will give a result. Next is Nanotechnology, Nanoparticles and Nanodevices are predicted to soon act as accurate drug delivery systems and they will become tools for cancer treatment. They can even be used to perform certain surgeries. Nanotechnology can also help us to create smart patches. These patches will enable continuous wound monitoring and a Graphene core to stimulate wound healing.

And one of the modern equipment has put into medical use in a practical way is Robotics technology. It can be said that the application of robots in medicine has become extremely developed. Currently, there are many different types of medical robots being used in medical facilities in many countries such as companion in surgery robots, helping elderly patients robots, sterilization robots, etc... The companionship of these robots can reduce mental problems for humans as well as help children who contracted chronic diseases. Some robots are also equipped with sensitive sensors along with camera and microphone systems so that patients can easily interact with them.

#### **1.4 Helping the agricultural industry develop to a new level.**

Currently, in the field of agriculture, we have gradually applied

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modern technologies to serve the needs of consumers such as the application of IoT Sensors. These sensors connected to smart devices, and they were controlled automatically during agricultural production, in order to cope with climate change as well as improve climate in greenhouses. Next, is robotics and automation technology. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles and data collection satellites by horticultural farms to analyze and make recommendations for better farm management. Currently, the agricultural industry has updated drones to sow seeds, spray pesticides, put down fertilizers, map fields as well as forecast landslides, deforestation and forest fires, etc... Using an automatic sprinkler irrigation device when the garden temperature is too high and the humidity is low. Robots in the field of agriculture are increasing their productive capacity for farmers in many different ways.

And finally, we can mention that the use of artificial intelligence technology can create many software and machines to collect information connecting things and process big data. Thereby, we can offer production management options towards organic agriculture in safety from farm to fork.

Advanced countries are thoroughly using this technology in the management of crop and livestock production. They then proceed to harvest, preserve and process them in smart agriculture. It will bring economic efficiency, environment in harmony with nature.

### **1.5 Easier in business management, helping to increase optimal working performance.**

In this 4.0 era, the application of science and technology is a decisive factor in catching up with new business trends. It helps

businesses perfect the model as well as sales method effectively.

We can see that the application of high-tech software in business management will gain many benefits as follows:

- Optimize the management time of the business, employees, departments, etc... The software helps administrators skip unnecessary steps, process complex data and set up reports quickly and efficiently.

- Handle the tasks in the process of operating the business in a much more efficient way to ensure work productivity. It supports total control of time, execution performance, work schedule and detailed system information easily.

- Improve quality and build a professional and flexible working style.

- Minimizing information errors and losses in the working process. From there, businesses can objectively evaluate the process and efficiency of work.

- Capturing new business trends in the market more effectively, taking timely measures and plans to deal with market fluctuations...

### **1.6 Assisting in the protection of resources and the environment.**

Currently with the environmental pollution and the depletion of the world's resources. Protecting a green environment is a top concern for most of us. And the application of new technologies for environmental protection is being researched and executed by many countries around the world. Advances in artificial intelligence technology will be one of the solutions to help solve global environmental crises, from climate change to the extinction of some

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plant and animal species. In fact, many organizations have clearly realized the benefits of applying AI and expanding the execution and taking advantage of this technology in the process of protecting the environment.

For instance, the DeepMind AI App of Google has limited their data center's energy usage by 40%. This has made their center more energy efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as data centers consume only 3% of global energy each year. Such AI development will not only improve energy using efficiently, but will also help increase energy availability for remote communities.

Another example in the application of artificial intelligence is that of the multinational computer technology corporation IBM. IBM has been using AI technology for SMT systems to improve weather forecasting and renewable energy predictions quickly with more than 30% accuracy. This forecast could make the installation and power transmission management of large renewable energy source systems better, it helps maximize renewable energy production and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **1.7 Create favorable conditions and be more active in education and learning.**

Only in the field of higher education, in the digital age with the explosion of the internet, it is becoming more and more common for learners to own computers or smart phones with internet connection. This directly affects teaching and learning methods, has completely changed the traditional education method, reaching a global educational space. By using digital platforms such as E-learning, Camtasio Studio, Microsoft team, Zoom, etc... which have helped a lot in teaching and learning during the time when the

whole world is struggling against the Covid-19 epidemic. It can be seen that without the support of these applications, perhaps the teaching and learning in the world will be delayed for a long time and this will lead to countless consequences...

In addition, with the development of information technology, students now can easily access to huge resources on the internet, this has made teaching and learning much more convenient.

### **1.8 Replacing traditional working methods.**

With the pinnacle of current technological development, AI (artificial intelligence) has created high-end robots, cars, small self-flying planes, and we just wait for the permission of law, then bus and taxi drivers will be replaced by autonomously controlled vehicles such as when an airplane taking off to a certain height, the pilot's control is no longer needed. It is said that, this will be happened in the near future.

## **2. NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF A CIVILIZED AND MODERN LIFE.**

### **2.1 The risk of personal information leakage is higher.**

With the influence of information technology in all areas of our daily lives, it is inevitable to face the dangers of the internet. Through the use of users' online payment accounts, we are most likely to become victims of professional hacker groups. Typically, the attacks of the famous hacker group Anonymous on the computer systems of many multinational corporations such as Paypal, Master Card, Visa, and many big banks in the world. But living in today's modern society, we cannot help but participate in the conveniences that the internet brings, especially during the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it showed the



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importance of the information technology industry.

### **2.2 The risk of unemployment is higher:**

When the machine age gradually replaces human labor, especially in handicraft industries. The fact that companies have to cut down their workers because the manual processes are replaced by machines as well as high-tech production chains. This has disturbed the lives of a part of workers. In our day and age, to get a good job, it is imperative that we have many skills and qualifications. This is the era of the competition between machines and humans. If you want to work in office positions, it is imperative that you have computer knowledge, and you must be able to use basic software such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Power point... If you want to work in the technical department, you must have professional qualifications. Therefore, in today's society, in order to have a job, it is imperative that we have to adapt. Currently, there are many university students who, after graduating, cannot find a job that matches their professional qualifications. So they had to find jobs outside their professions, and they accept to put in effort and time to learn and improve their knowledge in these new areas, then maybe they will have the opportunity to be recruited. This has caused a great disturbance of the job market; leading to other consequences along with negative impacts on society.

### **2.3 Moral degradation of Anthropology.**

Currently, the field of anthropology has made incredible progress. This has greatly helped the world's medicine industry, but besides that, there are other negative aspects that we need to pay attention to and promptly prevent to avoid unfortunate consequences in the future. For example, a Chinese scientist claims

to be able to create the twins that are immune to the HIV virus.<sup>74</sup> This is really the alarming situation of moral degradation in modern society today. The incident seemed to be only in sci-fi movies such as Replicas or the cartoon Star Wars: The Clone Wars which is only for our entertainment needs. Think about it, if one day we all had several our copies, what would the world be like? Are biometric parameters such as DNA, fingerprints, retina... applied in the field of security still necessary?

## **2.4 Potential dangers of Cyber Warfare.**

We are currently facing a lot of upheaval globally. With the current situation, the trend of attacking the security system, destroying the infrastructure of a government and civil society is gradually becoming a popular trend of some hacker groups in the world. The consequence of this is that it will lead to the disruption of a country's economy, even these cyber attacks can serve as a premise to prepare for a real physical war in the future, such as the breakdown of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 in the United States.<sup>75</sup> And most recently, the Anonymous group has declared a cyber war against the Russian government in the context of the ongoing hostilities between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>76</sup>

## **2.5 The degradation of culture and society.**

With the development of digital technology, we can easily collect information and access many sources of knowledge in all fields conveniently and quickly. But besides that, there are also countless consequences brought back from the media industry. In

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.science.org/content/article/chinese-scientist-who-produced-genetically-altered-babies-sentenced-3-years-jail>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.imperva.com/learn/application-security/cyber-warfare/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/16/what-has-anonymous-done-to-russia-here-are-the-results.html>

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modern times, there are many people of all ages looking for opportunities to earn more passive income through the internet, which we often call MMO, like becoming a Youtuber, Tiktoker... It can be said that these are tools that help us earn more income, but also because of that, there are some people who have taken advantage of these platforms either intentionally or unintentionally with their different purposes when they post videos on Youtube, or articles on their personal pages like Facebook, Twitter... with offensive content, or they propagate false and shocking statements purposefully in order to attract other users and get money quickly from these online social platforms without having no regard for moral and spiritual values, and they don't care about other people's feelings when viewing the content that they have posted either. This phenomenon has become one of the diseases of the times. We can't deny that these communication platforms have brought people a lot of convenience as it can help us easily keep in touch with relatives and friends, find and make new friends, find a job, express ourselves... But besides that, there are also many consequences on these social networking sites. Some of the harmful effects that affect our lives can be listed as:

### **- Communication laziness.**

*"Why meet for a coffee when you can have a Facebook chat?"*. Lady Greenfield, professor of the Oxford's pharmacology says.<sup>77</sup> And this is also the situation that many users of social networking sites face today. Even when sitting at a coffee shop with friends, we still don't pass up the opportunity to surf the web. What about at home? We also can easily see the absence of intimate conversations among

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/negative-effects-of-facebook.htm>

father, mother and children together nowadays. Everyone takes advantage of creating a space for themselves by accessing these social networking sites as a hobby after working hours at work or school. This has unintentionally created a gap in family relationships, which in the long term will lead to emotional rifts between family members. Because everyone pursues their own passions without paying attention to the thoughts and feelings of their loved one who close to them. The consequences of a rift are the thing very likely to happen.

**- The state of being bullied on the internet.**

As mentioned above, one of the benefits of social media platforms is that we easily find and make new friends, but at the same time there are still exist the consequences arising from this and the situation of cyber bullying is typical in many forms such as: posting public comments with insults and threats; setting up a separate page or group for the purpose of attacking and punishing victims; excluding a member from the site or group, makes the victim feel abandoned, despised; sharing sensitive images and videos to stigmatize victims... All of these make the victim fall into a state of mental crisis, depression, inferiority complex...and easily lead to unpredictable consequences.

**- Fear of missing out (FOMO).**

According to the Cambridge Dictionary definition, this is a feeling that you may miss exciting events that others people are going to, especially caused by things you see on social media. This makes you easy to fall into a feeling of loneliness, disappointment...if this situation lasts for a long time, it will lead to the risk of depression.

**- It can easily lead to insomnia.**

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When you spend too much time on social media sites. Although, with your purpose only for relaxation, entertainment. But this gives you a poor quality sleep, and even trouble sleeping. Many scientific studies have shown this. At first, you may think to yourself, “I will check my Facebook, Twitter... within five minutes to see my personal messages.” But then, once you've visited these pages, you'll be engulfed in countless interesting pictures, fascinating news from other users and so on, your eyes can't leave the computer or Smartphone screen. You end up letting time pass in vain, and that will lead to a poor quality sleep.

### **- Social media addiction syndrome.**

Currently, most of the users of mobile devices such as Smartphone, Laptop ... own a personal social media account. And we can easily see, we spend a certain amount of time every day to visit these pages. There are many people, in a day without access to these social media sites for some reason, they have a feeling of discomfort, as if they have lost something important to them. This is the syndrome of addiction to Facebook, Twitter... And this will greatly affect your life for individuals, families or groups.

### **2.6 Moral values and traditional culture are degraded.**

#### **- The elderly and children are abandoned and forgotten.**

Young people today, everyone spends time pursuing and consolidating their own career, we rarely spend time to care about family issues. We often justify that we have to go out to earn money for our family to have a stable and prosperous life. This inadvertently makes us no longer have time to care about the thoughts and feelings of those close to us such as fathers, mothers, grandparents as well as our children, especially they are in

adolescence - Objects that are in need of emotional, psychological and spiritual needs rather than a life of material comfort. For the elderly, they need more attention, visits, inquiries and conversations from their children and grandchildren than delicious meals.

Because when we get older, our digestive system also becomes much weaker, our teeth gradually fall out. These will lead to the difficulty in eating, so the most nutritious food of the elderly is the spiritual food.

Therefore, for the elderly, the words of consolidation and encouragement from their children and grandchildren are a great spiritual encouragement. This will help them no longer feel lonely, lost and useless in the world where material comforts are reigning. As for children who are in the teenage years, this is the age when they are at the stage of forming their character and dignity, and also the age when they want to express themselves. Therefore, it is very necessary for them to be educated and absorbed the noble ideas and moral lifestyles by the education of their grandparents and parents. The educational role of parents for their children in this age group is very important. A person's dignity and morality are almost all formed at this stage. But with the development of the times, we are forced to adapt to the environment and living circumstances to survive in today's society, it seems that we have been caught up with modern trends and we have forgotten to take care of the spiritual life of the people next to us accidentally or intentionally.

**- The family kitchen is gradually being forgotten.**

With the increasingly modern social trend, especially since the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic until now, online services have arisen that help people save time and effort in their meals such as cloud kitchen services on the internet. These services

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have really helped us to simplify and save a lot of time, but that has inadvertently reduced the quality of family meals, both nutritionally and spiritually. We need to know that the kitchen area is one of the sacred spaces of a family. This area is a symbol of warmth and reunion of a family members. This is also a place to show responsibility and cohesion between husband and wife, parents and children in the family. The image of family members gathering around the cooking fire to do the cooking and then they sit together to enjoy the food created by themselves is a symbol of complete happiness. Simultaneous, it also limits the harmful effects of snacking such as the risk of obesity in children as well as the risk of blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer in adults. Besides, the dishes were created by themselves will be more suitable for their taste and they will also ensure food safety and hygiene than those were created by others.

### **2.7 Negative influences from movies.**

With the current digital technology era, we can easily enjoy the world's famous movies with the most advanced technologies such as 3D, HD, 4K... These technologies make the quality of a movie sharper, smoother, and more attractive for a movie than other ordinary movies. It gives viewers the feeling that they are really in the context of the movie. It can be said that movies have become one of the indispensable entertainment needs in our lives today. that's why today's famous movie actors, who have great influence and power in the world. Some of the world's top actors have risen to become politicians such as the case of action movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger, who became governor of California, USA in 2003. The Newsweek has enumerated a list of about 25 famous movie actors of the world who later became politicians, such as former US president Ronald Reagan, Donald Trump, senator Fred

Thompson...<sup>78</sup>

This shows that movies have had a great influence on our lives. By some means or other, many of us, especially young people who have been directly influenced by movies through the content of a film, and especially the appearance of the actors in that movie. There are some people who have taken the characters of the movie as a guideline for their realistic lifestyle; some people use the actor in the movie himself as an idol, and they admire him up to the point of madness...

In addition to entertainment, cinema also contributes to the formation of the personality and life views of a part of viewers. In addition to films with content of high humanistic value, there are also many genres of films with violence, horror, vulgarity... and they have had a significant influence on the psychology and behavior of a part of the audience, especially among young people. The absurd and causeless acts of violence among today's youth are partly due to the influence of films in these genres. This is the distortion in perception because they can't control their emotions when watching movies, despite the warning lines that appear at the top of every producer's film. On the other hand, we must also admit that it is these types of films that attract the audience's attention more than other ordinary content films.

## **2.8 The syndrome of crazy about desiring for fame.**

Today in the world, there are many people who want to be famous, want to become the so-called Public Figure, want to become the focus of appearing on mass media such as newspapers, radio, internet...

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<sup>78</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/actors-who-became-politicians-1601389?amp=1>



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Through the world's talent-seeking TV programs, typically the tempest of Idol launched by a famous British TV and music producer, Simon Fuller in 1998, with the name “Pop Idol”. Since then, this contest has been present in 32 countries with many different names and it also attracted a huge number of participants, especially young people.

This event shows that the ambition to become famous, almost all of us have. This is not wrong at all, it is even a motivation to help us practice to become a more perfect person. But from that also arise countless cases of being half laughing and half crying, even in despite of everything just to become famous among a part of today's youth, especially through internet social media platforms. It can be said that if a person who wants to be famous, to be known by many people, first of all, he must have talent, together with many other factors. And the idol search contests mentioned above are an opportunity for everyone to fulfill their dreams like Pop idol's slogan *“turning anonymous people into public idols”*. And rightly so, after just one contest, a person that no one knew before, now he became a star. This is a driving force for young people, and also a phenomenon that leads to distorted thoughts and perceptions of today's youth. There are many young people who have used negative ways to be known, such as using social networks to post shocking videos, or taking pictures of revealing clothes, showing off your body or doing weird, eccentric actions for the purpose of attracting views on these social networking sites without regarding for all values of culture, morality, fine customs and traditions of a nation. This is one of the diseases of our time. And this will become more serious when it has adversely affected, created danger and poisoned the perception, thought and lifestyle of the majority of young people – the generations to inherit, preserve and promote the

culture and traditions of the nation.

## **2.9 The trend of divorce is on the rise.**

According to a recent sociological study, over the past four decades, the worldwide divorce rate has more than doubled.<sup>79</sup> Another study found that, overall, marriage is less and less common, whereas divorce and separation are on the rise.<sup>80</sup> Also according to the statistical documents of this study, currently, Russia was the leading country in the top 10 countries with the highest divorce rate in the world in terms of divorce. While Guatemala was at the bottom of the list of 10 countries with the lowest divorce rate in the world. This is an alarm bell for the growing rift of husband and wife relationship in this modern society. Divorce under any cause and form will lead to consequences, and the children of families with divorced parents are the direct victims of this problem. According to many studies, children whose parents divorced will experience the consequences such as: they will be more likely to smoke than children of two parents families; having badly at studying mathematics; having difficulty in social communication; having a higher risk of disease; having a greater propensity to commit crimes; etc...<sup>81</sup>

These are just five of the many consequences for children, after their parents divorce. It is worth mentioning here that nowadays, there are many young people who tend to live in imitation of the times, they often have thoughts in favor of choosing a divorce solution immediately after feeling that their marriage relationship is

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<sup>79</sup> <https://www.dupagecountyfamilylawfirm.com/naperville-divorcelawyer/why-are-divorce-rates-rising-around-the-world-1>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.unifiedlawyers.com.au/blog/global-divorce-rates-statistics/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://theweek.com/articles/466107/9-negative-effects-divorce-reportedly-children>

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not as well as desired. In fact, many couples, for very small reasons, they took each other to court to ask for a divorce. With this action, they directly broke up a stable family when their children were only a few years old. Then they found a way to justify their actions that if they didn't divorce, would the child be happy living in a family with such a father or mother? There are many young people who still find the way to counter the scientific studies as mentioned above.

Dear young friends! You need to know that, first of all, the above studies were a comparison between children whose parents divorced on the one hand and children who were lucky to live in two parents families on the other hand. Secondly, you must know that family happiness is a sacred thing, a noble value in terms of morality and spirit that all member have the responsibility to protect and preserve it when living together under the same roof just like you have the responsibility to protect your national prestige. From ancient times up to now, human civilization has developed through different periods and stages. But no matter how it has been developed, the moral and spiritual values are still valid and live forever with time and even it is more and more promoted and honored, such as Golden wedding, Silver wedding... These are anniversaries to mark one of the most important events in a person's life to honor a happy and fulfilling life in the husband and wife relationship in particular and the family in general. Therefore, living with family members until the end of life is a pride of anyone who is so blessed. Only when there is no other better way to solve the problems and conflicts in the married life, we were reluctant to make such decisions. Being adults, being parents, we have to be responsible for shaping the character, morality, and dignity of our children later from the influence of the decisions we make today.

*CHAPTER V:*

**APPLYING THE BUDDHA'S  
TEACHINGS AND FINDING  
THE MENTAL BALANCE IN  
MODERN LIFE.**

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*“Monks, one person is born in the world for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. What one person? The fully enlightened Buddha. Monks, this is the one person who arises in the world for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and*

*humans.”*<sup>82</sup>

### Gautama Buddha

**A**s mentioned in the previous chapter, a modern and civilized life has brought us material comforts and conveniences. But besides that, there are also many consequences, especially in spiritual manner. And the spirit is the most important thing, this has been proven in many areas and aspects of life, and recently it has been applied in the treatment of patients infected with Covid-19. As we all know, one of the factors that helps patients recover quickly and overcome the epidemic is to stay optimistic. Therefore, it is very necessary to be able to maintain a calm and peaceful attitude in today's volatile social and world context. A good and optimistic spirit will help you easily overcome events and consequences in life, and it acts as a protective armor for you to stay away from the troubles and annoyances of life.

It seems that the more civilized we are, the more deadlocked we become in solving problems that are said to have made great strides. For example, we have always wanted to find the way to conquer nature, but so far have not been able to do so. Natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes still cause thousands of deaths, although today the world's weather forecasting system has predicted much more accurately. Then in genetics in particular and modern medicine in general, we are proud to have manufactured and cloned humans with artificial intelligence...but what about when we face with the recent Covid-19 pandemic? With its outbreak in just 2 years, more than 5 million people died, and millions more were left in penuriousness. Politically, the more we invent modern technologies, the closer humanity is to the brink of extinction with

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<sup>82</sup> Anguttara Nikaya – One person.

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the arms race, especially in the field of uranium enrichment of the world superpowers today...

Living in a civilized, developed age like today, but we seem to have more insecurities than life in previous decades, but we can't go back to the past to find peace, simplicity and serenity in life and we don't need to do so either. For we now have a treasure trove of teachings that are transcendent, yet relatable and practical, and they can help us to find peace, happiness, and freedom in the midst of a busy, anxious and strenuous life, if we are willing to admit and apply them to our own lives.

One question is: Are the teachings of the Buddha that appeared more than 2600 years ago still relevant and can they be applied in this modern day? Let me tell you right away that they are not only relevant and can be applied to modern and civilized life nowadays, but what he taught will continue to be a guideline for those who want to get closer to achieving a better life. Why? Because his teachings were about the truth of the nature of life, no matter how civilized and developed society is, the nature of life is always the same, it has only changed in form.

So now we will explore this priceless treasure together. Then, we will find the way to bring back the most precious gems to be our luggage and capital on our journey to find peace and freedom in this turbulent life.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the Buddha's teachings are as vast as the sky, as deep as the sea. We cannot fully list the teachings of the Buddha during his entire 49 years of preaching the Dharma within the scope of this book. And we don't need to do that either. Since we only need to thoroughly understand and apply a small part

of his teachings in our real life, we have already collected so many benefits...

In this chapter, I will introduce to you one of the most basic doctrines of Buddhist teachings that both the two main traditions of Buddhism, the Theravada and Mahayana traditions have admitted and taken it as the foundation of their cultivation. Yes, that is the Noble Eightfold Path.

After attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. The Buddha set out towards the Deer Park in Sarnath to begin his journey of spreading the Dharma to everyone. There, he reunited with five former ascetic friends, Kondanna, Vappa, Assaji, Bhaddiya and Mahanama. And the first sermon called Turning the Wheel of Dharma in which the Buddha mentioned the nature of this life as nothing but suffering. They are called the Four Noble Truths and the way lead to the cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path. Before going into learning about the Noble Eightfold Path, I would like to talk about the Four Noble Truths, also known as the four ultimate truths, including:

❖ ***The Truth of Suffering:***

The nature of life is nothing but suffering, from the physical body to the spirit, everything around us is of the nature of suffering as mentioned in Chapter II, here I would like to skip it.

❖ ***The Truth of the Cause of Suffering:***

The cause of suffering is ignorance and desire. Ignorance is not knowing about the nature of life as impermanent, changing and perishing, but mistakenly clinging to it as permanent, eternal, and unchanging. Craving is the desire, it referred to the psychological states of attachment and clinging to things that bring a feeling of



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comfort, smoothness... and aversion to things that bring feelings of discomfort, pain... through the perception of the senses.

### **❖ *The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering:***

Only the annihilation of all desires, then we will be able to end all suffering and begin to enter the states of a Saint.

### **❖ *The Path leading to the End of Suffering:***

The path leading to the cessation of suffering and a holy life is the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the eight factors, or eight methods, or eight paths leading to the cessation of suffering and liberation including:

- ✓ ***Right View:*** Is the right view, right perception of things and phenomena as they really are.
- ✓ ***Right Thought:*** Are the right thoughts about things and phenomena as they really are.
- ✓ ***Right Speech:*** Is good speech, bringing benefits to yourself and others.
- ✓ ***Right Action:*** Righteous and noble actions that bring happiness to others.
- ✓ ***Right Livelihood:*** It is to nourish one's life by righteous and ethical job, and not to do the jobs that bring harm to others.
- ✓ ***Right Effort:*** The constant striving and effort to perfect the noble qualities in spiritual development.
- ✓ ***Right Mindfulness:*** Is paying attention correctly, always being aware of an object that arises in one's mind.
- ✓ ***Right Concentration:*** Is the concentration to eliminate

negative thoughts and try to settle the mind to go deep into the higher levels of meditation.

In these 8 methods, there will be 3 methods that always go through and complement the other methods: ***Right View***, ***Right Mindfulness*** and ***Right Effort***.

So, if you want to extinguish all your suffering and afflictions in order to bring a good, peaceful, holy, noble life, you must apply and practice these 8 methods in your present life. And how should we apply the Noble Eightfold Path to our modern life today? Let's go into the details of each method to solve the above question.

### **1. RIGHT VIEW:**

(Seeing things and phenomena as they really are.)

According to the Buddha's teachings, Right View includes the correct and right perception of all things and phenomena happening around and even ourselves. But, most importantly, we must have a thorough understanding of the two main contents, which are the Law of Cause and Effect and the Four Noble Truths.

As mentioned in Chapter II, Cause and Effect is one of the foundations of the Buddhist system of teachings. Here, we need to understand clearly, Cause and Effect is a law that rules the entire universe of human life. All our words, actions, and thoughts are the cause of inevitable consequences in the future sooner or later. There are consequences we can easily see arising from specific words and deeds such as when you speak ill or scold someone for no reason, you will immediately receive criticism and scolding from that person. But besides that, there will be actions that we have created but we never see them lead to consequences for a long time, and even until the end of life, we don't see the consequences. It's often

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make us mistakenly believe that there is no cause and effect in the world.

But actually we were wrong. Because the process that takes place from Cause to Effect also depends on the factor of conditions that make the time to arise the effect long or short. Just like the mango seed is the cause and the mango fruit is the fruit. But if you want to enjoy the delicious taste of a mango in the future, right now you'll have to sow that mango seed in the ground, then you water it daily until it sprout shoot. Over a period of time, you have to take care of it, together with the condition such as sunlight, sunshine, rain, temperature, climate, etc... it can grow into a mature mango tree. If we have a good farming regime along with perfect weather, the mango tree will quickly grow and produce quality mango fruits, but if these factors are not converged, or there are other negative factors such as pests, diseases, etc... then of course our mango tree will be slow to grow and will give a poor quality harvest.

Thus, the process from cause to effect is fast or slow depending on the condition factor. And the Buddha also taught that there are many different types of retribution such as:

- ***Immediate retribution:*** The retribution that will happen right in this life.

- ***Next life retribution:*** The retribution that will occur in the next life.

- ***Future retribution:*** The retribution that will occur in future lives, possibly tens or hundreds of lives later.

Therefore, with the limited worldly knowledge, we can't see the process leading to the consequences of an action created in this life,

and we quickly assume that there is no cause and effect. And some people even reason that: “I only live and know in this life, I don't care about future lives”. In this case, the Buddha advises us as follows: Even if there are no existing lives in the future, the fact that you have good words, actions, and thoughts will still bring you happiness and peace in this life. On the other hand, if there is a life existing in the future that continues with this present life after death, we will enjoy those happiness and benefits twice – this life and the next. On the contrary, if there is no life in the next life, then bad words, actions, and thoughts will lead you to unhappiness, anxiety, and afflictions in this life. And if there is existence of an afterlife, then we will have to suffer again. Therefore, whether there is an afterlife or not, we should still try to limit and avoid creating unwholesome words, actions, and thoughts. At the same time, we should try to develop wholesome actions and thoughts to help us lead a happy, peaceful and holy life.

Another aspect that we need to understand is that the law of Cause and Effect is not fixed. When we have committed an action whether it is wholesome or unwholesome, of course we will have to receive the consequences of that action in the future. But the degree to which the consequences are serious or trifling depends on the causal factor. For the process of forming an effect from an action which was performed must involve the element of condition. Let's take the example above, we see a mango seed has been sown in the ground but if it does not have enough necessary elements to grow such as human care and climatic conditions, weather, pests... we will harvest a poor quality mangoes crop, despite having good seeds. This shows that, if we have created unwholesome actions, we will have to face the mental consequences of anxiety, restlessness, insomnia in the short term. And in the future, when we have met the conditions, we will receive unwholesome deeds in proportion to

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the actions we have done.

But in the time when the consequences have not occurred yet, we still have the ability to change the extent of the consequences that we must receive. For example, when you have committed acts of violence against others, causing them to be disabled at a certain rate, there is a risk that you will be prosecuted, then you will be able to receive sentences given by the court in accordance with the victim's disability rating – this called the Effect. But after causing injury to the victim, you feel worried and insecure, so you went and found him to apologize for your mistake. At the same time, you spent the cost of food, medicine, and wholeheartedly taking care of him. Even if you are prosecuted later, you will still receive a much lighter sentence than the one you deserve to get owing to your sincere and repentant attitude. This is an evident truth.

Thanks to Right View, a clear and correct understanding of the law of Cause and Effect, we can improve our own problems in order to bring about a more peaceful and happy life. And of course, a kind word, a nice gesture, a positive thought will bring you a much more pleasant, comfortable and meaningful life. And unwholesome deeds are only done by someone who doesn't understand the law of Cause and Effect or when their mind is filled with greed, hatred, and delusion. And they will surely bear a lot of suffering in the future.

Thus, initially, we have had a correct view of the Cause and Effect theory. Next, we will delve into the Four Noble Truths to broaden our understanding of Right View.

As mentioned above, the Four Noble Truths are the four ultimate truths of life that the Buddha discovered. They are Suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of all suffering, and

the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The suffering is mentioned here are the uncomfortable, painful, unsatisfactory feelings in both our body and spirit that most of us can easily imagine when we talk about it. But, Buddhist doctrines are even more profound when listing and classifying the types of suffering in life in a very systematic way by 3 types of suffering or 8 types of suffering as mentioned in Chapter II. Now we will find out why we have to endure suffering through the second noble truth – the Cause of Suffering.

The origin of suffering is ignorance and desiring. Ignorance is not knowing, not realizing the nature of a thing or phenomenon, thereby giving rise to desiring. For example, when a couple is in love, of course the people involved feel very happy because they are in love and being loved. The feeling of seeing each other, talking to each other, cuddling each other makes both arise the craving and possession. And they always want the other person to be their own, but not realizing that the nature of emotions is not fixed, permanent, and it will change just like all other things and phenomena in life. One day the feelings of one of them will gradually change for some objective reason and leave the other, ending their emotional relationship. And of course the other person will be immersed in suffering because for a moment they feel that they no longer own what is theirs. And that person will become depressed and unbalanced in life.

Through the above example, we can see that, because we do not realize the nature of our affection in particular and all things and phenomena around us in general are constantly changing, we cling to that emotion and it will lead us to suffering when we broke off with our loved one. But let's go into the details of this issue a little to find out what makes us cling and fall in love with a person of the opposite sex. That is the perception of pleasure, or in other words,

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those are the smooth, pleasant and positive emotions when two people meet and interact with each other. It is because these good feelings are arisen at every encounter that gives rise to attachment and clinging, which then lead to suffering when those feelings are no longer present. Or to put it another way, if the relationship between a man and a woman only stops at common courtesy and it doesn't arise any feelings that lead to the perception of pleasure, then after their relationship ends, there will be no suffering happen. So the cause of misery that we have to suffer in this case is that we no longer a chance to possess our happy feelings when parting with the person we love.

The Buddha once warned us the attachment to Love and Desire are very dangerous. He gave two very vivid illustrations of this teaching. He likened our desires for sensual pleasures to when we give a fragment of bone to a hungry dog. Even if the dog gnaws on that bone's fragment all day, it will never satisfy its hunger. And in the second example, the Buddha used the image of sensual enjoyment as we taste drops of honey being soaked up on a sharp sword. Because of our attachment to honey drops, we can be cut our tongue at any moment.

With today's modern and civilized life, we can see that there are many types of entertainment that appear to serve our pleasures and pastimes. But with our nature of craving for sensual pleasures, then how much is enough for us? How many parties, how much wine to satisfy our dietary needs? How many clothes, shoes, bags are enough to meet our need to dress up? How many clothes, shoes, bags are enough to meet our demand for dressing up? How many movies, how many online games are enough to serve our entertainment needs? How much sexual activity is enough to satisfy our physiological needs? It will never be enough, because of

according to human nature, we are always looking for different things to satisfy our desires. It is worth mentioning here that we will very easily face with the dangers of engaging in the enjoyment of these pleasures. When you indulge in partying, you may become addicted to alcohol in the future, and you will have adverse health problems caused by disordered eating habits; Indulging in sex, you will be at a very high risk of contracting infectious diseases; Indulging in online games for a long time, you may catch amblyopia<sup>83</sup> and it will lead you to syndromes such as depression, auto-suggestion...

Another thing that we all easily realize that the enjoyment of sensual pleasures cannot last long. As someone once said: “Every party has to end at some point”. Any enjoyment of sensual pleasure will quickly pass like a pleasant dream, and then after waking up in the morning, we have to face the reality of life again. And the feelings of sensual enjoyment are now just memories because we can't keep them for long. And in the end, it only leaves us with a regret and disappointment.

Another danger when we indulge in sensual pleasure for a long time, we will have the thought of possessing it to satisfy our needs. Because in order to pursue and protect what we consider to be ours, we will defy everything to achieve our goals even if we have to cause negative effects to others such as: lying, cheating, humiliating and even using force against others... On the contrary, when we accidentally lose the things that we consider to be ours and they seem to be very important to us, we often have feelings of pessimism, depression, disappointment... These negative psychological states will lead to countless mental harms and have a

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<sup>83</sup> Weakness of sight.



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significant impact on our lives.

Thus, we can see that because of Ignorance, we are not aware of the impermanent nature, along with the production and annihilation of all things. So we keep immersing in temporary sensual desires, only to have to bear the sufferings in life that we shouldn't have. This shows that it is very important to understand the causes of suffering in life, it's also the foundation for us to continue our journey to discover the path to happiness and peace in life.

Now, we will continue to learn about the third noble truth – the Cessation of Suffering.

After we have clearly seen that the cause of suffering is Ignorance and Desire that almost any of us encounter. The question is, can we get rid of ignorance and desire? We are perfectly capable of doing that and the Buddha himself confirmed the same. The Buddha asserted that we can completely live a happy, peaceful, noble life along with the separation of suffering and troubles by eliminating and extinguishing Ignorance and Desire, and we have the full capacity to do it.

The Buddha taught that true happiness only exists when we have completely eradicated negative mental states such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Buddhists often call it the Three Poisons. These three states of mind keep us reeling, indulging in worldly pleasures whose true nature is an illusion, then we have to endure suffering without ever breaking out of its grip. Like the image of a man who sees a brilliant moon in the water, he immediately jumps into the river to find the way to pick it up for his lover, but when he jumped into the water, the moon disappeared and he ended up

drowning.

But, it is worth mentioning that there are many of us who still know that there is a risk of suffering and tragic endings when we indulge in worldly pleasures and benefits, but they still accept it. Sadly, they even reasoned that if there were no pleasure in the world, this life would become boring and tasteless for them, and they consider the indulgence and enjoyment of sensual pleasures as their main purpose in life.

This shows that we seem to be so familiar with what happens in our daily lives; we are so familiar that we don't want to change this present life full of filth, affliction and suffering; we are so familiar that we no longer have the courage to change our lives and accept it unconsciously. We are even afraid that if life is without pleasures, nothing to enjoy, how should we live? Then, in our minds, imagining a tasteless, insipid life when it doesn't have the fleeting and illusion pleasures anymore. Finally, we become frustrated.

The Buddha compared the image of people with such thoughts to a fish which was familiar with its their aquatic life through the meaningful fable of the Tortoise and the Fish that I take the liberty of telling here, so that we have the opportunity to contemplate together the profound lesson that the Buddha wanted to recommend us.

*“Once upon a time there was a fish that lived in a lake with a turtle. One day, when a turtle came back from walking on the ground, he met the fish and said:*

*‘Hey Miss Fish, I’ve been walking around on dry land these past few days, have you known that?’*

*‘Dry land?’ the fish is surprised. ‘Did you just say dry land? So what is*

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*dry land? How can land be dry? I've never seen dried mud.'*

*With a mild nature, the turtle gently replied:*

*'I know this is hard for you to believe. But in fact, the places that I went through these days were dry ground.'*

*'Hey Mr. Turtle, please clarify again,' said the fish. 'What does the dry land that you say look like? Is it wet?'*

*'No, it's not wet,' replied the turtle.*

*'Is it cool, mellow and comfortable?'* asked the fish.

*'No, it is not cool, mellow and comfortable,' said the turtle.*

*'Is it transparent so that light can go through it?'* the fish asked.

*'No, it is not transparent and light can't go through it,' replied the turtle.*

*'Is it soft enough for me to swim in it?'*

*'No, it isn't soft, and you can't swim in it.'*

*'Does it move and flow in streams?'*

*'No, it doesn't either move or flow in streams.'*

*The fish was very annoyed with the turtle's series of No, No and No answers, but she still insisted:*

*'Does it wave and melt into foam?'*

*'No, it doesn't,' the turtle answered honestly.*

*The fish suddenly laughed loudly, showing the joy of the winner:*

*I told you that your dry land is nothing but nibility. I asked and you confirmed that dry land is devoid of the things I asked, so it is really nothingness.'*

*'Okay,' replied the turtle. 'Very well'. 'Hey Miss Fish!, if you're convinced that dry land is nothing but nibility, you just keep thinking like that. In fact, anyone who already knows water and land will certainly call you a foolish fish, for asserting that what you do not know is completely empty and nothingness.'"*

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Most of us are like that small fish, we just want to use our short-sighted and worldly wisdom to think about the realm of liberation and enlightenment after being absent from all the sufferings and troubles of a mundane life, without knowing that the realm of liberation of the Buddha and Saints can't be comprehended by thinking and analysis, but it must be felt through spiritual verification. But, we can still perceive the true worth of peace and happiness when we have just gone through a painful experience. For example, we often say that it is only when we get older that we care and appreciate our health. Why? Because when we are old, our bodies become weaker and weaker; our diseases begin to arise; our teeth fall out; our eyes are blurred; our ears are deaf... causing us to suffer innumerable sufferings. At this time, we know how to cherish our health, which when we were young, there are few people cared about it.

Thus, the prerequisite for us to have a happy and peaceful life is to eliminate and extinguish all suffering and troubles in life. And how to get rid of them. We will continue our study of the fourth truth - The path leading to the cessation of suffering.

The path leading to the cessation of suffering consisting of eight

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<sup>84</sup> Buddhist Fairy Tale.

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methods. These are: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration, and Right Effort. And we are now dealing with the first method, which is Right View.

As mentioned above, in these 8 methods, there will be 3 methods that are always parallel and complement to the remaining methods. There are: Right View, Right Mindfulness and Right Effort, now we will carry out to examine this issue.

### **1.1 Right Mindfulness of Right View.**

After we have understood the Cause and Effect and the causes of suffering in the Four Noble Truths through Right View. We will need more Right Mindfulness to support our understanding with Right View.

For example, when you have just received a salary at the company. On your drive home, you pass a Casino where many people gather to try their luck. You also want to go there to play, but at this moment, another thought arises in your mind. “What if I go there to play and lose all the money I just received? At that time, where will I get money to pay electricity, water, taxes, daily living expenses in the family... How miserable I will be then. Well, I'll try to restrain myself and not go into those places.” So you drive straight home.

This is an example of using Right Mindfulness in Right View. That is, you are always awake and aware of the consequences of what you will do, then you will find the ways not to create those actions to avoid suffering in the future.

### **1.2 Right Effort on Right View.**

Going back to the example above, we see that in order to overcome the temptation from wanting to enter the game to try our luck when we see a Casino on the way home, we have to make an effort by thinking about the consequences of running out of paychecks, and the suffering that will follow. So you are forced to curb your greed and continue to drive away. After that, you can return home safely and the salary is still intact. That is, we have used Right Effort about Right View.

Through the above example, we can see that the three methods of Right View, Right Mindfulness and Right Effort always go together and will complement the other methods in the Noble Eightfold Path to help us to eradicate and extinguish all afflictions, suffering in an effective and perfect way.

## **2. RIGHT THOUGHT.**

Right Thought is the second method of the Noble Eightfold Path. After you have had a correct and right view of the things and phenomena happening around you. Now you should practice developing positive and nice thoughts to lead you to a peaceful, happy and noble life.

### **2.1 Letting go.**

As we all know, the cause of constant suffering in life is Ignorance and Desiring. Because there is Desiring, there will be Greed, Hatred, and Delusion; they also known as the Three Poisons. Because the mind contains these three poisons, it will arise unkind words and evil deeds that lead to negative and disastrous consequences. Of these three poisons, Greed is the first. This is also our basic human nature. Most people, everyone has greed. Greed for living in clover; greed for living in wealth; greed for holding high office; greed for owning a beautiful wife and a good child; greed for

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winning the respect of others; greed for fame, etc...It is these desires that has brought us countless consequences, leading to suffering and afflictions in life.

From ancient times up to now, human desire has never stopped. Although the form may change with the times, the essence remains the same. For example, we can take one of the problems of young people today that mentioned in Chapter IV to illustrate this issue. As we have seen, because of the desire to be famous, young people defy the consequences, they have created weird, eccentric, even uncultured actions just to be noticed by many people through social media platforms. Some of them used vulgar words, others posted their revealing, depraved photos.. just to attract and increase viewership without knowing that, because of their actions which will bring immeasurable harmful effects. It is because of irresistible desires that has created many negative consequences for themselves and their family.

If we have had a clear view of things and phenomena through Right View. Then we will know that in order to have a peaceful and happy life, we must practice the method of letting go. Letting go here doesn't mean you have to give it all up. It is letting go of things that are not yours, and things that will bring you suffering.

### **2.2 Practicing the method of Giving alms.**

One of the methods to respond and control greed is the practice of giving alms. You should try to practice giving, even if it's only a little. Some people will argue that I am not rich enough to give alms. Actually, you can still practice giving alms even if you have nothing. In Buddhism, Giving alms were divided into three kinds: ***Giving of goods, Giving of the doctrine, Giving of courage or***

*fearlessness.*

- **Giving of goods** were divided into two kinds: Inward giving and Outward giving.

Inward giving is that you will give away what belongs to your body. For example, if you go to the hospital for humanitarian blood donation every year, that means you have practiced Inward giving.

Outward giving is that you will give away what you have outside of your body such as food, clothes, money, jewelry, etc...

- **Giving of the doctrine:** That is, you will bring your knowledge and understanding of truth and morality to share with others. In Buddhism, these specific actions are preaching Dharma and chanting Sutra to save sentient beings.

- **Giving of courage or fearlessness:** When others feel fear, anxiety, or insecurity about something. You go and meet them, then you sit side by side with them to listen, talk and confide to them to bring a sense of peace and safety to them. Thus you are practicing the method of Giving of courage or fearlessness.

Thus, we can see, the essence of Giving is to bring happiness and benefit to others in any form. A compassionate look, a gentle smile, a kind word, a nice gesture when interacting with others that makes them feel comfortable and happy that you have practiced almsgiving. So it's not difficult to practice almsgiving, isn't it? And when you give, you'll get back. You will receive compliments and praise from others; you will win the hearts of others. Eventually, you will have immediate joy and peace; your negative mental states will be absent, making their way for inner peace. That is why you should practice almsgiving.

In today's modern society, the hustle and bustle of life makes us



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always busy making arrangement for material life, but sometimes we accidentally forget about spiritual values. Parents and grandparents in our family are often neglected subjects and they have a great need for the attention of their children and grandchildren. So, let's spend some time for paying attention and listening to the feelings and wishes of our loved ones by practicing Giving of courage or fearlessness. And I assure that you will reap a lot of joy and peace in your life when you try to practice this method.

### **2.3 Expanding your compassion.**

Compassion is one of the two basic concepts of Buddhism. It can be said that, we can't talk about Buddhism without talking about compassion. In Pali,<sup>85</sup> compassion is compounded from two distinctive characteristics, Loving-kindness (Metta) and Pity (Karuna). In there, Metta is the kindness that helps people and brings joy to all sentient beings. Karuna is the pity when seeing sentient beings in distress, and wanting to help sentient beings get out of those tribulations. Thus, we can generalize Compassion as bringing joy and happiness to others, along with saving sentient beings from suffering. Compassion can also be understood as love for sentient beings, but this love is equal to all and it's not selfish, personal and especially not possessive. For example, while walking on the street, you chanced on a beautiful girl, from which your love for her arises. The image of that girl keeps appearing in your mind, making you miss her day and night and you even want her to become your girlfriend. This is clearly a form of Love, but it is not the Love in the Buddhist category of Compassion. Love in Buddhism is unconditional whether the girl becomes your girlfriend

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<sup>85</sup> Indo-Aryan language that developed in India, language of the sacred literature of Buddhism.

or not.

Why should we expand our compassion? Most of us already have a treasure of Compassion in each of us. But because the material life has made us busy all the time, we have no time to care about it. We are so engrossed in life's luxuries and frivolities that we let our compassion slumber in our subconscious. We even forget that in each of us there is a powerful potential to help us overcome mental distress, that is Compassion. If you practice expanding your compassion on a regular basis. I can assure you, in time, you will have a different spiritual life than you do now. You will have an inner strength, a feeling of serenity before all fluctuations of life. Because when you practice expanding your loving-kindness, you will also receive many benefits from others. When there is more joy in your heart than sadness, your body will secrete active substances that help keep your heart healthy. This is a shield that helps protect you against problems in daily life, especially against the pitfalls of today's modern world.

## **2.4 Dealing with anger.**

It can be said that preventing and limiting anger is one of the most difficult things to do for each of us. Because anger comes from one of our strongest awareness, that's the Self. And anger can arise at any time when the Self is violated in any way. Sometime, we are very easy to get angry because of very small things. "How dare you talk to me like that?"; "Why didn't you do what I told you to do?"; "Why do you act like that to me?"... You see, all the causes of anger come from the Self of ours.

In order to counter angers, we will meditate on the principle of No-self. As mentioned in Chapter II, No-self is that there is no separate, fixed entity that exists in all things and phenomena in this

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world, even ourselves. Our body is made up of many different parts and organs such as bones, skin, flesh, blood, fat, tendons, marrow, heart, lung, liver, kidney, etc... Our mind is also not fixed, sometimes happy, sometimes sad; sometimes loving, sometimes disgusted; sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes lazy, etc... So can you point out where your mind lies in these emotional states? Of course it's impossible. In the Dhammapada, the Buddha used a four-line verse describing the No-Self very deeply:

*“I have sons, I have wealth;  
with this the fool is afflicted.  
Indeed, he himself is not his own,  
how can sons and wealth be his?”<sup>86</sup>*

Then there is nothing called “Self” anymore that make you get angry because of it and then you have to receive the negative consequences. When others insult or scold you, just think this is not me, I am not this body. And at the same time, you should contemplate that there is no one who insults or scolds you, but only anger is present. That anger is just an illusion, and it’s not real, so it will pass quickly. If you practice mindfulness like that, you will prevent thoughts that tend to respond to those insults and scolds. And then, everything will end in tranquility, and as a result, you will receive an apology from the person who acted rudely to you.

### **2.5 Showing Compassion to your family members.**

We often think that, of course, I love my family members like my father, mother, wife, husband, children, etc... Of course, you

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<sup>86</sup> The Dhammapada – Verse 62.

will give love to them, but it does not mean that you have shown true compassion for your loved ones. Have you ever thought why you have love for my family members? Of course the answer will be “because they are my blood relatives, my bloodline, so I love them naturally.” See, have you seen it? Again we see, most of our love is based on conditions that arise. You should try to use unconditional love, or Buddhist compassion in order to apply it to your family members, you will see a clear difference and it will help you to improve your relationship as well as your family troubles in no time.

So how to apply the compassion of Buddhism to your family? For example, when your son is about to enter college. You want him to pursue his study in Medicine, so that after graduation, he will become a talented doctor, this will make your family to be proud. But your son doesn't want to be a doctor, he wants to become an artist in the future. Because of this, you and your son always have quarrels with each other whenever it was mentioned, and it made the relation of father and son become worse and worse. Of course, there is nothing wrong in hoping that your son to become a doctor later, and that also comes from your child's love. But if we pay close attention, we will realize that this love is not perfect, because it has more or less selfishness. You want your son to become a doctor, that is your wish, not your child's. Of course, you just want the best for your son. But the fact that you choose for your son a path and force him to follow, while he has found another one that matches his capacity and passion. That thing inadvertently creates an invisible pressure on your child, and it has led to the deterioration of the father-son relationship naturally.

In this case you should apply Buddhist compassion to solve the problem. You should try to use the love without condition, possession or imposition, but only bring joy and happiness for

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others. Understanding this, you will realize that you made a little mistake when you unintentionally put pressure on your child to force him to obey your decision. First of all, you should try to put yourself in the situation of your son when you was forced by your parents to do something you don't like to see how you feel at that time. This will make you understand your child's current feelings. Then you will use Buddhist loving-kindness, which is to give joy, or to follow your child's joy. When you have opened your heart, you will have the opportunity to listen and understand your child's thoughts and aspirations, maybe later you will discover the reasons that led to your child's decision. And after knowing the reason, you will now have a new insight into this problem, and you will probably no longer intend to force your son to listen to your decision. Or your son will begin to follow his father's persuasion and gradually change his mind. Since then, the loving relationship between father and son will be as close as before, the happiness of your family will be more steadfast.

Thus, we can see, in order to protect family happiness in this modern age, we must acknowledge matters objectively to understand the thoughts and aspirations of each member in our family. Then, we will find the way to solve and overcome each problem with unconditional compassion, the family hitches and troubles will gradually disappear. And this is just one of the examples of how to apply the compassion of Buddhism to your family, to bring benefits for you and your loved one.

### **2.6 Right Mindfulness of Right Thought.**

Getting back to the response and control anger as mentioned above. As we can see, when someone insults or scolds you without reason, at that time, if you don't have mindfulness to reflect on the

principle of No-self, then surely the possibility of happening a quarrel is very high, perhaps it's even lead to a fight. So the role of mindfulness in life is very important, it helps us to recognize the nature of the problem more clearly, thereby we are possible to eliminate many negative consequences from our surrounding life.

### **2.7 Right Effort on Right Thought.**

From the above story about dealing with anger, we also realize a problem. Theoretically, when contemplating the principle of No-self, even though we still know that there is no self that is offended, there is no offending person, only anger is present and then it will pass quickly. Although knowing that, it is unlikely that we can restrain our emotion until the other person is no longer angry and insulting to us. Sometimes, we have restrained our emotion for a few seconds, the Self of ours suddenly arises and lead to quarrels are inevitable. So, in order to have good results in this circumstance, it is imperative that we have the element of Right Effort. That means we have to go through elaborate practice to achieve mental endurance. Like a boxer before entering the ring to compete, he must also undergo a period of hard training to increase his ability to withstand blows as well as to increase his fighting ability, only then can he stand firm and respond to the opponent's attack. Right Effort also plays the same role. If we want to have peace and happiness before the fluctuations in life, we have to work hard to train our mind until it become well-trained, then we hope to have the results as we have expected.

Thus, when you have already Right Thought, you will need more Right Mindfulness and Right Effort to support it. These three elements are like a tripod which help to strengthen our spirits, so that we can face the problems that happen around us in the most appropriate and efficient way.

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### **3. RIGHT SPEECH.**

Right Speech is right and good words. In Buddhism, a word that is considered righteous and fine is one that fits the following four things:

- ✓ **Abstaining from lying.**
- ✓ **Abstaining from divisive speech.**
- ✓ **Abstaining from malicious gossip.**
- ✓ **Abstaining from careless words.**

From ancient times up to now, tragic stories that occurred because of hearing wrong words or jokes are almost always present. The consequences of a false statement or joke are unimaginable. Realizing the importance of a right word, the Buddha included it in the precepts to apply to his disciples, one of the precepts of both monastic and lay people is Abstaining from lying.

#### **3.1 Abstaining from lying.**

A word of truth is always a statement of weight and prestige. And the speaker of these right words is also a man of morality and virtue. Because simply, when you tell a lie, it proves that you have already negative thoughts in your mind. With a mind full of negative thoughts, how can one become a good person? So the first principle in speech that the Buddha taught is to always tell the truth if you want to have a leading personality. In addition, when you tell the truth, you will be trusted by people around you, which is very beneficial to your life. Even in family life, if a husband or wife is always honest with what they say, they will receive more affection, respect and trust from their spouse.

Today's society shows that there are fewer and fewer people

telling the truth, living the truth with each other. It seems now that telling the truth, living the truth has become a luxury. Everyone follows the trend of society. For the sake of sustenance, they are ready to lie, cheat, trick... and they immerse themselves in a life of material comfort and then keep spinning in it like a moth. They leave behind what is seen as the basic moral standards. Even now if we live so honestly, we will be able to be seen as idiots... That is no wonder, the trend of the world is like that, how can there be no natural disasters, epidemics... These are the warnings about our modern lifestyle that few people turn back to acknowledge.

### **3.2 Abstaining from divisive speech.**

Confucius once said, *“What you don't want, don't do to others.”* If you don't want to get hurt, don't make others hurt. If you don't want to suffer, don't make others suffer. If you don't want to hear crude or foul languages, you shouldn't say unkind or bitter words to others.

The sages of the past were very focused on admonishing us to be careful in our speech. One word can save a life; on the contrary, it can also destroy the happiness of a family. The harmful effect of an unkind word is deeper than a wound on the body. Wounds can still be healed, but words once uttered from your mouth cannot be taken back even if you try to apologize later. There are three things in this life that never come back: the arrow that has been shot from the bow, the day that has passed and the word that has been spoken. Especially the words that are offensive to other people, and the words that cause division of other people's happiness. Both of these, although the form is different, but the nature is still the same. That is causing suffering to others. A person who has moral character will never utter words that cause pain to others, whether intentionally or unintentionally.



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When the Buddha was still alive, he told a story about a teacher who wanted to occupy the monastery of two elders, so he made up a story to divide their sentiments. Because of believing in the teacher's lie, the two elders left the monastery and went away on their own path. Then, of course the other teacher took over as the owner of this monastery. After some time, the two elders met together by chance, they sadly told each other about the previous situation. After knowing the truth of everything, the two elders returned to the monastery at once, and they immediately expelled the evil teacher from there. After that evil teacher died, he fell into Avici hell and endured suffering during the time between the two Buddhas. After finishing his time of inflicting punishment in Avici hell, he was reborn as a pig-headed demon in that present life. Then the Buddha said the verse:

*“Let a man be watchful of speech,*

*well controlled in mind.*

*And not commit evil in bodily action.*

*Let him purify these three courses of action,*

*and win the path made known by the great sage.”<sup>87</sup>*

Through the above story, we can see that, with just one divisive speech, we have created severely bad karma. Then, we have to suffer in the present life and in the future life. Our mouth is so small, but it has the ability to create evil karma as heavy as a mountain...

### **3.3 Abstaining from malicious gossip.**

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<sup>87</sup> The Dhammapada – Verse 281.

We should not use honeyed words to seduce others with an expectation of achieving our goals. People with an unrighteous heart often use this trick to deceive others for seeking profit. In the modern age, we can see this matter has happened a lot. The Ponzi scheme is a typical example.

I would like to take the liberty of telling a meaningful parable to demonstrate the harmful effect of malicious gossip so that we can all see this issue together.

*“A donkey after a day of hard working, he came back for relaxation. He was exhausted, breathing heavily, the dog immediately ran over to ask.*

*‘How is your work today? Why do you look so tired?’*

*The miserable donkey said, ‘My friend, I am so tired. I really want to have a day off work tomorrow.’*

*After saying goodbye to the donkey, the dog went away and met the cat at the corner of a country lane . The dog said:*

*‘Hey, I have just gone to visit the donkey. He’s so tired, he said he wanted to have a day off work. He was in no way to blame, the owner made him work too hard...’*

*The cat went out and met the goat, he said: ‘The donkey complained that the owner made him work too hard, he wanted to take a day off, the next day he didn’t work anymore.’*

*The goat told the chicken: ‘The donkey doesn’t want to work for his owner anymore, he complained that he had to do too much hard work. I wonder if the other owner would treat him any better?’*

*The chicken said to the pig: ‘The donkey is not willing to work for the owner, he wants to work for another family. What a miserable donkey! How*

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*could the owner treat his donkey so badly? He was made to do so much heavy and dirty work, and his owner even beat him cruelly with a whip.'*

*That afternoon, the landlady fed the pig, and the pig stepped forward and whispered, 'Madame, I want to tell you something. The donkey has a problem with his thoughts lately, you have to educate him carefully. He doesn't want to work for the owner anymore, he blamed the owner for making him work too hard, his work was so heavy and dirty. He also said he wanted to leave the owner and go to another family to live.'*

*After receiving the report from the pig, the mistress immediately told her husband: 'The donkey wants to betray you, it wants to change another owner. This betrayal is unforgivable, how are you going to deal with it?'*

*'A traitor will be killed without mercy,' the owner said loudly in exasperation.*

*So, the poor donkey who worked hard for his owner everyday, then being killed by a false report while he himself did not understand why?"*

Through the above story, we can see how great the harmful effect of malicious gossip. In The Ten Wholesome of Actions Sutra way, the Buddha taught that those who do not tell a made-up story will gain three benefits:

- ✓ Beloved by intellectuals.
- ✓ Having ability to answer difficult questions.
- ✓ To be a person of prestige and dignity in the human realm as well as realm of heaven.

### **3.4 Abstaining from double-tongued statement.**

Speaking in double-tongued means when we are talking to this person, we stigmatize other, and when we are talking to other, we

stigmatize this person. This is obviously a dangerous thing, we can easily create discord in relationships just by listening to one-sided words of a person without verification. So our words are sometimes an extremely sharp and dangerous weapon, they can cause arguments, friction and discord leading to serious consequences in life. Let me tell you a story about the tongue for us to think about its advantages and disadvantages.

*“One day Xanthos called his servant:*

*‘Esope, try to buy me a good, precious and special food today. Do you understand?’*

*‘Yes, Sir!’*

*Esope quickly went to the market and bought a string of tongues. Then, he brought it back for his master.*

*Xanthos asked:*

*‘Why did you buy nothing but tongues like that?’*

*Esope replied:*

*‘Sir, because I think there is nothing more precious and better than the tongue. The tongue is the key to philosophy, art, and truth.’*

*Xanthos thought he was a strange servant. The next day, he called to Esope again:*

*‘Today, you buy me something that people think it’s the worst.’*

*Without hesitation, Esope leisurely went to the market. And when he returned, he found himself carrying a... string of tongues again.*

*‘Why are you still buying tongues today?’ Xanthos asked.*

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*‘Sir, I discreetly think that the tongue is also the most dangerous weapon in the world. It is the cause of war and the potential source of trouble times, it’s also the cause of all divisions, hatred, jealousy... So, I suppose that there is nothing worse and more despicable in the world than the tongue.’”<sup>88</sup>*

### **3.5 Right Mindfulness of Right Speech.**

The ancients once taught: “Turn your tongue seven times in your mouth before speaking”. Perhaps someone will ask, why not turn your tongue 4 times, 5 times or 9 times but 7 times? The number 7 here is a symbolic number.  $7 = 4 + 3$ . 4 is a symbolic number of space including 4 directions: East, West, South, North. 3 is a symbolic number of time including 3 periods: past, present and future. Thus, the number 7 is a symbol for both space and time. Before speaking, we have to turn our tongue 7 times, that is, before we speak into words, we must consider whether the words are in accordance with the time and circumstances when speaking or not. And when we say this, will it have a bad effect on others? If those words are in danger of causing emotional suffering to them, then we shouldn’t speak them out. On the contrary, if such words can make people happy and they have a positive impact on their lives, then we should speak it out, but it must still be within the framework of the truth. That is, we are applying Right Mindfulness and Right Effort into Right Speech.

## **4. RIGHT ACTION.**

Right Actions are appropriate and positive actions, especially the acts of kindness. If we want to have a peaceful and comfortable life, we need to avoid doing illegal, violent and criminal acts in our life. And in order to perform this we must have knowledge of Right

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<sup>88</sup> Aesop’s fables.

Action. The Five Precepts of Buddhism are considered the fundamental principles of Right Action and are not only applicable to monks, nuns, and Buddhist followers, but also to anyone who wants to practice a comfortable and healthy lifestyle, including:

- ✓ **No killing.**
- ✓ **No stealing.**
- ✓ **No lying.**
- ✓ **No having sexual misconduct.**
- ✓ **No drinking alcohol and using addictive substances.**

Of these five precepts, there are four precepts in the Noble Eightfold Path. That is: No killing, no stealing, no having sexual misconduct which belong to the Right Action that we are talking about. The Precept of No Lying belongs to Right Speech which we mentioned above. Finally, the precept of No drinking alcohol and using addictive substances.

These five precepts were set up and applied to monks, nuns and Buddhist followers by the Buddha in order to bring a peaceful and comfortable life for everyone. According to the Law of Cause and Effect, any action that we have performed, we will receive a similar result. You use force against others, then others will use force against you, it is obviously. On the contrary, if you treat everyone with your benevolence such as consoling others with your kind words and supporting them in their difficult circumstances , then you will receive help from others during your difficult time later.

Maybe someone will say: *“Why do I have to obey these precepts? I don't think I will be able to get any benefit from obeying those precepts.”* Actually, it's still effective, but you don't realize it. When you help others, even though you have not received any return from your positive actions, joy and peace will appear in your mind immediately. On the

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contrary, if you have committed evil deeds, even though negative consequences have not yet occurred to you, the feelings of anxiety, insecurity, restlessness, regret... will arise in turn in your mind. Other countless negative mental states will be also present in your life, and of course you cannot live a happy life when you have to deal with your insecurities and stress every day.

Recent studies of MEL<sup>89</sup> (Mankind, Enlightenment, Love) have shown that when a person who regularly commits evil deeds, his body will emit the energy of negatives that directly affect the opposite person, it makes this one always feel uncomfortable when talking to that evildoer, this kind of energy is represented by circles of light that we can't see with our eyes. Studies of Physiognomy also shows that, when a person is about to die, on his face, in the area lay between the eyebrows will appear a dark black color which experienced soothsayers will immediately know. That's why Asians often have a saying: *"The person who has great virtue, he will win the respect of dragons and tigers and at the same time, he will also become a terror of ghosts and spirits."* That is, a person who has great dignity, no matter where he goes and what he does, he will not be afraid of even demons or beasts. Because they always radiate potential energy that makes wild animals or demons which have to stay away.

### **4.1 No killing.**

When we have thoroughly understood the principle of Cause and Effect along with the practice of compassion, there is no reason to kill a creature for nothing. By not killing, we are showing our respect for life. Any living thing in the world wants to live and survive as well as it does not want to be destroyed or killed. And we

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<sup>89</sup> The method of Human and Universal Energy.

too, we want to live, to work, to raise a family, to take care of and love our children, to have privacy rights... then there is no reason for us to invade and take the lives of other creatures. A spiritual master in Tibet once said a wise saying while he was teaching his disciples. *"If you don't have the ability to bring a dead ant back to its life, you should never kill it."* The saying was full of wisdom and it showed the great compassion of a guru.

We often have more tendencies towards demolition and killing than construction and regeneration. We must understand that burning down a house is much easier and quicker than building and creating it. Today, with modern and advanced technology, we humans have caused countless deforestation, then every year we have to suffer from natural disasters such as floods, droughts, environmental pollution... Large-scale deforestation has contributed to the loss of ecological balance, it has also made rare species of animals and plants no longer have a place to live. In addition, it has even increased the risk of erosion and landslides very high. Recognizing the dangers of this issue, more than 100 countries pledged to end deforestation in the next decades on November 2, 2021. Hopefully, we will soon have remedial measures to limit the risk of natural disasters caused by deforestation. Thus, when we have comprehended the harmful effects caused by killing and destroying, we need to try to limit our killing (if any) for us have a peaceful and happy life for ourselves.

#### **4.2 No stealing.**

Theft is a manifestation of greed and selfishness. It's a negative psychological state that needs to be eliminated. The reality of life shows that the more greedy a person is, the more likely he is to encounter disaster. War, armed conflict... are all risen from greed. A greedy person will never feel enough with what he has. Therefore,



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he always finds the ways to appropriate others' things to make his own possessions. Theft manifests itself in both forms of matter and spirit. In general, theft is the action of taking something that belongs to someone else to make it our own without their consent for all of various reasons and purposes. And the person who caused the theft will also have a insecurity of his psychological states afterwards such as fear of being discovered, fear of being prosecuted, etc...

To suppress greed, and the risk of theft. We should practice almsgiving. When you are willing to give a new lounge suite to an orphan, or to pay for a meal to the certain homeless. Immediately, indescribable happiness and peace will arise within you, and at the same time, negative psychological states such as greed and selfishness have no place in your mind.

### **4.3 No having sexual misconduct.**

This is the third fundamental moral principle of the Five Precepts that deals with human physiology. Surely most of us think that we humans all have physiological needs, and we consider this to be a normal thing. But, if you pay attention a little bit, you will realize that this is not as normal as we often think. Reading the history of the world again, we see how many kings have ruined an entire dynasty just because of greed for woman beauty such as the story of King Zhou of Shang Dynasty in China, because he was so captivated by the beauty and charm of Daji that he neglected the state affairs and eventually lost his country to the King Wu of Zhou dynasty in the 2nd century BC. Ironically, the last king of the Zhou dynasty also lost his country because of a girl named Bao Si later.

Thus, we can see, from ancient times up to now, there are countless people, from the common people to the monarchs, who

destroyed their careers and dignity because of their passion for concupiscence. When the Buddha was still alive, he once commented on sexual desire as follows: *“Among all kinds of desire, there is nothing as worrisome as concupiscence. The great passion for feminine beauty is incomparable. Luckily, it's only one. If there were two such things, no one in the whole world would be able to cultivate the way of religion.”*<sup>90</sup>

The passion for sex is so dangerous, but there are many people who still defy the consequences. They even rush into extramarital relations just to satisfy their physiological needs. This is called adultery in Buddhism. It can be said that adultery is the violation of ethics because of sexual passion. The stories mentioned above are only at the level of normal sexual passion, but it is so dangerous, let alone how dangerous adultery is. The concept of sexual misconduct in Buddhism refers to actions such as rape; forcing others to have sexual intercourse without their consent; having actions that sexually abused children or minors; sexual relations with another's spouse or defenseless person. And in the case of a loving couple, although they haven't got married, they have lived together as a married couple, then one of them betrays the other, it is also considered adultery.

Let's take one of the above cases that are considered adultery to talk about its dangers. For example, having sexual intercourse with someone else's spouse. This is considered a violation of social ethics. You will be considered the third person who interfere in other people's husband and wife relationship, and the agent that causes their family happiness in danger of falling apart when your extramarital relations was discovered. In addition to adultery, in this case you are also considered a thief. You have stolen someone else's love. Therefore, adultery will bring negative consequences for both

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<sup>90</sup> Sutra in Forty-Two Sections.

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you and the person who involved in extramarital relations with you. From ancient times up to now, adultery has never brought a perfect ending. So when the Buddha was still alive, he put this into the five precepts as a barrier not to be overcome to keep a happy and peaceful life for his disciples later.

### **4.4 No lying.**

As mentioned above, lying has created a lot of negative consequences for both ourselves and others. The liar himself will lose his dignity as well as stain his honor, henceforth he will get very little respect from others. Therefore, we should use Right Mindfulness and Right Effort to restrain from lying even though it's just a funny joke.

### **5.5 No drinking alcohol and using addictive substances.**

The use of alcohol and stimulants will make us lose our reason and lose control of our actions, it can cause great sins. According to science, alcohol will impair the function of internal organs such as liver, kidney, etc... and it can negatively affect our nervous system. Regular drinking will lead to a poor memory, and our minds will be lacking in flexibility and lucidity, etc...

In the Distinguishing Wholesome and Unwholesome Causes Sutra, the Buddha taught that when a person gets drunk, he will easily commit 36 (thirty-six) sins as follows:

“...

1. *The person, who get drunk, will treat his parents with impertinences; he also become a disrespectful subject to the king. Therefore, the relationships between father and child, king and subject have no*

*superiors and inferiors.*

2. *He will have a tendency for talking nonsense and making mistakes.*
3. *He will easily commit the evil conduct of speaking in double-tongued, and becoming a talkative person.*
4. *If he has something to hide, he will tell it all when being drunk.*
5. *Uttering the words which are offensive to God or deities without fear of committing offences.*
6. *Because of being drunk, he lay in the middle of the road and could not go back home, all his belongings were lost.*
7. *Unable to control himself to show a good manner in the presence of others.*
8. *Staggering in moving; sometimes he turns his face upwards towards the sky, sometimes he bends down with his face towards the ground; sometimes he falls into a pit, causing his body get injured.*
9. *Unable to walk and stand firmly, so he had to crawl like a cripple. When he was able to stand up, his face and body were all scratched and chafed.*
10. *He often makes mistakes and acts in provocation and offence to others in business.*
11. *Ignoring at work as well as having no paying attention to business.*
12. *Property will be wasted and lost.*
13. *He will not be interest in his wife and children, even how miserable their life is.*
14. *Shouting and cursing without fear of state law.*
15. *Taking off all his clothes and walking on the street in the nude.*
16. *Sneaking into others' houses in which he will try to entice women and girls, then he will insult them by his nonsense. So, he has created countless sins.*
17. *Wanting to pick a fight with anyone who come near him.*
18. *Banging his leg to the ground and screaming loudly, disturbing the peace of neighborhood.*
19. *Killing animals indiscriminately without having awareness of guilt.*

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20. *The furniture in the house was smashed into pieces.*
21. *Having unseemly expressions in his manner of speaking, simultaneously he consider his wife and children as prisoners.*
22. *Having an intimate connection with clique of rascals.*
23. *Keeping away and refuse to be familiar with sages.*
24. *Sleeping like a log, and when he wakes up, his body aches and pains like a sick person.*
25. *The things which he has eaten and drunk were regurgitated. That makes an aversion for his wife and children.*
26. *Wherever he goes, if he meet an elephant, horse, or wolf, because his mind is scattered, he will not be afraid to stay away.*
27. *Having no respect for the Sutras and Dharma; having no respect for sages, having no respect for Buddhist monks.*
28. *Insatiable lewdness without fear of its consequence.*
29. *His physical appearance looks like a madman. It makes everyone stay away from him.*
30. *Knowing nothing, as if a dead man.*
31. *Because of depending on alcohol, his body is yellow like a ripe fruit. Sometimes, scabies appears on his face.*
32. *Devas , nagas<sup>91</sup> and good spirits who protect Buddhism all stay away from him. Because they hate drinkers.*
33. *Good-Knowing Friends are gradually avoid contacting with him.*
34. *Being drunk, he squats and keeps staring at high-ranking officials without fear of them; if being beaten, he will shut his eyes tightly.*
35. *After passing away, he fell into Taishan hell. There, he will be often poured boiling copper water into his mouth by the jailer. His six internal organs are all burnt, it's impossible for him to prays for either survival or death, and he must endure such suffering for thousands of years.*

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<sup>91</sup> Dragons.

36. *When the period of his life in hell is over, he will be reborn as a human being whose mind is dull and ignorant. Nowadays, unintelligent people who lack of understanding of the surrounding circumstances are the consequences of their previous life of fondness for alcohol.*

*Thus, I have made it clear, you need to be careful with alcohol, because drinking alcohol has thirty-six sins. Anyone who drinks alcohol commits it all."*

In the past, there was a Buddhist layman who kept the five precepts of the Tathagata very strictly. One day, he had to go far away. When he returned home, it was time for everyone in the house to be away. Because of the fatigue of the long journey and being extremely thirsty, he went to find water to drink. At that time there was a large bottle of wine like water on the table. To be dying of thirst, he thought it was water, so gulped down that bottle of wine. After drinking, he felt dizzy and tipsy. Just then, a neighbor's chicken ran into his house; taking advantage of being hungry, he immediately thought he would better catch the chicken to slaughter it for having a delicious meal. After he finished eating, there was a girl in the vicinity went to his house to look for her chicken, she asked if the Buddhist layman had seen the chicken running into his house. He replied that he did not see any chickens passing by. Not only that, he also had sexual behavior towards that girl.

So, once drinking, this man offended against the five precepts of a Buddhist layman one after the other.

The above story shows us how great the harmful effects of drinking alcohol are. Nowadays, in addition to alcohol, we also face many pitfalls of social evils such as drugs, marijuana... Many young people, because of their abuse of methamphetamine, they do not hesitate to take actions that are very dangerous for themselves and others.

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Therefore, in order to ensure the happiness of our family and ourselves, we should limit the use of alcohol and addictive substances. Since then, it is possible for us to have a blameless life together with a brilliant and active mind.

### **5. RIGHT LIVELIHOOD.**

Right livelihood is the act of nourishing oneself by doing a proper job. A proper job here we can understand as a job which is not harmful to others both physically and mentally. But in real life, sometimes it is difficult for us to delimit the fine line between good and bad nature of the same job. For example, is a person in the business of buying and selling alcohol good or bad? We all know alcohol as a poison if we abuse it too much, but it is also a tonic if we know how to use it properly.

So, let's delve deeply into understanding what type of work is not suitable for Right Livelihood from the Buddhist point of view so that we can better understand this. There are many types of work that are not suitable for Right Livelihood, but within the scope of this book I only mention the most particular types of work for your reference and contemplation.

- ✓ *The first is the group of jobs such as drug and addictive substances smuggling.*
- ✓ *The second is the group of jobs such as producing and selling weapons.*
- ✓ *The third is the business of sports involving violence.*
- ✓ *The fourth is the business of betting forms such as gambling...*
- ✓ *The fifth is the group of jobs that belong to acts of slaughter.*
- ✓ *The sixth is the job that belongs to writing. If you use your pen to write articles for a naughty magazine or a rag to smear the good repute of others for profit, this is also considered a job that is not suitable for*

*Right Livelihood.*

- ✓ *The seventh is Human trafficking.*
- ✓ *The eighth is Wildlife trafficking.*

Now, let's go into the details of each of the above types of work to analyze their good and bad characteristics , thereby giving us a correct view in the spirit of Right Livelihood of Buddhism. Especially when we want to choose for ourselves a good and proper job which is not contrary to the ethical standards of Buddhism in particular and of human society in general.

### **5.1 The first is the group of jobs such as drug and addictive substances smuggling.**

This group of jobs has been banned by international law, so it is obviously that's the jobs which is contrary to Right Livelihood in Buddhism. And we don't need to have much discussion about it. Because almost all of us know about its harmful effects, not only for ourselves but also for our relatives, family and society.

### **5.2 The second is the group of jobs such as producing and selling weapons.**

The Buddha disapproved of the production and sales of weapons because it will be the cause leads to destruction, death, ruin, injury, and hatred. Re-reading world history, we have witnessed the massive destruction of war caused through the First and Second World War. It is worrisome that countries around the world are now tending to develop uranium enrichment, which will lead to the risk of a future nuclear war whose consequences are incredible. Therefore, the application of the Buddha's Right Livelihood in real life is so essential to protect people against the risk of extinction as the current developments of global politics. The necessary condition for the development of a country that is the



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country without the presence of war, and this is the obvious thing. With the current state of the world , nuclear disarmament is one of the necessary measures to maintain social order and cohesion and bring peace to the world. It's also an action that we need to put into execution together to create the foundation of a happy life for mankind.

### **5.3 The third is the business of sports involving violence.**

The Buddha once taught: *“To conquer oneself is a greater victory than to conquer thousands in a battle.”* In the past, the Buddha was the champion in fencing, wrestling and archery, but he realized that the possession of these powers only brought him the feeling of insecurity, and he was always in danger of leading to a conflict with others of any kind. So, he never used these skills. The Buddha's policy has always been non-violence, because according to him war will always lead to war, conflict will lead to conflict. Only compassion and forgiveness have the power to resolve these problems. In today's modern society, when people's entertainment needs increase, we can see a lot of programs for the sports of violence appeared on the media such as TV and the internet. In terms of the healthiness of sports, there is no problem, because sport makes our body flexible, supple and it can also help us reduce the risk of getting the disease through taking exercise regularly, this is an undeniable fact. But there are many types of sports for us to choose such as football, volleyball, badminton, table tennis... it's not necessarily the sports of violence. For example, when a child is forced to watch MMA, or UFC program on TV with his father, the risk of increasing aggression in the child's mind is very high, and this will lead to many harmful effects. His mind will be filled with violent images and this is also the basic premise of taking shape his

personality deviation compared to other ordinary children. Therefore, this is something that parents should be avoidance, when we want to watch these programs, we should only watch it alone. And we can see that this is one of the types of businesses in which contain violence and aggressiveness. Thus, we are recommended not to practice in these types of businesses according to the spirit of Right Livelihood in Buddhism.

#### **5.4 The fourth is doing the business on the forms of betting.**

From ancient times up to now, gambling has always brought people the passion and addiction to it. There are many people who have had to fall into the circumstance of the home is shattered and its members gone because of their passion for gambling and betting. With the development of information technology, it is easier for us to access cross-border online betting services. Nowadays, we just need to stay at home, access these websites, and with just one click we have successfully made a cross-border betting. The more convenient forms of betting and gambling as it is now, the quicker risk of falling into the situation of being deeply in debt.

Cambodia is a country in Southeast Asia, in recent years, this country has developed Casino services to become the center of entertainment and gambling of countries in the region which has led to countless negative consequences arising from these gambling houses. Many people had fallen into bankruptcy and even some of them had reached an impasse, they eventually had to choose committing suicide because they could not afford to pay their debts. We can see, being passionate about this type of win-lose entertainment can hardly bring a good result. And those who are dealing in these types of businesses, which means they are doing the business which can cause harmful effects on others according to the

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Buddhist point of view. We should stay away from these types of jobs to avoid receiving disastrous consequences in the future according to the theory of Cause and Effect in Buddhism.

### **5.5 The fifth is the group of jobs that belong to acts of slaughter.**

Although the system of laws in the world do not forbid these types of work, in Buddhism, slaughtering a pig, cow or chicken for food or any other purpose is also a crime of killing. Because animals are all sentient beings, they still have feelings, thoughts, and emotions like us humans, and they also have the tendency to cling to life and fear death. Some people will argue that if they didn't slaughter them for meat, where could others get food for themselves? Such reasoning is just an excuse for his actions only. In fact, if you didn't do that job, someone else would do it, people will not be deprived of food when you were no longer a butcher. And even if one day, there are no people who slaughter animals to provide food for humanity in the world, we humans still can't be without food because of that. There are still a lot of fresh and delicious foods made from vegetables and fruits. Recently, scientists has proven that the human teeth have a structure similar to that of herbivores rather than carnivores. Therefore, if one day humans no longer have meat to eat, it is normal to switch to a vegetarian diet.

Some people argue that, if humans don't eat animals, they will multiply and multiply all over the face of the earth, so that there is no place for humans to live? This is also a form of reasoning to defend themselves, because that will never happen. From ancient times up to now, did we humans eat ants? Of course, no one has ever used ants for food. But we can see, they did not multiply, spread all over the earth. The universe naturally has the law of birth

and death of all species without human intervention. On the contrary, if we intervene, it may lead to the risk of serious harm.

When we kill an animal, because of pain and its life is taken, its mind will always cling to us, waiting for an opportunity arises, they will take revenge and then we have to take our negative consequences of killing it. Therefore, we often hear stories in which the butchers who were close to death, they often showed the actions of the animals that they had killed. For example, a person who usually kills pigs, when he is close to death, he will make squealing sounds like that of a pig when it is killed. People who regularly slaughter cows, when they are about to die, they will be in danger of making a roar like that of a cow. These are all acts of revenge of animals that have been killed.

In Zhejiang, China there lived a person who was a butcher and his surname is Shao. His job was selling wine and pork, and he kept several pigs in his piggery. One day, while he was choosing some of the fattest pigs to slaughter for meat, when suddenly one of them knelt down and cried. He didn't show any his mercy, on the contrary, he got angry and took the pig to kill it.

It was raining that day, he arranged the pork on his kiosk to sell until it was getting dark, but there was still no one came to buy it. He was in a state of anger and resentment, with wooden clogs on his feet, he stood up on a chair, holding a large piece of meat in his hand. He intended to hang it on an iron hook hanging down from the rafters. But because of using too much force, he suddenly slipped and overturned the chair. The piece of meat fell to the ground, while the iron hook pierced his palm, leaving him suspended in a way that could not be removed.

At that time, while his family members were distilling liquors,

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they heard his shouting, so all rushed to save him, but he was in so much pain that he was delirious and no longer awake. They tried to take him down while he was screaming in pain; then he used his hands to gather both the wine and the brewer's grains, putting them in his mouths to eat. He smeared distiller's grains around his mouth and all over his body, at that time, he looked like a dirty pig.

Eventually, he lay in one place screamed in pain for more than twenty days before he died.

Therefore, the great master Lianchi (China) taught that: *“Please take my advice, if you really can't do anything for a living, you'd rather become a beggar. If you create evil karma due to killing for your livelihood, it is better to starve and die.”*

### **5.6 The sixth is the job that belongs to writing.**

The sixth group is the type of work that belongs to writing, using your pen to make other people fall into a difficult and dangerous situation. With the explosion of social media platforms nowadays, we can easily access information quickly and conveniently, and because of that, we have a lot of other problems. Many people have taken advantage of these social networking sites to post stories about the other people's private lives for the purpose of stigmatizing, compromising the reputation and dignity of the victim. Besides, they dignify and flatter themselves in many different ways. There are even some people who are journalists, professional reporters of major newspapers who have used their pen to post wrong information of a person or organization just for special benefit of themselves, regardless of the consequences of their articles. Such cases of violations of professional ethics, we can see a lot on social networking sites today. I think that people who are on

assignment of writing should have a little of professional etiquette when being on duty. Because of a very simple thing, the pen is also one of the powerful weapons that can praise somebody to the skies. On the other hand, it can also drive others to the brink of disaster without any effort at all.

### **5.7 The seventh is Human trafficking.**

This type of work is not only contrary to the Buddhist foundation of Right Livelihood but also the act contrary to international law. Human trafficking includes many forms such as slave trade, child trafficking, organ trafficking, etc... These are very cruel actions that need to be condemned and stopped. A mother can callously sell her own child for only a few thousand dollars, which is a common social evil in underdeveloped countries. This is one of the act of inhumanity that cannot be accepted and tolerated.

Modern society today no longer has the widespread slave trade as in the Middle Ages because of the constraints of the international legal system. But this is not without happening. In underdeveloped countries, we often see marriage bureaus with good advertisements such as to be married a foreign husband, to be provided with better foods and expensive clothes, to be wealthy... In fact, when a girl, especially in rural areas, because of the difficulty of her home economics conditions and unstable material life, she had to take a risk and married a foreign husband in the hope of having a new life. But after being married, she was not a wife but became a servant of her husband's family in the true sense of the word. There are many people, after going abroad for a few months, they had to endure a lot of suffering, such as having to work 24 hours a day and then being confined at home like a prisoner with no contact with anyone but members of the husband's family... so they managed to escape from their husband's family and found the way back to their

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homeland but this was not easy at all because of the language barrier and many other problems. Therefore, there were many people who had resigned themselves to a life of trials and tribulations, they couldn't but endure and cry in silence in such circumstances. Therefore, this is one of the social problems of the time that need to be paid attention by the authorities.

Besides, the trafficking in human organs by transnational criminal organizations is also a burning issue of the world in recent years. The achievement of a super-profitable source of income has made many people, regardless of the consequences, rush to work for these organizations like a moth, leaving behind what is called morality, humanity...

### **5.8 The eighth is Wildlife trafficking.**

This is also one of the jobs prohibited by international law. Indiscriminate hunting of wild animals is one of the causes of loss of biodiversity and habitat damage of many species. In addition, the illegal wildlife trade has led to the emergence and spread of new infectious diseases in humans, including emerging viruses. According to the statistics of WWF, more than 60% of all emerging infectious diseases from all over the world came from animal, which means they were transmitted from animals to humans, including HIV, Ebola, SARS, MERS and, most recently, COVID-19.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, the illegal wildlife trade always brings potential risks that we cannot foresee its consequences. Whether we like it or not, we should stay away from these types of jobs to limit the negative

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/reducing-zoonotic-disease-risk-from-wildlife-trade>

impacts on the environment and people.

### 5.9 Right Mindfulness of Right Livelihood.

After having gained a thorough and in-depth knowledge about the nature and consequences of jobs within the professions that are contrary to the spirit of Right Livelihood in Buddhism, we must be determined not to get attached to these types of jobs. In case we have missed practicing in the above types of jobs, let's try to learn to develop skills in other fields. so that we can gradually change career. If we can do that, then this is one of the most noble actions. And to do this, we must have an enormous effort, a great determination and a strong orientation.

## 6. RIGHT EFFORT.

Right effort is one of the three most important factors and runs through the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. In the remaining seven factors, if any of them are absent from Right Effort, the way of practice will not be fruitful. For an ordinary person who wants to turn around his present life without the factor of Right Effort, it is difficult to change the desired quality of life. The content of Right Effort is summarized by the Buddha through verse 183 of the Dhammapada:

*“To avoid all evil,*

*to cultivate good,*

*and to cleanse one's mind.*

*This is the teaching of the Buddhas.”*<sup>93</sup>

Right effort is defined as the efforts to bring a peaceful and

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<sup>93</sup> The Dhammapada – Verse 183.



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happy life to lay people as well as to bring a pure and holy life to ordained Buddhists. Right effort is different from the efforts of chasing after the money of the material life and disregarding everything. Right effort is also different from the efforts to pursue private gain that break down any obstacles even if it has to go against moral and spiritual values... Right effort leaves no room for selfishness without regard for the happiness and welfare of others. So, what exactly does Right Effort include? We will expand in detail what the Buddha taught about Right Effort.

### **6.1 Not to commit evils.**

By trying not to do evil, and any evil that has been created by mistake, we should try not to do it again. To do this, we need to have the following psychological states:

- ✓ ***Shame on the sin that we have committed, but we have to live in the present.***

Shame is a necessary thing for us to realize that our actions have been wrong. Without shame, it is very dangerous, because it is easy for us to repeat those evil deeds at any time in the future. In addition, shame and guilty feelings take a role as motive power to help us prevent future wrongdoing. However, we need to understand that we must have guilty feelings in order to realize our actions are wrong, and from there we are determined to stop similar actions in the future, but not the shame for us to live with a state of mind that is full of regrets and dissatisfaction with our misconduct which have been created in the past. This will not help us in developing our spiritual life positively, but also have risks of leading to negative consequences such as being prone to depression, paranoia, etc...

***“Live in the present moment.”*** That is the message for us from the Buddha more than 2600 years ago. We have shame, but we also need to learn how to get rid of our bad memories. We practice compassion for others but we must also be well-treated ourselves, and its necessary to forgive ourselves to find better things in life. If you stumble, you will grow up, if you fall, you have to try to find the way to get up and move on, not just lying there forever. As a human being, no one does not make mistakes, the question is, are we willing to make effort to transform our current circumstance into a better one, or keep gnawing on the pain of the past and then we hurt ourselves even more than we are already hurt? That is the true meaning of a peaceful life that the Buddha wanted to give recommendations to us.

✓ ***Eliminating negative psychological states from bad influences around our lives.***

Every day, we have to meet and interact with countless people from colleagues, partners at the company, then our friends and relatives to our neighbors in the hustle and bustle of modern life. All these relationships give us different psychological states such as happy, sad angry, sulky, etc... And we will inevitably be mentally affected by these contacts. Sometimes after a working day, we come home in low spirit because of harsh words whether by accident or design from colleagues, or stiff reprimands from superiors. If we keep holding such sadness in our hearts for a long time, it will breed diseases. And the elimination of these negative psychological states is very necessary for us to have a peaceful and happy life. We need to apply Right View and Right Mindfulness to realize these mental states. We will recognize this sadness will pass, and those insults are also unreal, because they are arisen from a mind was filled with afflictions and hatred. With such awareness, we will no longer feel sad or resentful, but will instead be in a joyful and relaxed state of

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mind. On the contrary, if we keep holding these sorrows in our hearts, the first person to suffer will be ourselves, then it will lead to many other negative consequences such as seeking to retaliate against those who have offended us, thereby leading to the possibility that we will cause regrettable actions...

✓ ***Evil things that have not been done, prevent them from arising.***

In this modern social context, there are too many stories of villains of all kinds and forms. There are many people who are doing bad deeds that even they themselves do not know they are doing evil deeds, sometimes they take it for granted, this is very dangerous, especially among young people today. The real situations of modern society can be mentioned such as promiscuous love, hasty love, hasty marriage. The young married couples who had one or two children together and then began to arise conflicts for very small reasons such as incompatibility in terms of temperament, lifestyle, salary... And finally, they flocked in a body into the court to ask for a divorce from each other while their children were only a few years old without caring about the consequences of their divorce will affect his children later. Then, adultery, sexual incompatibility, the effects of relatives, marriage at a young age, all lead to divorce. This is the result of promiscuous love. This phenomenon is the movement of young people nowadays. It is worth mentioning that they see this as a normal thing which is accordance with the adage: ***“Easy come, easy go.”***

With such a negative lifestyle, the concept of a happy family seems to be no longer exist. Moral and spiritual values also have no

place in today's society. Most people now only know how to follow the material life of the world, they live follow their instinct is the primary. This situation is a wake-up call for the degradation of social ethics that we have long been proud of living in a civilized and modern world with industry 4.0 this and that.

If we are really a person of righteousness with a good heart, before we do something, let's use Right Mindfulness to consider what consequences we will suffer from the actions that we are going to do, and we should try to limit and prevent if it is found those actions or speech will cause unwholesome things. Let's get into the habit of thinking before we act, so that we can minimize regrets later. This is called preventing evil deeds that have not been done and not allowing them to arise according to the spirit of Right Effort in Buddhism.

We often have the habit of following the crowd. Therefore sometimes, we accidentally cause bad karma without knowing it, we just think that is the normal things because almost everyone around is doing the same. It is this thought that has contributed to the formation of negative trends among young people today as we often see this phenomenon has happened on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter... This is very dangerous, we must use our reasons to consider whether the actions we are about to do are right? Are there any negative consequences for ourselves or for others of doing them? If you are calm and patient enough to find the answers to these two questions, I am sure that what you do now will very rarely cause trouble or regret in the future.

I would like to tell you a fairy tale about a smart crab that avoided extinction and enjoyed a good ending later thanks to the calm consideration of its actions.

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*‘Long ago the Bodhisattva <sup>94</sup> was born to a forest life as the Genius of a tree standing near a certain lotus pond. Now at that time the water used to run short at the dry season in a certain pond, not over large, in which there were a good many fish. And a crane thought, on seeing the fish, ‘I must outwit these fish somehow or other and make a prey of them.’*

*And he went and sat down at the edge of the water, thinking how he should do it.*

*When the fish saw him, they asked him, ‘What are you sitting there for, lost in thought?’*

*‘I am sitting thinking about you,’ said he.*

*‘Oh, sir! what are you thinking about us?’ said they.*

*‘Why,’ he replied; ‘there is very little water in this pond, and but little for you to eat; and the heat is so great! So I was thinking, ‘What in the world will these fish do now?’*

*‘Yes, indeed, sir! what are we to do?’ said they.*

*‘If you will only do as I bid you, I will take you in my beak to a fine large pond, covered with all the kinds of lotuses, and put you into it,’ answered the crane.*

*‘That a crane should take thought for the fishes is a thing unheard of, sir, since the world began. It’s eating us, one after the other, that you’re aiming at!’*

*‘Not I! So long as you trust me, I won’t eat you. But if you don’t believe me that there is such a pond, send one of you with me to go and see it.’*

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<sup>94</sup> A Bodhisattva is one who has the essence or potentiality of transcendental wisdom or supreme enlightenment according to the concept of Mahayana Buddhism. Here, it is referred to a former life of the Buddha.

*Then they trusted him, and handed over to him one of their number -- a big fellow, blind of one eye, whom they thought sharp enough in any emergency, afloat or ashore. Him the crane took with him, let him go in the pond, showed him the whole of it, brought him back, and let him go again close to the other fish. And he told them all the glories of the pond.*

*And when they heard what he said, they exclaimed, 'All right, sir! You may take us with you.'*

*Then the crane took the old purblind fish first to the bank of the other pond, and alighted in a Varana-tree growing on the bank there. But he threw it into a fork of the tree, struck it with his beak, and killed it; and then ate its flesh, and threw its bones away at the foot of the tree.*

*Then he went back and called out, 'I've thrown that fish in; let another come!'*

*And in that manner he took all the fish, one by one, and ate them, till he came back and found no more!*

*But there was still a crab left behind there; and the crane thought he would eat him too, and called out, 'I say, good crab, I've taken all the fish away, and put them into a fine large pond. Come along. I'll take you too!'*

*'But how will you take hold of me to carry me along?'*

*'I'll bite hold of you with my beak.'*

*'You'll let me fall if you carry me like that. I won't go with you!'*

*'Don't be afraid! I'll hold you quite tight all the way.'*

*Then said the crab to himself, 'If this fellow once got hold of fish, he would never let them go in a pond! Now if he should really put me into the pond, it would be capital; but if he doesn't -- then I'll cut his throat, and kill him!'*

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*So he said to him, 'Look here, friend, you won't be able to hold me tight enough; but we crabs have a famous grip. If you let me catch hold of you round the neck with my claws, I shall be glad to go with you.'*

*And the other did not see that he was trying to outwit him, and agreed.*

*So the crab caught hold of his neck with his claws as securely as with a pair of blacksmith's pincers, and called out, 'Off with you, now!'*

*And the crane took him and showed him the pond, and then turned off towards the Varana-tree.*

*'Uncle!' cried the crab, 'the pond lies that way, but you are taking me this way!'*

*'Ob, that's it, is it!' answered the crane. 'Your dear little uncle, your very sweet nephew, you call me! You mean me to understand, I suppose, that I am your slave, who has to lift you up and carry you about with him! Now cast your eye upon the heap of fish-bones lying at the root of yonder Varana-tree. Just as I have eaten those fish, every one of them, just so I will devour you as well!'*

*'Ah! those fishes got eaten through their own stupidity,' answered the crab; 'but I'm not going to let you eat me. On the contrary, it is you that I am going to destroy. For you in your folly have not seen that I was outwitting you. If we die, we die both together; for I will cut off this head of yours, and cast it to the ground!'*

*And so saying, he gave the crane's neck a grip with his claws, as with a vice.*

*Then gasping, and with tears trickling from his eyes, and trembling with the fear of death, the crane beseeched him, saying, "O my Lord! Indeed I did not intend to eat you. Grant me my life!"*

*'Well, well! step down into the pond, and put me in there.'*

*And he turned round and stepped down into the pond, and placed the crab on the mud at its edge. But the crab cut through its neck as clean as one would cut a lotus-stalk with a hunting-knife, and then only entered the water!*

*When the Genius who lived in the Varana-tree saw this strange affair, he made the wood resound with his plaudits, uttering in a pleasant voice the verse:*

*'The villain, though exceeding clever,*

*Shall prosper not by his villainy.*

*He may win indeed, sharp-witted in deceit,*

*But only as the crane here from the crab!'"*<sup>95</sup>

The story above shows us, before doing something, think carefully so as not to create regrets later, and this also to bring us a peaceful and happy life, especially when we are living in a volatile society like today.

✓ ***Cultivating good deeds.***

Whether you believe in reincarnation or not, whether you believe in a life in the future after death or not, living a pure and wholesome life with good deeds will always bring you peace and happiness in this present life. A recent scientific study shows that when we make up our mind to do good deeds such as helping others in difficult circumstances, giving alms to beggars... Immediately, our brain will produce serotonin active element which makes us feel cheery and happy afterwards. Thanks to these happy and excited psychological states, we will be energized to complete the necessary

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<sup>95</sup> Buddhst Birth Stories; or Jataka Tales, translated by T.W.Rhys Davids, vol 1 (London: Trubner and Company, 1880), no.38, pp. 317-20.



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tasks in our daily activities, it will make our lives more perfect and happy. That's why Brian Tracy - author of self-help books who has a very good quote: *"You will regret many things in life, but you will never regret being too kind or too fair."*

In addition, according to Buddhism, when you do a good deed, you will accumulate a division of the merit for yourself. Merit is a shield that protects you from dangers and disasters, it will also helps us to bring luck to our lives. For example, you are driving on your way home after a day of work, because it is raining, you do not see an obstacle ahead, and so you drive into it. You should have been seriously injured in this accident, but your daily practice of doing good deeds has created many blessings for you, and it is because you have a lot of merit that you were only slightly injured in the above accident. According to Visuddhimagga – a famous treatise on dogma of Theravada Buddhism, when a person does good deeds, there will be 11 benefits as follows: *easy to sleep; having a happy expression like a flower bud; having no nightmares when sleeping; beloved by beasts as well as god and spirits; protected by gods and demons; fire, poison and murder weapons are invulnerable; easy to fix in meditation; having a bright facial expression; death in peace; possibility of attaining the fourth jhana, if he can't attain arahantship, he will be reborn in the Brahma heaven after death.*

Therefore, we should strive to do good deeds, even if it is as small as giving a grain of rice to a colony of ants, we should not ignore it to accumulate for our treasure of merits getting bigger every day and to help us be more stable and confident in life.

✓ ***The good that has not been done, let it arise.***

When we see good deeds from others, we should have a positive attitude, which means that you rejoice in the welfare of others then

from there, we follow their example to practice. Or when you see other people doing good deeds, you feel happy with this and you are willing to help out with that person, you will reap great merit and the other person has not dented a single bit of the merit they have. In this case, the Buddha taught: *“Like as many men lighting a fire for cooking rice from one torch, diminish not the light of that one, so is it in this case of merit.”*<sup>96</sup>

When you thorough understand the law of Cause and Effect, you will be more motivated to do good deeds. Although, blessings and merit are inherently invisible, but not nonexistent. In the Dhammapada, the Buddha taught that all kinds of good karma and bad karma that we have created from our body, speech, and mind will always follow us like a shadow following the substance that never leaving or disappearing. At a certain time when the conditions are met, it will become a fruit, the taste of this fruit is sweet or bitter depending on what you have sown and planted in this present moment.

✓ ***Always keep a pure mind.***

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha taught:

*“Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.”*

*“Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.”*<sup>97</sup>

Thus, we can see that all actions of our body and speech are

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<sup>96</sup> The Sutra of the forty-two sections.

<sup>97</sup> The Dhammapada – Verse 1&2.

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arisen from the mind. That means a good deed will be rooted in a good mind. In other words, when you have a good idea in your mind, then you will have the motivation to do that good thing by action. On the contrary, if your mind is filled with evil things, then you will definitely cause evil things. Therefore, keeping the mind is very important.

In this modern day, we need to be more careful with our minds, because there are too many temptations when we have to use the internet to serve our needs of work, study and entertainment. If we do not have a mind fixed on goodness, we will be easily come around to the unhealthy websites. If we regularly visit these websites for a long time, we will form bad images in our minds, and we will automatically accept them. So we have to be vigilant, we have to use Right Mindfulness to deal with these pitfalls. How to use Right Mindfulness? We will find out together below.

### **7. RIGHT MINDFULNESS.**

Right Mindfulness is the foundation of spiritual practice and development methods. Without the factor of Mindfulness, you will be lost on the way of self-cultivation. Right Mindfulness means being aware and paying attention every second, every minute to what is happening around and within ourselves. This means that you just observe and pay attention to an object that is happening right in front of you without even thinking, comparing or thinking or analyzing at all. In other words, you observe and pay attention to all things and phenomena around you as it is, without awakening the mind to think, associate, compare or analyze. In order to have a clearer figure of Right Mindfulness, I would like to tell you a story to illustrate what it is like to observe everything with Mindfulness.

*“A Buddhist novice accompanied his Zen master on the road. Soon, they came to a swift-flowing river. There was a beautiful young girl walking back and forth on the riverbank, she looked very sad.*

*‘What’s the matter?’ asked the Zen master.*

*‘I am so anxious. My father is very ill, I need to cross the river to visit him but the bridge is broken. Do you know where the next bridge is?’ the girl replied.*

*‘Oh, it’s a mile away, but don’t worry. I can take you across the river,’ replied the Zen master.*

*The girl appreciated and accepted the Zen master’s help, then he carried her across the river, put her down, and said goodbye.*

*The Buddhist novice was very displeased with what had just happened. He knew that monks were not allowed to touch women, so he got angry because his master broke the Buddhist precepts. He kept agonizing over this during the whole journey. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, he had to speak openly to his master.*

*When the Zen master heard the reason of his disciple’s anger, he burst into laughter and said, ‘I had put the girl down when we reached the other side of the river, why have you been still carrying her?’”<sup>98</sup>*

There are many philosophy lessons to be drawn from the above meditative story. But within the scope of this book, I just want to talk about it in the field of Right Mindfulness so that you can better visualize it. As we can see, the Zen master in the story regarded the girl with the Right Mindfulness of his eyes, while the Buddhist novice did not. That is, the Zen master only saw in front of him a poor girl struggling to find the way to cross the river to visit her father, and she needed to have someone’s help. The Zen master

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<sup>98</sup> “Collection of Stone and Sand” by Japanese Zen master Muju.

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only saw the girl this much. Besides, he did not give rise to any other thoughts. So, he immediately carried the girl across the river without fear of breaking the Buddhist precepts, because there was Right Mindfulness always present in his mind. On the contrary, the Buddhist novice is representative of most of us. I wonder if we were in such a situation, when we saw a young, beautiful girl in front of us, would we be able to keep the same Right Mindfulness as that master did? Or then, in our minds, countless evil thoughts will be arisen one after the other such as wanting to ask, to get acquainted with or to flirt with her, then move on to get the possession of her, and so on...

When reading as far as here, perhaps you have figured out what Right mindfulness is, right? So, in order to always have Right mindfulness in every moment, what method should we practice? Here, I will go with you to find out.

In order to the factor of Right mindfulness be always present in our daily lives. We need to practice contemplating the following four methods:

### **7.1 Meditation and full realization on the impurity of the body.**

Our bodies are covered with beautiful clothes everyday, thereby making us fall in love every time we see them. But we really have been deceived by the flashy things outside. The method of contemplating the impure body will give us a true view of ourselves and the people around us. There is often a conception of our bodies as leather bags filled with impurities in Buddhism, including 32 impure substances: hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, kidneys, marrow, heart, liver, diaphragm tissue, spleen, lungs,

intestines, peritoneum, abdomen, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin fat, saliva, mucus, water in joints, urine.

Thus, if we admit our bodies and others with the above analysis, then our bodies are not beautiful at all, on the contrary, they are full of impure things. And that's what the truth is. This method of contemplating the impure body is very effective in dealing with Love and Desire. The reason why we like this person, love that person and the feeling that we can't seem to leave them is because we only see the beautiful things on the outside, but do not know the truth of the impure things that are hidden behind that smooth and white skin.

## **7.2 Meditation and full realization on the evanescence or impermanence of mind and thoughts.**

Our minds always change and never stop. From thinking one thing to another, it changes constantly. We are often heard the saying The mind like a monkey, the thought like a horse in Buddhism. It means that the mind is like a monkey passing branches, and the thought is like a horse running around. Visited a friend's rose garden today. Looking at the bright roses blooming in the sun, how beautiful they look, but when you reach down to pick a flower bud, you accidentally touch the thorns growing on the stem. A painful feeling arises and naturally you no longer feel like roses. When we see a long-lost friend again, we are happy and excited. But when living together for a while, we realize that there are too many bad habits of this friend, so a feeling of dislike has come over us, and we want to be away from him more and more. Today we see a beautiful shirt for sale in the shop, but maybe a few days later, we no longer like that shirt. Our mind is impermanent like that, it is never fixed forever.

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When you have a deep insight into the impermanence of mind, you will be indifferent to the aversion, alienation, and misunderstanding of others towards yourself. Because today, they may hate you, but tomorrow they may be friendly with you because the misunderstandings have been cleared. Understanding thoroughly the impermanence of mind, we can be footloose and fancy-free in the face of all the storminess of life, and it will also help you be more resilient when facing negative psychological states from others.

### **7.3 Meditation and full realization on the transiency selflessness of all elements.**

As mentioned in Chapter II, all things and phenomena in this world do not have a separate and fixed entity, but they are composed of many factors. Because they are made up of many different factors, they will gradually fall apart. But we often accept that it is fixed and durable. Because we think our bodies are real and fixed, we try to protect and cherish them every day, we even beautify them, without knowing that our bodies will gradually decay as time passed. The cells in our body change and transform from moment to moment, but we often don't notice it. There will come a day when we will have to say goodbye to our loved ones forever. Even we ourselves will one day return to ashes and dust. We ourselves have to be changed and destroyed like that, let alone the things around us. When you have understood the nature of all things are selfless, then the pairs of oppositional categories such as win and lose, joyous and sad, wealth and poverty... will no longer be a matter with you. At that time, you will have new insight into life with the eyes of wisdom, illuminating the true nature of all things and from there, your soul is always calm and peaceful, even if the storminess of life is happening right next to you.

#### **7.4 Meditation and full realization on the evils of sensations.**

Each of us has to accept a lot of things in life. First of all, we just assume that this body is ours, this mind is also ours. This acceptance is the first source that lead to other acceptance such as in order to preserve our lives, we have to eat and dress, we have to find the houses for us and our relatives to live in, then we will have to receive the sensations of visible objects such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea. From there comes a passion for what makes us happy, enjoyable, and aversion to what makes us uncomfortable or testy. And the more greed we have, the more feelings we experience. From the feelings that are necessary to the feelings that are little necessity and finally the feelings that are luxurious and superabundant for our lives, but because of the habit of collecting and being greedy, we cannot ignore it. In short, each living being, each life is a series of consecutive receiving.

And this very reception is the source of suffering.

As we all know, being away from someone we love is a great sorrow; on the contrary, being close to someone we don't like is also a pain; when we want something but we can't get it is another suffering; when it's hot, we will sweat and we will be cold when it rains; when you get sick, you have to take medicine and suffer a lot of pain... These are the sufferings that we must endure because of having this body and mind.

The method of meditation and full realization on the evils of sensations is applicable to those who often have desire. When we have desire for something, we should contemplate that if we have a feeling, we will suffer a pain, the more we experience it, the more we endure sufferings and the less we experience it, the less we



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endure sufferings. Of course, we cannot abandon all our insatiable desire at once; But we should sequentially abandon what is easy to give up, what can be abandoned, and then we gradually make progress towards the things that are difficult to discharge. The more you let go, the lighter the pain will be. Therefore, in our daily life, let's practice letting go of things that don't belong to us, so that our minds can be peaceful and content. When the mind is at peace, we will firmly face all the fluctuations of life as complicated as it is today.

### **8. RIGHT CONCENTRATION.**

Right Concentration is the further development of above seven factors through meditation. This is the last element of the Noble Eightfold Path, and it is also the must-have of a Buddhist monk in order to reach the realms of ultimate liberation. But if we are not monks. We can still apply it to our lives to bring peace, calm and clarity so we can afford to face life's problems.

As mentioned above, our mind always change and constantly transform. Although we have thoroughly understood the above 7 elements of the Eightfold Path, it is easy for us to be shaken our morale when we are faced with so many things happening every day, from the internet to real life. Therefore, we need to practice Right Concentration through meditation. I recommend that you set aside some time each day to practice meditation. Before going to bed, you just need to spend about 15 minutes to half an hour to meditate. It only takes that time, but you should try to practice regularly every day to wish to make spiritual progress. Details of the method to practice meditation, I will cover in another book. Here I only mention the basic and necessary issues so that you can practice meditation as simply as possible.

### **8.1 Space reserved for practicing meditation.**

The first thing you should do is choose an area for practicing meditation. This area does not need to be very large, but it needs to be clean and airy, with as few items as possible in it. This helps you to be less influenced by your thoughts when meditating.

### **8.2 Additional items when practicing meditation.**

You should buy yourself some incense to burn while meditating. The smoke and fragrance of this material will have the effect of making your mind more peaceful and gentle. Besides, it can also repel mosquitoes and other insects that disturb you during meditation.

### **8.3 Time for practicing meditation.**

You need to choose a fixed time during the day for your meditation. It could be early morning, midday or late afternoon. As long as during this time, everything around you needs to be a little quiet. Because when you begin to accustom practicing meditation, your mind is very easily affected by noisy sounds around. This makes it very difficult for you to concentrate the mind.

### **8.4 Personal hygiene before meditating.**

Before entering the room to practice meditation, you should take a shower and tidy yourselves up neatly. You can take a warm bath, this will bring comfort while you focus on meditation.

### **8.5 Dressing style when you practice meditation.**

You should wear loose-fitting clothes to help blood circulate easily during your meditation. Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothes, this will make it difficult for blood to circulate and will cause many

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diseases in the long run.

### **8.6 Necessary mood before practicing meditation.**

Before deciding to enter the room to practice meditation, you should keep a good and relaxed mood. Do not practice meditation at times when you are in negative mental states such as angry at someone for example...

### **8.7 Posture while practicing meditation.**

You can sit in lotus position, or half lotus position. Sitting with your back straight, without leaning against anything. Your head is slightly bent, but your neck should be in line with the spine.

### **8.8 Choosing a subject to meditate on.**

After sitting down and normalizing the breathing, you should choose a subject to meditate on. For example, you can make your breath into the subject of your meditation by paying attention to it. When you breathe out you know you are breathing out, when you breathe in you know you are breathing in. At this point, your mind is only focused on the breath, and nothing else should be thought of. If while focusing on your breath, a sudden thought occur to you, then you should use Right mindfulness to recognize it. "Oh, my mind is wandering for a short while. Well, return to focusing on the breath immediately." Keep doing this for a while, you will gradually become adept at focusing and watching your breath. Don't be surprised that when you begin to accustom practicing meditation, your mind will not stand still, but will be deep in thought from one thing to another. At that time, you will experience the saying "The mind like a monkey, the thought like a horse." in Buddhism. Then, you should not be discouraged, but try to practice gradually to

master it. But at the beginning of meditation, I advise you not to sit for a long time, just 15 minutes is enough, but regularly and often. Once you've mastered it, you can increase the time for your meditation to 30, 45 minutes, for example.

After practicing meditation for a while, you will feel a significant change in your mind. You will have better and wiser decisions in your life, you will be much calmer and more stately than before. You will face life's events with peace and contentedness that you probably couldn't stand before and you will use negative reactions to deal with them. In addition, practicing meditation on a regular basis will help your body be healthier, the risk of disease is repelled. These are real benefits when you have attained Right Concentration through meditation.

## CONCLUSION

**I**n Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path is considered the middle path. It is the path that lay between two extremes, the first is the tendency to indulge in sensual pleasures and enjoyment, the second is the tendency of self-mortification. The Buddha confirmed that neither of these two tendencies can help the practitioner to attain full enlightenment and liberation from suffering. Thanks to the practice of the Eightfold Path persistently and correctly, an ordinary person can become a Saint in the middle of everyday life with two categories:

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1. Help practitioners achieve the stages of meditation and come to full enlightenment, at ease in the state of Nirvana. This category is mostly for ordained Buddhists.

2. Helping lay people who are still attached to the worldly life achieve their success in life, full of blessings and have a peaceful and happy life with their family and loved ones. In the future, they will also have a good and pure life in the next ones.

In the scope of this book, the author only gives the concepts and ways to apply and practice the teachings of the Buddha in the most practical way to modern life today, with the hope of contributing to eliminating the anxieties, worries, insecurities, stress... that real life brings once you have thoroughly understood the nature of life with the point of view of Buddhism. From there, you can establish yourself the foundation of a solid personal spirituality to face the complex developments and full of pitfalls of today's life.

But it is not only the ordained Buddhists who can achieve full enlightenment and reach ultimate liberation, lay people like us still have the opportunity to achieve enlightenment. It's just that we're still too entangled in mundane life, so it's hard to achieve mental states like the clergies – who have left behind all the bonds and corollaries of a mundane life. In other words, they have a lighter burden than us, so it is obvious that they will reach the destination faster than us. However, we can still develop our noble qualities and we will gradually attain transcendental states of mind if we practice the Buddha-dharma properly, patiently with a strong determination.

If you have peace and happiness in your soul and you see the world around you with your awakening eyes after reading this book.

That will be the greatest reward for the author. It is also the first step as the foundation on your path to enlightenment later. And let's always remember one thing, Buddhism is coming to see, not to hear. Like a person who wants to know the taste of a glass of passion fruit juice, he or she must directly pick up the glass of passion fruit juice and drink it, but can not hear other people describe it that can know.

*My heartfelt thanks to you all.*

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***DEALING WITH MODERN SOCIAL PROBLEMS  
THROUGH THE BUDDHAS TEACHINGS***

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