

THE WORDS OF THE BUDDHA

The Path to Enlightenment

Revealing The Hidden



Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment

Volume 1

Preface	7
Gotama Buddha's Teachings Are a Life Practice	7
Chapter 1	21
Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals	21
Chapter 2	28
Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?	28
Chapter 3	48
Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?	48
Chapter 4	82
The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View	82
Chapter 5	111
The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment	111
Chapter 6	143
The Middle Way: Walking The Middle Way	143
Chapter 7	155
The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice	155
Chapter 8	184
Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance	184
Chapter 9	195
What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?	195
Chapter 10	205
What is Merit?	205
Chapter 11	221
Meditation: Developing Your Practice	221
Chapter 12	258
Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution?	258
Chapter 13	267
Identifying Cravings: Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind	267
Chapter 14	276
Cultivating Healthy Mental States: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity	276
Chapter 15	280
True Love: Love Without Attachment	280
Chapter 16	289
Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose	289
Chapter 17	314
Eliminating Fears: Are You Really Scared?	314

Chapter 18	320
God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will	320
Chapter 19	333
The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death	333
Chapter 20	340
Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness	340
Chapter 21	353
Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet?	353
Chapter 22	360
Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion	360
Chapter 23	372
Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery	372
Chapter 24	381
Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings	381
Image of Gotama Buddha	398
Frequently Asked Questions	405
How to Determine If You Have Attained Enlightenment	428
Author	432
Restoration of The Buddha's Teachings	433
The Path to Enlightenment	433
The Goal	435
An Entire Species of Enlightened Beings	435
Why Have I Decided to Teach The Path to Enlightenment as Taught by Gotama Buddha?	438
Why Have I Decided to Reside and Teach in Thailand in Order to Restore The Teachings of The Buddha Back into Humanity and Create	441
"Heaven on Earth"?	441
Glossary	447

The author is donating 100% of all his proceeds from this book to charitable work to share The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

You are welcome to freely distribute this book.

Please consider providing a donation to support the continued sharing of these Teachings.

Donations for Learning

Learn The Teachings of Gotama Buddha that lead to a stable, calm, and peaceful mind. A more peaceful and loving world where all beings have care and compassion for each other.

By supporting this learning opportunity, you will learn how to progress along The Path to Enlightenment and help offer these Teachings to others through online and in-person learning. Through these Teachings, the world will become a kinder, more peaceful, and loving society.

Consider contributing \$5, \$10, \$15 or any amount you wish to help us continue to offer these Teachings to you and others around the world.

You can make a donation for the development and creation of these Teachings to help you and others using this link.

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THE WORDS OF THE BUDDHA

The Path to Enlightenment

Revealing The Hidden

Volume 1

Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment

Volume 2

Walking The Path with The Buddha

Volume 3

Foundation in The Teachings

Volume 4

Exploring The Path to Enlightenment

Volume 5

The First Stage of Enlightenment
(Stream-Enterer)

Volume 6

The Natural Law of Kamma

Volume 7

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

Volume 8

The Foremost Householders

Volume 9

The Six Sense Bases

Volume 10

The Buddha's Way

Volume 11

The Realms of Existence

Volume 12

Lowly Arts

Volume 13

Generosity

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Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment (Volume 1)

Journey through The Words of The Buddha from the beginning of his first Teaching until his “last words” prior to death.

The book, “Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment” is an essential guide on The Path to Enlightenment to help you learn and progress in your understanding and practice of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. Developed to provide you a framework to understand and practice The Buddha’s Teachings to progress towards the attainment of Enlightenment - a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent.

Comprised of select Teachings from The Buddha with thorough explanations from a dedicated Practitioner and Teacher walking you through step-by-step how to develop a life practice with reading, videos, podcasts, and quizzes to confirm your learning.

This book series is select Teachings from The Buddha organized from the largest and most complete collection of The Buddha’s Teachings on The Path to Enlightenment - The Pāli Canon.

The Pāli Canon, or The Pāli Text, comprises forty-five (45) large volumes of books where Students from the lifetime of The Buddha captured his Teachings. The discourses of The Buddha in The Pāli Canon represent the largest and most complete collection we have of The Buddha’s Teachings in his own words. The Buddha’s Teachings are scattered over multiple volumes of books in The Pāli Canon making it challenging for the average Practitioner to glean the benefit of his Teachings.

The Words of The Buddha book series, has consolidated and organized his Teachings into a series of books, based on specific topics, with explanations of The Teachings from a dedicated Practitioner and Teacher.

You will find books such as Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Volume 7) that are the consolidated Teachings in The Words of The Buddha related to meditation. The Natural Law of Kamma (Volume 6) provides Teachings directly from The Buddha related to the important topic of Kamma. The Foremost Householders (Volume 8) shares Teachings specifically for Household Practitioners who are pursuing The Path to Enlightenment where the mind is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

The Words of The Buddha book series will provide a beginning, middle, and end with detailed Teachings to develop your life practice and the ability to seek guidance with the author of the book series. Learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings of The Buddha, in his own words, with guidance from a Teacher - offered openly and freely to “all beings”.

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Preface

Gotama Buddha's Teachings Are a Life Practice

This book is dedicated to “you” and the complete elimination, destruction, and cessation of suffering or “discontentedness” of the mind. Thus, this book is dedicated to the elimination of discontentedness and the suffering that it causes in the entire world.

The Teachings in this book series, with some effort on your part, will lead you to everlasting peace - a peaceful mind and a peaceful life. It's your personal choices, with these Teachings serving as a guide, that will bring you these results.

We are all walking towards the darkness or towards the light. Which direction you walk is completely your choice.

This book and Teachings are meant to be a primer to help you establish a framework of understanding to ultimately learn, reflect, practice and attain the results of Gotama Buddha's Teachings - Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are not based on “belief”. His Teachings are meant to be practiced so that you can independently observe the truth to acquire wisdom. A Buddha has already done the hard work of figuring out how to attain Enlightenment. You just need to learn and practice his Teachings to improve the condition of the mind and your life.

Understanding how to be an independent active learner, while knowing when and how to seek guidance, is an important quality of mind to be successful on The Path to Enlightenment. You will need guidance from a Teacher.

When you learn these Teachings, and then practice them, you will obtain “wisdom”. You will see the “truth” for yourself without needing to have “belief”. In this way, you will liberate the mind with Teachings that allow you to acquire “wisdom”. The same wisdom that Gotama Buddha understood during his lifetime that leads to Enlightenment.

The newly acquired wisdom will *gradually* improve how you view the world through the mind and how you interact in the world.

It is important that you do not believe anything in this book series and that instead you practice these Teachings to determine the truth for yourself, with

the guidance of Teachers. The mind will not be liberated through belief but instead, the mind will be liberated through observing the truth in these Teachings to acquire wisdom. The wisdom you acquire will allow you to function in life through the truths that you discover in a dedicated and well developed practice of these Teachings.

Today, many people consider Gotama Buddha's Teachings a religion. When, in fact, his Teachings are not a religion. Gotama Buddha was not attempting to create a religion with rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship. His original Teachings do not include any rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship. Gotama Buddha offered a better way to peacefully coexist with ourselves and others through training the mind. His Teachings, when learned and practiced, will teach you how to peacefully exist with yourself and others through understanding The Natural Laws of Existence. The Path to Enlightenment is to eliminate 100% of the discontentedness of the mind and a path to becoming a better human being.

"The mind" is not the brain. The brain is not "the mind". The brain is the organ that controls the functions of "the body". The mind is not tangible as it is not physical in nature. The mind is our consciousness where all intentions for speech and actions originate along with our thoughts, ideas, perceptions, feelings, and emotions arise, are experienced, and then cease to exist.

The problem that Gotama Buddha discovered, and then taught was to help people eliminate the constant craving and desire of "the mind". One of the most significant problems with the human mind is our constant cravings, desires, and attachments. Craving, desire, or attachment is "a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness". Gotama Buddha's Teachings help us to train the mind to eliminate our cravings, desires, and attachments reaching complete inner peace.

Because of the mind's longing for something with a strong eagerness (i.e. craving/desire/attachment), the mind becomes discontent with feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, and many other feelings that cause complications and difficulties in our life. The unEnlightened mind constantly struggles in daily life experiencing discontentedness.

Discontentedness plagues the human mind and most people do not realize these feelings can be 100% eliminated from the human mind.

Humans do not need to live with sadness, anger, guilt, shame, fear, etc. the mind can be trained to completely and entirely eliminate these discontent feelings.

Because the vast majority of humans do not realize there is a problem, they also do not realize there is a solution. Learning, reflecting, and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings leads to a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent, where one never experiences even the slightest feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, and many other discontent feelings.

You may not have known prior to discovering this book that these feelings are a problem and you do not need to live with a discontent mind. But now you do know they are a problem, they can be eliminated, and there is a solution to completely and entirely eliminate discontentedness of mind. Now that you do know there is a problem and that there is a solution, what will you do?

The goal of these Teachings is to attain a Higher Consciousness, Nibbāna, Nirvana, known as "Enlightenment" where the mind resides permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Through these Teachings and the help of Teachers and guides, you can eliminate 100% of the discontentedness in the mind and the suffering it causes. To do this, you will need to establish a solid "life practice".

Meditation is the foundation of these practices which trains the mind and enables the practice of these Teachings in everyday life. It is important for you to find Teachers and guides as, without them, one cannot attain Enlightenment. You will not be able to attain Enlightenment without having Teachers and guides to assist you.

You will need to establish a consistent daily meditation practice to make progress on this path. Without a regular meditation practice, you will find it very difficult to make progress on this path and in daily life. Please see the Chapter "Meditation: Developing Your Practice" to establish a daily practice. You may wisely choose to see that Chapter first so that you can develop a meditation practice that supports you through learning and implementing The Teachings in this book along this path.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are not a religion but rather, a "life practice" that guides one on a path to eliminate sadness, anger, loneliness, fears, depression, stress, and anxiety along with all other unwelcomed feelings.

Enlightenment is the ultimate goal which is a mind that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently. Practicing these Teachings is a path that leads to a better way of life.

This book and book series is an offering with loving-kindness and compassion to help all beings.

The goal of this book and book series is to clarify Gotama Buddha's Teachings in a way that, with the help of Teachers and guides, you can attain Enlightenment thus realizing your own Higher Consciousness. You can attain Enlightenment.

In some sections, Gotama Buddha's words have been included in this book for your learning and reflection. The subsequent books available through this book series focus on sharing "The Words of The Buddha" as shared during his lifetime to help you enrich the learning experience with Gotama Buddha's clear, concise, and direct Teachings. But, you will need to first learn with this book to develop your life practice creating a framework of understanding.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are timeless, and just as applicable today as they were over 2,500 years ago when he first started to teach how to liberate the mind. The human mind has not changed in 2,500 years and is why his Teachings are just as applicable today as they were back then.

Many Practitioners will welcome a book series, like this, in which they can gain a deep understanding of Gotama Buddha's Teachings. It will help you create a well developed understanding and practice in The Teachings of Master Teacher Gotama Buddha - "The Buddha".

This book series starts with this book, "Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment" to support you in establishing your life practice. Then, in the additional books, you will be learning directly through "The Words of The Buddha" with explanations of The Teachings.

During the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, his Teachings were all shared orally. Nothing was written down until after his death. Through forty-five (45) years of teaching, Students of Gotama Buddha remembered his Teachings word for word. The Enlightened mind has a high degree of focus, concentration, clarity of mind, and memorization. Upon Gotama Buddha's death, The Community of Enlightened beings gathered and captured his Teachings into written form which today we refer to as "The Pāli Canon" or "The Pāli Text".

These are forty-five (45) large volumes of books that took over twenty-seven (27) years to translate into the English language. The average person today, does not understand the Pāli language and we do not have to understand the Pāli language. It is best if we all learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings in English so that we have an international Community of Practitioners who are able to discuss The Teachings seeking support and guidance in a common language that is well understood today.

Gotama Buddha did the same thing during his lifetime. Rather than speak the language of the royal family, which he was once a member of, instead he chose to use a common language that was known to the widest audience possible. This helped Gotama Buddha to share his Teachings with as many people as possible during his lifetime so that Students could experience the results of an Enlightened mind. If Gotama Buddha was alive today, there is no doubt that he would teach in the English language in order to reach the widest audience possible so that they could experience the life changing results of an improved condition of mind and an improved condition of one's life.

It was not possible for Gotama Buddha to share his Teachings worldwide during his lifetime. There was no common language across the world and travel throughout the world was limited. But, today we do not have these obstacles and through sharing these Teachings in English, we are able to create more peace and harmony in our own lives and, thus, experience more peace and harmony throughout the entire world.

Today, there are many resources for Teachings described as Buddhist or originating with The Buddha. But it is only when a Practitioner chooses to investigate "The Words of The Buddha" being sourced directly from the original source, The Pāli Canon, that a Practitioner will come to understand the truth of what The Buddha actually taught and be able to implement these Teachings into your daily life to experience the results of Enlightenment.

Through learning and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings, in his own words, The Perfectly Enlightened One's wisdom can penetrate the mind and you can experience the breakthrough to realizing the Enlightened mind.

I have significant gratitude, appreciation, admiration, and respect for Master Teacher Gotama Buddha as his Teachings lead exactly where he said they would. To a steady, calm, stable, and unshakable mind known as Enlightenment.

There are countless unknown and unnamed individuals who are responsible for these Teachings reaching you in this book series. These Teachings have been preserved throughout history over the last 2,500 years through the tireless efforts of Ordained and Household Practitioners. These Teachings have been preserved and shared from one generation to the next because they work.

It is now up to us to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings to experience the Enlightened mind so that we may benefit from an improved existence while also preserving these Teachings for future generations in our hearts and minds.

While books are an outstanding tool to capture The Teachings and share them worldwide, there is nothing more significant than having massive numbers of Enlightened beings in the world who can directly share these Teachings with those who choose to seek guidance in developing their life practice on The Path to Enlightenment. Each of us individually and collectively are just one link in a long chain of Practitioners and Teachers spanning over 2,500 years.

What we choose to do in this time and place will determine how vibrant and sustaining these Teachings are for future generations. It is our work and effort to seek our own Enlightenment that we will experience results for our own mind and lay the ground work for countless more beings after us to experience the same freedom of mind that you are now choosing to pursue.

Many people are interested in improving the world but do not know how. It is only when we are dedicated to improving our own wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline that we will improve the world. Through improving our own life practice through learning “The Words of The Buddha” then, we will have collectively improved the world. But, this requires us to focus on developing our own life practice rather than attempting to change others.

The problem that the unEnlightened mind is experiencing is not the outside world, but the inner world. Training the mind, the inner world, is what produces a peaceful existence. You can’t control other people and what they do. You can only decide to train your own mind to be unaffected by what others do. The goal is not to change others or change the world but instead, by understanding how the world functions through The Natural Laws of Existence, an individual can make wiser choices leading to wholesome outcomes while choosing to live in peace and harmony with all beings.

It is a real struggle to exist in a world that the mind does not understand. It is “The Words of The Buddha” that explain The Natural Laws of Existence guiding the mind to acquire deep wisdom to make better free will decisions through a purified mind leading to wholesome outcomes.

It is important to study and practice The Teachings in this book prior to the study of other texts. This book will provide you a solid foundation for further studies in the remaining books of this book series. Many Students choose to read this book multiple times to deepen their understanding and practice of these Teachings while using the “Learning Resources for Further Exploration” at the end of each Chapter.

Oftentimes we look for ways to learn and study but feel there is no time in our day to fit in something new. Gotama Buddha taught us that it's best to train the mind with *gradual* training and *gradual* practice to experience *gradual* progress. I have observed for myself, this indeed works best.

You could read these books for 10-15 minutes in the morning, mid-day, or evening, and then do some meditation and finally, enjoy a nice day or go to sleep. I have found this helps the mind to rest and relax, leading to a wonderful night's sleep after which I awaken feeling refreshed, calm, and peaceful. This gives you time to understand The Teachings, reflect on them, and put them into practice so that you can see the results of these life-changing Teachings. The mind needs *gradual* training.

Many Students read just one chapter a week of this book to provide time to reflect and independently observe The Teachings as truth. This also provides time to continue to develop a daily meditation practice. The goal is not to just read to complete the book and book series but instead, to *gradually* soak The Teachings into the mind so that you understand The Teachings, can reflect on The Teachings, and then practice The Teachings to experience the results of The Teachings. It is through practicing The Teachings that the condition of the mind *gradually* improves.

You will need to study and practice The Teachings in order to observe the truth and obtain the wisdom of The Teachings. Through your practice of these Teachings, you will gain the results of a more peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy. Through the practice of these Teachings, you will create a more peaceful, calm, serene, and content life with joy and coexist with all other beings peacefully.

I suggest that you read and re-read this book several times as you learn, reflect, practice The Teachings and observe the results. As you progress through the book, learning and implementing The Teachings, you will need continuous learning, growth, and support. This is not a book to read once and put down, like a novel or storybook. This book will provide you with Teachings that guide your life through the pursuit of Enlightenment. As you read and re-read these Teachings throughout the entire book series, you will start implementing the various aspects of The Teachings that lead to acquiring wisdom. You will observe results as you learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to include meditation. The wisdom you acquire through practice of The Teachings will lead to the liberation of the mind by wisdom.

One aspect of these Teachings that is very important is the following, we cannot change how everyone and everything in the world functions. We can change our own mind so that we do not “react” to situations and events but rather we “respond” to the world around us. We can choose to be peaceful,

kind, loving, and warm. We can choose to have wholesome interactions with all people. We can develop healthy qualities of the mind with loving-kindness, compassion, generosity along with other qualities that will produce a peaceful and content mind. It is possible and you can start right here, right now.

The physical body can take a massive amount of pain, suffering, and trauma. With the proper food and water, it can actually repair itself in a relatively short amount of time.

The human mind is exactly the same.

The human mind can take an enormous amount of pain, suffering, and trauma. With the proper Teachings, Teachers, dedication and commitment the mind can repair itself but you need to pursue the learning and growth.

The Path to Enlightenment is to heal the mind in order to attain complete peace and serenity of mind. These Teachings and practices are the solution to the struggles that we have experienced our entire life.

The Path to Enlightenment is the solution to the challenges we experience in the world and the solutions of how to heal from what hurt us so that we never need to hurt again.

The mountain always looks tall when you are standing at the bottom. It is not until you are on your way up or standing at the top that you realize the mountain was not so tall after all. You do not need to climb the mountain all in one day. It takes time. There is support for you along the way.

Anything good takes time.

If The Path to Enlightenment was easy, everyone would already be Enlightened. But it is also not difficult either. At times there will be struggles that are well worth the results, and there will be times where it is quite enjoyable. This is the final struggle of all struggles. Once the mind faces the challenges through being trained to attain Enlightenment, all other struggles are eliminated.

Gotama Buddha shared "not to shrink back from the struggle".

You are welcome to seek guidance to help you through the challenges. There is no other way, as going it alone is not possible. I am here to support you and everyone who chooses to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings.

The Teachings and Teachers are available for you, right here. You only need to provide the dedication and commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings while seeking guidance.

May you be peaceful, may you be safe, may you be well, may you be free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes. May you come to understand the freedom and tranquility of the Enlightened mind.

Enjoy the journey to a peaceful and content mind...and a peaceful and content life.



Master Teacher Gotama Buddha (The Tathāgata)

The end of each Chapter will have “Learning Resources for Further Exploration”. You will be able to explore the audiobook, videos, podcasts, and quizzes to deepen your understanding of the content you read in each Chapter. Please see the ebook for more details on these resources.

As you have questions or need clarification on these Teachings, you are welcome to post those into the Facebook Group “Daily Wisdom - Walking The Path with The Buddha” or contact the author privately for in-depth learning.

Daily Wisdom - Walking The Path with The Buddha
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DailyWisdom999/>

Audiobook: These are recordings of this book. You are welcome to use the Youtube (Read & Listen) version which has the pure audio and displays each page of the book as its being read to you or the Podcast version with pure audio. Both versions are resources to help you learn, reflect on, and practice these Teachings.

Youtube Videos: The Youtube Videos are online classes with visual aids to help you learn The Path to Enlightenment based on this book.

Podcast: The Podcast has the same content as the Youtube Videos without visual aids but with the most clear audio to help you learn The Path to Enlightenment based on this book.

All these resources are available to help you learn and can be utilized based on what you decide is the most helpful in any given situation. Some Students prefer the Youtube Videos with visual aids while others may choose the Podcasts. You can decide as you move forward with each chapter what is working best for your preferred method of learning and what you have access to at that present moment when you are ready to learn.

Most Students will probably find a combination of all these resources to be the most beneficial as you progress in your learning and practice of these Teachings.

You are also invited and welcome to join the live online classes accessible using this link where you will be able to ask questions to seek guidance with the author of this book.

<http://bit.ly/GroupLearningProgram>

You are also invited and welcome to join in-person classes accessible using this link where you will be able to seek guidance with the author of this book through in-depth training in Thailand or at other locations around the world.

<https://www.buddhadailywisdom.com/>

Take a moment to join this Facebook Group so that you will have support as you learn and practice these Teachings. You can post questions for clarification and receive guidance from the author of this book or you can privately message the author of this book for personal guidance. Posting your questions for open discussion is great because then others can join the discussion and learn from your questions.

Continue to read and understand “The Words of The Buddha - The Path to Enlightenment - Revealing The Hidden” book series that has been laid out for all of us to achieve a better way of life.

You can connect to a group of people in a supportive environment for discussion, sharing, and learning through the Facebook group.

Daily Wisdom - Walking The Path with The Buddha

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DailyWisdom999/>

All members are accepted without judgment. It is a healthy place to talk, discuss, learn, and grow. There are resources to help you further on this Path to Enlightenment accessible online through a Group Learning Program.

Group Learning Program: LIVE Interactive Online Classes, Books, Audiobooks, Videos, Podcast and Personal Guidance are available for you.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Introduction & Preface) - Gotama Buddha's Teachings Are a Life Practice (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/KMUhFeu-TaI>

Ep. 500 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Introduction & Preface) - Gotama Buddha's Teachings Are a Life Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--500---Audiobook---Volume-1---Introduction--Preface---Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-Are-a-Life-Practice-e272s9d>

Youtube Video(s)

(Mini-Lesson #1) - Introduction to The Path to Enlightenment

<https://youtu.be/t6bayxzwsc>

(Group Learning Program) - "New Start" of The Group Learning Program

<https://youtube.com/live/PDVGli7KTxA>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

(Part 1 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/et5VVFDDxdw>

(Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Wisdom (Part 1 of 3)

<https://youtube.com/live/tLt9pradDog>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

(Part 2 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/Us1gNt58yQ4>

(Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Moral Conduct (Part 2 of 3)

https://youtube.com/live/y_mQJRvdXfU

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

(Part 3 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/CtYRuNMCx7U>

(Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Mental Discipline (Part 3 of 3)

<https://youtube.com/live/ksqBG0LzHcl>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

(Part 4 of 4)

https://youtube.com/live/e0_750QyKfI

(Group Learning Program) - The Four Stages of Enlightenment & The Ten Fetters

<https://youtube.com/live/QQ5fBkbIVZE>

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Podcast(s)

Ep. 408 - (Group Learning Program) - "New Start" of The Group Learning Program

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--408---Group-Learning-Program---New-Start-of-The-Group-Learning-Program-e1t8pif/a-a95cpgk>

Ep. 409 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Part 1 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--409---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-Part-1-of-4-e1td01f/a-a95s1qn>

Ep. 411 - (Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Wisdom (Part 1 of 3)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--411---Group-Learning-Program---The-Eight-Fold-Path---Wisdom-Part-1-of-3-e1thtoi/a-a96d8rb>

Ep. 412 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Part 2 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--412---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-Part-2-of-4-e1tmlnp/a-a96so1b>

Ep. 414 - (Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Moral Conduct (Part 2 of 3)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--414---Group-Learning-Program---The-Eight-Fold-Path---Moral-Conduct-Part-2-of-3-e1tskbd/a-a97i1g7>

Ep. 415 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Part 3 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--415---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-Part-3-of-4-e1u09k8/a-a97umgl>

Ep. 417 - (Group Learning Program) - The Eight Fold Path - Mental Discipline (Part 3 of 3)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--417---Group-Learning-Program---The-Eight-Fold-Path---Mental-Discipline-Part-3-of-3-e1u6sr7/a-a98mik9>

Ep. 418 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Part 4 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--418---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-Part-4-of-4-e1ual0l/a-a993ae7>

Ep. 420 - (Group Learning Program) - The Four Stages of Enlightenment & The Ten Fetters

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--420---Group-Learning-Program---The-Four-Stages-of-Enlightenment--The-Ten-Fetters-e1ujstv/a-a9a25ah>

Chapter 1

Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals

These Teachings are developed around three core concepts that directly relate to these Teachings and tend to be universal in The Teachings of many other traditions.

There are several traditions of Teachings that have emerged and been practiced over the years. These traditions are often labeled as “religions”. However, the original Teachers of each of these traditions never claimed that they were starting an organized religion. Teachers such as Gotama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, and others came into this world and sought to teach us a better existence and a better way of life; a more Enlightened way.

It was after they died that others gathered The Teachings, labeled them as religion, and assigned rites, rituals, ceremonies, and/or worship that were required to be practiced. Each tradition that exists today has its own unique Teachings and practices that are taught and/or practiced.

Now, the various groups have assembled, organized, and sometimes fight over who is right and who is wrong.

Due to the fighting, religious obligations, and the actions of select “religious leaders” within a tradition, the word “religion”, for some, elicits painful and hurtful feelings. This is due to human actions not because The Teachings themselves are not helpful to humankind.

If we removed the labels of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and all other “religious” labels assigned, we can easily see that these primary “Teachings” as taught by the original “Teachers” could all be summarized into these three core and fundamental Teachings.

- 1.) Universal Love for All Beings
- 2.) Do No Harm
- 3.) Be a Good Moral Person

In review of all worldly traditions, the original Teachers of the world’s traditions and those without an identified founder have advised, encouraged, and taught Teachings that lead humanity towards these three goals.

Each tradition of Teachings that have existed and exist today are mostly motivating and encouraging human beings to become better human beings. While each tradition has its own unique way of explaining their Teachings and sharing how one might look at the world around us, each tradition and the original Teachers were looking to help people to become a better person through practicing these Universal Teachings.

How each tradition explains their Teachings and the clarity of their Teachings is different from one tradition to the next. Some Teachings require interpretation which can be different from one person to the next which makes it difficult for us to have a unified understanding or get in touch with the original Teacher's Teachings.

Since the death of the original Teachers, The Teachings of each tradition have been affected by "impermanence". The fact is that The Teachings shared during the lifetime of the original Teachers have not stayed the same and are not permanent. Everything that exists in the world is constantly changing and never remains permanent. Impermanence has eroded The Teachings of all the original Teachers and all traditions that exist today and, consequently, our global civilization has eroded as well.

So too, the condition of the human mind and the condition of the planet have deteriorated. Our available resources, and our interactions with each other have also deteriorated with craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) very much pervasive throughout humanity. Humans are starting to realize that our human existence has drastically affected the environment and the life we have created on earth has become more miserable. Even though we attempt to look at the positive side of life on a daily basis, a wise and observant individual can clearly see the craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) that is pervasive throughout the world. (Craving, anger, and ignorance are referred to as The Three Poisons, The Three Unwholesome Roots, or The Three Fires and will be shared in detail in the Chapter titled "The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance" (Chapter 8).

It is humans that took The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, Jesus Christ and others and turned them into a religion. Religion categorizes us into different groups and causes us to feel that we should not get along or agree with one another. But I know we can agree that it is important to have "universal love for all beings", "do no harm", and "be a good moral person". We are here to get along, be well, and be peaceful with all beings. Living healthy and contently with all beings is the only way to find a peaceful existence on this earth.

We cannot destroy our earth, have unwholesome relationships, treat others poorly, have craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and ego while expecting to have a perfect life. We must first learn to have peacefulness, contentedness, and love for all beings.

The time has come for humans to wake up to the realization that no one is coming to save us and that if we are interested in a better, more peaceful existence, we need to create this for ourselves.

As a species, we need to evolve to a Higher Consciousness. The human mind and all of humankind cannot maintain the extensive amount of craving, anger, and ignorance that exists in the world today. It's unsustainable!

There has been war, fighting, and destruction in the past and this continues in the present and, we can expect the same in the future if we do not look to resolve the internal conflict that exists within each human mind. Each individual needs to apply effort and energy to attain Enlightenment and to rid the planet of craving, anger, and ignorance from within their own mind.

The time has come for the evolution of our species beyond our current state of existence through the pursuit of Enlightenment, resulting in a Higher Consciousness for all humans. To sustain life on this planet, we must all evolve to a Higher Consciousness and eliminate craving, anger, and ignorance. The time is now.

This book and book series will provide you Teachings that lead you and those around you to a better existence. An existence where people can have love, care, compassion, and generosity. We must learn to be pleased with others' successes, through a peaceful, calm, and content mind.

Our entire worldwide civilization, has been in the process of self-destruction due to the unwholesome intentions, speech, and actions of all individuals and our society as a whole.

We have massive amounts of warring, terrorism, disease, famine, mass shootings, drug addiction, sexual abuse, sexual promiscuity, rape, murders, pregnancy outside of committed relationships, poor working conditions, obesity, destruction of our planet and its resources, suicide, harm to animals, human trafficking, orphans, childhood deaths, financial disasters, corrupt politics and much more.

We are effectively creating “hell” on earth.

These are the results of countless generations of unwholesome decisions. We are experiencing the results of our individual and collective decisions. This is Kamma, the results of our decisions. (More on “Kamma” later in this book.)

Our current civilization has been born out of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) through constant and never-ending craving of “the mind” while attempting to satisfy our desire to build or maintain ego and a protection of the self. This book provides you Teachings that you can learn and practice to see the truth for yourself. You can gain wisdom how to abandon craving, anger, and ignorance while eliminating desires and dissolving the ego and realizing non-self.

This book series provides you Teachings for a “life practice”, not a religion, that when implemented will lead you to a Higher Consciousness, to Enlightenment.

This book will lead you to a life practice to attain the three core Teachings listed below and where you will experience a better existence and a better way of life.

- 1.) Universal Love for All Beings
- 2.) Do No Harm
- 3.) Be a Good Moral Person

You will need to learn and practice these Teachings to obtain the results of an improved existence for you, those close to you, and all of humanity. You will need Teachers and guides to assist you along “The Path”.

No matter what your existing faith and/or practice might be, these Teachings will help you to practice the most important aspects of your current faith tradition, Teachings that were intended by all the “original Teachers” and all the wholesome traditions that exist in the world today.

Learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha is to receive even more clarity on how to become an improved individual on this “path of life” as a continuation of what you have already been working on your entire life no matter what tradition of Teachings you grew up with or if you had no Teachings from any tradition at all.

These Teachings can be practiced within any religious tradition or without any religion at all. A belief in God is not required and will not hinder your progress.

In the practice of these Teachings, there is no one to worship or give praise. There are no “rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship” associated with these Teachings. There is no centralized organization that places requirements on you as an individual.

You will notice The Teachings in this book, in many cases, reflect traditions you may have been previously taught or even basic Teachings shared with you by your primary caregivers as you developed from childhood into adult life. However, the more you learn and practice these Teachings you will observe the clarity and concise approach to Gotama Buddha’s Teachings to train the mind. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings provide a path to “a better way of life” that is straight forward yet profound in its effect at improving the quality of the mind and your life.

These Teachings can be shared with family members and assist you in developing deeper relationships in all your various roles within society.

This is “Developing a Life Practice: The Path That Leads to Enlightenment”.

It’s a better existence, a better way to relate to the world around you, and a way that everyone in society can learn to be accepting, caring, compassionate, trusting, and without fear or other negative emotions.

It’s a way that we can better care for ourselves, each other, and our planet.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 1) - Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/tNV3uLb0bZE>

Ep. 501 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 1) - Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--501---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-1---Universal-Teachings-Love--No-Harm--Good-Morals-e272sgd>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 1 - Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals

<https://youtube.com/live/eMWz9FxDCMQ>

An Introduction to Gotama Buddha's Teachings with Contrasts to Jesus Christ's Teachings

<https://youtu.be/-qwhQg0EOjw>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 1 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/IW1ncFscecM>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 2 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/mgaPYtkvVJE>

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Podcast(s)

Ep. 423 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 1 - Universal Teachings: Love, No Harm, Good Morals

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--423---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-1---Universal-Teachings-Love--No-Harm--Good-Morals-e1urom1/a-a9asicp>

Ep. 31 - An Introduction to Gotama Buddha's Teachings with Contrasts to Jesus Christ's Teachings

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--31---An-Introduction-to-Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-with-Contrasts-to-Jesus-Christ's-Teachings-eecgqt/a-a28qm11>

Ep. 421 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 1 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--421---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Loving-kindness-Meditation-Part-1-of-4-e1unep3/a-a9ae0fj>

Ep. 424 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 2 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--424---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Loving-kindness-Meditation-Part-2-of-4-e1v2hvs/a-a9bifsn>

Chapter 2

Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?

The basic premise for anyone who might consider studying Gotama Buddha's Teachings to attain Enlightenment is the following...

Life is unsatisfactory and in life we all experience “discontentedness or suffering”. To be motivated to study and practice Gotama Buddha's Teachings and thus spend lots of time and effort, the world must be “shocked” into not being so comfortable with “what is” and be able to see “what is the future if more and more humans attain Enlightenment”.

If all humans see the world as a happy, delightful, and a comfortable place to exist, there is no motivation to do anything to improve one's own life.

Thus, one must feel very uncomfortable with life and its existence in order to be motivated to study, learn, implement, and gain the results of Gotama Buddha's Teachings. The results are a liberated mind and a pure mind, Enlightenment.

You may have experienced happiness and excitement in your life but you have also experienced a lot of pain and suffering that you would not want to repeat.

Gotama Buddha's goal was to provide Teachings that gave the mind a place where it could be permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. The mental state of Enlightenment will completely eliminate discontentedness of the mind, for every human. A Practitioner's mind who has attained Enlightenment will have concentration, clarity, and an increased ability for memorization which will prove useful in daily life.

Gotama Buddha understood that the mental state of Enlightenment is permanent while everything else in the world is impermanent. Because of our cravings, desires, attachments and clinging for everything to be permanent, we cause our own discontentedness in the mind. Nobody can cause us discontentedness but instead, we cause it ourselves.

You will learn in these Teachings that you cause all the discontent feelings associated with anger, sadness, boredom, loneliness, stress, anxiety, etc. And, you will learn how to completely eliminate the feelings of anger, sadness, boredom, loneliness, stress, anxiety, or other discontent feelings so that you will never experience a discontent mind.

No one ever said life would be “easy” but it’s also not supposed to be “tough”. Learning Gotama Buddha's Teachings is not “easy” but learning and practicing The Teachings of The Buddha will ensure “life is not tough”.

Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are not to control an individual nor dictate what they should or should not do. But instead, provide guidance that when practiced will lead to Enlightenment, a peaceful, contented, and liberated mind and, thus, a peaceful and content life. Everything in this practice is obtained through personal choice.

A Discontent Mind - There Are No Quick Fixes

Living as a human being can be challenging and difficult even in the best of times. The human mind is vastly misunderstood across all of humanity.

Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are not based on belief. It is important for each Practitioner to learn The Teachings and practice The Teachings so that you can observe the truth in The Teachings for yourself.

It is through understanding the truth in The Teachings and observing these truths in practice that you will attain wisdom to liberate the mind.

These Teachings are meant to assist you in developing a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy where you are unaffected by everyday challenges that produce sadness, worry, anger, stress, anxiety, and other discontent feelings.

Many people feel the goal in life is to be happy, but, happiness is impermanent and cannot be kept forever. When the mind is not happy, thus, unhappy, it will move to sadness, anger, or worse.

Therefore, if we dwell upon happiness and pursue it as a life goal, the craving and desire for happiness will lead to a discontent mind because the mind cannot hold on to happiness forever. Happiness is still impermanent and is not the goal that would lead to Enlightenment or a lasting peaceful mind.

Happiness is impermanent and the constant craving of happiness is the reason why you have not been able to attain lasting happiness in your life.

Gotama Buddha offered Teachings that would provide the mind a permanent place to reside. These Teachings lead to a mind that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy that has fully cultivated generosity, loving-

kindness, and compassion among other wholesome qualities. These Teachings will guide you in developing a mind that has joy in seeing others succeed and is without craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and free from ego enabling the realization of non-self. This is Enlightenment.

Attaining Enlightenment, you would have eliminated discontentedness or suffering of the mind. With every human attaining Enlightenment the entire world would be kind, peaceful and loving.

It is possible.

But you must strive and work to attain Enlightenment through learning and practicing The Teachings so that you can attain the results. No person or entity can “give” you Enlightenment. You must *gradually* progress through learning and implementing these Teachings.

Enlightenment is not a quick fix or an instantaneous result. In English we use the word “Enlightenment” but attaining Enlightenment is not like turning on a “light switch”. The mind will need *gradual* training to learn and practice The Teachings shared in this book and book series with the guidance of Teachers.

Enlightenment is a permanent mental state you can attain through liberating the mind with wisdom.

This is one reason why Enlightenment is permanent.

Once you gain the wisdom that leads you to Enlightenment, you will not “unlearn” that wisdom and the mind will permanently reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. The mind will be “unshakable” and “unaffected” by life situations and all that happens in everyday life. The mind will need *gradual* training in the direction of Enlightenment. Your dedication and commitment to learning and growing is important. Determination, dedication, and diligence applied to your goal of Enlightenment is important.

What Will I Learn?

The Teachings in this book and book series are Teachings that ultimately came from Gotama Buddha, a Teacher and a person that never wanted to be idolized, worshiped, or have his image captured in a statue. It’s not a religion. It’s a way of life. These Teachings and practices lead to a “better way of life”.

Gotama Buddha said, “One who sees The Teachings sees me, one who sees me, sees The Teachings”. Meaning, he was a walking, living, breathing example of his Teachings and if you understand and practice his Teachings deeply enough you can see his Teachings everywhere around you in real life. There is no need to see him or have him exist in the human form because we can see his Teachings in the world, we do not need to see his physical form.

Gotama Buddha is not a God or someone to worship or give praise to. He asks for nothing. He was merely a humble Teacher who asked for nothing and expected nothing in return for his Teachings. He taught without arrogance, pride, or conceit.

The Teachings of Gotama Buddha have been significantly diminished and are practically invisible on this planet. While we have Temples, male Ordained Practitioners, female Ordained Practitioners, and other traces of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, those practicing his Teachings closely, those who truly understand his Teachings and the number of people attaining Enlightenment through his Teachings, is currently minimal but will now be increasing. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings have been affected by impermanence.

The Teachings in this book series present The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment as existed during Gotama Buddha’s lifetime.

While nearly 500 million people in the world are identified as Practitioners of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, there are multiple traditions with different Teachings and practices. The Teachings in this book series are those that existed closest to the time of his death from the Theravada tradition of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. The meaning of Theravada is “teachings of the elders”. The Theravada tradition considers The Pāli Canon as the original source text for what was taught by Gotama Buddha. We do not believe The Pāli Canon but instead investigate The Teachings to learn, reflect, and practice them to independently verify the truth to acquire wisdom. In this way, as the condition of the mind *gradually* improves, reducing then eliminating discontentedness, one can observe what they are learning is the truth.

If the entire world practiced Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, we would not have mass amounts of warring, terrorism, countries fighting, an unwholesome earth, massive storms, people dying in poverty, children without parents, unwholesome drugs/substances, murders, rapes, suicide, incurable diseases or sickness, lack of education and countless other aspects of the world that appear to be causing “self-destruction” of human civilization and the planet we inhabit.

Human beings are causing all these problems in the world which means we can eliminate all these problems in the world through learning and practicing Teachings that lead to a better way of life.

Humans can have generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, be pleased with others' success, evenness of temper especially in difficult situations, treat all people fairly, eliminate craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) while conducting their life in a way that does no harm to themselves, other beings or our planet. There is a better way to live life through understanding and practicing The Teachings that lead to a Higher Consciousness or Enlightenment.

When is this world going to be SHOCKED enough to wake up to the reality that no one is coming to save us? We must save ourselves from the problems that we have created.

All the problems in the world are created by human beings and thus human beings can resolve the problems we have created.

Each person in the world will need to “earn their own Enlightenment”.

Are you ready to experience a life without suffering or discontentedness? Would you like to have focus, concentration, clarity of mind and improved memory? Would you like to learn how to have compassion for all beings with a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy experiencing lasting inner fulfillment? Would you like to create lasting inner peace and have harmony in your relationships?

You will learn how to develop a peaceful, calm, and stable mind that is unshakable, never again experiencing discontentedness.

A Rare Human Existence

Meditate, Monks, do not be complacent, lest you regret it later.

This is my instruction to you.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 43.1)

Gotama Buddha explained that our existence in the human realm is extremely rare and unique. His simile described for us just how rare this existence as a human really is and why we should pursue Enlightenment in this human state or we will regret it later.

Rare That One Obtains the Human State

Monks, suppose that this great earth had become one mass of water, and a man would throw a ring with a single hole upon it. An easterly wind would drive it westward; a westerly wind would drive it eastward; a northerly wind would drive it southward; a southerly wind would drive it northward. There was a blind turtle which would come to the surface once every hundred years. What do you think, Monks, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that ring with a single hole?

'It would be rare, Venerable Sir, that the blind turtle coming to surface once every hundred years, would insert its neck into that ring with a single hole.'

So too, Monks, it is rare that one obtains the human state; rare that a Tathāgata, an Arahant, a Perfectly Enlightened One arises in the world; rare that The Teachings and Discipline proclaimed by The Tathāgata shines in the world.

You have obtained that human state, Monks; a Tathāgata, an Arahant, a Perfectly Enlightened One has arisen in the world; The Teachings and Discipline proclaimed by The Tathāgata shines in the world.

Therefore, Monks, an effort should be made to understand: 'This is discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the cause of discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the elimination of discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness.'

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 56.48)

You have this rare human existence to cultivate the mind while in the human state, develop a pure mind, and escape The Cycle of Rebirth. The human existence is perfect to be motivated to learn and practice these Teachings because the unEnlightened mind experiences a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant and humans have the ability to cultivate the mind. In a human existence, we experience all three types of discontentedness of mind and, thus, have an interest to overcome it by developing the mind and escaping The Cycle of Rebirth.

For a Practitioner who is new to this path or is just starting out, I suggest you set aside The Teachings on The Cycle of Rebirth until there is a well developed understanding and practice of the core and central Teachings. The core Teachings are The Three Universal Truths, The Four Noble Truths, The Eight Fold Path, The Five Precepts with a well developed meditation practice. You will learn these and more through this book series and by connecting with a Teacher to seek guidance.

What happened in the past is in the past. What may or may not happen in the future is in the future. What is important is that right now you are experiencing a discontent mind and focusing on the core Teachings will allow you to experience results of an improved condition of the mind. When you are ready, there are Teachings towards the end of this book on The Cycle of Rebirth and you can seek guidance to guide you in understanding The Cycle of Rebirth. But for now, it is suggested that you focus on establishing a well developed practice of the core and central Teachings.

Do not waste this human existence. Do not be the last person to attain Enlightenment. Seek liberation of the mind by wisdom. Understand that anger, sadness, loneliness and all other unwelcome emotions can be eliminated. Eradicate every drop of complacency. Learn and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha which will completely liberate you from the darkness that has a hold on the unEnlightened mind.

You can decide to start pursuing “The Path” towards Enlightenment by continuing to read, learn, grow, evolve and implement these Teachings. Having a Teacher is helpful and required to attain Enlightenment. These Teachings are not practiced as a religion, but as a way of life or lifestyle and it will be important for you to seek guidance from someone who understands how to guide you in learning and implementing these Teachings into your life.

One key attribute of the mind that you must maintain in your pursuit of Enlightenment and beyond is the interest to learn and be open to all of life’s lessons.

An open mind that learns from every situation but practices The Teachings to find the truth and wisdom in The Teachings, will most likely find Enlightenment. You will find the truth and the wisdom that liberates the mind.

A mind that is closed and not interested in being open to learning from all people, will wander and lengthen their path to final knowledge and liberation of the mind. Many more rebirths will be needed to escape The Cycle of Rebirth with the risk of being reborn into one of the lower realms of existence, afflicted spirits realm, animal realm, or hell realm.

A closed mind may never be liberated because it is not open to learning The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are not to be interpreted but instead, practiced so that one may know the "truth" and gain wisdom leading to liberation of the mind.

It is through your practice that you gain wisdom and know the truth, and through wisdom that the mind is liberated.

So, if anyone ever provides you a Teaching, you would have to practice that Teaching to determine if it's truth. In this way, you can learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to determine exactly what is the truth and what leads to Enlightenment.

In this way, Gotama Buddha's Teachings cannot be interpreted incorrectly because you discover the "truth" in your practice. If someone does interpret The Teachings incorrectly, you discover whether they are correct or incorrect from practicing The Teachings.

Everyone's number one goal in life should be to attain Enlightenment, thus be loving, kind, and compassionate to all beings. Learning The Path to Enlightenment and implementing these Teachings into your life is like walking a path to a better life existence.

We must empty the mind of the negativity that it often holds on to, cultivate a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that has abandoned craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), while dissolving the ego to realize non-self. This is the future of the world and how to create a comfortable existence for all beings where we respect each other and mother earth.

Gotama Buddha provided us Teachings that lead to a better way of life.

Peacefulness, contentedness, a stable mind with generosity, loving-kindness towards all beings, compassion, being pleased for others' success, and calmness is a better way of life in which we experience peace on earth.

Long after his death, people gathered these "Teachings for a better way of life" and made them into a "religion". Gotama Buddha was not a Buddhist and had no plans to create a religion. The term "Buddhist" was created long after his death. He was a Teacher who taught us a better way of life.

Statues were eventually created and, rites and rituals along with many other aspects were added that turned The Teachings into what some consider to be a religion.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are meant to be studied and practiced so that we can obtain the results of a peaceful, loving, compassionate and generous society.

His original Teachings do not contain "belief" or "worship". You should not believe The Teachings or worship Gotama Buddha because when you practice his Teachings, you see the results for yourself observing the truth to gain wisdom. You discover the truth and you have appreciation for his Teachings but do not worship him. *Gradually* learn to practice his Teachings until they become natural for you.

When you practice The Teachings, you see the mind becomes more steady, calm, and peaceful. This is why a society of people practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings is widely peaceful and loving with lots of smiles and care for others.

Look for ways to help others and support others along The Path to Enlightenment through friendly discussions and friendship in a Community of Practitioners.

The measure of a successful nation and a successful society is not by how much money people have, how much land and how much material possessions that exist.

The measure of a successful nation and a successful society is how calm and peaceful the people are among each other. Are the people genuinely peaceful, considerate, loving, warm, kind and open to helping all beings? Do the people work together to help each other to cultivate a warm loving society? Is there fighting, racism, hatred, ill will, greed, hate groups, mass shootings, no time for family, all work, and no time for a peaceful coexistence? That is not success; it is not freedom.

If you would like to model a “truly successful and peaceful” society, look at Thailand. These people have figured out how to peacefully co-exist for multiple centuries and are Practitioners of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. While Thailand is not perfect, there are many wholesome attributes of Thai society that can be attributed to their culture being rooted in The Teachings of The Buddha.

It’s not an experiment - its proven truth as we can observe the polite, kind, friendly, and respectful peacefulness among many who live in Thailand.

How did people learn during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha?

Gotama Buddha attained Full and Perfect Enlightenment through independent realization of Enlightenment. In the pursuit of independently realized Enlightenment, a person obtains extensive amounts of wisdom in order to attain their own Enlightenment without any Teachers.

Gotama Buddha’s knowledge is represented by all the soil on the earth while what he taught during his lifetime that leads to Enlightenment was represented only by the soil that existed under his finger nail.

During the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, there were many seekers of wisdom.

Recognizing Gotama Buddha’s high degree of Enlightenment as The Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, humans asked him questions and received Teachings. This is how people learned.

As a Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, he had extensive amounts of wisdom represented by all the soil of all the earth.

Gotama Buddha only ever shared Teachings that liberate the mind to attain Enlightenment and would only teach that which people asked and which helped lead the people to Enlightenment. He did not push or force his Teachings onto others but instead, only taught those who were seeking guidance with him through asking questions. However, he did not answer all questions asked of him because the answers were not beneficial and did not lead to Enlightenment.

Through the questions people asked, Gotama Buddha understood what people needed to know so that he could guide them to Enlightenment. Gotama Buddha would not have enough time during his lifetime to teach “everything” that he knew as a Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha. That would be too difficult and lengthy.

So, it is questions from the Students, that allowed Gotama Buddha to provide The Teachings people needed to liberate their mind. You should also view this practice as an independent journey, in which, you seek guidance from Teachers but you ensure you are asking questions to seek more and more knowledge from your Teachers. Only a true Buddha would be able to attain Enlightenment without the guidance of any Teachers. Since you are not a Buddha, you will need guidance from a Teacher.

Today, it seems that many “want” and “crave” to teach and few are willing to apply determination, dedication, and diligence to learn.

Due to extensive amounts of craving to show their wisdom and increased amounts of ego (i.e. arrogance), it is extremely common for people to share their information and rare for people to ask questions to learn from others.

Many want to teach but rarely are people interested to learn.

If humanity is going to evolve past its current state of existence, there will need to be open minded people who are interested to learn, to ask questions and gain The Teachings needed to liberate the mind of billions of humans on this planet.

When you know of someone that has wisdom you’d like to acquire, ask them questions and listen attentively to the answers. Then, ask them more questions and still more.

Start listening and learning to gain knowledge. Let the Teacher know what questions you have, so they can guide you to liberate the mind by wisdom through your own practice of these Teachings.

Establishing a Solid Practice of These Teachings

To get started learning and practicing these Teachings, it is important that you develop a consistent meditation practice to train the mind which includes guidance from Teachers. The Chapter “Meditation: Developing Your Practice” (Chapter 11) will guide you in establishing a dedicated meditation practice.

You will need The Teachings, Teachers, dedication and commitment to learning and growing towards attaining Enlightenment.

In the world of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, there are several sources of information and Teachings.

It is important that you source The Teachings from a reliable source that is dedicated to the accurate translation of The Pāli Canon. Assembled into forty-five (45) volumes of books, the Pāli text or Pāli Canon is the original source of Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

This book and book series have reliable translations of Gotama Buddha's Teachings and the experiences of a dedicated Practitioner and Teacher to guide you in learning and practicing The Teachings.

Internet sources such as Wikipedia and others are not considered reliable sources of The Teachings. When you find Teachers who have attained Enlightenment, they will have a reliable source of The Teachings. (More on how to find Teachers who have attained Enlightenment later in this book.)

Study these Teachings and practice The Teachings so that you can independently observe the truth with the help of Teachers. Do not just believe anything you learn in this tradition of Teachings, including those Teachings in this book series. Belief will not liberate the mind through wisdom. It is only when you observe the truth in The Teachings that then becomes wisdom, will you understand the truth of reality so the mind can be liberated to attain Enlightenment.

The Pāli Canon, the source of Gotama Buddha's Teachings, does not have everything you need to attain Enlightenment. This is why having this book series and Teachers who have attained Enlightenment and who share their experience is important as a guiding light for you.

This is why Gotama Buddha encouraged us to learn and practice The Teachings. He was encouraging us to practice The Teachings to determine the truth for ourselves with guidance from Teachers where you are attaining growth.

You will know The Teachings are truth if you practice these Teachings and they produce results which liberate the mind. As you study and practice The Teachings, you should notice that the mind *gradually* becomes more peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

You should have observed truth in your practice and notice that The Teachings you study and the practice you develop are progressing you further along the path. Then you will know for sure that The Teachings and Teachers you are learning with is accurate and are helpful.

If the mind is abandoning such feelings as, anger, hatred, judgment, ill will and is cultivating such qualities as generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity then The Teachings you study and the practice you have established is leading you on the right path. There are many qualities of the mind that you will eliminate and cultivate. As part of learning and practicing these Teachings, you should notice *gradual* improvements in the mind as you near closer and closer to Enlightenment.

It is your practice of The Teachings that sorts through the impermanence that affects all things, including the impermanence that affects The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. It is your practice of The Teachings where you discover the truth to liberate the mind.

As you progress in your learning and practice, reflect on The Teachings through practice of The Teachings, so that you can determine the truth for yourself.

In this way, you will not be misled because the benefits of what you learn and practice are independently observable. These Teachings and practices are based on guiding you to discover the truth and are not based on belief.

The Teachings and practices in this book will assist you on the journey to Enlightenment.

All the benefits you attain through these Teachings and practices are based on your personal choices to learn and practice The Teachings closer and closer to that which are known to produce Enlightenment.

A wise one is not going to hope, dream, or wish for awakening of the mind but instead, take consistent and deliberate steps towards attaining their own awakening to the Enlightened mind.

Rules of Forbidden Activity or Guidance that Leads to Enlightenment

Oftentimes, Gotama Buddha's Teachings are thought of or discussed as "rules of forbidden activity". Some will even translate his Teachings as "training rules".

In my opinion, if a Practitioner approaches The Path to Enlightenment in this way, it is harmful to deeply understanding The Teachings of Gotama Buddha and can inhibit one from attaining the objective of Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha shared Teachings that he knew would lead the mind to Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a peaceful, calm, serene and content mind with joy that is permanent. The mind has eliminated all discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

All discontent feelings are eliminated from the mind 100% with the mind residing perfectly in the middle - peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

To attain the mental state of Enlightenment, a Practitioner needs to learn The Teachings with guidance and practice these Teachings to independently observe the "truth" for themselves acquiring wisdom.

It is through observing The Teachings in practice that one acquires wisdom. The mind then functions through this newly found wisdom making wholesome decisions based on the wisdom of The Teachings.

All progress on The Path to Enlightenment is attained through making wholesome individual choices, wholesome individual decisions as part of one's own "free will".

Following "rules of forbidden activity" will not lead a Practitioner to making wholesome choices based on the wisdom they acquired through learning and practicing The Teachings.

For Gotama Buddha's Teachings to be "rules", he would have had to create a doctrine of rules with an organization to collect, distribute, and enforce those rules.

That is not what Gotama Buddha did.

He offered Teachings that he knew lead to the mental state of Enlightenment, a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent, acquired through wise decision making by the individual Practitioner. The mind is liberated through wise decision making based on wisdom.

Through Students learning and practicing these Teachings, a Practitioner can observe through their own learning and practice that the condition of the mind improves.

Anger and frustration in the mind is slowly and gradually reduced and ultimately completely eliminated - along with all other discontent feelings. Individual Practitioners can observe for themselves that The Teachings and practices shared improved the condition of the mind through training of the mind.

Nothing Gotama Buddha taught is based on belief but instead, Teachings are shared with guidance that when learned and practiced can be observed as truth to acquire wisdom.

For one to learn and practice Gotama Buddha's Teachings is a personal choice based on free will decisions.

To attain Enlightenment is not to "follow rules of forbidden activity" but instead "learning and practicing Teachings with guidance from a Teacher".

Gotama Buddha did not establish a set of rules to be enforced but instead, shared Teachings with guidance that through your own wholesome personal choices will lead the mind to Enlightenment - if you choose to learn and practice with the guidance of a Teacher.

There are no rules, forbidden activity, or certain things that Gotama Buddha necessarily allowed or disallowed.

His Teachings are guidance that you can choose to learn and practice or not.

If his Teachings are rules of forbidden activity, who is coming to enforce those rules?

Surely not Gotama Buddha or anyone else.

Learning and practicing The Teachings as guidance will lead a Practitioner towards making countless wholesome decisions not because of rules or enforcement of said rules, but because the Practitioner learns through experience, then chooses to make wise wholesome decisions leading to good wholesome results - the Enlightened mind.

Enlightenment is a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent based on personal choices to learn and practice Gotama Buddha's Teachings with guidance from a Teacher.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are guidance to learn and practice through personal choice. Not rules. The mind will awaken to Enlightenment as it gains wisdom in The Natural Laws of Existence (i.e. The Buddha's Teachings) and decides to develop a life practice based on wise decision making.

The Problem - The Wisdom of Enlightenment Has Been Lost

Gotama Buddha lived over 2,500 years ago sharing The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment.

During his lifetime, it was well known to people who were learning, reflecting, and practicing with him as their Teacher, exactly what Enlightenment is and how to attain it.

This wisdom remained for 500 years after the death of The Buddha. But thereafter, this wisdom has gradually declined and diminished to the point where we are today, 2,500 years later. Gotama Buddha predicted this would occur.

The vast majority of the world does not understand what Enlightenment is and how to attain it. The Path to Enlightenment, while once was strong and vibrant during the lifetime of The Buddha, has now practically disappeared.

There are very few beings in existence today who understand what Enlightenment is and how to attain it.

The Universal Truth of Impermanence has drastically affected humanity's understanding of The Path to Enlightenment.

This occurred through the lack of focus and diligence to maintain The Teachings of The Buddha as vibrantly as existed during his lifetime. People gradually and slowly mixed and blended various traditions and thoughts into The Buddha's Teachings which, while perhaps well intended, have only served to dilute humanity's understanding of The Path to Enlightenment and, thus, have made it extremely difficult for countless beings to experience Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent. The Enlightened mind no longer experiences any discontent feelings. All discontentedness such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc., has been completely eliminated from the Enlightened mind.

Gotama Buddha's objective is for his Teachings to be shared worldwide so that all beings can experience the Enlightened mental state. However, during his lifetime, it was impossible to share his Teachings worldwide. It has now come to us to be able to actively learn, reflect, and practice his Teachings, in such a way, that they are restored and shining in the world so that countless individuals can attain Enlightenment today and in multiple generations to come.

But, in order to accomplish this goal, we will need to stay determined, dedicated, and diligent to learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings of The Buddha that he shared over 2,500 years ago. We will need to be diligent to ensure that we are not diluting his Teachings through mixing various traditions and practices that are not part of The Path to Enlightenment.

Every Practitioner will need to decide, are they interested in being part of the problem or part of the solution.

The solution takes time, effort, energy, and resources to be committed enough to restoring The Buddha's Teachings back into humanity, in such a way, that is highly beneficial to countless individuals today and long into the future.

Remaining part of the problem requires no time, effort, energy, or resources. It just requires continued complacency and lack of attention to the active learning, reflecting, and practicing of "The Words of The Buddha". I suggest it would be unwise to remain part of the problem as one will continue to experience discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

The Solution - Restoring The Buddha's Teachings Back into Humanity

If you would like to be part of the solution, I would like to encourage you to actively learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings of The Buddha, in such a way, that does not include the diluting or mixing of his Teachings with other traditions. It is The Teachings of The Buddha that lead to Enlightenment, not those that are blended and mixed that only serve to dilute The Path to Enlightenment for all those who aspire to experience Enlightenment.

The primary obstacle or obstruction that hinders Practitioners from the attainment of Enlightenment is ignorance (unknowing of true reality). This is a taint/pollution of mind where the Practitioner lacks wisdom to understand the true Path to Enlightenment. This unknowing of true reality creates an obstacle or obstruction that keeps the mind trapped in the unEnlightened state continuing to experience continued discontentedness and the suffering it causes. The only way to remove this hindrance is to seek guidance with a Teacher in the true Teachings of The Buddha using The Words of The Buddha. It is The Teachings of The Buddha that will awaken the mind to Enlightenment through independent verification of his Teachings to acquire wisdom, thus, removing this obstruction to Enlightenment.

Through dedication to restoring The Teachings of The Buddha within your own life practice by acquiring wisdom using The Words of The Buddha, you are doing your part to contribute to restoring his Teachings back into humanity for the benefit of countless beings that exist now and long into the future. All of humanity can evolve so that everyone can attain Enlightenment creating the most peaceful world we have ever imagined. It will be like "heaven on earth".

You are invited to join this Community to only learn and practice "The Words of The Buddha", in such a way, that leads to your Enlightenment and the restoration of The Buddha's Teachings so that you and countless beings can experience the peacefulness, liberation of mind, and complete elimination of discontentedness and the suffering it causes, known as Enlightenment.

The Words of The Buddha Book Series

<https://www.buddhadailywisdom.com/freebuddhabooks>



“Thank you” for choosing to learn and practice Gotama Buddha’s Teachings.

You are making the world a better place through developing your life practice based on “The Words of The Buddha”.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 2) - Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings? (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/3nPs6z273aQ>

Ep. 502 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 2) - Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--502---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-2---Why-Study-Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-e272sh1>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 2 - Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?

<https://youtube.com/live/E5yhvAgmckK0>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 3 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/VIDex-4T6rQ>

Podcast(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 2 - Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--426---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-2---Why-Study-Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-e1v86ji/a-a9c5i19>

Ep. 427 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 3 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--427---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Loving-kindness-Meditation-Part-3-of-4-e1vcdc0/a-a9cjd8>

Chapter 3

Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?

There is quite the hesitation in some people to discuss "Enlightenment", "Nibbāna", "nirvana", "nippon", a "spiritual awakening", a "Higher Mind", a "Higher Consciousness", etc. A person who has attained Enlightenment would never tell you they are experiencing Enlightenment, and if they do, would you believe them?

Enlightenment is a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent. Enlightenment is the elimination of craving, anger, and ignorance, dissolving of the ego and realization of non-self. An Enlightened mind has eliminated 100% of all discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc. You do not need to live with the constant struggles and burden of these unwelcome and discontent feelings. You can eliminate them through The Path to Enlightenment.

The mind needs to be *gradually* trained to eliminate craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and it is these Teachings on The Path to Enlightenment that will help you to learn exactly how to accomplish this goal.

The Path to Enlightenment is a journey of growing, learning, and evolving through the gaining of wisdom or knowledge that develops a pure mind through training the mind in a "life practice". There is *gradual* training and *gradual* practice that results in *gradual* progress.

Only you can do this important work to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to improve the condition of the mind and your life. Everything is experienced through the mind, so through training the mind in this way, one is then able to make wiser decisions through your own free will to improve your life. Accomplishing this goal, a Practitioner's mind will then permanently reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Through The Path to Enlightenment, you will attain a stable, peaceful, and steady mind. You will develop lasting inner fulfillment and a content mind.

Enlightenment is attained *gradually* over time through learning and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings so that you can observe truth that will allow you to acquire wisdom. The mind is *gradually* liberated to attain

Enlightenment through acquiring wisdom to know the true reality of existence by learning and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings - The Natural Laws of Existence.

The unEnlightened mind does not understand "true reality" and through its misperceptions of how things function in the world, one makes unwise decisions leading to unwholesome results which includes discontent feelings.

The Natural Laws of Existence are those aspects of the world that explain the way things happen in the world and are independently verifiable. They are not clearly seen by the untrained and unwise mind.

For example, The Natural Law of Kamma is a Natural Law of Existence.

The Buddha's Teachings explain these natural laws so that through gaining this intellectual learning you can apply effort reflecting and practicing to observe the truth for yourself acquiring wisdom of The Natural Laws of Existence. Everything that we experience is based on these natural laws. Because these natural laws exist throughout the world and the world functions through these natural laws, once you learn them and reflect on them, you can see the truth of what The Buddha is explaining through the practice of his Teachings.

The Buddha explains in his Teachings such as The Three Universal Truths, The Four Noble Truths, The Eight Fold Path, The Five Precepts, The Natural Law of Kamma, etc., how the world functions through these natural laws and with that wisdom, a Practitioner can then make wiser decisions, no longer struggling with difficulties through the unknowing of these natural laws. And, this is why it is important to not believe The Teachings but instead, to learn, reflect, and practice so that you can see the truth for yourself of what these natural laws are and how they function so that you can acquire deep and profound wisdom to better operate through these natural laws making wiser decisions leading to wholesome outcomes.

The Buddha's Teachings in this book series will explain these natural laws in a way that you can learn, reflect, and practice to acquire the wisdom of these natural laws leading to wiser decision making resulting in wholesome outcomes for your life.

It is a real struggle to exist in a world that the mind does not understand. It is "The Words of The Buddha" that explain The Natural Laws of Existence guiding the mind to acquire deep wisdom to make better free will decisions through a purified mind.

“The mind” is not the brain. The brain is not “the mind”. The brain is the organ that controls the functions of “the body”. The mind is not physical in nature, it is not tangible and cannot be touched. But the mind can be trained.

The mind is our consciousness where our intentions for speech and actions originate along with our thoughts, ideas, emotions, feelings, decisions, and perceptions, arise, are experienced, and then cease to exist. They are impermanent or temporary.

Enlightenment is attainable. It's not something to be shy about or only talked about with a close group of friends who won't embarrass you.

Enlightenment is thought, by some, to be unachievable or something that only Ordained Practitioners or highly religious people can attain. I am here to tell you this is not true.

Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, non-faith Practitioners, and all forms and labels of humans that are assignable can earn Enlightenment and experience a life without suffering or discontentedness. Let's just think of everyone as a human without labels. That is best. We are all humans and a way to a better life is for everyone to attain Enlightenment. It's like "heaven on earth".

Enlightenment is attainable during your current lifetime or at death. If you have not attained Enlightenment during this lifetime or at death, you will be reborn back into another existence. “The Cycle of Rebirth” will continue with a significantly rare opportunity to ever be reborn into the human realm again. Beings in the human and heavenly realms can attain Enlightenment.

Buddhism is a religion that people invented. Gotama Buddha offered Teachings as a Teacher, others made them into a religion. The Path he described to Enlightenment does not need to include religion.

If you find yourself not as engaged with the “rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship” of an organized faith practice, this could be an indication that you are well on your way towards Enlightenment. Someone that is pursuing a path towards Enlightenment will typically step away from organized religion realizing that rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship of organized religion are not required for one to achieve a better life.

You can practice a good moral life where you do no harm to others sharing universal love and compassion because you “know” it's the “right” thing for life, not because a specific religion has told you what is right or wrong.

You can attain Enlightenment as a regular person living in your home. Enlightenment has no judgment or discrimination. Enlightenment is not held or reserved for a special class of people. Enlightenment is for all people.

Earning Enlightenment is challenging and takes a lot of work, but it is attainable. There are people that have experienced Enlightenment while living a normal and productive life in modern times.

Let's open up the stigma of talking about Enlightenment and accept that it should be the goal of every human to attain this state of mind. Once you are experiencing Enlightenment and know the path, you can share it and help others on the path. Should you choose, you can learn the path now.

Enlightenment is nothing to prop up an ego against or state that someone is higher than anyone else. Someone with Enlightenment is not a special person or a special class of person. In fact, if someone expresses these thoughts or thinks this way, you can be sure they have not experienced Enlightenment.

Now, let's discuss: **What is Enlightenment?**

Enlightenment is a mind free of craving/desire/attachment, anger/hatred/ill will, and ignorance/delusion/unknowing of true reality with the realization of non-self and dissolving of the ego. (More on all these topics later in this book and book series.)

Enlightenment is a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that is permanent. Enlightenment is the elimination of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), dissolving of the ego and realization of non-self.

An Enlightened being is experiencing these mental qualities for the rest of their life.

Peaceful: free from disturbance; tranquil

Calm: the absence of nervousness, agitation, or excitement in the mind

Serene: calm, peaceful, and untroubled; tranquil

Content: a state of satisfaction

Joy: pleased and delighted not associated with any specific object; unconditioned gladness; the Practitioner is not attaining it by craving/desire/attachment.

These definitions explain what one is experiencing at “all times” once the mind is Enlightened. These mental qualities are permanent for the Enlightened mind as they are not based on any impermanent condition.

These mental qualities do not arise, do not change, and do not fade away. They are unconditioned.

An Enlightened mind has eliminated 100% of all discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc. The mind will have a high degree of focus, concentration, memory, and clarity of mind. You do not need to live with the constant struggles and burden of these unwelcome and discontent feelings. You can eliminate them through The Path to Enlightenment.

The Path to Enlightenment is a purification of the mind. Having attained Enlightenment, the mind will be purified and be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy having eliminated 100% of all discontentedness - permanently.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will have eliminated The Ten Fetters. These are also referred to as “taints” or “pollution of the mind”. A simple way to think of the experience of Enlightenment, is that an Enlightened being, having eliminated 100% of all discontentedness, will always be in a good mood. There is never a time when an Enlightened being will experience a bad mood. The good mood is permanent because the mind has been trained through the elimination of all pollution of mind and conditions that cause a bad mood.

You will have an interest in giving and sharing known as generosity. The mind will have a genuine interest in seeing all beings be well or loving-kindness. The mind will have concern for the misfortune of others or compassion. There will be joy in others’ success even though you did not contribute to their success or sympathetic joy. The mind will have evenness of temper, especially in difficult situations, or equanimity. You will be able to treat all beings equally. The mind will have acquired deep wisdom in how to practice these qualities of mind and others through the attainment of Enlightenment.

You no longer pursue cravings or desires but seek only what you “need” in life, not what you “want”.

You will have trust in all beings. You will not blame others for the problems you face.

A mind experiencing Enlightenment will have an unshakable calmness, steadiness, and be “content” or “satisfied with what is” experiencing no discontentedness.

When you attain Enlightenment, you will clear out unwholesome thoughts, not cling to the past or future. The mind will be able to live clearly in the present moment where it can be peaceful. You will have a pure mind to conduct your daily life and make free will life decisions through wisdom that result in wholesome outcomes.

Enlightenment is achievable by all humans. Children were known to attain Enlightenment as young as age 7 during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha.

The more one understands and knows what Enlightenment is and is not, the more likely they will be to attain this mental state. This chapter is to help you understand the goal so that you will be able to progress towards the objective and know when the mind has arrived.

As you pursue Enlightenment, you will be able to eliminate your cravings and addictions. You will be open and trusting of all beings and not see another as an enemy. You will not discriminate or judge others. You will not have a desire to always be “right” and argue. If these exist now, you need more growth and more inner development to fully awaken to the Enlightened mind. The pursuit of Enlightenment is a *gradual* pursuit, a path towards a better life. It is also a life without suffering or discontentedness of mind. It’s a higher state of consciousness that allows you to function in life with ease and smoothness. You clear the clouds of darkness that form discrimination, judgment, and arrogance, among other unwholesome qualities of mind.

Gotama Buddha described that when one has attained Enlightenment they “lay down the burden” or “lay down the stress”. This refers to the burden or stress of life and the carrying of unwelcome emotions and feelings caused by the mind’s mental longing with a strong eagerness (craving/desire/attachment) which produces discontentedness.

Because one aspect of attaining Enlightenment is to extinguish any and all craving (mental longing with a strong eagerness), you must not also have craving and desire to attain Enlightenment. When there is craving, there can be no Enlightenment. Therefore, we pursue Enlightenment as an interest, goal, or objective without craving nor desire. Craving, desire, and attachment are defined as “a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness”.

Enlightenment is not happiness as happiness is an impermanent feeling that you cannot maintain permanently. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings provide the

mind with a path to Enlightenment, a permanent mental state that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Many feel the goal of life is to be happy but this is not possible. Permanent happiness is an unrealistic goal and will only lead to further discontentedness when the mind cannot maintain the feeling of happiness long term. If the mind is not happy, it will move to sadness, anger, or worse. Happiness is a pleasant feeling and is considered discontent because it is impermanent. Since the mind cannot reside in happiness permanently, it is unsatisfying. The mind is shaken up when experiencing conditioned pleasant feelings and once the pleasant feelings are gone, one is left with painful feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, etc.

Happiness is a feeling that is part of the three aspects of a discontent mind. A discontent mind will experience pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant based on an impermanent condition, rather than be inwardly peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy not based on a condition. The Enlightened mind is experiencing unconditioned peacefulness, calmness, serenity, and contentedness with joy and, therefore, it is permanent since these mental qualities are not based on an impermanent condition.

Conditioned happiness is temporary and will not last forever. When the mind is not happy, it will move to another feeling and, thus, the unEnlightened mind cycles through all these impermanent feelings continuing to be discontent because it is basing its internal feelings on impermanent conditions.

Happiness is based on certain conditions that cause the mind to be happy. When those conditions are removed, the happiness will be temporary and the mind will move to another feeling. The feeling of happiness is impermanent because it is based on certain conditions that need to exist to create the feeling of happiness in the mind.

One who has attained Enlightenment will have a permanent mental state of joy. Having attained Enlightenment, the joy experienced is without conditions and not based on an impermanent situation, object, or experience and, therefore, is permanent.

One can be happy without having the mental state of joy. To be joyful is a mental state, not a temporary feeling like happiness. Happiness can exist with ill will or hatred while the joyful mental state of Enlightenment would not include ill will or hatred. A person who has attained Enlightenment will not have ill will or hatred.

Having attained Enlightenment, the mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. This is a permanent mental state where the mind can reside. As you attain Enlightenment, the mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

You will laugh, joke, and have fun but you will not allow the mind to dwell in conditioned happiness because the mind will know it is impermanent. Instead, the mind will be trained to acquire unconditioned joy which is permanent because the mind is not latching onto impermanent conditions to create the inner joy.

You will laugh, joke and have fun but then be able to easily bring the mind back to the middle where the mind is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

If the mind is unwilling to let go of impermanent conditioned happiness, it will never experience permanent unconditioned joy of the Enlightened mind.

With your current state of mind, you might think that a steady, calm, and stable mind is impossible or unattainable. However, if you accept that these things are attainable, it is just a matter of learning, implementing, and experiencing this important change in your life. You can pursue Enlightenment in this lifetime and the first step is making the decision that it is attainable and that you WILL pursue it.

As you start to learn and implement The Teachings, found throughout this book series, you will notice positive results. Slowly over time, the mind and your life will improve as you understand and implement The Teachings. You do not need to have belief, you will see the results when you implement The Teachings to observe the truth acquiring wisdom.

Believing in God is not required and it will not hinder you in the process of pursuing Enlightenment. Just learn and implement these Teachings because you know that they are helping you to create a better life for yourself and those around you.

Enlightenment is not a mystical and mysterious existence or a status of one being higher than another. In fact, it's just the opposite. It's learning that a polluted mind leads to a life of suffering and discontentedness.

Each person should make Enlightenment their number one goal in life.

By attaining Enlightenment, all things are possible. Whether you would like to be a good partner, parent, friend, Student, employee, boss, sibling, etc., the

process of earning your own Enlightenment will enable you to fulfill all those roles, and any others you wish with a high degree of clarity of mind.

Enlightenment is attainable. You can do it. You will enjoy much more from life in the process of pursuing Enlightenment.

What are the advantages of attaining Enlightenment?

There are significant benefits that one will experience through the pursuit and attainment of Enlightenment such as:

- Increased and high degree of focus
- Increased and high degree of concentration
- Improved and high degree of memory
- Clarity of thought and mind

An Enlightened being will no longer experience any discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

An Enlightened being will have deep wisdom in which to conduct daily life. They do not argue, fight, or have any hostility.

They are polite, kind, friendly, respectful, calm, caring, etc. They deeply understand what causes harm in the world and, thus, do not cause any harm through their intentions, speech, actions, or livelihood so no harm comes to them.

An Enlightened being can create healthy personal and professional relationships with ease.

Because of these benefits and others, their mind and their life are peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy for the remaining time of their life, their last life.

Enlightenment is a permanent mental state.

Why pursue Enlightenment?

1.) To attain complete and ever lasting peace of mind and a peaceful life where the mind resides permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy eliminating 100% of all discontent feelings. To acquire a high degree of focus, concentration, an improved memory, and clarity of mind.

- 2.) To share with others how to attain ever lasting peace of mind and how to obtain a peaceful life where their mind resides permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. To help others acquire a high degree of focus, concentration, an improved memory, and clarity of mind.
- 3.) To benefit all of humanity through the elimination of your own pollution of mind. You will eliminate all unwholesome results from your decisions through wise decision making, thus, create a more peaceful humanity through cleaning up your own unwholesome conduct to attain a peaceful mind.
- 4.) To respect Gotama Buddha for his Teachings. The best way to show respect to a Teacher is to learn and practice their Teachings.
- 5.) To share these Teachings with your family, friends, those close to you, and your homeland to assist in creating a more peaceful life for all those closest to you and all of humanity.
- 6.) If you are an Ordained Practitioner, to respect Household Practitioners for their support of your journey to Enlightenment. The Household Practitioners support you and you should support them through a dedicated practice of these Teachings where you return The Teachings to them to benefit their life. It is Kamma!

Do you need any other reasons?

How do you attain Enlightenment?

To pursue Enlightenment, you must learn and implement The Teachings of:

- A.) The Three Universal Truths
- B.) The Four Noble Truths
- C.) The Eight Fold Path
- D.) The Five Precepts
- E.) The Brahmā-vihāras
- F.) The Ten Fetters
- G.) The Seven Factors of Enlightenment
- H.) Extensive Meditation Training

There are plenty of other Teachings and you can explore them all. However, these are some of the core Teachings to create a solid foundation for you to work towards Enlightenment in your life practice. A wise Practitioner might choose to focus on developing an understanding and practice of only The Three Universal Truths, The Four Noble Truths, The Eight Fold Path, The Five Precepts, and developing a meditation practice to get started. Then, as results are being experienced, expand into deepening your practice through

all the other Teachings. You will need to seek support and guidance to accomplish the goal of developing your life practice.

Having Teachers or guides to assist you on the path to Enlightenment is very important and beneficial. You will not be able to pursue this path alone. As you seek Teachers, be sure that you find Teachers free of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) with no ego. Enlightenment is the opposite of these things. If you need help on this path, it's important to find someone that does not embody these aspects of mind. You should be interested to have Teachers and guides who have loving-kindness and compassion towards all beings and are open to helping all people without expectation of payment for their support.

You can pursue Enlightenment no matter what has transpired in the past. No matter what your previous intentions, speech, actions or anything that has transpired in the past, Enlightenment can still be pursued and attained. What really matters on your path to Enlightenment is that you learn, reflect, practice, and observe the results in the present moment. Dedication and commitment to learning and growing will ensure you are moving the mind towards Enlightenment.

This path requires inner growth and development as there is nothing external that is needed in pursuit of this path.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are not to control an individual nor dictate what they should or should not do. But instead, they provide guidance that when practiced will lead to Enlightenment, the liberation of the mind, a peaceful and content mind and, thus, a peaceful and content life. Everything in this practice is obtained through your personal choices.

It is important to pursue Enlightenment without craving or desire to attain it but use it as a goal, an interest, or an objective.

If there is craving, even craving for Enlightenment, you will not be able to attain full Enlightenment as an Arahant. And if there is craving at the time of death, there will be rebirth.

There is no finish line to the attainment of Enlightenment. Once a mind reaches the fourth Stage of Enlightenment, the mind can continue to ascend to higher degrees of the Enlightened mind. A Practitioner needs to focus on the one (1) step in front of them that leads to further progress on The Path to Enlightenment. If the mind is focusing on the imaginary non-existent finish line, the craving for Enlightenment will inhibit and hinder the mind from experiencing Enlightenment.

Instead, a Practitioner may be interested to consider themselves already Enlightened and they are just working to remove all the pollution of the mind that is inhibiting them from experiencing Enlightenment. In this way, the mind is not attempting to attain anything at all but instead, the mind is already Enlightened and a Practitioner's life practice is to purify the mind removing the pollution that is hindering one from experiencing the radiance and brightness of Enlightenment.

How can you know if you are walking towards Enlightenment?

You will notice, as you learn and implement these Teachings, that the mind will continually clear out more and more. It takes time, lots of time, however the results of learning and implementing these Teachings are more and more profound as you learn and progress. Enlightenment does not require belief because you will see the results for yourself. You will experience increased levels of concentration and clarity of mind. You will find that it's easier to communicate, accomplish tasks, and conduct daily life. There will be a *gradual* decreasing of strong feelings and emotions that cause struggles and difficulties in life and within your relationships.

Situations in the past that caused anger or frustration will no longer result in you reacting with the same feelings but rather, you will experience evenness of temper or equanimity. You will be able to respond in difficult situations rather than react.

What are The Seven Factors of Enlightenment?

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are not to determine if someone is or is not Enlightened but instead, they are used to fine tune the mind bringing it to a balanced state - "in the middle". If a Practitioner is noticing that the mind is not "in the middle", as described in the Chapter titled "The Middle Way: Walking The Middle Way" (Chapter 6), use the associated factors of Enlightenment to move the mind to practicing the middle way.

When the mind becomes complacent, sluggish, lethargic, dull, or lazy, this is the time to practice the Enlightenment factors of Investigation, Energy, and Joy.

When the mind is excited, elated, ecstatic, euphoric, or over stimulated, this is the time to practice the Enlightenment factors of Tranquility, Concentration, and Equanimity.

The Enlightenment factor of Mindfulness is always useful and should be practiced in each and every moment. Mindfulness will need to be developed as part of training the mind through The Eight Fold Path (Chapter 5) using Breathing Mindfulness Meditation (Chapter 11) on a consistent and ongoing basis.

1.) Mindfulness: (Awareness of mind as described in The Eight Fold Path as “Right Mindfulness”.)

2.) Investigation: (Dedicated examination, exploration, research, study, and questioning to learn The Teachings.)

3.) Energy: (Effort, determination, ambition, initiative, motivation, vigor, and enthusiasm; willingness to do something.)

4.) Joy: (Pleased and delighted not associated with any specific object; unconditioned gladness; the Practitioner is not attaining it by craving/desire/attachment.)

5.) Tranquility: (Relaxed, steadiness, stability, peacefulness, and stillness of mind.)

6.) Concentration: (Mental alertness, attentiveness, the ability to give your attention or thought to a single object or activity. “Singleness of mind” as described in The Eight Fold Path as “Right Concentration”.)

7.) Equanimity: (Mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation; treating everyone impartially.)

It is, Monks, when The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are developed and cultivated in this way that they fulfill true wisdom and liberation.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 46.6)

What are The Four Stages of Enlightenment?

There are four (4) stages in the attainment of Enlightenment, however, these are for personal development purposes only. You should not compare or profess to another person which Stage of Enlightenment you think you have attained. Self declared attainment has no beneficial purpose and oftentimes comes from arrogance and pride, the ego, while being fraught and filled with errors.

One goal of these Teachings is to eliminate arrogance and pride, the ego, therefore, if a Practitioner is declaring their self determined Stage of Enlightenment, there is still arrogance and pride. A Practitioner sharing with others what they think they have attained is an indication that, the mind is not yet Enlightened.

An Enlightened being would have no need or desire to profess what they think the mind has attained. An Enlightened mind is so peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy that an Enlightened being will just be enjoying life rather than attempting to convince others or boasting about what they think they have attained.

Self determination of attainment of any Stage of Enlightenment is fraught and filled with errors.

While one should consistently apply effort towards learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings to include understanding The Four Stages of Enlightenment, these are used for personal development to guide a Practitioner's journey assisting you on the path to higher and higher degrees of attainment not as a way to brag, show off or profess to others what you think you have attained. Convincing the mind that it has attained any of these Stages of Enlightenment or that the mind is actually Enlightened is dangerous for the mind.

The ego is constantly going to be interested to convince the mind it is more Enlightened than it really is. The ego is equivalent to a "bad tenant" who never pays rent and doesn't want to leave the residence. The bad tenant, the ego, needs to be evicted but every time things move in that direction it tries to convince the mind it is more Enlightened than it really is because the ego does not want to leave. The bad tenant keeps wanting to stay but yet provides no benefit whatsoever and continually attempts to convince the mind it is Enlightened so that the bad tenant, the ego, can stick around.

You need to evict the ego and as long as the mind is convinced that it is experiencing higher and higher degrees of attainment, then there is the risk or danger that arrogance and pride will arise, thus, halting any forward

progress. With arrogance and pride (i.e. the ego), the mind will want to measure and compare what it thinks it has attained to others creating unwholesome decisions that produce separation rather than harmony amongst friendly Practitioners and “all beings”. The mind could become judgmental looking down on others rather than practicing loving-kindness and compassion with an interest in seeing all beings attain Enlightenment.

You should never believe you have attained Enlightenment and continuously pursue this path your entire life. Should you ever think you have attained Enlightenment and are “done”, the mind can become “sluggish or complacent” and halt your progress on this path.

Arrogance and pride can arise in the mind if one becomes absorbed, engrossed or fascinated with progressing through The Four Stages of Enlightenment. As soon as any arrogance, pride, or ego arises, the mind is not experiencing Enlightenment.

If any of this is occurring in the mind, the mind is not Enlightened and is essentially sabotaging a Practitioner’s ability to experience more progress. Through never convincing the mind that it is truly Enlightened, even when all discontentedness has been eliminated, then, the mind can continue to reside protected from any potential arising of arrogance and pride (i.e. the ego), and continue to experience increased benefits as the mind becomes more and more Enlightened.

While we use the term Enlightenment, this mental state is not a destination that once one arrives, everything is complete. Instead, as the mind arrives to Enlightenment having eliminated all discontentedness, a Practitioner can experience increased benefits of the Enlightened mind as the brilliance and brightness of the Enlightened mind shine through more and more. If one convinces themselves they are Enlightened and are actually “done”, then they would not experience the continued and increasing benefits of the mind entering into an even higher degree of Enlightenment.

There will be glimpses of Enlightenment as you develop your practice. Whether it be in meditation, during the daily activities, or for multiple minutes, hours, weeks, months, etc. as one progresses. These glimpses are similar to a flickering lightbulb that is struggling to shine bright on a consistent and ongoing basis. These glimpses of Enlightenment help a Practitioner to observe the possibilities of what one is headed towards and that they are headed in the right direction. But the mind needs to remain unaffected by these momentary or elongated and impermanent experiences. The mind needs to remain unaffected by the improved condition of the mind to be able to experience more and more awakening of the mind.

The mind could experience multiple minutes, hours, weeks, months, etc. with the returning of discontentedness at any moment. A wise Practitioner needs to remain determined, dedicated, and diligent to apply effort watching over the mind with mindfulness or awareness of mind. If one proceeds without guarding the mind with mindfulness, then cravings/desires/attachments can emerge from the corners of the mind producing discontentedness.

Just like the mind will experience flickering and glimpses of Enlightenment as the mind is developed, the mind will also experience a flickering diminishing of cravings/desires/attachments and discontentedness.

As discontentedness is *gradually* being extinguished, the qualities of the Enlightened mind are continuing to increase. All the while, the Practitioner is having experiences in the mind they never knew existed and the mind can become quite blissful and elated. It is important to reside unaffected by these experiences continuing to bring the mind back to the middle. If the mind takes great pleasure in what it is experiencing, this is dangerous and risky as the mind then continues to crave these pleasant feelings stalling progress.

This is yet another reason guidance with a Teacher is so important. As the mind moves and shifts through the preliminary phases of the Jhānas and into The Four Stages of Enlightenment, a Practitioner is going to need support from someone who has experienced what they are experiencing. This will allow a Practitioner to gain the insight and Teachings needed to continue forward development through seeking guidance of how to continue the mind's cultivation.

The Ten Fetters are the ten (10) individual aspects of the mind that need to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. The word "fetter" is defined as: "a chain or shackle used to restrain a prisoner, typically placed around the ankles". The Ten Fetters are essentially keeping a being trapped in The Cycle of Rebirth bound to the endless cycle of continuous rebirth experiencing discontentedness over countless lives.

It is not until one eliminates The Ten Fetters that a being's mind is liberated from discontentedness and The Cycle of Rebirth. A fetter can also be referred to as a taint or pollution of the mind. A taint is an impure quality of the mind and is why these need to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. The Ten Fetters pollute the mind not allowing us to experience the brightness and radiance of the Enlightened mind.

These are “The Ten Fetters”. These are the chains that bind us into The Cycle of Rebirth and to multiple lifetimes of experiencing continuous discontentedness. You must eliminate these and practice The Seven Factors of Enlightenment to attain Enlightenment - along with many other Teachings as part of The Eight Fold Path.

The Ten Fetters

Lower Fetters

1.) Personal existence view (Eliminating the concept of a permanent self from the mind. Realization of The Universal Truth of Non-self.)

2.) Doubt (Elimination of doubts about The Teachings and the ability of them to attain Enlightenment. Confidence in The Buddha, The Teachings, The Community, your Teacher, and your own ability to attain Enlightenment.)

3.) Wrong behavior and observances (Elimination of the mind’s belief that rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship will help a Practitioner to attain Enlightenment. Well developed practice of The Eight Fold Path.)

4.) Sensual desire (Elimination of the desire for pleasures from The Six Sense Bases: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind.)

5.) Ill will (Elimination of hostility, hatred, anger, aggression, resentment, frustration, irritation, annoyance, etc.)

Higher Fetters

6.) Desire for form (Elimination of desire for existence in the form realms; Animal or Human. Elimination of the fear of death.)

7.) Desire for the formless (Elimination of desire for existence in the formless realms; Hell, Afflicted Spirits, or Heaven.)

8.) Conceit (Elimination of arrogance, pride, judging, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior to others. Ego is completely dissolved.)

9.) Restlessness (Elimination of confused, distracted, worried, anxious, restless state of mind; the opposite of “singleness of mind”.)

10.) Ignorance (Elimination of delusion or unknowing of true reality through acquiring wisdom. Learn, reflect, and practice of The Teachings of The Buddha, such as, The Three Universal Truths, The Four Noble Truths, The Eight Fold Path, The Five Precepts, The Three Wholesome/Unwholesome Roots, The Natural Law of Kamma, The Cycle of Rebirth, etc. all detailed later in this book and book series.)

A Stream-Enterer (returning to human realm no more than 7 times) is:

Free From:

1. Personal existence view
2. Doubt
3. Wrong behavior and observances

A Once-Returner (returns to human realm only one time) is:

Free From:

1. Personal existence view
2. Doubt
3. Wrong behavior and observances

Greatly Thinned:

4. Sensual desire
5. Ill will

A Non-Returner (does not return to human realm) is:

Free From:

1. Personal existence view
2. Doubt
3. Wrong behavior and observances
4. Sensual desire
5. Ill will

An Arahant is free from all of the five lower fetters and the five higher fetters, which are:

1. Personal existence view
2. Doubt
3. Wrong behavior and observances
4. Sensual desire
5. Ill will
6. Desire for form
7. Desire for the formless
8. Conceit
9. Restlessness
10. Ignorance

A Practitioner attaining the results and Stage of Enlightenment as an Arahant is Enlightened. In the first three (3) Stages of Enlightenment, the mind is not yet Enlightened and is still experiencing discontentedness. There will be a *gradual* diminishing of discontentedness as the mind ascends through each Stage of Enlightenment but it is not until the mind reaches the Stage of Enlightenment as an Arahant, where the mind is actually Enlightened, that all discontentedness is eliminated and there is no more rebirth in The Cycle of Rebirth.

What is a Buddha?

A “Buddha” is not a Stage of Enlightenment but instead, is a unique type of Enlightened being. A Buddha is an Arahant who has attained Enlightenment without any assistance of Teachers but only through their own efforts of using the world as their Teacher and perhaps Teachings of a previously awakened Buddha.

There are three primary criteria of what makes a Buddha a Buddha.

1.) A Buddha awakens to Enlightenment through their own independent journey without the assistance of any Teachers, independently discovering The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment.

A Buddha has fully eliminated The Ten Fetters to attain Enlightenment as an Arahant but they have done so through their own independent journey without the assistance of any Teachers, developing deep wisdom of what is needed to attain Enlightenment.

2.) A Buddha guides countless others to Enlightenment during their lifetime through sharing their independently discovered Teachings that led to their own Enlightenment during their independent journey.

A Buddha has the ability to guide countless beings to the attainment of Enlightenment during their lifetime and after their death. A Buddha will dedicate the remaining time of their life towards sharing their Teachings and guiding countless beings to Enlightenment.

3.) Upon a Buddha’s death, they will leave their Teachings in a condition that can be continually shared assisting countless more beings to Enlightenment after their death.

A Buddha’s Teachings and Students will continue to guide countless people to Enlightenment after a Buddha’s death. A Buddha has already done the hard work of figuring out how to attain Enlightenment. You just need to learn and practice his Teachings to improve the condition of the mind and your life.

A Buddha is referred to as a Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, a Perfectly Enlightened One, or a Tathāgata. They are a human being, a Teacher, one with deep compassion for all beings and the world. A Buddha has deep wisdom to help the world and can accomplish that goal through individuals choosing to learn and practice their Teachings to attain Enlightenment.

They are considered Perfectly Enlightened because there are no outside influences that have led to their awakening, so they have “Perfect Enlightenment” where their mind is unaffected by any teachings outside of their own independently discovered Teachings that led to their awakening.

A Buddha will have an excellent memory being able to recall countless past events and situations with stunning accuracy. Unlike other humans, their memory does not fade and is not overwritten.

A Buddha will need to weave their way through a previous Buddha’s Teachings as all things are affected by impermanence, thus, a previous Buddha’s Teachings will not be in a pure condition.

A Buddha will be able to easily determine the condition of the mind of another person, then be able to help them with Teachings to eliminate the unwholesome qualities of the mind and cultivate wholesome qualities of the mind. A Buddha will be able to observe the condition of another being’s mind but only does so with an interest to help the other being eliminate the unwholesome qualities from the mind and cultivate wholesome qualities in the mind to guide one towards Enlightenment.

A Buddha will have a deep practice of their own Teachings, leading by example as a living, breathing, walking example of their Teachings.

A Buddha will be able to make predictions of the future and understand the future progress of the world as a whole while explaining past events and the current condition of the world through their Teachings.

A Buddha will know this is their last life without being reborn into any realm of existence. They will have insight into their previous lives and knowledge of their existence in those previous lives. Their only goal will be to lead as many people to Enlightenment as possible and to create a strong Community of humans with Enlightenment who will assist others to attain Enlightenment and leave strong Teachings that will assist unEnlightened beings to become Enlightened after a Buddha’s death.

When a Buddha arises in the world, this is your best opportunity to attain Enlightenment. A Buddha will have independently realized their Enlightenment and will be experiencing “Perfect Enlightenment”. A Buddha will have deep knowledge, deep understanding, and deep wisdom of how to attain Enlightenment through their independent realization of Enlightenment.

A Buddha will be able to teach and guide all humans, who are interested to learn, towards Enlightenment.

A Buddha arising in the world is extremely rare. The last Buddha currently known to the world was Gotama Buddha who died over 2,500 years ago.

Why Does a Buddha Appear in the World?

A Buddha appears in the world when a Buddha is needed.

When humanity has reached a point of major confusion, conflict, and there is grave suffering throughout the world, a Buddha will appear.

A Buddha has the ability to help all of humanity to realize a better existence through their independently realized Teachings.

A Buddha will have struggled for countless lives to reach Enlightenment. Their journey on The Path would have been long and difficult over untold numbers of countless rebirths but they would never give up in their pursuit to Full and Perfect Enlightenment. They also would never give up on sharing their Teachings with all of humanity teaching until death.

A Buddha would have deep compassion for every single being in existence - past, present, and future.

A Buddha would know that they have attained Full and Perfect Enlightenment and are able to help all of humanity now and well into the future. But, all of humanity is never ready and willing to learn, grow, and progress on The Path during a Buddha's existence. All unEnlightened beings are already experiencing significant internal struggles so they will also struggle to closely understand and practice The Teachings that will lead to their full liberation. Most will not even know there is a solution to their struggles of the mind because they do not necessarily realize there is a problem.

Complacency is the norm and is the most detrimental quality of the mind.

Humanity may or may not even see the struggles and issues that are apparent and so clear to a Buddha. The vast majority of humanity will not even know that a Buddha has appeared because they are unable to determine who is or is not Enlightened and, thus, would not be able to determine who is or is not a Buddha. Humanity is mostly "unknowing" of true reality and "unknowing" of the countless problems faced by all beings. The large masses do not understand the challenges they are facing with the unEnlightened mind, so they are unfamiliar with the solutions to the unEnlightened mind.

A Buddha sees all the problems and has all the solutions of how to guide a being on The Path to Enlightenment so that a more Enlightened humanity can work together to solve its challenges.

A Buddha's responsibility is not to himself as they have transcended any selfish pursuit or interest in fame or fortune. A Buddha chooses to spread the word of their appearance and Teachings through guiding people to attain Enlightenment without the need for others to know they are a Buddha. A Buddha can be more productive through others not knowing he is a Buddha because he can more accurately assess a Practitioner's mind. If there is a worldwide announcement of the arrival of a Buddha, there would be those who agree and come to that Buddha for guidance and others who would reject the idea of a Buddha being in existence.

Those who reject the idea of a Buddha's existence would not seek guidance on The Path to Enlightenment, and those who do seek guidance might try to be on their "best behavior" masking the mind's true nature. This would hinder a Buddha's ability to observe the condition of a Student's mind and, thus, be more limiting to how a Buddha could assist their Students in the progress of Enlightenment.

A Buddha would not be interested in a worldwide announcement of their awakening as it would be counterproductive and would instead, choose to humbly and peacefully share their Teachings with those who choose to be taught. A Buddha will encourage people to learn and progress on The Path guiding anyone who is interested to attain Enlightenment.

A Buddha's goal is to help eliminate the massive amount of suffering that is pervasive and the original cause for the Buddha's appearance in the world.

A Buddha appearing in today's society would need to be creative in understanding exactly how to present The Teachings to an "unaware" and otherwise absorbed audience. An audience that is complacent either unknowingly unaware or purposefully ignoring their own suffering.

Either way, upon a Buddha's appearance, the Buddha will have to put much more thought and effort into helping people understand that there is a problem rather than the thought and effort that they would put into the actual sharing of The Teachings themselves.

Complacency is not easily eradicated, and the vast majority of the world is complacent unknowing of the true struggles faced and the solutions to these struggles.

Once a person decides they need guidance and accepts responsibility to learn and practice, the Buddha is well prepared to deliver every Teaching that permeates their entire mind.

There is no one or nothing that could eliminate the wisdom acquired by a Buddha through their independently realized Enlightenment.

There are no specific physical features that would identify a Buddha as being a Buddha. You will know who is a Buddha through observing their work to develop a dedicated Community of Practitioners and Teachers while assisting countless Practitioners to attain Enlightenment. You will be able to observe through a Buddha's work towards sharing The Teachings into the world in such a way that helps countless beings attain Enlightenment during his lifetime and after his death leaving The Teachings and a Community to share those Teachings. And, if you know that individual does not have any Teachers but was able to benefit countless beings to attain Enlightenment during their lifetime and after their death, with their Teachings continuing to help countless beings attain Enlightenment, then this person could be considered a Buddha.

Are there any physical or emotional symptoms that we are currently experiencing that may not be medically related that could be attributed to awakening of the mind to Enlightenment?

As you pursue Enlightenment, you may notice various physical and emotional symptoms associated with your ascent to Enlightenment. This is a short list. Do not get attached to these symptoms or think Enlightenment is imminent. Just know that these symptoms are normal and keep learning, growing, and practicing these Teachings so that you can continue to pursue Enlightenment.

It is not that pursuit of Enlightenment has caused these symptoms necessarily, but instead, that as the mind awakens the body will oftentimes experience various sensations or experiences as the mind moves towards performing more optimally. These symptoms are not permanent and may or may not be noticed or even happen at all.

This list is shared so that if you are or have experienced any of these symptoms, that you will understand it is normal.

It is important for Practitioners to understand, if they are experiencing these symptoms that it does not mean that something is "wrong" with the physical body or mind but instead, these are just normal symptoms that may or may not be experienced along The Path to Enlightenment. If there are concerns,

seek medical advice to determine if there are any underlying health issues but do not be surprised if there is nothing found.

In fact, some of these are indications that the condition of the mind is improving and as these symptoms subside, the body and the mind will function more optimally.

Physical:

- 1.) Pressure or ringing in the ears.
- 2.) Weight fluctuations.
- 3.) Faster hair and nail growth.
- 4.) Heart palpitations.
- 5.) Looking and feeling younger.
- 6.) Power surges and hot flashes.
- 7.) Periods of lethargy and fatigue or excitement and elation.
- 8.) Skin eruptions: rashes, bumps, acne, hives, and shingles.
- 9.) Headaches or pain in the head.
- 10.) Backaches, neck pains, flu-like symptoms (this is called vibrational flu), digestive problems, muscular spasms or cramps, racing heartbeat, or chest pains.
- 11.) Numbness, tingling, or itching sensations all over the body.
- 12.) The 5 physical senses (Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch) all become heightened and lessened multiple times as you pursue Enlightenment. Temporary blurry vision is common.
- 13.) You may experience dizziness, light headedness, nausea, confusion, lack of immediate or short-term memory.
- 14.) Events that alter your life: death, divorce, change in job status, loss of home, illness, and/or other catastrophes - sometimes several at once.
- 15.) The pupils of your eyes may become enlarged and will not contract even in lighted conditions. This is a condition called “wisdom eyes” or slang “egg yolk”. It signifies being able to see more of the world and walking from the darkness into the light. Your eyes are now, “wide open” to the world. This usually occurs as you are successfully implementing most of The Eight Fold Path and moving into the Jhānas.

Emotional

- 1.) No longer have any fears including the fear of failure or fear of death.
- 2.) Being alone feels comfortable.
- 3.) Changes in sexual drive.
- 4.) Insomnia or irregular sleeping schedule.
- 5.) You may experience anxiety, depression, difficulty falling asleep, waking up early, or any disruption to your sleeping schedule as you are letting go of past trauma, experiences, suffering and expectation of the future.
- 6.) Losing track of time or feeling as though you are in a time warp.

7.) You may notice that you no longer have dreams or cannot remember your dreams. This is noticeable as you stop clinging to past thoughts or being worried about the future. At this point, you are living more in the moment.

A Practitioner may or may not experience any of these or may have already been experiencing these symptoms prior to embarking on their journey on The Path to Enlightenment.

This list is provided to put the mind at ease that if you are currently experiencing any of these, they are temporary and have answers that are not based in permanent medical conditions. The journey to Enlightenment is highly beneficial and does not cause any adverse symptoms or complications in one's life. There are only beneficial results as part of learning and progressing on The Path to Enlightenment that creates more peacefulness and harmony within all your relationships.

Guidance on The Path

Attempting to experience Enlightenment without proper guidance or people who understand it, can be scary and would be impossible to actually attain - other than for a true Buddha. Since you are not a Buddha, you will need guidance. Unfortunately, most of the people around you may be unfamiliar with the process of pursuing Enlightenment and will potentially encourage you to seek mental healthcare. This will inevitably lead you to being labeled with a mental condition and to prescription medications which could suppress the progression of Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is an enjoyable pursuit but can be very challenging at times. You should surround yourself with people that understand the progression of Enlightenment as sometimes, it can get uncomfortable when you are letting go of your deepest held emotions and past traumas. Without this support, you will not be able to fully break through to achieve your final goal of a liberated mind. You can be left with countless physical and emotional symptoms that appear on the surface to those inexperienced in its symptoms, to be a collection of other physical/emotional disorders or conditions.

At certain times as you are pursuing Enlightenment, you might feel the most uncomfortable that you have ever felt in your entire life both physically and emotionally. When the mind is struggling on The Path to Enlightenment, that is when it's doing the most work, with the best opportunity for progress when one seeks guidance and support from a Teacher. You need support from caring and understanding people that will help you progress to a Higher Consciousness.

You are welcome to seek guidance with the author of this book through the methods previously mentioned. If you choose to seek guidance with someone else, the below can be helpful to find a Teacher that would have the needed life practice well established to support your learning and growth.

How to Determine If A Potential Teacher Has Attained Enlightenment

To attain Enlightenment, you will need to have the help of Teachers and Guides.

The written Teachings offered from Gotama Buddha's lifetime do not contain everything you need to know to attain Enlightenment. Studying only the written text without the assistance of Teachers and Guides who understand The Path to Enlightenment will not produce Enlightenment for you.

You will need guidance from Teachers who have attained Enlightenment to assist you along The Path to attain Enlightenment.

If you are going to learn Gotama Buddha's Teachings that lead to Enlightenment, it is important to find a Teacher who has already attained Enlightenment. How can one lead another person to attain Enlightenment if they themselves have not yet attained Enlightenment? This would be like attempting to learn how to drive a car from someone who has never driven a car. This would most likely not be the wisest decision.

A Teacher of this Path should not force others to understand and practice Gotama Buddha's Teachings. Attaining Enlightenment does not work that way and will not work that way.

A Teacher of this Path should politely, kindly, and respectfully share The Teachings with others, as they ask or request guidance, which illuminates The Path so that by the Practitioner's own personal choices, they can learn and practice The Teachings to attain Enlightenment.

Through learning and practicing The Teachings with guidance from a Teacher, a Practitioner can independently observe the truth for themselves to acquire wisdom. The wisdom one acquires will liberate the mind to attain Enlightenment.

It is through a Practitioner's own personal choices that they will learn and practice The Teachings to *gradually* attain the results of an Enlightened mind.

Enlightenment requires dedication, commitment, and real work to learn and understand the truths that Gotama Buddha taught, so that you know on your

own that The Teachings are 100% truth. A Practitioner can only accomplish this if they take the time to put aside what they currently understand about the world that is keeping the mind in the unEnlightened state. Through these Teachings, a Practitioner needs to expand their wisdom beyond what they currently know.

Through applying The Teachings in “real life” a dedicated Practitioner can see the truth for themselves to *gradually* attain Enlightenment.

In effect, seeking out and acknowledging a Teacher is confirmation that one’s mind is open to receiving guidance which will ultimately lead to their progress on The Path to Enlightenment. Seeking the guidance of a Teacher is also very helpful to reduce and eliminate arrogance (i.e. the ego). Admitting to one’s self that they do not know it all, is helpful to reduce the ego.

Whether it was learning the ABC’s, 123’s, reading, writing, or any other long term learning goal you have pursued has always involved seeking guidance with a Teacher. The Path to Enlightenment is exactly the same. You are going to need Teachers.

To learn and attain Enlightenment will take a significant amount of time, effort, dedication, and commitment. So, if you are going to invest the time, effort, dedication, and commitment to attain Enlightenment, it is important that you find someone who has already attained the mental state of Enlightenment.

In the unEnlightened state, you are in darkness. A Teacher with Enlightenment will be carrying the light to guide you away from the darkness and towards the light through sharing Teachings. Without a Teacher who has attained Enlightenment, you walk The Path alone without any light. You will find that it is impossible to complete the journey walking alone in the darkness without a light.

If you ask someone if they have attained Enlightenment, a person who has attained this state of mind will not admit “Yes, I have attained Enlightenment”.

It is considered by most that if you say that you have attained Enlightenment then you do so with arrogance and pride (i.e. ego), placing yourself above another person. One aspect of attaining Enlightenment is that you dissolve the ego and judgment of others. If someone professes they have attained Enlightenment, then it is considered they have done so out of ego and thus, have not attained Enlightenment at all.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will be more interested in helping you attain Enlightenment than in discussing their own attainment of Enlightenment. If you are seeking guidance on The Path to attain Enlightenment, they will most likely focus the discussion primarily on “What is Enlightenment and how you can attain it”, rather than on, their own attainment of Enlightenment.

You can consider asking a potential Teacher the following questions to help you determine if you would like to learn with them.

1.) Ask a potential Teacher “Have you attained Enlightenment?”.

If they are eager to answer “Yes” and are eager to discuss their current stage of attainment of Enlightenment focusing the discussion on themselves, you should take this into consideration. You may conclude that perhaps their arrogance and pride (i.e. ego) will inhibit your learning on the path to Enlightenment. A person who has truly attained Enlightenment will not have arrogance or pride because the ego has been eliminated.

2.) Ask a potential Teacher “What is Enlightenment?”.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will have extensive knowledge of what Enlightenment is and what it is not. In this book, there are details of what Enlightenment is and what it is not. This will help you better reflect on the answer provided by the potential Teacher.

3.) Ask a potential Teacher “How to attain Enlightenment?”.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will have extensive wisdom of how to attain Enlightenment. Their answer of how to attain Enlightenment with Gotama Buddha’s Teachings may include the following:

- Learn, Reflect, Practice, and Observe the results of a well developed practice of The Teachings shared by Gotama Buddha. The pursuit to Enlightenment is an independent journey with Teachers and Guides to assist you. However, you will need to do all the work yourself, as your potential Teacher, can only guide you.

- A small sample of The Teachings that are needed to attain Enlightenment include:

- A.) The Three Universal Truths
- B.) The Four Noble Truths
- C.) The Eight Fold Path
- D.) The Five Precepts
- E.) The Brahmā-vihāras
- F.) The Ten Fetters
- G.) The Seven Factors of Enlightenment
- H.) Extensive Meditation Training

4.) Ask a potential Teacher “What rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship are required to attain Enlightenment?”.

There are no rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship required to attain Enlightenment.

If someone explains certain chants that need to be repeated, certain postures the body needs to be trained to acquire, or sells/provides you any external devices that includes bells, strings, clothing, beads, music, statues, special drinks or food, etc. then this person has not attained Enlightenment.

Enlightenment does not require any special chanting or external devices to attain this mental state. If someone claims they have special chants or external devices to attain Enlightenment and it is only them who possess these secrets, they have not attained Enlightenment. There is nothing external required to attain Enlightenment and if they claim special status with pride, you can be sure this person has not attained Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is not about training the body to acquire a specific body position. Enlightenment is about training the mind. If someone focuses their Teachings on training the body, then they have not attained Enlightenment.

The Teachings of Gotama Buddha are known to many people and there is not just one (1) special person who knows all the secrets to attaining Enlightenment and there are no special external devices required to attain Enlightenment.

All the work and ability to attain Enlightenment is already inside of you.

You need a well developed Teacher to help guide you to attaining Enlightenment who focuses on purification of the mind. You will need The Teachings, Teachers, dedication, and commitment to attain Enlightenment.

The Teacher will provide The Teachings to teach you. You will need to provide the dedication and commitment to learn and practice The Teachings.

5.) Ask a potential Teacher “What is the price or cost for me to receive training with you?”.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will have deep loving-kindness and compassion for all beings with an interest to help “all beings”.

Therefore, the potential Teacher will not be interested in money or acquiring wealth. They will potentially need money to support their life but they will not be interested in teaching you to attain Enlightenment for a price or specific cost. They will not have a set price or menu of options for attaining Enlightenment. However, they will accept donations to support them in their life and in teaching other Students.

It is common for Students to offer their Teachers financial support or gifts as appreciation for The Teachings and guidance but for someone with Enlightenment, there will be no expectation of acquiring money or gifts in return for teaching you. A potential Teacher with Enlightenment will not “ask” you for money or gifts.

The Teachings they offer should be unattached to the accumulation of wealth, possessions, or fame. The only interest a potential Teacher should possess is to help and benefit “all beings” without an interest in personal gain.

6.) Ask a potential Teacher “What type of Students do you accept and what type of Students do you turn away?”.

A person who has attained Enlightenment will have openness, friendliness, and be accepting of all people who are interested to learn and grow in The Teachings of Gotama Buddha as long as the Student has respect for The Teachings and the Teacher.

Observing a potential Teacher’s speech and actions and ensuring that they are practicing “Right Speech” and “Right Action” is crucial. Spending time to know the potential Teacher through building a relationship prior to learning with them can be helpful. Anyone who has attained Enlightenment will be a perfect example of these Teachings in practice.

Answering the questions provided here is helpful, but observing a potential Teacher’s practice of The Teachings without judgment can provide you the most insight. It will help you to ascertain whether they are a good role model of these Teachings and if they would benefit your learning and growth or not.

A potential Teacher should be polite, kind, friendly, and respectful at all times. You should observe that they are never angry, frustrated, irritated, or annoyed for any reason. They should be patient to assist any and all Students who choose to seek guidance.

If the Student shows repeated disrespect towards the Teacher in their effort to openly and freely offer Teachings to a Student, it would not be uncommon for the Teacher to no longer offer Teachings to that Student.

If you are repeatedly disrespectful to a Teacher or fail to study diligently, it is the results of your decisions (i.e. your Kamma) to be turned away or potentially be asked to not come back.

There needs to be gratitude, respect, and politeness from the Student to the Teacher to establish a proper Student-to-Teacher relationship. The respect and politeness should be in both directions. From the Student to the Teacher and from the Teacher to the Student.

You should observe that the potential Teacher is modeling The Teachings by example. That includes being polite, kind, friendly, respectful, and patient through their speech and actions staying open to “all beings”.

7.) Ask a potential Teacher “Who can attain Enlightenment?”.

All humans who have dedication and commitment to learning and growing can attain Enlightenment. To attain Enlightenment, does not require you to ordain or otherwise abandon your household life although, that is an option some choose to take through becoming an Ordained Practitioner.

You can have life partners, children, an occupation, and possessions while living a household life and still on the path to attaining Enlightenment as an Arahant, the highest stage of Enlightenment.

All humans can attain Enlightenment, no matter your race, gender, sexual orientation, current faith practice, or any other labels people assign to a human being.

The only limitation to attain Enlightenment is yourself. You need to get the “self” out of the way and focus on the growth and development of the mind while eliminating all complacency. Determination, dedication, and diligence to learning and growth is required.

All humans can pursue Enlightenment if they have the proper Teachings, Teachers with Enlightenment, dedication, and commitment.

8.) Ask a potential Teacher “Is it possible to eliminate sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, and ego?”.

One primary aspect of attaining Enlightenment is to eliminate sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, and the ego. If a potential Teacher has attained Enlightenment, they will not experience any of these feelings and know that the ego needs to be dissolved to attain Enlightenment.

Through discussion of these questions and others you may develop, you will need to decide if you feel that you can respect and learn with a potential Teacher.

You may need to experience multiple Teachers and Guides along The Path. Being attached to just one Teacher may not produce the best results.

However, your initial training should be with one Teacher to establish a solid foundation and practice of The Teachings. You should notice in a relatively short timeframe that The Teachings shared are clear, concise, and direct with you being able to independently confirm the truth in The Teachings resulting in *gradual* improvement to the condition of the mind.

Enjoy the journey of meeting and learning from countless people along The Path whose only goal should be to help you. Every experience you have in life, no matter how you perceive it, is an opportunity for learning and growth.

With The Teachings, Teachers, dedication and commitment you can pursue Enlightenment and experience a better quality of life through The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

One Who Points Out Treasure

Ānanda, I shall not treat you as the potter treats the raw damp clay. Repeatedly restraining you, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. Repeatedly guiding you of what to avoid, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. The truly dedicated will stand [the test].

Regard him as one who points out treasure, the wise one who seeing your faults guides you of what to avoid. Stay with this sort of Teacher.

For the one who stays with a Teacher of this sort, things get better, not worse.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 122 & DHP 76-77)

Author's Thoughts: In order to share The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment, a Buddha or any Teacher, would need to help Students uncover unwholesome qualities in the mind and in their life practice while pointing out the cultivation of wholesome qualities. A Student will need to put their trust in the Teacher while investigating the areas of improvement the Teacher identifies and shares with the Student.

A Student will need to be inviting and accepting of a Teacher's guidance in order to identify areas of improvement and then learn, reflect, and practice Teachings to improve their life practice. If a Student allows the ego to block the guidance from the Teacher while feeling displeasure in the Teacher "pointing out treasure", they will not "stand the test" of receiving guidance from the Teacher to progress towards Enlightenment.

A Teacher would need to exert a significant amount of time, effort, energy, and resources to guide a Student to Enlightenment. A Teacher should not ask for any benefits from their Students, but instead, await what is given as offerings. A Teacher's only goal should be to guide a Student to Enlightenment without any personal gain for themselves whatsoever.

So, a Teacher who takes their time, effort, energy, and resources to "point out treasure" should be regarded as a "wise one who seeing your faults" will help you to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to attain Enlightenment.

The Buddha's advice is to "stay with this sort of Teacher" as things only "get better, not worse". As the condition of the mind and one's life, "only gets better, not worse" when a Student is open to understanding guidance from a wise Teacher who kindly and patiently shares areas for improvement while not seeking any benefit from you - their only goal is to help you. In this type of relationship with a wise Teacher pointing out areas of improvement as treasure to be appreciated based on the goal of helping you, you should "stay with this sort of Teacher" as things only "get better, not worse".

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 3) - Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/h-FzczvCJc>

Ep. 503 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 3) - Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--503---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-3---Enlightenment-What-is-Enlightenment-e272sij>

Youtube Video(s)

(Mini-Lesson #2) - What is Enlightenment?

<https://youtu.be/WzjX5fqeJdQ>

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 3 - Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?

<https://youtube.com/live/sCo66eRBHgQ>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 4 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/yqOFNhU0CJA>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 429 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 3 - Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--429---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-3---Enlightenment-What-is-Enlightenment-e1vj52b/a-a9dct6b>

Ep. 430 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Loving-kindness Meditation (Part 4 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--430---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Loving-kindness-Meditation-Part-4-of-4-e1vmr28/a-a9dr5g1>

Quiz

Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?

<https://forms.gle/nBYxTCJzgcWTUt5EA>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 4

The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View

For anyone interested to explore and study The Path of Enlightenment, one must begin with a deep understanding of The Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths is the first discourse offered by Gotama Buddha as his very first Teaching upon him attaining Enlightenment as The Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha.

You can study his progression and dedication to reaching Enlightenment through understanding his story that led him there. This Chapter will provide details on his actual first Teaching once he became The Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha and a subsequent Chapter will help you understand a portion of his life story.

The Four Noble Truths is the core understanding required to establish “Right View”. Right View gives a Practitioner’s mind the foundation in which to apply all the other Teachings and practices taught by Gotama Buddha. A Practitioner would have no ability to attain Enlightenment unless they learned, reflected, and practiced The Four Noble Truths to establish “Right View”.

The Four Noble Truths explains the wisdom of discontentedness, the wisdom of the cause of discontentedness, the wisdom of the elimination of discontentedness, and the wisdom of the way of practice leading to the elimination of discontentedness.

In four (4) simple statements, Gotama Buddha shares the problem with the unEnlightened mind, the cause of the problem, the elimination of the problem, and the path leading to the complete elimination of the problem.

Before we explore The Four Noble Truths in The Words of The Buddha, I will first share a summarized version of this Chapter to provide you a high-level understanding of The Four Noble Truths and related Teachings to prepare the mind for deeper investigation of this Teaching.

The content in the following table will help you get a basic understanding of The Four Noble Truths and related Teachings.

Understanding and practicing “The Four Noble Truths” is the first step towards The Path to Enlightenment, Nibbāna, and a Higher Consciousness.

The Four Noble Truths is the first step of “The Eight Fold Path” called “Right View”. The Eight Fold Path is The Path to Enlightenment with the other Teachings from Gotama Buddha connecting into this path.

Impermanence: Everything is constantly changing and there is no permanent state. Material objects/possessions, relationships, thoughts, ideas, states of mind, everything in the world is constantly changing. All conditioned feelings will cease to exist. All that arises will cease to exist. There is no steady, constant, or fixed mental state other than Enlightenment.

Discontentedness: Gotama Buddha describes three feelings as discontent or “Dukkha” due to their nature of being based on impermanent conditions. The goal of these Teachings is to eliminate discontentedness of mind providing the mind a permanent place to reside in Enlightenment.

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

Craving/Desire/Attachment/Wants/Expectations/Grasping/Holding/Clinging: a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness. The mind pulling in a direction for objects of its affection.

The Four Noble Truths —> “Right View”

1.) First Noble Truth: Everyone that is unEnlightened will experience discontentedness.

2.) Second Noble Truth: Discontentedness is caused by our own cravings/desires/attachments because the mind wants everything to be permanent when everything in the world is impermanent.

3.) Third Noble Truth: The elimination of discontentedness is possible by eliminating cravings/desires/attachments.

4.) Fourth Noble Truth: The path to eliminating discontentedness is The Eight Fold Path.

The goal in life is not to be happy, as that is an impermanent feeling. When the mind is not happy, it will move to sadness, anger, or worse.

The goal in life is to develop a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy free of cravings/desires/attachments that is “satisfied with what is....” - the Enlightened mind. The Enlightened mind will not base its inner feelings on impermanent conditions therefore it is a permanent mental state. The Enlightened mind is unconditioned.

Author's Thoughts: The Four Noble Truths can be summarized and understood in the following way.

You need to accept responsibility for your own discontent mind and the emotions you experience. Rather than blaming pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant on someone or something external, see the truth that you cause your own discontent mind. See the truth that your own mind is causing itself to experience these unwelcome feelings. By observing the truth that you are the problem, the next step is that you have the ability to resolve the problem.

By accepting responsibility for your own discontent mind, you then have 100% ability to eliminate discontentedness in the mind through understanding and practice of these Teachings. Because if you are the cause of the discontent mind, that means you have the ability to eliminate and resolve the discontentedness in the mind. You have 100% ability to attain a content mind through learning and practicing these Teachings.

The way leading to the complete elimination of discontentedness in the mind and attaining a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy is to learn and practice "The Eight Fold Path". The Enlightened mind will be calm and relaxed yet attentive and alert. The mind will be concentrated, steady, and unshakable.

Understanding The Four Noble Truths is the first step towards a content and peaceful mind and life. Right View is the first step of The Eight Fold Path. Without accepting responsibility for the discontent mind, you will never be able to take steps to resolve the discontentedness in the mind because of the "wrong view" that something or someone else is causing the mind to be discontent means you feel that you have no ability to attain a content mind. If it is others who are causing you to experience discontentedness, then you will need to train the entire world to do things your way.

You are unable to train the entire world to do things the way of your choosing.

Therefore, with "wrong view" you will always experience discontentedness in the form of pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant. You may find that you are attempting to train others to do things your way rather than train your mind to understand The Natural Laws of Existence.

However, since it is impossible to train everyone in the entire world to react and respond to you in the way of your choosing, you need to train the mind to be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy to no longer experience discontentedness in any and all situations. You have the ability to change your own mind through training but you have no ability to change the mind of another person.

The problem is not the outside world, but the inner world. Training the mind (inner world) is what produces a peaceful existence.

You cause your own sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, and all other discontent feelings. Because you are the cause of these discontent feelings, this means that you can eliminate the discontent feelings through understanding and practice of these Teachings.

Author's Thoughts (continued):

These Teachings are a “life practice” to establish an understanding and to practice Teachings that eliminate 100% of the discontentedness in the mind. The first step is to understand The Teachings intellectually, reflect on these Teachings, then observe these Teachings in practice so that you can attain the wisdom and truth in The Teachings.

Through the wisdom you acquire in the practice of these Teachings, you will liberate the mind through wisdom to experience Enlightenment, Nibbāna, a Higher Consciousness. This new found wisdom “*gradually*” improves the way the mind functions in the world through how the mind interacts in the world and will eliminate discontentedness of mind. When the mind attains Enlightenment, the mind will not experience any discontentedness. The mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

Now that you have an introduction to The Four Noble Truths, let me explain in more detail.

Let's first discuss The Three Universal Truths as these are foundational Teachings that one needs to learn, reflect on, and practice to be able to understand The Four Noble Truths.

We refer to these Teachings as The Three Universal Truths and The Four Noble Truths. Gotama Buddha knew they were the truth and Enlightened beings know they are the truth, but in order to attain Enlightenment you will need to know they are the truth through learning, reflecting, and practicing these Teachings with guidance from a Teacher to observe the truth to acquire wisdom.

As the mind acquires more and more wisdom in this way, the mind will *gradually* awaken to “true reality” no longer struggling to understand the world and what happens in the world. The mind will awaken to the wisdom of The Natural Laws of Existence that were explained by Gotama Buddha.

There are “The Three Universal Truths” that are important to understand.

- 1.) Impermanence (Pāli: anicca)
- 2.) Discontentedness (often translated as suffering) (Pāli: dukkha)
- 3.) Non-Self (Pāli: anattā)

1.) The Universal Truth of Impermanence is a crucial Teaching to understand as it relates to understanding Gotama Buddha’s Teachings of the world he describes and then offers a path forward.

Impermanence is the understanding that all things are constantly changing.

Nothing in the world is permanent except for The Natural Laws of Existence and the mental state of Enlightenment. Material objects/possessions, relationships, thoughts, ideas, feelings, states of mind, everything in the world is constantly changing. All conditioned feelings will cease to exist. All that arises will cease to exist. There is no steady, constant, or fixed mental state other than Enlightenment.

If you take a moment to explore the mind and the world around you, you can observe that this is, in fact, a universal “truth”. You have had multiple jobs, relationships, countless clothing and possessions. Your hair continuously grows and you never can keep it forever, it leaves the body every moment.

Nothing in your life has stayed with you forever and is constantly changing, including the physical body itself. The body has constantly changed from birth until now and will continue to change your entire life. You will need to leave the body at some point. Nothing truly belongs to you as you are only using everything temporarily and everything will leave us someday because it is all impermanent. You cannot keep anything, material objects/possessions, relationships, thoughts, ideas, or feelings permanently.

Your emotions and mental states are also impermanent. The mind will change from pleasant feelings, to painful feelings, to feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant through your life and oftentimes throughout your day. There is no emotion or mental state that is permanent - only Enlightenment is permanent.

Enlightenment is the only mental state that is permanent. It is a mental state for the mind to exist permanently because the mind is liberated by wisdom. Once you learn The Natural Laws of Existence and deeply understand them through practice, you will not unlearn or forget this wisdom. Thus, Gotama Buddha gave us Teachings that provide a permanent place for the mind to

reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - fully protected from the ups and downs of life where a Practitioner will enjoy life more fully.

Other examples of how you can observe impermanence in the world are: there will never be a time when 100% of all people in the world understand you are a loving and kind person who only has an interest to live peacefully. That would be permanence and it does not exist. Oftentimes, the mind wants everyone to understand you and attempts to convince others of something. This is not accomplishable as not everyone is going to understand you because that would be permanence.

Not everyone is going to agree with your opinions and views. There are going to be some people who agree with you and others who disagree. There will never be a time when 100% of all people agree with you due to The Universal Truth of Impermanence. So, does it make sense to adamantly argue with someone to convince them to agree with you when you know this is not possible? Or, instead, one could have a peaceful discussion to share an opinion if others are interested to understand recognizing that not everyone will understand and not everyone will agree.

The mind needs to deeply understand The Universal Truth of Impermanence and will need to observe this in the world for itself to acquire wisdom. So, look around and see for yourself if you can find something that is permanent.

Is the sidewalk permanent? Is it the same color, shape, or texture throughout the entire city or town where you live? Does the sidewalk remain solid or does it have cracks? This is impermanence.

Is the weather permanent? Do we experience the same temperature, wind conditions, and precipitation every day? This is impermanence.

Is a tree permanent? Are the leaves the same color, shape, or texture? Does the tree remain the same shape permanently or is it constantly changing? This is impermanence.

Impermanence is a Universal Truth and the more you look around in the world, the more you will come to understand this truth to acquire wisdom.

This is a foundational Teaching that will help you understand The Four Noble Truths and the problems within the unEnlightened mind and why you have not been able to experience permanent happiness in your life. Happiness is impermanent.

2.) The Universal Truth of Discontentedness is how the unEnlightened mind has conditioned feelings based on impermanent conditions. The unEnlightened mind will base its inner feelings on impermanent conditions leading to conditioned pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant.

The words discontent, discontented, and discontentedness can capture the full essence and meaning of what is mostly described across books and writings about Gotama Buddha's Teachings where you see the word "suffering" substitute the word "discontentedness". Where you see the word "Dukkha" substitute the word "discontentedness".

Gotama Buddha's Teachings, that lead to Enlightenment, are meant to allow you to find a content mental state that is in the middle, so that the mind is not affected by impermanence to become "discontent" (oftentimes discussed as "suffering").

The word "**suffering**" is often translated from the word "**Dukkha**", used by Gotama Buddha, which you will see if you are studying Gotama Buddha's Teachings in the Pāli language, if you speak with Ordained Practitioners, or other places in your journey with Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

Oftentimes the word "suffering" is used in the English language to represent the subject Gotama Buddha discussed in the Pāli language as "Dukkha". However, I have found that the word "discontentedness" is a much better word to understand and use. This word represents much more than the word suffering.

The word suffering tends to only bring one's mind to think of physical or emotional "pain". It does not capture the full range of mental feelings that exist in one's experiences of daily life. The word "suffering" is ineffective in bringing a Practitioner's mind wholly to the understanding shared by Gotama Buddha. The word suffering will not bring a Practitioner's mind to establishing "Right View" as described by Gotama Buddha which is needed to attain Enlightenment. Thus, offering the word "discontentedness" will assist a Practitioner to gain the insight needed for establishing a foundation for further studies and ultimately to attain Enlightenment.

Discontentedness describes the mental state when the mind is unsatisfied, displeased, uncalm, or unpeaceful. The mind is shaken up, unsteady, or unstable.

Discontentedness is impermanent but it continues to happen over and over again because the conditions that are causing the discontentedness still remain in the unEnlightened mind. The Path to Enlightenment is to train the

mind to eliminate the conditions that are causing the discontentedness through dedicated learning, reflecting, and practice of these Teachings.

Discontentedness is a mental state that can arise from physical or emotional pain through to the slightest unpleasantness of a small odor or slightest of touches when unpleasant feelings arise. It describes the mental state that can arise from extreme physical discomfort through to the smallest of needle pricks, emotional unpleasantness or significant traumas and effects of the mind. Discontentedness also describes the condition of the mind when there are feelings of happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, boredom, loneliness, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, and others in the mind.

Discontentedness is a state of being, not a feeling or emotion itself.

When the mind is excited and elated, the mind is uncalm where one does not have concentration.

The Enlightened mind is beyond pleasure and pain where instead of experiencing conditioned happiness, excitement and elation based on an impermanent condition, it will instead experience permanent joy no longer attaching its inner feelings to impermanent conditions.

Gotama Buddha describes three feelings as discontent. This is referred to as The Universal Truth of Discontentedness.

The goal of these Teachings is to eliminate discontentedness of mind providing the mind a permanent place to reside in the mental state of Enlightenment.

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

Happiness can be described as discontentedness because we know those feelings and pleasures will not last - they are impermanent. Once the pleasant feelings cease to exist, the mind then oftentimes moves to painful feelings of sadness, anger, or worse. The mind continues to go through this constant cycle of chasing pleasant feelings, then experiencing painful feelings and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant experiencing discontentedness struggling in life.

All three of these feelings can be experienced in the unEnlightened mind which can be described as discontentedness. If we use the word “suffering”, as has been used in the past, it only describes 1/3 of the meaning of “dukkha” originally taught by Gotama Buddha. Suffering describes a painful feeling but it does not describe the other two (2) types of “dukkha” or feelings taught by Gotama Buddha. Using the word suffering, a Practitioner would be missing 66.6% of what Gotama Buddha was discussing to eliminate from the mind, thus, finding it very challenging to ever experience Enlightenment.

Discontentedness is experienced through The Six Sense Bases. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. These are the six internal sense bases or the six internal sense faculties. You will see different people using different language to describe Gotama Buddha’s Teachings because even how people describe these Teachings is impermanent. It is not steady, fixed, or constant as different people choose to use different language.

The six internal sense bases experience the six external sense bases of forms, sounds, odors, flavors, physical objects, and mental objects.

The mind longing for pleasant feelings through the six internal sense bases for the six external sense bases is one of the significant problems of the unEnlightened mind described in The Ten Fetters as “sensual desire”. The mind is chasing after pleasant feelings through The Six Sense Bases looking to fulfill the objects of its desires through impermanent conditions.

The mind experiences discontentedness through longing for sensual pleasure through these six (6) sense bases.

The Six Sense Bases

Internal Sense Base	External Sense Base
Eyes	Forms
Ears	Sounds
Nose	Odors
Tongue	Flavors
Body	Physical Objects
Mind	Mental Objects

When seeing an agreeable form through the eyes, one experiences pleasant feelings. When seeing a disagreeable form through the eyes, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

When hearing an agreeable sound through the ears, one experiences pleasant feelings. When hearing a disagreeable sound through the ears, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

When smelling an agreeable odor through the nose, one experiences pleasant feelings. When smelling a disagreeable odor through the nose, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

When tasting an agreeable flavor through the tongue, one experiences pleasant feelings. When tasting a disagreeable flavor through the tongue, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

When touching an agreeable physical object through the body, one experiences pleasant feelings. When touching a disagreeable physical object through the body, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

When recognizing an agreeable mental object through the mind, one experiences pleasant feelings. When recognizing a disagreeable mental object through the mind, one experiences a painful feeling. The mind is discontent.

Mental objects are mental states. A mental state is a mental quality in which the qualities of the mind are constant even though the state itself may be dynamic (i.e. changing).

Through all six (6) sense bases or The Six Doorways to Discontentedness, the mind experiences pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant. When pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant are experienced, the mind is discontent. There are more detailed Teachings on this topic in the book “The Six Sense Bases” (Volume 9) in this same book series.

As the mind chases pleasant feelings, due to the impermanent nature of these feelings, the mind is then inviting in painful feelings and/or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant as the mind still has a longing with a strong eagerness for impermanent conditions to create pleasant feelings. If the mind is basing its inner pleasant feelings on impermanent conditions, it is also going to experience painful feelings and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant based on impermanent conditions. Instead, the mind can be trained to be inwardly peaceful and calm no longer yearning for pleasant feelings through conditions which are all impermanent.

If the mind is unwilling to let go of impermanent conditioned happiness, it will never experience permanent unconditioned joy of the Enlightened mind.

To attain Enlightenment, you will need to learn how to “guard” the doorways to discontentedness and “protect your own contentedness” through developing a life practice of non-craving, non-desire, non-attachment, or non-clinging. We are each responsible to “protect or maintain our own contentedness of mind”, no one else can do that for us.

Since the mind is not resting in one of these three (3) feelings permanently, due to the internal feelings being based on impermanent conditions, the mind is experiencing discontentedness.

The goal of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings and pursuing Enlightenment, is for the mind to be content which is a permanent place the mind can reside through liberation of the mind. The mind will be liberated from basing its internal feelings on impermanent conditions residing permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. To accomplish this, one needs to observe the truth in Gotama Buddha’s Teachings to acquire wisdom through your practice of The Teachings and then deeply training the mind.

We acquire wisdom through learning and practicing The Teachings to observe the same “truths” as Gotama Buddha. The collection of this wisdom leads to improved ways for the mind to function optimally with purity of thought and awakened to attain Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a permanent place for the mind to reside because once you learn something to acquire wisdom you do not “unlearn” it. You learn through experience and observation of The Teachings through practice of The Teachings. There is no belief in these Teachings and practices but instead experiential learning where you observe the truth in The Teachings that becomes wisdom. Liberation of the mind by wisdom (i.e. Enlightenment) is the only mental state that is permanent. Enlightenment is a mental state where the mind can reside permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

We will now use the word discontent, discontented, or discontentedness, rather than suffering or dukkha, throughout this book.

3.) The Universal Truth of Non-Self is a Teaching that needs to be realized in the mind that there is “no permanent self” through learning, reflecting, and practicing to eliminate the mind’s misunderstanding that there is a permanent self.

The unEnlightened mind will falsely identify the body and/or the mind as being “the self”. There is a self image and self identity that the mind is oftentimes interested to project and then protect. The misunderstanding that the mind has thinking there is a permanent self leads to the mind continuously wanting to protect the self image and self identity being unable to remain peaceful and calm when there is a disagreeable experience related to the self image or self identity.

For example, if someone comments about the self image or self identity in a way that the mind agrees with, the mind can experience pleasant feelings. But, if someone comments about the self image or self identity in a way that the mind disagrees with, the mind can experience painful feelings.

The mind falsely associates the physical body and its appearance as being “who you are”. The mind thinks that this body or the mind is “you” and therefore goes out of its way to mentally protect itself when it meets with disagreeable experiences.

When the mind holds on to a permanent self, one can oftentimes become very selfish, self centered, self absorbed, and pursue its own selfish desires. This inhibits a person from being able to observe the life changing wisdom that we are all interconnected and need to improve the way we function in the world through giving and sharing living harmoniously with each other.

As long as the unEnlightened mind falsely associates with the physical body and/or mind as being the self, who “you” are, thinking the body or mind is “you”, then the mind cannot reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy because the mind will be fearful and protective of this permanent self. The mind will become angered, frustrated, or worse as it experiences disagreeable situations related to the self image and self identity.

But this is a misunderstanding of the unEnlightened mind and as long as it holds on to this false belief that there is a permanent self, the mind cannot reside peaceful and calm as it will always be fearful and looking out with strategies of protection from perceived enemies and disagreeable experiences.

An animal needs to retain the concept of a permanent self in the mind as this is how it protects itself in the wild and ensures survival. But, as human beings, we can reside in the human existence more peacefully through

realizing that we do not need to hold on to this concept or belief of a permanent self and, thus, will eliminate a massive amount of fears, unwholesome protective habits, and discontentedness in the process of letting go to realize “non-self”.

What truly exists is a physical body and a mind that has come together for this unique existence. At birth, we were provided a name, a label, that then makes it easy for everyone to refer to this unique body and mind combination in this existence. The given name lets everyone know “who we are” and we can more easily attend to our daily activities roaming and wandering about the earth.

But then, the unEnlightened mind starts to form a self image and self identity based on this name that has been given to label the unique existence of this body and this mind. The mind forms the false perception that this body is you or that this mind is you. The mind experiences feelings and thinks that is you and who you are. The mind gets tangled up misunderstanding that there is a self because it lacks the wisdom it needs to see clearly that there is no self.

Oftentimes people get so confused that at some point during life one might proclaim they need to go “find themselves” or they are going to go try to “discover their true self”. One might say, “they do not even know who they are anymore”.

This might lead to a journey where they unplug from society or go on a journey through education, travel, and other experiences seeking to understand who they truly are as they are not able to identify a “true self”. One might remain conflicted for many years over who they are becoming experiencing boredom, loneliness, or other discontent feelings due to not being able to find or understand “the self”. The mind is searching and yearning to discover a self but it can never find one though it continues its pursuit seeking to know and find a self because the mind does not realize there isn’t one. There is no self yet the mind’s misunderstanding thinking there is a self can cause the mind to grow increasingly conflicted and struggle.

This can cause one’s life to come crashing down around them because they are seeking to find a self but a self does not actually exist. They are on a never ending journey to find something that does not actually exist.

The only way out of this constant struggle is to deeply understand there is “no self” through understanding The Universal Truth of Non-self coming to realize that the mind can reside more peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy when it is not falsely identifying the physical body or the mind as being a permanent self.

Is the body permanent or impermanent?

Is the mind permanent or impermanent?

So, if the body is impermanent and the mind is impermanent, where is this permanent self that the mind wants to “hold on” to?

The answer is, there is no permanent self but the unEnlightened mind thinks there is one and this is a misunderstanding that the mind has, thus, causing it problems in the world through fears, unwholesome protective habits, and oftentimes becoming quite selfish being unable to share with others claiming ownership of everything around us. The false understanding or ignorance (unknowing of true reality) that the unEnlightened mind has related to The Universal Truth of Non-self and all these other Teachings sends it into a constant cycle of trying to fulfill or please the mind with pleasant feelings but it keeps ending up with repeated discontentedness.

This can all be remedied through learning, reflecting, and practicing Teachings to eliminate this misunderstanding, misperception, and false belief in the mind that there is a permanent self.

This comes with consistent learning and practice with guidance from a Teacher. A Practitioner will need to first have a well developed life practice of The Eight Fold Path which includes meditation. These core and central Teachings help prepare the mind to get to a point where it can more clearly see “there is no self” and be prepared to “let go” of its misunderstanding that there is a permanent self.

Oftentimes when one is learning The Universal Truth of Non-self, the Practitioner does not immediately understand it and even if they did, it would still take a well developed practice of many other Teachings to get to the point where the mind will be willing to let go of “the self” realizing non-self which is to eliminate the fetter/taint/pollution of mind described in The Ten Fetters as “personal existence view”.

Eliminating “personal existence view” to realize “non-self” will be discussed further in the Chapter titled “Dissolving The Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose” (Chapter 16).

Now, onto The Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths are offered throughout literature of Gotama Buddha's Teachings in many forms. It is rare to see the same translation or wording from any two sources due to impermanence.

The below are The Four Noble Truths as translated from The Pāli Canon, the original and most complete source of Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

The Four Noble Truths

Monks, there are these Four Noble Truths.

What four?

The noble truth of discontentedness,
the noble truth of the cause of discontentedness,
the noble truth of the elimination of discontentedness,
the noble truth of the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness.

And what, Monks, is the noble truth of discontentedness?

It should be said: The Five Aggregates subject to clinging; that is, the form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formation aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. This is called the noble truth of discontentedness.

And what, Monks, is the noble truth of the cause of discontentedness?

It is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by excitement and desire, seeking excitement here and there; that is craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination. This is called the noble truth of the cause of discontentedness.

And what, Monks, is the noble truth of the elimination of discontentedness?

It is the remainderless fading away and elimination of the same craving, the giving up and letting go of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it. This is called the noble truth of the elimination of discontentedness.

And what, Monks, is the noble truth of the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness?

It is this Noble Eight Fold Path, that is, Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. This is called the noble truth of the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness.

These, Monks, are The Four Noble Truths.

Therefore, Monks, an effort should be made to understand: 'This is discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the cause of discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the elimination of discontentedness'; an effort should be made to understand: 'This is the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness.'

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 56.13)

The following text of The Four Noble Truths is a Teacher's explanation to assist a Practitioner's learning rather than an attempt at a direct translation of Gotama Buddha's actual words.

The remaining part of this chapter will be dedicated to helping you to understand The Four Noble Truths in a way that allows you to understand, reflect, and practice this important Teaching to establish Right View.

First Noble Truth: Everyone that is unEnlightened will experience discontentedness. (The noble truth of discontentedness.)

In the first noble truth Gotama Buddha explains discontentedness. There is no permanent peacefulness, calmness, serenity or contented state with joy in the mind other than Enlightenment.

All unEnlightened beings will experience discontentedness. If you experience discontentedness which is a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, or a feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant, then you know the mind is unEnlightened.

If the mind experiences:

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

...then, you know the mind is discontent and unEnlightened.

There are plenty of unEnlightened beings in the world and is why we experience so many struggles in daily life. The Path to Enlightenment is for you to eliminate discontentedness in the mind so that it can reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

With continued learning, reflection, and practicing of these Teachings, the mind will move closer to the Enlightened mind.

Experiencing all three of these feelings it can be described as the mind is discontent, discontented, or experiencing discontentedness.

Happiness (i.e. pleasant feelings) is based on an impermanent condition, therefore, it is impermanent - it is unsatisfying and displeasing. If there is conditioned happiness (i.e. pleasant feelings), it is only a matter of time before the mind experiences painful feelings or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant. The mind will continue to experience discontentedness as long as it has craving/desire/attachment for conditioned pleasant feelings. Painful feelings and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant are right around the corner waiting to invade the mind.

An Enlightened mind will experience joy that is beyond pleasure and pain. The joy will not be conditioned on an impermanent object, therefore, it will be permanent. An Enlightened being wakes up joyful, is joyful all day long, and goes to sleep joyful. An Enlightened being can enjoy much more out of life because the mind is never discontent, it is deeply trained to no longer base its inner feelings on some impermanent condition.

Discontentedness does not arise in an Enlightened mind.

All beings in the unEnlightened state experience discontentedness of mind through pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant.

This could be perceived as a pessimistic view however, in order to achieve contentedness, a Practitioner will need to first understand the discontentedness in the mind so that with this Right View, a Practitioner can clear their own discontented state of mind.

If we view the mind, and thus the world as correct, healthy, and a pleasant place to be then there is no reason to change or adjust our state of consciousness. It's through observing the mind and what humans have created in the world as undesirable that we bring the mind to the understanding that we need change.

We certainly feel enjoyment, pleasure, and have had plenty of pleasant experiences in life. However, you have also experienced grave suffering or mild suffering that if you had the choice, you would not want to repeat. The purpose of pursuing Enlightenment is to eliminate discontentedness in the mind and ensure that there is not rebirth into the world to experience the misery of a new existence. In this way you can experience a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy and, thus, a peaceful life. You can escape The Cycle of Rebirth and experience a better way of life through the pursuit of Enlightenment.

An Enlightened mind will enjoy the rest of their life with complete peace and calmness of mind.

Look at what is in the mind this very moment along with the past or future thoughts you are having. What do you see? If you are honest with yourself, you will see discontentedness, suffering, a lifetime of accumulated discontentedness. This is normal and the state of mind prior to the pursuit of Enlightenment and for someone unaware of the solution. Your discontentedness continues over and over without the ability to understand it or resolve it until you have learned and practiced The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Further, if you look at the world around you carefully, a well learned eye should start to see discontentedness everywhere. Not just in your own life, but in the life of most people around you. You should see that everyone you know, no matter how happy of a face they portray, has discontentedness of one form or another unless they have attained Enlightenment. All people who are unEnlightened will experience discontentedness of mind, however the most important understanding and focus should be on your own mind. You can resolve the discontentedness in your own mind but you cannot resolve the discontentedness of someone else's mind, only they can do that.

When we see the world as an undesirable place to exist, we will naturally be interested to seek refuge or protection in a higher state of consciousness, thus, seek Enlightenment - the ultimate goal of Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

We cannot run from this world or all that has accumulated in the mind, so the only answer is to seek Teachings, understanding, and protection in the further progress towards emptying the mind on The Path to Enlightenment. You will often see phrasing such as "seek refuge in the dharma". "Dharma" or in Pāli "Dhamma", are The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

By seeking refuge, you are seeking understanding, insight, knowledge, wisdom, and ultimately as you pursue Enlightenment you will have safety of the mind through protection of The Teachings and wisdom you have acquired. The mind will be protected by Gotama Buddha's Teachings to protect against the world of discontentedness. The mind will be liberated by wisdom. The mind will experience the fading away of strong feelings and ultimately freedom from strong feelings as it is liberated from the problems it encounters through making decisions with pollution of the mind.

Through the process of learning and emptying the mind, you will attain a purer and purer mind, thus, a more stable, content, and peaceful existence. The mind will be purified from the fetters/taints/pollution and, thus, all discontentedness can be eliminated but one must understand what is causing the discontentedness and how to eliminate it which is explored in the remaining portion of The Four Noble Truths.

Now, let's explore why the impermanent nature of everything in the world causes the mind to be discontent.

Second Noble Truth: Discontentedness is caused by our own cravings/desires/attachments because the mind wants everything to be permanent when everything in the world is impermanent. (The noble truth of the cause of discontentedness.)

With the understanding that the unEnlightened mind is full of discontentedness, we now explore the second noble truth which details the cause of the discontentedness.

The cause of our discontentedness is that the unEnlightened mind has cravings/desires/attachments, mental longing with a strong eagerness, wanting things to be permanent when everything is impermanent except for Enlightenment and The Natural Laws of Existence. This is how the mind pulls in the direction towards the objects of its affection.

The mind has craving/desire/attachment to "things" including the "things" of the past or the future. Our expectation is that things are permanent and when they are not, discontentedness occurs. When the mind has mental craving/desire/attachment, longing with a strong eagerness for "things" that are impermanent while we expect them to be permanent, the mind will cause itself to become discontent because it "wants" permanence.

This is why when there is a relationship that has ended, the mind experiences sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, boredom, loneliness, or other discontent feelings. The mind wanted the relationship to be permanent and when it was not, the mind experiences discontentedness in the form of painful feelings.

Whether the relationship ended due to a disagreement, moving away from each other, death, or some other cause, the unEnlightened mind wanted the relationship to be permanent and when it wasn't, the mind experienced discontentedness. The unEnlightened mind does not understand impermanence and is not trained to be comfortable with impermanence and, therefore, causes itself to be discontent.

If an unEnlightened mind purchases a brand new shiny sports car and drove it to a store, parked and then went into the store returning to a scratch on the car, one person could get angry or enraged blaming others for this anger and looking to settle this through hostility and aggression. Or, a person could exit the store observing the scratch on the car understanding impermanence and be thankful that they have insurance or otherwise plan to get the car fixed - remaining calm, steady, and stable with an understanding that the car

is impermanent and it is impossible for it to permanently be a brand new shiny sports car.

In both scenarios, the scratch was the same but one person's mind reacted to the situation with ignorance (unknowing of true reality) of impermanence and the mind is causing itself to be discontent due to craving/desire/attachment while the other person chose to respond understanding impermanence and made wise choices to get the car repaired. So, the cause of the discontentedness was not the scratch or the person who created the scratch or else, both people would have the same experience.

The cause of discontentedness is that the unEnlightened mind has craving/desire/attachment wanting to keep things permanently and when it encounters impermanence, the mind becomes discontent.

The mind is causing itself to be discontent due to its own mental longing with a strong eagerness wanting things to be a certain way referred to as craving/desire/attachment.

There is never a time where a relationship is going to be permanent or that one's possessions will remain in a permanently pristine condition. Therefore, as long as the mind is unaware and unknowing of The Universal Truth of Impermanence and The Four Noble Truths, not practicing these Teachings to train the mind, the unEnlightened mind will continue to struggle experiencing an untold amount of discontentedness throughout life.

Craving/desire/attachment/wants/expectations/grasping/holding/clinging are all words that we use to describe how the mind yearns or longs for something with a strong eagerness. The unEnlightened mind thinks that if it just gets the objects of its affection that it will have what it needs, will provide inner fulfillment, and it can rest.

But, the mind continually chases after the objects of its affection wanting and desiring pleasant feelings. Upon acquiring the objects of its affection or whatever it is obsessing over, the mind experiences pleasant feelings (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.). Because those feelings are impermanent (i.e. temporary) the mind continues its chase after the pleasant feelings through the next object of its affection experiencing the burden of carrying craving/desire/attachment deep in the mind oftentimes experiencing headaches, tiredness, or heaviness, etc. as it carries the burden of craving/desire/attachment throughout the day.

Craving and desiring pleasant feelings the mind identifies the next object of its affection and continues to chase after it never getting a chance to rest as it thinks the next shiny object is just around the corner that will be ultimately

fulfilling and it continues to chase after them but never experiences lasting inner fulfillment because it is basing its internal feelings on impermanent conditions.

If the mind does not get what it wants, then it experiences painful feelings (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.). The mind is uncomfortable with the painful feelings so it attempts to push these away thinking that they are being caused by external “things” so it pushes away the people, situations, and circumstances that it attributes these painful feelings. Yet, the cycle continues because it is not truly the external “things” that are causing discontentedness in the mind, it is the mind’s own craving/desire/attachment that is causing itself to experience discontentedness.

It is through the mental craving/desire/attachment in the mind that we cause our own discontentedness.

It is possible to love, have relationships, and possessions without being attached to them which would cause us discontentedness.

Allowing the people in our life to walk their own path without forcing behavior or decisions is a practice of non-craving, non-desire, non-attachment or non-clinging. Being pushy or forceful is due to the mind’s craving/desire/attachment and will only push people away from you while hindering your Enlightenment. Caring for another human and ensuring they have what they need in life is a practice of loving-kindness or compassion, not craving/desire/attachment.

A craving/desire/attachment refers to the mental attachment or mental clinging, the way the mind pulls towards the objects of its affection with longing and yearning - a strong eagerness. Just merely possessing something is not a craving/desire/attachment. Should you not have the possession, a relationship, or “thing” is the mind discontent? Is there craving, desire or attachment, mental longing with a strong eagerness? If so, this is a craving/desire/attachment.

It is not the relationships or possessions that are causing the discontentedness but instead the way the mind longs for things to be a certain way and when they are not that way, the mind becomes discontent. Understanding that all possessions and relationships are impermanent, thus, will leave us some day, helps us to practice non-attachment training the mind to not hold things so tightly.

As unEnlightened humans, we typically place much focus on our “wants” instead of our “needs”. Our “wants” will drive the mind to more and more discontentedness because we never can fully fulfill our “wants” and, thus, they result in discontentedness with the mind constantly attempting to pursue “wants” instead of peacefulness and contentedness. The mind has constant “cravings and desires” or “wants”.

Therefore, our discontentedness is self imposed through creating, building, and maintaining our own craving/desire/attachment to “things”, wanting them to be permanent in an impermanent world. With the mind wanting things to be permanent but yet everything in the world is constantly changing, the mind’s misunderstanding expecting permanence causes the mind to continue to experience discontentedness over and over again until it learns and is deeply trained through developing a comprehensive “life practice”.

Things are going to always change so if we cling to them expecting them to never change, we are setting ourselves up for discontentedness. So, to obtain wisdom and a peaceful existence, we must not have craving/desire/attachment wanting things to be permanent.

Look at your life and the “things” you are clinging too. What are they? Material possessions, relationships, a calm environment or “stuff” that if gone would cause you discontentedness.

If you lost your wallet, purse, mobile phone, keys, your house, your car, your best friend, your partner, your parents/family members, your title, or your job, how much discontentedness would you experience? These are all examples of things you would experience a certain degree of discontentedness with should your possession of them be lost or broken.

When you have attained Enlightenment, these things nor others will cause the mind discontentedness but instead you will look for solutions to these impermanent situations and circumstances.

We cannot blame others for our unhappy or unsettled mind and state of existence. We are the only one who can cause ourselves discontentedness and we are the only one who can attain contentedness for the mind and our life through developing our life practice to understand and practice these Teachings.

A person will struggle in personal and professional relationships finding it difficult to experience total peace of mind because the mind is falsely attributing all of its difficulties and struggles to other people, situations, and circumstances that it feels is beyond its ability to control. The unEnlightened

mind will constantly blame others for the difficulties and struggles it faces rather than accepting responsibility for its own decisions that are leading it to discontentedness. This is “wrong view”.

Yet, the unEnlightened mind tries to control people, situations, and circumstances to do things its way trying to find peace in getting everyone to do things the way you want. But the work is incomplete because it is impossible to get everyone in the world to do things your way permanently.

Instead, the mind could learn The Natural Laws of Existence gaining deep wisdom to understand the world that it does not understand so that it no longer struggles through countless daily interactions and decisions. Gaining wisdom of The Natural Laws of Existence through Gotama Buddha's Teachings, the mind can then focus on how to eliminate discontentedness rather than living with the burden of continuing to experience a mind that gets shaken up by daily events and occurrences caused by its own craving/desire/attachment/wants/expectations/grasping/holding/clinging.

Third Noble Truth: The elimination of discontentedness is possible by eliminating cravings/desires/attachments. (The noble truth of the elimination of discontentedness.)

Gotama Buddha's third noble truth explains how to eliminate discontentedness in the mind no matter how large or small the discontentedness might be. We know from the second noble truth that the cause of our discontentedness is from the mental craving/desire/attachment/wants/expectations/grasping/holding/clinging to “things”.

So, the elimination of our discontentedness can only be achieved by the elimination of our craving/desire/attachment to thoughts, emotions, possessions, people, situations, etc. The mind needs to eliminate the mental longing with a strong eagerness, not the possessions, people, or situations in our life. A Practitioner needs to eliminate how the mind pulls towards the direction of the objects of its affection wanting them to be permanent.

The elimination of discontentedness is possible through the elimination of our own cravings/desires/attachments. This means, we know we will experience discontentedness from our cravings/desires/attachments so thus, we must train the mind through the remedy prescribed by Gotama Buddha to resolve the mind's constant longing with a strong eagerness wanting to hold on to “things”.

The general training that is employed is Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and a practice of generosity in daily life. Both of these are training the mind to “let go”. These remedies are explained in more detail in this book and

book series. A wise Practitioner will develop a consistent daily meditation practice to include Breathing Mindfulness Meditation. Seeking guidance with a Teacher will help you to establish this practice and develop it to ensure the most benefits to the mind. The Chapter titled “Identifying Cravings: Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind” (Chapter 13) in this book will provide additional ways to approach the elimination of cravings/desires/attachments.

We can train ourselves to acquire only the things we “need” and not the things we “want”. Eliminating craving/desire/attachment does not mean that we need to eliminate relationships or eliminate our possessions. It means we need to learn non-craving, non-desire, non-attachment and train the mind not to be discontent when we do not have these “things”, based on the impermanent nature of all “things”. We need to eliminate the mental craving, desire, or attachment through active training of the mind.

We may “want” a big house and luxury car however to accomplish this “want” it may require extensive discontentedness in the mind. It may be possible that you will need to have greed or other unwholesome cravings to achieve your “wants”. However, if we tend to only our “needs”, it can be a more balanced and healthy life.

This is one reason why Ordained Practitioners wear simple clothing, cut their hair, eat whatever is given to them, live where ever they need to live and use just the bare essentials, etc. This creates a minimalist lifestyle that fosters the best opportunity for one to pursue Enlightenment.

One can achieve Enlightenment through a household life, it’s just more challenging and requires the utmost attention to what you are craving and desiring, so that you can eliminate the mental craving/desire/attachment through a disciplined approach where Ordained Practitioners practice a pre-prescribed discipline.

It is not required that you end your relationships with partners/friends/children/family, or give up things like a car, job, clothing, etc. It’s only required that you seek what you “need” in life so that you aren’t driving the mind to fulfill your “wants” which is a never achievable goal while training the mind through these Teachings. As soon as you get what you want, your wants change and thus the mind continues on its never ending quest to acquire more things.

You do not need to give up everything to live the monastic life for the pursuit of Enlightenment. You can do that and it is a route that some people prefer to take as it creates conditions conducive for Enlightenment but is not required.

The conditions of eliminating cravings/desires/attachments within the monastic life are drastically improved. Living a monastic life does not mean you will absolutely attain Enlightenment. You will still be required to earn your own Enlightenment, just like everyone else, it's just that living a holy life within a Temple environment provides you a set of guidelines that drastically minimize your ability to cling or have attachments while being surrounded by a community of supportive Practitioners.

The home life or householder environment is more challenging because one must first gain the deep knowledge of what is required for the seeking of Enlightenment, dedicate time, create a discipline for themselves, seek training and support for The Teachings, and then implement them into their daily life.

If a Household Practitioner has an entire household or support system attempting to achieve the same goals of Enlightenment, this pursuit is more possible to achieve. However, if just one person in the household is working alone amongst others, it can be more challenging to learn and implement The Teachings. Having friends, family, and community who are learning, working, progressing, and supporting each other will produce the best results.

A monastery is a community of people who are all working towards the same goals, however, there are communities of people throughout the world seeking to eliminate discontentedness from their lives using the core Teachings from Gotama Buddha.

Some communities explain it as The Teachings of Gotama Buddha and others do not, however, The Teachings all originate from the same source, Gotama Buddha.

Gotama Buddha is the originator and discovered "The Path" to Enlightenment, Nibbāna, and a Higher Consciousness.

Gotama Buddha offered his Teachings to those around him and the world without ego or interest in fame or fortune. He did not even want to teach because he felt it would be too much of a struggle to teach others. But he persevered and continued forward ultimately deciding to teach anyone who was interested to learn and chose to learn.

He ordained females to provide females an ordained path to attain Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha was not interested in people even being attached to him asking for no one to create images, statues, or likeness of him. However, people and our “wants” decided to create these “things” because of craving/desire/attachment and human beings are experts at craving/desire/attachment.

A Household Practitioner will need to find ways to physically, electronically, or otherwise gain access to The Teachings for their own life. This book series and all the associated resources including personal guidance are available to help you learn, reflect, and practice to eliminate discontentedness of mind on The Path to Enlightenment.

Fourth Noble Truth: The path to eliminating discontentedness is The Eight Fold Path. (The noble truth of the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness.)

Gotama Buddha offers truth and reality in The Four Noble Truths. He explains the discontent mind and its solution in just three simple statements.

He explains the problem (First Noble Truth), the cause of the problem (Second Noble Truth), and that ending the problem is possible and the solution for “how” to eliminate the discontentedness (Third Noble Truth).

Then, he gives us “The Path” forward to eliminate the discontentedness in this fourth and final noble truth.

In the fourth noble truth Gotama Buddha lays out the path forward and how we can all pursue Enlightenment. He gives us the exact formula to solve the problem of discontentedness in the mind. He gives us a road map of how to end our own discontentedness. Thus, he presents **The Eight Fold Path**.

It is The Eight Fold Path that is the way leading to the complete elimination of all discontentedness from the mind. Through learning, reflecting, and practicing The Eight Fold Path, a Practitioner can train the mind to completely eliminate 100% of all discontentedness.

Right View: The Right View is to understand and practice The Four Noble Truths to establish the proper view or understanding as we embark on the remaining journey ahead of us.

Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

Studying and practicing The Eight Fold Path, we learn many important lessons for life ahead. It gives us a complete and perfect plan for achieving the results of a life without a discontent mind.

Deep study and understanding of this path forward is required to achieve the results of an Enlightened mind. As you develop and bring your life practice closer to the ideal practice of The Eight Fold Path, you will notice more and more results for your life. More and more discontentedness will be cleared away from the mind reducing then eliminating all the discontentedness caused by your own cravings/desires/attachments.

Practicing The Eight Fold Path will require you to have an interest to pursue your own Enlightenment. A detailed description of The Eight Fold Path will be shared in the next Chapter.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 4) - The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View (Read & Listen)

https://youtu.be/Na0UEtc_zQc

Ep. 504 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 4) - The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--504---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-4---The-Four-Noble-Truths-Establishing-Right-View-e272sq7>

Youtube Video(s)

(Mini-Lesson #3) - The Universal Truth of Impermanence

<https://youtu.be/qHjCVwEEes4>

(Mini-Lesson #4) - The Universal Truth of Discontentedness

<https://youtu.be/-i1VYPagSTQ>

(Mini-Lesson #5) - The Universal Truth of Non-self

<https://youtu.be/FjujEBw6veo>

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Youtube Video(s)

(Mini-Lesson #6) - The Four Noble Truths - The First Noble Truth

<https://youtu.be/5Q8aIMjzBws>

(Mini-Lesson #7) - The Four Noble Truths - The Second Noble Truth

<https://youtu.be/S54XV6agTuQ>

(Mini-Lesson #8) - The Four Noble Truths - The Third Noble Truth

https://youtu.be/-2ooC_YrNUY

(Mini-Lesson #9) - The Four Noble Truths - The Fourth Noble Truth

<https://youtu.be/tAuN7wX-l6g>

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 4 - The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View

https://youtube.com/live/RPAIOqHYx_0

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 1 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/ff9Vz57-z3l>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 432 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 4 - The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--432---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-4---The-Four-Noble-Truths-Establishing-Right-View-e1vu5t9/a-a9elj7l>

Ep. 433 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 1 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--433---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Buddhist-Chanting-Part-1-of-4-e2046ne/a-a9fa0pl>

Quiz

The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View

<https://forms.gle/nAvYVxtyzBfnJk9E8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 5

The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment

With an understanding of The Four Noble Truths, you can now study and practice The Path to eliminate discontentedness from the mind and your life. You will need a detailed and thorough understanding and practice of The Eight Fold Path to attain Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha gave us “The Path” forward to pursuing our own Enlightenment. In his explanation of The Eight Fold Path, we learn exactly how to achieve Enlightenment through a life practice or a better way of life.

You will need to learn The Eight Fold Path in detail, over time, to soak this Teaching into the mind. A Practitioner will need to apply time and effort to investigate this Teaching on multiple occasions to fully develop their life practice. The Eight Fold Path is your “life practice” and The Path to Enlightenment.

The Eight Fold Path is categorized into three (3) different sections, wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline. Referring to The Eight Fold Path as wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline is an easy way to reference The Eight Fold Path and the goal of each section of The Eight Fold Path, without needing to describe each step individually.

The following table will help you to understand the categorization of The Eight Fold Path into its three (3) separate categories which describes the goals of those individual steps.

For example, learning, reflecting, and practicing Right View and Right Intention leads to the development of “wisdom”. Learning, reflecting, and practicing Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood leads to the development of “moral conduct”. And, learning, reflecting, and practicing Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration leads to the development of “mental discipline”.

8.) Right Concentration	Mental Discipline
7.) Right Mindfulness	
6.) Right Effort	
5.) Right Livelihood	Moral Conduct
4.) Right Action	
3.) Right Speech	
2.) Right Intention	Wisdom
1.) Right View	

You will need to put the entire Eight Fold Path into practice within your daily life, over time, as you learn and grow.

You will not be able to achieve perfection in a couple of days, weeks, or months. Instead, you will need to learn, implement, see results, and continue the process of working to diligently apply all steps of The Eight Fold Path to your life. Through *gradual* training and *gradual* practice, the mind will experience *gradual* progress to becoming more peaceful and calm.

You must not master each step individually before moving onto the next.

Instead, study the entire Eight Fold Path and implement it as a way of life, a “Life Practice”. Earning your own Enlightenment is a pursuit of life improving steps. Having guidance and Teachers is helpful as you study and work towards the goal of Enlightenment.

The Eight Fold Path is the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness and attaining Enlightenment. Through practice of The Eight Fold Path, we eliminate all unwholesome results and outcomes from our unwholesome decisions through not causing harm to other beings. This is described as the elimination of unwholesome Kamma through producing only wholesome Kamma. It is our wholesome and wise decision making to acquire wisdom, improve our moral conduct, and refine our mental discipline that we will experience better results in the condition of the mind and our life.

By causing harm to other beings through your intentions, speech, actions, or livelihood, you cause harm to yourself through “The Natural Law of Kamma”. The Natural Law of Kamma is cause and effect, action and results, essentially the results of your decisions. If you make wholesome decisions, there will be wholesome outcomes. If you make unwholesome decisions, there will be unwholesome outcomes. It is due to craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) that the unEnlightened mind does not

understand what it does not understand and, therefore, makes unwholesome decisions causing harm in the world. Then, that harm is returned to you through others' intentions, speech, and actions. There will be more on Kamma in the Chapter titled "What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?" (Chapter 9).

These Teachings and practices are about non-harm or harmlessness to other beings so that you do not create unwholesome outcomes, (i.e. unwholesome Kamma) which would be returned back to you.

Practicing "The Eight Fold Path" closely, you ensure there is no harm to other beings practicing harmlessness, thus, you can attain inner peace, Enlightenment, or Nibbāna through, in part, the elimination and extinguishing of unwholesome Kamma.

The Noble Eight Fold Path - The Way of Practice Leading to the Elimination of Discontentedness

And what, Monks, is The Noble Truth of the Way of Practice Leading to the Elimination of Discontentedness?

It is just this Noble Eight Fold Path, namely: Right View; Right Intention; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration.

And what, Monks, is Right View?

It is, Monks, the wisdom of discontentedness, the wisdom of the cause of discontentedness, the wisdom of the elimination of discontentedness, and the wisdom of the way of practice leading to the elimination of discontentedness. This is called Right View.

And what, Monks, is Right Intention?

The intention of renunciation, the intention of non-ill-will, the intention of harmlessness. This, Monks, is called Right Intention.

And what, Monks, is Right Speech?

Refraining from lying, refraining from slander, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from frivolous speech. This is called Right Speech.

And what, Monks, is Right Action?

Refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from sexual misconduct. This is called Right Action.

And what, Monks, is Right Livelihood?

Here, Monks, the Noble Disciple, having given up wrong livelihood, keeps himself by Right Livelihood.

And what, Monks, is Right Effort?

Here, Monks, a Monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. This is called Right Effort.

The Noble Eight Fold Path - The Way of Practice Leading to the Elimination of Discontentedness (continued)

And what, Monks, is Right Mindfulness?

Here, Monks, a Monk resides reflecting on body as body, dedicated, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside craving and worry for the world; he resides reflecting on feelings as feelings, dedicated, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside craving and worry for the world; he resides reflecting on mind as mind, dedicated, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside craving and worry for the world; he resides reflecting on mental objects as mental objects, dedicated, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside craving and worry for the world. This is called Right Mindfulness.

And what, Monks, is Right Concentration?

Here, a Monk, distant from sense-desires, distant from unwholesome mental states, enters and resides in the first Jhāna, which is with thinking and pondering, based in seclusion, filled with excitement and joy. And with the subsiding of thinking and pondering, by gaining inner tranquility and oneness of mind, he enters and resides in the second Jhāna, which is without thinking and pondering, based in concentration, filled with excitement and joy. And with the fading away of excitement, remaining imperturbable (unable to be upset or excited; calm; serene), mindful and clearly aware, he experiences in himself the joy of which the Noble Ones say:

‘Peaceful is he who resides with equanimity and mindfulness’, he enters the third Jhāna. And, having given up pleasure and pain, and with the fading away of former gladness and sadness, he enters and resides in the fourth Jhāna, which is beyond pleasure and pain, and purified by equanimity and mindfulness. This is called Right Concentration.

And that, Monks, is called the way of practice leading to the elimination of discontentedness.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: DN 22)

1.) Right View: Having the “Right View” is having a clear understanding of The Four Noble Truths and practice this Teaching so that you know it is true.

You will need to understand that The Four Noble Truths explains the wisdom of discontentedness, the wisdom of the cause of discontentedness, the wisdom of the elimination of discontentedness, and the wisdom of the way of practice leading to the elimination of discontentedness.

The Eight Fold Path explains the path forward to eliminate discontentedness in the mind. You need to accept responsibility for your own intentions, speech, and actions realizing that you cause the mind to be discontent, not

anyone else or something else external. You alone are the cause of the discontent mind and only you can eliminate the discontentedness in the mind through learning and practicing the entire Eight Fold Path. This is practicing “Right View”.

If you blame others for the pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant (discontentedness), then you are not yet practicing Right View but instead “wrong view”.

You need to understand and observe the wisdom that no one and nothing can create a discontent mind, only you can do that to yourself. If you will not take responsibility for the mind blaming others for its discontentedness, then you will find it impossible to eliminate discontentedness in the mind.

Wrong view means that discontentedness in the mind is caused by someone else or something else so therefore, you have no ability to eliminate discontent feelings.

Right View is accepting and seeing it as your responsibility to eliminate discontentedness in the mind without blame of anyone else. You are solely and 100% responsible for all discontent feelings. This means that you can 100% eliminate discontentedness in the mind. Accepting this responsibility is the very first step towards a peaceful mind and eliminating 100% of the discontentedness in the mind.

2.) Right Intention: The Right Intention, “right thought”, or “right thinking”, is formed by the interest in renunciation (letting go) along with the absence of ill will or harm in the mind. You need to practice the intention to let go of unwholesomeness while developing a practice of non-ill-will and harmlessness.

Goodwill, harmlessness, and wholesome intentions towards all beings is important. Intentions based in ill will, harm, craving, anger, ignorance (unknowing of true reality), ego, or other unwholesome mental states will produce unskillful speech and actions thus produce unwholesome results (i.e. unwholesome Kamma).

You must always have the “right” or “proper” intention, thoughts, or thinking that is positive and beneficial to other beings to produce the best outcomes for your own well-being.

There are three aspects to Right Intention.

Renunciation: The mind needs to practice “renunciation” or “relinquishment”, the interest and willingness to “let go” and “give up” unwholesomeness and the mind’s false beliefs and misperceptions of reality. The cause of discontentedness is that the mind has craving/desire/attachment (mental longing with a strong eagerness) which is the source of all discontent feelings.

As long as the mind is “holding on”, then it will continue to experience discontentedness.

Until it trains to “let go” to reside “in the middle”, the mind will continually experience discontentedness. With the intention of letting go, or relinquishment, the mind is prepared to abandon its harmful habits and develop wholesome moral conduct and mental discipline through all the other steps on The Eight Fold Path while eliminating its false beliefs and misperceptions of reality.

Non-Ill-Will: The mind needs to develop the intention and practice of loving-kindness, which is the opposite of ill will or “non-ill-will”. Loving-kindness is active goodwill towards all beings without judgment. A genuine interest in seeing all beings be well. Through developing the intention for all beings to be well, including yourself, the mind is filled with loving-kindness and has eliminated ill will. The mind is then uninterested to cause harm to other beings and finds its way developing the remaining portions of The Eight Fold Path as a well developed life practice.

Harmlessness: The mind needs to have the “right” or “proper” thought, thinking, or intention to not be interested in producing harm to other beings. Any harm that we cause to a being, is only going to be returned to us and be a source to cause our own harm. Causing harm to other beings is like kicking up sand and having it blow back into your eyes.

Knowing that any harm you cause is only going to be returned back to you, why would the mind continue to choose to cause harm to others? A practice or intention of harmlessness will ensure the mind is uninterested and unmotivated to cause harm to other beings and will find it more seamless to make all the other decisions to cultivate The Eight Fold Path and practice The Teachings in daily life.

Right Intention helps to form a foundation of wisdom in the mind to let go, having a genuine interest in seeing all beings be well, and a practice of harmlessness which the remaining factors of The Path to Enlightenment are then developed and practiced through The Eight Fold Path.

3.) Right Speech: The Right Speech involves ensuring that we do not cause harm to other beings through our communication. During the lifetime of Gotama Buddha all that existed was “verbal speech”. Today, we communicate through verbal speech, text/chat messages, emails, posts to social media, and many other forms of written communication. All communication can either be “harmless and wholesome” or “harmful and unwholesome”. But choosing to learn and practice harmless communication, or Right Speech, you are then ensuring how you interact with others does not cause harm so that harm is not returned to you.

To practice Right Speech, or Right Communication, a Practitioner would need to fully develop and practice The Five Factors of Well Spoken Speech in all conversations through *gradual* training of the mind. This includes polite, kind, friendly, respectful, and wholesome speech in all forms of communication.

Five Factors of Well Spoken Speech

Monks, possessing five factors, speech is well spoken, not badly spoken, it is blameless and beyond reproach (disapproval) by the wise.

What five?

- (1) It is spoken at the **proper time**;
- (2) What is said is **true**;
- (3) It is **spoken gently**;
- (4) What is said is **beneficial**;
- (5) It is spoken with **a mind of loving-kindness**.

Possessing these five factors, speech is well spoken, not badly spoken; it is **blameless** and beyond reproach (disapproval) by the wise.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 5.198)

Proper Time: A Practitioner needs to ensure they are choosing the right time to speak. This includes not interrupting others when they are speaking, choosing to be patient and to speak at the appropriate time. This also includes ensuring that your mind is prepared to speak and is choosing to speak at a time when the mind is clear and concentrated rather than angered or otherwise confused about the topic to be discussed. If the mind is angered or unconcentrated, this will produce communication that is harmful to others requiring them to sort through our own discontent feelings and unconcentrated or unorganized thoughts.

If the mind is discontent, that is the improper time to speak. Postponing conversations can allow the mind time to regain its calmness, mindfulness, and concentration to then ensure one is speaking at the proper time with wisdom. If the mind is lacking Right Intention, Right Mindfulness or Right Concentration, that is the improper time to communicate. Allow the mind to regain these qualities of mind and then communicate at the proper time when you can practice harmlessness with full awareness of the mind and with focus or singleness of mind.

It is also important that you observe and consider whether it is the proper time to talk with the other person. If they are angered, frustrated, or irritated, it is most likely not the proper time to have a discussion. You can consider the topic that you have to speak about and ensure it is the appropriate time to have a discussion on that specific topic. When people first come home or have recently arrived to a certain destination, it is oftentimes best to allow their mind to adjust to the new environment where they have just arrived before discussing most topics especially topics that may be of a heavy nature. Topics that are significant, dramatic, or those that might involve major changes to one's life would be best discussed at a time when your mind, and the mind of others involved, is prepared to discuss that topic. It could be wise to ask the other individual if it would be a good time to discuss a certain topic before just opening up into an in-depth conversation that could have significant impacts to one's life. As a wise Practitioner, you may need to prepare the mind of the individual prior to choosing to have major conversations through asking questions if it would be a good time to speak about a specific topic rather than opening up into a full scale conversation.

Knowing the best time to speak with others will need to be developed through trial and error, being best assessed in the present moment, based on the uniqueness of the topic, while considering the mental state of the individuals involved in the conversation.

True: Having truthful communication helps to establish that you are a truth-speaker, one to be relied on, trustworthy, dependable, not a deceiver of the world. A Practitioner who only speaks the truth develops the ability to be helpful and well received by others because people become accustomed to you only speaking the truth. It will be well known within your community that when you speak, you only speak the truth, therefore, you will find it much easier to help others and encourage improvement in all the various projects and efforts you choose to participate.

Through speaking the truth, you become "one whom people listen to" well received in the world instead of a deceiver of the world.

You will find that opportunities to progress in life with wholesome outcomes will come to you more easily because in your personal and professional relationships people know that you are not a liar but are trustworthy and dependable. If one speaks untruths, people worry what else you could be lying about and one's reputation is significantly diminished creating obstacles to your success in life.

Not only is it wise to speak the truth, in terms of, not telling a deliberate lie but also, it is important to verify the accuracy so that all you share through communication is 100% true. Whether you are speaking, writing, or otherwise communicating in any way, ensuring that you have independently verified what you share with others will ensure the best possible outcomes and the mind can be at ease knowing that what you share is accurate and the truth. Propagating untruths, conspiracy theories, or otherwise unfounded content will only create harm in the world, therefore, it will produce unwholesome results for you. Where you can talk through your own direct experience, this will ensure you are speaking the truth, not only by not telling a deliberate lie, but also ensuring all that is communicated is accurate and based in wisdom.

Always speaking the truth makes it easy for the mind and unburdens the mind. If one always speaks the truth, they do not need to sort through all the various conversations and statements they have made in the past to conduct conversations in the present moment. A Practitioner can just always look to the truth, speak the truth, and the mind can rest easy knowing that at all times you are only ever speaking the truth. This allows communication to happen easily, seamlessly, and with minimal effort unburdening the mind. The mind can rest and relax knowing that you are only ever speaking the truth.

Spoken Gently: To speak gently, one needs to pay close attention to training and then practicing gentle tone, tempo, and word choice in their communication. Through observing what is working and not working amongst individuals that you communicate with, you can dramatically improve how you communicate and, thus, interact with others. You can observe and become aware how calm and gentle words work to accomplish your goals more readily than rushed and harsh words. You will need to practice, observe, and adjust your communication style until the mind is more finely tuned to practice speaking effortlessly and gently in all conversations paying close attention to tone, tempo, and word choice.

When you do not practice speaking gently, notice how it causes harm to others and thus, causes harm in your relationships. There are going to be challenges for you to bring your communication style closer to speaking gently in all conversations. As you are *gradually* developing your life practice

but still unable to practice speaking gently, you can apologize, aim to improve, then move on applying effort to improve in each and every conversation.

Beneficial: A Practitioner who is speaking beneficially would ensure their communication is clear, concise, and well delivered ensuring there is purposeful speech with an interest to help others. If one was to speak unclearly, lacking conciseness, and with poorly delivered communication then it would cause harm to others as they would need to sort through the muddled conversation to determine what you are attempting to communicate.

Through a well concentrated mind that is uninterested in causing harm to others, you can decide to train the mind to gather the thoughts and communicate in a clear, concise, and well delivered method that ensures the receiver of your communication does not need to apply extensive effort to understand what is being shared. Communication should be purposeful and to the point without frivolous speech or pointless rambling.

If you make people work hard to understand what you are attempting to share, people will be less and less interested in communicating with you. People will just stop listening and “tune you out”. You will find this frustrating and challenging to accomplish your goals in life.

To develop effectiveness in communication, your speech needs to be beneficial to others through purposeful dialogue that is not self satisfying or originating from selfish desires. Instead, look for ways to help others that focus on bringing people together in harmony rather than argumentative unbeneficial conversations through clear, concise, and well delivered communication.

A Mind of Loving-kindness: Through a well developed practice of Right Intention, a Practitioner should have loving-kindness for all beings. Loving-kindness is active goodwill towards all beings without judgment. A genuine interest in seeing all beings be well.

Through Right Intention, or Right Thought and Right Thinking brought through into Right Speech, the mind is well prepared to deliver words with goodwill and an interest in seeing all beings be well. If there is any ill will inserted into your communication, this will cause harm to others, therefore, cause harm to you.

While on the surface sarcasm may seem humorous and harmless, but in reality the true intention behind sarcasm is oftentimes malicious and with ill intent. While it may be the right time, true, gentle, and perceived as

beneficial, if there is ill intent with sarcasm through mocking or ridicule then the speech is not being spoken through a mind of loving-kindness.

Therefore, any speech including sarcasm that has ill will is harmful and will only come back to harm you. People will speak to you in the same way that you speak to others. The ill intended speech with sarcasm, mocking, and ridicule of others is only going to be returned to you as this is the speech one is choosing to use with others. Conversely, if you speak with a mind of loving-kindness, that is how others will choose to speak with you. Overtime, more and more people will observe your wholesome moral conduct and choose to treat you the same way that you treat others.

Blameless: No one enjoys being blamed for anything or made to feel as if they are at fault. While it could be true that someone has made a mistake, it is just a mistake or accident and if you choose to assign blame in your communication, it is only going to serve to create division. And, if the person truly has not made a mistake and is being falsely blamed, this is only going to create separation and arguments - blameful speech is harmful speech.

If we choose to be blameful towards others holding them to potentially feel guilty about their mistakes, then people are going to be uninterested to interact with you as a family member, friend, or coworker. Rather than focusing on placing blame, a well trained mind can let go of that desire and instead focus on solutions to the mistake. There is no need to ensure someone is pressured into accepting blame, but instead, the real challenge is how to move past this impermanent situation in peacefulness and harmony with all beings feeling whole.

Placing blame would only produce harm to others through disparaging others' efforts, thus, it is going to harm your relationship both personally and professionally. Mistakes or accidents are "mistakes and accidents" so punishing others through blameful speech is only going to drive people in the opposite direction from you where you will lack the support you need to accomplish the goals or objectives ahead of you. Instead of blaming others for situations and circumstances that are in the past, focus on the present moment and how to resolve the situation for the best outcome of all involved. It is best to find encouraging, supportive, and motivating language that can allow all participants to maintain their enthusiasm and interest to work together in meeting a given goal or objective. Speech that is blameless is speech that is harmless.

Through causing no harm in your communication, you will find that relationships are quite enjoyable and you can be inspiring to countless people in your life.

You can reflect on these Five Factors of Well Spoken Speech and the need to speak blamelessly and how when you have not spoken in this way, your conversations and relationships dissolved or were otherwise negatively impacted. Conversely, you can observe how when speaking in this way, all participants gained insight, understanding, and maintained harmony in accomplishing certain goals.

As you observe that the mind is not practicing one or more of these five (5) factors, make efforts and repeated efforts to improve your moral conduct through applying energy and active training of the mind. Bring your speech closer and closer to these five (5) factors observing how your personal and professional relationships will dramatically improve as you focus on improving your life practice as it relates to Right Speech or Right Communication.

If you choose to not practice these five (5) factors in their entirety, then you will observe the struggles and challenges associated with practicing “wrong speech” or “wrong communication”. Difficulties in personal and professional relationships will ensue with the result of continued struggles and challenges making any goals or objectives more labor intensive. The mind will be drained of its energy because it is constantly struggling to have polite, kind, friendly, and respectful relationships.

If you miss even one (1) of these factors in a given conversation, there is the potential for the discussion to digress into argumentative or otherwise difficult territory that you’d wished would not have occurred. Training the mind closer and closer to practicing all five (5) factors will only help you to achieve better results in life. Speaking in this way is “a better way of life” that is beneficial for others, therefore, it is benefiting you. As your life practice becomes more and more wholesome, more and more wholesomeness will return to you.

We should not engage in idle chatter or unpurposeful talk that includes gossip, harsh language, false speech with lies, deceit, or slander.

Slander (Gossip): speech or communication that is damaging to the reputation of an individual/company/organization/country/group of people, etc., whether true or false.

Frivolous Speech (Idle Chatter): is described as speaking “unbeneficially” and “unpurposefully”. This is typically done with the mind’s craving/desire/attachment where one may just be rambling pointlessly without any real purpose or need to speak but instead, just because there is a craving/desire to talk. There is no purpose or value to the speech. In some cases, one could

be speaking quickly and continuously without the ability for a mutual conversation.

Having clear, well thought out, purposeful and wholesome speech is important. Your speech should be without blame or “blameless”.

The Right Speech is born out of the Right Intention. With wholesome intentions practicing harmlessness, this will breed wholesome and purposeful speech free from craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) without ego.

A good practice is, “if you do not have something good to say then do not say anything at all”. You will need to learn to have “Right Speech” to attain Enlightenment practicing the “Five Factors of Well Spoken Speech”.

These are not rules to follow but instead, the best way to ensure the best possible outcome in all your communication with all beings. Through not causing harm to others through your speech, your life will become effortless and much more enjoyable as your personal and professional relationships will blossom.

When you do not practice speaking with Right Speech, notice how it causes harm to others and thus, causes harm in your relationships. There are going to be challenges for you to bring your communication style closer to speaking with Right Speech in all conversations. As you are *gradually* developing your life practice but still unable to practice speaking with Right Speech, you can apologize, aim to improve, then move on applying effort to improve in each and every conversation.

4.) Right Action: Our bodily actions are born from the Right Intention. Having no interest in harming other beings through practicing loving-kindness and all the other aspects of Right Intention, the mind can then produce bodily actions without harm.

You need to produce the Right Actions to ensure no harm to other beings through movements of the body. Actions should also be free of craving, anger, or ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and ego. Our bodily actions should be without harm or “harmless”.

Some of the most harmful bodily actions include the below and through making the unwholesome decision to do any of these, there will be unwholesome results (i.e. unwholesome Kamma).

A Practitioner should develop their life practice to:

- Refrain from killing
- Refrain from stealing
- Refrain from misusing of sexual conduct that would harm
- Refrain from substances that would cause heedlessness
- Refrain from gambling

These actions are largely part of The Five Precepts which should be practiced by all people. Through practice of these Five Precepts and The Eight Fold Path, one is conducting a good moral life.

While Gotama Buddha never explicitly said, “do not punch someone in the face” as part of Right Action, we know that if we cause harm through our bodily actions this will cause harm to us. If you were to hit someone either a friend or a person unknown to you, the harm you cause will be returned to you. They could hit you, their friends could attack you, you could go to jail, or you might even get murdered. Any bodily actions that are harmful will cause harm to others and there will be harm that returns to you.

It is important to purify your bodily actions to ensure that you are practicing in such a way that there is no harm being produced through your bodily actions so that no harm will come to you. We do not judge others, discriminate, or otherwise form harmful bodily actions. These are not commandments but the best way one would live in harmony with others.

5.) Right Livelihood: A livelihood is how you earn your living through daily life to sustain your life in a career, profession, or lifestyle. Our livelihood is the work or activities we do on a daily basis such as an occupation or lifestyle to sustain our life (i.e. stay at home parent, volunteer, retired person, holy life, administrative support, waste removal, cleaning services, doctor, politician, entrepreneur, etc.). A livelihood to sustain our life should not cause any harm to other beings. If we cause harm to other beings in order to sustain our own life, this is going to produce harm in our own life.

For example, are you a doctor, nurse, auto mechanic, street cleaning engineer, food server, waste removal technician, etc.? Are you conducting a livelihood that is wholesome and helpful to society and humanity? “Yes”? This is a Right Livelihood. You should not cause any harm through your livelihood.

Each person has a livelihood whether the goal is to acquire financial support or not. A livelihood is the career, profession, or lifestyle one chooses. In some cases, a person may choose to pursue personal interests and skills rather than financial goals or a career. A stay at home parent is still a

livelihood as this is a contribution to society and humanity providing life sustaining activities but may not have a direct salary associated with the day-to-day responsibilities.

A livelihood is not necessarily solely to make money or produce wealth but instead is how we choose to contribute our time, effort, and energy towards life sustaining activities for us and our family. Finding life supporting activities, a livelihood, that allow us to generate income to support our life through helping others or just purely providing life sustaining activities that we perform as a role in society, is our livelihood. Through finding a livelihood that you enjoy while also providing income or life sustaining needs will ensure a successful livelihood.

For those who do generate income through their livelihood, focus on finding something you enjoy that happens to also provide financial support. This will ensure the best outcome and enthusiasm for your daily life. If you select a livelihood solely on the bases of making money, acquiring wealth, power, prestige, or a specific title, then you will find the mind will struggle to perform your duties and responsibilities on an ongoing consistent basis perhaps even becoming bored or disinterested.

If you find a livelihood that is helping others, you enjoy the profession, and you happen to be able to acquire financial income to sustain your life and the life of those close to you, this will be the best match.

The mind will be motivated and enthusiastic to perform the daily responsibilities of the livelihood with ease. Finding a livelihood where you can acquire an income, help others, and you enjoy the activities required on a daily basis, will ensure that you never “work” one day in your life. Your profession will not feel like “work” but instead it is just one way that you help the world through your daily efforts and it happens to generate life sustaining resources for you and your family. Your livelihood is part of your life practice and we can make conscious and wise choices to ensure we are meeting our goals while also helping others through our livelihood.

Gotama Buddha gave us five livelihoods that we should not engage in as they cause harm to other beings, thus, unwholesome Kamma production: business in weapons, business in living beings (animals, slaves, human trafficking), business in meat, business in substances that cause heedlessness, and business in poisons. These all cause harm in the world, thus, if we choose to sustain our life based on these “wrong livelihoods” then we will experience harm.

Trades Not to Be Plied

Monks, a Household Practitioner should not engage in these five trades.

What five?

Business in weapons,
business in living beings,
business in meat,
business in substances that cause heedlessness,
and business in poisons.

A Household Practitioner should not engage in these five trades.

(Reference: AN 5.177)

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And what, Monks, is wrong livelihood?

Scheming, flattery, hinting, belittling, pursuing gain with gain: this is wrong livelihood.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 117)

These are aspects of practice that one is being guided to avoid while practicing one's livelihood.

Scheming: corruption or deception.

Flattery: excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one's own interests.

Hinting: suggest or indicate something indirectly or covertly. Not being direct, clear, and to the point with one's work activities.

Belittling: talking down to others in negative and disparaging ways in the attempt to diminish others' work.

Pursuing gain with gain: doing work just for profit or greed, without a real interest to provide benefit to humanity through one's livelihood.

As long as your livelihood is not involved in any of these five (5) wrong livelihoods, you are not pursuing a livelihood solely for the purpose of "gain" or selfish desires (i.e. solely for fame or fortune), and you conduct your livelihood with high ethics (i.e. without scheming, corruption, or deception), you are practicing "Right Livelihood".

Ordained Practitioners have guidance from Gotama Buddha beyond these five (5) livelihoods that are considered “wrong livelihood”. For example, Gotama Buddha provided guidance that Ordained Practitioners who provide tattoos, palm reading, spells, predictions based on astronomy, and other types of “livelihoods” are practicing “wrong livelihood”. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings have much more details on “Right Livelihood” for Ordained Practitioners.

Gotama Buddha’s objective for Ordained Practitioners was to keep them focused on learning, practicing, and sharing these Teachings so that they could eliminate discontentedness in the mind for themselves and guide humanity in eliminating the discontentedness in their mind. Therefore, Ordained Practitioners who focus on livelihoods other than learning, practicing, and sharing The Teachings are not practicing “Right Livelihood”.

Ordained Practitioners are sustained through offerings by Household Practitioners. So it is important that they develop their own practice of these Teachings and then share those Teachings with Household Practitioners so they can benefit from The Teachings and improve their life. If Ordained Practitioners are not learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings so that they can then share The Teachings with Household Practitioners, they are benefiting from the offerings and hard work of Household Practitioners without providing anything in return that is beneficial to Household Practitioners. This was not how Gotama Buddha intended The Community of Ordained Practitioners to function, thus, he established many “wrong livelihoods” that involved distracting Ordained Practitioners from their work to develop a life practice and then teach others.

Recently, marijuana has become known as a substance once thought of as a “drug” but now many people are realizing its medicinal qualities. For one to sell this medication through proper legal channels as a “medication” with the intention to help, that would still be considered a “Right Livelihood”. You will find more on the topic of marijuana in the Chapter titled “The Five Precepts: A Householder’s Guide to Daily Practice” (Chapter 7).

Detailed explanation of Right Livelihood is available in this same book series found in Chapter 14 of the book “Lowly Arts” (Volume 12).

6.) Right Effort: Right Effort has four (4) aspects to it that need to be understood and practiced.

To apply Right Effort, you will need to:

- A.) Prevent unwholesome mental states that have not arisen from arising in the mind.
- B.) Abandon unwholesome mental states that have arisen in the mind.
- C.) Produce un-arisen wholesome mental states to arise in the mind.
- D.) Maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not allowing them to fade away and work to increase their growth in the mind.

Prevent unwholesome mental states that have not arisen from arising in the mind

A good example of this aspect of Right Effort would be that you most likely have no interest in killing another human being currently in the mind. The unwholesome mental state of killing another human being is un-arisen in the mind.

Applying this aspect of Right Effort would be to prevent this unwholesome mental state and all other unwholesome mental states that have not arisen in the mind from arising.

Abandon unwholesome mental states that have arisen in the mind

A good example of this aspect of Right Effort would be that if you are currently in a relationship yet have a craving and desire to have sexual contact with another, you should apply Right Effort to abandon this unwholesome mental state that has arisen in the mind. Eliminate the unwholesome mental state of craving sexual contact as you already have a partner and having sexual contact with another would cause harm.

Another example of this would be when you feel the rise of anger inside of the mind along with the physical sensations of a burning and irate feeling arising. Do you let it come through in your speech and actions or do you make the “Right Effort” to abandon this unwholesome mental state?

By applying “Right Effort” we can abandon the unwholesome mental state prior to reacting through our speech and actions, thus, eliminating any potential unwholesome Kamma production through our speech and actions.

Produce un-arisen wholesome mental states to arise in the mind.

A good example of this aspect of Right Effort would be if you know the mind is not generous or compassionate, then you apply Right Effort to produce these un-arisen wholesome mental states to arise in the mind. Practice generosity and compassion through your actions and all other wholesome mental states that need to be arisen to attain Enlightenment.

Maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not allowing them to fade away and work to increase their growth in the mind.

A good example of this aspect of Right Effort would be if the mind currently has loving-kindness and sympathetic joy. Then you apply Right Effort to maintain these wholesome mental states that have arisen, not allowing them to fade away and work to increase their growth in the mind.

Right Effort Summary

In applying Right Effort, you actively work to prevent and then abandon unwholesome mental states such as craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) or ego from arising along with other unwholesome mental states that would be in conflict with The Five Precepts or other Teachings. It is important to cultivate wholesome mental states such as generosity, loving-kindness, wisdom, and humbleness (the opposites of craving, anger, ignorance, and ego).

You can apply Right Effort to cultivate the wholesome mental states of compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, along with the wholesome mental states shared as guidance in The Five Precepts and all other Teachings shared by Gotama Buddha.

You will also need to apply Right Effort to develop a meditation practice on a consistent and ongoing basis. A Practitioner will need to apply Right Effort to abandon the unwholesome mental state of complacency and arise the wholesome quality of developing and practicing meditation daily.

After implementing this important practice in applying “Right Effort”, over time you will notice it becomes easier and easier to abandon the unwholesome mental states and arise wholesome mental states.

Over time and as you better train the mind, when events happen in your life where you once experienced anger or other unwholesome mental states, you won’t even have a rise of the unwholesome mental state - at all. You will not experience any anger, frustration, irritation or other unwelcome feelings. You will notice that you can completely and entirely eliminate 100% of all

unwholesome mental states through actively cutting off the arising of unwholesome mental states and through cultivating wholesome mental states.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity is training the mind to easily “let go”. Then, in daily life as unwelcome feelings and unwholesome mental states arise, a Practitioner can more easily apply Right Effort to “cut off” and eliminate the unwholesome, arising the wholesome. Through determination, dedication, and diligence to apply Right Effort in daily life, over time, the mind will *gradually* eliminate any arising of discontentedness. This requires a committed and consistent meditation practice along with learning and implementing all the other Teachings including Right Effort.

Right Effort will help you to attain a peaceful, calm, and stable mind no matter what events happen in your life. You will not be attached to the speech nor actions of others nor events that happen around you. You will ultimately attain an unshakeable content mind. The mind will need *gradual* training to accomplish this result.

Training the mind in this way, you can work towards liberating the mind through wisdom. It is a permanent place for the mind to reside, content and peaceful.

The same applies to unwholesome mental states like sexual desire that would break The Five Precepts, or other unwholesome mental states. Do you allow this unwholesome mental state to continue to arise and then apply speech and action to fulfill your desire or do you make efforts to abandon this unwholesome mental state?

We must apply “Right Effort” to abandon unwholesome mental states and produce or maintain wholesome mental states.

With “Right Effort” you prevent unwholesome mental states that have not arisen from arising, abandon unwholesome mental states that have arisen, produce un-arisen wholesome mental states, and maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not allowing them to fade away and work to increase their growth in the mind.

7.) Right Mindfulness: Mindfulness is to be aware of the mind in the present moment, not allowing the mind to dwell in the past or the future. To purify the mind, you will need to have awareness of mind and what currently exists in the mind. Additionally, to apply Right Effort you will need to have full awareness of the mind at all times. This is developed *gradually* over time.

For a Practitioner who is just starting out, you can think of Right Mindfulness as “awareness of mind”. However, as you progress in this book series and seek guidance with a Teacher, a Practitioner will need to learn and practice The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

These are explored in the book “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” (Volume 7) of this same book series.

For completeness, The Four Foundations of Mindfulness will be listed here and then Teachings on these will be found in the book “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” (Volume 7) of this same book series and through training classes with the author of this book series.

A Practitioner can consider Right Mindfulness “awareness of mind” until they are able to more fully explore The Four Foundations of Mindfulness and develop these in their life practice.

What Are The Four Foundations of Mindfulness?

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are four aspects of awareness the mind needs to develop to have “awareness of mind”, then, actively and skillfully work with arising unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings to eliminate them from ever arising again.

It is through developing awareness of bodily sensations, feelings, conditions of the mind, and mental objects that the mind can then eliminate unwholesome qualities and cultivate wholesome qualities.

Through developing The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, a Practitioner can then more readily and actively “cut off the thoughts” and “let them go” training the mind to eliminate discontentedness.

Rather than allowing the mind to become polluted with unwholesome feelings, conditions of the mind, or mental objects, a Practitioner can instead cut off and let go of any arising thoughts, ideas, and feelings when they are only bodily sensations.

This allows the mind to not experience the pollution of arising unwholesomeness and trains the mind so that unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings no longer arise at all.

Without The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, a Practitioner would not be aware of the bodily sensations, or the resulting feelings, conditions of the mind, and mental objects to then be able to cut off and let go of the

unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings prior to polluting the mind so that eventually, they will never arise.

Through developing The Four Foundations of Mindfulness a Practitioner will be able to get to the point in their training that through the constant cutting off of unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings that the mind can reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy because unwholesomeness will never arise.

It is the constant cutting off sooner and sooner that the mind can experience liberation through the non-arising unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The mind will eventually get tired and will submit to never arise unwholesome thoughts, ideas, or feelings.

The non-arising of unwholesome thoughts, ideas, and feelings is experienced through a well liberated mind - an Enlightened mind.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Body as Body	Observing/Awareness of Bodily Sensations
Feelings as Feelings	Observing/Awareness of Feelings
Mind as Mind	Observing/Awareness of Conditions of the Mind
Mental Objects as Mental Objects	Observing/Awareness of Mental Objects

To develop awareness of mind, you should not allow the mind to be lost in daydreams, anticipation, indulgences, worry, or dwell in other discontent feelings. With awareness of the mind that the mind is not in the present moment during daily life, cut off those thoughts and bring the mind to the present moment.

Cultivating mindfulness or awareness of mind is accomplished through meditation practices and carried into everyday life through implementing awareness of the mind in each moment of your normal activities.

To cultivate mindfulness, you will need to learn Breathing Mindfulness Meditation in the positions of seated, lying, standing, or walking. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and the four (4) body positions for meditation are described in the Chapter titled “Meditation: Developing Your Practice”

(Chapter 11). Using Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, you can establish mindfulness or awareness of bodily sensations, feelings, conditions of the mind, and mental objects while learning to “let them go” to eliminate discontentedness.

If you continue to have reoccurring thoughts during the day or during your meditation sessions, a Practitioner could find the “cravings/desires/attachments” of why this discontentedness exists and learn how to eliminate them from the mind with the guidance of a Teacher.

Eliminating cravings/desires/attachments will clear the mind and uncover your ability to “concentrate” in the present moment. Right Concentration is the last and final step of practicing the entire Eight Fold Path.

The word “mindfulness” or “mindful” has become a popular word as part of common language. The use of the word “mindfulness” or “mindful” is most often being used in replace of “careful”.

While the vast majority of the world is using these words in a different way than that of The Buddha, it is important that you understand and use the word “mindfulness” and “mindful” in the same way as Gotama Buddha. This will bring the mind to a better understanding of The Path to Enlightenment and allow you to cultivate the mind to attain Enlightenment. Even though others may choose to misunderstand this word and use it in replace of “careful”, now that you understand the definition of this word more deeply, you can use it as described as part of The Eight Fold Path so that you can train the mind based on these Teachings.

Mindfulness is “awareness of mind”.

Be sure to continually practice “Right Mindfulness” during all waking moments. Implement mindfulness into your daily life in all that you do. This will assist you to be aware of the mind, clear the mind of cravings/desires/attachments to the past or future, and to eliminate aversion, thus allowing the mind to reside in the present moment being “satisfied with what is” with a more peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

8.) Right Concentration: Concentration is the practice of meditation and a by-product of a clear and pure mind that is practicing the entire Eight Fold Path. A mind that has eliminated cravings/desires/attachments along with practicing all these Teachings will have a focus and high degree of concentration. This is referred to as “singleness of mind”.

Right Concentration, or singleness of mind, is developed and maintained with a consistent and regular practice of The Eight Fold Path including a well established meditation practice to train the mind.

Through training the mind in Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, a Practitioner applies Right Effort to develop Right Mindfulness training the mind to “let go” to eliminate craving (mental longing with a strong eagerness). As a result, the mind becomes more aware and concentrated. Then, in daily life one should train the mind to only focus on one thing at a time to develop higher degrees of concentration or “singleness of mind”.

It is not physically possible for the mind to do more than one thing at a time. If a Practitioner attempts to do multiple things at one time through “multi-tasking”, you are essentially training the mind to rapidly cycle from one task to another. The mind is not actually doing multiple tasks at one time but instead is being trained to become overactive cycling through tasks so quickly, it will find it challenging to do any particular task well. The mind will then lack concentration and find that from the over stimulation that it is difficult to calm and relax the mind at other times in your day.

Through training the mind to do only one task at a time, a Practitioner will increase their productivity because each task will be done well with wholesome decisions and wholesome results (i.e. wholesome Kamma). You will not need to clean up any situations where you rushed through the decision making process producing unwholesome results. Instead, each decision will produce wholesome results because it was executed with Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The mind needs to take the effort to develop singleness of mind performing tasks one-by-one with full awareness of mind so that the mind can have well developed concentration ensuring the best possible outcome.

The increased and high degree of focus, concentration, and memory with clarity of mind is attained through a well developed practice of The Eight Fold Path but more specifically through daily training in meditation and through practicing “singleness of mind” in daily life. Performing one task at a time in daily life over a consistent long term basis is a practice of “singleness of mind” and will readily develop Right Concentration outside of one’s meditation sessions.

A Practitioner uses meditation to train the mind but then moves the benefits of these sessions into daily life through their life practice. Focusing the mind on the breath in Breathing Mindfulness Meditation trains the mind to have singleness of mind. Then, the Practitioner will need to apply the effort to ensure they are only performing one task at a time throughout their day in

daily life. This fully brings the mind into the present moment through fully practicing singleness of mind in-and-out of meditation to accomplish the goal of Right Concentration.

A Practitioner then benefits from the increased and high degree of focus, concentration, and memory with clarity of mind being able to apply them to your personal and professional life creating beneficial outcomes.

As taught in The Four Noble Truths, The Eight Fold Path is the “life practice” that leads to the complete elimination of discontentedness to attain Enlightenment. The Eight Fold Path needs to be deeply understood through detailed study and practiced in daily life to attain Enlightenment.

By eliminating cravings, you will “lay down the burden” of carrying these in the mind. Gotama Buddha used this phrase when describing Enlightenment. Upon attaining Enlightenment, one has “laid down the burden” or “laid down the stress” of carrying the heaviness of mental cravings.

The practice of meditation allows you to practice every step of The Eight Fold Path at one time for a given period of time, Right View through Right Concentration. This is why it’s so effective at creating wellness and a healthy mind.

During the time of meditation, one is conducting the entire Eight Fold Path for that timeframe. It’s like “restarting” the mind with full execution of The Eight Fold Path in multiple moments strung together. Those moments then lead to the next moments of a healthy and stable mind that generates concentration. And it is implementing The Eight Fold Path as a “life practice” that will allow you to attain a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy - Enlightenment.

There are multiple forms of meditation that can be useful in training the mind.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation in the positions of seated, lying, standing, and walking along with Loving-kindness Meditation are the main forms of meditation needed for attaining Enlightenment. This will be explained more in the Chapter titled “Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance” (Chapter 8) and “Meditation: Developing Your Practice” (Chapter 11).

You will find many meditation techniques and styles taught throughout the world, however, focusing on the types of meditation mentioned here will bring the best results in practicing The Eight Fold Path as taught by Gotama Buddha. Other forms of meditation can be used as needed for specific goals

or tasks the mind may need for continued training and liberation. (More on meditation in later Chapters.)

Many people start with meditation as their entry point into attempting to work towards Enlightenment. That is fine, however, one must understand that meditation alone will not produce Enlightenment if the entire Eight Fold Path is not practiced throughout your daily life in a life practice.

You cannot meditate your way to Enlightenment through wishful thinking while having improper intentions, speech, or actions and have a harmful livelihood. You could not attain Enlightenment without meditation but you also would not be able to attain Enlightenment with only meditation.

To attain Enlightenment, you will need to learn and practice the entire Eight Fold Path with meditation and other Teachings.

Through a regular practice of meditation to train the mind, quiet the mind, and eliminate cravings, you will gain higher and higher degrees of concentration. With a mind full of discontentedness, it's very hard to have concentration. But with continued practice of the entire Eight Fold Path that includes meditation, you will experience a high degree of concentration as you pursue the goal of Enlightenment and a higher state of consciousness.

Gotama Buddha taught Four (4) Jhānas or degrees of concentration that are attained as you progress closer and closer to Enlightenment as part of Right Concentration. Jhāna is the Pāli word for meditative or mental absorption, and refers to states of deep and subtle concentration. The Jhānas are preliminary phases the mind moves through prior to entering into the first Stage of Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha gave details that describe each of these Jhānas. However, your goal should be to attain Arahantship, in other words, become an Arahant. This is the highest Stage of Enlightenment and the mind is then Enlightened. The Jhānas are impermanent while Enlightenment is permanent. The goal is to achieve Enlightenment.

This means, you will need to practice the entire Eight Fold Path closely and eliminate The Ten Fetters along with eliminating and cultivating various attributes of the mind.

There is no use trying to understand each individual Jhāna and which Jhāna you have or have not attained. It is best to develop and maintain a solid practice of these Teachings while pursuing The Path to Arahantship by staying focused on The Ten Fetters and eliminate these from the mind.

Obtaining the human state is rare and your time in this form is always limited. So there is no need to focus the mind on figuring out which Jhāna you are in, that you are headed toward, and where you “want” to be. This will take you away from learning The Teachings and practicing The Teachings that lead to complete liberation of the mind.

The Jhānas are temporary and not the goal of these Teachings. The mind is not meant to reside there so there is no need to focus extensive time and effort to understand each Jhāna but instead, apply dedication and commitment to eliminating The Ten Fetters in the goal of attaining the Stage of Enlightenment as an Arahant. Knowing you are attaining the Jhānas can help you to understand you are headed in the right direction but you should not crave or want a specific Jhāna.

If you “want” a specific Jhāna, then you are craving and you will not attain complete Enlightenment. All craving must be extinguished including the craving to attain a specific Jhāna or even the craving to attain Enlightenment. You will need to pursue it as an interest, goal, or objective without craving.

Another reason why there is no need to determine which Jhāna you are in is that there is no need to compare or evaluate your “status” on this path compared to anyone else. This is a personal pursuit and one that you are walking alone with Teachers and guides to assist you. Comparing your progress to another person will only slow your progress as this will create judgment and ego. Both judgment and ego, along with other qualities of the mind, need to be fully extinguished on The Path to Enlightenment.

You will attain “Right Concentration” as you progress along The Eight Fold Path and practice all The Teachings deeply to include meditation.

There are no short cuts to achieving Enlightenment. You must start at the bottom in order to get to the top of the mind. A higher state of consciousness or “Enlightenment” is not given to you. Personal responsibility, personal improvement, and an independent journey with the guidance of Teachers is required in order to earn Enlightenment. You can maintain a normal, healthy, and productive life while pursuing Enlightenment. In fact, your life will actually continuously improve as you work your way towards Enlightenment.

You will notice ease and smoothness in areas of your life where you previously had roughness. Enlightenment is not something to prop up the

ego against that you hold as a higher status over others, in fact, it's just the opposite. To achieve Enlightenment, one needs to let go of their ego.

As you pursue Enlightenment through practicing The Eight Fold Path, you will most likely be interested to help others attain Enlightenment as well. It is best to refer new Practitioners to Teachers who are prepared to guide Students in developing a deep understanding and practice of these Teachings. If you attempt to help others while you are still gathering understanding yourself, then the work to help others will only hinder progress. It is best to refer anyone who is interested to pursue this path to a Teacher who is capable of guiding them while still allowing you time to progress. Then together, both of you can discuss The Teachings supporting and encouraging each other.

Enlightenment, and its path, is life changing. You will see the results of implementing The Eight Fold Path into your life as you constantly pursue Enlightenment.

To maintain the quality of Enlightenment, continue to work at maintaining a healthy and pure mind through continuous attention to practice The Eight Fold Path using meditation as a tool to develop and maintain a content mind. Develop and maintain a wholesome "life practice" for the best results.

Right Intentions, Right Speech, and Right Actions will produce wholesome Kamma creating a life of ease and smoothness. Another way to understand these are Kind Intentions, Kind Speech, and Kind Actions.

Enlightenment is a continuous pursuit of knowledge and the result of fully practicing The Eight Fold Path, but it is also the starting point to fully apply your practice with a liberated mind.

Enjoy the journey, enjoy the learning, growing and developing. Enjoy knowing that you can achieve Enlightenment through the process of earning your own Enlightenment.

You will never fear death because you know without a doubt that you are finished with discontentedness and the suffering it causes. Through pursuing Enlightenment and attaining it, you will never be reborn. The mind will have inner joy and inner fulfilling peace that is unshakable.

The below table shows The Eight Fold Path grouped into its sections of Wisdom, Moral Conduct, and Mental Discipline.

8.) Right Concentration	Mental Discipline
7.) Right Mindfulness	
6.) Right Effort	
5.) Right Livelihood	Moral Conduct
4.) Right Action	
3.) Right Speech	
2.) Right Intention	Wisdom
1.) Right View	

There are two additional steps on The Path to Enlightenment referred to as The Ten Fold Path. The two additional steps described as part of The Ten Fold Path are not taught but instead experienced. The steps of Right Wisdom and Right Liberation are added to The Eight Fold Path to describe The Ten Fold Path.

Right Wisdom and Right Liberation do not have specific Teachings that are shared to produce these factors of The Path to Enlightenment but instead are the results of fully practicing The Eight Fold Path and all the other Teachings to attain Enlightenment.

An Enlightened being will be practicing The Ten Fold Path where they will be experiencing Right Wisdom and Right Liberation as a result of fully practicing The Eight Fold Path.

9.) Right Wisdom: is a Practitioner's deep understanding of The Teachings and being able to communicate them with ease. A Practitioner will have fully eliminated The Unwholesome Root of Ignorance (unknowing of true reality) which is also described as a fetter/taint/pollution of mind as part of The Ten Fetters.

10.) Right Liberation: is that a Practitioner's mind is fully liberated experiencing freedom from discontentedness through having eliminated The Ten Fetters. The mind is Enlightened.

You do not need to do anything special to focus on these two additional factors of The Path to Enlightenment but instead, they will be developed as a result of all the other training you employ.

Do Not Be The Last One

...And, therefore, I say to you Ānanda, what is the good practice? It is The Noble Eight Fold Path...

When there are two men living, he under whom there occurs a breach of this good practice - he is the last man among them.

Therefore, Ānanda, I say to you: continue this good practice instituted by me and do not be the last man.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 83)

Author's Thoughts: Through this Teaching from Gotama Buddha to one of his closest Students "Ānanda", with understanding of all other Teachings of Gotama Buddha, we understand that Gotama Buddha is providing guidance that we should continue to learn and practice The Eight Fold Path.

This is The Path that leads to the complete elimination and destruction of all discontentedness of the mind to attain Enlightenment. Understanding The Eight Fold Path thoroughly and in detail is highly important for the pursuit of Enlightenment.

Further, Gotama Buddha understood that his Teachings are meant to fully liberate the mind of all of humanity bringing peace to all humans.

Until we attain Enlightenment, we will constantly be reborn through "The Cycle of Rebirth" until we attain Enlightenment during this very life or at death. Over time as all of humanity attains Enlightenment, eventually, human existence will cease to exist because there will no longer be any beings to be reborn.

Nothing lasts forever, all "things" will cease to exist including all of humanity.

So, do not be the "last one" to attain Enlightenment. Pursue this good practice... thoroughly and in detail learn and practice The Eight Fold Path to liberate the mind with the help of Teachers. The Eight Fold Path is your "life practice" to liberate the mind and attain Enlightenment so that you will no longer be reborn through "The Cycle of Rebirth" and you can attain a peaceful and serene mind and life. "Do not be the last one."

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 5) - The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment (Read & Listen)

https://youtu.be/jk_hlCqt1rQ

Ep. 505 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 5) - The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--505---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-5---The-Eight-Fold-Path-The-Path-for-All-Humans-to-Enlightenment-e272srs>

Youtube Video(s)

(Mini-Lessons) - The Path to Enlightenment - Revealing the Hidden

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFuun1phKgQmwvEJ8D2TADuTmcalFBec0>

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 5 - The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment

<https://youtube.com/live/giMDg0WPPzs>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 2 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/-668VDoJfHk>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 435 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 5 - The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--435---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-5---The-Eight-Fold-Path-The-Path-for-All-Humans-to-Enlightenment-e20b3i4/a-a9fvgku>

Ep. 436 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 2 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--436---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Buddhist-Chanting-Part-2-of-4-e20fqa5/a-a9ge0q3>

Quiz

The Eight Fold Path: The Path for All Humans to Enlightenment

<https://forms.gle/VuDauZ2WYxvmmmXdA>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 6

The Middle Way: Walking The Middle Way

Throughout literature, Gotama Buddha teaches and encourages us to “Walk The Middle Way”. But what does this mean and where do we find it?

During Gotama Buddha’s lifetime, he noticed that there was a stringed instrument similar to a “sitar” that only played beautiful music when the strings were tuned perfectly to “the middle”.



If the string was too tight, the instrument did not play as it was intended to play. The music did not sound beautiful.

If the string was too loose, the instrument did not play as it was intended to play. The music did not sound beautiful.

It was only when the musician had tuned the string perfectly that it would play beautiful music as the instrument was intended to play. He observed that the string needed to be tuned perfectly to “the middle”. And, when the string was tuned in this way, the instrument played beautiful music as it was intended to play and those around enjoyed the music.

He then compared this to the human mind. That the human mind is exactly the same. When the mind holds onto things too tightly, the mind is muddled and unconcentrated. The mind does not perform optimally. When the mind is

too loose, the mind is muddled and unconcentrated as complacency and laziness will arise. The mind is muddled and unconcentrated.

It is only when the mind is tuned perfectly to the middle by the Practitioner, that it plays beautiful music as it was intended to play. It is only when the mind is tuned perfectly to the middle, that it will experience focus, concentration, and memory with clarity of mind. And, it is The Buddha's Teachings to understand The Natural Laws of Existence that the mind can learn, reflect, and practice to tune the mind perfectly in "the middle".

This is one of the most simple, yet profound, Teachings that you will learn from Gotama Buddha. Tuning the mind perfectly to the middle is exactly what is happening as one progresses on their journey to Enlightenment.

There are countless Teachings to learn and understand so that you can practice. But there is no Teaching that is more simple to understand and that can be readily applied to your life, right now today, that will have more impact.

Whether it be how one chooses to engage with their personal or professional relationships, the mind needs to find the middle. If you are looking at financial decisions within your life, the mind needs to find the middle. If you need to make decisions regarding maintenance of your home or other possessions, the mind needs to find the middle way.

Even as it relates to learning and practicing these Teachings, the mind needs to find the middle way.

If the mind pushes too hard and forcefully attempts to move the mind in the direction of Enlightenment, this is not the middle and it is only going to cause the mind to be discontent. The mind will become frustrated, irritated, and annoyed because it is not walking the middle way.

If the mind is too complacent, laid back, and not interested to apply energy and effort to learning and practicing these Teachings, this is not the middle and is only going to cause the mind to be discontent. The mind will become dull, lazy, and lethargic.

It is only when the mind finds the middle and stays there that it will perform optimally moving *gradually* towards Enlightenment. So, where is the middle as it relates to learning, reflecting, and practicing these Teachings?

A Practitioner should be determined, dedicated, diligent, and motivated to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings. Here, the mind can find the middle and reside there peacefully, calmly, in serenity, with contentedness and joy.

The mind can know that it is applying constant energy and effort to learning and progressing - neither holding these Teachings too tight nor too loose. Now, the goal is to take this lesson and apply it to everything in other areas of your life.

Whether it be with your children, life partners, parents, friends, career, personal possessions, goals, financial needs, etc., always look for the middle way.

Keep in mind that while a Practitioner will need to pursue certain goals in life, holding those tightly the mind will experience discontentedness. But also, if a Practitioner never applied effort and energy to improve their life, the mind would be too loose not being able to experience beneficial outcomes. A Practitioner will need to find the middle where it can pursue goals and objectives but also find time for rest and relaxation. The constant work and drive craving certain successes is only going to create “burn out” where the mind is no longer enjoying life but instead is highly discontent with stress, anxiety, and exhaustion not having time to gather one’s thoughts and reflect on making wholesome life choices.

Understanding that inner peacefulness is created through a balanced lifestyle (i.e. the middle way) not through the acquisition of physical or mental objects, is highly important. If the mind is constantly pursuing and chasing the objects of its affection, not enjoying the journey, this can result in many difficulties and struggles. So, be sure to pursue goals and objectives but also find time for rest and relaxation. You may need to train the mind to rest and relax as this quality is not natural but instead, oftentimes the mind needs to be trained to just relax and view that as being productive for your life and life practice. It is ok to stop and smell the flowers.

The mind will tell you when it’s not in the middle. The discontentedness of mind that is experienced is the “red light” on the dashboard alerting you that the mind is not in the middle.

If the mind is discontent, it is not in the middle. The mind is not playing beautiful music as it was intended to do. It is The Buddha’s Teachings that will provide you the remedies of how to move the mind to the middle.

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

If the mind is experiencing any discontentedness whatsoever of pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant, then the mind is not tuned to the middle and there is more work to be done to further tune the mind and get it to stay there through developing a life practice based on The Eight Fold Path.

This requires you to develop a life practice through consistent and comprehensive learning, reflecting, and practicing these Teachings with guidance from a Teacher.

Progress will be *gradual*, but within a short period of time you will notice a difference as the mind *gradually* becomes less and less discontent. There will be situations that once produced anger, sadness, frustration, irritation, and annoyance in the mind, but those same circumstances will arise and the mind will be able to maintain its calmness and composure. This is how you will know The Teachings and practices you are implementing are working. You will see the truth for yourself. You will not need to believe these Teachings as you will see the truth that the mind is *gradually* becoming more peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy in countless situations until eventually, the mind is perfectly tuned to the middle and stays there permanently. This is a mind that is experiencing Enlightenment.

If we are sad and feeling down, we aren't walking the Middle Way. There is discontentedness of mind. But this is a temporary emotion and we know it will not be forever, because Gotama Buddha teaches us that everything is impermanent except for Enlightenment and The Natural Laws of Existence. You can see this truth for yourself as the mind constantly moves from feeling to feeling, emotion to emotion. You can observe this as truth that no feeling is indeed permanent. Your sadness will eventually dissipate and you will slide into other emotions even if that takes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, etc.

But some of us dwell in the sadness, feeling so sad and thinking that we are going to be in this condition for so long. We keep repeating these sad thoughts in the mind over and over and over. So, what we get is sadness because that's all we are thinking. One moment leads to the next so we are filling up this moment with sadness, so we get sadness in the next moment. So what we experience is a feeling of never ending sadness. We are highly discontent in this situation and certainly not "Walking The Middle Way" because we are sad.

Perhaps feeling sadness, we turn to happiness thinking that will save us. We turn to happy friends, happy occasions, happy situations, but somehow the mind keeps returning to the sadness or perhaps it stays in the happiness

and we are just happy, happy, happy. So happy, we joke all the time, we make others laugh, we go out of our way to show happiness in all situations. We may be truly happy and gleeful or we might be covering up the sadness. But this is a temporary emotion as well. Happiness will end some day and, thus, we cycle back and forth between happiness and sadness. We are gleeful and then we are not - never finding that middle ground, so to speak, or contentedness.

Oftentimes, we are encouraged by self-help books, life coaches, friends, family, and all kinds of input into our senses to be happy, just be happy. I want to be happy. Why can't I just be happy?

Well, the goal is not to be happy. The goal is to be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy or to be "satisfied with what is", "satisfied the way things are". That is the true goal and that is "Walking The Middle Way".

We can't be happy (pleasant feelings) all the time, because we know that is a temporary emotion subject to impermanence, and we for sure are not interested to be sad (painful feelings) all the time. The third option would be boredom or loneliness (feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant) which is also impermanent, therefore, the best option is to create a life where we "Walk The Middle Way".

The mind can reside in the middle peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. This is Enlightenment, it is permanent because to attain Enlightenment you need to obtain wisdom through these Teachings which liberates the mind.

Once you learn something, you do not "unlearn" it, thus, Enlightenment is a permanent state of mind. The mind can reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy permanently unaffected by the impermanent nature of all "things".

As we pursue Enlightenment, that does not mean we can't laugh, we can't cry if we need to, we can still experience these other emotions on all sides of the spectrum. It simply means that when we feel those emotions, we need to recognize them as being impermanent and train the mind to come back to the middle where it can reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Do not try to maintain these impermanent emotions of happiness, sadness, or loneliness, but rather actively apply effort to bring the mind back to the middle with meditation, reading, activities that are grounding, outdoor activities, gardening, massage treatments, whatever we need to help bring the mind back to the middle and a wholesome state. Over time, you will be

able to maintain the “middle way” through your “life practice” which includes meditation.

Apply The Seven Factors of Enlightenment from the Chapter titled “Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?” (Chapter 3) to move the mind into the middle along with all The Teachings as part of The Eight Fold Path.

Often, the first thing people tell you when you are sad is “snap out of it, go outside, do something”. What they are really saying is “change your state of mind”. Put the mind in a different environment so that it can experience a new emotion and cultivate the healthy vibes of something else. By focusing on something that will bring the mind back to the middle, the mind will go there. Maybe not right away, but with training and experience you will find this becomes easier and easier until eventually the mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy 100% of the time with an unshakable inner peace.

Moving the mind to the middle is an application of Right Effort. Taking the effort to eliminate the unwholesome qualities and arise the wholesome qualities. So, as you observe the mind is discontent, eliminate that from the mind by cutting off those thoughts and letting them go. Take the effort to move the mind in the direction of the middle way where the mind can be peaceful and calm.

The same Teaching of The Middle Way can be applied not only to happiness and sadness but also to money, possessions, relationships, trust, love, compassion, excitement, etc. We must always walk the Middle Way, because if we have craving, desire, or attachments, we will cause discontentedness for the mind.

Finding the Middle Way and staying there is a “practice” in your LIFE
PRACTICE!!!

It is possible to love and have love for others without being attached or clinging to them. We must allow all beings to follow their path without being affected by our own attachments or aversions. If we try to block people from pursuing their goals, try to get them to stick close to us, or persuade them to follow what “we want” rather than what “they need”, then it is difficult for those close to us to find and follow their own path. Likewise, if we have aversion and keep ourselves or others “away” from certain aspects of our life, we potentially lose the opportunity to gain insight or wisdom from a given situation.

One aspect of a meditation practice is to develop the ability to see the emotions, thoughts, and feelings that aren’t in the middle, then, you can use

techniques to bring the mind back to the middle. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation in the positions of seated, lying, or standing along with walking meditation are perfect for finding the middle way and staying there while also training the mind not to cling or attach. Then, apply effort to consistently maintain the middle way throughout your day. Whenever you noticed the mind is not in the middle, take active steps to move the mind back to the middle by cutting off unwholesome feelings and let them go. This becomes easier as a Practitioner accumulates the benefits of a well developed Breathing Mindfulness Meditation practice.

Eventually, the mind will be trained to always stay in the middle and you will not need to apply this effort. But, as long as the mind is longing with a strong eagerness and pulling in the direction of its cravings/desires/attachments, you will need to apply effort to cut those off and let them go. The mind will eventually get tired of this repeated cutting off and will choose to stay in the middle. It is just going to take time, effort, and dedication to develop your life practice.

You will need to study Gotama Buddha's Teachings and practice them diligently before everything will click, and each day all The Teachings and practices will lead you further on The Path to Enlightenment as the mind becomes more trained. It is peaceful when you can experience life without discontentedness or even the slightest suffering of the mind.

Why wait to the end of your life to know what will happen, when you can experience Enlightenment during this life and enjoy it for the rest of your life. You can study the practices shared with us by Gotama Buddha, practice those daily, and experience Enlightenment.

Getting to Enlightenment is not meditating and hoping you will get there one day. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is a tool to train the mind to not cling or attach and bring it to the present moment but takes practice. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation will help you train the mind to eliminate the mind's "wanting", "craving", and "clinging" so that you can eliminate the mind's tendency to form attachments - a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness. This is how the mind pulls in the direction of the objects of its affection and, thus, the mind is not in the middle.

You have to pursue your own Enlightenment through a daily practice of learning and implementing The Teachings into your life. By doing this, you will start to see the results of the difficulties in your life slowly start to disappear - life changes for you. You gain a higher level of consciousness that equips you with new tools to handle life and respond to the situations around you.

As you seek Enlightenment, life problems are not going to instantly vanish - the way we usually picture heaven. Nope, you are still on earth in a world full of discontentedness and the suffering it causes. But when you have attained Enlightenment, you have a new mind through having acquired new wisdom to deal with the impermanent nature of existence and you will not allow impermanence to affect the mind. You will no longer be affected by pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant.

Once you step forward into the light, there is no going back into the darkness. The mind will be liberated with the wisdom you acquire in your practice.

Unfortunately, many of us make ourselves way too busy with regular life that we do not take the time to study The Teachings and implement them into our practice or daily life. The mind becomes complacent and struggles through life just accepting the difficulties of experiencing repeated discontentedness rather than take action to eliminate it from the mind. Those who do implement these Teachings can tell you, they are experiencing the results as the mind moves closer to being peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Anyone that has dedicated time to learn and implement Gotama Buddha's Teachings will tell you without a doubt their life has improved greatly from the time prior to learning and implementing his Teachings.

Now, you can apply this Teaching of the middle way to your life and life situations. As you need guidance, you are welcome to reach out to seek guidance to more deeply understand and apply these Teachings into your life.

Adjusted to a Balanced Pitch

Tell me, Soṇa, in the past, when you lived at home, weren't you skilled at the lute (a stringed instrument)?

'Yes, Venerable Sir.'

What do you think, Soṇa? When its strings were too tight, was your lute well tuned and easy to play?

'No, Venerable Sir.'

When its strings were too loose, was your lute well tuned and easy to play?

'No, Venerable Sir.'

But, Soṇa, when its strings were neither too tight nor too loose but adjusted to a balanced pitch, was your lute well tuned and easy to play?

'Yes, Venerable Sir.'

So too, Soṇa, if energy is aroused too forcefully this leads to restlessness, and if energy is too soft this leads to complacency.

Therefore, Soṇa, be determined on a balance of energy, spiritual faculties, and take up achieving evenness of the object there.

'Yes, Venerable Sir,' the Venerable Soṇa replied.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 6.55)

Walking The Middle Way - Two Extremes That Should Not Be Followed

Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness.

What two?

The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, not honorable, unbeneficial; and

The pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, not honorable, unbeneficial.

Without veering towards either of these extremes, The Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to wisdom, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge (experience), to Enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

And what, Monks, is that middle way awakened to by The Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision, which leads to Nibbāna (Enlightenment)?

It is this Noble Eight Fold Path; that is, Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 56.11)

Walking The Middle Way - Two Extremes That Should Not Be Followed (continued)

Author's Thoughts: This Teaching from Gotama Buddha helps a Practitioner understand that seeking pleasant feelings or “sensual happiness” in “sensual pleasures” will not lead to Enlightenment. In fact, training the mind to not seek inner fulfillment in sensual pleasures is a major aspect of The Path to Enlightenment.

This does not mean that a Practitioner is unable to enjoy the many aspects of life, but it is when the mind mistakenly believes that it is sensual pleasures that will create lasting inner fulfillment that the mind causes itself to be discontent because it is then basing its inner feelings on impermanent conditions.

And, if the mind mistakenly believes that “self-mortification” or depriving the senses through harsh practices is what will produce the Enlightened mind, then it is misunderstanding and not practicing “The Middle Way”.

Gotama Buddha awakened to Enlightenment where the mind is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy through “the middle way”. His mind functioned in the same way as yours and through understanding the middle way, a Practitioner can experience Enlightenment just like Gotama Buddha.

If sensual desires for pleasure nor self-mortification is the middle way, then what is “the middle way”?

Gotama Buddha makes clear in countless Teachings, including this one, that it is The Eight Fold Path that leads to the complete elimination of all discontentedness and here he refers to it as “the middle way”.

Through learning, reflecting, and practicing The Eight Fold Path, a Practitioner trains the mind to reside in the middle being perfectly tuned to not chase after the objects of its affection through sensual desire, but also needs to train the mind to not inflict physical pain through deprivation of the senses. It is only when a Practitioner finds the middle and trains the mind to stay there that they will experience permanent focus, concentration, deep memory, and clarity of thought as the mind performs as it was intended to function. The Enlightened mind will be trained to reside in the middle permanently.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 6) - The Middle Way: Walking The Middle Way (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/iiBnP2v4rbl>

Ep. 506 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 6) - The Middle Way: Walking The Middle Way

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--506---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-6---The-Middle-Way-Walking-The-Middle-Way-e272suk>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 6 - The Middle Way: Walking the Middle Way

<https://youtube.com/live/Qm3zNzQr0Xk>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 3 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/vzvLLncJgGk>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 438 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 6 - The Middle Way: Walking the Middle Way

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Ep. 439 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 3 of 4)

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Chapter 7

The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice

Gotama Buddha gave us guidance to conduct life without harm to other beings or ourselves. In his Teaching titled “The Five Precepts”, he provides some basic guidance that when learned and practiced, will significantly reduce the harm you are causing in the world.

These are not commandments nor rules to follow, rather how to ensure you are not causing harm to others or yourself. By causing harm to others, we cause harm to ourselves by The Natural Law of Kamma. Through practice of these precepts, you will drastically eliminate unwholesome Kamma production and, thus, experience a more peaceful and content existence. (More on “Kamma” in a later Chapter.)

It is The Eight Fold Path that completely and fully extinguishes all unwholesome Kamma through the production of only wholesome Kamma, but here in The Five Precepts, we gain more insight into Right Speech and Right Action to further help us understand The Eight Fold Path. Through making wholesome choices in our life, we will experience wholesome outcomes. Through making unwholesome choices in our life, we will experience unwholesome outcomes. It is always our choice of whether we choose to make decisions based on wholesome or unwholesome teachings and then we experience the results according to our choices.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are not to control an individual nor dictate what they should or should not do. But instead, provide guidance that when practiced, will lead to Enlightenment, liberation of the mind, a peaceful and content mind and, thus, a peaceful and content life. Everything in this practice is attained through personal free will choices.

The Five Precepts will not be a surprise for you as they are all things you have been taught your entire life. The Five Precepts are required as a minimum for realizing the benefits of Enlightenment. You can *gradually* train the mind towards practicing these Teachings more closely each day rather than feel that you need to make multiple drastic changes at one time. If you have in the past practiced these precepts or are currently doing any of these now, good. If not, you can change or slowly modify your conduct to still seek Enlightenment.

1.) Abandoning the taking of life, refraining from taking life, without stick or sword, diligent, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings.

This is often translated in other writings as, “Do not kill or No killing or intentional taking of life”. As you can see here in this direct translation, we get much more details directly from Gotama Buddha himself. The final conclusion is, do not intentionally kill another being, human or animal. We should have compassion for all living beings.

There are three components that are needed to create a living being. An egg, sperm, and a consciousness (i.e. a mind). If these things are present, there is a living being.

Plants do not have a mind. While we may consider them as being “alive”, in some respects, they are not living beings. Bacteria are not a living being because they do not originate from an egg, sperm, nor have a consciousness. (This book series will share The Five Aggregates to help you understand what makes “a being, a being” based on this important Teaching.)

Euthanasia of a human or animal, termination of pregnancy, suicide, assisted suicide, capital punishment, attacking in war or any government sponsored killing, are all the intentional killing of another being. A person who is seeking Enlightenment or has attained Enlightenment, would not participate in intentions, speech, nor actions of these events. If you have conducted these actions in the past, that does not preclude you from pursuing and attaining Enlightenment. Putting the past behind us is important. Focus on the present moment to eliminate these actions.

Not being able to afford medical care to extend the life of a being, that if care is not administered would die, is not an intentional killing of that being. This is death that occurs by Kamma in that medical care could not be provided to extend the life of a dying being. There was no intentional action to kill the being and if the resources were available, the life of the being would have been saved. The being was not intentionally killed but instead died due to lack of resources. In a perfect world, the resources would have been available and the being would be saved.

If insects land on you, blow them off or take them off with a flick or swipe of the hand. If you unintentionally kill an insect or another being, you did not cause the intentional death of that being. This instead would be an accidental killing and not the result of a deliberate intention and action to kill the being.

This precept is helping a Practitioner to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion in the mind to eliminate any anger, hatred, or ill will. If the mind is making decisions through anger, hatred, or ill will, those unwholesome qualities are going to produce unwholesome decisions resulting in unwholesome outcomes.

Notice this precept is not, “preserve all life at all costs”. That is not possible. So, what a Practitioner is doing through learning and practicing this precept is training the mind to live compassionately with concern for the welfare of all living beings.

Suicide

Craving is the fuel that causes rebirth. Craving or desire to end one’s life is a “craving for the extermination of life”. Suicide will not resolve a person’s discontent mind as they will be reborn into a new existence with discontentedness and suffering continuing in The Cycle of Rebirth. They will most likely not be reborn back into the human realm and require many rebirths in other realms of existence to potentially once again obtain the human state, for a new chance to attain Enlightenment.

It is possible to attain Enlightenment during this life or at the time of natural death, if one has eliminated craving which includes extinguishing 100% of their unwholesome Kamma. If a person experiences 100% of their unwholesome Kamma in this human existence (to experience natural death without craving for the extermination of life), they have the ability to attain Enlightenment at death and escape The Cycle of Rebirth. If a person has craving to exterminate their life, they have not extinguished craving 100% and will be reborn. A person who works towards extinguishing all craving and experiences 100% of their unwholesome Kamma, will not be reborn to experience life in a new existence.

Avoiding natural death is a craving for the extermination of life and will continue the suffering of a person for countless more rebirths.

Obtaining the human state is extremely rare and should not be wasted. A being who has a desire to end their life should learn and practice these Teachings while in this current human form to attain Enlightenment which would eliminate the desire to end one’s life through wholesome practices that train the mind. Suicidal thoughts can be eliminated through learning and practicing these Teachings. Enlightenment is the only permanent solution to end all discontentedness of the mind and the suffering it causes.

Defense and Protection

There may come a time in life where you need to defend the body from an attacker. Should you find the body in this situation, it is understandable if the decision is to defend against bodily harm in that immediate moment to protect the body or the safety of those around you.

However, keep in mind that there are many choices and decisions that can be made each day to ensure we do not find ourselves in a situation where the body is attacked. Having a well developed mind and purity of mind is your first line of defense and protects the body from negative events and experiences (i.e. unwholesome Kamma).

If the body is being attacked due to your speech or actions, that is Kamma and due to your speech and actions, another person has chosen to attack the body. To avoid this, practice The Eight Fold Path as your “life practice” to extinguish all unwholesome Kamma production.

If you find yourself in an unprovoked attack and you can get away to avoid the situation, you should. A person with no ego would have no interest to stand and fight for the sake of fighting, but instead, would prioritize safety of the physical body to continue life over protection of the ego. However, removing the body from the situation is not always possible. If you need to defend the body in that immediate moment to be safe, you can.

If there is a way for you to defend against bodily harm without killing the attacker, that would be best but not always possible. Defend the body with as little harm to another being as possible while ensuring the body is safe and protected. Do not prolong the defense and only apply as much force as required to provide for your immediate safety and the safety of those around you.

Consuming Animal Products - Vegan

Gotama Buddha was supposedly asked about whether it is important for the Ordained Practitioners to be vegan during his lifetime. It is rumored that his reply was in the line of, the intentional killing or action of killing of an animal is done by another being and that person is producing the unwholesome Kamma. Gotama Buddha explained how as an Ascetic, they must accept whatever is given to them and not show a preference.

Gotama Buddha did include in his Eight Fold Path the “wrong livelihoods” of “business in living beings and business in meat” so he understood the massive amount of unwholesome Kamma produced through these activities, which we are currently seeing the results of today. He encouraged us not to

participate in these livelihoods as a way to sustain our life and if everyone practiced these Teachings, there would be no meat to eat.

You can also see in his very First Precept his Teachings are that we should practice “Abandoning the taking of life, refraining from taking life, without stick or sword, diligent, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings.”. Gotama Buddha taught that no one should kill a living being as this produces unwholesome Kamma. Any harm caused will be returned to us through The Natural Law of Kamma.

There are no contradictions in Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. Based on his central Teachings and guidance, we should practice Right Livelihood by not having business in living beings and business in meats. One should practice The First Precept of not killing living beings, living compassionately, and concerned for their welfare.

A Practitioner should also practice The Second Precept of not stealing as taking a life for consumption of meat or use of animal products is stealing. The being did not give permission for use of its flesh or other parts of its body. So, to take what is not given would be harmful to that being and, thus, harmful to you.

Gotama Buddha taught to have loving-kindness and compassion for all beings. How could one practice loving-kindness and compassion for all beings while eating another being?

We can understand that the rumor shared in some Buddhist communities that eating meat does not cause any unwholesome Kamma “is untrue”, and it can be considered “just a rumor”. Gotama Buddha understood the effects of killing living beings and the harm it would cause for those living beings and, thus, that harm would be returned to us as we are witnessing today.

Someone that is practicing these Teachings and may be interested to practice them very closely, will choose to be a vegetarian or vegan to progress towards Enlightenment. Being vegan will provide the mind more clarity as the body will be free of the harmful drugs, hormones, toxins, and emotions of the animal found in the flesh of an animal and animal by-products. There is unwholesome Kamma associated with eating animal products and that is returned to you through the unwholesome animal products which is loaded with drugs, toxins, and emotions of fear the animal experienced at the time of death.

There is enormously more unwholesome Kamma associated with eating animal flesh now than during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha due to the toxic substances found in animal flesh that is ingested by you if you choose to eat

animal products. Additionally, to produce animal products like eggs, milk, cheese, leather, etc., it creates an environment where massive numbers of animals suffer to provide humans these products. Animals are being trapped in the animal realm. These beings cannot be reborn to take human form for the opportunity to attain Enlightenment as long as humans are attached to producing animals and animal products for their use and consumption.

Animal products are not required to sustain human life. Proteins and other important nutritional value humans obtain from eating animal products can be ingested through plant-based products. Viewing food as merely a substance that is needed to sustain the body can help to eliminate the attachment to wanting to taste flavors of certain foods. Instead view food as just a requirement to sustain life rather than something that you “want” to please the tongue through certain flavors although there are plenty of foods you can enjoy that are plant-based foods. What we ingest into the body is to nourish and sustain “the body”, not to please “the mind”.

Eliminating the attachment to the “sensual pleasure” of the tongue can help you *gradually* eliminate the craving/desire/attachment to animal products.

By not eating animal products, you can find joy in knowing that your eating habits are not causing harm to another being and you will benefit from the healthy effects of a plant-based food supply. A Practitioner may need to investigate using a B12 supplement as part of moving to a plant-based food supply. There are only a limited number of plants that have B12 and this vitamin is needed by the human body.

The important Teaching here is do not intentionally kill another being while having compassion for all living beings. If we are eating animal flesh and/or using animal products, how could we have compassion for all living beings?

Gotama Buddha, as an Ascetic, could not choose his food. As Householders, we can choose our food and choose what we offer to Ascetics. Choosing a vegan lifestyle is a choice to do no harm to other beings.

If you have compassion for “all living beings”, as explained in this precept, you will not have a desire to consume or use animal products as your personal choice. One aspect of progressing to Enlightenment is to develop loving-kindness and compassion for all living beings. How could a Practitioner have loving-kindness and compassion for all living beings if they are eating a living being?

As with all these Teachings, you can *gradually* train the mind to move in this direction.

All beings that exist today have experienced countless rebirths in multiple forms including countless animal rebirths. Gotama Buddha explained that it would be difficult to find a being in existence that has not previously been our mother, father, sister, brother, or some other relative in a past existence. Eating animal products that promotes the killing of animals can be considered as killing your relatives and ingesting their flesh. We should have loving-kindness and compassion for all beings.

Today, many people who practice these Teachings closely are vegetarian or vegan. You can understand through “Kamma” that the massive production of animal products around the world has created massive amounts of unwholesome Kamma for the world through an unwholesome environment.

Just like accepting a possession that was stolen by another person could cause you harm, accepting animal flesh that has been killed by another person will still cause you harm. The fact that another person has killed the living being does not protect you or the environment from the harmful effects of producing and ingesting the animal products.

Producing animal products has left the environment around us in drastically poor health. Consuming animal products on an individual level is causing cancers and other bodily illnesses to humans. Through the growing, preparing, packaging, transportation, and selling of animal products, there is a massive amount of harm being done to the planet’s environment.

It is well understood that in order to bring our world’s environment into a more healthy existence, humans will need to transition to plant-based foods. As a result of not killing or causing the suffering to a tremendous amount of animals, we generate wholesome Kamma. Our planet is more healthy and our individual body and mind is more healthy.

By consuming animal products, it does cause harm to animals, to our environment, and to ourselves individually. That harm will be returned to us through an unhealthy planet and effects on our individual health. It is best to not consume animal products as this will ensure a healthy body, a healthy mind, and a healthy planet. You will notice the body and the mind function better when you only consume plant-based foods.

In addition to eliminating the action of killing another being, this precept also relates to the cultivation of deep compassion for all beings. Your practice of not consuming animal products will bring you into more harmony with all beings and a healthy planet, while eliminating the unwholesome Kamma that affects the planet and you individually.

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

With the modern advances in medical treatments with the ability to prolong or extend one's life, it is common for people to make a conscious decision to put in place a "Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)" prior to natural death.

A DNR is a document that a person signs to ensure that if they die, they are not brought back to life through modern medical advances. A DNR is not an active intentional killing.

A DNR means, the human being is already dead and they are not interested in going to extreme measures to bring them back to life.

They are perfectly content with dying and have chosen to do so naturally, without artificial ways of bringing them back to life.

A DNR is not euthanasia. These are two different things.

A DNR is choosing not to be brought back to life after one has already died.

Euthanasia is an active decision to take a life, that is killing.

2.) Abandoning the taking of what is not given, living purely, accepting what is given, awaiting what is given, without stealing.

This precept is exactly what you think it is and have, potentially, been taught your entire life. Do not steal or take what does not belong to you. This would cause harm to others and is morally not the proper way to conduct a wholesome life. Stealing will cause harm to others which will cause harm to us and means there is still craving and desire.

Accepting What is Given

In a society of people who practice generosity, oftentimes people will make generous offerings of food, supplies, money, or gifts. "Accepting what is given" is to accept all offerings without expectation or judgment. By accepting an offering made by others, we are not blocking the wholesome intentions of another being while being open to allow all people to practice generosity.

If an offering is made, one should accept the offering graciously without expectation or judgment of the offering or the person making the offering.

If we reject an offering made by another person, we are shutting down their opportunity to practice generosity. This will harm their wholesome practice of

generosity and harm your relationship with that person. If you block someone from making an offering to you by not accepting what they offer, there is a good chance they will experience painful feelings associating that with you, rather than their own craving/desire/attachment, and then choose to no longer make you offerings or perhaps distance themselves from you entirely by ending the relationship.

If someone offers you something that you know you will not use, it is fine to accept the offering and then at some point, through practicing generosity, give this item to someone else. Eventually, the item will find a home with someone who can use the item. In the meantime, the item has gone through multiple hands of individuals who benefited from practicing generosity and ultimately ended up with someone who could truly use the item. Rather than the item going to waste in your possession as the mind just “holds on” thinking that you cannot “let go” of this item through giving it to someone else, giving the item to someone else means that it can be put to good use and used for beneficial purposes.

There is no harm in giving away items that have been given to you. The person who gave you the gift should have done so out of the kindness of their heart without any expectations of what you will or will not do with the gift.

A practice of generosity should come without any expectations of what the receiver of the gift will or will not do with the item. If the person who gave the gift is hurt by you giving it to someone else, this was caused by their mind’s own expectations. They caused their own discontentedness through having expectations of what you should or should not do with the gift. That means they did not give the gift without expectations and caused their own discontentedness due to not practicing pure generosity as found in these Teachings.

Awaiting What Is Given

We should also not ask for possessions, gifts, or wealth from others. Gotama Buddha shares with us in this Precept “awaiting what is given”. In this way, he is providing guidance that helps us to eliminate craving and desire which is the cause of all discontentedness.

Having craving and desire to obtain more and more possessions, gifts, or wealth, etc., will have a direct effect on your own mind by causing it discontentedness, and will affect others by placing obligations and expectations of delivery of the requested items. If those items cannot be provided, it can cause stress in the relationship and a discontent mind for anyone involved. The request for possessions, gifts, or wealth can create

expectations. Expectations are a form of attachment which will lead to a discontent mind.

If we ask another being for help, it should not be because we “want” something but because we “need” help. We should not place undue obligations and burdens on another person.

3.) Abandoning un-chastity. Abandoning sexual relations with women [men] who are protected by their mother, father, mother and father, brother, sister, or relatives; who are protected by their Teachings; who have a husband [wife or partner]; whose violation entails a penalty; or even with one who has been garlanded by a man [woman or partner] as a sign of engagement.

This is often translated in other writings as “no sexual misconduct”. As you can see here, the sexual conduct that is suggested to abstain from involves sexual actions that would cause harm to other beings.

- Sex with minors.
- Sex without consent.
- Sex with multiple partners (i.e. un-chastity).
- Sex while living in the home of relatives and while still being guided in life by relatives. (If relatives have accepted a committed relationship and allow you to co-habitat in their home, they have accepted the committed relationship and understand sexual contact is part of your relationship.)
- Sex with someone who has previously decided to remain celibate.
- Sex with people who are already committed in other relationships.
- Sex outside any relationships you are committed to and pledged to be faithful.

Based on other Teachings of Gotama Buddha, this would also be included as harmful sexual conduct.

- Sex with people that are human trafficked.

Un-chastity would be to have constant and continuous casual sexual relationships without an interest or goal for a committed and loyal relationship.

Chastity would be to have a loyal and committed relationship where the goal, objective, or interest is a long term relationship while having sexual intercourse as part of the relationship.

Marriage is not a requirement for sexual intercourse but, through practicing as described in this precept, it will ensure one does not cause harm through their sexual contact and thus, does not experience harm due to their sexual contact.

Sexual intercourse is not wrong or immoral. It should be conducted in a way that does not cause harm to yourself nor others. You can enjoy sexual contact and attain the first two Stages of Enlightenment. This would require you to participate in sexual contact without extensive craving/desire/attachment, having sexual contact in a committed relationship.

To attain the highest two Stages of Enlightenment, you will need to eliminate sexual contact which is a “sensual desire”. To achieve this objective, you would need training of the mind to reduce and then eliminate the craving for sexual contact or this “sensual desire”.

If you have or do not have sexual activity, can the mind still maintain contentedness? You should not be attached to sexual activity but rather enjoy it as needed until you have made a decision to *gradually* reduce or eliminate your craving for sexual contact to attain the two highest stages of Enlightenment.

If you are attached to sexual contact, there will be extensive craving and desire that leads to potential harmful actions and results including discontentedness. If attachment to sexual contact exists, the mind will be discontent if you do not have sexual contact. A mind that is pursuing Enlightenment can enjoy sexual contact or not, and still be content. And at some point, make the effort to reduce or eliminate sexual contact, if you choose to attain the two highest stages of Enlightenment.

When or if you choose to eliminate sexual contact and have a partner at that time, it would be wise to discuss your decision with them so that you are both in agreement to *gradually* eliminate sexual contact. You will need to consider your partners’ thoughts and then ultimately come to a decision based on what is in your best interest while choosing not to cause harm to others.

It is important that you have responsible sexual contact. If there is a life conceived as part of your sexual contact, you need to accept responsibility for your role as a parent from conception, to birth, through complete natural life. Termination of a pregnancy is killing another being and, thus, unwholesome Kamma would be produced that affects you as a result of this action. This is mentioned in the First Precept.

Sexual conduct is particularly emotional and sensitive with the potential to cause grave harm if not conducted with the purest of intentions.

If this is a precept you have not practiced closely in the past or present, it does not mean you cannot attain Enlightenment. It means that you need to bring your actions closer to practicing this precept so that you can continue your walk towards Enlightenment.

Multiple Partners

Having multiple sexual partners at the same time is “un-chastity”, whether known and approved by all parties or not, this would create unwholesome Kamma resulting in the potential of sexually transmitted diseases and harm to others. To have multiple partners, one will oftentimes need to lie causing much stress and anxiety. Arguments, fights, financial ruin and even murder have resulted from decisions to have multiple partners. These are the unwholesome results of the unwholesome decision to have multiple partners.

Even in situations where partners have agreed to allowing multiple partners in a relationship, this produces distrust and lack of closeness where partners are oftentimes experiencing internal conflicts affecting their ability to maintain a trusting and loving relationship through practicing loyalty in a relationship.

To reduce unwholesome results (i.e. unwholesome Kamma), humans will need to have a long term committed relationship with only one (1) partner.

Human beings are most often reborn from the animal realm. Our craving/desire to have multiple partners is a behavior that comes from our countless animal existences and the ego. The Path to Enlightenment is a path to becoming more and more human. Choosing to have trusting, loving, and loyal relationships will produce the best results in this human existence and a Practitioner may need to actively train their mind to develop their life practice towards seeing this as beneficial to their life and peace of mind.

Paid Sexual Services

There is significant dilemma in having a “temporary sexual relationship” that requires payment. There is unwholesome Kamma associated with “paid sexual services” due to several aspects and nature of the temporary relationship.

As Gotama Buddha explains, humans need to “abandon un-chastity”.

Having several partners outside of an established, long term, committed relationship for a sexual worker and/or a customer would result in significant unwholesome Kamma. You should not pay for sexual services nor offer sexual services for payment as there is unwholesome Kamma associated with this temporary sexual relationship for the customer and sexual worker.

In a “temporary pay for service” sexual encounter, there is sexual contact outside of an established, long term, committed relationship. Due to the temporary nature of the encounter, the sexual worker and customer are not in an established, long term, committed relationship. The sexual worker could be a minor, human trafficked, and either party the sexual worker or customer could have sexually transmitted diseases.

The sexually transmitted diseases, guilt, and shame are the unwholesome Kamma production for both the customer and sexual worker - this is the “effect”. The “cause” of the sexually transmitted diseases, guilt, or shame is the un-chastity, having sexual contact outside of a committed relationship.

Prostitution promotes “un-chastity” and generates unwholesome Kamma for the sexual worker and the customer which is observable in the effects through The Natural Law of Kamma in the potential for sexually transmitted diseases, shame, guilt, and loss of a wholesome reputation that can affect personal and professional relationships.

Providing money to a partner in an established, long term, committed relationship to sustain their life, is not a “temporary sexual relationship” and is not considered paid sexual services. An established, long term, committed relationship, is in an effort to develop a lasting loving relationship and the money offered to this partner is a practice of generosity.

Humans should have sexual contact only in an established, long term, committed relationship to ensure no harm, and thus no unwholesome Kamma production through sexual contact.

Same Sex Partners

It is important to note that there is no Teaching that sex with the same gender (same sex relationships) would preclude someone from pursuing Enlightenment. There are people that prefer same sex relationships who have earned Enlightenment.

It is shared in The Pāli Canon that Gotama Buddha was well aware of people born into a male body whose mind does not identify with masculine qualities. He also discussed people born into a female body whose mind do not identify with feminine qualities. Yet, he never taught sexual contact

between people of the same gender would preclude one from pursuing and attaining Enlightenment.

Our sexual identity is our own sexual identity and our own decision. What is important is to ensure there is no harm in the conduct of our sexual activity. Two loving consenting adults who are loyal and faithful to each other that happen to be the same gender are causing no harm to others through their relationship and personal choice for sexual contact. If you are not causing harm with your sexual contact, there is no unwholesome Kamma production. Therefore, as you learn and practice this precept to understand Enlightenment, you will come to know that relationships of the same gender cause no harm to others. People who would like to seek Enlightenment and maintain a loving relationship with the same gender can do so while pursuing Enlightenment.

Sexual activity is a pleasurable and natural part of life. It is not wrong and does not need to be avoided. What needs to be avoided is unwholesome sexual practices as described in this important precept that would cause harm to other beings.

To attain Enlightenment as a Non-Returner or Arahant, one would need to eliminate “sensual desire” which includes sexual contact.

Transgender

During Gotama Buddha’s lifetime, he shared with Students that he observed people who are born into male bodies, when the mind does not identify with masculine qualities. He mentioned that there are people who are born into female bodies, who do not identify with feminine qualities.

But that is all he says.

He just makes the observation and shares what he observed with his Students. He never says anything else about the topic.

If one understands The Cycle of Rebirth, in that we have all been countless beings in the past of various species and various genders, it is completely understandable that a body and mind coming together right now in this human form do not necessarily match in gender.

Meaning, the body can be of one gender and the mind may identify with a different gender. This is completely normal. It is a normal part of life.

Additionally, for one who understands The Universal Truth of Impermanence, it is completely normal and understandable that not every single human born

with male sexual organs is going to identify with masculine qualities, and not every single human that is born with female sexual organs is going to identify with feminine qualities.

This is completely normal and matches exactly with what Gotama Buddha taught on the topic of The Universal Truth of Impermanence.

Gotama Buddha had nothing to teach on this subject other than make the observation and share that observation because, it is completely normal.

There is no Teaching that anything is wrong or that one should have negative feelings towards a human being whose mind does not identify with the sexual organs of the physical body.

Gotama Buddha taught to love “all beings”, have compassion for “all beings”, to be polite to “all beings”, to be kind to “all beings”, to be friendly to “all beings”, and to be respectful to “all beings”.

There is no one or nothing that we should hate or have anger towards.

Those whose mind and body do not identify with the same gender, those who prefer same gender relationships, those who prefer opposite gender relationships, and those who prefer no life partner at all, are “all” the same.

Completely normal.

We are all “human beings” and the more we love and care for one another, the world only gets better and better.

Masturbation

Masturbation is sometimes thought of as immoral. That is not true as one who masturbates is not causing harm to other beings through the self pleasing sensual pleasure. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are about not harming other beings, thus, masturbation has nothing to do with another being and you are not causing harm with this conduct.

Masturbation is a practice that can be used to thin your sexual craving so that you can ultimately eliminate the craving for sexual contact if you choose. The highest stages of Enlightenment require “thinning” or “eliminating” “sensual desire” which includes sexual contact with a partner.

Masturbation can be used to *gradually* train the mind to reduce or eliminate the sensual desire of sexual contact with a partner.

Excessive masturbation can be destructive to your own mind as the craving for sensual desire will cause a discontent mind and one should work to eliminate this craving as they progress closer to Enlightenment.

To attain the highest two stages of Enlightenment, masturbation would need to be extinguished to eliminate the “fetter/taint/pollution” of “sensual desire”.

Sex with Animals

Animals and humans are not meant to closely interact and doing so creates environments in which humans are able to be easily exposed to illnesses that cause significant harm.

A sexual relationship is meant to be between two loyal consenting human adults. If a human being were to choose to have sexual contact with an animal, this would cause harm to the animal and thus, will cause harm to humans. A Practitioner who chooses to practice these Teachings closely would not choose to have sexual contact with any animals but only through loving, loyal, and consenting adult relationships.

Pornography

Pornography did not exist during the lifetime of The Buddha. There was no technology to capture pornographic images and to allow the mind to indulge in viewing pornography at its own leisure.

Viewing pornography mostly harms one's own mind and because of that, it can also harm one's relationships with a partner, friends, family, etc., along with impacting one's social interactions.

Some partners consider viewing pornography as “cheating” and they feel one is being unfaithful, therefore, it can impact one's relationship by degrading of a partner's trust and confidence in you and the relationship. There are relationships that have been ended due to one's indulgence in viewing pornography.

If an individual is secretive in their actions, The Buddha discusses this as being unwholesome. If we are conducting ourselves with good wholesome moral conduct, there is no need to be secretive in our actions. So if we are being secretive about certain things we do, such as pornography, we can understand that this is unwholesome and the mind knows it and is why it's being secretive in its actions. Therefore, the mind becomes conflicted with its choice of unwholesome moral conduct and oftentimes experiences the painful feelings of guilt and shame associated with viewing pornography.

This guilt and shame is discontentedness that is caused due to the mind's craving/desire/attachment to pornographic material.

Additionally, there can be challenges for an individual who is addicted to pornography in that they will find it difficult to relate to others in wholesome ways, becoming socially awkward with anxiety in social settings. When in the presence of others, the mind can be obsessed with pornographic images due to the addiction and they find that relating to others in wholesome ways, through interactive conversations and finding a true "human connection", can oftentimes be difficult as the mind struggles to develop real life connections.

Because the mind is so hooked (i.e. attached) to pornography and the images viewed, the individual can find it difficult to experience meaningful human interactions because they lack the human experience of intimacy through human interactions but instead, have relegated themselves to viewing of pornographic material. The intimacy the mind craves/desires is being thwarted (i.e. prevented) because the mind *gradually* slips into its own world of viewing pornography losing its ability to comfortably interact with a partner who would be able to provide the intimacy that the mind craves/desires.

Pornography is like a self sabotaging activity, in that, the mind truly craves/desires intimacy but the more it drowns itself in pornography, it takes itself away from and loses the ability to experience the closeness it craves with a true real life partner.

Rather than directing one's sexual energy towards pornography, if one developed their life practice and channeled their desire for intimacy towards a real partner, they could more readily satisfy the craving/desire for intimacy rather than allowing the mind to dwell in a fantasy world that is never real or fully satisfying.

Even in emerging from a pornography addiction, the mind can struggle because the real life experiences with a partner seem to never live up to those experienced in the fantasy world of pornography. Therefore, again, the mind is self sabotaging in that the mind is dwelling in an unrealistic world that cannot become real, and even when the mind moves towards true love and intimacy with a partner, the mind can feel as if something is missing, thus, the mind still craves/desires the pornography.

It's like a downward spiral that can only be resolved through the elimination of craving/desire/attachment to pornography such that, the mind can "let go" of pornography seeing it as part of the problem, not the solution to its

lack of intimacy. And, that continued viewing of pornography would only further dilute the mind creating constant difficulties and struggles.

For all cravings/desires/attachments, there are skillful means to employ that *gradually* eliminates the craving and moves the mind in a healthy direction.

But to be successful, the Practitioner needs to be dedicated to elimination of pornography and be committed to training the mind to “let it go”. This is typically accomplished over a *gradual* period of time as the mind will be most comfortable to let go of craving/desire/attachment *gradually*. Working directly with a professional or Buddhist Teacher who understands how to accomplish the goal to eliminate a pornography addiction through skillful means would be required so that the mind can move closer to Enlightenment through the elimination of this craving/desire/attachment.

The mind oftentimes lacks self-discipline to eliminate this on its own and will need to reach out for personal guidance to learn and actively practice methods that are known to work to eliminate the obsession.

Allowing the mind to indulge in viewing pornography is based on craving/desire/attachment. It is due to the mind’s craving/desire for pleasant feelings through the eyes and often includes masturbation, craving/desiring for pleasant feelings through the body.

The mind views the physical body of others as attractive and is looking for gratification to please the senses and longs/yearns for pleasant feelings in the mind.

It is the same issue that all unEnlightened minds experience in that the mind continues to chase after pleasant feelings, seeking the objects of its affection, wanting to cling to pleasant feelings.

Those pleasant feelings are temporary and when they fade away, the mind is typically left with painful feelings of guilt, shame, boredom, loneliness, etc. It is the same cycle the mind experiences with all cravings/desires/attachments.

The mind thinks that it is the next new shining object around the corner that is going to bring it permanent and lasting fulfillment, but the mind is never satisfied and keeps chasing after the objects of its affection (i.e. pornography) never being permanently satisfied because the mind keeps craving, and craving, and craving until it is trained otherwise.

Just like all cravings/desires/attachments, a Practitioner will need to *gradually* train the mind to eliminate the craving/desire for pornography

through training the mind to eliminate the fetter/taint/pollution of mind described as “sensual desire” in The Ten Fetters.

There are specialized meditations and specific training that is offered to help the mind eliminate this craving/desire/attachment.

To attain Enlightenment, a Practitioner will need to eliminate pornography from their life practice. As long as this craving/desire/attachment exists in the mind, a Practitioner will not experience liberation, peace, freedom from strong feelings, Enlightenment.

The individual choosing to participate in pornography is harming themselves through their own decision to participate in pornography.

To sustain one’s life on business in living beings is part of “wrong livelihood” as described in Chapter 5 of this book and would oftentimes require multiple sexual partners, thus, leading to harm.

A person who chooses to work in the pornographic industry will have multiple consequences and effects (i.e. Kamma) as a result of their choice to sustain their life through creating pornographic content. There is oftentimes guilt and shame the individual experiences as a result of this work. Additionally, there can be difficulties related to relationships and social interactions as described in this section. There can be a degrading of one’s reputation and even sexually transmitted diseases as a result of this “wrong livelihood” and not practicing this Precept closely.

The choice for an individual to view the pornographic material is providing the financial support and other means for this harm to occur but, that is not a direct harm. If the individual did not choose to participate in the pornographic industry, they would not receive the harm. So it is the individual’s choice to participate in the pornographic industry that creates the direct harm.

The harm caused by the customer/viewer is more of an indirect harm but that would not occur for the other individual if they had not chosen to participate in the pornography profession as their livelihood.

It is the individual’s choice to base their livelihood on pornography that is causing them harm. And, it is the viewer’s choice to view pornography that is causing them harm.

4.) Abandoning false speech, refraining from false speech, a truth-speaker, one to be relied on, trustworthy, dependable, not a deceiver of the world.

This is often translated as “Do not lie”. That is correct and most of us have been taught this our entire life. There is further and deeper meaning here in this precept.

Through having false speech, one is not a truth-speaker, cannot be relied on, is not trustworthy or dependable, and is a deceiver of the world.

Through practicing only speaking the truth, one is a truth-speaker, one to be relied on, trustworthy, dependable, and well received in the world.

Not only is it wise to speak the truth, in terms of, not telling a deliberate lie but also, it is important to verify the accuracy so that all you share through communication is 100% true. Whether you are speaking, writing, or otherwise communicating in any way, ensuring that you have independently verified what you share with others will ensure the best possible outcomes and the mind can be at ease knowing that what you share is accurate and the truth. Propagating untruths, conspiracy theories, or otherwise unfounded content will only create harm in the world, therefore, it will produce unwholesome results for you. Where you can talk through your own direct experience, this will ensure you are speaking the truth, not only by not telling a deliberate lie, but also ensuring all that is communicated is accurate and based in wisdom.

Through practicing this precept closely, one comes to develop a reputation that they only speak the truth and can be looked to as a leader in their family, career, and/or community leading to wholesome results in your personal and professional life.

We should not gossip, slander, lie, or talk with deceit. While most countries have freedom of speech laws, having false speech and the freedom to do it under the law does not mean it is correct, proper, or wholesome. It can cause harm to others if speech is untruthful and, therefore, will cause harm to you. Just because you are following the law regarding speech, does not mean you have a pure mind and will earn Enlightenment.

It is important to engage in wholesome and purposeful speech that does not harm others. (See “Right Speech” as part of The Eight Fold Path for more details on Speech.)

Gotama Buddha understood Kamma so well and the need to speak the truth, he did not even lie as part of a joke as any lying will cause harm.

I Will Not Utter a Falsehood Even as a Joke

Even so unwise and empty, Rahula, is the recluseship (life practice) of those who are not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie.

So too, Rahula, when one is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no evil, I say, that one would not do. Therefore, Rahula, you should train thus:

“I will not utter a falsehood even as a joke.”

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 61)

We can use this Teaching from Gotama Buddha to help us make wise choices in our personal and professional relationships. If one is deliberately lying, there is no evil that they would not do.

A significant aspect of learning and progressing on The Path to Enlightenment is to have wholesome friends and associates. Through developing wholesome relationships, a Practitioner will have a tendency to practice wholesome qualities of mind. The converse can also be said that if one chooses to surround themselves with unwholesome friends and associates, a Practitioner will have a tendency to practice unwholesome qualities of mind.

While not judging nor looking down upon others, you may consider that if someone is lying in your relationship, this is an indication that there is no evil that they would not do, and you will need to consider whether it is wise for you to maintain a personal or professional relationship with this person.

5.) Refraining from strong drink and sloth-producing drugs (substances that cause heedlessness), the basis for heedlessness.

This precept is often translated as “Do not take intoxicants”. The purpose of pursuing Enlightenment is to clarify and purify the mind. If we take substances with the “intention” to become “heedless”, this only complicates the process towards Enlightenment as you will find it difficult to observe the true mind and you will lack “Right Mindfulness” or awareness of mind.

Being heedless with alcohol, drugs, or other substances, either legal or illegal, does not promote a mind that is on a path to become clean, clear, and pure.

The meaning of “heedlessness” is: careless, thoughtless, inattentive, uncalm, unaware, or unmindful.

If one chooses to become heedless, they are more likely to not practice the other four (4) precepts and all the other Teachings that are needed to experience Enlightenment. This means that when one is heedless, they are more likely to kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, or have false speech causing untold amounts of unwholesome Kamma.

Therefore, this precept is very important, and anyone interested to attain Enlightenment should deeply consider whether substances that cause heedlessness is helping or hurting them on the journey to a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

Based on the negative effects these substances have on the body and the mind, if you view them as “poison”, this can assist you in your training to eliminate these substances. There is no wholesome purpose to ingest substances that cause heedlessness; so “why do it”?

Gotama Buddha could not have envisioned all the various substances that would be invented after his death. So, he used language that is timeless.

With the understanding that the goal is to purify the mind, developing awareness of mind, and that substances that cause “heedlessness” would detract from this goal, one could easily apply this precept 2,500 years ago, now, or 10,000 years from now. These Teachings are timeless and when one understands the true goal of the guidance of Gotama Buddha, they can apply effort towards improving their life practice to experience the results of an Enlightened mind.

While there are many substances in the world that cause heedlessness, let’s explore some of the more common substances to help you understand application of this precept into your daily life. Any and all substances that cause heedlessness should be avoided to produce a mind that is fully aware practicing Right Mindfulness and has developed Right Concentration.

Marijuana

Marijuana is a substance that has recently been known to provide significant medical benefits for patients. An individual consuming marijuana for medical purpose and not for the sake of “heedlessness” would be practicing this precept properly. Only you know your true and real intention in using marijuana. If you are ingesting it for heedlessness, you will not be able to

attain Enlightenment because you will lack the ability to have “Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration”.

A person who is ingesting marijuana for medical purposes would most likely be interested in looking for versions of this plant that have a low level of THC and a high concentration of CBD. Research shows that THC effects the mind and causes heedlessness, while CBD contains the properties of this plant that are beneficial for medical purposes. You should consult experts in this field for guidance on how to best benefit from the medical qualities of this plant and avoid any potential effects that would cause heedlessness.

Keep in mind that smoking marijuana versus another form of ingesting this substance, can cause harm to the lungs much like cigarettes. This is unwholesome Kamma in that the action is “smoking the substance” with the result being “damage to the lungs”.

There are ways to ingest medical marijuana that could provide medical benefits without the harmful effects of smoking marijuana or other forms of ingesting that is harmful to the body.

Stress and anxiety are not a medical reason for ingesting marijuana. The marijuana is masking the stress and anxiety, not getting to the root of the problem which is craving/desire/attachment. Stress and anxiety are discontentedness, and craving/desire/attachment is the cause of discontentedness. Through training the mind, one can uproot the conditions that are causing the stress and anxiety permanently eradicating these from the mind, rather than the continuous ingesting of a substance that hinders the mind from observing its true nature, and address the source of the stress and anxiety which is craving/desire/attachment - the untrained and unEnlightened mind.

Through training the mind to attain Enlightenment absent of marijuana, stress, anxiety, and all other discontent feelings can be eliminated allowing the mind to reside peaceful and calm. But if one continues to turn to marijuana to push down the stress and anxiety, then they aren’t addressing the true problem and will be dependent on this substance throughout their life. These Teachings provide the remedy to a discontent mind, not marijuana.

Cigarettes

Cigarettes are a craving and attachment that will cause the body to be harmed, and can harm others through second hand smoke. Smoking causes unwholesome Kamma for you, and you can observe this through harm to the body. When you smoke, it does harm to the body, shortens your life

expectancy and, thus, limits the amount of time you have in this existence to attain Enlightenment and escape The Cycle of Rebirth.

If you are smoking near others, you are causing harm to them through the inhalation of second hand smoke.

To attain Enlightenment, all craving must be extinguished including the craving and attachment to cigarettes. You will need to find a way to train the mind to eliminate this unwholesome craving so that you can attain a clear and content mind while eliminating this craving.

Prescription Medications

There are various medications that if used outside the temporary use prescribed can become an addiction and habit that produces heedlessness. It is important that a Practitioner look closely at any prescription medications they ingest and ensure they are being used for their intended purpose and not through long term addiction to heedlessness.

Caffeine

Caffeine, while legal, is a drug and stimulant that is abused worldwide. Caffeine is a substance that causes heedlessness and should be avoided.

This drug contributes to anxiety, depression, loneliness, boredom, and other unwelcomed emotions that affects the ability to practice “Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration” to attain Enlightenment. Let me explain...

When one ingests caffeine, it provides a stimulant that produces excitement, energy, and pleasure (pleasant feelings). It also helps to speed up the mind and oftentimes contributes to racing thoughts and emotions. Anxiety and rapid thoughts will usually follow the ingesting of caffeine. The more caffeine ingested, the more noticeable the effects. While one might say that is the desired effect, the condition of the mind can become so intense, it is hard to focus and have “Right Mindfulness or Right Concentration”.

As the effects of the caffeine start to diminish, just like with all drugs, there can be withdrawal symptoms that include headaches, limbs shaking, emptiness of mind, dry mouth, aggressiveness, and other conditions.

The mind adapts to the pleasurable feelings of caffeine and will often “crave” this substance regularly giving us the feeling that we can’t conduct our daily activities without it. We become “hooked” or “addicted” just like the potential with all other drugs and stimulants.

With repeated use, the mind becomes trained and reliant on this substance to get excited, awake, and have pleasurable feelings.

Then, when we do not have caffeine in the body, we feel down or depressed - leaving us feeling more empty or lonely inside (feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant).

This up and down of the emotions through use of caffeine can be mistaken as symptoms of bipolar disorder or other conditions - pleasurable feelings and painful feelings or excitement and then lethargy.

By purging this substance from the body, you can see that your real true emotions can be quite stable and calm. You do not need to rely on this substance, or be attached to this substance, as you can feel more stable experiencing the calmness and peacefulness that already exists inside the mind.

You can eliminate caffeine if you currently drink sodas by moving to a soda or fruit drink that does not contain caffeine. If you are a coffee drinker, you can move to a tea with less caffeine or perhaps an herbal tea without any caffeine. Many decaffeinated coffees actually still have some caffeine so those aren't always a wise choice.

As you move away from coffee, the aroma of coffee can sometimes pull you back in. You will need to mentally manage this craving and desire for coffee and the effects of caffeine. You will need to train the mind to eliminate the craving to ingest caffeine to further liberate the mind from this attachment.

The vast majority of coffee drinkers do not actually enjoy or like the taste of coffee. That's why we include milk, sugar, and other additives to our coffee to get rid of the bitter taste of completely black coffee.

What we like is the sweet milky flavor of sugar and milk with the effects of caffeine. If coffee drinkers actually liked the taste of coffee, they would drink completely black coffee. Few people enjoy coffee this way and when they do, they are still affected by caffeine which can cause the mind to race with pleasurable feelings and then drop into painful feelings described as depression.

You will do yourself a big service to eliminate caffeine from the body. As you do, allow the withdrawal symptoms of headaches, foggy mind, body shaking and others to remind you that you are indeed "detoxing" from a drug. You will be better off without it.

You can replace caffeinated drinks with water, fruit drinks, herbal drinks, vegetable juices, and other more wholesome substances that the body can use to create a healthy environment for the mind to exist.

Eliminating caffeine from the body will ensure you do not have any foreign substances creating un-welcomed and unwholesome thoughts, emotions, or mental states. This will allow you to see the true mind with “Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration” ultimately realizing that the natural state of the mind is actually quite calm, stable, and steady. Purging this substance from the body will allow you to see the true mind so that you can work on eliminating other unwholesome mental states.

Sugar

Sugar in large quantities at one time can also cause heedlessness. If you have ever ingested a significant amount of sugar and then crashed afterwards, then you understand the effects of sugar.

There is research that shows sugar in large quantities can have the same effects to the mind as addictive substances like cocaine.

A wise Practitioner will need to be observant of their sugar intake and ensure this is not excessive to maintain awareness and concentration of mind.

Psychedelic Substances

Throughout history and in current times, people have relied on psychedelic substances to induce temporary periods of deep thinking and deep thought. These substances can produce pleasurable feelings that become enveloped into the mind.

Psychedelic substances produce impermanent mental states, not the permanent mental state of Enlightenment. One can become attached or crave the journey experienced through psychedelic mushrooms, LSD, and other substances that produce reflection and thought beyond what one has ever experienced in the unEnlightened state. Some think that through ingesting these substances, it will make their path to the Enlightened state more streamlined or rapid.

The mind will produce many reasons and rational for the various habits and activities one decides to pursue as reasons to continue craving to avoid elimination of various aspects of one’s life practice. Justification that substances help to produce an Enlightened mind sounds quite interesting

and provides the mind a reason to hold on to this craving for the impermanent pleasant feelings.

Through understanding and practice of these Teachings, you can see how any craving leads to a discontent mind because the mind cannot maintain the mental state permanently. Psychedelic substances are another attachment or craving that will lead to a discontent mind due to the impermanent nature in the effects of these substances.

To attain Enlightenment, one would need to eliminate the ingesting of psychedelic substances, and attain Enlightenment through learning, reflecting, practicing, and observing the results of a dedicated practice of these Teachings. By developing a “life practice” that leads to Enlightenment, you will be able to attain the Enlightened mental state permanently.

Psychedelic substances will never lead to a permanent mental state of Enlightenment. Experiencing Enlightenment will far outweigh what one experiences with psychedelics, and Enlightenment is a permanent mental state while psychedelics are not. Psychedelics can be dangerous and, thus, you can experience long term effects from ingesting these substances both physically and to your quality of life.

There are no shortcuts or rapid paths to Enlightenment. One needs dedication and commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha with Teachers who have already attained Enlightenment as Guides.

It makes sense that in our modern society there are some who would convince themselves that there is a quick fix of the mind that involves ingesting a psychedelic substance to produce Enlightenment.

If The Path to Enlightenment was as simple as ingesting a certain substance, Gotama Buddha would not have needed to teach for 45 years. If attaining the Enlightened mind was as easy as ingesting a psychedelic substance, then the entire world would already be Enlightened as this information would surely spread throughout the world for everyone to rapidly attain the permanent mental state of Enlightenment.

Enlightenment does not require any external substance or any external possession.

To attain Enlightenment, you will need to develop the mind into a pure mind through learning and progressing along The Path making wise personal choices to a dedicated practice of these Teachings. There are no shortcuts.

Additional Notes

The legality of certain speech or actions versus that which produces Enlightenment are sometimes two separate things unless a government has organized in such a way to follow these Teachings. I am not currently aware of any government that has setup entirely in line with these Teachings. This is why it's important that you study, learn, and implement these Teachings into your own life. By merely following the law made by humans, this will not produce a pure mind or Enlightenment.

The application of The Five Precepts and other Teachings from Gotama Buddha is not black and white or right and wrong. There is a significant gray area that a Practitioner will need to navigate. Oftentimes the mind wants Teachings like this to be clear cut of either "right or wrong". But, that is not how these Teachings work. This path requires reflection, deep thought, and wise decision making.

Seeking guidance from a Teacher can help you to navigate the gray area and then you can observe the truth through practice of The Teachings. You should not believe a Teacher but instead, learn, reflect, and practice so that you can discover the truth to acquire wisdom.

Depending on your lifestyle, there are increased numbers of precepts. The precepts one chooses to practice is up to the individual and their lifestyle, however, "The Five Precepts" is a baseline minimum that is required for all individuals to attain Enlightenment. Learning and practicing precepts beyond The Five Precepts provide additional insight and training guidance should a Practitioner choose to explore deeper into The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

The book titled "Foundation in The Teachings" (Volume 3) in this same book series has additional Teachings on The Five Precepts and detailed Teachings on The Eight Precepts to help you deepen your life practice.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 7) - The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/QKjYnzEptj0>

Ep. 507 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 7) - The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--507---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-7---The-Five-Precepts-A-Householders-Guide-to-Daily-Practice-e272t38>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 7 - The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice

<https://youtube.com/live/36myfepniBA>

(Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 4 of 4)

<https://youtube.com/live/2wQfXuTMS-M>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 441 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 7 - The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--441---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-7---The-Five-Precepts-A-Householders-Guide-to-Daily-Practice-e216qdg/a-a9ijgr8>

Ep. 442 - (Group Learning Program) - LEARN Buddhist Chanting (Part 4 of 4)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--442---Group-Learning-Program---LEARN-Buddhist-Chanting-Part-4-of-4-e21blt3/a-a9j2jse>

Quiz

The Five Precepts: A Householder's Guide to Daily Practice

<https://forms.gle/nvJkQhjYptBcuJ5G6>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 8

Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance

Gotama Buddha's Teachings to eliminate craving, anger, and ignorance are known, for good reason, as The Three Poisons, The Three Unwholesome Roots, and The Three Fires. Also known as (greed, hatred, and delusion) or (desire, ill will, and confusion).

These are The Three Poisons that exist and are present in the mind as part of rebirth into the human realm. It is our goal, through these Teachings, to eliminate these three poisons through practice of non-craving or generosity, non-anger or loving-kindness, and non-ignorance or wisdom. To attain Enlightenment, one would need to completely eliminate The Three Poisons.

These metaphors suggest how dangerous afflictive thoughts and emotions can be if they are not understood and transformed. Craving (Greed/Desire) refers to our selfishness, desire, attachment, and grasping for contentedness and satisfaction outside of ourselves. Anger (Hatred/Ill Will) refers to our hostility and aggression, our aversion and repulsion towards unpleasant people, circumstances, and even towards our own uncomfortable feelings. Ignorance (Delusion/Confusion) refers to our dullness, confusion, and misperception; our unknowing or wrong views of reality misunderstanding the world around us as described as part of The Natural Laws of Existence in Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

The poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) — mask our true nature, the awakened mind of wisdom and compassion. These poisonous states of mind then motivate non-virtuous and unskillful intentions, speech, and actions, which produces unwholesome Kamma so they need to be transformed, remedied and an antidote applied to experience the brightness of the Enlightened mind.

Craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) are deeply embedded in the conditioning of our personalities. Our behavior is habitually influenced and tainted by these three poisons, these unwholesome roots buried deep into the mind. Burning within us as craving (greed/desire), anger (hatred/ill will), and ignorance (delusion/confusion), these poisons lay to waste hearts, lives, hopes, and civilizations, driving us blind and thirsty through the seemingly endless round of birth and death - The Cycle of Rebirth.

Gotama Buddha describes these defilements as bonds, hindrances, and knots; the actual root cause of unwholesome Kamma and the entire spectrum of human discontentedness. It is The Three Poisons, The Three Unwholesome Roots, or The Three Fires that keeps the mind in the unEnlightened state. It is only when a Practitioner deeply understands these and uproots them from the mind, that one can reside permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Although this Teaching may appear negative or unpleasant, indeed, a wise understanding of The Three Poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) is ultimately positive and empowering. With this superb understanding, we can clearly see and observe the factors that are causing discontentedness and suffering in our lives. And with this clarity and insight, we can make the choice to eliminate those factors.

The Teaching of The Four Noble Truths clearly explains that when we embrace and understand the exact causes of our discontentedness, suffering, and dissatisfaction, we can then take the necessary steps to extinguish those causes and liberate the mind. This is certainly positive and empowering.

In addition, it is important for us to realize that Gotama Buddha's Teachings regarding defilement and purification are not just rigid, restrictive, or authoritarian theories regarding morality, but are real and solid truths essential to our correct understanding of reality and eventual awakening. Through learning these Teachings and the practice of these Teachings, we awaken to true reality, acquiring wisdom, eliminating the poison of ignorance/delusion or "unknowing" we have of true reality that keeps The Three Poisons well rooted into the mind causing us untold amounts of discontentedness and suffering.

Through learning, reflecting, and practicing these Teachings while seeking guidance with a Teacher, a Practitioner will independently observe the truth acquiring wisdom to liberate the mind removing these poisons to experience Enlightenment.

Craving

Our craving is a burning desire, a never ending thirst, yearning, and longing; we want the objects of our desire to provide us with lasting satisfaction so we feel fulfilled, whole, and complete.

The poison of craving creates an inner hunger so that we always seem to be chasing an unattainable object. We mistakenly believe our contentedness is

dependent upon that object, but once we attain it, we get no lasting satisfaction. Then once again, our craving and desire will arise, looking outside of ourselves for the next thing that will hopefully bring satisfaction. Influenced by craving/greed, we are never content.

Another common face of our craving shows up as a lack of generosity and compassion towards others. Even a moment of honest and mindful reflection will reveal how deeply-rooted our craving can be. We can experience the symptoms of our craving appearing in even the most trivial instances, and of course, craving can manifest itself in even more compulsive and destructive ways as well.

We always seem to want more, we want bigger and better, we want to fulfill our never ending inner hunger and thirst. This type of craving affects our personal lives, our professional lives, and the domain of international business and politics. Global conflict and warfare, as well as the destruction of our precious environment are obvious results of our corporate and political greed. Our craving, greed, and thirst affects each of us on a personal and global level. Our craving is an endless and destructive cycle that only causes discontentedness and suffering in its wake.

Anger

The symptoms of anger can show up as hatred, hostility, aggression, aversion, resentment or ill will; wishing harm or suffering upon another person. A mind being affected by the poison of anger reacts to insignificant circumstances with intentions, speech, and actions causing harm in our personal and professional relationships.

With aversion, we habitually resist, deny, and avoid unpleasant feelings, circumstances, and people we do not like. We want everything to be pleasant, comfortable, and satisfying all the time. As the unEnlightened mind experiences painful feelings, it will falsely attribute the painful feelings as being caused by someone else or something else. With an interest to eliminate the painful feelings, the unEnlightened mind will then push away the people and situations it mistakenly attributes as being the cause of the painful feelings. This behavior simply reinforces our perception of separation inhibiting one from being able to have healthy relationships with all people.

An individual can become isolated unable to interact with others who do not meet one's criteria or conditions for a relationship. It is only a matter of time before the unEnlightened mind finds a problem with each individual in their life and then pushes them away erecting a wall between themselves and others, oftentimes, with anger, hatred, hostility, aggression, resentment, and ill will. This is referred to as aversion and only complicates one's life with

increased struggles where you will find relationships difficult, challenging, and unsuccessful.

Aversion would be to experience painful feelings caused by your own cravings/desires/attachments, falsely attribute the painful feelings as being caused by another person, push them away thinking that will solve the problem, and doing so with anger/frustration/irritation/annoyance, etc.

Anger or hatred thrusts us into a vicious cycle of always finding conflict and enemies everywhere around us. When there is conflict or perceived enemies around us, the mind is neurotic, never calm, and we are endlessly occupied with strategies of self-protection or revenge. We can also create conflict within ourselves when we have an aversion to our own uncomfortable feelings.

With anger and aversion, we deny, resist, and push away our own inner feelings of fear, hurt, loneliness, and so forth, treating these feelings like an internal enemy. With the poison of anger, we create conflict and enemies in the world around us and within our own being.

We cannot benefit from openness to all people and situations that could potentially be helpful in our life journey. We sabotage ourselves through the unwholesome mental state of anger and hatred caused by our own cravings. Anger coming into the mind degrades concentration and wisdom which often leads to leaving one to feel lost and confused.

No one can cause us anger or hatred, we cause it ourselves. Because we cause our own anger, hatred or ill will, through the pursuit of Enlightenment, we can eliminate 100% of our anger, hatred and ill will.

Ignorance

Ignorance (unknowing of true reality) is our wrong understanding or wrong views of reality. Ignorance is our misperception and misunderstanding of the way the world works; our inability to understand the nature of things exactly as they are, free of perceptual distortions.

The mind does not understand it causes its own discontentedness and how to eliminate the discontentedness (The Four Noble Truths), the way leading to the complete elimination of discontentedness (The Eight Fold Path), The Natural Law of Kamma, or how to significantly reduce one's unwholesome Kamma (The Five Precepts), along with all the other wholesome Teachings from Gotama Buddha described as The Natural Laws of Existence.

Influenced by ignorance, we are not in harmony with ourselves, others, or with life; we are not living in accordance with these Teachings.

Affected by the poison of ignorance, which arises from ignorance of our true nature, we do not understand the interdependent and impermanent nature of life. Thus, we are constantly looking outside of ourselves for contentedness, satisfaction, and solutions to our problems. The word ignorance/delusion was not used in a derogatory way by Gotama Buddha as this word is used today. Instead, Gotama Buddha was describing that the mind is “unknowing of true reality” and is not understanding The Natural Laws of Existence.

This outward searching of craving creates even more frustration, anger, and confusion. Because of our ignorance, we also do not understand the virtuous, life-affirming actions that can create contentedness, nor do we understand the non-virtuous, negative, and unwholesome actions that create discontentedness.

Wholesome actions are described as any actions that do not conflict with “The Eight Fold Path” or “The Five Precepts”. Again, our ignorance (unknowing of true reality) binds us to a vicious cycle where there does not appear to be any way out.

Transforming The Three Poisons

For countless eons we have been influenced and motivated by our craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) being reborn as various beings throughout The Realms of Existence. Therefore, this work of purification and transformation of the mind cannot be rushed, despite our impatient demand for quick results.

This work requires patience, care, persistence, and deep compassion for ourselves and others through a well developed “life practice”. Gotama Buddha taught us that the poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), which cause so much suffering, can indeed be purified and transformed. We can break the chain of discontentedness and unwholesome Kamma and live a content, fulfilling life.

Gotama Buddha’s Teachings tell us that Enlightenment is our true nature, and will naturally shine forth through the purified mind. Therefore, the goal of our life practice is to liberate ourselves from the defilements that obscure the natural clarity, radiance, and joy of our Enlightenment.

So how do we encounter The Three Poisons and transform them in a way that leads to genuine liberation of the mind?

We must begin this work of purification in the precise place where the poisons originate — in the mind itself (the conditioned mind or personality).

This purification and transformation begins with the challenge of calming the mind and seeing deeply into the mind. In other words, to eliminate the poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), we must first learn to recognize them when they first appear. Being mindfully aware, we can then discern how these deep-seated poisons influence our everyday thoughts, feelings, perceptions, decisions, intentions, speech, and actions.

This mindfulness (awareness of mind), this seeing deeply into the mind, is the beginning of understanding; the beginning of our ability to transform these defilements.

To accomplish this awareness, we train the mind through Breathing Mindfulness Meditation. We learn to concentrate on our breathing through the nose, cutting off all thoughts and feelings that arise and let them go without evaluating them or reacting to them. Learning and practicing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, we train the mind to become aware of the thoughts and feelings then “cut off the thoughts” and “let them go”. By training the mind to develop awareness (mindfulness) and let go, we learn how to control the mind in any and all situations.

Through this practice, we become much more aware of the mind in everyday situations. We are able to notice when thoughts, feelings, and emotions arise and begin to disturb us. In this way, we can become conscious of these thoughts, feelings, and emotions and work with them skillfully before they get out of control, causing harm to ourselves and others. Then, eventually we can eliminate disturbing thoughts entirely from the mind by attaining Enlightenment with a well developed life practice that is beyond just meditation alone.

The Antidotes

In addition to meditation practice, there are also the antidotes or alternatives to The Three Poisons. For every defilement, Gotama Buddha has given us the antidote, the method whereby we eliminate unwholesome mental qualities and replace them with virtuous, wholesome qualities which benefit ourselves and others.

Therefore, the entire aim of our life practice is to *gradually* subdue the poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) by cultivating the alternative mental factors that are directly opposed to them. These antidotes are called The Three Wholesome Roots: generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom.

To overcome craving, is to cultivate selflessness, generosity, detachment, and contentment. If we are experiencing craving, strong desire, or attachment and we are interested to let it go, we can reflect on the impermanence or the disadvantages of the objects of our desire. We can practice giving away those things we would most like to hold on to. We can also practice acts of selfless service and charity, offering care and assistance to others in any way we can, free of all desire for recognition or compensation.

In truth, there is no objection to enjoying and sharing the beauty, pleasures, and objects of this material world. The problems associated with craving and attachment only arise when we mistakenly believe and act as if the source of our contentedness is outside of ourselves in impermanent conditions.

The antidote to craving/desire/attachment is Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and practicing generosity in daily life. Both of these practices train the mind to “let go”. Craving is how the mind wants to pull and chase after the objects of its affection and then holds on to them, thinking that is what will create contentedness and peacefulness in the mind.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and a well developed practice of generosity in daily life will *gradually* transform the mind to train it to “let go” which becomes easier over time as the mind is more deeply trained through both of these methods. The mind needs to accumulate the benefits of this training over a consistent period of time through determination, dedication, and diligence of a well developed life practice. These techniques and practices will be shared later in this book and book series to help you cultivate a well developed practice of these Teachings.

To overcome anger, we learn to cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, patience, and forgiveness letting go of any resentment or hostility that has accumulated in the mind. When we react to unpleasant feelings, circumstances, or people, with anger, hatred, ill will, or aversion, we can use these superb antidotes to counteract this poison.

Here we learn to openly embrace the entire spectrum of our experiences without anger or aversion. Just as we practice meeting unpleasant experiences in the outer world with patience, kindness, forgiveness, loving-kindness, and compassion, we must also practice meeting our own unpleasant feelings in the same way.

Our feelings of loneliness, hurt, doubt, fear, insecurity, inadequacy, depression, and so forth, all require our openness and loving-kindness. The challenge in our life practice is to soften our habitual defenses, open our

heart, and let go of anger, hatred, ill will, aversion, hostility, aggression, resentment, and denial. In this way, we can meet and embrace ourselves, others, and all inner and outer experiences with great compassion and wisdom.

The antidote to anger is Loving-kindness Meditation and a well developed practice of loving-kindness in daily life which will *gradually* transform the mind developing deep interest to see all beings be well. Then, a Practitioner will need to practice loving-kindness in daily life through treating all beings polite, kind, friendly, and respectful without any interest in anything in return. These techniques and practices will be shared later in this book and book series to help you cultivate a well developed practice of these Teachings.

To overcome and antidote ignorance, we cultivate wisdom, insight, and “Right View” through learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings of The Buddha to discover The Natural Laws of Existence. Learning to experience reality exactly as it is, without the distortions of our self-centered desires, fears, and expectations, we free ourselves from ignorance (unknowing of true reality). Developing a comprehensive approach to acquiring wisdom while seeking guidance from a Teacher through practice of these Teachings will eliminate all ignorance.

Deeply sensing and acting in harmony with the interdependent, impermanent, and ever-changing nature of this world — realizing that all living beings are inseparably related and that lasting contentedness does not come from anything external — we free ourselves from ignorance.

As we develop a clear understanding of The Natural Law of Kamma, knowing the positive, wholesome actions that bring contentedness, and the negative, unwholesome actions that bring discontentedness, we cultivate the wisdom, insight, and “Right View” with wise decision making that free us from ignorance.

By studying The Teachings and applying The Teachings properly in our lives through a “life practice”, we will *gradually* wear away even the most stubborn habitual behaviors, fully liberating the mind from stress, discontentedness, and suffering. Gotama Buddha calls this the “taintless liberation of the mind.”

The superb peace, wisdom, limitless awareness, unity, and calmness of Enlightenment shines forth as our essential nature when The Three Poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) have finally been extinguished through our life practice with non-craving or generosity, non-anger or loving-kindness, and non-ignorance or wisdom.

Simile of a Man Were Wounded by an Arrow Thickly Smeared with Poison

Suppose, Mālunkyaṇḍita, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon to treat him. The man would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble or a Brāhmin or a merchant or a worker.’ And he would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me;...until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of middle height;...until I know whether the man who wounded me was dark or brown or golden-skinned;...until I know whether the bowstring that wounded me was fibre or reed or sinew or hemp or bark;...until I know whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated;...until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted — whether those of a vulture or a heron or a hawk or a peacock or a stork;...until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound — whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a deer or a monkey;...until I know what kind of arrowhead it was that wounded me — whether spiked or razor-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or lancet-shaped.’

All this would still not be known to that man and meanwhile he would die. So too, Mālunkyaṇḍita, if anyone should say thus: ‘I will not lead the holy life under the [Enlightened] One until the [Enlightened] One declares to me: ‘The world is eternal’ and ‘the world is not eternal’; ‘the world is finite’; and ‘the world is infinite’; ‘the soul is the same as the body’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’; and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist’, that would still remain undeclared by The Tathāgata and meanwhile that person would die.

Therefore, Mālunkyaṇḍita, remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared.

And what have I left undeclared? ‘The world is eternal’ and ‘the world is not eternal’; ‘the world is finite’; and ‘the world is infinite’; ‘the soul is the same as the body’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’; and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ — I have left undeclared.

And what have I declared? ‘This is discontentedness’, ‘This is the cause of discontentedness’, ‘This is the elimination of discontentedness’, ‘This is the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness’ — I have declared.

Why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to liberation, to freedom from strong feelings, to elimination, to peace, to direct knowledge (experience), to Enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared it.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 63)

Simile of a Man Were Wounded by an Arrow Thickly Smeared with Poison (continued)

Author's Thoughts: This simile uses the “poisonous arrow” to represent “The Three Poisons” that we are all affected by “craving (greed/desire), anger (hatred/ill will), and ignorance (delusion/confusion)”. The Teachings of Gotama Buddha are represented by the surgeon. His Teachings are the medicine to remove “The Three Poisons”. But, if we expect to know all the answers that lead to the removal of “The Three Poisons” prior to practicing these Teachings, which would remove these poisons, then surely we will die before the poisons are removed.

There is no way for you to know all the answers prior to learning and practicing these Teachings as you need to create a “life practice” to clearly see many of the answers to acquire wisdom. Each day you build more and more wisdom in your life practice to *gradually* attain Enlightenment. If you expect to know all the answers prior to practicing these Teachings, surely you will die before the poisons are removed and, thus, have continued discontentedness and be reborn to once again experience life in a new realm - most likely not the human realm.

Gotama Buddha left certain questions undeclared because they do not lead to liberation of the mind. But The Teachings he did declare do lead to complete liberation of the mind, namely starting with “The Four Noble Truths” as mentioned in this simile.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 8) - Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance (Read & Listen)

https://youtu.be/CFhxOb_S4zM

Ep. 508 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 8) - Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--508---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-8---Transforming-The-Three-Poisons-Craving--Anger--and-Ignorance-e272t6c>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 8 - Transforming the Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance

<https://youtube.com/live/mFnNfaF5ttk>

Why Do We Meditate and Developing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation - (Group Learning Program)

https://youtu.be/zW_P9nCWwVU

Podcast(s)

Ep. 444 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 8 - Transforming the Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--444---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-8---Transforming-the-Three-Poisons-Craving--Anger--and-Ignorance-e21kru3/a-a9jte0j>

Ep. 164 - Why Do We Meditate and Developing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation - (Group Learning Program)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--164---Why-Do-We-Meditate-and-Developing-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation---Group-Learning-Program-evt3pb/a-a5de1jl>

Quiz

Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance

<https://forms.gle/J8hhCodH4jKG7Kuu9>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 9

What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?

Kamma, or The Natural Law of Kamma, refers to the fact that everything in life has a “cause and effect” or “action and result”. Essentially, our intentions, speech, and actions, wholesome or unwholesome, have an effect on us. One way to think of Kamma is that Kamma is “the results of our own decisions” or “the effects of our own decisions”.

You may have been exposed to the word “Karma” which is referring to the same natural law but using a different language. Karma is from the Sanskrit language while Kamma is from the Pāli language. The source of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings is in the Pāli language. Those who are learning and practicing these Teachings from The Pāli Canon, the most complete source of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, will typically use the word “Kamma” instead of “Karma”.

All of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings center on the importance of “not doing any harm”. By doing harm to other beings, we do harm to ourselves because of The Natural Law of Kamma.

If we put out wholesome intentions, speech, and actions, wholesomeness will come back to us. With wholesome, and pure intentions, speech, actions, and livelihood, we know that our life will be wholesome, calm, steady, and peaceful as we eliminate more and more attachments on our pursuit to Enlightenment.

Likewise, if our intentions, speech, actions, and livelihood are unwholesome, unwholesome things will come back to us. If we harm other beings, through our intentions, speech, actions, or livelihood, harm will return back to us.

Kamma is not necessarily instantaneous or immediate. It may not come back in exactly the same form we put it out in. For example, if we put calm, steady, kind, and polite waves into the world’s seas, that’s what will come back to us. Maybe not immediately, but over time we will see this steadiness and calmness come back to us.

Conversely, if we put out damaging and vicious waves into our world’s seas, then that is what will come back to us. Fierce, strong, and violent waters will create havoc and floods in our life. Kamma is not a system of rewards and punishments but instead, a natural law of “cause and effect” or “action and results” - the results of our decisions.

Kamma does not need to be feared. The Natural Law of Kamma needs to be understood so that we can make wise choices in our life that lead to a more peaceful mind and a more peaceful existence for us individually and all of humanity.

There is no fear in these Teachings and there is no fear in Kamma.

The only one who fears Kamma is the person who does not understand The Natural Law of Kamma and is unable to make wise decisions that would lead to a more peaceful existence.

The more you learn and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, the more awakened the mind will become to The Natural Law of Kamma and the better decisions one can make. This will result in a more peaceful existence to include a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are guiding you in understanding this Natural Law of Kamma to awaken the mind to better life choices that lead to an improved existence.

Each person has 100% ability to make decisions in their life, these are personal choices. Based on the personal choices we make, the resulting effect will be experienced. This is our Kamma.

The Natural Law of Kamma is something that is talked about in modern society but oftentimes as a joke or said in passing. Kamma is sometimes thought to be a mystical or mysterious concept. However, Kamma is the governing factor of all things in life through "cause and effect" or "action and result".

Kamma is the results or effects of our own decisions.

Kamma is a natural law that exists, and Gotama Buddha's Teachings are awakening the mind to deeply understand this natural law, so that you can make good wholesome decisions to function peacefully in life. Through understanding The Natural Law of Kamma, you will make much better decisions in life and, thus, experience better results.

There is no one that governs this natural law or oversees its functioning. The Natural Law of Kamma just exists and it is absolutely one-hundred percent truth.

Examples of Kamma are:

- 1.) You murder someone and then you are put into jail. Your quality of life is impacted by becoming worse.
- 2.) You steal something and then you are put into jail and people steal from you. Your quality of life is impacted by becoming worse.
- 3.) You commit sexual misconduct having sexual contact with a person already involved in a relationship. This relationship is discovered, and the partner finds you and a verbal and/or physical attack transpires. Your quality of life is impacted by becoming worse.
- 4.) You are someone who speaks with false truth through lying, gossip, and slander. People cannot trust your words and you find it difficult to have relationships, conduct business, and people constantly lie to you. Your quality of life is impacted by becoming worse.
- 5.) You take substances becoming heedless and find yourself lacking concentration or mindfulness with the inability to focus on work, relationships, and everyday activities. Your quality of life is impacted by becoming worse.

When our intentions, speech, actions, and livelihood are pure without craving, anger, or ignorance (unknowing of true reality), we are creating wholesome Kamma for ourselves, thus, goodness will come back to us.

Three Causes for the Origination of Unwholesome Kamma

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of (unwholesome) Kamma.

What three?

- (1) Craving (Desire/Greed/Attachment) is a cause for the origination of (unwholesome) Kamma;
- (2) Anger (Hatred/Ill Will) is a cause for the origination of (unwholesome) Kamma;
- (3) Ignorance (Delusion/Unknowing of True Reality) is a cause for the origination of (unwholesome) Kamma.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 3.34)

Three Causes for the Origination of Wholesome Kamma

Monks, there are these three causes for the origination of (wholesome) Kamma.

What three?

- (1) Non-Craving (Generosity) is a cause for the origination of (wholesome) Kamma;
- (2) Non-Anger (Loving-kindness) is a cause for the origination of (wholesome) Kamma;
- (3) Non-Ignorance (Wisdom) is a cause for the origination of (wholesome) Kamma.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 3.34)

It is the goal of Gotama Buddha's Teachings to eliminate The Three Poisons (i.e. The Three Unwholesome Roots) of craving/greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance/delusion/unknowing of true reality realizing non-self and dissolving the ego to attain Enlightenment. This is the awakened mind that can be peaceful and co-exist with others peacefully.

Through eliminating these Three Poisons, one has eliminated all the unwholesome roots that create unwholesome Kamma, thus, Enlightenment will be attained. The more people who attain the mental state of Enlightenment, the more peaceful existence all of humanity will experience. Through everyone actively pursuing Enlightenment, the world will *gradually* become a more peaceful place to exist.

Through the entire world practicing the following three Teachings, the benefit and peace on earth will be immense: 1.) Universal Love for All Beings 2.) Do No Harm, and 3.) Be a Good Moral Person.

Kamma is created individually. Each of us individually has our own Kamma. Our individual Kamma is returned to us on an individual level throughout our life, or future lives if we are reborn due to not attaining Enlightenment in this life. One cannot run or hide from their Kamma.

It is important for you to maintain wholesome Kamma individually and as a community or nation.

As you create wholesome Kamma, you should not wait or expect good things to come back immediately. You must create wholesome Kamma without expectation of a return or when it will return.

The expectation of return of something good just because you did something good, negates the wholesome intention, speech, or action. You must have good intentions, speech, and actions because you know it is the right thing to do for yourself and the world - it is wholesome. You produce wholesome Kamma because you know it's right, not because you expect something back in return.

To eliminate discontentedness of the mind is to eliminate your unwholesome Kamma production through the elimination of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) through practicing generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom. Generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom are the causes for the origination of wholesome Kamma referred to as the antidotes to The Three Poisons or The Three Wholesome Roots. Practicing generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom through The Eight Fold Path will transform the mind to the Enlightened mind.

This is done while doing no harm to other beings through practicing The Eight Fold Path. We pollute the mind with unwholesome Kamma every moment through our own thoughts and intentions. You must start there. With a wholesome mind that has no unwholesome Kamma production, you will benefit from a peaceful and calm existence.

All too often we attempt to stop or inhibit others from unwholesome intentions, speech, or actions but if our mind is polluted, our message is confusing and not well received. With a pure mind we have pure intentions, speech and actions so that our message to others is clear and better received. Thus, we have more ability to assist others when the mind is pure through learning and practicing these Teachings.

Additionally, it is The Natural Law of Kamma that governs all things. While laws of society are defined and enforced by human beings, which means errors are introduced, The Natural Law of Kamma is a natural law. It is not created and is not administered by humans, thus, it is completely objective. This is the reason why we should not feel the overwhelming pressure or craving to "right a perceived wrong" which would cause us undue stress, burden, and complications. But instead, we should feel comfortable that The Natural Law of Kamma always exists and there is no need to overwhelm the mind with activities of "righting a perceived wrong".

The Natural Law of Kamma is similar to that of the natural law of gravity. Gravity is experienced by all, whether they are aware of the existence of gravity or not. Gravity is not monitored or maintained by any entity. Gravity just exists and all things are subjected to its forces.

When you were a child, you did not understand the natural law of gravity and found it challenging to walk, run, jump, and exist peacefully in the world with the mind unawakened to this natural law. As the mind became more awake to the natural law of gravity, you slowly began to function in the world with ease and smoothness. You found it easier to conduct daily tasks. Life became more straight forward and the world around you became easier to understand and navigate.

The Natural Law of Kamma functions in the same way. The more awakened the mind is to this natural law, you can exist in the world with more wisdom, ease, and smoothness to ensure you are making good wholesome decisions that lead to good wholesome results. Through learning and practicing The Eight Fold Path, you can produce only wholesome Kamma and, thus, extinguish all unwholesome Kamma through producing only wholesome Kamma.

To attain Enlightenment, a Practitioner needs to extinguish all unwholesome Kamma through producing only wholesome Kamma for an extended period of time using The Eight Fold Path as the way leading to the complete elimination of discontentedness in the mind.

There is no entity responsible for monitoring or maintaining Kamma and all are subjected to Kamma, whether one is aware that this natural law exists or not, just like you were affected by the natural law of gravity even though at a young age you were unaware of it. The more you understand The Natural Law of Kamma, the more life will improve.

One cannot run or hide from The Natural Law of Kamma. All unwholesome Kamma will need to be experienced and extinguished from this life and all prior lives through the pursuit of Enlightenment.

For you to escape The Cycle of Rebirth through attaining Enlightenment, you must practice The Eight Fold Path for an extended period of time which will extinguish all unwholesome Kamma from this life and previous lives. As your practice becomes deeper and deeper, you will experience less and less negative events in your life. Life becomes more comfortable and easier when practicing these Teachings through a more awakened mind with a deepened understanding of Kamma.

By practicing The Eight Fold Path completely and entirely for an extended period of time, all unwholesome Kamma production is eliminated. You will eliminate the production of all unwholesome Kamma and your life will become more comfortable, fluid, and easy because you are not creating harm in the world; you have burned off all your unwholesome Kamma from this life and previous lives. Because you are not causing harm through a

deep understanding and practice of The Eight Fold Path, there is no harm being returned to you.

You cannot escape The Natural Law of Kamma. Your current existence is an accumulation of the results of your decisions from this life and past lives - that is your Kamma. All your wholesome and unwholesome deeds have accumulated into your current existence. Our life is a result of all our past decisions, wholesome or unwholesome. To attain Enlightenment, you will need to extinguish all unwholesome Kamma from this life and all prior lives through practice of The Eight Fold Path.

Craving determines if there is rebirth, while Kamma determines in what realm, what situation, and the condition of the new being upon rebirth. If there is craving, there is rebirth. Craving is the fuel or spark that causes rebirth creating conditions in which a new existence emerges. Each existence is a new being, however, the craving and residual memories of previous existences are carried forward to the new being.

Rebirth occurs when craving from an existence has not yet been extinguished. Craving will be carried forward into the new mind to create a new existence. The new being will create unwholesome Kamma in the new existence based on craving from previous lives that exists in the current life. These unextinguished cravings that exist in this current life will create unwholesome Kamma in the current life. All unwholesome Kamma needs to be experienced in order for the new being to extinguish 100% of its unwholesome Kamma. Through observing Kamma as an indicator to extinguish craving, one can be guided to fully extinguish all unwholesome Kamma.

In this way, one cannot run or hide from their unwholesome Kamma. Through extinguishing craving/greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance/delusion/unknowing of true reality, one will extinguish their unwholesome Kamma to attain Enlightenment.

You may have bad situations and experiences happen to you in this life that are difficult for you to understand why they have occurred or are occurring. Kamma can be the very best and unbiased Teacher that will help you to observe changes that you need to make to improve your life through wholesome Kamma production. You will only gain this insight if you have a deep understanding of The Natural Law of Kamma through learning and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

We actively apply effort to learn and practice these Teachings so that we can extinguish any unwholesome Kamma production. You will need to learn how to not attach or cling to the pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings

that are neither painful-nor-pleasant that you experience in this life, while learning how to produce only wholesome Kamma through learning and practicing The Eight Fold Path.

Laws of Society

Now that you understand The Natural Law of Kamma and how being a good moral person practicing The Eight Fold Path will produce only wholesome Kamma, let's discuss laws of society that attempt to govern our daily lives, but are difficult to create, implement, and enforce fairly.

Following societies "laws", as they are written, does not necessarily mean you will earn your own Enlightenment.

Criminal and civil laws are created by humans. These laws are always imperfect, however The Natural Law of Kamma is not created by humans and just exists. It is completely fair based on the natural goodness or harms of one's intentions, speech, actions or livelihood. We should all follow laws of society but just merely following the law does not mean we are not causing harm to other beings, and following the law alone will not guarantee you will attain Enlightenment. Instead, one needs to learn, reflect, and practice The Natural Laws of Existence to attain Enlightenment.

We must practice "The Teachings" which are good moral Teachings that far exceed any laws of any land.

Freedom of speech laws are a perfect example. We have the "legal right" to say anything we want, mostly, in some countries. However, hate speech, slander, gossip, or harsh language is not going to earn us Enlightenment.

Wrong speech will harm others and, thus, create unwholesome Kamma that will be returned. An individual will experience the unwholesome results (i.e. unwholesome Kamma) of their unwise decisions to practice wrong speech. This is the results of their decisions but they may or may not result in criminal or civil punishments.

Society's laws are not always in line with these Teachings, therefore, it's important to understand Gotama Buddha's Teachings so that we can create a better life for ourselves on this earth through wise decisions that lead to wholesome results (i.e. wholesome Kamma).

We should adhere to the laws of the land, but we should allow The Teachings of good moral conduct to guide our daily lives through good wholesome decisions. By practicing these Teachings, we ensure we have “universal love for all beings”, “do no harm”, and “be a good moral person”. Laws of the land do not necessarily ensure we are practicing these core Teachings.

To explore and understand The Natural Law of Kamma more deeply, see the book titled “The Natural Law of Kamma” (Volume 6) of this same book series.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 9) - What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me? (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/rbkBTbOr3YQ>

Ep. 509 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 9) - What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--509---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-9---What-is-Kamma-and-How-Does-It-Affect-Me-e272t7j>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 9 - What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?

<https://youtube.com/live/tUoM48dqR24>

Why Do Loving-kindness Meditation and Developing a Loving-kindness Meditation Practice

<https://youtu.be/2-4CDTyZEq0>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 447 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 9 - What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--447---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-9---What-is-Kamma-and-How-Does-It-Affect-Me-e2260vi/a-a9l9usd>

Ep. 166 - Why Do Loving-kindness Meditation and Developing a Loving-kindness Meditation Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--166---Why-Do-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Developing-a-Loving-kindness-Meditation-Practice---Group-Learning-Program-e10blbj/a-a5fqs8>

Quiz

What is Kamma and How Does It Affect Me?

<https://forms.gle/pUPg87ErZbozAMQL7>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 10

What is Merit?

Merit is an important Teaching to understand as it relates to The Path to Enlightenment. Merit is thought of as a unique type of Kamma. Merit is wholesome Kamma generated through generous offerings and gifts to The Community of virtuous Ordained Practitioners and anyone who has attained one of The Four Stages of Enlightenment. This community of people is referred to as the “Ariyan Sangha”. Sangha is the Pāli word for “community”. The “Ariyan Sangha” is translated as “The Noble Community”.

Merit is generated by making offerings of food, water, clothing, shelter, medical care, time, effort, energy, financial support, and resources, to support the sharing of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. It is The Noble Community who are responsible for guiding others to attain Enlightenment. Ordained Practitioners and anyone who has attained one of The Four Stages of Enlightenment are considered deep Students and Practitioners of these Teachings who support all others by guiding them towards attaining Enlightenment.

If you make offerings to these people, you are supporting the continuation of The Teachings that will help end discontentedness and the suffering it causes to all of humanity. To make offerings to The Noble Community, virtuous Ordained Practitioners, and any person who has attained one of The Four Stages of Enlightenment, you are recognizing the importance of The Teachings and supporting their continued growth. This is considered a unique type of wholesome Kamma called “Merit”.

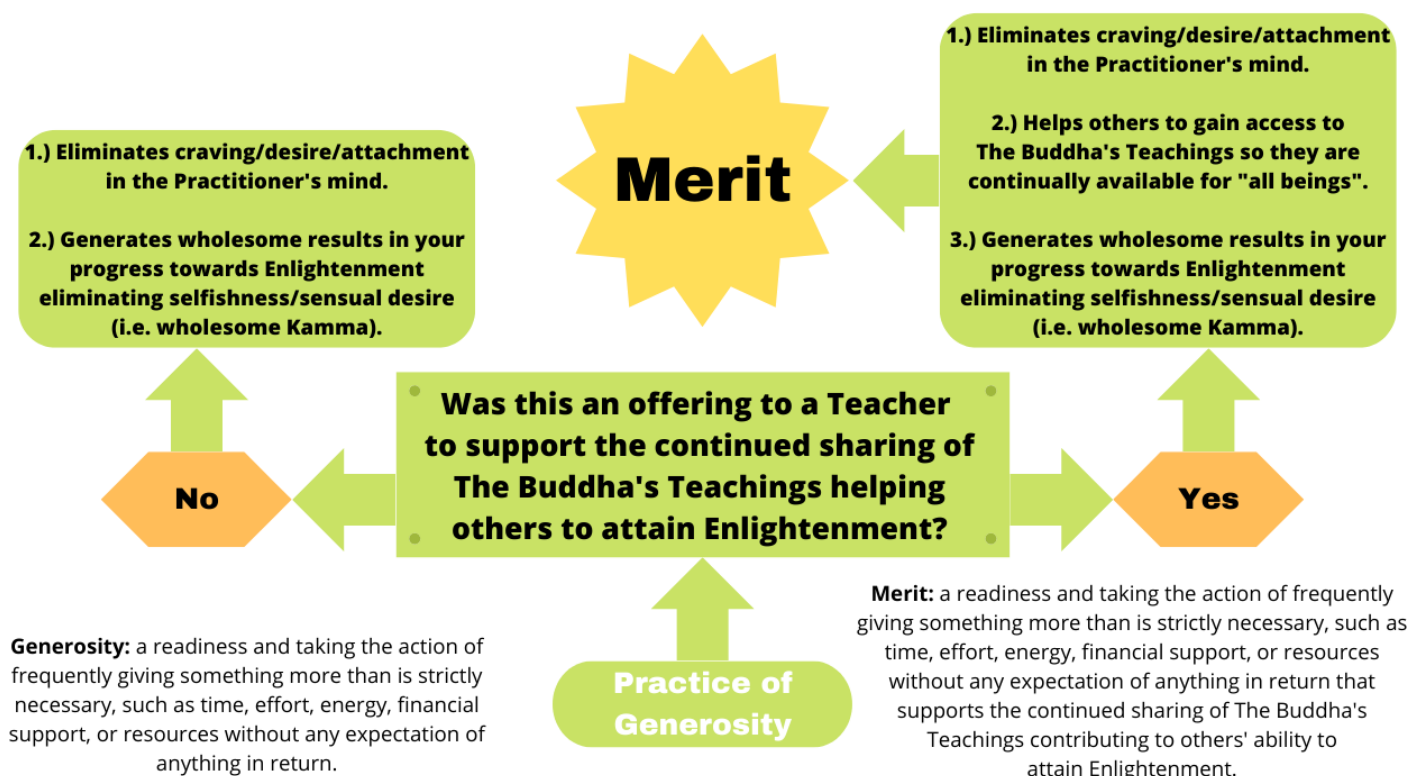
Sharing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha requires an enormous amount of time, effort, energy, and resources. Wherever you learn these Teachings, these people need to use time and money to support their ongoing efforts to share The Teachings with you. The vast majority of people who share these Teachings with loving-kindness and compassion would never ask for a payment for sharing The Teachings but instead, offer them to you on a donation basis. The Teachings are essentially shared at no cost, for free, but those who are sharing The Teachings are spending their time, effort, energy, and resources to do the work to share with you.

Those who share The Teachings in this way are doing so with generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion for all beings. It is important that you do not just “take” this generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion, but that you also “return it back” to those who are using their time, effort, energy, and

resources to help you. You should also help them. As people are sharing with you, you can share with them. And, you can also initiate sharing on your own without any expectation of obtaining something in return. The practice of generosity and sharing is a powerful way to help cultivate a mind free of greed or craving.

Without sharing and practicing generosity to create Merit, a person would be unable to attain Enlightenment as the mind would still be holding on and would not have eliminated craving. It is through making offerings to the Teachers of these Teachings that one is acknowledging, with appreciation and gratitude, that The Teachings have helped them in their life, and they are making offerings to help the Teacher help others.

It is only through the generosity of people before you that The Teachings have been preserved and shared worldwide to finally reach you. The people before you have already made donations of time, effort, energy, and resources to help these Teachings reach you.



Now, instead of just “taking The Teachings” to benefit your life, you can also help those yet to come behind you by “practicing generosity and giving” to benefit those in the future.

Your offering that produces Merit helps those who share these Teachings with you. And you are helping those people after you who will learn and progress with these Teachings in the generations yet to come.

If Beings Knew the Results of Giving and Sharing

Monks, if beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of selfishness obsess them and take root in their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared it, if there were someone to share it with.

But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they eat without having given, and the stain of selfishness obsesses them and takes root in their minds.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: ITI 26)

Five Benefits of Giving

Monks, there are these five benefits of giving.

What five?

- (1) One is dear and agreeable to many people.
- (2) Wholesome persons go in large numbers to one (you).
- (3) One acquires a wholesome reputation.
- (4) One is not deficient in the Householder's duties.
- (5) With the breakup of the body, after death, one is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

These are the five benefits of giving.

By giving, one becomes dear, one follows the duty of the wholesome; the wholesome mentally disciplined Monks always go in large numbers to one (you).

They teach one The Teachings that dispels all discontentedness, having understood which the taintless one here attains Nibbāna (Enlightenment).

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 5.35)

Oftentimes, people think one must be wealthy in assets to generate Merit. Some think to generate large quantities of Merit, one must have extreme wealth to give money, donations, supplies, etc., to virtuous Ordained Practitioners, Temples, Teachers, etc. It is thought that the more we give the more we will receive “good things” in this life or future lives, based on the total amount of money we give. This is not true.

Wealth by itself is not an indication of whether someone is a good moral person or not, and whether their deeds are wholesome. Wealth does not pave the way to Enlightenment. Just as being wealthy does not pave the way to attaining Enlightenment, being poor or having less money does not inhibit you either.

The amount of money you have acquired is not important in terms of Enlightenment. What is important is how you acquire your wealth, “Right Livelihood” (see The Eight Fold Path in Chapter 5), and what you do with it once it is acquired through your “Right Intentions, Right Speech, and Right Actions”.

Merit is generated and inherited by you and you alone. You are the owner of your own Merit. You are not able to transfer or inherit Merit from another person. Gotama Buddha explains clearly in his Teachings that we are the “owner and heir” of our Kamma.

Gotama Buddha taught us that “...beings are the owners of their Kamma, the heirs of their Kamma; they have Kamma as their origin, Kamma as their relative, Kamma as their resort; whatever Kamma they do, wholesome or unwholesome, they are its heirs.”

Merit is a unique type of Kamma and Gotama Buddha made it clear that Kamma cannot be transferred to another person. That it is only through our own wholesome actions that we create wholesome results. Merit cannot be accumulated and then transferred to another person. It is only through our own actions that we produce either wholesome or unwholesome Kamma.

Through practicing generosity on a consistent and ongoing basis, along with other practices, the mind is *gradually* trained to “let go” reducing then eliminating craving/desire/attachment to eliminate the mind’s discontentedness.

Merit and Kamma are two Teachings that are interconnected.

Practicing Generosity to Attain Merit

One of our goals in life is to create wholesome Kamma and minimize or eliminate the production of unwholesome Kamma into the world.

Accumulating Merit is a way that we can put wholesome Kamma into the world. We can do this with donations, giving supplies, giving our time or effort to helping support the distribution, teaching, and sharing of these Teachings. Money, supplies, time, effort, etc., are all just some ways that we can assist in supporting the growth of these Teachings across the world.

Through supporting these efforts, one is creating Merit which is wholesome Kamma. At the same time, you would be practicing generosity which helps you to eliminate the poison of greed or craving. It is important to cultivate a mind that practices generosity to train it to eliminate the poison of greed, craving, attachment, and desire. This will help you to eliminate selfishness.

In this way, through making continuous meritorious offerings to support the sharing of these Teachings to benefit the world, you are also receiving the benefit of reduced craving. Merit and Kamma are interconnected in that through the wholesome actions of giving, you are also receiving benefits to your own practice through generosity which will reduce craving in the mind.

Generosity is a readiness and taking the action of frequently giving something more than is strictly necessary, such as time, effort, energy, financial support, or resources without any expectation of anything in return. A practice of giving and helping others as part of an ongoing and comprehensive life practice. This action can help you develop and cultivate a more caring and compassionate mind as one chooses to consistently give and share through their life to eliminate selfishness. Generosity eliminates craving/desire/attachment in the mind, thus, helping to eliminate discontent feelings from the mind.

Generosity without judgment or expectation of anything in return is a practice that can transform the mind in ways you never thought possible.

Giving of time, effort, goods, supplies, or money to assist in the sharing of these Teachings will help you to create Merit. We all have something to give, and these Teachings only continue through those who are benefiting from The Teachings. The reason you are receiving beneficial Teachings is because countless people before you made offerings to The Noble Community to continue The Teachings from the time of Gotama Buddha until now. Without their generosity, you would not be able to learn and benefit from these Teachings. Your offerings to support these Teachings help you and those after you.

By giving to The Noble Community, we are practicing loving-kindness and compassion through actions to help support the continued growth of these Teachings and helping to support the learning of people after you.

Generosity is important and we should practice generosity by giving to others and important causes that benefit others. We can practice generosity not only by giving to The Noble Community but also by giving to people and charitable efforts without any expectation of anything in return. By practicing generosity of time, effort, energy, and resources, you will accumulate wholesome Kamma for yourself but more importantly, you will cultivate a mind with loving-kindness for all beings and compassion for all beings without judgment and the mind will eliminate craving/desire/attachment.

Through developing an ongoing practice of giving and helping others, we cultivate loving-kindness and compassion, while also practicing non-craving to our own possessions or wealth.

Through the personal choice of being generous and giving, it helps to eliminate the unwholesome root of craving. It is common to give to others including making offerings to a Teacher who is helping you. It is not expected

or required but a personal choice. You will find being generous to those around you is a helpful practice to train the mind to eliminate craving.

This understanding could lead one to think you must be wealthy and that those who are less fortunate cannot produce wholesome Kamma by practicing generosity. This could not be further from the truth, but is a common belief held by many.

The absolute best way for us to create the highest quality of wholesome Kamma is by completely eliminating the production of unwholesome Kamma. The way we do this is to practice these Teachings to include meditation.

By doing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation or Loving-kindness Meditation, we are practicing the entire Eight Fold Path during those moments, thus, all unwholesome Kamma production has ceased. During meditation, we are not producing any unwholesome Kamma. We have eliminated unwholesome Kamma production from our life for those moments of meditation.

Through the practice of meditation and elimination of unwholesome Kamma production, Gotama Buddha explains we are creating the highest level and highest quality of wholesome Kamma for ourselves which is beneficial to the entire world.

Gotama Buddha explains in his Teachings that the most expensive gifts and highest priced items given, do not generate nearly as much wholesome Kamma as one who does Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, and second to that one who does Loving-kindness Meditation.

So, accumulating wholesome Kamma does not require any money or supplies whatsoever. It only requires that we dedicate time to meditation which will produce wholesome Kamma. The ripple ‘cause and effect’ of your meditation is wholesome Kamma into the world. Thus, you can know that your individual wholesome intentions and actions of meditation will produce goodness for you and the entire world.

One does not need to be wealthy to accumulate the highest quality of wholesome Kamma, it only requires dedication and commitment to a meditation practice.

If you are able, it is beneficial to offer donations of time, effort, energy, and resources to The Noble Community to assist in the elimination of suffering in the world. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings have been carried forward over time by people like you who support Ordained Practitioners, Temples, Teachers, meditation centers and other causes associated with sharing his Teachings

worldwide. However, if you do not have money, you can offer your time and effort that benefit the sharing of these Teachings while also accumulating the highest form and highest quality of wholesome Kamma by doing meditation. By doing meditation, you have thus made the highest offering possible to the world by applying effort to eliminate discontentedness in the mind. When you eliminate discontentedness in the mind, you are producing less and less unwholesome Kamma that the world needs to deal with and experience from you.

Without a word spoken, the calmness felt at the end of meditation is the calmness you created in the mind. It's like the world is quietly saying "Thank you for sending us calmness and peace. Now, we send it back to you".

Meditation is the highest form of wholesome Kamma you can produce and, therefore the Kamma of meditation is returned to you immediately and instantaneously. Your meditation benefits you and it benefits the world. You should do meditation to benefit the mind and to benefit the world, whenever you need it and for however long you need it. A daily practice is recommended.

You can offer your time, effort, energy, or financial support to virtuous Ordained Practitioners, Temples, and Teachers who are actively applying effort to share these Teachings to generate Merit. Your time, effort, energy, and financial support is helpful to benefit you and countless others to learn these Teachings. Through the decision to support virtuous Ordained Practitioners, Temples, and Teachers, you and countless others will be able to learn and practice these Teachings creating a more peaceful world through less and less harm being produced in the world.

Teachers should not be sharing these Teachings in order to receive donations but instead, because a person has decided to leave behind worldly pursuits to share these Teachings with you, they will need donations to sustain their life and to provide the needed resources allowing them to share these Teachings with you and others in the world. By a Community providing donations to support an individual to share these Teachings, it facilitates the ability of these Teachings to more readily and deeply reach you and others in the world creating a kinder, gentler, and more peaceful society that you and everyone can enjoy.

Without the wisdom of these Teachings, the world would be lost continuing to experience heartache, misery, despair, and displeasure. Humanity would continue to suffer.

Supporting these Teachings by creating Merit through generous offerings to The Noble Community means that you will have the ability to gain the needed wisdom to support your life goals while improving your personal and professional relationships to enhance your life.

Gifts of Teachings Is Superior Than Gifts of Material Things

Monks, there are these two kinds of gifts: a gift of material things and a gift of The Teachings.

Of these two kinds of gifts, this is supreme: a gift of The Teachings.

There are these two kinds of sharing: sharing of material things and sharing of The Teachings.

Of these two kinds of sharing, this is supreme: sharing of The Teachings.

There are these two kinds of assistance: assistance with material things and assistance with The Teachings.

Of these two kinds of assistance, this is supreme: assistance with The Teachings.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: ITI 100)

Author's Thoughts: The best most beneficial gift that I could ever give to you is the gift of sharing these Teachings. May you discover the freedom associated with a mind that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy permanently - the Enlightened mind.

As you need help to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings, you are welcome to seek guidance which is available openly and freely to "all beings".

An Unsurpassed Field of Merit for the World

Monks, these eight persons are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.

What eight?

The Stream-Enterer, the one practicing for realization of the fruit of Stream Entry;
the Once-Returner, the one practicing for realization of the fruit of Once Returning;
the Non-Returner, the one practicing for realization of the fruit of Non-Returning;
the Arahant, the one practicing for realization of the fruit of Arahantship.

These eight persons, Monks, are worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.

The four practicing the way
and the four established in the fruit;
this is the upright Community -
composed in wisdom and virtuous behavior (moral conduct).

For people intent on sacrifice,
for living beings seeking merit,
making merit that ripens in the acquisitions,
what is given to The Community bears great fruit.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference:AN 8.59)

Why Do Ordained Practitioners Beg for Food?

It is a common misunderstanding that people think Ordained Practitioners (i.e. Teachers) are begging for food. Ordained Practitioners are not begging for food nor anything else. They are walking through The Community providing the opportunity for Household Practitioners (i.e. Students) to practice generosity to acquire merit which will assist them in developing the mind to attain Enlightenment.

As part of what The Buddha shared as Teachings, he developed a system of “mutual support”.

The mutual support between Ordained Practitioners (i.e. Teachers) and their Students (i.e. Household Practitioners) is designed to ensure that there is opportunity for both Teachers and Students to practice The Teachings according to what leads to Enlightenment - namely “generosity”.

Teachers are giving up their career and worldly life. They have eliminated, or are working to eliminate, their craving/desire/attachment to worldly life of having an extensive amount of possessions, a career, etc. Through applying effort to develop their life practice to understand and practice The Teachings, they are being a deep and dedicated Student.

To be the very best Teacher, one would need to first be a very deep and dedicated Student and Practitioner.

So by living on donations of food, water, clothing, shelter, medical care, and financial support, Teachers are able to get deeper and deeper into their own practice of these Teachings to acquire wisdom of The Teachings. In this way, a Teacher is able to become a very deep, dedicated, determined, and diligent Student that leads to the elimination of craving/desire/attachment to worldly life, ultimately benefiting the Teacher and their Students. The Teacher is then better prepared to share the wisdom they cultivated on The Path to Enlightenment to help their Students to then get closer to and attain Enlightenment for themselves. It was the Student's offerings that supported the Teacher aiding them in their journey to Enlightenment through generous donations, and it is the wisdom they cultivated that is then shared with the Students that helps them to progress in their journey to Enlightenment. This is the "mutual support" that The Buddha envisioned and created during his lifetime.

To be a good Teacher, one first needs to be a really great Student.

Through the work of being a very deep Student, a Teacher is then best prepared to be able to share these Teachings with Students to help them learn, reflect, and practice towards the attainment of Enlightenment.

A Teacher should have a well developed practice of generosity, in that, they are giving and sharing The Teachings of The Buddha without asking for anything in return. They should have no expectations of their Students and focus on sharing The Teachings with all those who have a sincere interest in learning and growing on The Path to Enlightenment.

Generosity is a significant aspect of practice that one needs to develop in order to attain Enlightenment. An individual would be unable to attain Enlightenment without a well developed practice of "generosity".

Generosity is a readiness and taking the action of frequently giving something more than is strictly necessary, such as time, effort, energy, financial support, or resources without any expectation of anything in return. A practice of giving and helping others as part of an ongoing and

comprehensive life practice. This action can help you develop and cultivate a more caring and compassionate mind as one chooses to consistently give and share through their life to eliminate selfishness. Generosity eliminates craving/desire/attachment in the mind, thus, helping to eliminate discontent feelings from the mind.

Generosity without judgment or expectation of anything in return is a practice that can transform the mind in ways you never thought possible.

Students are focused on living a household life where they do have certain possessions, a career, and other aspects of worldly life. As a Student progresses forward in life, due to pollutions of mind, they will face various struggles, difficulties, and challenges. Due to the lack of wisdom of The Natural Laws of Existence, a Student will experience various challenges in life that they find difficult to overcome and it is The Teachings of The Buddha that will guide them to an improved condition of mind and life.

Because a Teacher has given up their worldly life to focus on sharing Teachings with Students, Students will then provide support to their Teacher to assist them in sustaining their life and to be able to offer these Teachings to them and others throughout the world.

In this way, there is “mutual support”.

The Teachers are sharing The Teachings of The Buddha to help their Students improve their life and Students are providing life sustaining resources that support the Teacher to sustain life and acquire the needed resources to offer these Teachings to them and others.

Without this mutual support, the entire Path to Enlightenment would collapse as we see today in many parts of the world. We would find that it would be utterly difficult for anyone to get to Enlightenment without this system of mutual support.

There would not be the ability for Teachers to deeply develop their understanding and practice of these Teachings while practicing generosity by sharing The Teachings and Students would not have the ability to develop their mind by learning and practicing these Teachings while practicing generosity to support the continued sharing of these Teachings. Essentially, people would be “stuck” and unable to progress to Enlightenment because the entire system of “mutual support” would break down and there would not be the practice of generosity for Teachers and Students to get closer to Enlightenment.

If Teachers charged money for their services, they would not be practicing generosity. If Students are paying a fee for classes, courses, and retreats, they would not be practicing generosity. Therefore, without this regular and ongoing practice of generosity where Teachers are regularly sharing Teachings and Students are regularly sharing their time, effort, energy, and resources to help the Teachers continue to share The Teachings, the system of mutual support would not exist, individuals would not be practicing generosity, people would not be getting to Enlightenment, and The Path to Enlightenment would completely and entirely collapse.

This would leave the world without the needed Teachings of The Buddha to improve society and, thus, help all of humanity evolve to a higher consciousness where we are loving, kind, and gentle to each other while being able to acquire a peaceful and joyful mind and life.

Therefore, it is important that we do not think of it as Ordained Practitioners, including Teachers, are “begging for food”, because to “beg” would be to have craving/desire/attachment while pleading with Students to give them something. This is not what The Buddha taught as Practitioners are guided to “await what is given” rather than to have expectations that something will be given or to beg for something to be given.

Instead, The Path to Enlightenment is based on “mutual support” and through this mutual support, there will be Teachers in a Community who are interested and willing to teach based in loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity while there will be Students who have a sincere interest to learn and are willing to practice generosity to support the continued sharing of these Teachings.

In this way, Teachers have the ability to develop and Students will have Teachers available to help them develop.

If we appreciate, value, and respect Teachers who offer these Teachings at no cost, then Students will need to do their part to provide the needed support for a Teacher to exist in the world through providing the basic necessities to sustain life and resources to support the continued sharing of these Teachings.

If a Teacher is practicing in the way that is needed to share these Teachings into the world, they would use a portion of the offerings (i.e. donations) to sustain their life with food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical care and also allocate a certain amount of the resources provided by their Students towards improving their ability to share these Teachings. In modern times, this might include any of the following:

- Website
- Video Conferencing Membership
- Computers, Lights, Microphone, and equipment to share The Teachings.
- Meditation Cushions and Chairs
- Classroom Supplies (carpets, water, cups, bathroom supplies, white board, markers, etc.)
- Signage Advertising Classes
- Transportation to and from classes, courses, retreats, and appointments with Students.

While a Teacher may offer their classes and other programs for FREE, it is not free for a Teacher to offer their Teachings. A Teacher will need support on a continuous and ongoing basis to be able to continuously share The Teachings of The Buddha.

By supporting a Teacher to share The Teachings of The Buddha, you are supporting your ability to learn The Teachings and the ability of others to learn The Teachings while training the mind to eliminate craving/desire/attachment, the cause of discontentedness.

But, a Teacher (i.e. Ordained Practitioner) is not begging nor should they ever have an expectation of their Students to make offerings.

By a Teacher sharing their Teachings without any cost for the Student, this makes The Teachings of The Buddha available to the widest audience possible and removes any potential financial obstacle that may or may not exist for a Student. These Teachings are to help an individual rise above and move beyond the daily struggles and difficulties in their life. Many of those struggles and difficulties will hinder an individual from financial success.

If a Teacher offered their Teachings at a price for classes, courses, or retreats, an individual who is struggling with finances due to their lack of wisdom of these Teachings, would be unable to access the very solution to the struggles they face. The very Teachings they need to overcome the financial roadblocks would be inaccessible to them because there is a certain fee that is required to learn the wisdom they need to achieve improved financial success and other life successes in personal and professional relationships. Essentially, they would be “stuck” in the financial difficulties without the ability to ever learn and practice The Teachings they need to overcome their struggles in life.

Therefore, a Teacher needs to function without any selfish desires or attachment to financial success. A Teacher needs to be willing and able to offer their Teachings at “no cost”. If they assign a cost to their Teachings, there would be countless beings who would be left behind due to their

inability to pay for the classes, courses, and retreats that they need in order to acquire the needed wisdom to overcome their struggles and difficulties in life.

If you decide to support Teachers, Ordained Practitioners, and/or Temples, you are providing the needed resources to make these Teachings available to you and many others in the world. And, you are developing your practice of “generosity” to develop and enhance the mind towards the attainment of Enlightenment by eliminating craving/desire/attachment, the cause of discontent feelings, thus, helping to eliminate discontent feelings from the mind.

Do keep in mind, that a Teacher, Ordained Practitioner, and/or Temple should not expect, ask, nor beg for support. Instead, they would just give and share allowing their Students to also give and share.

In this way, the system of mutual support, wisely created by The Buddha during his lifetime, continues with Teachers and Students progressing towards Enlightenment through the practice of “generosity” to acquire “merit”. Through a regular, consistent, and ongoing practice of “generosity” by both Teachers and Students, The Path to Enlightenment is fully intact and accessible to “all beings”.

Mutual Support Between Monks, Brāhmins and Householders

Monks, Brāhmins and Householders are very helpful to you. They provide you with the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines in time of sickness. And you, Monks, are very helpful to Brāhmins and Householders, as you teach them The Teachings that are good in the beginning, the middle, and the end, with the correct meaning and wording, and you proclaim the spiritual life in its fulfillment and complete purity. Thus, Monks, this spiritual life is lived with mutual support for the purpose of crossing the flood and making a complete end of discontentedness.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: ITI 107)

To learn more about producing wholesome Kamma through practicing generosity, see the books titled “The Natural Law of Kamma” (Volume 6) and “Generosity” (Volume 13) of this same book series.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 10) - What is Merit? (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/6HJ3bqvzUOs>

Ep. 510 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 10) - What is Merit?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--510---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-10---What-is-Merit-e272t7s>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 10 - What is Merit and Student Discussion

https://youtube.com/live/1iDy_e-4P2U

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/QxIKPcmUOkw>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 450 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 10 - What is Merit and Student Discussion

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--450---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-10---What-is-Merit-and-Student-Discussion-e22helm/a-a9mbl8a>

Ep. 451 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--451---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e22lkmf/a-a9mohan>

Quiz

What is Merit?

<https://forms.gle/m7zzpR17m3JdbZdY8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 11

Meditation: Developing Your Practice

Gotama Buddha said, “meditate or lest you regret it later”. We have this extremely rare human existence and we should not let it go to waste through laziness, complacency or excessive delays. We should utilize our time in this human form to develop and cultivate a pure mind so that we can experience a peaceful and content life while escaping The Cycle of Rebirth.

Gotama Buddha explained that “a pot without a stand is easy to tip over”. The mind is the “pot” and your meditation practice is the “stand”. Without a stable “stand” (i.e. meditation practice) the pot (i.e. the mind) is going to constantly be “tipped over”.

The reason why the mind keeps experiencing discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc. is because there is not a well established meditation practice along with learning and practicing the entire Path to Enlightenment. The mind keeps getting “tipped over” experiencing discontent feelings.

The mind needs a steady and consistent “stand” that you establish through the continual development of your meditation practice to train the mind. With a stable meditation practice, a Practitioner can develop mental discipline and the mind won't keep getting tipped over to experience discontent feelings.

Developing a solid and consistent meditation practice that provides the mind training and development is an essential part of learning and practicing these Teachings. The mind needs a steady and consistent “stand” that you establish through the continual development of your meditation practice to train the mind.

Meditation is a technique to actively train the mind during dedicated, independent, purposeful training sessions to eliminate unwholesome qualities of the mind and/or cultivate wholesome qualities of the mind in the positions of seated, lying, standing, or walking.

Just as important as it is to understand what meditation is, it is just as important to understand what meditation is not. Meditation is not exercising, walking the dog, gardening, driving, watching a sunset, dancing, listening to music, martial arts, nature watching, etc. These are activities that are beneficial to one's life through experiencing various aspects of life but these are not active, dedicated, independent, purposeful training sessions to eliminate and/or cultivate various qualities of the mind.

Meditation is the foundation of our "life practice" that trains the mind. Over time and with a well developed life practice that includes meditation, you will discover the same truths as Gotama Buddha and acquire wisdom. It is the wisdom you develop within a life practice and meditation that liberates the mind. Meditation is the core method of training the mind and establishes a foundation in which to build all the other Teachings and practices taught by Gotama Buddha that lead to Enlightenment.

To attain Enlightenment, an individual needs to focus on developing a practice of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Loving-kindness Meditation. These two meditations are required to attain Enlightenment. The other meditations discussed in this Chapter are optional, specialized meditations to be utilized when appropriate and with guidance from a Teacher. All these Teachings and the meditation techniques shared in this book should be learned with guidance of Teachers as one will need assistance on The Path.

Meditation Teacher

It is important for you to find Teachers and guides that will help you along this path. You cannot attain Enlightenment alone or without Teachers. You will need guidance and instruction from people familiar with The Path to Enlightenment.

Only a Buddha, which is extremely rare, would be able to attain Enlightenment without Teachers or guides. The last Buddha existed over 2,500 years ago and the world is currently unaware of the existence of any other Buddha since his existence. Since you are not a Buddha, find helpful Teachers and guides to assist you along this path.

You can find ordained and unordained Practitioners that will provide you guidance in these Teachings and in your meditation practice. It is important to seek guidance from Teachers and guides who have attained Enlightenment as they will be very familiar with this pursuit and be able to best guide you.

If a Teacher has abandoned craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) dissolved the ego and realized non-self, they will be most helpful. A Teacher should have a mind with generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion for all beings. You should be able to observe a quiet stillness and calmness in their intentions, speech, and actions.

A Teacher who has attained Enlightenment will be able to explain what Enlightenment is and provide extensive details of what Enlightenment is, is not, and how to pursue Enlightenment. A Teacher will assist you along the path without any self interest, but only to help you attain Enlightenment.

Just like everything else, it is important not to become attached to any one Teacher and learn from multiple people. However, starting off with one Teacher for several years to establish a solid practice can be helpful in getting started. Then, you may find it helpful to seek guidance from other Teachers.

Do not allow someone to instruct you into a very rigid meditation posture that does not feel comfortable for you. If a Teacher is providing very specific and rigid positioning for the body that is not comfortable for you, the body positioning being taught may work for that Teacher but may not work for you. It is important that you are not “attached” to do meditation in the exact same body position as a Teacher because what works for one person may not work for another. The goal of meditation is to train the mind not the body.

Gotama Buddha never gave us exact parameters for meditation positioning of the body but instead offered four (4) positions to be used. He realized that everyone is unique and different so the exact position you use could be different than another person and will change over time. Meditation and these practices are not about everyone doing meditation exactly the same way. That is impossible because of The Universal Truth of Impermanence.

A helpful meditation Teacher will work with you to find a position that works best for you within these four (4) postures, not force you to follow what works for them. If someone is forcing you to follow their methods, that means they are attached to their methods and, thus, are not fully practicing The Teachings of non-attachment and are not understanding impermanence.

It is important that you find what works best for you, then do not become attached to it. As you age or have other physical challenges with the body, your meditation position will need to change. Remember, do not expect permanence including the position that you meditate in. Do not allow someone to instruct you into rigid meditation positions that work for them but do not work for you.

You will need to establish a meditation practice that consists of needing only the body, the mind, and the breath without any other attachments like external stimulus. Having the assistance of Teachers and guides is the best way to develop a meditation practice.

If the positioning of the body is uncomfortable and all you feel is pain during meditation, then all the mind will experience is pain. You will be unable to train the mind to be content. So, find positions that are comfortable but not luxurious and be open to make adjustments and changes as the body needs change during meditation or during subsequent meditation sessions. Find the body positions that are most comfortable but not luxurious as you may have a tendency for the mind to drift to luxurious thoughts.

You may find multiple day meditation retreats, retreat centers, and meditation centers helpful to share Teachings and guidance with you while providing you the opportunity to meditate for several days continuously in an environment that is supportive and knowledgeable of your pursuit to Enlightenment.

Would you attempt to learn to build a house to dwell and reside without a Teacher? Would you be able to build this house easily and feel safe to reside there? “No, you would not.”

The pursuit to Enlightenment is building a house within the mind for it to reside. You will need help to learn how to develop this mental state.

You are individually responsible for your own journey, but you cannot walk alone. You need guidance to walk The Path to Enlightenment.

You can find Teachers and guidance at: BuddhaDailyWisdom.com.

It is a common practice for Teachers to accept donations for their work to help you in developing your practice. By offering donations to your Teachers, you are practicing generosity, which helps you to practice non-greed and eliminate attachment to money, while also showing your appreciation to those that help you on The Path to Enlightenment. It is only because of Students before you that donated support that has allowed these Teachings to continue to present day where you are now able to learn these Teachings to benefit your life. Others donated support to help preserve these Teachings for you and you should look for ways to provide support to help those yet to come.

Teachers typically give their time, effort, and wisdom to help others through their teaching and oftentimes live a basic life with only the basic needs to sustain life. Food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical care is all that is truly

needed for existence and Teachers who practice these Teachings closely will be pleased to help you regardless if you make donations or not.

To show your appreciation and to support the continued learning and sharing, your offerings of donations will assist your Teachers to continue to share The Teachings with you and others.

You do not need to wait to be asked to offer a donation, as most Teachers will never ask a Student for money or support. You can independently on your own, share with your Teachers that you would like to provide them support and offer donations as you feel appropriate.

One Who Points Out Treasure

Ānanda, I shall not treat you as the potter treats the raw damp clay. Repeatedly restraining you, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. Repeatedly guiding you of what to avoid, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. The truly dedicated will stand [the test].

Regard him as one who points out treasure, the wise one who seeing your faults guides you of what to avoid. Stay with this sort of Teacher.

For the one who stays with a Teacher of this sort, things get better, not worse.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 122 & DHP 76-77)

Author's Thoughts: In order to share The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment, a Buddha or any Teacher, would need to help Students uncover unwholesome qualities in the mind and in their life practice while pointing out the cultivation of wholesome qualities. A Student will need to put their trust in the Teacher while investigating the areas of improvement the Teacher identifies and shares with the Student.

A Student will need to be inviting and accepting of a Teacher's guidance in order to identify areas of improvement and then learn, reflect, and practice Teachings to improve their life practice. If a Student allows the ego to block the guidance from the Teacher while feeling displeasure in the Teacher "pointing out treasure", they will not "stand the test" of receiving guidance from the Teacher to progress towards Enlightenment.

A Teacher would need to exert a significant amount of time, effort, energy, and resources to guide a Student to Enlightenment. A Teacher should not ask for any benefits from their Students, but instead, await what is given as offerings. A Teacher's only goal should be to guide a Student to Enlightenment without any personal gain for themselves whatsoever.

So, a Teacher who takes their time, effort, energy, and resources to "point out treasure" should be regarded as a "wise one who seeing your faults" will help you to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to attain Enlightenment.

The Buddha's advice is to "stay with this sort of Teacher" as things only "get better, not worse". As the condition of the mind and one's life, "only gets better, not worse" when a Student is open to understanding guidance from a wise Teacher who kindly and patiently shares areas for improvement while not seeking any benefit from you - their only goal is to help you. In this type of relationship with a wise Teacher pointing out areas of improvement as treasure to be appreciated based on the goal of helping you, you should "stay with this sort of Teacher" as things only "get better, not worse".

Gotama Buddha provided us four (4) positions to meditate. Seated, lying, standing, and walking are the four (4) positions of meditation. These positions can be used at different times, interchangeably, for different purposes and best learned with Teachers. Through you learning and practicing these body positions, you can decide what is or is not working for you in any given situation. It is only when you learn and apply The Teachings in practice that you will know the truth of what is and is not working for you. Then, seek guidance from a Teacher to better help you gain insight into the development of your meditation practice.

Seated Position

It is common to start with learning meditation in the seated position.

Lower Body

You can sit on the floor, in a chair, on a bench, a wheel chair, or other location. The important thing is that the lower body is supported and comfortable. If all you feel is pain from sitting on the floor, this is not the right position for you to meditate at this time.

You can work to develop sitting on the floor if you like, however, if all you experience is pain then you will find it difficult to observe anything else in the mind other than pain. So, find a seated position that is comfortable for you.

The position should be comfortable but not luxurious.

Upper Body

The upper body should be fully supported by your own strength. You should not slouch or be too stiff and upright. Maintain a comfortable and supported upper body that is in the "middle" and allows for comfortable, steady, and consistent breath.

If you choose to meditate in a chair, try not to lean back using the back rest unless it is required to eliminate pain or the back muscles are insufficient to support the body. Try using the back muscles to support your upper body, if possible, to maintain an attentive and alert mind.

Hands and Arms

The hands and arms should be relaxed in front of you. There are several different ways to place the hands and arms. You can see the below photo to observe how Gotama Buddha performed meditation.

Gotama Buddha placed his right hand on top of his left hand with the thumbs touching together. If this works for you, you can use this technique.

Other options include placing the palms of your hands on your lap or on top of your knees.

You should not be attached to placing the hands and arms, or other parts of the body, in the exact same position as Gotama Buddha. However, if they work for you then you can use those.

The most important thing is that the hands and arms are relaxed in front of the body and comfortable. There are many ways to accomplish this goal.



Remember, one aspect of this practice is to eliminate ego. So, it is not important that we all force ourselves into the same body position or emulate Gotama Buddha's meditation posture to determine who is doing it "right" or "wrong" or who is better than another.

The "right" position for you is the right position for you. And, this will change over time as the body needs to be adjusted as the body has physical changes over the course of your lifetime. You may start meditating on the floor but later in life, move to a chair or other position.

What is important, is that you find a comfortable position that allows the body to be seated comfortably while you train the mind, then, not be attached to that position as it will not be permanent and will need to change over time.

Lying Position

Lying position can be used for various reasons. If you are using seated position for long periods of time and would like to change positions to continue your meditation, you may choose to switch to the lying position. If the body is tired and you are interested to relax all the muscles in the body while meditating, this could be a helpful position for you.

If you are interested to train the mind not to be attached to the seated position, lying position is another option.

You may also need lying position at times when other positions are not possible. If you are sick or otherwise incapable of sitting, standing or walking, meditation in the lying position is an option for you.

You can lay on the floor, a bed, or any other location. If you are able to lay on the floor, this is a good place to start while also being open to meditating in a bed. If you are in the hospital or otherwise confined to a bed, it is nice to have the lying position available for you to meditate.

All the muscles in the body should be relaxed and comfortable. Be sure you maintain the mind in meditation as a lying position may promote a sluggish or sleepy mind. Remember, meditation is to train the mind so if you are falling asleep while trying to meditate, it will limit your ability to train the mind. To train the mind you will need to maintain an attentive and alert mind.

Conversely, if you are having trouble falling asleep, you could use the lying position and meditation to assist you in falling asleep. Be sure you also have meditation sessions where you are training the mind to eliminate or cultivate the mental qualities discussed in this book. This includes training the mind as described in the various meditations shared in this Chapter.

The below photo demonstrates a potential option for lying position. Again, you will need to work with the body and Teachers to help you find a lying position that works for you and then you should not be attached to that position as it will need to change.



Standing Position

Just like lying position, standing position provides another option for meditation and can also be used at different times for various purposes. In the same way as lying position, standing can be used when you would like to change positions to continue your meditation or when another position is not possible.

You may use standing position during a dedicated meditation session when the body needs to change positions. You can also use standing position while standing at a bus stop, in line or another location where you are standing and would like to do a bit of meditation.

For standing position, you stand upright with both feet together and your arms in front of you using one hand to clasp the wrist on the opposite side of the body. There is no secret with which hand clasps the other. It's up to you.

If clasping at the wrist with one hand is not possible, then you could allow the arms to just relax at your side or clasp them at the wrist behind the body. Again, no attachments to a specific posture, the body needs to be comfortable but not luxurious.

Walking Position

Walking position is another position for meditation that can be used and can be helpful. If the mind is very active and unwilling to sit, lay, or stand, walking position could be used. Additionally, walking position could be used to provide another option that allows you to extend your meditation session to maintain the body in a comfortable position and attentive posture. If the body becomes uncomfortable with one of the other positions, walking position could be used to extend meditation sessions allowing the body to be comfortable.

Walking position, as with all meditation, is helpful to learn with a Teacher. You will need to learn various details and instruction should be sought for this position of meditation along with all the others.

All of the following meditation techniques can be conducted in the above mentioned positions.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation helps you to eliminate craving by training the mind to “cut off thoughts” during meditation, thus, removing the poison of “Craving” or “Greed” while developing the skill of mindfulness.

The goal of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is to develop “Right Concentration”, “Right Mindfulness”, and to eliminate the unwholesome root of craving by training the mind not to cling or attach to emotions, situations, fears, relationships, the past nor the future expectations you have of yourself. Gotama Buddha explained this as “cutting off thoughts”. You may also think of this as “letting go of the thoughts”.

All discontentedness is from cravings, desires, and attachments so it is important to train the mind to not have attachment.

Developing a mind that has been trained not to have attachments is highly useful in everyday life so that you can more easily let go of your current attachments and not pick up new attachments which will eliminate your discontentedness of the mind.

The benefit of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is that we develop a calm, steady, peaceful, more concentrated mind through the elimination of cravings/desires/attachments. You can develop an unshakable mind. The elimination of attachments is what creates the concentration and contentedness, not actually the meditation by itself.

This meditation trains the mind not to have craving, then, you will need to practice non-craving and the other Teachings to develop the mind into a pure mind with Enlightenment. It is through a practice of non-craving that the mind will be calm, content, and peaceful to ultimately attain Enlightenment.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation becomes a way to empty out the mind of past thoughts and future expectations along with any emotions, thoughts, ideas, perceptions, fears, etc. while training the mind to not crave anything because we know craving causes discontentedness. You are training the mind in meditation to not crave so it will be content which produces a calm, stable, and concentrated mind.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is the foundation of a practice in these Teachings and should be developed as the primary meditation practiced daily.

Cutting off thoughts does not mean you will never have thoughts or it would not be helpful to have thoughts. It means, that **you train the mind not to hold on to thoughts, ideas, and perceptions, etc. because then you would be attached to those things.** If you are attached to thoughts, ideas, perceptions, etc. then you will “cause yourself” discontentedness when these are not fulfilled as expected.

You will always have thoughts, ideas, wisdom, even memories of past events or goals in the future you’d like to achieve. But when you are attached to these things, then it causes the mind to be discontent. You are causing the mind to be discontent through your own attachments to these thoughts, ideas, perceptions, or the past and future.

You can train the mind to not attach to thoughts but to use them to your benefit without attachment.

It is best to recognize the impermanent nature of all conditioned things, live in the moment, and be “satisfied with what is” with a content mind. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation helps to train the mind to be content with nothing, emptiness, and while being alone doing nothing.

When the mind can be content with nothing, emptiness, and alone during meditation, then this helps to train the mind towards being content in any and all situations. There is more training of the mind that is needed beyond meditation alone, however, many people have challenges to be content while alone due to arising thoughts and emotions from the mind.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is a way for you to allow these thoughts to arise, not attach to them and empty them out, while living in the present moment peaceful, calm, and content.

Thoughts and emotions generated by the mind should not bother you or cause the mind to be discontent but this requires training. Sitting alone, breathing, without any bodily action in meditation can allow the thoughts and emotions to arise so that you train the mind not to attach to what the mind produces.

By not attaching to what the mind produces, the mind can be peaceful, calm, and content. Slowly over time, the mind will produce less and less negative thoughts or emotions and the mind can cultivate more wholesome qualities and positive mental states during meditation and in daily life.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is the practice for you to train the mind to not attach to thoughts, ideas, and perceptions or past events and future expectations, to be accepting and “satisfied with what is”, living in the present moment.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is training the mind to “let go” with ease. Over repeated sessions, the mind develops the ability to easily observe an arising thought, idea, emotion, or feeling and then to “let it go”. As the mind develops this ability more deeply, a Practitioner is then able to use this skill in daily life. In daily life when the mind observes an arising unwholesome thought, idea, emotion, or feeling, the mind can then easily “let it go”.

The mind’s ability to consistently observe arising unwholesome mental activity and then easily let it go, will ultimately be what eliminates craving/desire/attachment and the associated discontentedness.

The mind becomes an expert at “cutting off” unwholesome mental activity and then eventually, these destructive thoughts, ideas, emotions, and feelings will not even arise. But, this is only accomplished through a well developed practice of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation to cultivate awareness of mind (Right Mindfulness) of unwholesome mental activity and then easily “cut it off”. The mind will eventually get tired of clinging to thoughts because of the repeated action of “cutting them off and letting them go”, and eventually submits residing in the middle permanently. The mind *gradually* learns that every time it has a craving/desire/attachment and discontentedness is produced, a Practitioner “cuts it off” and “lets it go”. The mind slowly discovers that it is unbeneficial and unfruitful to have mental longing with a strong eagerness, thus, it will eliminate this activity in the mind residing completely peaceful and content.

When the mind eliminates mental longing with a strong eagerness (craving/desire/attachment), it will no longer experience any discontent feelings whatsoever.

A Practitioner will never eliminate thoughts during meditation, even when the mind is Enlightened but instead, through a well developed Breathing Mindfulness Meditation practice, the mind will be quieted and stilled during meditation. Rather than experiencing a bombardment of thoughts, over time, a well trained mind will experience a slowing down of the thoughts where there are long gaps between thoughts. The mind will be quieted and stilled

to the point where there are only some occasional thoughts, the mind will be aware of the thought, and be able to then easily let it go coming back to the breath.

One Who Perceives Non-Self Eradicates the Conceit 'I Am'

When, Monks, a Monk has wholesome friends, wholesome companions, wholesome comrades, it can be predicted of him that he will be virtuous (practicing moral conduct), one who resides restrained by the training guidelines possessed of wholesome conduct and resolving difficult situations, seeing danger in small faults. Having undertaken the training guidelines, will train in them.

When a Monk has wholesome friends, wholesome companions, wholesome comrades, it can be predicted of him that he will get to hear at will, without trouble or difficulty, talk concerned with the holy life that is conducive to opening up the heart, that is, talk on elimination of desires, on contentment, on solitude, on not getting bound up (with others), on arousing energy, on virtuous behavior, on concentration, on wisdom, on liberation, on the wisdom and vision of liberation.

When a Monk has wholesome friends, wholesome companions, wholesome comrades, it can be predicted of him that he will arouse energy for abandoning unwholesome qualities and acquiring wholesome qualities; he is strong, firm in effort, not casting off the duty of cultivating wholesome qualities.

When a Monk has wholesome friends, wholesome companions, wholesome comrades, it can be predicted of him that he will be wise, possessing the wisdom that discerns arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of discontentedness.

Having based himself on these five things, the Monk should develop further (another) four things.

(1) (The perception of) unattractiveness of the body should be developed to abandon lust.

(2) Loving-kindness should be developed to abandon ill will.

(3) Mindfulness of Breathing (Breathing Mindfulness Meditation) should be developed to cut off thoughts.

(4) The perception of impermanence should be developed to eradicate the conceit 'I am.' When one perceives impermanence, the perception of non-self is stabilized. One who perceives non-self eradicates the conceit 'I am, (which is) Nibbāna (Enlightenment) in this very life.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 9.1)

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation - Starting Meditation

Choose a position of either seated, lying, or standing. Get comfortable, as previously described for the position you choose. Use your breath as an anchor and close the eyes. Through normal breathing in through the nose and out through the nose, the mind can become aware of the breath.

You will need to establish a natural, steady, and consistent breath. The breath should not be rapid or forced. With full awareness of the breath, you can develop a natural, steady, and consistent breath in through the nose and out through the nose. The inhale and exhale should be *gradual* fully experiencing the entire breath.

If you experience challenges with breathing in and out of the nose, you may consider using a saline rinse to regularly flush out the nose clearing it for a more calming and clearer inhale and exhale.

Allow the breath, and the sound of the breath entering the body through the nose, to become the anchor that brings the mind into the present moment. The mind should be fixed on the sound of the breath or the sensation of the breath moving over the skin of the body into the nose.

The breath is the present moment.

In this way, as you focus on the breath and not the thoughts, you “cut off thoughts”. Bring the mind to the breath entering the nose as the anchor or fixed position of the mind. As any thought enters the mind, you should not observe the thought, attempt to figure it out, evaluate it in any way, or why it’s coming to the mind. Bring the mind back to the breath even if the mind wanders for some time, catch the mind and bring it back to the anchor of the breath.

It may take time for you to establish this practice and, thus, realize the benefits. Immediate benefits do not always happen in just one session.

Remember, Gotama Buddha gave us Teachings that we need to “strive” to implement and attain the results. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are not lessons you can implement in just 5 minutes experiencing immediate results. You will need to work with these Teachings and *gradually* implement them into your practice to *gradually* have a positive impact on the mind over a consistent period of time.

Training the mind to do this in meditation, will help you be able to also “cut off thoughts” in daily life as you need to detach from thoughts, emotions, or situations to attain a content mind. Train the mind in this way through

meditation so that the mind has this same training for everyday life. If you train the mind, then you will be able to control the mind through “cutting off” unwholesome mental activity as an application of Right Effort.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation allows you to train the mind to reside in the present moment using the breath as an anchor. We do not attach to the thoughts or feelings in the mind. We do not analyze what is in the mind during meditation. We just let everything go, by emptying out the mind.

In this way, we train the mind “not to crave” and “not to cling”. By training the mind not to crave during many sessions of meditation, we then have the training to not crave in daily life. We practice “non-craving” always and continuously every day and all day. Craving is the “cause” or “origin” of all our discontentedness and suffering it causes.

We cause our own discontentedness. We eliminate it by not craving. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is the practice that trains the mind not to crave. With regular daily sessions of training, you will then be able to control the mind in all situations as you near closer to Enlightenment.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is a practice to train the mind but it also, like everything else in your life, has an effect on your Kamma. Through being still, calm, and peaceful for extended periods of time, you are producing only wholesome Kamma. This means, for whatever period of time you conduct meditation, you are practicing the entire Eight Fold Path, thus, you eliminate all unwholesome Kamma production. As a result, you are putting health into the world and can expect only goodness from your meritorious conduct.

Immediately, what you receive from your meditation period is typically increased levels of calmness, peacefulness, mindfulness and concentration with a more stable mind. The longer you meditate, the more noticeable the effect. It could take you several attempts and getting comfortable with meditation prior to you having noticeable benefits or results.

After completing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, then the goal is to carry the calm, steady, and stable mind with you throughout the day, practicing all The Teachings of The Eight Fold Path as a life practice, “cutting off” any unwholesome mental activity as it arises.

Once you have developed a consistent Breathing Mindfulness Meditation practice for a minimum of four (4) weeks, you may decide to move into Loving-kindness Meditation.

Loving-kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness Meditation helps us to eliminate anger, hatred, ill will, hostility, aggression, resentment and cultivate a mind that has loving-kindness or goodwill towards all beings, thus, removing the poison of “anger”, “hatred” or “ill will”.

There are several ways to do Loving-kindness Meditation, as with all meditation. Every Teacher and Practitioner will have various techniques that work for them and are helpful. Learning from others and sharing your practice is one way to contribute to the wealth of knowledge among Practitioners of these Teachings.

There is not one (1) “right” way to meditate but, instead, many different options that may or may not work for you. Continue to explore options with various Teachers and Practitioners until you have a toolbox that helps you in your pursuit of Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha described developing a mind of loving-kindness through meditation as the second highest form of wholesome Kamma one could produce, with meditating on impermanence (i.e. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation) as the highest quality of wholesome Kamma. A mind that is well trained produces little to no unwholesome Kamma to harm others so, thus, the unwholesome Kamma will be reduced with less affect to you. A well trained mind is easy to control producing only wholesome intentions, speech and actions that is harmless to other beings, thus, no harm will be returned to you.

Loving-kindness Meditation can be enormously beneficial in cultivating a mind of loving-kindness and compassion for yourself and all beings. To attain Enlightenment, you will need to remove any and all anger, hatred, ill will, hostility, aggression, resentment and other negative emotions towards yourself and any other being to even include a minor dislike.

You will need to abandon, eliminate, and extinguish any and all negative mental states towards yourself and others. Loving-kindness Meditation and practicing loving-kindness in daily life is the way to accomplish this goal.

Loving-kindness Meditation - Starting Meditation

To conduct Loving-kindness Meditation, you should first practice Breathing Mindfulness Meditation to bring the mind to the present moment or “singleness of mind” to eliminate any unwholesome mental states prior to Loving-kindness Meditation.

This helps to ensure your intentions are the most pure prior to cultivating a mind of loving-kindness towards all beings through emptying out the mind and detaching from thoughts, ideas, and perceptions. In effect, the Breathing Mindfulness Meditation should be a preparation for Loving-kindness Meditation.

Then, do Loving-kindness Meditation in a method or style that you have learned from Teachers.

The below is offered as a potential option for you to try and experience results. Remember, any meditation practice will need consistency and dedication over multiple sessions to produce results. So, you should not expect immediate or instantaneous results, but instead, commit to a *gradual* training of the mind to realize *gradual* benefits.

To start, meditate as you normally have, using the techniques mentioned in this book for “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” in the seated, lying, or standing positions.

Next, repeat the following affirmations quietly in the mind on the out breath.

- 1.) May “I” be peaceful.
- 2.) May “I” be safe.
- 3.) May “I” be well.
- 4.) May “I” be free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

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- 1.) May “we” be peaceful.
- 2.) May “we” be safe.
- 3.) May “we” be well.
- 4.) May “we” be free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

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- 1.) May “all beings” be peaceful.
- 2.) May “all beings” be safe.
- 3.) May “all beings” be well.
- 4.) May “all beings” be free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

Phrases

Repeat this meditation and its affirmations as many times as you need over several sessions to cultivate a mind with intentions of goodwill or loving-kindness towards yourself and all beings.

The individual phrases you use can be modified to fit your own choice and needs. The important aspect of developing these phrases is to suit your own needs and to ensure the last word is a non-burdening phrase.

For example, you would not be interested to use the terms “kind”, “happy”, “polite”, “respectful”, etc. because these phrases require the beings to “do” something in order to attain this affirmation.

Your phrases should not burden yourself or another being with the obligation to do something in order to attain the affirmation you use.

To be “peaceful”, “safe”, “well”, and aspiring that all beings are “free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes” does not require or burden you or another being with the obligation to accomplish something.

Rings

As you conduct this meditation, you can also construct any number or combination of rings to include the groupings you choose that you need to cultivate goodwill or loving-kindness towards. Those individuals or groups of beings whom the mind currently has anger or hatred towards, should be included in your meditation to cultivate a mind of loving-kindness towards those beings.

Those individuals or groups of beings whom you know the mind has anger or hatred towards should be included in your Loving-kindness Meditation until the mind has fully and entirely released any and all ill will for these beings. If the mind develops anger, hatred, or ill will towards any individuals or groups

of beings, they should be included in your Loving-kindness Meditation to eliminate this from the mind.

Always start with yourself and end with “all beings”.

Examples might be:

1.) I, We, All Beings

2.) I, Those Beings in This Neighborhood, This Town, This Province, This Country, This Continent, The Entire World, The Universe, The Far Reaches Beyond Imagination, All Beings (Grouped based on geography.)

3.) I, My Parents, My Partner, My Children, My Family, My Friends, My Co-workers, My Acquaintances, All Beings (Grouped based on relationships.)

You can create any groupings you choose based on whom the mind needs to cultivate loving-kindness towards.

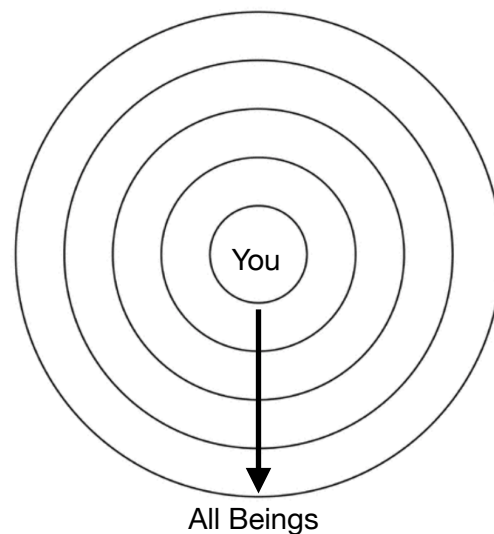
You can also conduct Loving-kindness Meditation for specific individuals that you are having a challenge to cultivate loving-kindness for and that you are having difficulties in relationships. Start with yourself, this person, then all beings. You could even repeat the affirmation for just this one person over and over and over again starting with yourself, moving to that person repeating the affirmations multiple times, then to all beings.

In this way, you are training the mind to cultivate healthy and wholesome mental states towards yourself to remove any negative self talk, towards any beings you choose, and then ensuring you include all beings at the very end of the meditation so that you are “all inclusive” and not leaving out any beings.

Loving-kindness Meditation is cultivating in your mind the genuine interest in all beings to be peaceful, safe, well, and free of discontentedness and the suffering it causes. This meditation is to transform your mind from anger, hatred, and ill will eliminating hostility, aggression, and resentment in your mind. Loving-kindness Meditation is not an attempt to change other people as that would be impossible. There is no meditation that can be employed that would change another person.

As the mind quietly repeats these affirmations, you are creating “rings” with you in the center and all beings at the outer edge. Fill in as many middle rings as you choose, however you choose, with whatever non-burdening statements you choose.

The rings shared here are examples to assist you in developing this practice with a Teacher and other Practitioners being able to offer you suggestions on what works for them.



Even more fruitful...would it be to develop a mind of loving-kindness even for the time it takes to pull a cow's udder.

Even more fruitful...would it be to develop the perception of impermanence just for the time of a finger snap.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 9.20)

Meditation to Eliminate Sexual Cravings

If you have excessive craving for sexual contact, you may be interested to *gradually* thin your craving or eliminate it all together in order to attain the highest Stages of Enlightenment. The decision to reduce or eliminate the fetter/taint of sensual desire, which includes sexual contact, is a personal choice that one can pursue based on where they are in the stages of life and if they would like to pursue the highest Stages of Enlightenment. It is a personal choice for each individual when or if they choose to thin or eliminate sensual desire to include sexual contact.

The reason we have sexual craving is because we do not see the body as it truly is. We see the outer layer of skin, hair, clothing, and other added features that are assembled into an appearance that is appealing to our senses.

When we see the body as it truly is by observing, as Gotama Buddha said, the “unattractiveness of the human body”, craving for sexual contact can be reduced or eliminated. Sexual craving is a craving that needs to be extinguished as you choose to progress to the highest Stages of Enlightenment.

You can acquire a photo of a dead corpse or a partially dissected human body for meditation while looking at this image. If you are in the presence of an actual corpse, you could meditate for this same purpose and goal. The added exposure to the smell of a dead corpse can help you meditate on the “unattractiveness of the body” which can help to reduce or eliminate sexual craving.

Without the outer layer of skin, you can see the flesh, bones, sinews, and fluids of the body. A photo of a dissected corpse will expose these hidden aspects of the body so that you can see the body as it truly is and, thus, reduce or eliminate sexual craving depending on your goal.

This is a specialized meditation that would not be required of all Practitioners but only those who are working to thin or eliminate sexual contact. This meditation can help a Practitioner improve their moral conduct so that they can more closely practice The Five Precepts through having sexual contact with only one partner and/or to eliminate the fetter/taint of “sensual desire” through the complete elimination of sexual contact.

Sexual cravings usually start in the mind as it daydreams about sexual contact and/or observes individuals through the eyes you find attractive.

In addition to the meditation shared here, as you observe the craving for sensual pleasure through the eyes arise in the mind, you need to train to cut it off and let it go. Redirect the mind towards something else as a practice of Right Effort.

Do not allow the mind to dwell in obsessive thoughts regarding sexual contact or actively seek out pleasant looking people or content to view through the eyes as this will arise the craving for sexual contact in the mind. It is much easier to cut off and let go of sexual cravings before they are filling the mind than to allow the mind to be polluted with sexual cravings and to then attempt to eliminate them.

Guarding the doorways of discontentedness, not allowing the mind to welcome the pleasant thoughts of sexual contact to enter, will help prevent the mind from an arising sexual craving. It is much easier to prevent the arising of craving sexual contact than to eliminate it once it has invaded the mind.

Meditation to Realize Non-Self

As you progress on The Path to Enlightenment, you will eventually need to learn The Universal Truth of Non-self and that there is no permanent self, in order to realize “non-self” eradicating the fetter/taint of “personal existence view”.

Learning The Teaching of this universal truth is important but then you will need to realize this for the mind in practice. Just like all The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, you need to learn The Teaching intellectually then practice The Teaching to apply it so that you can acquire this wisdom in the mind.

The perception of impermanence should be developed to eradicate the conceit “I am”, helping you to realize “non-self” and that there is no “you” that exists. This helps you to understand you are not the body, you are not the mind. All that exists is a physical body and a mind that have come together for this unique existence but neither of these are “you”.

It is craving that is the fuel that brings you back into a new existence in one of The Five Realms of Existence. The body does not belong to you, you cannot keep it forever, the body is not “you”, and it is impermanent.

Earlier in this book, there were Teachings shared to help you understand “non-self”. This is one of The Three Universal Truths. If you need a refresher on this Teaching, see the Chapter “The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View”. The Teaching of “The Three Universal Truths” is located in that Chapter.

Non-self is a Teaching you need to understand but more importantly, it’s a realization that you need to attain as part of “The Path” to attain Enlightenment at any stage.

You need to realize non-self towards the later stages of “The Path” as it’s a more intermediate to advanced Teaching, which is better approached later as you are practicing many of the other Teachings.

As you closely practice these Teachings, having fully established a life practice based on The Eight Fold Path and you are meditating regularly starting to experience the Jhānas, you will need to “realize non-self” to attain Enlightenment at any of the four (4) stages.

Eliminating the fetter/taint of “personal existence view” is required to experience even the first Stage of Enlightenment.

Realizing non-self involves learning Teachings with deep thought and reflection soaking the understanding of this Teaching into the mind. You might consider realizing non-self as part of dissolving the ego.

I share this meditation that can assist you but more importantly you will need the guidance of a Teacher in order to assist you to fully realize non-self at the appropriate time through Teachings, practice, and perhaps meditation as described in the below. There is much preliminary work that needs to be accomplished through a well developed practice of The Eight Fold Path before the mind will be ready to realize non-self or release the concept of a permanent self that the unEnlightened mind is holding.

Meditate as you normally have using the techniques mentioned in this book for “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” in the seated, lying, or standing positions.

Next, repeat the follow affirmations in the mind on the out breath similarly as you do with Loving-kindness Meditation.

- 1.) “I am not the body” (Repeat several times directing it to the body.)
- 2.) “I am not the mind” (Repeat several times)
- 3.) “There is no self” (Repeat several times)
- 4.) “I do not exist” (Repeat several times)
- 5.) “I am not the body, I am not the mind, There is no self, I do not exist” (Repeat several times)

Repeat this meditation and its affirmations as many times as you need over several sessions until you fully realize, there is “no self” and that there is no “you”. “You” does not exist and there is “no self”. There is no permanent self.

Using this meditation alone will not produce results unless a Practitioner has included the intellectual understanding of “non-self” and through developing practices outside of meditation to realize non-self. It is only when one understands The Teachings in the Chapter “Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose” and practices them, along with this meditation

and guidance from a Teacher, that a Student will be able to realize non-self.

You need to realize non-self to dissolve the ego and fully extinguish any craving to exist in any form. Dissolving the ego requires more than meditation alone and you will need to implement other practices described in this book. See the Chapter titled “Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose” (Chapter 16).

It is craving that is the fuel that leads to the next rebirth. So, it is important that you extinguish any concept or attachment to the body, the mind, a permanent self, and clearly establish in the mind that there is no “you”.

By the time you are ready to realize non-self, you will most likely be working closely with Teachers who can offer you guidance on The Teachings of non-self, this meditation, and others that can help you realize non-self.

If you continue to identify a “self”, “self identity” or project a “self image”, thus, remain attached to a concept of a permanent self, then you will not attain Enlightenment or complete liberation of the mind.

You must detach identification with the body and the mind as being “who you are” to realize “non-self”.

Time, Frequency, and Schedule of Meditation

Gotama Buddha did meditation three (3) times per day, morning, midday, and evening. This produces the best results.

Depending on your life situation, you may be able to meditate three (3) times per day or less frequently.

The goal is that meditation should be a daily practice that you allocate time each day for this healthy mind practice. It is like “medicine for the mind”.

There is no set amount of time, frequency, or schedule you should aim for as everyone is different. You may start to develop your practice with very short meditation periods and later extend them for longer or for shorter durations depending on life’s progression. Everything is impermanent, except for Enlightenment and The Natural Laws of Existence, including your time, frequency, and schedule of meditation.

You will notice the most benefits when you develop your practice to 2-3 sessions per day with thirty (30) minutes or more per session. You will need to build up to this *gradually* to develop your meditation practice.

You do not need to time your meditation periods. How long you meditate for is not as important as attaining results during each meditation session. But, once a week you might decide to look at the time to ensure your practice is developing closer to thirty (30) minutes or more per session.

Meditation has accumulative benefits and results. This means that the results of meditation are experienced in greater amounts, the more time you accumulate in meditation over multiple sessions. Each individual session accumulates to produce benefits over the long term with consistent meditation practice being the priority. It is more important to focus on the larger goal of a well developed practice that is sustained over time rather than focusing on each individual session and its specific timeframe.

I aim to do meditation 2-3 times a day, morning, mid-day and evening. However, I sometimes have dedicated meditation sessions more or less often. It's ok, I aim for 2-3 times a day schedule and throughout my life, I had to ramp up to that schedule oftentimes fitting in a fourth, fifth or sixth meditation period - as needed.

There are periods of my life where I did not meditate for several years due to various factors. These were the most difficult times in my life as I did not have a meditation practice to keep the mind stable, calm, and steady.

Now, I am practicing mindfulness (awareness of mind) all day long in everything. Everywhere I go the mind is focused, concentrated, and aware not to attach to thoughts, ideas, perceptions, etc. Whether I am walking, seated, talking to others, or otherwise involved in various life activities, I am always mindful, concentrated, and have awareness of mind to practice non-craving.

This requires dedicated daily meditation sessions to train the mind.

It is best not to be attached to a specific time for meditation. If you set a time for yourself using an alarm, one of two things will happen. You will most likely fall short of that time and perhaps feel guilty or beat yourself up for not getting to the set time. The other outcome of setting the time could be that you will be deep in meditation gaining benefits and the alarm will go off limiting you from going further to attain more benefits. It's best to just meditate and not be concerned about the time. You can finish whenever you need to finish. By setting the time, it is like trying to determine the future and

that is another craving as the mind may constantly long with a strong eagerness to know “if it’s time yet” to finish meditation. The goal of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is to eliminate mental longing with a strong eagerness training the mind to eliminate craving/desire/attachment. If the mind has a designated time on an alarm that it is longing for, then this becomes counterproductive.

While meditating without an alarm is ideal, there may be situations where you find an alarm is needed. It would be best if you can develop the vast majority of your meditation sessions to not include an alarm. But, if there are occasions where you need an alarm, you should use one. When you are in situations that you do not need an alarm, it is best not to use one so that the mind can sink into the meditation session stabilizing the mind being unaffected by an alarm reaping the benefits of the meditation rather than being worried or anxious about the pending alarm.

You do not need to regularly time your meditation period to determine how long you have meditated. The information of how long you meditated is not beneficial to you. The goal is to attain the benefits of meditation through training the mind, the amount of time you meditate is not an indicator of anything good or bad, it’s just the amount of time you meditated. If we used the time to compare it to our previous meditation sessions or compare it with others’ meditation sessions, nothing good would come from this comparison. The results of meditation are what you are working to attain - a concentrated mind that is eliminating cravings and/or cultivating wholesome mental states.

Gotama Buddha said to meditate for the “snap of a finger”. This means to meditate for whatever length of time you need to meditate. You will find that meditation sessions of 30 minutes or longer will produce the best results, but you will need to build up to that through *gradual* training and *gradual* practice. If you are starting with just a few minutes per meditation session, that’s fine but make it your goal to expand the length of time you meditate over the course of days, weeks, and months. Once a week, time your meditation sessions by look at the time as you start and finish to observe that your sessions are expanding and headed in the right direction. The amount of time you meditated is just to ensure you are actively working to build your meditation practice but not anything to take pride in or compare with others. Instead, use this for personal progress and perhaps in conversation as you seek guidance with a Teacher.

You will need to build up to a practice where you are able to meditate anywhere and in any situation, no matter what the perceived distractions might be. You can accomplish this by changing the location where you meditate so that you are not attached to meditating in just one location.

During certain periods of your life, you may decide to do multiple day meditation retreats that involve 3, 5, 10, 21, or a longer number of days in deep meditation.

You need to develop your own practice, see the results, and figure out how meditation can integrate into your life rather than following another person's pre-prescribed formula that works for them. Their practice may not work for you, so discover your truth and what works best for the mind.

Even though we describe "The Path" which has eight (8) distinct steps, what that path looks like in our daily life for each individual is going to be very different.

You cannot meditate your way to Enlightenment as you must have a life practice. But, you would not be able to attain Enlightenment without meditation either. You will need meditation to be able to clear your past and future thoughts along with attachment to thoughts, emotions, people, situations, etc. and bring the mind to the present moment. This will help you walk the middle way.

Sleepiness During Meditation

Practitioners will oftentimes experience sleepiness during meditation sessions. This is normal.

If the mind experiences sleepiness or a tendency to fall asleep, the mind may need rest and, therefore, you should rest the mind to ensure there is sufficient sleep.

However, you will need some dedicated meditation time either morning, midday, and/or evening. You could try these different times to observe the effect various times have on your practice, and you may choose to build up a practice where you are meditating at all three times during the day.

If it's noticed that the mind is continually falling asleep at all these times and dedicated meditation time is still needed, then changing positions between seated, lying, standing, and walking meditation positions could be employed to maintain attentiveness and the ability to train the mind during meditation.

As the mind has learned and is practicing these Teachings more deeply while practicing non-craving, you may notice the mind needs less sleep and experiences deeper sleep. Just like everything else, sleeping patterns are impermanent and the mind will need to get comfortable with shifting sleep patterns not attempting to allow the mind to get fixed to one specific sleep

schedule. It is impossible for the mind to sleep at the same time each day or for the same amount of time each day. This would be permanence and that does not exist.

Physical Sensations During Meditation

During meditation sessions, the mind may become aware of various physical sensations throughout the body. Various sensations will arise and they will cease to exist. These sensations are not permanent.

As the mind experiences these various physical sensations, just like the thoughts, ideas, and perceptions, let them go. Do not allow the mind to hold on to the physical sensations or allow them to disrupt the meditation session. Recognize how the physical sensations arise and then cease to exist, they are impermanent. Train the mind to resist the urge to scratch or touch the sensations, just allowing them to exist and then cease to exist.

As meditation sessions continue over the years, you may experience the sensation of the head expanding during your meditation sessions. Many people describe it as feeling as if the head is becoming the size of an elephant's head. This is completely normal as the mind is receiving more and more benefit through the training of ongoing meditation sessions.

This experience may or may not happen and if it is experienced there is nothing to be concerned about as it is not permanent. A Practitioner can have this experience or many others as their meditation practice develops. If there are any questions or concerns, you should seek guidance with your Teacher for clarification.

Visual Stimulation During Meditation

As the mind is *gradually* awakening, it is common to experience visualizations during meditation. There is a significant range of experiences one might have such as white light, colored lights, flashing lights, or a full range of other visual stimulus that can occur during meditation.

This is completely normal.

There will be sessions where a Practitioner will experience visual stimulation and some sessions where it is not experienced. The visualizations experienced are not an indication of anything other than the mind is gradually awakening and produces all types of random stimulation - both physically and visually.

A Practitioner should not allow the mind to latch onto any visualizations allowing the mind to experience pleasant feelings. If the mind experiences pleasant feelings when there are visualizations, then when those do not exist due to The Universal Truth of Impermanence, the mind will experience painful feelings.

The mind needs to reside unaffected by what is or is not happening during meditation. Each meditation session is independent of another. If a Practitioner attempts to compare one meditation session to another while having expectations, it is easy for the mind to become disinterested or dissuaded when their expectations for the meditation session are not met.

It is best to meditate without any expectations developing a consistent practice where the mind is *gradually* trained without a desire to compare one session to another. Each meditation session is completely unique, and it is the development of a consistent ongoing practice that one will experience results. Do not allow the mind to have craving/desire/attachment to what should or should not happen during meditation.

If the rain is falling and all seems dark, reside with the mind being unaffected. If the sun is shining and all seems well, reside with the mind being unaffected.

It is only when the mind expects one thing, and gets something else that it can oftentimes cause itself to become discontent. So when there are no expectations, the mind can reside unaffected and be “satisfied with what is”.

Meditation with External Stimulus

There are meditation practices that include the use of external stimulus like gongs, phone apps, music, beads, candles, and other devices or you might learn meditation with a guide constantly talking to you. While these could be perceived as helpful when one first gets started or at different times during your pursuit of Enlightenment, it is important to develop a meditation practice that does not have any attachments to external stimulus or objects. Holding on to any of these external objects to commence a meditation session, is only going to inhibit the mind from fully “letting go” as it is still “holding on” to these various external stimuli.

Meditation becomes increasingly important as you get closer and closer to Enlightenment. As you release past emotions, thoughts, and worries you will need meditation to help you through life’s daily struggles. Meditation will assist you to overcome any unwelcome feelings. You will not know exactly when these mental states will arise in the mind, and meditation will be a vital component to help the mind overcome any uncomfortable mental states.

Because you do not know when or where you will be as you start to release emotions, you need to ensure you develop a solid meditation practice that does not include attachment to any external requirements or stimulus for you to conduct meditation that is beneficial for the mind. You will need to be meditating each day 2-3 times per day so you will not have the same external stimulus with you every day of your life as you roam about the planet. So, it is important to develop a meditation practice that is not dependent on any external objects.

You should only need three (3) things to perform meditation: the body, the mind, and the breath. You will have these three items with you always until your last breath, at the breakup of the body and separation of the mind when you will take the last breath.

All external devices are impermanent and, therefore, you cannot have them with you 100% of the time for your entire life. If the mind becomes attached to meditating with these devices, then you are dependent on them in order to train the mind through meditation. One goal of this practice is to eliminate any and all attachments which includes attachment to external stimulus during meditation. This will ensure you can meditate at any time and any place because all you will need is the body, the mind, and the breath.

You should develop a meditation practice that only requires the body, the mind, and the breath with you being alone. This should comprise 80-90% of all your meditation practice so that you are able to pursue Enlightenment through an independent journey. No matter where you are in the world, you will always have the body, the mind, and the breath.

Having a meditation practice that only requires the body, mind, and breath will ensure you can meditate anywhere at any time on this independent journey with Teachers pointing the way. That is the meditation practice you will work to achieve, but that practice evolves over time, and you will need to be patient with yourself as you work to develop this practice.

Preparing for Meditation

Gotama Buddha described that as we prepare ourselves for meditation, we must “setup mindfulness in front of us”. This relates to how you prepare the body and the mind for meditation.

I have chosen to follow the below described practice to “setup mindfulness in front of me”, that I developed for myself with a combination of the traditions I have studied and gained benefit from over my lifetime. However you should find what works best for you “to setup mindfulness in front of

you” based on your own life experiences and the wisdom you have acquired throughout your life.

This practice is only described to provide you an understanding of what I do and its diversity of traditions, however, you should not use this as a step-by-step process for yourself as you need to find what works best for you.

You do not need to include prayer or anything that relates to God. I choose to do this based on my experiences in life. Your practice will be developed based on your experiences in life which are unique to you.

1.) Kneel on the ground, make the holy trinity -> The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.

2.) Pray to God, The Father, thanking him for my life and anything that comes to mind. Letting him know that I love him and appreciate his presence in my life. I do not ask for any favors or wishes. God is not a “genie in a bottle” and I am not interested to just always ask God for things. I could not imagine being God and hearing from billions of people all day just begging and asking for things. God does not grant wishes so I just “thank him”.

Additionally, if one is always “seeking” things from God, they would be practicing “wrong view” and would still have “craving”, thus, not able to attain Enlightenment.

3.) Recite The Lord’s Prayer.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread.
Forgive us of our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

(See the Glossary for a full explanation of this prayer.)

4.) Chanting in Pāli Language

Arahang samma sam-putto pha-ka-wa

The Perfectly Enlightened One is worthy & rightly self-awakened,

Put-tung pha-ka-wan-tung ah-pee-wa-taa-me.

I bow down before The Awakened, Perfectly Enlightened One.

Sa-wa-ka-to pha-ka-wat-ta dhammo

The Teachings is well expounded by The Perfectly Enlightened One.

Dham-mung nama-saa-mee.

I pay respect to The Teachings.

Su-pa-tip-pa-no pha-ka-wat-to sa-wa-ka-sung-ko

The Community of The Perfectly Enlightened One's disciples has practiced well.

Sung-kung-na-maa-mee.

I pay respect to The Community.

--

Namo ta-sa pha-ka-wat-to ara-hato samma sam-putta-sa

(Repeat 3 times)

Respect to The Perfectly Enlightened One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-Awakened One.

--

Eti-pi so pha-ka-wa arahang samma sam-putto

He is The Perfectly Enlightened One, a Worthy One, a Rightly Self-awakened One,

Wee-cha cha-ra-nang sam-pu-no sa-ka-to row-ga-wee-too

consummate in knowledge & conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the worlds,

Anu-ta-row pu-ree-sa dhamma sat-thi sat-tha dewa ma-nuu-sa-nang put-to pha-ka-wa-ti

Unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, Teacher of human & heavenly beings; awakened; and Perfectly Enlightened.

(Meditation: seated, lying, standing, or walking meditation.)

Repeat all three (3) chants again.

(This is a great time to observe the difference in your chanting now that you have trained the mind, you can see the results of a more clear and concise sound of the chanting.)

The Mind is The Boss and The Body is The Employee

The mind is the boss, and the body is the employee. In order to get to the boss, we need to go through the employee. By making the employee comfortable but not luxurious, we can get to the boss. By keeping the body comfortable but not luxurious, this will keep the mind attentive and alert so that it can be actively trained in a meditation session.

During meditation, we use the body to get to and train the mind. We need to go through the body in order to access the mind. We place the body into positions, postures, and situations that are comfortable but not luxurious which allow us to observe and train the mind.

A well trained mind with Right Intention will then be able to provide Right Speech and Right Actions through the body in daily life. So by training the mind (i.e. the boss), we generate wholesome intentions, speech and actions, thus, having better results in daily life (i.e. wholesome Kamma).

If the mind is muddled, full of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), along with ego, then our intentions, speech and bodily actions will mirror what is inside of the mind. Conversely, if we have a pure, calm, and peaceful mind our intentions, speech, and actions will be wholesome with universal love for all beings, does no harm, and you will conduct a good moral life. You will experience improved results (i.e. wholesome Kamma) in your life because you are making wholesome decisions with pure intentions, speech, and actions.

As you progress, place the mind in situations that are not peaceful, calm, nor serene to further train the mind to be content in any and all situations. This can help to test the mind in various venues to deepen the training and create more stability of mind.

Never Give Up

What is important is that you make efforts, and most likely repeated efforts, to meditate throughout your life.

Do not ever get discouraged or feel you are doing something wrong. There is no giving up, only forward progression. Developing a meditation practice is

always a work in progress. The mind will want to constantly tell you that you are doing it wrong, you are no good, and you should just “stop doing this silly activity”. Negative thoughts constantly hold you back from many things in life. If you listen to the negative thoughts in the mind, you will never get rid of those thoughts. Meditation is the training needed to eliminate the negative thoughts and chatter that plague many minds.

Understand that the same thoughts that may be motivating you to learn and practice these Teachings are the same thoughts that will try to persuade you to turn away, to not pursue a wholesome mind and an improved life.

The mind will want to fight or flight/run. It will not usually be interested to stay in one place to be trained so it will fight with you to do something else and/or want to run. It is your dedication and commitment to this practice that will ensure you have the best results of continued progress.

Use the body to train the mind. Develop a pure mind. Develop a meditation practice that is the stand that keeps your pot stable and calm, no matter what life brings your way. Anything good is going to take time to develop, and you will not be an expert meditator on your first few attempts. It will take several years for you to develop this practice as a life practice, but you should notice increased benefit and growth as you progress over time.

Find a helpful Teacher who has attained Enlightenment that can teach you how to meditate without attachments to external stimulus or guidance.

Gotama Buddha taught the first three (3) types of meditation offered in this Chapter to include Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, Loving-kindness Meditation, and Meditation to Eliminate Sexual Cravings. Other styles of meditation have been created and shared since Gotama Buddha’s lifetime. The author of this book has shared the “Meditation to Realize Non-Self” based on his own experiences with these Teachings and what helped improve his practice.

The main form of meditations taught by Gotama Buddha to attain Enlightenment focuses on training the mind to “cut off thoughts” (i.e. letting thoughts go) while observing impermanence called “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” to eliminate craving/desire/attachment, and “Loving-kindness Meditation” to eliminate the poison of anger/hatred/ill will.

Keep in mind that any attachment to thoughts and ideas will produce a discontent mind. The goal of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings is to empty the mind through training, not to encourage more thoughts.

Through emptying of the mind, it will create more space for there to be beneficial thoughts that could lead to developing wisdom that will assist you on your journey in life. However, meditation itself should be focused on training the mind to be “empty” and “still” without negative thoughts. Develop “singleness of mind” through training the mind in meditation, and then practice maintaining this throughout the day.

Through developing an empty mind, you will have concentration that leads to beneficial thoughts, speech, and actions during your daily life.

There are meditation practices that cultivate wholesome mental states such as Loving-kindness Meditation and others as presented in this Chapter. All meditation will focus on the elimination of unwholesome qualities of the mind or cultivation of wholesome qualities of the mind. These are the goals of these Teachings and, thus, is the goal during meditation.

If you decide to employ any meditation that was not taught by Gotama Buddha, ensure you understand the “why”. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings clearly explain the problems in the unEnlightened mind and provide an exact remedy or solution to those problems. Each of his Teachings are interconnected leading to a specific goal or objective to eliminate specific unwholesome qualities and arise specific wholesome qualities of mind. If you are going to go outside of what Gotama Buddha prescribed, be sure you understand the “why” as Gotama Buddha has provided a complete solution, and a Practitioner should have no need to employ something that was not taught by The Buddha. Mixing and matching various traditions can result in massive confusion for a Practitioner, and actually hinder or inhibit their journey to Enlightenment.

Enjoy your journey and constant pursuit of Enlightenment. Remember that meditation is just one component of your “life practice”. Meditation is a “practice” that is inside your “life practice” to train the mind.

Meditate, Monks, do not be complacent, lest you regret it later. This is my instruction to you.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 43.1)

To learn more about developing your meditation practice, see the book titled “Breathing Mindfulness Meditation” (Volume 7) of this same book series.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 11) - Meditation: Developing Your Practice (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/rKq1Sz6l3o0>

Ep. 511 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 11) - Meditation: Developing Your Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--511---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-11---Meditation-Developing-Your-Practice-e272uam>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 11 - Meditation: Developing Your Practice

<https://youtube.com/live/UxCCSSpxfFk>

How to Do Walking Meditation - Breathing Mindfulness Meditation

<https://youtu.be/frGLCtTmR9A>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 453 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 11 - Meditation: Developing Your Practice

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--453---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-11---Meditation-Developing-Your-Practice-e2307p7/a-a9npdct>

Quiz

Meditation: Developing Your Practice

<https://forms.gle/Sir1WxEAnZKrHEDs9>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 12

Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution?

The primary problem that Gotama Buddha discovered about the human mind is that it is constantly in a condition of craving and desire, also described as attachment. The mind constantly craves, desires, and attaches to possessions, relationships, wealth, fame, occupations, etc. A craving, desire, or attachment is “a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness”.

The unEnlightened mind continuously and endlessly has “cravings”, “desires”, “attachments”, “expectations”, or “wants” and because we cannot ever fulfill our endless “wants” with the mind craving permanence, the mind is discontent caused by our own cravings, desires, or attachments.

The mind is never content and craves more and more from life. This is the condition of the mind in the unEnlightened state creating a life of never ending pursuit of our cravings. Yet the mind can be trained to evolve past this never ending cycle of craving. The mind can attain a “Higher Consciousness” through the pursuit of Enlightenment.

It is the mind’s ignorance or “unknowing of true reality”, that the unEnlightened mind does not understand what it does not understand, that is keeping it in the unEnlightened state. Through acquiring wisdom in these Teachings, the mind *gradually* awakens to its challenges and implements the solutions in a well developed life practice to eliminate cravings/desires/attachments, thus, eliminating 100% of all discontentedness.

As a kid, we feel that we could just be happy if we had a bicycle. We focus the mind on this goal and put lots of effort into obtaining a bicycle. We eventually obtain the bicycle. The mind is happy for a period of time but eventually the happiness associated with the bicycle reduces and the mind looks to its next craving or desire to create pleasant feelings.

Next, the mind wants a motorcycle. We apply the mind and effort to acquire this new item and the mind is happy. But, eventually this happiness wears off since conditioned happiness is impermanent. The mind conditioned its happiness on an impermanent condition so it wears off. The mind is seeking internal pleasant feelings based on impermanent conditions, therefore, the pleasant feelings are only temporary and the cycle continues.

Then, the mind craves an automobile. We apply the mind and effort to acquire this new item and the mind is happy.

Later, the mind craves a luxury automobile. We apply the mind and effort to acquire this new item and the mind is happy. But, eventually this happiness wears off since happiness is impermanent. The cycle continues leaving us unhappy and unsatisfied but still constantly developing new cravings for impermanent conditions to create inner pleasant feelings.

As long as the mind continues in the way, it will continue to chase after the objects of its affection constantly experiencing pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant. The mind will never experience a permanent peaceful and calm mental state as long as it is basing its inner feelings on impermanent conditions.

Craving, desire, attachment, mental longing with a strong eagerness, needs to be eliminated from the mind to train the mind to no longer chase after pleasant feelings through impermanent conditions.

The difference between a craving or desire versus a need is, a need is something that is required and helpful to sustain life. A craving or desire is “a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness”.

In this example, the need is for “transportation” but it is the craving for more and more that causes the mind to be discontent. Rather than be content with having transportation of any type, the mind craves another form of transportation which then requires one to pursue this craving seeking outward satisfaction or impermanent happiness that is never lasting because seeking to satisfy happiness based on an impermanent condition will lead to a discontent mind. The mind continues to pursue more and more pleasant feelings through impermanent conditions never being content or “satisfied with what is”. The mind is displeased and continues on this constant search seeking inner fulfillment through impermanent conditions.

The mind constantly craves possessions, relationships, wealth, fame, occupations, etc. We spend our lifetime craving and chasing after our cravings. We endlessly and forever pursue our cravings without ever reaching contentedness, unless we train the mind towards the attainment of Enlightenment.

The Path to Enlightenment involves extinguishing our cravings and desires (i.e. attachments), learning to live within our means and finding contentedness through inner fulfillment where the mind can reside peaceful,

calm, serene, and content with joy, never experiencing even the slightest irritation or annoyance.

This path to attain Enlightenment is guidance to help one understand the cause of the discontent mind and through personal choices that are made, one can train the mind to attain higher and higher degrees of a peaceful and content mind, thus, a peaceful and content life.

Each person needs to decide when is the appropriate time to extinguish the individual cravings, desires, or attachments currently present in the mind and as one does so, they will experience more and more of a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy. The mind will become permanently tranquil and unshakable.

A craving, desire, attachment is not the object itself. So eliminating possessions and relationships is not what eliminates the craving/desire/attachment.

A craving/desire/attachment is how the mind pulls in the direction of an object thinking that is what is going to produce satisfaction in the mind. But, because the mind is chasing after these impermanent objects, even when the mind acquires the object of its affections experiencing pleasant feelings, the mind is still discontent. The happiness, excitement, or elation is conditioned on an impermanent object, therefore, it is only a matter of time before the mind then experiences painful feelings due to the temporary nature of the external object.

Training the mind to no longer chase after the objects of its affection is to train the mind to eliminate craving/desire/attachment.

A Practitioner does not need to eliminate possessions and relationships but instead, train the mind to not pull in the direction of these objects thinking that is what it needs to create lasting satisfaction or fulfillment of the mind. The mind needs to gain the wisdom to understand that it is the longing and yearning for these impermanent objects that is causing the mind to be discontent. If one only pursued these as interests, goals, and objectives, the mind could be peaceful and content, not longing or chasing after impermanent objects to create inner feelings.

In the following table, you will find examples of potential cravings. The object itself is not what determines if it is or is not a craving, but instead, it is how the mind relates to these external objects. If the mind is pursuing and chasing these, thinking that is what will create inner satisfaction or fulfillment of the mind, it is a craving/desire/attachment.

There is no such thing as a wholesome craving/desire/attachment as all cravings will produce discontentedness.

Examples of Potential Cravings

Craving	Potential Harmful Effects By Unwholesome Kamma Production with Connection to Gotama Buddha's Teachings
Automobiles	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us, Pollution
Children	Disease, Famine, Lack of Resources, Excessive Work
Clothing and Jewelry	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us
Fame	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us
Food or Eating Animal Products	Obesity, Harmful Effects in the Body, Death, Destruction of Planet's Resources, (<i>Greed; Taking of Life; Business in Meat</i>)
Happiness	Suicide
Help the World	Lack of Motivation Due to Inability to Help the "Entire World", Ignoring Inner Development or Inner Healing
Job Titles	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us, Aggressive Decision Making Based on Greed, Hatred, or Delusion and Ego that is Harmful to Relationships, Society, and Environment.
Life Partner	Feelings of Abandonment, Loneliness, Premature Selection without Full Consideration of Needs, Divorce, (<i>Sexual Misconduct</i>)
Perfection	Guilt, Obsessiveness, Control, Feelings of Worthlessness, Excessive Work
Power	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us, Aggressive Decision Making Based on Greed that is Harmful to Relationships, Society, and Environment; Poor Working Conditions, Extensive Poverty, Corrupt Politics, Bullying, Murder, Terrorism, Mass Shootings, War, (<i>Greed; Taking of Life</i>)
Sexual Contact	Loneliness, Lack of Trust in Relationships, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), Unplanned Pregnancy, Lack of Resources to Care for Children, Orphans, Rape, Sexual Abuse of Minors, Pregnancy Outside of Committed Relationship, Human Trafficking, Prostitution, Divorce, Death, (<i>Sexual Misconduct; Business in Living Beings</i>)
Substance Abuse (Alcohol, Illicit Drugs, Prescription Drugs, Caffeine, etc)	Racing Mind, Excessive Energy, Lack of Calmness, Insomnia/Loss of Sleep, Loss of Memory, Loss of Occupation, Loss of Financial Stability, Loss of Relationships, Loss of Home, Loss of Health, Drug Addicted Infants, Prostitution, Death, (<i>Substances that Cause Heedlessness; Business in Substances That Cause Heedlessness</i>)
Wealth (Currency, Real Estate, Gold)	Excessive Work, Excessive Ego, Lack of Time with Those Close to Us, Aggressive Decision Making Based on Greed that is Harmful to Relationships, Society, and Environment; Poor Working Conditions, Extensive Poverty, Financial Disasters, Excessive Debt, Murder, Terrorism, Mass Shootings, Prostitution, War, (<i>Greed; Taking of Life</i>)

The list of potential cravings and desires is endless which can lead to wrong intentions, wrong speech, wrong actions, and wrong livelihood. Our cravings and desires lead us to cause harm to other beings and to ourselves through The Natural Law of Kamma, including not practicing The Five Precepts. As we cause harm because of our cravings and desires, this harm is returned to us due to The Natural Law of Kamma. The mind remains unEnlightened and the discontentedness of mind continues, never reaching peacefulness, calmness, serenity, or contentedness of mind with joy.

These are some common examples to help you see that your human existence is merely chasing after your cravings and desires rather than living in the moment to enjoy a life of contentedness while being “satisfied with what is”. The list of “Potential Harmful Effects” is just an example of ways these excessive cravings could lead to harmful effects. There are many other cravings and potential harmful effects. The potential harmful effects are not clear cut and absolute but potential effects based on a specific craving (i.e. attachment).

These same cravings can be pursued as healthy goals, without an excessive craving, that leads to beneficial outcomes for your life and society. This would be “walking the middle way” progressing in life with interests, goals, and objectives.

With excessive craving, we spend our time and effort fulfilling what we “think” will make us happy, but it turns out once we acquire what we thought would make us happy, that happiness fades and leaves us feeling not as fulfilled. Then, the craving continues until we extinguish our cravings and desires through the growth of attaining Enlightenment.

These aspects of life are helpful and can be healthy for our existence however, excessive cravings in any of these areas, or others, can send the mind into unwholesome pursuit of these cravings.

The goal is to extinguish these never ending and potentially reckless cravings and desires while creating a life of contentment. Bringing the mind to walk the middle way rather than harbor extensive craving, is part of this life practice.

Extinguishing Cravings and Desires

Some of the most challenging cravings and desires to extinguish are excessive and reckless sexual desire or substance abuse.

These cravings, along with others, can preoccupy the mind for unlimited amounts of time which take away from living a content life. These cravings can cause harm to other beings through excessive use of finances that should be allocated to home life, or excessive use of time that could be devoted to wholesome relationships or wholesome activities rather than chasing our cravings.

By eliminating our endless cravings and desires, we are able to pursue more meaningful relationships and activities that produce greater benefit for society, those close to us, and our life, without craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and without cultivation of our ego. We are better able to focus on what we “need” for life rather than what we “want”.

Depending on the specific cravings and desires you currently have, you may need to find help to learn how to extinguish your cravings. A life full of excessive cravings and desires, such as listed in the above, will take you away from enjoying a peaceful and calm existence in the human form, perhaps inhibiting you from a deep, engaging, and rewarding life.

There are various professionals around the world who specialize in the elimination of various addictions. Addictions, or cravings, desires, or attachments, are all areas of our life that can be addressed through seeking of guidance and/or professional help. Depending on the depth of your addiction, you could potentially gain benefit from various professionals, support groups, and/or self help programs.

Craving is the “fuel” that causes rebirth. If there is craving at the time of death, you will be reborn into another realm of existence. So, by solving the problem of craving, you also solve the problem of rebirth. If we are not reborn, we do not experience sickness, aging, nor death. The discontentedness and suffering caused by craving is completely eliminated.

Upon rebirth, most likely, you will not be reborn back into the human realm unless the mind has attained the first or second Stage of Enlightenment.

If you can extinguish your cravings and desires prior to death, you can experience Enlightenment. Enlightenment will be a content and peaceful existence, in which, you will not experience discontentedness nor suffering during the remaining time of your existence in the human realm. You will also have peace to know you will not be reborn ever again. You can experience

Enlightenment during life and experience unshakable peace and inner fulfillment for your life, or you can wait until death without truly knowing the outcome. Waiting until death is highly risky and provides no opportunity for you to enjoy a peaceful and calm mind.

As you pursue Enlightenment, you will know you are progressing on “The Path” because your life will continually improve as you relate to the world around you in a more and more healthy and peaceful way. Because you are causing less and less harm in the world, there will be less and less harm returned allowing the mind to be completely at ease and peaceful.

As you work to eliminate your cravings and find that you have urges and desires that draw you to the unwholesome behavior, it is important not to allow the mind to dwell in the craving and desire. As you experience unwholesome urges, move the mind into a constructive activity. This way, the mind does not sit in one spot for the craving to build. This would be a healthy application of “Right Effort” from The Eight Fold Path. You would like to abandon the unwholesome mental states and arise wholesome mental states, but this cannot happen with the snap of a finger. You must apply Right Effort to move the mind into another direction that is wholesome, cutting off the unwholesome qualities that arise in the mind.

Therefore, the practice you incorporate when you experience the urges of your cravings is to move the mind into a different environment or activity. Go outdoors, call a friend, go to the gym, go for a walk, or any other activity that you might enjoy, that would change the mind from a state of craving to something more productive and wholesome.

In the moment of recognizing a craving, you could try meditation, however, this might keep the mind in one spot and not necessarily produce the results you need. Oftentimes, moving the mind into a new environment or a new activity is what’s needed to ease it out of addictive cycles, thinking, and cravings.

Use meditation as a consistent ongoing practice to regularly train the mind to eliminate craving with Breathing Mindfulness Meditation as described in Chapter 11 (Meditation: Developing Your Practice). A Practitioner will also need to practice generosity as part of their “life practice” in daily life. Both Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity are the solutions to craving/desire/attachment.

The important goal for you is to not be a slave to your addictions and ensure you are progressing on a path to eliminating these life altering behaviors.

As you reduce your addictions, cravings, and desires you will notice *gradual* improvements in your mental alertness, clarity, and peacefulness through elimination of your attachments. Your relationships with those close to you will improve and deepen. Be aware that relapses can occur but bringing a *gradual* diminishing of your addictions (i.e. attachments) is normal. You should observe a *gradual* tapering of your addictive behavior as you apply “Right Effort”. If a relapse does occur, put it in the past and move forward with your continued pursuit to extinguish the craving.

Depending on the type and severity of your addiction, increased levels of professional help and support could be needed, or you may be able to extinguish your cravings through your own efforts. You need to decide what is best for you and how you need to progress to extinguish your cravings including your craving to exist in this world.

By the time of your death, you will need to extinguish the craving to exist in the world in any form including any desire to enjoy an afterlife with a pleasant destination. If you still have craving to exist or any other cravings, you will be reborn. You must even extinguish the craving to attain Enlightenment, and pursue this as an interest, goal, or objective.

When there is craving, there is no Enlightenment.

Continue your progress to eliminate cravings and desires which is causing the mind to be discontent. Do not get discouraged as you apply effort to extinguish your cravings. Taper your cravings and desires until they are fully extinguished and continue to walk The Path towards Enlightenment - a better way of life.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 12) - Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution? (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/ISkkF-lxzE>

Ep. 512 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 12) - Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--512---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-12---Craving-is-The-Problem-What-is-The-Solution-e272ubm>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 12 - Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution?

<https://youtube.com/live/loIH5rdzLDA>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/nlcWkfqUHcE>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 456 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 12 - Craving is The Problem: What is The Solution?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--456---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-12---Craving-is-The-Problem-What-is-The-Solution-e23adv/a-a9oqau1>

Ep. 457 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--457---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e23i3vp/a-a9pji5e>

Quiz

Craving is The Problem: What is the Solution?

<https://forms.gle/6mZWxzhL4o7SMxba8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 13

Identifying Cravings: Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind

In your pursuit of Enlightenment, it is highly beneficial that you develop this most important skill.

“The Ability to Identify Your Own Cravings through Analysis of The Mind” then developing a plan to eliminate the cravings, desires, and attachments.

The Path leading to the elimination of discontentedness and the suffering it causes involves the “elimination of cravings, desires, and attachments”. But, if you do not know how to identify a craving, desire, or attachment, how could you ever eliminate them?

Because we cause our own discontentedness through cravings, we need to eliminate our mental cravings, desires, and attachments if we are to eliminate 100% of all discontentedness from the mind.

First, you need to know what a craving/desire/attachment is:

A craving/desire/attachment/wants/expectations/grasping/holding/clinging: a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness. The mind pulling in a direction for objects of its affection.

Second, you need to know how to identify your own cravings through analysis of the mind so that you can develop a plan to eliminate them. You need to train the mind to identify cravings and eliminate them all. There is no such thing as a “good” or “wholesome” craving.

To attain Enlightenment, a Practitioner will need to eliminate 100% of all cravings.

To identify cravings, you should use discontentedness as the “red light” on the dashboard helping a Practitioner observe that the mind is shaken up, unsteady, unstable, or uncalm. When the mind is discontent, it is uncalm and needs to be trained. Each time discontentedness arises, such as, any of these feelings, the Practitioner needs to take active steps to identify the cravings that led to the discontentedness and eliminate those cravings.

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

With awareness of mind, when the Practitioner observes these feelings exist in the mind, they should “cut them off” and “let them go”. As any pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant are arising, the mind needs to be aware of the arising feeling, then cut it off and let it go.

If the mind is able to identify the feelings arising as just a bodily sensation and cut it off there, that would be ideal. If not, then cut it off as a feeling in the mind. If the Practitioner was not able to cut it off as a bodily sensation or as a feeling in the mind, then it will affect the condition of the mind more long term for hours, days, weeks, etc. The Practitioner will need to cut it off and let it go as a condition of the mind. Otherwise, it will feed the mental objects in the mind such as sensual desire, ill will, complacency, conceit, etc.

The bodily sensations, feelings, conditions of the mind, and mental objects are referred to as The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

The Buddha is explaining in The Four Foundations of Mindfulness the process that is experienced as discontentedness is arising. To eliminate discontentedness, a Practitioner will need to develop awareness of the bodily sensations, feelings, conditions of the mind, and mental objects. The sooner one is able to observe the arising discontentedness and cut it off so that one can let it go, the better. If one is able to observe the bodily sensations associated with arising discontentedness and “cut it off and let it go” there, this Practitioner is nearing close to Enlightenment.

By cutting off and letting go of any arising discontentedness as a bodily sensation, the Practitioner is helping the mind to not need to experience the discontentedness as a feeling in the mind. They are guarding the mind and protecting the mind with Right Mindfulness while also applying Right Effort to eliminate the craving/desire/attachment that arose the discontentedness.

Over time, with enough practice, the Practitioner will have cut off and let go of the arising discontentedness enough times that the craving/desire/attachment that produced it will have been eliminated and there will no longer be any discontentedness that arises associated with that specific craving/desire/attachment. The benefits accumulate to complete liberation of

the mind where it will no longer experience any discontentedness because all the cravings/desires/attachments that are producing the discontentedness have been eliminated.

But, to accomplish this goal, a Practitioner will need to develop awareness of the bodily sensations that occur based on the arising discontentedness and then be able to cut off and let go of any arising discontentedness as a bodily sensation. This is accomplished through training the mind in Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and having a well developed practice of generosity. Both of these are providing the mind generalized training to “let go” so that it is no longer having craving/desire/attachment resulting in experiencing the Enlightened mind.

The approach that you are interested to employ is that if you were taking a long distance boat trip across a large stretch of ocean, what would you do? Would you allow the water to come into the boat and then attempt to get it out or would you prevent the water from ever coming into the boat?

Of course, you would be interested in preventing the water from ever coming into the boat so that it does not sink the boat.

Being aware of the bodily sensations associated with arising discontentedness and “cutting it off and letting it go” as a bodily sensation is the same as preventing the water from ever coming into the boat. This ensures that the mind is not shaken up by the arising discontentedness because it was never able to become a feeling in the mind. Through a well developed life practice, you can train the mind to the point where this can be accomplished effortlessly, and result in the mind experiencing Enlightenment.

Then, once the feelings have passed and the mind is able to look inward, the Practitioner should investigate the mind analyzing what were the cravings/desires/attachments that caused the discontentedness. There was some mental longing with a strong eagerness that led to the discontentedness. The more intense the discontentedness, there is going to most likely be more than one (1) craving that exists in the mind that caused that specific incident of discontentedness.

Discontentedness does not arise if there is no craving/desire/attachment in the mind, therefore, anytime a Practitioner observes the “red light” of discontentedness arise, they will need to uncover what craving led to it, so that the mind can actively work to eliminate those specific cravings/desires/attachments. Just like if the red light on the dashboard of a car “lit up” the driver would investigate the cause in order to remedy the issue, a wise Practitioner will observe the arising discontentedness that “lit up” and then

investigate the specific cause (craving/desire/attachment) then remedy the issue.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity should be developed in a consistent and comprehensive life practice to *gradually* train the mind to more easily let go of cravings. But, there are then oftentimes active steps a Practitioner will need to take in order to eliminate a specific craving.

Once a craving or multiple cravings have been identified, you can take active steps to eliminate the craving/desire/attachment.

For example, if the Practitioner becomes discontent when one's mobile phone is not readily available and the mind experiences anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, fear, or some other discontent feeling, then that is the red light alerting you to become aware that the mind has craving/desire/attachment to the mobile phone. The Practitioner can identify that the mind has a craving/desire/attachment (a mental longing with a strong eagerness for the mobile phone) and due to this, it has caused the mind to become discontent when the mind thinks the phone is lost or otherwise not available.

Noticing this, a Practitioner will not only need to continue with Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and a life practice of generosity to generally train the mind to eliminate cravings, but also a wise Practitioner will need to put the mind in situations where it can actively work to eliminate its specific craving for the mobile phone.

A Practitioner might choose to purposefully and *gradually* move away from the mobile phone, training the mind not to hold on to it so tightly.

The mind is not in the middle, therefore, it becomes shaken up when it does not have the mobile phone. If the mind holds on to anything tightly, it will cause the mind to become discontent.

The Practitioner will need to train the mind to leave the mobile phone at home and go for walks or otherwise depart from the mobile phone, training it to be peaceful and calm when you do not have the mobile phone. Otherwise, the mind is going to continue to stay latched onto the mobile phone and always want to keep it close. When the device is not close, the mind will be shaken up by this impermanence. The mind will continue to experience repeated cycles of discontentedness as long as the mind is latched on and holding the mobile phone so tightly.

The mind is trying to hold on to the mobile phone permanently and when it experiences the impermanent nature of the mobile phone, it causes itself to become discontent.

If a Practitioner doesn't use discontentedness as a red light notifying them of the cravings in the mind and does not investigate to eliminate the cravings, then a Practitioner will just continue to experience discontentedness related to the mobile phone over and over until it finally learns to mentally "let it go" - not attempting to hold it so tightly.

This same example can be applied to each situation where the mind experiences discontentedness. Anytime the mind experiences any discontentedness whatsoever, the Practitioner should immediately apply Right Effort to cut off and let go of the discontent feelings but then afterwards, investigate and analyze what were the cravings/desires/attachments that led to the discontentedness.

Through analyzing the mind in this way, a Practitioner will become an expert at becoming aware of the arising discontentedness, cut off and let go of the discontent feelings, then investigate what were the cravings that caused the discontentedness so they can be eliminated, and the mind will no longer experience discontentedness related to that specific craving, desire, or attachment.

It is only when a Practitioner has eliminated 100% of all cravings/desires/attachments, that the mind will then reside permanently peaceful and calm, no longer longing with a strong eagerness for things to be done a certain way. The mind can learn to be "satisfied with what is" and content with the impermanent nature of the world, taking wise steps to resolve whatever impermanent situations arise.

But, if the mind thinks that the lost mobile phone is permanent and dreads needing to look for the mobile phone, find the mobile phone, or otherwise acquire a new mobile phone, then the mind will react out of anger and frustration rather than respond through the wisdom of The Natural Laws of Existence realizing that it is impossible to maintain the mobile phone permanently. The phone is impermanent and will leave you someday but why react with anger and frustration? How does that help the situation?

The Path to Enlightenment is an independent journey with the guidance of Teachers. You cannot rely on others to tell you what your cravings are, you need to identify them for yourself. This requires training the mind in this new skill and training the mind to be honest with yourself. In this way, we all need to strive to pursue a more peaceful and content mind. But, Teachers can be very helpful for you to establish the ability to identify your own cravings/desires/attachments and then develop a plan for how to eliminate them. Once you learn this important skill and practice it a few times, then it is just a

matter of repeating this same approach in each situation when the mind experiences discontentedness.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is the “practice” within your “life practice” that helps you to observe the mind and be aware of what’s in the mind so that, through training, you can develop the ability to cut off thoughts and let them go. Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is a practice that takes time to establish and is training the mind to become aware of thoughts and let them go more and more easily through dedicated training.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is training the mind to eliminate the unwholesome root of “craving/desire/attachment”. Practicing generosity in daily life is also helping train the mind to “let go”. But, this generalized training is not enough as there are active steps outside of meditation that one needs to take in order to eliminate discontentedness in the mind.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation is training the mind to eliminate the unwholesome root of craving/desire/attachment while also training the mind to develop “awareness of mind” or Right Mindfulness. With awareness of mind and the ability to “let go”, the mind can observe unwholesome qualities and then let go of these unwholesome qualities to arise wholesome qualities. Taking the effort to eliminate unwholesome qualities and arise wholesome qualities is Right Effort as part of The Eight Fold Path.

In addition to Breathing Mindfulness Meditation, you need to develop the skill to understand that when the mind experiences discontentedness, take active steps to identify what the mind is craving that is “causing” the mind to be discontent. You may actually have several cravings that caused one burst of outrage, anger, or other emotions - especially early in practice.

It is craving/desire/attachment that is causing the mind to be discontent as described in The Four Noble Truths. Therefore, to eliminate discontentedness a Practitioner will need to eliminate craving/desire/attachment.

Examples of discontentedness are: happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, unsatisfied, etc., or even just an uncomfortable and displeased mental state.

Discontentedness is a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and a feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant.

The Four Noble Truths explains exactly why we are experiencing discontentedness of mind. The Second Noble Truth: Discontentedness is

caused by our own cravings/desires/attachments because the mind wants everything to be permanent when everything in the world is impermanent.

The Four Noble Truths explains to us that we must eliminate our cravings/desires/attachments and practice The Eight Fold Path in order to eliminate our own discontentedness in the mind. But, if you do not develop the ability to identify the mind's cravings, how could you ever eliminate them and, thus, reach Enlightenment?

We all must develop this skill by being honest with ourselves and looking inwardly through "analysis of the mind". This important skill is so crucial in the pursuit of Enlightenment. It requires investigation of the mind so that you can observe the mind's cravings then develop a plan to eliminate them.

Meditation and being able to identify one's own cravings are the two most important skills a Practitioner needs to develop on this path to the Enlightened mind.

Unwelcome feelings and emotions are just indicators that something is not satisfied within the mind. These unwelcome feelings indicate that the mind is discontent. Then, you must actively take steps to investigate the mind to discover the cravings so that they can be eliminated and the mind can be content. By eliminating the cravings/desires/attachments, the mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy and not experience discontentedness from the cravings.

Take a moment to reflect on the following questions to develop the ability to identify cravings in the mind that cause discontentedness and then eliminate them.

Reflect on the last time the mind was angry.

What was the situation? What made the mind angry?

It wasn't someone else, what they said, what they did, or the situation, etc.

That's what you may think now, but, look deeper for your own cravings/desires/attachments that caused the anger.

What inside of the mind caused the anger? There is something or multiple things that the mind was longing for with a strong eagerness. There was something or multiple things the mind wanted or expected and when it did not get that, the mind reacted with anger.

What was the craving or cravings “that the mind is holding” that caused the mind to be angry?

If you can identify what they were, then you are starting to develop this important skill to identify the cravings in the mind.

If you are having challenges to understand and observe what cravings caused the anger and other discontent feelings, then you need to reach out to seek guidance. You can post a question into the Facebook group to seek guidance, ask a question during a class, send a private message, or schedule a personal guidance session with the author of this book. All learning opportunities are offered openly and freely to “all beings”.

This is a skill that the mind will need to understand and develop. Then, once the mind can identify the cravings, it will need to learn how to construct a plan to eliminate the cravings from the mind.

As a Practitioner learns this process with a few different cravings, a Practitioner can then apply this same approach to each situation where the mind encounters discontentedness.

- 1.) When discontentedness occurs, cut off and let go of the pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant as a bodily sensation.
- 2.) Reflect on the cravings/desires/attachments that led to the discontent feelings arising.
- 3.) Develop a plan to eliminate the specific cravings/desires/attachments that caused the discontent feelings to arise while maintaining a consistent practice of Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity.
- 4.) Repeat this process for each incident of discontentedness that arises in the mind seeking guidance with a Teacher as needed.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 13) - Identifying Cravings: Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/oKqM1oWVxD8>

Ep. 513 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 13) - Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--513---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-13---Cultivating-Non-Craving-and-Analysis-of-The-Mind-e272uct>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 13 - Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind

<https://youtube.com/live/I9zH6BQJ4o8>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/-iCvkWh0G60>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 459 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 13 - Cultivating Non-Craving and Analysis of The Mind

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--459---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-13---Cultivating-Non-Craving-and-Analysis-of-The-Mind-e23m8ni/a-a9q1g6l>

Ep. 460 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--460---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e23shs3/a-a9qktut>

Quiz

Identifying Attachments: Cultivating Non-Clinging and Analysis of The Mind

<https://forms.gle/4JNcCYt65Duyj5Ji9>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 14

Cultivating Healthy Mental States: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity

As you learn and implement The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, you will need to cultivate the healthy mental states of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity to attain Enlightenment.

These four (4) mental states are often referred to as “The Brahmā-vihāras”.

The Four (4) Brahmā-vihāras are:

- 1.) **Loving-kindness** (Pāli: mettā) is active goodwill towards all beings without judgment. A genuine interest in seeing all beings be well.
- 2.) **Compassion** (Pāli: karuṇā) is concern for the misfortunes of others.
- 3.) **Sympathetic joy** (Pāli: muditā) is joy for others’ success, even if you did not contribute to it.
- 4.) **Equanimity** (Pāli: upekkhā) is mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation; treating everyone impartially.

These mental states can be cultivated through meditation and in your daily life. Your intentions, speech, and actions should emanate from these mental states.

Loving-kindness is the remedy for anger, hatred, ill will, hostility, aggression, and other harsh intentions, speech, and actions. Loving-kindness also helps eliminate judgment of others looking down on them with arrogance or conceit. A Practitioner can train the mind to treat all beings in a polite, kind, friendly, and respectful way, without judgment.

Compassion is the remedy for lack of care, indifference, worry, and anxiety.

Sympathetic joy is the remedy for envy, jealousy, and pride.

Equanimity is the remedy for an overactive mind that has restlessness and worry, it helps to cultivate patience. Equanimity will also assist a Practitioner to eliminate measuring and comparing beings treating all beings equally.

As you experience life, it is important to practice equanimity in all situations. Mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper while treating everyone impartially without judgment, are mental states that will help you trust all beings.

One way of cultivating these mental states is through generous deeds, practicing generosity. Through the practice of giving and helping others, you do so with a mind of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

No one can give you a magic potion or secret spell that will cultivate these qualities for the mind. You will need to apply these in practice through your intentions, speech, and actions.

Meditation can help you cultivate these mental states internally so that your intentions, speech, and actions emanate from these mental qualities. Give the mind time to *gradually* cultivate these mental states through meditation and your life practice.

By practicing these mental states and ensuring that your intentions, speech, and actions reflect these mental qualities, you will ensure you are producing healthy and wholesome Kamma at all times.

Another quality of the mind that you need to cultivate is one of generosity.

Generosity is a readiness and taking the action of frequently giving something more than is strictly necessary, such as time, effort, energy, financial support, or resources without any expectation of anything in return. A practice of giving and helping others as part of an ongoing and comprehensive life practice. This action can help you develop and cultivate a more caring and compassionate mind as one chooses to consistently give and share through their life to eliminate selfishness. Generosity eliminates craving/desire/attachment in the mind, thus, helping to eliminate discontent feelings from the mind.

Generosity is to give and help others without any expectation of benefit for yourself. Through giving and helping others, we develop loving-kindness and compassion while also practicing non-attachment to our own possessions or wealth. By sharing, the mind practices generosity and non-attachment, which helps the mind to realize the interconnected nature of all beings through sharing with humanity.

We can be giving with our time, effort, energy, and resources. By helping others through our unselfish acts of giving our time, effort, energy, and resources for beneficial causes, we are producing good and healthy benefit for other beings and to humanity while applying effort to eliminate selfishness. The unEnlightened mind will oftentimes pursue its own selfish desires but this can be remedied through giving and sharing without the expectation of anything in return.

You should make regular efforts to help others in need through giving with daily efforts to strive in cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

The Path to Enlightenment encompasses many Teachings a Practitioner will need to learn and practice to attain Enlightenment. The Brahmā-vihāras are four mental states that are crucial in the development of the mind. It is not until a Practitioner has fully cultivated The Brahmā-vihāras and practice them daily that the mind will move closer to Enlightenment.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 14) - Cultivating Healthy Mental States (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/w4xgB9fplew>

Ep. 514 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 14) - Cultivating Healthy Mental States

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--514---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-14---Cultivating-Healthy-Mental-States-e272ue1>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 14 - Cultivating Healthy Mental States

<https://youtube.com/live/XoLv1idH1LA>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/4GarEJPc8z0>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 462 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 14 - Cultivating Healthy Mental States

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--462---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-14---Cultivating-Healthy-Mental-States-e243dma/a-a9r9thv>

Ep. 463 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--463---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e247gk3/a-a9rn91s>

Quiz

Cultivating Healthy Mental States: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity

<https://forms.gle/b6VpQMziLpmP3yMb8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 15

True Love: Love Without Attachment

Having caring and loving relationships is an enjoyable part of life. It is possible to have care and love for other people while practicing these Teachings. In fact, a Practitioner of these Teachings will find that care and love are central aspects at the core of these Teachings. But you will need to understand what is “true love” in order to experience the joy of loving relationships without attachment.

You may find yourself currently defining love as attachment. What you may see as love is actually not love at all but attachment.

You seek out relationships or look within existing relationships for how the other person will make you happy. You desire for the relationship to create happiness for you. You seek happiness through relationships with others as if these relationships will help to “complete” you, making you feel whole.

We tend to sabotage relationships by inadvertently placing unrealistic obligations and expectations on the other party to make us happy, when it is impossible for anyone to meet this expectation. The feeling often becomes that “I love you” and therefore I expect you to make me happy.

We may form expectations for the other person in a relationship far beyond just the need to make us happy. The obligations and expectations we form are mental cravings/desires/attachments that constantly change because they are impermanent. The other person will find it impossible to meet ever changing and unrealistic expectations we have for them, especially considering these unrealistic expectations are oftentimes unspoken.

Even if we did share our expectations for the other person, the expectations are still cravings/desires/attachments we have that unless met, will cause the mind to be discontent. The expectation that we will be “happy” all the time in a relationship is actually an unrealistic expectation as happiness is impermanent and is not lasting.

The mind creating expectations in this way forms attachment to the other person. The mind is relying on the other person for comfort and pleasant feelings, therefore not being content on your own. We often think that

without this other party in our life, we are unable to be happy or have fulfilling experiences.

It is this “mental longing for something with a strong eagerness” (i.e. craving/desire/attachment) we have for another party to make us happy that forms our mental attachment, that will lead to a discontent mind. Any and all attachments will lead to discontentedness of mind. So we must learn to have care and love without attachment to others.

If you form obligations and expectations for the other person to fulfill, those obligations and expectations are impermanent in that they will never remain the same. Therefore, the other person will find it impossible to fulfill your expectations and the mind will be discontent because things do not happen as you expect.

As you move forward in a relationship with craving/desire/attachment, you may find that you argue, fight, or have disagreements that lead to frustration, irritation, and tension in the relationship because both parties are pulling in opposite directions towards the very different obligations and expectations of each person.

The pleasant feelings that once existed are no longer present or part of the relationship, so one or both people lose interest in the relationship.

The other situation might be that both people continue to struggle trying to make the relationship work, not realizing that it is actually their own obligations and expectations, i.e. cravings/desires/attachments, that are making it increasingly challenging to have a peaceful relationship. We are actually sabotaging our own ability to have a successful relationship. We oftentimes think the other person is the problem, rather than look at our own mind for the source of the problem.

Even if the relationship starts heading in the same direction with similar expectations, those expectations change due to impermanence and leads to problems as the relationship continues.

Eventually both parties in the relationship will end up with very different expectations and neither are being fulfilled 100%, so the mind of one or both becomes discontent with less and less interest in maintaining the relationship. It feels that the love is gone but, in fact, it is the unfulfilled obligations and expectations, i.e. cravings/desires/attachments, that are causing the mind to be discontent.

Attachment in relationships will lead to tension and conflict that ultimately becomes division and separation, oftentimes lasting an entire lifetime.

It feels that the love is gone because neither person is getting what they “want”, “desire”, or “crave” in the relationship when if there were no obligations or expectations, the relationship could be peaceful.

You may even decide to block people from your life who are disagreeable to you, erecting walls to ensure you have no contact with these people. This is aversion.

Of course, there needs to be politeness, kindness, friendliness, and respect within all relationships, but other than these basic foundations of any healthy relationship, we typically have obligations and expectations far beyond these basic foundational requirements. We can oftentimes hold relationships too tightly with obligations and expectations and because of that, we “crush it”.

Ideally, both people would already be fulfilled and come into the relationship appreciating each other and their individual contentedness. But, this is rare and is why relationships are oftentimes a significant struggle for the unEnlightened mind where you experience many difficulties in developing and maintaining relationships due to the constant arising of discontentedness within the relationship.

What is True Love?

True love is to have care for another person, not wanting anything specific from the relationship but instead, only having an interest to see this person be well and peaceful. A relationship with true love would be formed and conducted with no intentions or interest other than to see the person succeed in life in whatever way they choose to progress and walk forward. We “love them as they are”.

Having a relationship without craving/desire/attachment would involve allowing an individual to walk whatever path they choose while you show care and support along the way. You would not have obligations nor expectations of who they are or what they should become but instead, allow their life to flow and progress based on their own personal choices, uninfluenced by obligations or expectations from you. This is true love, and this unconditional love can be permanent.

This type of relationship is possible with life partners, children, parents, friends, and any other relationships we form. We can have unconditional love for “all beings” when a Practitioner understands true love and practices true love.

Until you have learned these Teachings and practice establishing relationships with “true love”, most will find creating relationships with “love”

very difficult and unpleasant. This is because we tend to approach relationships with an understanding that craving/desire/attachment is love, rather than understanding how to love and care for someone by practicing “true love” without attachment.

It is not until the mind wakes up to understand this wisdom, learning and practicing “true love” that you will find relationships more relaxed, enjoyable, and without stress. Otherwise, the obligations and expectations you have for the people around you will create hostility and complications, that will make it difficult for you to experience caring, loving, and lasting relationships.

No one is ever going to meet all the obligations and expectations you have for them, so eliminate the expectations, eliminate the cravings/desires/attachments, and you will find rewarding and successful relationships which are quite enjoyable and even more fulfilling.

Judgment and expectations of others make it difficult to see others as “they truly are” and “love them as they are”.

Love Ourselves

Just as we have expectations for others, which can stand in the way and cause conflict, having excessive or unrealistic expectations for ourselves can create internal conflicts. Negative self talk, guilt, shame, and other feelings can all manifest through craving/desire/attachment to thoughts, ideas, perceptions, obligations, and expectations we have of ourselves.

If we judge ourselves, we often judge others as well, causing the mind to be discontent. Negative thoughts directed at us from our own mind can be eradicated by eliminating negative thoughts or judgment towards others.

It is best to have dedication and commitment to learning and practicing these Teachings with understanding that *gradual* training will be needed to attain results. If we have expectations for drastic and quick improvements, this craving for rapid success or other expectations will only cause a discontent mind.

To have ego or conceit based love towards ourselves, is unfruitful. However, having a positive and wholesome outlook for ourselves, others, and the world around us, will produce a healthy mind.

Love for Parents or Caregivers

Gotama Buddha's Teachings share many important Teachings related to relationships with others especially our parents. Today, parents could be our biological parents, adopted parents, grandparents, or other caregivers who provide us our start in life and look after us.

It is these people who provide us clothing, food, books, education, and other necessities to start our life, and who have the most influence on shaping the mind. They are our "original Teachers" that gave us our start in life understanding how to complete basic tasks like brushing our teeth, cleaning the body, eating, urinating, defecating, and other life sustaining activities. Some parents or caregivers have provided us wisdom well beyond these basic tasks. Without this guidance, we would be unable to sustain our life.

Having healthy relationships with all people is important but it is very important that we show our gratitude to those caregivers who provide us care to sustain our life and attempt to give us life lessons to assist us on our journey in this life.

Whether this is the first book you have ever read that shares Gotama Buddha's Teachings or not, you have always had people around you that taught you that it is unwise to kill other beings, to steal, to commit sexual misconduct, to lie, and to ingest substances that cause heedlessness. These initial lessons are typically shared with us by our original Teachers, our "parents" or "caregivers".

The below Teaching is directly from Gotama Buddha that can help you to understand one of his Teachings related to caring for our parents, our "original" and oftentimes "most dedicated" Teachers.

We should always and forever look for ways to show gratitude, respect, and dedication to our parents or caregivers.

Repaying One's Mother and Father

Monks, there are two persons that cannot easily be repaid.

What two?

One's mother and father.

Even if one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other, and (while doing so) should have a life span of a hundred years, live for a hundred years; and if one should attend to them by anointing them with balms, by massaging, bathing, and rubbing their limbs, and they even void their urine and excrement there, one still would not have done enough for one's parents, nor would one have repaid them.

Even if one were to establish one's parents as the Supreme Lords and Rulers over this great earth abounding in the seven treasures, one still would not have done enough for one's parents, nor would one have repaid them.

For what reason?

Parents are of great help to their children; they bring them up, feed them, and show them the world.

But, Monks, if, when one's parents lack confidence, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in confidence; if, when one's parents are unwholesome, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in virtuous behavior (moral conduct); if, when one's parents are selfish, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in generosity; if, when one's parents are unwise, one encourages, settles, and establishes them in wisdom: in such a way, one has done enough for one's parents, repaid them, and done more than enough for them.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 2.33)

Repaying One's Mother and Father (continued)

Author's Thoughts: We are born into the world to parents who provide us care or needs to sustain life. In some situations, our parents may lack the understanding or ability to guide us in the way that we expect. The expectations we have of our parents, what they should be and how they should function as our parents, can cause us to be discontent and have a strained relationship at best.

It is important to understand that our parents gave us life. They brought us into the world and provided the care needed to sustain our life. These actions alone require tireless effort. This same Teaching can be applied to grandparents, non-biological parents, and the full range of caregivers who contributed to your upbringing and care from infancy to adulthood.

What Gotama Buddha is sharing here is that parents provide great help to their children to “bring them up, feed them, and show them the world”. The amount of work and effort involved in just clothing, feeding, bathing, and guiding children in the world is exhaustive. Our parents do not always have the training or wisdom to guide us in the way that we “want” to be guided. Our obligations and expectations of our parents can leave us feeling abandoned, left out, or unloved. But these are just the feelings and emotions we have assigned to the lack of our parents meeting our own obligations and expectations we set for them. This is most likely not how our parents actually feel towards us.

If a child can be appreciative of the fact that our parents went through extensive and exhaustive efforts to bring us into the world and sustain our life, the way we repay an unwise parent, is to, when we are ready, provide them encouragement in developing confidence in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community along with developing virtuous behavior, generosity, and wisdom. In this way, then we have done enough for our parents.

If we have gained wisdom and understanding that can help our parents to realize a better life, we need to find humble ways to share that wisdom with our parents and provide them guidance in these Teachings that will improve their life as repayment for the guidance they gave us as a child, and do so without attachment to the outcome.

Our parents are rarely going to meet the expectations we have of a “perfect parent”. If we eliminate the expectations (i.e. the cravings/desires/attachments), and understand we have the parents we have and then be thankful for the life that they have given us, then perhaps we can eliminate whatever expectations we have and provide them unconditional “true love” that guides them in developing confidence, virtuous behavior, generosity, and wisdom.

This requires that we are learning and practicing these Teachings so that we can more readily provide the wisdom that our parents would need, to improve the quality of the mind based on our intimate understanding of The Teachings and how to practice them. We need to lead by example through a well established practice of these Teachings.

Life Partners

If you choose to have a life partner, look for individuals who are aware and practicing these same Teachings that you know to be beneficial to a content mind and a peaceful life. Find a partner who is dedicated to learning and practicing The Five Precepts, The Eight Fold Path, The Brahmā-vihāras and all these important Teachings from Gotama Buddha. Doing this, without ego, will help you both walk the same direction in life. You can both walk towards Enlightenment supporting each other's growth and progress.

You will most likely not find perfection or the person of your dreams because that person only exists in the mind. But you could find someone who agrees that this same "life practice" is a worthwhile pursuit, so that you can base your life together and your family's life around the foundation and core principles of these Teachings.

Selecting a life partner based on these Teachings will create more harmony and peacefulness in the relationship and the life you intend to share together. A relationship that will potentially be part of your very last life without any future rebirths as you both progress towards Enlightenment and ultimately achieve it.

You are not going to find the perfect partner, that only exists in your own mind as a dream. But, you could find a partner who is an imperfect being who is willing to learn, grow, and do the work along with you on The Path to Enlightenment. Just as you are imperfect, they will also be imperfect. But supporting and encouraging each other, you can create the perfect life together.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 15) - Cultivating Healthy Mental States (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/TKvxLaYtkeA>

Ep. 515 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 15) - True Love: Love Without Attachment

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--515---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-15---True-Love-Love-Without-Attachment-e272uf8>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 15 - True Love: Love Without Attachment

<https://youtube.com/live/Sjtw7wDi8wU>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/BX6dTQZE5EQ>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 465 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 15 - True Love: Love Without Attachment

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--465---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-15---True-Love-Love-Without-Attachment-e24fpfa/a-a9sgr1j>

Ep. 466 - ((Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--466---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e24kdsh/a-a9svf5o>

Quiz

True Love: Love Without Attachment

<https://forms.gle/wLTrwwALPEkFWbYx6>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 16

Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose

Our ego is a collection of experiences from the past and our future expectations of ourselves. Ego is the accumulation of thoughts, ideas, and perceptions that we have of our self image and self identity. The ego will contain arrogance, pride, judgment, and measure and compare itself as superior or inferior to others.

Dissolving the ego can be one of the hardest and most difficult aspects in the pursuit of Enlightenment. So, it's best to start learning to dissolve the ego early in your practice while ensuring to deeply explore this topic with the guidance of a Teacher.

Through our past experiences and the future expectations we have of ourselves, we acquire a personal image of who we think we are but it's a delusion and our ego serves no purpose. The elimination of the ego is required to attain Enlightenment.

All our intentions, speech, and actions can be born out of our ego. We protect our ego at all costs. It is often one of the strongest attachments we have and is why it is one of the last things to go and easy to pick back up.

Oftentimes we judge others through our ego. We reflect those unwholesome qualities that exist inside of us onto others thinking it is the other person who has these unwholesome qualities when, in fact, it's actually our ego looking at itself.

We think someone is trying to be SO smart and show everyone how intelligent they are when, in fact, it is us who are the ones with this behavior.

We sometimes look at others with jealousy because they are trying to look so important or beautiful. When, in fact, it is us who is desiring and craving this attention.

We often look at others as having ego, when it is us who has the ego.

Do you see a theme?

What we think and judge of others is what's inside of us. We see others and it is like viewing a mirror. We see certain qualities in others because those are

the most present qualities within our own mind, so we project it to others and think it's coming from them. We project the ego onto others and read the reflection as if it's coming from the other person when, in fact, it is us.

This is one reason you should not judge another being but focus only on your own practice and development of the mind. Do not be concerned with another person's "life practice" or how well you think they are or are not practicing these Teachings. Judgment serves you no purpose and only harms your own mind. You should only be encouraging, helpful, and polite with loving-kindness and compassion for all beings.

Judgment: attempting to determine what is right or wrong for another person while placing oneself above others with arrogance or pride (i.e. the ego). Comparing that one is superior or inferior to another person. Attempting to declare who is wholesome or unwholesome, good or bad. Judgment is based in "conceit". Judgment is harmful to the mind and needs to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment.

Instead of judging others, you would like to practice discernment.

Discernment: is wise decision making based in wisdom. Discernment is helpful to the mind and needs to be cultivated to attain Enlightenment.

During Gotama Buddha's lifetime, the word "ego" was not available for use. The word ego did not come into use until recent times. Gotama Buddha referred to two different aspects of the mind that we now refer to as "the ego".

The Ten Fetters taught by Gotama Buddha refer to "personal existence view" and "conceit" as what we refer to as "the ego". These two (2) fetters/taints/pollutions of mind need to be eliminated and completely dissolved to eradicate the ego on The Path to Enlightenment.

Personal existence view: Eliminating the concept of a permanent self from the mind. Realization of non-self.

Conceit: Elimination of arrogance, pride, judging, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior to others. Ego completely dissolved.

The Ten Fetters are the ten (10) individual aspects of the mind that need to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. The word "fetter" is defined as: "a chain or shackle used to restrain a prisoner, typically placed around the ankles". The Ten Fetters are essentially keeping a being trapped in The Cycle of Rebirth bound to the endless cycle of continuous rebirth experiencing discontentedness over countless lifetimes.

It is not until one eliminates The Ten Fetters that a being's mind is liberated from discontentedness and The Cycle of Rebirth. A fetter can also be referred to as a taint or pollution of the mind. A taint is an impure quality of the mind and is why these need to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. The Ten Fetters pollute the mind not allowing us to experience the brightness and radiance of the Enlightened mind.

Personal existence view and conceit both need to be eliminated from the mind to allow the Practitioner to reside peaceful and calm. As long as the mind retains a personal existence view and conceit, it will continue to struggle through personal and professional relationships finding difficulties in your interactions with others.

Two of the most challenging fetters for one to eliminate can often be “personal existence view” and “conceit”.

This chapter is devoted to sharing Teachings to help you better understand both of these fetters and how to eliminate them, but always keep in mind, seeking guidance with a Teacher is something that each Practitioner is going to need as they choose to learn and practice these Teachings. One would be unable to only read a book or take in content through some other resource, to eliminate the personal existence view or conceit to attain Enlightenment. Guidance is going to be required to deeply understand each aspect of The Path to Enlightenment and understand how to improve the condition of the mind to attain Enlightenment. This is true about all The Teachings of Gotama Buddha and especially true as it comes to understanding and eliminating personal existence view and conceit.

Understanding personal existence view oftentimes takes several conversations along with multiple resources for the average Practitioner to understand. Then, they will need specific Teachings of how to eliminate “personal existence view” from the mind with guidance from someone who has accomplished this goal.

To eliminate personal existence view, a Practitioner will need to understand The Universal Truth of Non-self as shared in the chapter titled “The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View” (Chapter 4) and in this chapter. It is suggested that you read that as a refresher then come back to this chapter to continue your learning while seeking guidance from a Teacher.

What is Self Image and Self Identity?

To understand personal existence view and how the unEnlightened mind holds onto the concept of a permanent self not understanding The Universal Truth of Non-self, it is important to explore what a self image and self identity are, as these will need to be eliminated to realize The Universal Truth of Non-self.

Self image: The mind wants to project a certain physical appearance and be perceived a certain way based on its outward projection of its desired image. The mind accumulates certain external objects to assemble an outward appearance it wants to project into the world for favorable treatment by others.

Jewelry, makeup, clothing, and other material possessions are acquired in order to project to others how the mind wants to be perceived in the world. The mind would like to be perceived as successful, wealthy, intelligent, beautiful, important, or other qualities it finds desirable, and looks for favorable treatment by others based on physical objects that form a self image the mind attempts to hold on to permanently.

This is due to the mind's lack of inner contentedness thinking that if others perceive you in a certain way, then it will create lasting inner fulfillment but instead, the mind is merely chasing pleasant feelings (i.e, happiness, excitement, elation) based on impermanent conditions. The pleasant feelings will eventually fade, as they are based on impermanent conditions, and the mind will be back where it started from, no longer experiencing pleasant feelings continuing to seek or long for something with a strong eagerness to create what it thinks will be lasting inner fulfillment.

The mind is stuck in a cycle of constantly looking for the next “thing” that it can acquire to project its desired self image to the world longing with a strong eagerness for pleasant feelings that are never permanent because there is no permanent self image due to there being “no self”.

As long as the mind holds on wanting to project a self image due to the fetter/taint/pollution of personal existence view, it will never find permanent peace because it is attempting to base its inner fulfillment on impermanent conditions. Once the conditions that created the pleasant feelings change, the mind can no longer sustain the pleasant feelings because they were based on impermanent conditions, and the mind continues to seek and long with a strong eagerness for the next “thing” to acquire to regain the pleasant feelings.

But, because the unEnlightened mind does not understand that impermanent conditions will never create permanent contentedness, having ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and it does not understand there is “no self”, it just continues the cycle of wandering and roaming for the next object of its affection never acquiring permanent contentedness until the mind eliminates the fetter/taint/pollution of personal existence view no longer craving to project a certain self image into the world realizing The Universal Truth of Non-self.

Self identity: The mind wants to project a certain identity and be perceived a certain way based on those attributes or mental qualities. The mind holds on to specific attributes of the personality or life circumstances identifying with those as being who you are as a person.

For example, “I am a Teacher”. “I am a Doctor”. “I am a Mother/Father”. “I am a wife/husband/life partner/girlfriend/boyfriend”. “I am a citizen of the United States of America”. “I am a Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Buddhist etc.”. “I am a business owner”. “I am wealthy”. “I am kind”. “I am friendly”. “I am a responsible adult”. “I am a hard worker”.

The mind has countless labels that it attempts to identify with and fulfill in order to adopt and then project a certain self identity into the world. The mind holds on to these attributes as a self identity seeking pleasant feelings from these impermanent conditions. But because these labels of the self identity are impermanent, when they no longer exist the mind experiences painful feelings (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, etc.).

Not only does the mind hold on to a specific life partner, but it also holds on to the identity of being a wife/husband/life partner/girlfriend/boyfriend and then feels less of a person when the mind can no longer identify with a certain label.

Not only does the mind hold on to the life circumstances of being a Doctor or the occupation of being a Doctor, but it holds on to the projected self identification of being a Doctor as the mind wants to be perceived in the world in a certain way. When the mind can no longer identify with this impermanent label to create pleasant feelings, it then experiences painful feelings.

It is not until the mind lets go of holding on to the self identity attempting to form pleasant feelings internally based on impermanent conditions of a self identity that it can reside permanently peaceful and content. If the mind continues to long for and hold on to impermanent conditions of a self identity, it will experience painful feelings as the conditions that created the pleasant feelings are not permanent. It is not until the mind realizes The

Universal Truth of Non-self and stops attempting to satisfy the mind based on impermanent conditions for a self identity, understanding there is “no self” that it will find inner contentedness.

The mind needs to understand and realize The Universal Truth of Non-self to eliminate the fetter/taint/pollution of personal existence view to eliminate the mind’s longing with a strong eagerness to project a self image and self identity into the world for pleasant feelings otherwise, it is welcoming painful feelings or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant at some point never experiencing peacefulness, calmness, serenity, and contentedness with joy that is permanent.

Understanding The Universal Truth of Non-Self and The Fetter of Personal Existence View

The Universal Truth of Non-self will help a Practitioner to understand that there is no “you”, “me”, or “I” to facilitate eliminating the fetter of personal existence view. We use the pronouns “you”, “me”, “I” and names given to us during our life, but these are unfitting to truly explain what we are experiencing in this human existence.

There is essentially a physical body and a mind that have come together for this existence, but neither of these are “you” or “who you are”.

The challenge that human beings face is that we grow up with a name, typically given at birth, that the mind starts to associate a certain self image or self identity with the given name. We start to adopt the thinking and false belief that we are this name, forming self image and self identity around the given name. We oftentimes associate the physical body and/or the mind as being “the self” or “who you are”. But anything that the body or mind experiences is not “you”.

Take a finger and point to “you”. Where are “you”? Can you point to “you”? What are you pointing to now, the body or the mind?

That’s not “you”. Where are “you”?

If the body and mind are both impermanent, how could either the body or the mind be a permanent self or “you”?

In reality, what exists is essentially bones, tissue, and fluids inside a big bag made of skin. There is a consciousness, or mind, that has come together with the physical body to form “a being”. A name was given to us at birth as a label to make it easy for people to refer to us and for us, to attend to our daily activities. Family and friends could not say: “Has that big bag of bones,

tissue, and fluid come home yet?”. Instead, we need a name to make it easy for people to know who we are referring to in our conversations.

But the challenge develops when the given name becomes adopted in the mind as “who we are”, and the mind forms self image and self identity around the name, the label, given during our life.

Human beings form a concept of a permanent self in the mind referred to as a “personal existence view”. The unEnlightened mind thinks and falsely believes there is an actual permanent self when in reality, this does not exist.

The misunderstanding of a permanent self is comprised of such things as the self image, self identity, expectations we have of ourself, and expectations others have of us. The unEnlightened mind will falsely identify with the body and/or the mind as being “the self”, thus, having a “personal existence view”.

But, this is part of the mind’s ignorance (unknowing of true reality), delusion, or confusion. The self does not actually exist, but the unEnlightened mind has the thinking, misperception, or false belief that there is a self. As long as the mind continues to hold on to what it thinks is a self, described as “personal existence view” in these Teachings, it will not be liberated from discontentedness to experience Enlightenment.

Because the mind is holding on to its self image and self identity thinking that is “who you are”, when it hears something agreeable or disagreeable about its self image or self identity, the mind will become discontent.

When the mind hears agreeable and pleasing compliments about the self image or self identity, it will experience happiness, excitement, or elation as pleasant feelings will often invade the mind. Then, when the mind hears disagreeable and displeasing remarks about the self image or self identity, it will experience sadness, anger, or frustration as painful feelings will often invade the mind.

Due to the personal existence view, the misperception or false belief of a permanent self, the mind cannot reside in the middle with calmness as it experiences pleasant feelings associated with agreeable compliments and painful feelings upon experiencing the disagreeable remarks. With the mind holding on thinking there is a permanent self, it cannot reside peaceful and calm as it will be looking out for the next agreeable or disagreeable comment, needing to protect itself from its perceived external enemies and/or anticipation or seeking out of agreeable compliments to produce pleasant feelings.

The mind will look to protect itself from disagreeable remarks, not wanting to experience painful feelings. The mind can be constantly on guard with strategies of self protection resulting in unwholesome intentions, speech, and actions. The mind will oftentimes become fearful of even the smallest little situations as it holds on to its personal existence view, being afraid to not only hear disagreeable comments, but also fear death or any small experience that the mind perceives as potentially causing harm to the physical body or mind.

The unEnlightened mind does not realize that there is only a physical body and a mind that have come together for this existence but, in fact, there is no permanent everlasting self. There is nothing permanent that currently exists related to "a self", so there is no need to be constantly on edge to protect against the potential of painful feelings, or be ready and willing to allow the mind to experience great happiness (i.e. pleasant feelings) when one receives pleasing compliments. Basing one's internal feelings on impermanent conditions would only invite discontentedness into the mind.

Due to the mind holding on to a self image and self identity, a Practitioner may feel that they cannot associate with certain people or types of people as it would impact "who they are" diminishing one's reputation. Rather than the mind being comfortable to reside with all beings peacefully and in harmony, the mind judges others of who they feel they can and cannot associate with based on superficial attributes, unable to practice loving-kindness and compassion for all beings.

The personal existence view causes a dilemma for the mind in that it needs to constantly evaluate itself and others to determine if it feels comfortable in any given situation, unable to be at rest to reside peacefully. The mind can experience anxiety and fear as it perceives what is happening around it as diminishing or infringing on its self image or self identity. Destructive protective habits are produced and one finds they are continually discontent in seemingly innocent situations. The mind can perceive harm to "the self" in the most simple of circumstances believing that impending doom is headed your way.

The mind's confusion accumulates due to the misunderstanding that there is a self and oftentimes reacts out of self protection rather than through wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline as taught in The Eight Fold Path.

The personal existence view needs to be eliminated to realize non-self in order to eradicate the problems associated with holding on to a permanent self in the mind allowing it to reside more peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy, no matter what is or is not happening. Eliminating the

personal existence view will allow the mind to reside comfortably and in harmony with others, no longer plotting methods of self protection developing unwholesome habits, but instead the mind will look for ways to be more open and loving with all beings.

Techniques to Realize Non-Self

Eliminating and eradicating the fetter of personal existence view will allow the mind to peacefully and calmly exist without the constant need to protect and defend “the self”.

The mind can reside being generous, loving, kind, and compassionate to all beings rather than pursuing selfish desires and strategies of self protection. The mind can let go of impolite, unkind, unfriendly, and disrespectful interactions with others because it will understand that the harmful words of others only affect them not “you”, because there is no “you”.

A mind without a personal existence view can be open and loving to all beings because it is not judging others based on its own self image and self identity, only choosing to associate with people who it feels are worthy of your friendship. The mind will discover ways to develop lasting relationships with all beings. Through eliminating the personal existence view, a mind will not experience fear because it is not holding on to the physical body or mind thinking that any minor situation would cause permanent harm.

If there is still the concept of a permanent self, you will defend it, guard against it, and react with emotion based on the need to protect the self rather than respond calmly, peacefully, and with a concentrated mind. There is also the tendency to place the “self” above or below other beings with judgment, arrogance, and pride known as conceit.

Once the concept of a permanent self, which is part of the ego, has been fully dissolved and you realize “non-self”, you will no longer feel a need to mentally defend or protect the self because you will know it does not exist and, thus, will be able to attain and maintain a content mind no matter what is said about you by another person. The mind will not react negatively to others’ intentions, speech, nor actions. The mind will not experience any arising of anger or frustration even when someone is being impolite and disrespectful. There is nothing to mentally defend or guard against because you no longer have a concept of a permanent self in the mind, and it can see true reality which is just that someone is being impolite and disrespectful rather than absorbing this as an assault against your self image or self identity.

To attain even the first Stage of Enlightenment, one needs to fully understand and realize non-self. It is typically through much learning, practice, and guidance with the help of Teachers that one will fully understand and realize non-self. The Teaching on non-self is usually a Teaching approached later in practice as a Practitioner has already established a solid foundation of many other Teachings and one nears closer to the first Stage of Enlightenment having already experienced the Jhānas.

If you understand impermanence and that there is no condition that is permanent, then realizing non-self can be reflected upon in this way.

Is the body yours? Does it belong to you? Will you be able to keep it forever?

No.

Is the mind yours? Does it belong to you? Will you be able to keep it forever?

No.

So, what are we? We are nothing.

There is no permanent self that one can identify. There is no “you”, but we still use this pronoun since there is nothing else fitting in the English language to refer to “nothing”.

Understanding “non-self” conceptually is one step of realizing non-self to eliminate the fetter of personal existence view. Then, it is important to put this Teaching into practice through daily life and a life practice, to include a specialized meditation technique - if needed. This Teaching is typically explored later in the process of attaining Enlightenment and should not be focused on until there is already a well-established practice of many of the other Teachings and with the guidance of Teachers.

The mind will not be willing to let go of its personal existence view until it is well trained through the core Teachings found in The Eight Fold Path and a Practitioner is starting to experience the Jhānas.

In addition to specialized meditation techniques to help the mind understand that there is no self, a Practitioner can choose to change the way the mind thinks of its relationship to material objects, people, and various parts of life.

To train the mind to let go and reside more peacefully, a Practitioner can modify the language they use in reference to material objects, people, and various parts of life to help eliminate the way the mind thinks and believes that a permanent self exists. When there is a self, the mind can become very

selfish, self centered, and self absorbed. The mind can attempt to control others wanting things to be done in a certain way that is pleasing to the self. Changing the language one uses in everyday life can then influence change in the mind.

Rather than saying, and thus thinking, this is “my phone” a Practitioner might refer to it as “the phone”.

Instead of “my car” it can become “the car”.

Instead of “my clothes” it can become “the clothes”.

Instead of “my house” it can become “the house”.

Instead of “my job” it can become “the place I work”.

Instead of “my hair” it can become “the hair”.

Instead of “I am hungry” it can become “the body is hungry”.

Instead of “I have a headache” it can become “the head is feeling pain”.

These examples and others that you become aware of can be modified to remove the “my” or “me” from your language and how you interact in the world and how the mind wants to hold on tightly.

Essentially, the mind starts to disassociate with material objects, relationships, and various parts of life as being “mine”. Because if the mind deeply understands that there is no “you”, then how could anything be “yours” and belong to “you”?

Through training the mind by using different language, it can start to distance itself from thinking there is a permanent self and instead see true reality that nothing actually belongs to you. Therefore, the mind can easily “let go” of the personal existence view, experiencing peacefulness rather than being selfish or feeling that something harmful is being done “to you”.

As long as the mind thinks and falsely believes that material objects, relationships, and other aspects of life belong to “you”, then it will define itself through these and become highly discontent when things are not happening the way the mind wants or desires.

Whenever the mind is aware of pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant starting to arise associated with self image or self identity, a Practitioner needs to apply Right Effort to cut them

off and let them go. Otherwise, allowing the mind to experience feelings associated with “the self” will only continue to reinforce its misunderstanding that there is a permanent self, inhibiting it from realizing non-self. When any and all pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant are experienced, a Practitioner should cut them off and let them go.

When there is no longer a self, the mind will not want to or feel a need to defend itself when hearing negative or disparaging remarks about its self image or self identity, and the mind will not experience any painful feelings associated with disrespectful comments. And, when there is no self, the mind will not experience happiness, excitement, or elation when it hears a positive compliment about its self image or self identity.

The mind will reside unaffected, uninfluenced, and unshakable through hearing positive or negative comments about “the self” as the personal existence view, or the self, will have been eliminated. The mind will no longer have a misperception or false belief that there is a permanent self, therefore, it will reside unaffected by any comments related to the self image or self identity.

Detailed discussion and consultation with a Teacher is required to more fully understand The Universal Truth of Non-self and to implement practices to eliminate the fetter of personal existence view.

Because a mind with personal existence view has the false belief that the body and/or the mind is the self, or the permanent self, then anything a Practitioner can do to eliminate this confusion will help the mind see more clearly. Suggested approaches that a Practitioner can employ include the following:

- Receive guidance in how to use the “Meditation to Realize Non-Self” in the chapter titled “Meditation: Developing Your Practice” (Chapter 11).
- Change language used to disassociate the mind with the word “my” in connection to relationships, objects, or various life situations.
- Develop the perception of impermanence deeply observing in the world that there is no object that is permanent. Soak into the mind that there is no object, situation, or circumstance that is permanent through observing the truth through experiences in the world.
- Wear simple clothing and make your appearance simple as desiring physical beauty is cultivating your “personal existence view” and could be projecting arrogance or pride.
- Refrain from wearing any jewelry or body decorations including make up, and eliminate bodily scents such as perfumes and cologne. (This helps to establish in the mind there is no desire to project a self image or self

identity. It trains the mind to practice non-attachment to the body's image or identity. The mind can be trained to reside unaffected by others' views of the image of the body and others' opinions will have no effect on the contentedness of the mind helping to eliminate personal existence view.)

- Remove head and facial hair, eliminate the craving to beautify the body.
- Eliminate your interest to project a personal image through "cutting off" and "letting go" of any feelings or interest in the mind to mentally project or protect the self image or self identity.
- Consult and seek guidance with a Teacher over multiple sessions to deeply understand The Universal Truth of Non-self to receive instruction on how to eliminate personal existence view from the mind.

It is important that we distinguish the difference between non-self and a soul. Gotama Buddha taught that there is no permanent self as part of his Teaching on The Universal Truth of Non-self, but he left The Teaching about a soul as undeclared. See the "Simile of a Man Were Wounded by an Arrow Thickly Smeared with Poison" to understand Gotama Buddha did not declare a Teaching concerning a soul and left this as undeclared. This simile is located at the end of the chapter titled "Transforming The Three Poisons: Craving, Anger, and Ignorance" (Chapter 8).

Understanding The Fetter of Conceit

Conceit is the attributes of arrogance, pride, judging, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior that pollute the mind. This causes the mind to produce intentions, speech, and actions that only backfire as others find conduct originating in conceit as displeasing, tasteless, and inappropriate.

A person who projects arrogance and pride is most often rejected in personal and professional relationships as one attempts to place themselves above others to feel superior. This behavior originates in our countless existences in the animal realm as there is oftentimes a clear "pecking order" within a given herd or pack of animals which is needed for survival. But, in the human realm this non-virtuous behavior is not needed and not appreciated as being acceptable among human beings who are interested in practicing fairness and equality while having loving-kindness and compassion for all beings.

A person who puts themselves below others feeling inferior is often viewed as weak and incapable of being trusted or other virtuous qualities. An individual who puts themselves below others can oftentimes look up to other beings with a mind that is shaken, unsteady, and uncalm fearing potential harm from others, unable to reside relaxed and peaceful with a concentrated mind. This inhibits a person from gaining opportunities to apply their

intelligence and skills to beneficial projects that would help improve one's life.

Judging others only puts a wall between you and others as the mind is unable to practice generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity with all beings in all situations. Judging others only harms you as you will drive away those who are disinterested in comments, remarks, and discussions where an individual is placing themselves in a position of judging others.

Due to the pollution of conceit that is part of the ego, a being constantly struggles to find its place in the world because it needs to continuously search whether it is above or below others, causing a burden to the mind. The mind functions much like an animal being uncomfortable unless it knows exactly where it is in the "pecking order" of the herd or pack of like species.

Acting upon any feelings of conceit, the accumulated arrogance, pride, judging, and measuring one's self as superior or inferior to others only inhibits one from experiencing the fullness of life where they can benefit from all relationships and opportunities. Instead of fruitful outcomes, a person with conceit would be limited to only a handful of relationships that will tolerate their constant need for superiority or their lack of confidence in feeling inferior.

Conceit inhibits one from being a true member of a team and instead is looking for how to gain all the glory and attention to create pleasant feelings in the deluded mind. Team members become disinterested in associating with someone who is incapable of sharing in the success of the entire team as a team player but instead, appears to only be out for attaining their own selfish satisfaction.

When we think that we are "right" and everyone else is "wrong", conceit and arrogance (i.e. aspects of the ego) is firmly rooted in the mind.

A being with conceit will struggle to find opportunities to improve its life and struggle to find individuals willing to participate in life activities that can be rewarding and fulfilling.

The fetter of conceit will motivate impolite, unkind, unfriendly, and disrespectful intentions, speech, and actions that only serve to drive people and opportunities away from you rather than bring people towards you to assist in producing beneficial outcomes for all individuals involved.

Conceit held in the mind can lead to fights, arguments, hostility, murder, and even global conflict or war. Countless lives have been ruined and wasted

through decisions based in conceit that have lasting and long term consequences unforeseen by a person who is blinded by the cloud of ego, unknowing of true reality, and unaware of these Teachings to liberate the mind from its daily struggles and difficulties.

A wise Practitioner will apply energy and effort through a dedicated life practice to eliminate any and all conceit from the mind, thus, realizing the benefits of being able to peacefully reside in harmony with all beings.

Eliminating conceit from the mind will result in beneficial outcomes for you as the mind becomes more comfortable to reside in personal and professional relationships without a need to be superior or inferior. Instead, the mind will look for ways that everyone can “win” rather than looking for the selfish satisfaction and the desire to project its own arrogance and pride.

Techniques to Eliminate Conceit

Anytime a Practitioner observes arrogance, pride, judging, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior arising in the mind, they need to practice Right Effort taking active steps to eliminate these unwholesome qualities and arise wholesome qualities.

There is no benefit to arrogance, pride, judging, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior arising in the mind, so when it is observed, one needs to cut it off and let it go.

Allowing even the smallest amount of conceit to trickle into your conversations, discussions, or relationships will have devastating effects that result in harmful outcomes (i.e. unwholesome Kamma).

The more readily a Practitioner becomes aware of the arising conceit, they can take active steps to eliminate it from the mind. Cutting this back further and further through catching it earlier and earlier, the mind can eventually eliminate conceit from ever arising. But, a Practitioner will need to understand what conceit is so that as the mind is aware of its arising, it can be cut off and eliminated from the mind.

A wise Practitioner can also take proactive steps towards the elimination of conceit through initiating various practices into their daily life. For someone who is unfamiliar with Buddhist Teachings or Buddhist culture, these practices may seem quite foreign and a challenge to understand. You should seek guidance to understand any practices that are not fully understood as to why these are helpful to eliminate conceit and how to implement these into your daily life.

There are several practices that could help you to eliminate conceit. I offer the following as potential examples of how to eliminate conceit.

- Say “thank you”, “sorry”, speak politely using “sir, ma’am, or other respectful pronouns” and say “I do not know” as needed and as appropriate.
- Sleep in a low position that is not elevated or luxurious and sit on the floor.
- Do tasks that you feel are “beneath” you.
- Listen to others teach you wisdom without any interest to teach them.
- Wash people’s feet. People you have no association with, if possible.
- Show respect and gratitude to all people with a “wai” as done in Thai culture.
- Show generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion to all beings, especially people you find challenging to be friendly towards.
- Eliminate judgment of others with no comparisons that you are superior or inferior to others.
- Be kind and gentle because it’s the “right” thing to do.
- Ask others for advice and what they learned in life, just listen without trying to prove anything.
- Help others without any expectation of a return favor or positive benefit for yourself.
- Seek guidance of a Teacher helping the mind to admit to itself that it does not know everything and needs help in this world.
- Eliminate your interest to project arrogance, pride, judgment, measuring or comparing as superior or inferior through “cutting off” and “letting go” of any feelings or interest in the mind that resembles these unwholesome qualities.
- Consult and seek guidance with a Teacher over multiple sessions to deeply understand the fetter of conceit to receive instruction on how to eliminate conceit from the mind.

Never Assume The Ego Has Been Eliminated

We must always and forever develop our practice to “eliminate ego” and never “assume” it has been extinguished. The ego will always attempt to get you to think it has been eliminated as it is like a bad tenant that never pays rent and does not want to leave.

The moment the mind convinces you that the ego has been eliminated is a moment that you know that ego still exists. Instead, never assume the ego has been eliminated, and constantly work towards being humble and down to earth in any and all situations.

A Practitioner who learns and practices these Teachings from Gotama Buddha will develop profound wisdom. It is especially important for one who

has deep wisdom to always practice being humble. A truly wise individual is wise enough to know to always practice being humble and has no need to project arrogance, pride, judge others, or otherwise allow conceit into the mind or into their daily interactions.

There is no benefit in projecting self image, self identity, arrogance, pride, judging others, measuring and comparing one's self as being superior or inferior to others. You will find that your personal and professional relationships will blossom when personal existence view and conceit is eliminated.

Through eliminating the fetters of personal existence view and conceit, the mind can reside peaceful and calm no matter what is or is not happening around you.

The ego props us up and protects "who we think we are" and "our self image". It is very difficult for one to see their own ego.

There is no need to mentally protect yourself from anyone when there is "no self". A peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy that does no harm, only needs to walk with "wisdom and a smile".

A wise person only needs to walk with wisdom and a smile. They have no desire to project a self image, self identity, arrogance, pride, judge others, or measure and compare themselves as superior or inferior. A wise person knows there is no benefit in doing so, therefore, they only need to walk with wisdom and a smile.

The ego is held deeply inside the mind and blocks us from realizing our full potential because we "think" we already know who we are and what we should be doing in the future. It blocks us from healthy relationships and connecting to other beings with a pure mind and pure intentions.

The ego can block us from learning and growing with wisdom shared by other beings because we think we already "know it all".

Dissolving the ego is easier said than done. Because we have spent a lifetime acquiring the ego and many countless hours thinking about what we want to do in the future, it is very hard to let go of the ego. There is self image and self identity along with many other attributes that comprise the ego, and if we hold on to the ego, we will create discontentedness for ourself, never being able to fully experience the Enlightened mind.

To reach Enlightenment, the ego must be dissolved, dismantled, and eradicated. The ego serves no purpose.

Gotama Buddha explains just how dreadful, bitter, vile, and obstructive it is to allow ourselves to dwell in praise, pride, and ego in the following Teaching.

Gain, Honor, and Praise, Are an Obstacle Even For an Arahant

Monks, gain, honor, and praise, I say, are an obstacle even for a Monk who is an Arahant, one with taints destroyed.

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda asked the Master Teacher Gotama: ‘Why, Venerable Sir, are gain, honor, and praise an obstacle even for a Monk with taints destroyed?’

I do not say, Ānanda, that gain, honor, and praise are an obstacle to his unshakable liberation of mind. But I say they are an obstacle to (his attainment of) those peaceful dwellings in this very life which are achieved by one who resides diligent, dedicated, and determined. So dreadful, Ānanda, are gain, honor, and praise so bitter, vile, obstructive to achieving the unsurpassed security from bondage (Enlightenment).

Therefore, Ānanda, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will abandon the arisen gain, honor, praise, and we will not let the arisen gain, honor, and praise persist obsessing our mind.’

Thus should you train yourselves.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 17.30)

Progress Towards Eliminating The Ego

You will know the ego is starting to diminish when the mind is no longer interested in taking credit for the wholesome deeds you participate in, but instead, is more interested in seeing wholesome things happen for all beings. The mind will not be affected by praise nor disrespect. If someone tells you that you have ego and the mind experiences painful feelings, such as, sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, etc., then the mind still has ego.

Comparing yourself to others will be entirely eliminated and there will be no interest in judging others (looking down on others) for any reason. A Practitioner will choose to cultivate and practice wholesome intentions, speech, and actions because it is the “right” thing to do, not because one is looking for a reward or acknowledgment of their wholesome ways.

An individual without ego will be able to be polite, kind, friendly, and respectful to any and all beings with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity regardless of that person's intentions, speech, or actions. There will be no conditions that are required of you to practice these good wholesome Teachings, and there are no conditions that would prevent you from practicing these good wholesome Teachings.

A wise Practitioner will never conclude their ego has been eliminated and instead always be watchful to never allow the ego to remain in the mind rooting it out whenever it raises its ugly head.

Teaching Through Ego

Gotama Buddha reached Enlightenment during his six (6) years of training the mind then had a lifelong practice of maintaining the mind. He knew, for himself, that he attained Enlightenment as a completely liberated mind is very noticeable to the person who has attained it.

While he knew he had all the answers, others around him taught their teachings which did not lead to Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha's Students attained Enlightenment and they knew the truth. There were still plenty of people during his lifetime who did not learn and practice Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

There is a reason Gotama Buddha only ever taught Students that chose to learn with him.

He did not go out in search of Students. He allowed them to come find him. It is important not to "crave" Students as the mind will shutdown and lose tranquility. Craving is the problem; non-clinging, non-attachment, non-craving, and Enlightenment is the solution. With craving, there is no Enlightenment even if the mind is craving more Students.

A Student needs to seek out the help of a Teacher for guidance. This act alone helps to reduce ego for a Practitioner. The Student needs to open the front door and welcome The Teachings into the mind with trust and respect. Without the Student opening the door, the Teacher cannot breathe healthy life into the mind, thus, the Student will not have The Teachings to make improvements.

It is only a Student who lowers the ego, seeks out a Teacher, and seeks guidance through questions that will allow The Teachings to penetrate the mind, then ultimately improve their life practice on The Path to Enlightenment.

The Student needs to do the hard work of transforming the unwholesome mind into a wholesome and pure mind.

A Teacher cannot create Enlightenment for their Students. A Teacher cannot “give” their Students Enlightenment. It is only through diligent study, practice, and commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings that a Student can actively work towards Enlightenment. A Student will need to have gratitude, appreciation, and respect for The Teachings and their Teacher.

A Teacher can teach, inspire, encourage, and offer guidance but it is the Student that must decide Enlightenment is an important pursuit for their life and commit to their own growth. The Student needs to seek out Teachers who can assist them on their path to Enlightenment.

A Teacher cannot seek out Students as unEnlightened beings will be so attached to their current Teachers and their current practice while perhaps having ego. A Teacher who seeks out Students will always meet a brick wall.

A Teacher who knows they have The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment can do little to nothing to “convince” a Student to study or practice. The interest to study and pursue Enlightenment must be initiated by the Student.

A Student will need to reach out to Teachers for guidance learning how to establish a healthy relationship built on a foundation of kindness, politeness, gratitude, and respect in all directions. Only a Buddha would be able to attain Enlightenment without the assistance of Teachers. While all other Practitioners are able to experience Enlightenment, they would need the guidance of Teachers and a well developed practice of these Teachings.

Students should seek guidance through asking questions to gain understanding while developing an honest and respectful relationship with their Teachers.

Teachers should only provide guidance to Students when they request guidance through asking questions and/or designating one as their Teacher.

Seek Teachers without craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) who have eliminated the ego and who have realized non-self. These are the people who have attained Enlightenment and will be the best Teachers to guide you.

It would be very difficult for a Teacher to guide others towards Enlightenment if they have not yet attained Enlightenment.

As one progresses in learning and practicing these Teachings, there will be deep wisdom that is acquired. Sometimes the simplest and most apparent truth that you see in a situation can be applauded as profound wisdom by those who are not on The Path to Enlightenment because they are unaware of the truth and wisdom within these Teachings. Compliments and words of admiration from others can often invade the mind producing even more excessive amounts of conceit - if the Practitioner allows the praise to obsess the mind.

While it is beneficial for your life to learn and practice these Teachings, it is important to always remain humble. Whether it be with friends, parents, family, or other associates and Teachers, you need to understand that projecting arrogance or pride as it relates to your life practice and progress on this path would only inhibit your own further progress while dissuading others from exploring Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

It is possible for a Practitioner to view the beneficial and constantly improving focus, concentration, deep memory, and clarity of mind as qualities to take pride in while looking down on others who are lacking concentration or otherwise experience a muddled mind with discontentedness. In some cases, a Practitioner can even start to feel so superior based on their wisdom of these Teachings rather than staying humble to continue their learning and progress on The Path to Enlightenment, arrogance, pride, and ego can take over even pushing away those who helped them to acquire a foundation and deep practice of these Teachings.

Gotama Buddha himself spoke of Students who would eventually reject him and his Teachings perhaps even attempt to steal what he taught as being their own Teachings.

Students can sometimes become unfriendly and disrespectful to the very person who guided them to realize benefits on The Path to Enlightenment. It is extremely dangerous for a Student to allow arrogance or pride to invade their mind thinking they are more superior than their own Teacher. It is the Teacher who helped them get established and make significant progress on The Path to Enlightenment, so choosing to have arrogance or pride in a relationship with your Teacher would not produce a beneficial outcome for you to continue to progress towards Enlightenment.

Gratitude, appreciation, and respect along with humbleness are foundational aspects of a mind that will ultimately become Enlightened. If a Student remains with gratitude, appreciation, respect, and humbleness towards their

Teachers, they can continue to develop their mind experiencing complete liberation.

But, one who decides to reject their Teacher's kindness out of their own arising conceit, will continue to struggle through their own arrogance and pride lacking the ability to come close to senior members of The Community who can provide guidance to eliminate the ego to ultimately attain Enlightenment.

These Teachings are based in over 2,500 years of generational sharing based purely in generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. A sincere and devoted Teacher is not choosing to share these Teachings for any selfish benefits as their goal should only be to help others. A Practitioner would need to approach these Teachings, and thus, the senior members of The Community including Teachers with gratitude, appreciation, and the qualities of generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

While a Student can oftentimes struggle to eliminate the ego, just through seeking guidance from a Teacher is helpful in eliminating arrogance, the ego, from the mind. Seeking guidance would require a Student to develop a healthy relationship based in gratitude, appreciation, and respect.

It is important for a Student to always be respectful towards Teachers as without their wisdom, they would be unable to progress on The Path to Enlightenment.

Likewise, a Teacher needs to maintain gratitude, appreciation, respect, and practice humbleness with all Students. A Teacher should be among the deepest Practitioners of these Teachings. A Student will look to their Teacher as an example of how these Teachings should be practiced in daily life emulating their wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline.

If a Teacher is not practicing politeness, kindness, friendliness, and respect, the Student would be lost in how to practice these same qualities of mind. Students who are choosing to diligently learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings should be appreciated by the Teacher. Without determined, dedicated, and diligent Students who choose to actively learn and progress on The Path to Enlightenment, these Teachings would soon fade out.

But over countless generations, these Teachings have continued to be shared into the world based on mutual gratitude and respect among Students and Teachers. As soon as either a Student or a Teacher allows the ego to enter into the relationship and the process of clearly transmitting

these Teachings, it will pollute and hinder the ability of The Teachings to be effective at eradicating discontentedness from the mind of all beings.

It is not possible to teach with ego nor teach through ego. The ego needs to be eliminated, eradicated, and destroyed for there to be a successful Student/Teacher relationship and success in experiencing the Enlightened mind.

As a Community, we must always remember that it is not through our historical texts, intellectual knowledge, or words that we are able to share with the world the way leading to the complete elimination of discontentedness but instead, through our virtuous actions.

It is our bodily, verbal, and mental actions, as shared in The Eight Fold Path, that will help others observe the way of practice leading to the complete end to discontentedness.

A wise Practitioner will always and constantly remain watchful to never assume the ego is eliminated, actively applying their dedication to humbly learn and practice these Teachings to eliminate, eradicate, and destroy the ego.



Washing Feet

Washing someone's feet can be powerful for them and you. It cultivates humility and a caring mind. It will help you to eliminate ego and is a practice that you should consider to incorporate into your life practice.

In Thailand, it is part of the culture to wash the feet of your parents or other members of the family to show gratitude and respect. It is not a forced action or expected. It is up to the individual to decide if it's something they should or should not do.

Thais practice washing feet at special times during the year. Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, new years, and any time during the year they would like to share this special experience with those close to them.

It is common to wash your parents' feet on your birthday to thank your mom, dad, grandparents, members of the family, and Teachers for helping to guide you in life. No matter what our relationship is with our parents, they did struggle for many years to provide us our existence. We could never repay them enough for the hard work of providing us this existence and the sustaining of our human life.

Washing the feet of family members, friends, Teachers, and people to whom you would like to show gratitude, appreciation, and respect, can help you cultivate a mind of loving-kindness and compassion while eliminating the ego. Each time you do, it gives you a chance to delicately provide a soothing and loving touch of the feet, that penetrates the heart and the mind.

This practice could help anyone who would like to not only say "I love you" with words, but also with actions.

When you wash someone's feet, you are saying through your actions "I love you", "I respect you", and "I have gratitude and appreciation for you". It is much more potent than anything you could ever say as actions speak much louder than words. A caring grasp, a nurturing way of washing the feet says everything you need to say but in the more powerful method of communication - through actions.

Learning how to love without attachment is very important. It is possible to love without attachment. Care and love can come from a place of non-attachment and this practice can help you cultivate this mental state into your life for those who have had the most influence in sharing wisdom to help you grow and progress in this life.

Washing the feet of others is also a powerful practice to eliminate the ego.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 16) - Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/VYO-HhQ8tO8>

Ep. 516 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 16) - Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--516---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-16---Dissolving-the-Ego-Ego-Serves-No-Purpose-e272uhr>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 16 - Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose

https://youtube.com/live/fe7_B5_Fizc

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/xatVLfAnVA>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 468 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 16 - Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--468---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-16---Dissolving-the-Ego-Ego-Serves-No-Purpose-e24s754/a-a9tpphe>

Ep. 469 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--469---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e251fdo/a-a9ua59s>

Quiz

Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose

<https://forms.gle/2PBq9jgxpzoS5Eht6>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 17

Eliminating Fears: Are You Really Scared?

Our fears play a significant role in inhibiting us from realizing our full potential in life. We get a good idea and either do not pursue it all the way or we give up at some point because we fear failure, so we fail because we do not even try.

There are countless fears in life that the mind has the potential to hold on to including the fear of death.

Through the process of pursuing Enlightenment, you need to eliminate all fears from the mind including the fear of death. You will also need to train the mind to trust all beings. Eliminating your fears will help you to trust all beings.

The best way to eliminate fears is to put the mind into whatever situation it fears to train it that there is nothing to be afraid of. For example, if you fear being alone, the loneliness is the mind experiencing discontentedness, so put the mind in many situations where it is alone until you are content being alone, no longer experiencing loneliness. Go shopping, travel, take walks in the park, or any other countless activities - do them alone. This will train the mind to reside peaceful and content while being alone.

Attempting to always have people around you filling your day with constant interactions to avoid loneliness, is not solving the true problem as it is impossible to always have people around you due to The Universal Truth of Impermanence. The true challenge the mind is experiencing is that it is uncomfortable being alone, therefore, train it to be alone so that it will never experience loneliness. Do not avoid being alone by attempting to have constant interactions as this is impossible and does not solve the true problem.

If you fear being alone, this could mean you are attached to always being with other people and that is why the mind is discontent. You are attached to being with others. If the mind “craves” being with others, then do just the opposite and train it to be alone. You must eliminate all cravings and desires including the constant craving for being with others.

The pursuit of Enlightenment is an independent journey with guidance from Teachers. You must get comfortable with being alone in your meditation and in daily activities. Eliminating craving/desire/attachment and eliminating the constant craving and desire for “things”, means you will need to be content with just being alone.

You will not always be alone because everything is impermanent except for Enlightenment and The Natural Laws of Existence. You will have family, friends, and associates; but to attain Enlightenment, you must be comfortable with being alone and not fear anything.

A mind that has no fear of failure, death, loneliness, or other fears is a mind that is independently satisfied and able to function without craving/desire/attachment, which will always and forever bring the mind contentedness. Eliminating mental craving/desire/attachment will eliminate discontentedness of the mind.

Another form of fear can cause aversion to people or situations. You may have fear of those people or situations for countless reasons. To develop a stable, steady, and calm mind, you will need to be able to exist in any situation without discontentedness. You must train the mind to be content in any and all situations while protecting your own contentedness.

So, if you have aversion to certain people or types of people, put the mind into situations where you encounter those people and types of people, so that the mind will not have any fear and develop loving-kindness and compassion for all beings.

If the mind is discontent around other people and craves solitude, (meaning you are attached to solitude), place the mind in situations where you are around people and train the mind to be content in the presence of others.

To eliminate fears, you will need to do exactly the opposite of what the mind wants. Giving into the fear through attempting to avoid whatever the mind fears does not actually solve the problem. It is just allowing the mind to avoid what it fears by not encountering the uncomfortable situation, therefore, the mind will continue to retain the fear, holding on to what it wants which produces the discontent feeling of fear, constantly looking out to be on guard ensuring it avoids those situations but never solving the true problem in the mind.

If you have fear of specific situations, you will need to get comfortable to exist in those situations. Put the mind in those situations you fear so that the mind accepts that there is nothing to fear, and you can function without discontentedness in that situation.

Because the mind needs *gradual* training, you may need to do this slowly to allow the mind to slowly adapt to the situation and eliminate the cravings/desires/attachments that is causing the fear. This way, the mind can then eliminate the discontentedness by overcoming the fear.

For example, if you fear going back to a school where you were kicked out due to the administration's discrimination, which resulted in poor treatment of you and that has left scars in the mind, you must overcome this mental trauma by training the mind.

If you have since obtained access to the education through various means available to you to combat the discrimination, you could slowly get the mind comfortable and content with going back to the school to overcome the fear and past trauma.

You could drive to the school and park in the parking lot, just exist there and allow the mind to be calm. Meditate in the car, calm the mind, and allow it to adjust.

If you would like to step forward that day or in future days of training, next get out of the car and take a walk through the campus. At any time you feel fear or anxiety, do not run in fear. Sit down, breathe, relax, and train the mind to overcome the fear and attain contentedness.

Next, make your way into the school buildings and interact with people. Observe the mind with "Right Mindfulness" and at any time you need to just sit, breathe, and calm the mind, do that by applying "Right Effort". Release the fear and know that this place, its buildings, its people, and anything around you cannot hurt you. Only you can hurt yourself.

There is no reason to fear. It is your own cravings/desires/attachments that cause the mind discontentedness. No one and nothing can cause the mind discontentedness. It is the mental clinging to the past experiences that is causing the mind to be discontent (i.e. experience fear).

Maintain the mind in the present moment, realize you are doing nothing but breathing, therefore, since you are not causing any harm, no harm will be returned to you. Allow the mind to remain calm and peaceful in the present moment.

You can apply this same method of training to other situations you fear as well. Find a way to *gradually* and slowly, but without being complacent, to always work towards attaining forward progress. Train the mind to feel

comfortable and “satisfied with what is”. Train the mind to be content with all people and all situations.

Another example of eliminating fear would be that if the mind was involved in a vehicle accident where it now fears driving or being in a vehicle, you will need to *gradually* train the mind to let go of this fear. Rather than avoid being in a vehicle or feeling stress, anxiety, or apprehension when it is time to be in a vehicle, the mind can be eased into *gradually* becoming comfortable to once again travel in a vehicle.

An approach you might consider would be to have someone you trust drive you around in a neighborhood or community, where the mind is comfortable, that has small streets with little to no traffic. Let them drive you around a few times allowing the mind to breath comfortably and adjust to being in the car trusting that all will be fine. If anything becomes too overwhelming, just close the eyes and relax.

Next, once the mind is comfortable in a few sessions, then have a person you trust drive you onto streets that have a bit more traffic and repeat the process.

Then, when ready, you drive on the small streets with little traffic in a neighborhood or community where the mind is comfortable.

After multiple sessions of this, move to streets that have more traffic.

In this way, the mind can *gradually* adjust to training session after training session *gradually* becoming comfortable driving in a vehicle to eliminate the imprint or conditioning of the negative experience it had due to the accident. The mind needs to replace the negative experience it had with several positive experiences, so the mind can see there is nothing to fear. The mind can let go of clinging to the negative experiences and conditioning of mind that it is holding on to, by having positive experiences, learning and being trained that there is nothing to fear.

All of this specific training to eliminate fear can be pursued while the Practitioner is consistently applying Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and the entire Eight Fold Path, as the mind needs to have ongoing training in these Teachings to help it “let go” of the past negative experiences and conditioning of the mind.

Apply this same approach and methodology to any and all fears that exist in the mind *gradually* training it to be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy in any and all situations.

You will see that only you can cause the mind discontentedness. No one and nothing can cause the mind discontentedness. You can trust all beings while having discernment, have loving-kindness for all beings, and have compassion for all beings.

Empty out anything the mind fears. Eliminate any and all fears that exist in the mind through dedicated training to eliminate cravings/desires/ attachments which will eliminate all fears. You are not really scared. You are just clinging to past or future thoughts - the mental attachment(s) are “causing” the fear, and the mind is discontent due to it holding on to past experiences or anticipating future harm.

You understand The Natural Law of Kamma from a previous Chapter. If you are not doing anything unwholesome, nothing will come to hurt you. If you have only wholesome intentions, speech, and actions, the mind can be calm, steady, and peaceful knowing that only wholesome things will come back to you.

If you are putting unwholesome intentions, speech, and actions into the world, then that is another reason you have fear. Eliminate any harm you are doing to other beings through making the decision to have only wholesome moral conduct, and no harm will come back to you. By purifying your intentions, speech, actions, and livelihood, this will ensure you are not causing harm so that no harm will come to you, and the mind can be at ease. Knowing that you are not causing harm can allow the mind to reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Your clinging to all those thoughts and experiences which is causing the fear, will cause the mind discontentedness. So, eliminate the clinging by *gradually* training the mind, and you will eliminate the fears.

Fear is a form of discontentedness of mind and needs to be eliminated 100% for you to attain Enlightenment. Eliminate the mental cravings/desires/ attachments and do no harm then you will eliminate fears, and the mind can reside content.

Gradually train the mind to be comfortable in any and all situations. Train the mind to be comfortable with any and all people. Train the mind to be content when alone or in any and all situations, eliminating fear through training the mind to “let go”.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 17) - Eliminating Fears: Are You Really Scared? (Read & Listen)

https://youtu.be/2G_KF8hUUgc

Ep. 517 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 17) - Eliminating Fears: Are You Really Scared?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--517---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-17---Eliminating-Fears-Are-You-Really-Scared-e272uis>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 17 - Eliminating Fears: Are Your Really Scared?

<https://youtube.com/live/uuVdJC7wFHs>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/PnvAsVEzKTY>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 471 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 17 - Eliminating Fears: Are Your Really Scared?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--471---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-17---Eliminating-Fears-Are-Your-Really-Scared-e25b3uv/a-a9v6gdg>

Ep. 472 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--472---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e25d4if/a-a9vcjk3>

Quiz

Eliminating Fears: Are You Really Scared?

<https://forms.gle/RWUi993vFz74WBnQ6>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 18

God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will

During the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, there was belief in many different Gods. Gotama Buddha discusses Gods throughout his Teachings. But when Gotama Buddha discussed God in the below, he only spoke of one God.

A common definition of the word “God” is:

God: The creator of the universe and source of all moral authority; the supreme being. (God, Allah, All Knowing/All Powerful, Omniscient/Omnipotent)

All Is Caused by God's Creative Action

Then, Monks, I approached those Ascetics and Brāhmīns who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Whatever this person experiences — whether pleasure, pain, or neither pain-nor-pleasure — all that is caused by God's creative activity,’ and I said to them: Is it true that you Venerable Ones hold such a doctrine and view?

When I ask them this, they affirm it. Then I say to them: In such a case, it is due to God's creative activity that you might destroy life, take what is not given, indulge in sexual activity, speak falsehood, produce argumentative speech, speak harshly, indulge in idle chatter; that you might be full of longing, have a mind of ill will and hold wrong view.

Those who fall back on God's creative activity as the essential truth have no interest [to do] what should be done and [to avoid doing] what should not be done, nor do they make an effort in this respect.

Since they do not apprehend as true and valid anything that should be done or should not be done, they are muddle-minded, they do not guard themselves, and even the personal designation “Ascetic” could not be legitimately applied to them.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 3.61)

Gotama Buddha's goal was not to prove or disprove God's existence, because Gotama Buddha only taught “truth” that could be independently realized or understood by you through your own practice and that which leads to Enlightenment. This is how you gain “wisdom”.

Gotama Buddha never denied the existence of God but instead, taught people how to attain Enlightenment while still having an understanding of God.

Gotama Buddha did not teach God as being a central role in the attainment of Enlightenment, but instead, helped people understand how the existence of God relates to The Five Realms of Existence. Gotama Buddha taught that one's attainment of Enlightenment is based solely on your own determination, dedication, and diligence to actively learn, reflect, and practice Teachings to train the mind improving the condition of one's mind and life.

It is possible to progress on The Path to Enlightenment with or without a relationship with God. The choice is up to the Practitioner how they choose to proceed.

This chapter is devoted to helping you understand how to attain Enlightenment with or without a relationship with God.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings to attain Enlightenment are not based on "belief". These Teachings are a path for you to gain wisdom which liberates the mind from discontentedness. These Teachings help you to develop a pure mind to attain Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha had nothing tangible to teach us that could prove or disprove God's existence, so, he taught us not to be attached to God. Your attainment of Enlightenment is not based on God, but instead, your own determination, dedication, and diligence to actively learn, reflect on, and practice these Teachings.

Gotama Buddha understood that any and all attachments would cause us discontentedness. So, he taught us not to be attached to God, his existence, nor that God controls all things. If we have this view, then it renders humans powerless. If you do believe in or have an understanding of God, that would not be God's way.

We know that our intentions, speech, and actions are 100% within our ability to be wholesome. God does not control us like robots, we have complete "free will" to think, say, and do whatever we please.

Nothing in this world, other than you, can control your intentions, speech, or actions as you have consciousness and "free will". But it is our intentions, speech, and actions coming from a pure and wholesome place that will lead us to Enlightenment. There is also nothing in this life that is predetermined or

determined by another being. We have the full ability to make free will choices that improve our life, or cause our life to decline. Everything that we have experienced, are experiencing, or will experience in life is based on our own free will decisions.

The Path that leads to Enlightenment does not require a belief in God or a relationship with God. A belief in God or a relationship with God will also not hinder you as long as you have eliminated craving and practice “Right View” from The Eight Fold Path along with other Teachings shared in this Chapter.

God and Right View

Practicing “Right View” while having a relationship with God would include understanding that God does not control you and grant wishes, and that you are 100% responsible for your own intentions, speech, and actions. You have the ability to eliminate discontentedness of the mind and it is not dependent on God.

Any pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant are a result of your own decisions, not those of God. It is the mind’s own craving/desire/attachment that causes discontentedness, not God.

A Practitioner needs to accept responsibility for their own decisions and the results of those decisions to establish Right View. Please see the chapter titled “The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View” (Chapter 4) to deeply understand and establish Right View.

God and Elimination of Craving in the Mind

Elimination of craving as it relates to praying to God, would include that you do not consider God as a “genie in a bottle” who will grant you a wish that comes true.

If your prayer consists of requests, wishes, desires, and cravings, then the mind will not be able to reach Enlightenment due to your constant cravings and desires while being attached to God, asking for “stuff”.

Have you ever prayed for a new car, a new house, or more wealth and God instantly granted that wish? No, of course not. This is how you know the truth that God is not a “genie in a bottle” and for you to accomplish anything wholesome in this life, it needs to be initiated by you and your actions.

Detailed explanation of “Aspirations Are Not Obtained by Means of Prayer” is available in this same book series found in Chapter 82 of the book “Generosity” (Volume 13).

If you choose to have a personal relationship with God, you can through prayer and giving “thanks”. But the constant asking for “stuff” from God would only be due to a Practitioner’s own craving/desire/attachment and inhibit them from the attainment of Enlightenment.

If you choose to pray, you might consider to acknowledge in prayer that you believe in God, are open to guidance, and give thanks. Any sort of craving/desire/attachment in prayer would only inhibit a Practitioner from liberation of the mind.

If you have a craving/desire/attachment to exist in heaven after this life in union with God, you will need to eliminate this desire from the mind to attain Enlightenment. If there is still craving/desire/attachment at the time of death, there will be rebirth. A mind that craves existence with God after this life will not be liberated to attain Enlightenment, but instead, continue to be reborn through countless lives until the mind attains Enlightenment.

God and The Natural Law of Kamma

It is important to realize that if you would like change and improvement in your life, you will need to create that for yourself because constantly asking God for change has not worked and will not work. Any improvement in your life needs to be initiated by you.

If you would like a good and wholesome life, you need to create that for yourself through “The Natural Law of Kamma”. If you do good and wholesome things through your intentions, speech, and actions, you will have a good and wholesome life.

All that happens in this life is a result of The Natural Law of Kamma, not the result of “God’s Creative Actions”. God nor Kamma rewards us nor punishes us. But, instead, all our own actions produce a result either wholesome or unwholesome. The Natural Law of Kamma is “the results of our decisions”.

God and Elimination of Fear

Some traditions of teachings that include God, teach human beings to fear God. God does not need to be feared. If you have belief in God, God would not be interested in having you fear, which can make the mind neurotic, but instead know that there is an unlimited amount of love and compassion from God for you. You should be encouraged to practice these same qualities towards God and all living beings throughout your life practice.

It is important that if you have a belief in God that you do not fear God. All fear needs to be eliminated as part of this path to attaining Enlightenment, including any fear you may have of God. If there is fear, there can be no Enlightenment.

The Afterlife - An Undeclared Teaching

An “afterlife”, which Gotama Buddha left as an “undeclared” Teaching, is what happens when one has attained Enlightenment in this life or at death - what happens next? That is the afterlife.

Gotama Buddha did not teach about an afterlife or a soul. He left these “undeclared” in his Teachings. He did not teach whether we exist nor not exist once we attain Enlightenment and die. He shared that there is no more rebirth as “a being” in The Cycle of Rebirth which is different than “no existence at all”. If we do not attain Enlightenment during this life or at death, we will be reborn through The Cycle of Rebirth. If we attain Enlightenment in this life, there will be no more rebirth in The Cycle of Rebirth.

These are the undeclared Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

- the world is eternal
- the world is not eternal
- the world is finite
- the world is infinite
- the soul is the same as the body
- the soul is one thing and the body is another
- after death The Tathāgata exists
- after death The Tathāgata does not exist
- after death The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist
- after death The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist

Tathāgata is another term used to refer to Gotama Buddha.

Gotama Buddha is referring to himself who was an Arahant, therefore, you can also insert “Enlightened Being” for Tathāgata. This means, he left The Teachings “undeclared” of whether a being who has attained Enlightenment as an Arahant “after death exists, does not exist, both exists and does not exist, neither exists nor does not exist”.

Just like all craving/desire/attachment, if we crave the answer to these questions, it will cause the mind to be discontent. Knowing the answer to any of these questions will not lead to an individual’s own Enlightenment and therefore Gotama Buddha never taught or “declared” these Teachings. They are “undeclared”.

There were many Teachings Gotama Buddha did not share, as his main focus was to help people understand that they needed to work towards their own salvation through the process of attaining Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha focused everyone's attention, the mind, and their development on The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment - the elimination of discontentedness and the suffering it causes rather than rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship. He taught people to practice The Teachings of being a good moral person that eliminates all unwholesome Kamma production, producing only wholesome Kamma.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings are about non-attachment. He was not even interested in people attaching to him nor the existence of God, as Gotama Buddha knew Enlightenment is 100% determined by our own intentions, speech, and actions.

Rebirth, or The Cycle of Rebirth, is the process in which all beings who have not attained Enlightenment during this life or at death, will be reborn into a new form or formless existence in the hell, animal, afflicted spirits, human, or heavenly realms.

You need to be comfortable with not knowing the answer, in other words, not craving to know what is or is not going to happen in an afterlife as craving to know this outcome will inhibit you from attaining Enlightenment and will cause rebirth. The goal is to extinguish all craving for a "personal existence view", "desire for form", and "desire for the formless". These are just three (3) aspects of The Ten Fetters required for Enlightenment as it relates to the discussion in this Chapter.

If you attain Enlightenment in this human existence, life will be so peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy that you will have no need to know what comes next in the afterlife, if anything at all. You will be experiencing complete and total peace of mind and will know that if there is something after death, having attained Enlightenment, it must be good.

The goal is to attain Enlightenment in this very life so that you will not be reborn through The Cycle of Rebirth into another existence. You can attain Enlightenment during your existing life to experience ever lasting peace or at death.

In order to accomplish this goal, one would need to ensure there is no craving/desire/attachment including the craving to know what will or will not occur once one attains Enlightenment and dies.

No Interest in God

If you have no belief or understanding of God, that is fine, and you will not be inhibited from attaining Enlightenment in any way.

This practice has no attachments to God, and there is no requirement to not believe in God. A Practitioner can maintain a relationship with God, if they choose, and still attain Enlightenment. But, a Practitioner would need to understand The Teachings in this Chapter to help them navigate what they may or may not have been taught in the past related to the topic of God.

This practice is about freedom of thought and “free will”. This life practice is about observing how your own intentions, speech, and actions determine 100% of your life through The Natural Law of Kamma.

Nothing and no one other than you can control the mind, your intentions, your speech, or your actions.

Practicing Loving-kindness and Compassion Towards God

Depending on what you have been taught in the past, a Practitioner can experience anger, hatred, or ill will towards God. This can be detrimental for one’s own mind and progress on The Path to Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha taught to have loving-kindness and compassion for “all beings”. While one does not need to have a belief or relationship with God to attain Enlightenment, a Practitioner would need to be sure they do not have anger, hatred, or ill will towards God.

If a Practitioner has anger, hatred, or ill will towards any being at all, the mind will not experience Enlightenment.

While some people are taught that God punishes us and rewards us, this is not true and could lead to harmful feelings in the mind. Some are even taught that God is the one who determines who lives or dies. This also is not true and would only produce harmful feelings in the mind inhibiting you from the attainment of Enlightenment.

If you have been taught to pray to God for the objects of your desire and have not received a favorable outcome, the mind might harbor anger, hatred, or ill will towards God thinking that he has turned his back on you or failed you in some way.

It is not that God has failed you or turned his back on you, but instead, what was taught to you was not the truth.

If one was taught that God decides who lives or dies and that he answers prayers giving you whatever you wish for, then when someone close to you dies this might create painful feelings in the mind that are being attributed to God and still held on to today. A Practitioner will need to “let this go” realizing God does not determine who lives and dies.

Instead of harboring anger, hatred, or ill will towards God, a Practitioner will need to release this realizing that what you were taught in the past is not the truth. God does not punish and reward us nor give us what we “want”, but instead, it is our own intentions, speech, and actions that produce results in our life. It is our own life practice and how we conduct ourselves in the world that determines the outcomes of what we experience in life. A well known Teacher who shared many teachings about God shared “you reap what you sow” and this is The Natural Law of Kamma.

It is important to realize that while certain venues share their beliefs of what God does and does not do, through learning and practicing these Teachings you can observe the truth for yourself, without a need to believe.

You can observe for yourself that the only reason why people die is because they were born. Because an individual was born, they need to die. God does not punish us through death or the death of those close to us but instead, we need to die because we were born. This is part of The Universal Truth of Impermanence as discussed in the Chapter titled “The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View” (Chapter 4).

You can observe for yourself that God does not sit listening for prayers granting wishes like a “genie in a bottle”. If he did, you could pray for anything you want right now and it would immediately appear. This is not how the world works despite this being taught in some venues.

It is not that God does not exist or that he does not care about what we are or are not doing, it is that what some of us have been taught related to God is not true. When we are taught that God will do a certain thing and it does not happen, one might think that God does not care or does not exist.

Instead, what is being taught is not the truth which leads one to think that God does not care or does not exist, rather than realizing what has been taught is not the truth.

Understanding God

If you would like to understand God, then perhaps you might consider that God is also a Practitioner of these Teachings - The Natural Laws of Existence. He is the highest and most developed Practitioner of these Teachings because he is the one who created The Natural Laws of Existence. Consider that he is not attached to us, but it is possible to have love and care while not being attached to others.

As a parent, would you constantly restrain your child from touching the hot stove after repeated lessons to help them see that the stove is hot and that it will hurt them? Or, would you eventually decide to let the child touch the hot stove so that they can see the truth for themselves to acquire wisdom so that they will make the wise decision to no longer touch the hot stove?

God's approach, purpose, and responsibility is not to constantly restrain us ensuring that there is never any harm that comes to us. God does not have a craving/desire/attachment to having your life progress in a certain direction. Instead, as a wise parent would, he is interested in seeing each being choose to walk towards Enlightenment through their own free will choices.

God's purpose is to help us and guide us to understanding these Natural Laws of Existence, if we choose to have a relationship with him and seek his guidance. He is not domineering and controlling but instead, here to help those who choose to have a relationship with him and request his guidance.

He is interested in seeing all beings acquire wisdom. He is interested in seeing all beings practicing loving-kindness and compassion towards each other, learning to live in harmony with one another but he is not attached to this outcome. God is interested in seeing all beings attain Enlightenment to create "heaven on earth".

God does not have a preplanned path for every human being that we must follow or are required to follow. He does not require us to fulfill his desires because he does not have craving/desire/attachment for us to do anything specific. We all have free will to make whatever choices we would like to make in our life and doing so based on The Natural Laws of Existence will create peacefulness and harmony in our life beyond anything you could imagine.

If God "flipped a switch" to have everything in the world function perfectly in an instant, then within a matter of seconds the world would be right back into the same problems we have always had as individuals and as a collective society. Through our own free will, we would choose to make

unwholesome decisions taking life in an unwholesome direction because we still lack the wisdom of how to make wholesome decisions.

Anything that God would do to improve upon the world would be immediately tainted as individuals would make countless decisions through craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) to once again bring the world back into decline and into the darkness.

Instead, a wise parent would choose to share teachings with their children to learn, reflect upon, and practice so that they can acquire wisdom to make wise decisions through their own free will as responsible individuals.

The other option would be that God controls everyone, there is no free will, and we are all robots. We know this is not true reality and no one would enjoy this type of world. Nobody would appreciate a pushy and domineering parent who is attempting to control their children, and that is why God does not practice those qualities.

So, our choice is to decide to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings to acquire wisdom leading to liberation of the mind where it is completely peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy or not.

If we choose not to practice these Teachings, then, we should realize that is a decision that leads to our own consequences based on our own decisions, not the decisions of God.

And, through choosing to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings that will also lead to our own consequences based on our own decisions, not the decisions of God.

God nor Gotama Buddha chooses to motivate us through guilt, shame, or fear. While others may share teachings in that way, that is not what would lead to liberation of the mind. God nor Gotama Buddha chose to share Teachings in that way and neither do I.

Instead, it is more helpful for a Practitioner to realize they have complete free will to make any decisions they like. And, the more we understand The Natural Law of Kamma, the wiser decisions that we can make experiencing improved outcomes.

God does not grant Enlightenment and God does not control all things in life.

We have complete “free will” to determine our own path in life. We do not need to be attached to the outcome of this existence nor be attached to God to create change in our life. Only you can create change in your life through your own free will and personal choices as a responsible and wise individual.

If you believe God does exist, God would be interested in all humans being kind, gentle, warm, and loving with each other. These Teachings will guide you in developing a mind and life practice free from discontentedness and the suffering it causes. You can obtain your own salvation and believe in or have a relationship with God. You will not earn salvation through worship but through practicing Teachings that lead to universal love for all beings, causing no harm, and leading a good moral life. These are The Universal Teachings as described in Chapter 1 of this book.

If you do not believe in God and develop a kind, gentle, warm, and loving life practice, should you someday find God does exist, God would be very pleased with your intentions, speech, and actions. And, if God does not exist, then you would have had a comfortable and wholesome existence on earth while living in harmony with other beings. You would have led a very wholesome life in developing this “life practice”.

You do not need to believe in God to learn and practice these Teachings and a belief in God will also not hinder your practice, as long as you are not craving and desiring things from God nor having anger or hatred towards God. A relationship with God would only be helpful if cultivated as described in this Chapter.

God is able to help you, if you choose to invite him into your life but that is not required in order to attain Enlightenment. You might think of God as another Teacher who is able to share his wisdom but only does so when someone seeks his guidance. He can be thought of as a very best friend who does not want anything from you nor will ever turn his back on you. God is only interested in seeing you be well and peaceful. He has an equal amount of “true love” for each and every being that has existed, exists now, and will exist in the future. What type of relationship or whether you have a relationship with God at all, is your choice. You are not penalized for not having a relationship with God but in choosing to have a relationship with God, he will help you as a friend or perhaps you might think of him as a kind, patient, understanding, loving, and wise Father who is always there for you if you choose to reach out a hand to him.

God does not have any jealousy whatsoever as jealousy is caused by craving/desire/attachment and God does not have any craving/desire/attachment.

A Practitioner will need to deeply consider The Teachings in this Chapter and all other Chapters within this book and book series to attain Enlightenment.

All things that happen are not due to God's creative actions and Enlightenment is not granted to you by God. For this reason, you can understand, believe, and have a relationship with God or not while still attaining Enlightenment.

This is your journey, and you get to decide what is or is not included in your life journey.

You are not being controlled and you cannot gain "material things" from God through prayer as everything that you acquire in this life is based on your own life decisions and your own life choices through The Natural Law of Kamma.

Choose wisely...

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 18) - God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/lxV7C6efbE0>

Ep. 518 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 18) - God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--518---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-18---Gods-Creative-Action-You-Have-Free-Will-e272uk2>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 18 - God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will

<https://youtube.com/live/k4qcOUSUQws>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/dOqPUHNp1xQ>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 474 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 18 - God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--474---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-18---Gods-Creative-Action-You-Have-Free-Will-e25m0e3/a-aa0aiqb>

Ep. 475 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--475---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e25oolr/a-aa0ki67>

Quiz

God's Creative Action: You Have Free Will

<https://forms.gle/PJbX2m1RxASoJZmT8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 19

The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death

Three aspects of life that are the most difficult for us to deal with in our human existence are sickness, aging, and death.

The young Prince Siddhartha Gotama, who eventually became Gotama Buddha, was sheltered during his first 29 years of existence as his father, the King, was keeping him in the palace attempting to lure him into the ways of a monarch through keeping him attached to the luxurious life of being a Prince and eventually a King.

At the age of 29, Siddhartha Gotama exits the palace for the first time without his father's knowledge to observe life outside the palace. He had his attendant with him who helped explain Siddhartha Gotama's four (4) observations of sickness, aging, death, and an Ascetic or monk - a spiritual seeker.

Siddhartha Gotama was passionately interested in understanding the nature of life and why beings experience sickness, aging, and death along with the associated discontentedness of mind. He observed the Kingdom was full of discontentedness and was not interested to rule over the hardship that he observed. Instead he was interested in finding the answers to what plagued the people of the Kingdom to help them, and decided to embark on a spiritual journey that ultimately led him to Enlightenment and all the answers to his questions.

The motivation and determination of Siddhartha Gotama eventually led him to the understanding that because of the impermanent nature of all conditioned objects and the mind's craving for permanence, we cause our own discontent mind. Through a lack of wisdom, the mind is ignorant (unknowing of true reality) of The Natural Laws of Existence and, thus, beings are trapped into a Cycle of Rebirth repeatedly experiencing sickness, aging, and death.

It is not until we learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings to eliminate the discontentedness in the mind attaining Enlightenment that we solve the discontent mind and escape The Cycle of Rebirth. Only then, will our constant wandering and roaming be eliminated residing peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

Sickness

The health of our physical body is important and we should maintain our health through a proper food supply and other prudent activities. We need to give the body what it needs to maintain its health. If the body ceases to exist through death, then the mind cannot stay in the current human form to cultivate the consciousness. If we do not attain Enlightenment, we will be reborn thus, our difficult experiences continue.

Sickness is a major challenge in our human existence. Oftentimes when we are sick, we might moan or groan about our illness. Our normal activities might cease and thus our attachment to being active and to wanting permanent health of the physical body causes the mind to be discontent.

It is important that we seek help for our sickness but in doing so, understand that sickness is part of the human existence. We cannot escape this as part of our human condition. The body is impermanent and we will not always be healthy. If we are human, we will be sick.

During times of sickness, it is easy for the mind to stop practicing these Teachings and perhaps talk poorly to people around you and have poor actions while feeling miserable. The mind is often highly discontent when we are sick.

The “cause and effect” of The Natural Law of Kamma does not stop just because we are sick. Being sick is not an excuse for being impolite, unkind, unfriendly, and disrespectful to others.

Be sure you continue to practice The Teachings shared in this book which includes Right Intention, Right Speech, and Right Action along with all the other Teachings. If we speak kindly and politely to those caring for us during our sickness, it will continue to create wholesome Kamma and we will experience excellent care as people will be pleased to help us.

Aging

Aging is a challenge of life. As we age, our youthful appearance fades and if we are attached to our youthful appearance, we may take drastic steps to continue looking youthful that can cause discontentedness.

By attaching to our youthful appearance, we may opt for costly medical procedures or go down the path of extreme efforts to maintain our youth. This would require extensive effort all to please the mind that “craves” a youthful appearance rather than accepting that we all age. It is a normal part of life and the human existence.

Aging brings challenges with the physical body that we all experience. We experience aches, pains, and difficulties that we did not have during our more youthful days. We need to accept this as part of the human existence while recognizing it is impermanent. We will not always look or feel the same as the body ages as the body is impermanent.

If you are attached to your youthful appearance and constantly “crave” youthfulness, the mind will be discontent. If you are attached to the physical body and constantly “crave” to never feel pain, the mind will be discontent. These things are all impermanent and if the mind is clinging to permanent youthfulness or permanent comfort in the physical body, there will be discontentedness.

Death

Death is one of the biggest challenges for humans to accept and understand. Accepting our own death and the death of those close to us can be extremely challenging. There are major attachments to our friends and family unless you have learned and are practicing “love without attachment”. Upon the death of friends and family or our own death, it’s the end of our time together in this existence without any chance to ever again resolve any undiscussed concerns or dilemmas.

Death can be a time of grave and deep discontentedness or despair due to the burden of significant attachment and the sometimes abrupt end of life rather than a *gradual* letting go. Even with *gradual* death, it can often be a challenge for humans to accept and deal with when the mind is craving permanence.

A friend or family members’ death does not need to be taken as a tragic loss. Through understanding and practicing these Teachings, you can accept death as a natural and normal occurrence that will happen because we are humans and we must die. The human condition means we were born and thus we will experience sickness, aging, and death. The mind craves for permanent health, youthfulness, and for those close to us to be with us permanently. The unEnlightened mind is uncomfortable with the impermanent nature of the human condition and when we experience sickness, aging, and death this represents significant impermanence in our life. Therefore, the unEnlightened mind is often discontent associated with these unwelcome changes in our life.

The mind can be trained to understand and accept the impermanent nature of the human condition, residing peaceful and calm even during sickness, aging, and death.

Death does not need to involve sadness, grief, and remorse. These are feelings produced due to attachment and the mind causing itself to be discontent. If there is love without attachment, you can experience death of those close to you without sadness, grief, nor remorse. You can have gratitude for the time you spent together rather than craving/desiring permanence which will only cause discontentedness.

Gotama Buddha explained to us that there is only one reason why we die and it's because we were born. Because there is birth, there is sickness, aging, and ultimately death. This is the human condition and Gotama Buddha's Teachings help us to eliminate all three of these by escaping The Cycle of Rebirth. If we are not born, then we will not experience sickness, aging, nor death.

It is ignorance (unknowing of true reality) that the unEnlightened mind does not understand what it does not understand that continues us in constant rounds of The Cycle of Rebirth. It is only when the mind acquires wisdom, that it is liberated from discontentedness experiencing Enlightenment and at the same time liberated from The Cycle of Rebirth.

Gotama Buddha did not teach what happens after death once we have already attained Enlightenment. The Teachings of the "afterlife" is an undeclared Teaching. He did explain that we can attain Enlightenment during this life or at death. He left The Teaching undeclared of what transpires once one attains Enlightenment and then dies, because knowing the answer to this question does not change or effect our ability to attain Enlightenment in this life in this human state.

No one has ever attained Enlightenment and returned, since one who has attained Enlightenment would not return back to any future existence in The Cycle of Rebirth. Therefore, it is an undeclared Teaching of what happens once one attains Enlightenment and dies. Gotama Buddha's goal was to focus the mind on attaining Enlightenment in this very life so that we could escape The Cycle of Rebirth and no longer experience existence in The Cycle of Rebirth which would only bring sorrow, misery, displeasure, and despair. The Enlightened mind will only experience peacefulness, calmness, serenity, and contentedness with joy - permanently.

If we still have craving at the end of this life, that is the fuel that will cause us to remain in The Cycle of Rebirth and be reborn into another realm. If we have not attained one of The Four Stages of Enlightenment, we will most likely be reborn into a lower realm of existence such as hell, animal, or the afflicted spirits realm although there is the opportunity to be reborn back into the human realm or the heavenly realm. None of the existences in any of the

realms is permanent and it is not until one attains Enlightenment that they will eliminate discontentedness and escape The Cycle of Rebirth.

Siddhartha Gotama eventually left his royal heritage to seek a better understanding of these observations of sickness, aging, and death to help end discontentedness of the mind. He became a homeless roaming Ascetic seeking a better understanding of life to resolve the significant discontentedness he observed with the human existence.

He was not interested to be a ruler over people in misery and pain with discontentedness affecting the mind. Instead he looked for answers to the most significant problems that existed in the world - sickness, aging, and death. The young Siddhartha Gotama was interested in understanding why these three human conditions caused such significant discontentedness of mind.

Through his six (6) year pursuit, he *gradually* awakened the mind as The Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha finding the answers to these questions and many others. He contemplated for seven (7) weeks of whether to teach his new found wisdom, as he did not think the world was ready for The Teachings.

Gotama Buddha returned to teach five (5) Ascetics he knew prior to his independent pursuit of Enlightenment. They did not believe that he was Enlightened so he sat down and touched the earth with his hand to call on the animal kingdom to give witness of his attainment of Enlightenment. Animals came from all directions and the Ascetics had confidence in him and then listened to his Teachings and The Community of Enlightened beings flourished.

It is said that immediately upon Gotama Buddha's death, there was a significant earthquake that shook the earth.

An earthquake following the death of a Buddha is an indication to those who remain alive that this person was indeed a Buddha. This helps those who did not learn and practice his Teachings during his lifetime that, with the confirmation that he is a Buddha, they would be wise to learn, reflect, and practice his Teachings to attain Enlightenment with those who remain alive.

These two examples are the only significant miracles I am aware of that were said to have happened during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha and that I know to be true. From this point forward, he provided Teachings that could be understood and then practiced so each person can observe the truth and gain wisdom for themselves liberating the mind from strong feelings.

Gotama Buddha helped others to attain Enlightenment through his Teachings and guidance out of compassion for the world.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings do not require belief as you can see the truth from your own practice of his Teachings as the condition of the mind gradually improves. You learn The Teachings, practice The Teachings, gain wisdom that liberates the mind and gain the results of a better, more peaceful, and more calm existence.

As the mind experiences Enlightenment, it will reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy being unaffected by sickness, aging, or death. The Enlightened mind is unshakable even by the most significant challenges in life.

An Enlightened being will no longer experience any discontentedness related to sickness, aging, nor death, or any other aspect of life. The mind is steady, calm, stable, and unshakeable. The mind has been liberated and experiences permanent peacefulness.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 19) - The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death (Read & Listen)

https://youtu.be/Wmg1t_7aICl

Ep. 519 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 19) - The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--519---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-19---The-Difficult-Human-Existence-Sickness--Aging--and-Death-e272ulk>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) Chapter 19 - The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death

<https://youtube.com/live/eDq0aSr10ko>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/iJ9R9qcv8C4>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 477 - (Group Learning Program) Chapter 19 - The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--477---Group-Learning-Program-Chapter-19---The-Difficult-Human-Existence-Sickness--Aging--and-Death-e25v6t7/a-aa1bqdj>

Ep. 478 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--478---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e261rit/a-aa1l0dg>

Quiz

The Difficult Human Existence: Sickness, Aging, and Death

<https://forms.gle/AAVPRYhgsmDJDR4H6>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 20

Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness

As mentioned in a previous Chapter, there are Five Realms of Existence - heavenly realm, human realm, realm of afflicted spirits, animal realm, and realm of hell.

Each of these realms have certain characteristics and aspects or conditions within each realm, and certain conditions for the beings in that realm. To obtain the human form, we are primarily reborn from the animal or heavenly realms.

For humans to take form into the human realm, we have already had countless previous births. Planet earth has existed for over 4.5 billion years. Your existence for 80-100 years in your current human form, and our ability to somewhat understand the last few thousand years is minuscule compared to how long the planet has existed.

Globally we say it is the year 2021, however, that is just counting from a period of time based on historical events that occurred in the recent past. Is it really and truly the year 2021 when the planet earth has existed for over 4.5 billion years?

Well, it depends on when you started counting.

If we count from the beginning of the existence of the earth, the current year 2021 does not come close to accurately reflecting the total history of the planet, its existence, and its evolution. There is a lot more to learn here on this planet than what you currently know or understand.

Keeping this in mind, your own existence in this human form is also minuscule in the grand scheme of planetary existence. Our 80-100 years of natural life, is a blink of an eye compared to the total time and existence of the entire earth.

At this point in time, you have memory and can recall events, situations, and relationships that have transpired within your current existence - your current life. However, you have had several lives prior to this life that you may not currently recall and cannot remember. Those prior existences may not be part of your current available memories.

As the mind wakes up closer and closer to Enlightenment, the mind may have memories of previous lives. The process of progressing towards Enlightenment will allow you to attain a higher and Higher Consciousness, which allows you to see more of your current life and past lives.

As you ascend to a higher place, you can see more of the bigger picture.

Just like if you were in a village or city, you can only see and experience what is in that village or city. But if you relocated to a higher location on a nearby mountain top, you would be able to see all the other villages from this higher vantage point and how all these villages interconnect from one to the other.

Attaining a Higher Consciousness will have the same effect as being on top of the mountain.

As you attain a Higher Consciousness, you will see more of your existing life and how to create a smooth and peaceful existence within this life. You may also observe previous births in the other realms, including previous births in the human realm.

To obtain rebirth in the human realm, you would have needed to generate significant amounts of wholesome Kamma in your previous births.

Seeing past lives, is not necessarily important because they are in the past and have no significance on your attaining Enlightenment in this life. Discovering past lives is interesting but will not help you to attain Enlightenment in this life. Only what you do in this life will contribute to Enlightenment in this life. Nothing from past lives and nothing in the past from this life matters - it's in the past and does not affect your ability to attain Enlightenment in this life.

Being born into the human realm means there have most likely already been countless previous births within all Five Realms. A certain number of rebirths into the human realm occur from the heavenly realm. The vast majority of all rebirths occur out of the animal realm into the human realm.

Gotama Buddha explained that the total volume of all our blood from our previous births is greater than the total volume of water in all the oceans and seas of the entire world. He also explained that all the milk we have drank from our mother in our previous rebirths is also greater than the total volume of water in all the oceans and seas of the entire world.

Considering the planet has existed for 4.5 billion years and your short life span within each of your previous existences, you can easily see how your previous rebirths would be numerous and countless. The total volume of

blood from those existences and births would easily total more than all the water of all the oceans on the planet.

This is why the goal for this human existence is to reach Enlightenment so that you can eliminate The Cycle of Rebirth while experiencing a content and peaceful remaining existence in this human form. You and I have been wandering through this entire process of rebirth countless times, being reborn into various forms.

Our Kamma in those previous births has not led us to The Teachings which allow us to cultivate our consciousness and gain wisdom to completely escape this Cycle of Rebirth. You are still bound by The Ten Fetters which will keep you trapped in The Cycle of Rebirth, until you work to eliminate these from the mind.

Animal to Human

To exist in the human realm, it means you have previously been reborn into the animal realm countless times. You may not remember these births at this time, but you may gain these memories as you continue to develop your consciousness.

But even in your current mental state, you can understand the process of rebirth and that you were previously born as an animal.

Let me explain...

Many people consider humans to be animals, more developed and intelligent, but nonetheless we are often considered animals.

If you think of how the human mind works, it is very much like an animal's mind but much more evolved.

When we are first reborn into the human realm, we are evolving out of countless previous animal existences. Just like an animal, we do not have the ability to remember events, people or situations in great detail. As a human, the mind operates on praise and reward, and continues to function best in a praise and reward structure - just like an animal.

Even though we are now in the human realm, we go through all the same trials and tribulations of the animal realm because the consciousness is evolving out of the animal realm. We begin to understand, through developing the mind, how to eat and what food does for the body. We learn to walk, talk, interact, socialize, and what is acceptable or not acceptable within our "pack" of like species. We learn through our experiences and

interactions with other humans, just like animals learn through the experiences and interactions they have with other animals of the same kind.

Some animal behaviors are instinctive while others are learned behaviors, just like with humans. We have many instinctive behaviors while many of our behaviors and conduct are learned behavior. Humans left on their own without socialization (learned behavior) and without the ability to acquire more wisdom, would instinctively revert to our animal consciousness.

The animal consciousness is overwhelmingly preoccupied with basic survival instincts that are born out of craving, anger, ignorance (unknowing of true reality), accumulation of an ego and protection of a self. Keep in mind that craving encompasses strong desire and a lack of interest to share or be generous, which includes the excessive accumulation of food. Animals are well known for hoarding food without interest to share.

As humans, we start off our existence with these same qualities of our consciousness, yet, because we are humans we can evolve beyond craving, anger, ignorance (unknowing of true reality), the accumulation of ego and the protection of a self.

Enlightenment is the abandoning of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) the elimination of ego and the realization of non-self.

The process of Enlightenment is in effect, evolving beyond our animal instincts and consciousness into the human realm of existence with a Higher Consciousness. Many humans will not evolve into a Higher Consciousness during their life or at death through the process of attaining Enlightenment and, thus, will be reborn back into the animal realm or a lower realm of existence.

Humans may also be reborn back into the human realm or into the heavenly realm depending on Kamma in this life.

It should be the goal of every human, now that we have obtained this rare rebirth into the human realm, to work to attain Enlightenment in this very life. This is the only way to end our massive self destruction of the planet and end the continuous Cycle of Rebirth.

Birth in its very nature consists of misery and pain whether in the animal realm or human realm. If we are born, we will experience sickness, aging, and death along with massive amounts of discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

Evolving past our animal instincts and the animal consciousness is possible now that you have obtained this human state. It must not go to waste, and you must not be complacent.

This knowledge is available for you to evolve to a Higher Consciousness if you take steps forward to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings so that you can attain the results.

This is why these Teachings are not a “religion” as humans have understood them and categorized them in the past. Religion is often thought as an organization attempting to control human behaviors, I understand why many would think this way.

However, these Teachings are to attain a better existence, a Higher Consciousness, and guidance to assist you in escaping the continuous Cycle of Rebirth. Through training the mind, we can experience an improved human existence evolving beyond the animal instincts of our previous lives.

There is no interest to control behavior but for you to “save” yourself from The Cycle of Rebirth and create a peaceful existence. But, you must do the work to “save” yourself.

This is why there is no central organization that governs these Teachings and there is no central figure who controls The Teachings or the people who are learning and practicing these Teachings. Each person is able to make their own decisions of what is helpful for their life.

These Teachings are to assist you and all of humanity, to evolve past animal consciousness and into a better existence, so that you will not need to be reborn into another existence to experience the misery that is associated with birth. If you are reborn, you will experience misery through sickness, aging, and death. The goal is to never be reborn ever again. “Not being reborn” means you escape the misery of existing in any form while enjoying the rest of this life without discontentedness. The mind will be peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

Status of the World

It is common for an unEnlightened mind to complain or take exception with the current state of the planet. The environment is not healthy and a large majority of the minds of people on the planet are not healthy. The health and condition of the minds of humans is directly reflected in the health and condition of the planet.

Because human existence has largely reverted back to our animal consciousness of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), with the accumulation of ego and protection of self, we are seeing massive amounts of destruction to our planet and to each other.

Murders, rapes, massive accumulation of wealth and power by a small percentage of the population (i.e. hoarding) which helps to cause extensive poverty and famine, corrupt politics that allows for further accumulation of wealth and power, diseases, invented diseases that help to create wealth with costly medical procedures or medications, these and countless other problems exist on the planet due to the mind of humans reverting back to the animal consciousness of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), with the accumulation of ego and protection of a self.

If this progression of human consciousness is allowed to continue to degrade, our human existence will be utterly destroyed through creating “hell on earth”.

The Path Forward

It is common for humans to complain about the condition of the planet and the misery that exists. It is also common for humans to complain about how “others” contributed to the misery of the planet and the world around us rather than looking at our own individual intentions, speech, and actions.

What all humans must understand, is that there is nothing you can do to individually change another human. It is the choice of each human to change themselves.

You will not and cannot change the natural laws that govern the world. You can do nothing to change the fact that The Natural Law of Karma exists and that The Cycle of Rebirth will continue for the remaining time of human existence.

The only thing you can do, personally, is to seek your own Enlightenment and assist those around you to also seek this Higher Consciousness as they choose to ask questions.

As Gotama Buddha said, “do not allow yourself to be the last person” to attain Enlightenment.

If you spend time attempting to change local laws, motivate people to change local policies, or other aspects of life without the encouragement of seeking a Higher Consciousness, you are attempting to change behavior but not human consciousness through these Teachings.

By attaining a Higher Consciousness, human behavior will automatically change through freedom of choice with deeper and more profound wisdom.

We must be the influence and motivators to encourage all humans to improve their consciousness to abandon craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) to dissolve the ego and realize non-self. This will automatically influence more healthy decision making and behaviors. We influence others through our own intentions, speech, and actions, not through telling others “what to do”.

If each human does not walk toward the “light” and continues to dwell in the “darkness”, then the planet will continue to become a darker and darker place to exist.

Most of us do not have the influence or ability to change or affect large populations of people unless you are a leader within your community.

Most of us live a daily life with a handful of close friends and family around us. We attempt to change a rule or policy that we think will bring about a better existence for those people in our immediate society.

However, working endlessly to influence change or to change a law, policy, or specific condition of the human existence as it exists in this current modern time, does little to influence the overall evolution of our entire human species and planet that has existed for over 4.5 billion years.

Do you have any insight into the laws or policies that existed a few hundred, thousand, millions, or billions of years ago?

No, because all of that is well in the past and does not matter, it was all impermanent and all that matters is this present moment. But the natural laws that govern our existence have not changed and still influence everything about our existence. You need to learn and understand these natural laws of existence in order to create a peaceful existence in this life.

All you can do as an individual is to make a decision to work towards attaining a Higher Consciousness, while motivating and encouraging those around you to do the same by being a good example of a Practitioner who is practicing these Teachings with your own wholesome intentions, speech, and actions.

But it is your salvation and inner growth that is the most important. There is nothing you can do to “change” another human. They need to make their own decisions to change and evolve to a Higher Consciousness.

When you have attained Enlightenment, you will not experience any anger, have feelings of frustration, or blame others for the problems you face.

You will not have anxiety, sadness, boredom, loneliness, fears, or other discontent feelings. When you attain Enlightenment, you will have eliminated your cravings and addictions. You will not discriminate or judge others. You will not have a desire to always be “right” and argue. If these exist now, you need more growth and more inner development to fully awaken to your Higher Consciousness.

It is not selfish to focus on yourself and your own evolution and growth.

You can run around the earth focusing on changing societies’ laws, modifying a policy, or conducting business, those things are needed as well, but if you are neglecting yourself and your own inner development then you are not serving yourself nor humanity to the best of your ability.

You must work to evolve your consciousness beyond the animal instincts and into a higher human consciousness. As you do that, you will be a better parent, friend, family member, employee, boss, or whatever it is that you would like to do in life. As you develop a Higher Consciousness, the sky is the limit.

You need to start with “Right View”. Understand that “you” and “you alone” cause your discontentedness and “you” can eliminate your discontentedness by eliminating cravings, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) seeking Enlightenment.

Without this basic and most important understanding, you will blame others for your condition within this human existence. You will think there is no ability for you to improve or modify anything to escape the misery. You will feel hopeless and a victim to your surroundings and the events in your life. Nothing will improve.

But you have 100% ability to create change in the current condition of the mind. “You” and “you alone” are the only person that can improve your consciousness through learning and practicing these Teachings.

You can pray to God, worship God for eternity, or practice “worshipping” of other entities, however, worshipping is not going to gain you favor nor create a better life for you. God is not a “genie in a bottle” and, if you have a belief in God, it is “you” that must do the work. God will not change your life; only “you” can do that.

You cannot just “worship” or “believe”, you must practice The Teachings that lead to an improved existence.

Nothing external will create inner peace and allow you to attain Enlightenment.

There is no need to pressure or force others to practice Teachings that you yourself are not fully practicing, do not fully understand, and have potentially been misinterpreted. Belief is only belief, but by practicing Teachings that produce results, you will know they are beneficial because your life will improve. You will see the truth and wisdom in your practice as the mind becomes more and more liberated, thus, concentrated, stable, peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. The mind will become unshakable.

Childhood Development

Because humans mainly evolve out of the animal realm, you will find that the best way to guide, teach, and lead humans is through praise and reward like you would do in training an animal towards good behavior and good choices.

You need to treat all beings with loving-kindness and compassion but we can also guide our children in these Teachings and through life’s many lessons much like we would guide any being through praise and reward.

Currently, there are still families around the world who choose to hit children as part of the disciplinary process to guide and teach. This practice is born out of our animal instincts to fight, have anger, and aggression when something is done around us that we disagree with. In doing so, we are teaching children to be angry, hostile, and aggressive, while lacking the ability to solve challenges peacefully through discussion and sharing wisdom. Children need to be taught how to make wise decisions but hitting children only teaches anger, hostility, and aggression.

Instituting capital punishment to kill other beings who we think should not be part of our society due to having committed crimes, is also from our animal instincts and should be eliminated from our global society as killing any being produces unwholesome Kamma and promotes killing.

Why would someone in society think they are wrong for killing if governments sponsor killing through capital punishment, wars, and assassinations?

Leaders of governments are promoting killing while condemning the killing that happens on their streets. This conduct by governments is teaching

humans that killing is appropriate and acceptable if someone has done something we think is wrong.

As an animal, if something happens that angers us or we disagree with, we will fight and show aggression until the other animal complies with our requests or there is a battle to death. This is animal behavior that needs to be purged from our human consciousness.

To guide our children to a Higher Consciousness, we must be actively working to earn our own Enlightenment while being a role model for our children to seek the same. If we continue the destructive cycles of the past, we will continue to see destruction throughout the world.

Positive encouragement and positive influences will help to guide humans to a better existence.

Bullying, mass shootings, aggression, fighting, gang violence, murder, war and countless other behaviors are born out of our animal consciousness to protect the self and show aggression when something happens around us that we do not agree with.

To evolve individually and as an entire civilization, we must learn to talk, discuss, and educate through respectful and polite dialogue. Talking to our children and each other is the only way for us to share and learn.

Just like we learned animal behaviors through socialization, we must learn these Teachings through human interaction and humans teaching each other how to learn and practice these Teachings.

The best way to guide children on this path is to expose them to The Teachings early in life when The Three Poisons and ego is minimal. Then, allow children to experience their own Kamma helping them to understand this natural law while guiding them to making good choices.

All too often, parents “protect” or “insulate” children from the consequences of the child’s unwise decisions. As soon as their child does something that would cause unwholesome Kamma for the child, the parent sometimes will protect the child because they do not want to see the child struggle.

But it is through the struggle of the mistakes and learning from their mistakes that children can grow to understand that The Natural Law of Kamma exists and that their own wholesome or unwholesome intentions, speech, and actions has a direct result or “cause and effect” in their life.

Children can learn that through good decision making based on The Natural Laws of Existence found in these Teachings, they can create a peaceful existence and peaceful life where they do not harm others and, thus, no harm comes to them through The Natural Law of Karma. Children can attain Enlightenment as young as age 7 with proper learning and guidance.

One of the best gifts you could ever give a child is for you to learn and practice these Teachings so that you can attain Enlightenment. Then based on your own growth, provide this same guidance to children so that they can attain Enlightenment which means they will never experience sadness, loneliness, or even cry among many other benefits.

Children can experience a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy from early in life, being able to have healthy and productive relationships that benefit their life for their entire life, without experiencing a life full of frustration with a discontent mind and the suffering it causes.

The very best gift we could ever give a child is to guide them towards attaining Enlightenment, cultivating a mind that has eliminated feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, boredom, loneliness, etc., while practicing generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity towards all beings.

Today, we have countless stimuli in our life. We teach each other but we also learn through media like TV, Internet, music, and gaming. All of these various media and images we hear and see, shape our views and perspectives. All input into the mind is teaching and educating us.

Video games and other media that show graphic content or have us participate in graphic content, does not help to educate us beyond our animal instincts and animal behaviors. While gaming and media can be entertaining, it can also be damaging to our consciousness, making the mind think it is acceptable to harm and kill.

While we may say “it is just a game” or “it is just a movie”, gaming becomes real life, especially when these games are played and media viewed extensively from young age into adolescent and adult life without proper guidance from these Teachings.

While these same games are played throughout the world and graphic media input into the mind, there are only a few places in the world that experience massive anger and acts of violence. The places that experience the most violence and anger are those places that are lacking the social guidance offered by these Teachings.

Be thoughtful of the media that goes into the mind. Graphic violence or other media can persuade you away from a solid life practice and impact the calmness or stability of the mind. Pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant, i.e. discontentedness, can arise through media that affects the mind. All input into The Six Sense Bases including the mind, the doorways to discontentedness, can impact the mind, so choose wisely what you allow into the mind to absorb through the sense bases.

Wise Choices Eliminates Our Animal Behaviors

You can see that hatred and countless acts of violence have drastically increased decade over decade. Mass shootings and violence are being perpetrated throughout the world on a large scale through individual events and terrorist organizations.

We can continue to deny the existence of massive amounts of hatred in our world, which is exacerbated and stimulated by our choice of input into the mind with lack of guidance, or we can implement the guidance found in these Teachings to guide the world to a better existence.

The source of anger, aggression, and mass violence is not the video games or media, it is our roots in the animal realm and our previous animal existences, however, the media we choose to put into the mind encourages or arises animal instincts and behaviors.

Making wise choices to purge hitting for discipline, eliminating input into the mind of media that promotes hatred, violence, killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, use of substances that cause heedlessness, and ensuring governments and leaders do not support the same, will ensure that we “guard our doorways to discontentedness” through wholesome input into the mind.

While The Five Precepts ensure the elimination of a significant portion of unwholesome Kamma for each individual, they also guide each human away from their animal instincts and animal consciousness.

Learning and practicing these Teachings will ensure that we continue to evolve as a species and global society while moving away from our roots in the animal realm and closer to functioning as awakened human beings.

To learn more about The Realms of Existence and The Cycle of Rebirth, see the book titled “The Realms of Existence” (Volume 11) of this same book series.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 20) - Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/6c6QXBHQJgQ>

Ep. 520 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 20) - Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--520---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-20---Animal-to-Human-The-Evolution-of-Our-Consciousness-e272upp>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 20 - Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness

<https://youtube.com/live/SV29ZBcnxcM>

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

https://youtube.com/live/Qm2tgJ70_IE

Podcast(s)

Ep. 480 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 20 - Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--480---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-20---Animal-to-Human-The-Evolution-of-Our-Consciousness-e26a65m/a-aa2gvq7>

Ep. 481 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--481---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e26a609/a-aa2h1cn>

Quiz

Animal to Human: The Evolution of Our Consciousness

<https://forms.gle/YWByki8eb8WFrBD86>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 21

Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet?

When we are reborn into this human existence, we are afflicted by The Three Poisons of craving/greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance/delusion (unknowing of true reality), as described in a previous Chapter.

Through life's progression, The Three Poisons, our ego, and the protection of a self, all affect our relationships, interactions, decisions, and countless aspects of our life. Our decision making is influenced by the mind and what we have accumulated over the course of our current life.

Currently, it is well known that the planet has experienced massive destruction from the human population and our daily decisions. The human population of the planet has drastically impacted the planet's natural habitat. Pollution, waste, lack of food, water, and other resources plagues our ability to live in a healthy environment where all beings can thrive.

The destruction of the planet is a direct result of the destruction of the mind of all of humanity. The pollution of the mind of all of humanity can be seen in the pollution of the planet.

When a significant portion of humanity has accumulated craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) with ego and protection of a self in massive quantities, our decisions become tainted by the stains of our consciousness.

We no longer look to take care of one another and our planet but instead focus on how to enrich our own lives at the peril of everything else. We no longer understand that we are part of a global society where all beings depend on one another and the planet for a peaceful coexistence. But instead, we focus on our own selfish "wants", our own "cravings and desires" rather than focusing on how we can best live a life in harmony with all beings.

These Teachings bring our focus to an independent journey where we apply effort to learn and practice Teachings that eliminate craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) while dissolving the ego and realizing non-self in our pursuit of Enlightenment to attain a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

We apply this practice as an independent journey through awakening the mind in an “independent practice” with guidance of Teachers. We know that we cannot change another being, we can only work to achieve our own peaceful and content mind.

However, our independent journey with these Teachings raises our awareness that all beings are interconnected and depend on each other to sustain life.

While we need to have an independent practice, an independent journey, and independent pursuit of Enlightenment, we realize through these Teachings that we cannot be selfish nor conduct ourselves in a manner that harms other beings nor the planet. Any harm that we cause will only be returned to us as we understand based on The Natural Law of Karma.

Attaining a Higher Consciousness means that we realize our peaceful coexistence requires healthy resources from the planet and that our daily decision making has a direct impact into the health and sustainability of our environment.

We need to understand that we cannot cause destruction to the planet and expect that it will provide us a comfortable environment in which to exist. We cannot strain the planet through exhaustion of resources for the sake of “greed” and expect the planet will provide us a healthy environment in which to live. The “greed” that exists in the human mind has caused us to destroy the planet and we can see the Karma associated with this through the massive pollution and unhealthy state of the planet.

Attaining Enlightenment means that we are no longer reborn through The Cycle of Rebirth, however, we have significant loving-kindness and compassion for all beings. Even in realizing we have attained Enlightenment and are not returning to this planet, we feel a duty to all of humanity that as we leave this life, our last life as part of attaining Enlightenment, that we not only “do no harm” to other beings but that we also “do no harm” to the planet. By practicing harmlessness towards the planet, we will reduce any potential harm to other beings.

Through attaining Enlightenment, we will not experience any more rebirths, but we know we are leaving a planet that needs to sustain life for the future of all beings who will come after us.

We understand that the existence of this planet is over 4.5 billion years and we have been constantly reborn countless times over several eons. In our countless rebirths, it would be hard to find a being that exists today or will

exist after us that has not been our mother, father, sister, brother, child or some other relative at some point in the past. Through our countless rebirths, we are related and have been family members with every being that has existed, exists now, and will exist in the future.

We have significant compassion towards all beings and the need to provide a planet that can sustain a healthy life so that all our “family members”, all of humanity, have the opportunity to cultivate the mind, attain Enlightenment, and escape The Cycle of Rebirth with a sustainable planet and its resources. The pursuit of Enlightenment focuses us entirely and solely on the mind and the elimination or destruction of “The Ten Fetters” through our independent journey. But we are wise enough to know that our independent journey is interconnected to countless other beings.

One could not practice these Teachings of “causing no harm or harmlessness” without a focus on their individual decisions and how those decisions affect the planet in which we inhabit.

We need to pursue Enlightenment with a focus on our independent journey and purification of the mind. We also need to focus on the purification of the planet through helpful decisions that lead to a revitalization of our planet’s resources.

From the earth’s beginning of over 4.5 billion years ago, we have over fished our seas, scraped natural resources from the soil, built extensively, dumped waste, polluted the air we breathe, and have caused massive destruction beyond imagination or our willingness, for some, to admit.

Through modernization, our civilization has lost its connection to the earth and mother earth is hurting. Oftentimes “greed” becomes a priority when many are looking for ways to become “wealthy in material possessions” for the sake of “ego” without regard to the devastation we are causing to humanity and the planet through unwholesome Kamma production.

As craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) and our ego with the protection of a self rules the mind of each human, we destroy the planet without care or regard to what comes next.

If we do not attain Enlightenment in this life, we will be reborn back into another existence until we extinguish all our unwholesome Kamma from this life and our previous lives. This means, we can never run or hide from our unwholesome Kamma and the destruction of the planet.

Destroying the planet now and not attaining Enlightenment means we will be reborn to deal with the destruction of the planet. Destroying the planet now

and attaining Enlightenment means we leave an unhealthy environment for our family members to inhabit for the remaining time of earth's existence.

We are currently at the lowest point of humankind and our existence on the planet. There has never been a time in the evolution of this planet that has seen such massive destruction of the planet and each other. This is a direct result of the destruction of "the mind" of all of humanity.

The solutions to the world's problems lie within these Teachings. Every problem that exists in the world today can be resolved by all of humanity attaining Enlightenment and a Higher Consciousness.

Through eliminating craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) while dissolving the ego and realizing non-self, cultivating generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion for all beings by all humans, while practicing sympathetic joy and equanimity we can drastically improve the condition of humanity and the condition of the planet.

We can create a more gentle, calm, and peaceful humanity through learning and practicing these Teachings. We must start with our own independent practice to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings.

Humanity has countless problems that we have caused. But because we caused these problems, we can also eliminate these problems. We have 100% ability to resolve the unwholesome condition of the mind, the unhealthy planet, and reverse the destruction of humanity.

We can only apply effort to attaining our own Enlightenment while encouraging those around us to do the same. But continuing on the current path of destruction and disregard will only create more destruction.

This book and book series provides us a guide in three primary Teachings: 1.) Universal love for all beings 2.) Do no harm, and, 3.) Be a good moral person.

"Do no harm" relates to harmlessness of other beings and the planet. Through harming other beings or the planet, we harm ourselves due to the harm we cause being returned to us.

This is The Natural Law of Kamma from which we cannot run nor hide.

We must experience all unwholesome Kamma from our previous lives in this life or in future births until we extinguish all unwholesome Kamma through the attaining of Enlightenment.

It is in our best interest and the best interest of all of humanity, that we all pursue Enlightenment while also caring for the planet. In order to sustain life and allow humans the opportunity to live and attain Enlightenment, we will need to have a planet that can support human life.

Our individual decisions each day and each moment contribute to the health of the mind and the health of the planet.

What we have done in the past, is in the past. Now, we must focus on this current moment and what is needed to clean up the mind and clean up the planet.

Food

One aspect of reaching Enlightenment is to consider your food intake ensuring that you are ingesting healthy foods, rather than processed foods. Eating wholesome and nutritious food will ensure you are providing the body with all the nutrients needed to sustain a healthy and fit body. What we ingest into the body is to nourish and sustain “the body”, not to please “the mind”.

Today, some food systems rely on packaged and preserved foods that have an extensive amount of chemicals and other unnatural substances.

To ensure the body has the best quality foods, you should focus on a plant-based food supply that does not include preservatives which can cause unfortunate effects in the body and mind. Animal flesh has an extensive amount of drugs, hormones, toxins, animal emotions, and other unhelpful qualities that can make you sick or mask your true thoughts and emotions.

To have the best chance to observe the mind and know the thoughts and emotions residing within the mind, eliminating preservatives and animal products would be the best approach for the body and the planet.

Significantly reducing or eliminating stimulants like caffeine, sugar, alcohol, drugs and other products will also help you to observe the true mind rather than falsely associating the effect of these substances as coming from the mind.

Drinking as much water, fresh fruit juices, plant-based milks, teas without caffeine, and other natural products while reducing or eliminating the chemicals associated with drinks you ingest, will all be helpful to purifying the body so that you can observe and purify the mind.

It is suggested that you consider the elimination of products such as fluoride, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and other similar products from being used as these contribute to affecting the mind in a way that would not allow you to observe its true nature, and to purify the mind through active training of the mind. Through the elimination of these products and others that have similar effects to the mind, you can observe the improvements to the clarity of the mind for yourself and eliminate any negative effects from these sorts of substances. You will be able to see the truth for yourself as a Practitioner gradually eliminates unbeneficial substances from being ingested that the condition of the body and mind improves.

The best thing you can do to “save this planet” is to “not waste food”.

Forty percent (40%) of all food is wasted. The production, transportation, packaging, preparing, and disposal of wasted food causes great harm to the planet.

Next, eat vegan and you will be contributing enormous benefits to reducing the destruction of our home - mother earth.

All these choices and others are helpful to you, helpful for the planet, and helpful to all those yet to come.

You can implement adjustments slowly and over time. The body and the mind will be more pleased with *gradual* and slow, but steady, progress. Too many changes too quickly can have unsettling results.

We all need to find our own unique ways, based on wise decision making, to ensure that we have the least amount of impact to the planet. As conscious and concerned individuals, we can find our own unique ways of ensuring we leave a planet that can continue to thrive for many years to come.



Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 21) - Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/wPpgf4nvVNI>

Ep. 521 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 21) - Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--521---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-21---Do-No-Harm-What-is-The-Future-of-The-Planet-e272ur8>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 21 - Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet?

https://youtube.com/live/po_DHHBLeVg

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/ZmGwwy8yju0>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 483 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 21 - Do No Harm: What is The Future of The Planet?

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--483---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-21---Do-No-Harm-What-is-The-Future-of-The-Planet-e26g1t1/a-aa33nqe>

Ep. 484 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--484---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e26keki/a-aa3gcsc>

Chapter 22

Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion

Humans have a complex consciousness, with the mind, which can be muddled or evolved - it's a personal choice. Our understanding of what is around us and how we relate to it is a "personal choice". And the personal choices or decisions that we make as individuals, can be influenced by all of humanity. As a species, just like other species, we often find the easiest way or path is to "conform" to the established beliefs, understandings, and customs of those around us. We conform to what is expected of us as individuals within a larger society.

This conformity helps to keep us moving in a similar direction but conformity does not lead to Enlightenment. Craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) demonstrated with the accumulation of ego and protection of a self, with all these motivations being rooted in our consciousness, humanity can become easily corrupted, destructive, and self serving as each person chooses to just follow another without investigating to discover the truth and acquire wisdom to make their own wise decisions. Conforming will only keep the mind trapped in its own false beliefs and misperceptions.

We often think we are the "center of the universe" and "intellectually superior" to prior civilizations. But with little known of civilizations that existed even just a couple centuries ago, let alone thousands of years ago, this is very egotistical.

Sure, we have historical records of what might have transpired in one century or another but what motivated the people, their decisions, and how they conducted their daily life is mostly lost to the impermanent nature of all things.

We can be sure that the makeup of the human mind has not changed throughout history. What's in the mind and how evolved we are as a species has changed, but the way the mind functions has not changed.

This is why The Teachings of Gotama Buddha are just as applicable today as they were 2,500 years ago. Gotama Buddha's Teachings are related to the human mind and how the mind functions remains unchanged since Gotama Buddha's lifetime.

The daily lives, motivations, and decision making of humans have all changed but how the mind functions has not.

In our current civilization, we tend to think that “new” is “better”. We tend to think that if we have just invented something, that it has to be better than the past because it was just created and because our thinking is that “we are so intelligent”, much more than in the past. So, this new thing must be much better.

In the past, humans rubbed sticks together and it took a long time to make fire. Now, we can instantly create fire at will with minimal effort.

So the advances in technology make it much easier to do things that could not be done in the past, and this bolsters our false sense of ego and superiority that we must be so much greater than past civilizations. This is a delusion with extensive amounts of ego and self serving thoughts that cause some to look down on humans of past civilizations.

This is not how civilizations before us thought or processed their understanding of their own existence.

It was well understood, in past civilizations, that anything that existed and any knowledge they had to improve their existence, was based on their ancestral past. Honor, respect, and gratitude of the past was paramount in their quest to improve their lives. But, all too often in modern society we look down on the past with dismay and with ego, not understanding how those past civilizations could not have understood what we now know today.

In many cases, we lack the humbleness to acknowledge that without the past decisions of humans before us, we could not have the modern advances we now enjoy. If it was not for the developments and advances of past civilizations, we would not understand much of the world that is around us today nor could we have built upon our ancestor’s knowledge.

In many cases, we have discovered healthy and productive ways to build on prior knowledge which benefits our modern society. But, in many cases, as craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) with accumulation of ego and protection of a self, have permeated our consciousness more deeply, the destruction of the planet, the individual mind, and humanity becomes more and more apparent.

Because the functioning of the human mind has not changed, any conditions of the mind that exist today also existed in prior civilizations. However, because we think that our knowledge is far more advanced than prior civilizations, we have developed “new ways” of looking at the mind.

With our ego being center stage, we assume these new approaches to understand the mind must be better and more profound than anything in the past. However, any new developments or new approaches to understanding the mind are highly unfounded and unproven with an extremely short timeframe of development and use in society.

The modern mental health discipline has only been in existence for a relatively short period of time compared to the length of time these Teachings have existed in the world. Considering the entire span of time that Gotama Buddha's Teachings have existed, over 2,500 years, the short timeframe of knowledge developed in the field of mental health is highly unfounded, unproven, and untested.

Modern day society is, all too often, looking for an easy answer with a "quick fix". So, when humans are feeling sad, lonely, anxious or experiencing wide ranges of discontent feelings, in our "new approach" to the mind we label these feelings as "mental illness" and now have an enormous discipline of treatments that we claim are going to improve the unwelcomed thoughts and emotions of the human mind.

We have a highly medicated humanity that uses "drugs" to escape the reality of our existence rather than accept responsibility for our personal choices that lead to either a miserable existence or a Higher Consciousness with the ability to relate to the world around us in a more healthy way.

Humans are more content to blame their unwelcomed thoughts and emotions on "brain chemistry" along with blaming unwholesome intentions, speech, and actions on brain chemistry.

Humans accept the notion from people in positions of authority that they are not in control of their intentions, speech, and actions therefore are relegated to a lifetime of expensive medicine, medical care, and treatments to treat a mental illness because they truly believe they are sick or ill, yet, they may never be cured.

Instead, humans could understand through the practice of these Teachings that they are 100% in control of their thoughts, emotions, intentions, speech, and actions, thus, we can resolve all internal and external conflicts finding inner peace.

We are not "mentally ill" and we have the ability to improve the condition of the mind through gaining wisdom and we can liberate the mind from 100% of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes through these Teachings.

By eliminating the delusion that we are “mentally ill”, we can eliminate a lifetime of expense and unwelcomed thoughts or emotions.

Discontentedness of mind is not permanent, and a diagnosis of “mental illness” is not permanent.

These Teachings have existed for over 2,500 years and are well founded, proven, and tested. They continue to exist on this planet because they work and help people attain a more peaceful existence.

There is no external substance that will eliminate unwelcomed thoughts and emotions to produce a content mind. Only inner development of the mind and having a “life practice” of causing no harm to yourself nor other beings, can 100% resolve your inner and external conflicts.

Remember, the mind is not the brain. The brain is the organ that controls function of the body while the mind is our consciousness that originates the intentions (thoughts), speech, and actions we produce in each moment. The mind, or consciousness, governs our “free will” or individual choices.

Mental illnesses are thought to be a chemical imbalance of the brain and often treated with medications.

While medications do change the chemistry of the brain and can be helpful in certain situations, they also sedate the mind suppressing past traumas, cover up unwelcomed emotions, and hinder certain aspects of our thoughts while complicating wise decision making that will lead to improved outcomes. Medications never permanently “fix the problem” as an individual struggling with unwelcomed thoughts and emotions needs to train the mind.

Medications will not permanently eliminate the accumulated unwelcomed thoughts and emotions because these feelings in the mind are not generated by the chemicals in the brain. The brain is not the mind, therefore brain chemistry does not generate thoughts and emotions of the mind which produce our intentions (thoughts), speech, and actions.

It is not brain chemistry that causes pleasant feelings, painful feelings, or feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant (i.e. discontentedness). It is craving/desire/attachment that causes discontentedness. Discontentedness in the mind then influences and affects the chemistry of the brain. Brain chemistry does not cause discontentedness; therefore, discontentedness cannot be permanently eliminated through changing brain chemistry. Attempting to change inner feelings through changing brain chemistry is attempting to solve a problem based on a false theory that can lead to continued suffering.

To eliminate unwelcomed thoughts and emotions, we must empty the mind through elimination of cravings/desires/attachments which will eliminate discontentedness of the mind. An individual can't eliminate discontentedness by changing brain chemistry because it is not the brain chemistry that is causing the discontent feelings. With proper guidance, The Teachings of Gotama Buddha can lead a Practitioner to stability of mind eliminating all unwelcomed feelings and emotions permanently. Discontentedness will be eliminated, and the brain chemistry will become balanced.

Examples of Mental Illness and Connection to These Teachings

Mental Illness	Connection to Teachings
ADHD, ADD	Craving mental stimulation. Lack of "Right Concentration".
Anorexia, Bulimia, Eating Disorders	Craving false image of beauty, identification of a self or personal identity.
Anxiety	Anticipation or fear of a future event, situation, or outcome.
Bipolar Disorder	Craving sexual contact, craving material possessions, craving excitement (i.e. mania). Untrained mind experiencing pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant.
Depression	Attachment to past traumas, events, or expectations of the future. Experiencing significant painful feelings.
Hoarding	Craving for material possessions.
Insomnia	An awakened mind needs little sleep. As the mind awakens, interrupted and erratic sleep patterns emerge. Craving a permanent or fixed sleeping schedule.
OCD	Craving perfection.
Personality Disorders	Craving to conform to others' expectations for your personality. Observance of past lives.
Phobias	Personal existence view, protection of a self, craving existence.
PTSD	Clinging to past traumas with the mind untrained in "letting go".
Schizophrenia	Lack of "Right Concentration", communication with beings from other realms, and observance of past lives.
Substance Abuse	Craving pleasant feelings, happiness, and escape from life.
Suicidal Thoughts	Craving pleasant feelings, happiness, and escape from life. Clinging to past traumas or expectations of the future. Craving for extermination of life. Desire to exterminate life to escape a discontent mind and the suffering it causes due to observation of significant amounts of suffering in the mind and in the world.

This previous table is not meant to be an exhaustive or thorough categorization of all mental illnesses and their relationship to these Teachings. Instead, this table provides a brief example of insight into how mental illness is a misunderstanding of modern society and how these Teachings, when practiced, can eliminate the symptoms of what some people refer to as “mental illness”. There are other physical and emotional symptoms that can be misunderstood as a medical condition that needs medical treatments but can be resolved through these Teachings to train the mind. I have not explored this topic to exhaust all possible options.

For example, many of the symptoms of “multiple sclerosis” are common to one who is approaching Enlightenment and this illness may also be a modern day misunderstanding. One approaching Enlightenment could be diagnosed with this condition and offered medication rather than assisted to complete the process of waking up the mind into Enlightenment.

Further research could be explored by qualified doctors and scientists who also deeply understand and practice these Teachings and are Enlightened.

There is no medication that will improve our intentions, speech, and actions as these can only be improved through training in wisdom, moral conduct, and mental discipline. The mind is liberated through wisdom and a medication will not produce wisdom in the mind.

There are many unknowns that we currently have related to how the human body functions. Doctors or scientists will often share that we do not currently understand everything there is to know about the human body. Out of everything that we do not understand about the human body in modern science, we understand the least about how the brain and mind function.

In modern medicine and modern science, we currently understand very little about the brain and mind. In all that we do know, we know the least about the brain and the mind. There is more to learn and more to discover that can be highly beneficial to all of humanity.

The challenges and difficulties experienced in the human existence and the human mind is because we do not understand what we do not understand. The unEnlightened mind is hindered by a lack of wisdom not by a defective brain. Awakening the mind to Enlightenment is to eliminate ignorance (unknowing of true reality), along with the other pollution of the mind, through acquiring wisdom.

While brain trauma can affect an individual’s ability to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings, the mental health conditions described in this Chapter are not inclusive of individuals experiencing brain trauma or brain injury.

The mind can produce hallucinations, delusions, and countless other thoughts, emotions, and feelings that when looked at by an individual unfamiliar with the process of a mind awakening to a Higher Consciousness, could be viewed as not normal and labeled as “mental illness”.

The mind can produce many hallucinations and delusional thinking as the mind wakes up into a Higher Consciousness but lacks the stability of an established practice with guidance in these Teachings.

With an established meditation practice and the support of a practice in these Teachings, one can attain a stable, calm, and content mind free of medication. The symptoms experienced are not a medical issue and there is nothing “wrong” with the brain chemistry, but instead, the mind is untrained and, thus, the individual experiencing the awakening does not have the ability to control the mind.

Through proper training in these Teachings that includes meditation techniques, the individual can learn how to control the mind to completely eliminate all hallucinations, delusional thinking, desire for self harm, sad depressed feelings, and all other unwelcomed emotions that are now associated with mental illness.

If the mental health industry was effective at improving mental health, we would see mental health cases consistently decreasing as these disciplines are shared worldwide. As the new mental health discipline is shared more widely, we would see the mental health of humanity consistently improving throughout the world with more and more stability of mind. In the countries of origin for these mental health disciplines and those countries where these practices are shared most widely, if the new mental health discipline is effective at improving the quality of mind, we would see that population of people as the most mentally stable in the entire world. This is not the result of what we see in the new mental health industry.

Furthermore, if the conditions described in the mental health industry such as sadness, loneliness, anxiety, and others are based on chemistry in the brain that can be resolved by expensive medications, we would see the same conditions throughout all populations of humanity. If the premise of the mental health industry is that these conditions are a result of a defective brain that does not produce the proper chemical balance for the human being to function normally, we would see all populations across the world suffering from these same conditions that are currently labeled as “illnesses” in modern times. We would also see these conditions dating back throughout history as humans have evolved.

Humanity and the human mind could not have truly become unbalanced and defective in a matter of a few decades. The feelings of sadness, loneliness, anxiety and others have been experienced by all humans throughout time, yet they were not considered illnesses until recent times. Not all populations across the world experience the same instability of mind. This is proof that mental illness is not a human condition experienced throughout all of humanity and, thus, there is no medication that will change the way one thinks, speaks, or acts.

Civilizations in the past who learned and practiced these Teachings, understood the process of a mind that is awakening and understood how to assist these people with guidance and support to find stability, calmness, and a peaceful mind.

An unawakened mind with significant cravings will have poor concentration, lack motivation, and experience many difficulties in life, along with other symptoms. All these symptoms and many more are now associated with mental illness that rarely gets fully resolved through costly medications and are merely symptoms of an unEnlightened mind.

While the suffering and anguish of mental illness is “real”, the reason for why humans are having unwelcomed emotions is “not real”. Mental illness is not due to brain chemistry but instead that the mind has not been trained to eliminate craving/desire/attachment and attain the qualities of a mind that has *gradually* awakened to Enlightenment and is waking up to its Higher Consciousness. A trained mind can be controlled through healthy practices known to humanity for over 2,500 years.

Enlightenment is a mind that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. This permanent mental state is achievable by all human beings who choose to apply dedication and commitment to learning and practicing these Teachings.

A mind with Enlightenment will have an unshakable calmness, steadiness, and be “content” or “satisfied with what is” rather than constantly craving more and more.

If our new approaches and these new medications are helpful to resolve the conditions of mental health or the mind, we would see a reduction of mental health cases and significant improvements to humanity’s mental health. However, since the introduction of these medications and discipline of mental health practices, we have seen a continuous degrading of mental health across humanity represented in the actions of humans through

increased war, conflicts, hate, terrorism, mass shootings and countless other problematic actions created by humans.

With modern disciplines being created in the mental health field being based upon, but not proven on brain chemistry, these new disciplines overlook the past developments, discounting their significance. This mindset is based on the ego of modern humanity thinking that what we have developed in “new” disciplines is more advanced than past civilizations, and that our understanding of the mind must be more profound than in the past. We put more significance on our intelligence and scientific methods than our ancestral knowledge of the past.

The make up of the human mind has not changed since Gotama Buddha’s lifetime 2,500 years ago, therefore, the thoughts and emotions experienced by humans also have not changed.

Humans 2,500 years ago had sadness, loneliness, and anxieties.

Rather than look for the “quick fix” and the “easy methods” to resolve these unwelcomed thoughts and emotions, people who learned with The Buddha looked for answers within themselves. Humans, in the past, took responsibility for the thoughts and emotions they had and looked for methods to rid themselves of the unwelcomed and uncomfortable emotions through means of a permanent solution, seeking insight and wisdom of the mind and its function.

Humans trusted that they had the ability to eliminate the unwelcomed conditions of the mind and they found the answers. People of past civilizations that attained Enlightenment did not look for impermanent things to create inner peace. Enlightenment, Nibbāna, or a Higher Consciousness was discovered and realized by humans.

Later, due to impermanence, these Teachings were degraded and, thus, the collective condition of humanity’s mind has also degraded. The destruction of humanity’s mind can be seen in the planet, the news of human actions, and our blaming of others for our despair or misery.

Many are waiting for the return of a savior that will sort out all of this mess and instantly save us all. Some are expecting that a universal power from a higher entity will resolve the crisis of humanity and ask for favors through daily prayer. But, the wise understand that we got ourselves into this mess and “we are the only ones” who can get ourselves out of this mess.

There have been countless prayers and ceremonial worship for many generations, however, humanity continues to get worse and worse and worse. Why is humanity continuing to hold out hope for a third party to resolve all the conflicts and mess “we” created? If a third party had the interest or ability to instantly “save us all”, that would have happened already.

We can resolve the issues of the world through *gradual* training and development of our individual mind.

Humanity is a collection of humans with individual minds. If individuals in humanity decide to purify the mind through these Teachings, we will create a kinder, gentler, and more peaceful civilization.

There is not one person or one entity that can decide for you to pursue a Higher Consciousness. You must decide for yourself and pursue to evolve your own Higher Consciousness to attain Enlightenment.

Diagnosis of mental illness is devastating large populations of people convincing them that they are sick, ill, and relegating them to a lifetime of medications and treatments with no cure and a lifetime of expenses. If you are not sad prior to the diagnosis, you certainly will be after being convinced by a person of authority that you are sick and your brain is defective.

There are people with diagnosed mental illness who have eliminated all unwelcomed thoughts, emotions, medications, and medical treatments through these Teachings and practices.

Belief is a powerful persuader of the mind. If you believe you are sick and ill, then you will continue to believe this and be relegated to medications, doctors, hospitals, and treatments for an imbalance in the brain chemistry. This imbalance cannot be proven through any test and there is a good chance you may never become fully well through the mental health industry.

Or, you can understand that the mind is not the brain, and that the mind produces unwelcomed thoughts and emotions. The mind can be trained and then controlled by you to eliminate unwelcomed thoughts and emotions just like has been done for the last 2,500 years. This knowledge has been largely lost and pushed aside due to the egotistical thinking of our modern age along with overwhelming greed.

The last several decades has seen a tremendous increase in craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) because these Teachings are only practiced by 500 million people rather than all of humanity.

Currently, we are seeing a surge of meditation practices around the world, increased awareness of mindfulness training and development, and we are putting more importance on having a calm, stable, and steady mind without ego, recognizing that we all have the ability to accomplish this for ourselves without medication and that a content mind is achievable through healthy mind practices.

Medications could be helpful in acute circumstances to bring the mind to a place where it can receive Teachings and decide to acquire wisdom through mental training. It is training the mind through these Teachings that will bring long term success in developing wisdom to improve one's life practice that will create stability in the mind. A population of people who choose to practice these Teachings as part of their way of life can experience a significant reduction in long term use of medications and increase long term success of establishing good mental health in their community averting the constant struggle and crisis of a lack of mental health around the world.

We can accept the notions of our modern society continuing to think we are smarter, more intelligent, and better off than past civilizations. Or, we can look at the past realizing that the simple and humble life they lived in harmony with the planet and each other, was a peaceful and content way to co-exist with all beings.

The future of the world and the planet is based on the individual decisions and personal choices of all that exist and occupy this planet.

While craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) with accumulation of ego and protection of a self are pervasive throughout humanity, we will continue to see conflict, fighting, wars, terrorism, substance abuse, prostitution, human trafficking, famine, suicide, harm to animals, orphans, childhood deaths, financial disasters, poverty, corrupt politics, and destruction of the planet and its resources - and much more.

We created this "mess" and we are the ones that need to fix it.

The way to start is to accept full responsibility for our intentions (thoughts), speech, and actions, realizing that we have the ability to create a peaceful existence by giving up our notions that we are the "best this planet has ever seen". We must eliminate our ego and look to the past for the answers they provided, answers that we have overlooked due to our delusion of superior intelligence.

Millions of people can be liberated from long term medications and a lifetime of expense, treatments, and confinement through the healthy mind practices discovered and taught by Gotama Buddha.

If an individual is interested in improved or excellent mental health, The Path to Enlightenment is the way to accomplish that goal while taking into consideration any potential need for medical intervention until the mind gains its stability and steadiness on its way to being peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 22) - Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/uqTPCYbWONI>

Ep. 522 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 22) - Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--522---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-22---Mental-Health-A-Modern-Day-Delusion-e272us9>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 22 - Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion

<https://youtube.com/live/Mo2i9WShXE4>

Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions - (Group Learning Program)

<https://youtu.be/uNzYo77Tflg>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 486 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 22 - Mental Health: A Modern Day Delusion

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--486---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-22---Mental-Health-A-Modern-Day-Delusion-e26qhnb/a-aa43dk1>

Ep. 192 - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Student Questions - (Group Learning Program)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--192---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions---Group-Learning-Program-e15i1sr/a-a69r3tu>

Chapter 23

Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery

Our knowledge and ability to understand these Teachings has evolved over time. During Gotama Buddha's lifetime, all his Teachings were shared orally. Later, human development evolved to include technology and the ability to capture these Teachings in written format.

Today, we have the ability to read, write, and understand The Teachings in written format, through oral instruction, and a full range of other options.

Prior to organized educational systems, the oral Teachings were captured into symbolism and imagery that could remind Practitioners of these important Teachings that guided their lives.

The symbolism was captured in the architecture of Temple construction projects, artwork, and in other locations where people could be reminded of The Teachings through viewing of imagery which would then strengthen their understanding and practice of The Teachings.

If an individual had learned The Teachings with Gotama Buddha in detail, then upon viewing certain images they could be instantly reminded of The Teachings helping to further soak The Teachings into the mind so that a Practitioner could practice them in daily life.

Today, if a Practitioner has deeply studied and learned The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, they can view symbolism and imagery in Temple construction projects, artwork, and in other locations to be reminded of The Teachings and help to further develop their life practice.

Having the understanding of Gotama Buddha's Teachings and then visiting Temples or viewing artwork can be even more enjoyable and beneficial as a Practitioner can confirm their understanding of The Teachings. It is also interesting to "decode" the symbolism and imagery used in past generations through Temples built many centuries ago. These Temples and the artwork located in the Temples indicate what was on the mind of those who participated in the construction of the Temple.

Visiting Temples throughout the world can be an enjoyable family activity. Together with family and friends, you can uncover the secrets of the past

identifying connections to The Teachings in the symbolism and imagery used in Temple construction. But first, you will need to have an understanding of The Teachings themselves through developing your life practice.

This chapter will help you to develop an understanding and connections to The Teachings of some of the most common imagery used through Temple construction projects, artwork, and in other locations. This will help you remember The Teachings and help you to further develop your life practice when you are viewing Buddhist symbolism.

Now that you have had the opportunity to learn a significant portion of Gotama Buddha's Teachings in this book and book series, learning the symbolism and imagery to remind you of The Teachings can be quite interesting and intriguing.

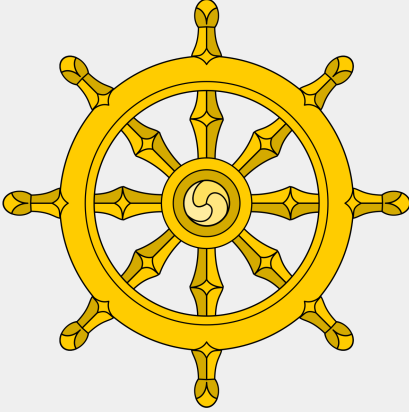
As you visit Temples and view Buddhist artwork, you can look for these images and others to "decode" what was on the mind of those involved in the Temple construction and the artists in developing the artwork.

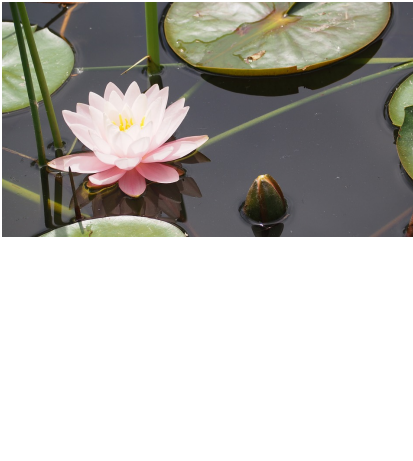
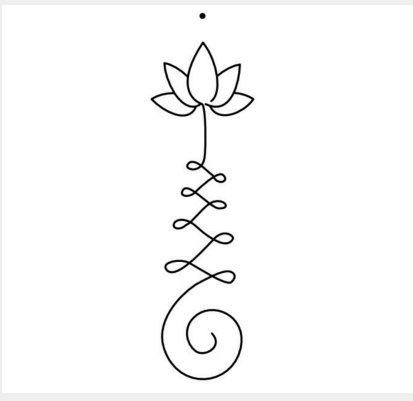
You might also find images that are not shared in this chapter but based on your continued practice to deepen your understanding and wisdom of these Teachings, you might be able to "decode" other symbolism and imagery on your own.

As always, if you are unsure or you'd like to confirm your understanding, you can ask your Teacher or other Practitioners for assistance in understanding any imagery that you encounter in your journey within Buddhist Communities. But through a deep understanding of these Teachings, you may find that with your own investigation it is quite interesting, fun, and beneficial to reflect on the symbolism and imagery you discover in your journey to determine if you can "decode" the meaning on your own.

This will help to further confirm The Teachings of The Buddha within the mind providing you an opportunity for learning and growth.

Symbol	Connection to Teachings
	These symbols represent the attainment of Enlightenment. The image originates at the bottom, typically with a large circle, through a long winding path ending with a straight line pointing upwards. This symbolizes being bound to “The Cycle of Rebirth” represented in the circular part of the image. Then, once a human being gains access and understanding of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings, there is a long winding path that starts broad and wide, narrowing towards the top until we have a straight and direct line to our Higher Consciousness, Nibbāna, and Enlightenment. Notice how the image loops and sometimes tracks slightly backwards in its progression from bottom to top but ultimately proceeds upwards to completion at the very top where the line then becomes extinct and nonexistent.
	This symbolizes The Path to Enlightenment as one will walk forward, sometimes with minor steps backwards but ultimately moves forward and upwards to completion attaining Enlightenment. This image can often be found on Buddha statues or artwork located between the two eyes, at the third eye. Opening of the third eye, or inner eye, is also a symbol of having attained Enlightenment.
	When you observe this imagery, it should remind you that Enlightenment is achievable by all human beings. And, that your path may be long, wide, twisting and turning until you finally narrow in on The Teachings and your practice, until the mind ascends to Enlightenment through dedicated learning and practice.

Symbol	Connection to Teachings
 	The “Dhamma Wheel” is most often depicted with eight spokes, this represents The Eight Fold Path. (Dhamma = The Teachings) The Eight Fold Path is the path that leads to the elimination of discontentedness and ultimately The Path to Enlightenment to escape from The Cycle of Rebirth. The Wheel itself can remind us that, in the unEnlightened mental state we are bound by “The Cycle of Rebirth” with The Eight Fold Path providing us The Path to escaping The Cycle of Rebirth. The circle of the wheel represents The Cycle of Rebirth while the individual spokes represent the individual steps of The Eight Fold Path, the escape from discontentedness and The Cycle of Rebirth. This imagery is usually placed on Temple markers, in artwork, and oftentimes behind the head of Gotama Buddha in paintings or near statues. The purpose for placing The Dhamma Wheel behind Gotama Buddha’s head is, a Dhamma Wheel is turned by a Buddha. It signifies a stepping forward of civilization into a new era. A Buddha awakening in the world is a major step forward for all of humanity. A Buddha turning a Dhamma Wheel signifies a stepping forward of civilization into a new era. With the awakening of a Buddha, The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment can shine in the world and be shared with all of humanity in a way that will guide countless beings to Enlightenment during their life and after their death. A Buddha will know the location of this dhamma wheel, when to turn it, and in what direction to turn it. The location of The Dhamma Wheel is on the head of a Buddha where the top of the skull and back of the skull comes together. A Buddha will turn this Dhamma Wheel counter clockwise upon their awakening. When you observe a Dhamma Wheel in artwork, it should remind you that you are bound in The Cycle of Rebirth, and The Eight Fold Path is the path to escaping The Cycle of Rebirth.

Symbol	Connection to Teachings
	Lotus flowers are another form of imagery and symbolism that is used to remind us of The Teachings. A closed lotus reminds us of everyone's potential to become Enlightened. We all have the potential to attain Enlightenment, just like every flower has the potential to bloom. A fully open lotus flower is another symbol of the attainment of Enlightenment.
	A lotus flower will oftentimes float above the water and even be suspended over the water by a strong stem while the roots of the plant are down into the dirty and murky earth under the water. The roots signify our attachments to this physical world while the attainment of Enlightenment, the fully bloomed lotus flower above the water, signifies the mind raising above craving/desire/attachment ascending to Enlightenment. The strong stem of the lotus flower signifies one's solid dedication and stability of learning and practicing these Teachings from Gotama Buddha with a strong life practice to attain Enlightenment. Our life practice is the support and stability needed for the mind to progress to Enlightenment.
	You will also see combinations of symbols like the one depicted here. You can see the symbol depicting Enlightenment with a lotus flower at the top. These are two symbols that are combined both representing the attainment of Enlightenment.

Symbol	Connection to Teachings
	The King of the Serpents or Serpent King (Naga), reminds us of a story passed down from the time of Gotama Buddha that reminds us of The Teachings. It was shared that during Gotama Buddha's lifetime, there was a Serpent King who, although reborn into the animal realm, was so close to human existence that with a more developed consciousness he could turn himself into the human form. He turned himself into a Monk, male Ordained Practitioner, so that he could be in the company of Gotama Buddha and learn The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. However, the Serpent King fell asleep along with the other Monks and lost the control of his consciousness turning back into a serpent. Upon observing this, the Monks were unsettled and fearful deciding to alert Gotama Buddha.
	One who has attained Enlightenment has eliminated all fear 100%. Gotama Buddha calmly walked to the area where the Monks were frightened and had a discussion with those present. Gotama Buddha explained to the Serpent King that it was impossible for him to attain Enlightenment in the form of an animal that he needed to live out his current existence facing his Kamma as a Serpent. And, if his Kamma led him to being reborn as a human in his next existence, he could then learn and practice The Teachings to attain Enlightenment in that new human existence. Upon Gotama Buddha explaining this to the Serpent King, he agreed to leave The Community of Monks to not cause any further disruption but decided to be a protector and guard of The Teachings from all evil doers who worked to degrade The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. Today, you can see this imagery at the front of many Temples and at the front of staircases leading into many Temples as The King of the Serpents is standing guard protecting The Teachings from all evil doers. Anyone entering should have wholesome intentions to learn and practice The Teachings not interested in causing any harm to The Teachings but instead, interested in seeing them shared. It should remind us of our past existences in the animal realm and that it is only in the human or heavenly realms that we can attain Enlightenment. All fear needs to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. It should remind us not to be complacent or delay our learning and growth in The Teachings and practice. It can also remind us of our commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings as the Serpent King was highly dedicated, even in his animal existence, to learn and protect The Teachings. Additionally, it reminds us that we must experience all the unwholesome Kamma we create in this existence and from our past existences prior to attaining Enlightenment, thus, motivating us to create only wholesome Kamma. Whether this story is actually true is unknown, however, it is a wonderful story that can remind us about many of The Teachings through viewing this one artwork as we enter many Temples or viewing any artwork that contains the Serpent King.

Symbol	Connection to Teachings
 	You will often see drawings or depictions of a leaf from a Bodhi Tree, Pippala Tree, Peepul Tree, Peepal Tree or Ashwattha tree (in India and Nepal), or the scientific name “Ficus Religiosa”. This is the tree that it is said that after six (6) long years of dedication to his practice, while meditating under this tree, Gotama Buddha made the final effort to attain Enlightenment. Gotama Buddha then contemplated under this tree for seven (7) weeks whether or not to share The Teachings he had discovered in his independent journey to Enlightenment. He was not sure that the world was ready to understand what he had to share. He eventually did share The Teachings going on to a long teaching career of 45-years of sharing The Teachings on The Path to Enlightenment. While Gotama Buddha shares in his Teachings that the journey to Enlightenment is through <i>gradual</i> training and <i>gradual</i> practice to experience <i>gradual</i> progress, it is this tree that is considered the location where Gotama Buddha attained Enlightenment. In reality, one would <i>gradually</i> attain Enlightenment over the course of a multi-year life practice and there is not just one point in time where a person might be considered Enlightened or not but instead, a <i>gradual</i> progression towards the goal with <i>gradual</i> training and <i>gradual</i> practice needed to accomplish the goal. But, with the significance of a Buddha arising in the world, a specific date of his Enlightenment and location of where he attained Enlightenment was determined so that it could be visited and celebrated after his death. Today, this location is celebrated as the place where Gotama Buddha attained Enlightenment and there is a specific date identified as the date of his Enlightenment. Again, in reality, he attained Enlightenment over a multi-year life practice and one might even say over multiple lifetimes a Buddha has been working to attain Enlightenment through <i>gradual</i> training and <i>gradual</i> practice. The leaf of this tree is another symbol of Enlightenment and a reminder of our ability to attain Enlightenment. Due to its significance, you will see the image of this leaf in countless Temple construction projects and artwork throughout Buddhist communities. You can observe the thick base of the leaf gradually narrowing to a fine point, a symbol of the progression towards Enlightenment.

There is plenty of other symbolism that you will observe in various types of artwork and Temple construction. These are a sample of the most common and widely used symbols.

The more you understand and practice The Teachings in this book and book series, the more you will be able to observe artwork and architecture to determine the symbolism that reminds you of The Teachings for yourself.

Through understanding The Teachings and symbolism, you can easily visit Temples around the world while being reminded of The Teachings for your own practice. Likewise, as you view artwork you can be reminded of the important Teachings in a glance that help to develop a more stable practice of The Teachings.

These are powerful reminders of The Teachings, the practice, the results, and that we are all on The Path to Enlightenment.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 23) - Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/VZ7sTbBb7-Y>

Ep. 523 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 23) -Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--523---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-23--Symbolism-of-Teachings-Reminders-Through-Imagery-e272uu3>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 23 - Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery

https://youtube.com/live/WLc2B88_PDg

(Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://youtube.com/live/TELSY3rNmPc>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 489 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 23 - Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--489---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-23---Symbolism-of-Teachings-Reminders-Through-Imagery-e271k5g/a-aa4q8t8>

Ep. 490 - (Group Learning Program) - Guided Loving-kindness Meditation and Student Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--490---Group-Learning-Program---Guided-Loving-kindness-Meditation-and-Student-Questions-e275gip>

Quiz

Symbolism of Teachings: Reminders Through Imagery

<https://forms.gle/GTAp2PtFU5MGQhid8>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Chapter 24

Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

Gotama Buddha's Teachings, just like everything in the world, are affected by impermanence. There have been several traditions of Buddhism that have spawned from his original Teachings. All traditions of Buddhism respect Gotama Buddha for his Teachings, but due to impermanence affecting everything in life, there are several influences from various traditions and The Teachings of Gotama Buddha have been modified since the time of his death.

There are three primary traditions of Teachings hosted by various regions around the world. The Theravada tradition is primarily hosted in South and Southeast Asia. Mahayana tradition is primarily hosted in East Asia. Vajrayana is primarily hosted in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, and the Russian republic of Kalmykia. There are also other traditions taught and practiced in other parts of the world. These three represent the more widely practiced traditions but there are other Teachings besides these. While these traditions are primarily hosted within these various regions, today they are practiced throughout the world.

These Teachings are truly hosted in the mind of people. There is no centralized organization with authority to compile and distribute these Teachings within each tradition throughout the world. Gotama Buddha taught us to not blindly follow The Teachings of a Teacher but to practice The Teachings to determine the "truth" and "wisdom" of The Teachings for ourselves.

In this way, we can determine for ourself and with the guidance of a Teacher, what is working to evolve the mind and liberate it through wisdom. We can determine for ourselves that the mind is more liberated through increased levels of concentration, peacefulness, and a content mind that is unshakeable as a result of practicing Teachings that liberate the mind.

Due to the movement of people and the impermanent nature of all things, The Teachings that Gotama Buddha taught during his lifetime have been modified due to the exact conditions of the mind he taught to eliminate.

Just like impermanence affecting all things in the world, unless one is Enlightened as an Arahant their mind is also affected by craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality), the ego and the protection of a self. Thus, multiple traditions of these Teachings have spawned.

At the time of Gotama Buddha's death, not everyone in the world was Enlightened as an Arahant having eradicated the mind's Three Poisons nor The Ten Fetters. Attaining Enlightenment is a *gradual* process with qualities of Enlightenment being enhanced the closer to Enlightenment one becomes. It is not like throwing a switch and either you are Enlightened or you are not, instead there are varying degrees of Enlightenment which will shine through at various stages, while defilements of the mind will also be present. This is one reason we should never consider ourselves as Enlightened and constantly pursue deeper amounts of wisdom through our practice.

Therefore, as the numbers of Practitioners of these Teachings expanded and humans experienced various degrees of Enlightenment, some people were still affected with various degrees of The Three Poisons of the mind including the ego. Through impermanence and ego, The Teachings were modified, morphed, and adjusted to fit localized culture and beliefs. There are no beliefs in The Teachings of The Buddha.

The approach I have taken in practice and teaching is to remain true to The Teachings of The Buddha as he was the discoverer, originator, and declarer of The Path, so there is no need to modify his Teachings.

The Theravada tradition of these Teachings thinks that it is best to retain The Teachings in the form closest to those Teachings shared by Gotama Buddha during his lifetime. The Pāli Canon is the most available and comprehensive historical source of Gotama Buddha's Teachings that is relied upon within the Theravada tradition.

You may learn that some refer to the Theravada tradition as Hinayana or "lesser vehicle". Mahayana tradition as the "greater vehicle". And, Vajrayana tradition as the "lightning fast vehicle". "Vehicle" is described as the speed or quickness in which one can attain Enlightenment. This description and a comparison of one to the other could be viewed as egotistical in referring to Teachings as a lesser, greater, or lightning fast vehicle. Hinayana is considered to be a degrading term born out of ego. One goal of Gotama Buddha's Teachings is to eliminate ego and the word Hinayana should not be used if one has dissolved the ego.

Because The Teachings live in the mind of humans and there is no centralized organization that compiles and distributes these Teachings, there is no common definition of what all of these traditions teach, the description

of Enlightenment, nor how to determine if one is or is not Enlightened. A Practitioner can observe for themselves that what they are learning and practicing is working to liberate the mind as the condition of the mind gradually improves to become more and more peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. In this way, an observant Practitioner can never be misled.

The Teachings are not a forced behavior or a requirement that one must fulfill, but instead, guidance for how to eliminate defilements of the mind if one chooses to do so through learning and practice of The Teachings.

The translation of the word Theravada means “The Teachings of The Elders”. It is understood that the Theravada tradition is The Teachings and practices closest to that which existed during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, with Mahayana tradition and Vajrayana tradition starting much later. The traditions of Mahayana and Vajrayana have been highly affected by impermanence, that’s why they originated long after Gotama Buddha’s death, with significant modifications to The Teachings.

One small example of these modifications is that during Gotama Buddha’s lifetime he explained that he was a human, just a man and a Teacher. Traditions and beliefs changed much later after his death, and some refer to Gotama Buddha as a God, deity, or avatar.

Why would we refer to Gotama Buddha as a God, deity, or avatar if he himself never referred to himself as such? There are significant modifications to The Teachings within Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions that the author of this book does not have a need to introduce nor share as that would just be confusing to a Practitioner learning these Teachings. The Teachings in this book and book series will lead you to Enlightenment as taught by Gotama Buddha.

The Teachings and practices described in this book and book series are from The Teachings that existed closest to the time of Gotama Buddha’s death from the Theravada tradition sourced from The Pāli Canon. The Pāli Canon is the largest most complete and accurate collection of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings.

It is not so important to understand where these modified influences originate from, other than the mind of humans affected by craving/greed, anger/hatred, ignorance/delusion/unknowing of true reality, the ego and a protection of the self. But understand impermanence does affect all conditioned things including The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Theravada Buddhism is considered to be the form of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings which is closest to the time of his death. However, even within this

tradition there are some adjustments that are practiced based on misunderstandings and impermanence.

An Arahant with Enlightenment and practicing Gotama Buddha's Teachings closely can see these misunderstandings clearly as not part of his original Teachings.

Examples of cultural influences and misunderstandings are provided in the below to help you navigate what are and are not The Teachings of The Buddha so that you can ensure to learn, reflect, and practice the actual Path to Enlightenment rather than participate in activities that will not lead to Enlightenment.



1.) Pouring Water Ceremony (Gwat Nam): There is a practice of pouring water in many places that practice the Theravada tradition. Water is poured from a small urn into a small bowl. While doing this, the people “believe” they are dedicating or transferring their Merit and wholesome Kamma to friends, family, or others who have already passed away.

Gotama Buddha taught us that “...beings are owners of their Kamma, heirs of their Kamma, they have Kamma as their origin, Kamma as their relative, Kamma as their resort, whatever Kamma they do wholesome or unwholesome, they are its heirs. And, a person with wrong view, there is one of two destinations: either hell or the animal realm”.

Thus, the practice of pouring water to dedicate or transfer Merit and wholesome Kamma to another being is impossible. This is one aspect of “wrong view” and the first step of The Eight Fold Path to attain Enlightenment is “Right View”. This practice of pouring water to dedicate or transfer Merit is a misunderstanding of Gotama Buddha's Teachings and leads people to not fully understand Gotama Buddha's Teachings through promoting “wrong view”.



2.) Blessed Water (Nam mon): There is a practice of a Monk lighting a candle to drip wax into a bowl of water while chanting to create “holy water” or “blessed water”. This water is then distributed out onto the body of others around the Monk.

This practice is in conflict with Gotama Buddha’s Teachings and instructions that making of “holy water” is considered a “lowly art”. The Buddha prohibited Monks, including himself, from participating in a practice such as this.

He stated that the Ascetic Gotama refrains from such lowly arts and that a Monk refrains from such lowly arts. There are several lowly arts that are currently practiced by Monks throughout the world that are not in keeping with Gotama Buddha’s original Teachings.

Moreover, Gotama Buddha also taught “the harm of explaining what has not been stated, spoken and prescribed by The Tathāgata as having been stated, spoken and prescribed by him. Those are acting for the unhappiness of many people, for the ruin, they generate much demerit and cause the good Teachings to disappear”.



3.) Sacred Thread (Sai sen): The practice of obtaining a sacred thread from an Ordained Practitioner that wraps a body part, oftentimes the wrist, does not originate with Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings were offered to liberate the mind through wisdom. He provided Teachings that could be practiced that affect the mind.

External objects like sacred thread, bowing to statues, certain body gestures or positioning, ringing bells, hitting gongs, etc., by themselves, do not produce a healthier mental state. These practices alone do not change the condition of the mind if it's greedy, has hatred, delusion, wrong intentions, wrong speech, or wrong actions, etc.

No matter how many strings or other external objects we look to, they are not capable of producing permanent inner change or peace of mind attained through Enlightenment. There is nothing external that will create lasting inner change or inner fulfillment.

4.) Ordained Practitioners (Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis): It is important to review the practices of Ordained Practitioners closely. There are past Teachers who have modified and changed Gotama Buddha's original Teachings that could produce unwholesome practices that lead individuals through a longer path towards Enlightenment or potentially inhibiting Enlightenment altogether.

Teachers after Gotama Buddha have influenced or even modified his Teachings, thus, could be potentially inadvertently affecting one's path if they were to blindly follow The Teachings of Teachers other than Gotama Buddha.

For example, many Ordained Practitioners follow a practice of not "wai-ing" (showing respect) to Household Practitioners, and Household Practitioners will often get on their knees and bow to Ordained Practitioners.

This practice of not showing respect to Household Practitioners is not described anywhere in Gotama Buddha's Teachings and could potentially be harmful for the Ordained Practitioners' development of the mind if they allow "ego" or other unwholesome mental states to develop or exist. Bowing to Ordained Practitioners could produce a mind placing an individual above or below each other with judgment. If the mind is developed in this way, it will inhibit one from attaining Enlightenment.

Ordained Practitioners are human just like everyone else with their own challenges and struggles in pursuing Enlightenment. They have chosen a lifestyle, temporarily or perhaps until death, that provides a discipline that helps create conditions conducive for Enlightenment but does not guarantee Enlightenment. Therefore, Ordained Practitioners will need to pursue their own Enlightenment with the same Teachings and learning as Household Practitioners including "The Three Universal Truths", "The Four Noble Truths", and "The Eight Fold Path" along with others.

The precepts one chooses to practice is up to the individual and their lifestyle, however, “The Five Precepts” is a baseline minimum that is required for all individuals to attain Enlightenment.

An Ordained Practitioner who does not show respect to another being because they think they are practicing a higher number of precepts could develop a mind of ego and excessive arrogance, pride, or conceit. An Ordained Practitioner who is pursuing Enlightenment should have generosity, loving-kindness, and compassion for all beings without ego. They should not expect people to show them respect just because they have chosen to live a life as an Ordained Practitioner.

Respect should be shown to all beings by all beings.

The ordained path was created by Gotama Buddha to teach a humble lifestyle. He created the ordained path as the lowest and most humble livelihood through giving up of possessions, relationships, jobs, income, and for Ordained Practitioners to enter homelessness.

This lifestyle significantly reduces cravings/desires/attachments through a pre-prescribed discipline taught by Gotama Buddha and should also help to eliminate the ego. The ordained path creates conditions more conducive for Enlightenment but does not guarantee Enlightenment.

All individuals need to continuously and constantly pursue Enlightenment through developing their practice. An Ordained Practitioner should not have “arrogance or pride” in themselves just for being ordained and therefore “higher” in society as all other beings. This would produce ego. This is exactly the opposite intention of Gotama Buddha in creating The Community of Ordained Practitioners and by not eliminating “conceit” this would inhibit one from attaining Enlightenment.

There are Ordained Practitioners whose practice of these Teachings is not as developed as Household Practitioners. For anyone to have excessive arrogance or pride in themselves for the development of their practice just because they are ordained, is negating the intentions of these Teachings. We must always and forever develop our practice to “eliminate ego” and never “assume” it has been extinguished.

In addition to the “lowly arts” mentioned previously, Gotama Buddha provided guidance that Ordained Practitioners should not provide tattoos, palmistry, cast spells, conduct fortune telling, house blessings and other “lowly arts” as part of their livelihood. Ordained Practitioners should not provide these services and others mentioned in The Teachings, but, instead focus their time on learning, practicing, and sharing these Teachings.

Ordained Practitioners should be the deepest Practitioners as leaders to guide others in The Teachings, but, are not always practicing The Teachings as taught by Gotama Buddha.

We should not obtain images or tattoos of Gotama Buddha. This practice can form attachments and would only further inhibit one from attaining Enlightenment.

It is best for all individuals to show respect to all people not placing one's self above or below another human being.

Gain, Honor, and Praise, Are an Obstacle Even For an Arahant

Monks, gain, honor, and praise, I say, are an obstacle even for a Monk who is an Arahant, one with taints destroyed.

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda asked the Master Teacher Gotama: 'Why, Venerable Sir, are gain, honor, and praise an obstacle even for a Monk with taints destroyed?'

I do not say, Ānanda, that gain, honor, and praise are an obstacle to his unshakable liberation of mind. But I say they are an obstacle to (his attainment of) those peaceful dwellings in this very life which are achieved by one who resides diligent, dedicated, and determined. So dreadful, Ānanda, are gain, honor, and praise so bitter, vile, obstructive to achieving the unsurpassed security from bondage (Enlightenment).

Therefore, Ānanda, you should train yourselves thus: 'We will abandon the arisen gain, honor, praise, and we will not let the arisen gain, honor, and praise persist obsessing our mind.' Thus should you train yourselves.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 17.30)

This Spiritual Life Is Not Lived for the Sake of Deceiving People

Monks, this spiritual life is not lived for the sake of deceiving people and persuading them; nor for the benefit of gain, honor, and praise; nor for the benefit of winning in debates; nor with the thought: 'Let the people know me thus.'

But rather, this spiritual life is lived for the sake of restraint, abandoning, freedom from strong feelings, and elimination.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 4.25)

To learn more about what Gotama Buddha taught related to the practices for the Ordained Practitioners, see the book titled “Lowly Arts” (Volume 12) of this same book series.

5.) Chanting or Mantras: Throughout the world there are Practitioners who do “chanting” of The Teachings. It is important that Practitioners understand, while chanting can help to create mindfulness (i.e. awareness of mind), concentration, and memory, the words themselves and the sounds coming from a person’s mouth do not have any mystical, magical, or special power to attain or create Enlightenment.

There are no mystical, magical, or special powers that one could use in a chant or mantra that would create benefit of doing such things as destroying unwholesome Kamma, attaining Enlightenment, transferring Merit/Kamma, achieving a long life, helping beings that have already died, improving one’s destination after death or any other beneficial result.

Mantras are sometimes taught and “believed” to have mystical, magical, or special powers. This is not true and will not result in beneficial outcomes beyond training for concentration, memory, or awareness of mind.

All of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are focused on the Practitioner learning and practicing Teachings that train the mind, not invoking mystical, magical, or special powers for any sort of benefit. Gotama Buddha himself did not teach these types of practices and described them as a “lowly art”.

Chanting can be relaxing and a powerful practice to calm the mind while developing awareness of mind and awareness of breath through training of the mind, but not through mystical or magical powers.

To attain Enlightenment, a Practitioner needs to practice the entire Eight Fold Path. It is through our practice of learning and applying The Teachings in everyday life, that we liberate the mind to attain Enlightenment.

Listening to chanting or performing chanting can help to create a peaceful mind, develop mindfulness, and awareness of breath. One can use the practice of chanting to improve concentration, memory, and awareness of mind among other beneficial results to train one’s own mind.

Chanting can help calm the mind, however, the Practitioner will need to do the work to sustain the mindfulness and calmness of mind long term.

Chanting is just one practice that helps to develop mindfulness and the mind will need a “life practice” to cultivate a content mind with Enlightenment. A

Practitioner will need to learn and practice the entire Eight Fold Path as their “life practice” to attain Enlightenment.

Merely chanting or reciting a mantra for some beneficial result is not what Gotama Buddha taught as part of The Path to Enlightenment. These Teachings are 100% focused on learning and practicing Teachings that lead to liberation of the mind to eliminate discontentedness.

A chant or mantra alone will not accomplish that goal and is not required to attain Enlightenment.

6.) Gotama Buddha Statues: Every statue of Gotama Buddha looks very different depending on what culture has created the statue. China, Tibet, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other cultures all have Buddha statues but they all look different.

What you will notice is that each culture casts statues of Gotama Buddha based on local tradition and local appearances from within the culture that casts the statues. Statues in Thailand look very Thai while Chinese statues look very Chinese, and so forth. None of these statues resemble the description of Gotama Buddha in his Teachings. (See “Image of Gotama Buddha” at the end of this Chapter.)

People cast statues based on their culture’s appearance due to the affection that people have for Gotama Buddha in that each culture would like Gotama Buddha to look as close to them as possible.

It is a form of craving or mental attachment to Gotama Buddha and having a craving or desire for Gotama Buddha to be from the culture that made the statue.

Keep in mind, we should not allow the mind to crave/attach or worship any image or statue of Gotama Buddha. Gotama Buddha taught us to learn and practice his Teachings so that we can attain the results which is Enlightenment. He was not interested in teaching us to attach to his image or worship him as he knew it would lead to discontentedness of mind and not to Enlightenment. Any and all forms of attachment will cause a discontent mind.

Some people believe the spirit of Gotama Buddha resides in the statues and they can be found praying to the statue (i.e. Gotama Buddha’s spirit) asking for benefits. Gotama Buddha never taught to create statues of him or that his spirit resides in any statue. In fact, he never taught whether a spirit or soul exists or does not exist. He left this as an undeclared Teaching.

The highest form of respect you can give to a Teacher is to practice their Teachings.

Merely, worshiping Gotama Buddha's image will not produce Enlightenment, thus, he did not teach us this practice. He only ever taught us Teachings that lead to Enlightenment, and worship of a statue does not produce Enlightenment.

7.) Gotama Buddha as a God, Avatar, or Lord: There are some traditions that consider Gotama Buddha a God or Avatar.

Common definitions of the words "God" or "Avatar" are:

God: the creator of the universe and source of all moral authority; the supreme being.

Avatar: a manifestation of a deity or released soul in bodily form on earth; an incarnated divine Teacher.

Gotama Buddha never described himself as a God or Avatar during his lifetime. He considered himself a human and a Teacher who discovered "The Path" to a better existence. Gotama Buddha is the discoverer, originator, and declarer of "The Path" to Enlightenment. He then humbly taught this path to others as a human being and a Teacher.

Additionally, some people refer to Gotama Buddha as a "Lord" or "Lord Buddha". The word "Lord" has meaning in communities throughout the world that is very well defined and specific within those communities.

Using the word "Lord", which Gotama Buddha himself did not use, can be confusing for a Practitioner of these Teachings who has exposure to the word "Lord" within other communities and traditions.

Most commonly, the word "Lord" is used to refer to Jesus Christ as "The Lord". Because a large majority of the world uses this word to refer to Jesus Christ, it would be very confusing for anyone with this background to understand Gotama Buddha in this same context as Jesus Christ referred to himself as "The Only Lord".

A common definition of the word "Lord" is:

Lord: someone or something having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler. (Noun)

Lord: act in a superior and domineering manner toward (someone). (Verb)

Synonyms: order about/around, boss about/around, give orders to, domineer, dominate, dictate to, pull rank on, tyrannize, bully, have under one's thumb, etc.

With close review of the word “Lord”, you can see that the common definition of this word is opposite of what Master Teacher Gotama Buddha taught.

Gotama Buddha taught us to be humble, peaceful, calm, polite, kind, friendly, and respectful. He did not teach us to have “power” or to have a “domineering manner towards someone”. His Teachings and guidance were exactly the opposite of these qualities. If we assign or use the word “Lord” to refer to Gotama Buddha, we are also assigning these qualities to Gotama Buddha which are directly opposite of his Teachings.

We should be careful to not refer to or consider Gotama Buddha as anything other than a human and a Teacher or Master Teacher.

He only ever referred to himself as a human so why would we refer to him as anything other than a human? He was a Teacher, a Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, and he also used the term The Tathāgata.

It is not possible to pray to Gotama Buddha to ask for favors and wishes. He has died and will never return to another rebirth.

It is only through the practice of his Teachings that you will experience a liberated mind through wholesome intentions, speech, and actions along with his other extensively clear and concise Teachings that lead to a better life.

8.) Blessings: There are several phrases related to “blessings” used in current day language with good intention but with misunderstanding of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings.

Phrases you may hear include “May Buddha Bless You”, “May the Triple Gem Bless You” or other variations of these phrases. You may see reference to Gotama Buddha as “The Blessed One”.

A common definition of the word “Bless or Blessing” is:

Blessing: God’s favor and protection; a prayer asking for God’s favor and protection.

Gotama Buddha was a human being and a Master Teacher. He taught to abandon and discouraged “rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship” as he understood they would not lead to Enlightenment. Rites, rituals, ceremonies and worship do not change the condition of the mind.

There was never a time in Gotama Buddha’s Teachings where he discussed that he offered “blessings” or that anything he taught was connected to a “blessing”. He also did not teach people prayer or prayer to him as part of his Teachings. These phrases are misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha’s Teachings. (See the book titled “Generosity” (Volume 13) in this same book series, Chapter 83 titled “Aspirations Are Not Obtained by Means of Prayer” for The Words of The Buddha related to his Teachings on discouraging the use of prayer.)

Gotama Buddha encouraged Practitioners to learn and practice The Teachings he shared so that you can observe the truth in The Teachings improving the condition of the mind. In this way, one acquires wisdom and liberates the mind to attain Enlightenment.

Gotama Buddha cannot bless us and nothing he taught involved a blessing but instead dedication and commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment.

In places where you see the title “The Blessed One”, I encourage you to replace “The Blessed One” with “The Perfectly Enlightened One” as this more accurately reflects Gotama Buddha’s Teachings.

9.) Buddha, Buddhahood, or Buddha Nature: Some traditions of these Teachings consider all people to be a Buddha and when you attain Enlightenment, you are a Buddha. This is not what Gotama Buddha taught.

Gotama Buddha was often referred to as “Ascetic Gotama” during his lifetime. Prior to giving up his royal heritage, he was known as Siddhartha Gotama. Upon leaving the royal palace to seek a better understanding of life through attaining Enlightenment, he was known as “Ascetic Gotama” or in other words “Monk Gotama”. Some people referred to him as Teacher or Master Teacher Gotama.

He would most often refer to himself as “The Tathāgata”.

The term Tathāgata is often thought to mean “one who has discovered the truth”, “one who shares the truth”, “one who has thus gone”, or “one who has thus come”. This is understood as signifying that The Tathāgata is beyond all coming and going - sharing the truth of The Natural Laws of

Existence that lead to Enlightenment. There are, however, other interpretations, and the precise original meaning of the word is not certain.

Gotama Buddha is quoted on numerous occasions in The Pāli Canon (the source of his Teachings) as referring to himself as “The Tathāgata” instead of using the pronouns me, I, or myself. This may be meant to emphasize by implication that The Teaching is spoken by one who has transcended the human condition, one beyond the otherwise endless Cycle of Rebirth and death (i.e. beyond discontentedness of mind).

The term Tathāgata has a number of possible meanings.

Gotama Buddha understood the use of the pronouns, me, I, or myself is unfitting to refer to the human condition as there is “no self”, as explained in the previous chapter titled “The Four Noble Truths: Establishing Right View” and “Dissolving the Ego: Ego Serves No Purpose” on The Teaching of “non-self”. The term Tathāgata is a way to refer to himself without using the pronouns me, I, or myself.

Other meanings for the term Tathāgata include:

- He who has arrived in such a fashion, (i.e. who has worked his way upwards to perfection for the world’s good).
- He who by the path of knowledge has come at the real understanding of things.
- He who has won Truth.
- He who has discerned Truth.
- He who declares Truth.

Regardless of what the term Tathāgata means or whether you refer to Gotama Buddha as a Teacher or Master Teacher, he rarely, if ever, even referred to himself as a Buddha and he never referred to people who attained Enlightenment as a Buddha.

So, the man we appreciate, respect, and have admiration for because he shared his Teachings with the world to fully liberate the mind to attain the mental state of Enlightenment rarely, if ever, even refer to himself as a Buddha and never referred to another person who had attained Enlightenment during his lifetime as a Buddha.

The use of the term Buddha to refer to Ascetic Gotama or Monk Gotama was mostly applied to him after his death in 483 BCE. It was after his death that people widely referred to him as a Buddha.

Master Teacher Gotama Buddha never referred to people who attained Enlightenment as a Buddha. He did not refer to Enlightenment as Buddhahood. He did not teach that people have Buddha Nature. He did not tell people they are potentially a Buddha. He rarely, if ever, even referred to himself as a Buddha and all these uses of the title Buddha referring to a person who has attained Enlightenment is not what Gotama Buddha taught.

You will not find these Teachings and use of the term Buddha for an Enlightened being in the source of his Teachings within The Pāli Canon because Gotama Buddha did not teach that everyone is a Buddha, that one would attain Buddhahood, or use the term Buddha Nature to refer to Enlightenment. A person who has attained Enlightenment at the highest stage with the guidance of Teachers would be referred to as an Arahant or perhaps an Enlightened person or an Enlightened being.

Because Gotama Buddha did not teach in this way to use the title Buddha, the title Buddha should not be used to refer to someone who has attained Enlightenment (i.e. is Enlightened) but one could be considered an Arahant.

Gotama Buddha left his royal palace, attained Enlightenment on his own through a 6-year pursuit of hard work and dedication bringing him close to death, taught countless people how to attain Enlightenment during his lifetime, left Teachings that would help countless people after his death to attain Enlightenment, established the ordained path for individuals to attain Enlightenment as Ascetics which is still alive today, and most importantly he was the deepest Practitioner ever known to humankind of The Teachings he shared. He was the discoverer, originator, and declarer of The Path to Enlightenment.

There is no one that has come after Gotama Buddha or will come after Gotama Buddha that has had the same dedication and commitment to sharing The Teachings that lead to Enlightenment as Gotama Buddha did - a true Buddha. There is no one that has or will have as much of an impact to benefit all of humanity in the same way as Gotama Buddha, a true Buddha, including the expected appearance of the next Buddha Maitreya.

To refer to another human who has merely attained Enlightenment as a Buddha, as attained Buddhahood, or having Buddha Nature is to disrespect and minimize the hard work and effort our Master Teacher Gotama Buddha exhibited during his 45-years of Teaching, whose Teachings have drastically improved the existence of countless human beings over the past 2,500 years, and will continue to have an impact well into the future of humanity.

If someone refers to themselves as a Buddha, having attained Buddhahood, or having Buddha Nature is to place themselves on the same level as the

individual who is admired and respected across the entire world for a lifetime of dedication and service to others, whose Teachings have stood the test of time even now, over 2,500 years later. Gotama Buddha was a true and real Buddha.

You are not a Buddha and will never be a Buddha. You will not attain Buddhahood. You do not have Buddha Nature. You can attain Enlightenment as an Enlightened being considered an Arahant but your work and effort will never amount to the impact shared in the world as that of a true Buddha who attains Enlightenment through their own independent journey and then, guides countless other beings to attain Enlightenment.

Referring to oneself as a Buddha, having attained Buddhahood, or having Buddha Nature is to do so with ego and, therefore, it is widely known an individual who does so is not even Enlightened.

If one has ego placing themselves on the same level as Gotama Buddha, a true Buddha, they still have ego and cannot have even attained Enlightenment.

To attain Enlightenment, one needs to dissolve the ego. If someone refers to themselves as a Buddha, having attained Buddhahood, or having Buddha Nature, the ego is still present and has not yet been dissolved. Therefore, you can consider that a person who claims to be a Buddha, having attained Buddhahood, or has Buddha Nature that they are not yet even Enlightened, and lack the appreciation, respect, and admiration as exists for the man once known as Siddhartha Gotama, Ascetic Gotama, Monk Gotama, Teacher Gotama, Master Teacher Gotama, or The Tathāgata.

Gotama Buddha rarely, if ever, referred to himself as a Buddha, why would anyone else refer to themselves as a Buddha unless there is craving/desire and ego while seeking admiration by putting themselves on the same level as Gotama Buddha. If there is craving/desire or ego, one cannot even be Enlightened so how could they be a Buddha?

The Chapter titled “Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?”, shared previously in this book, has many characteristics of what is a true and real Buddha. To be considered a Buddha, one would need to meet those criteria.

The Rare Appearance of Five Treasures

Licchavis, the appearance of five treasures is rare in the world.

What five?

(1) The appearance of a Tathāgata, an Arahant, a Perfectly Enlightened One is rare in the world.

(2) A person who can teach The Teachings and discipline proclaimed by a Tathāgata is rare in the world.

(3) When The Teachings and discipline proclaimed by a Tathāgata has been taught, a person who can understand it is rare in the world.

(4) When The Teachings and discipline proclaimed by a Tathāgata has been taught, a person who can understand it and practice in accordance with The Teachings is rare in the world.

(5) A grateful and thankful person is rare in the world.

Licchavis, the appearance of these five treasures is rare in the world.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: AN 5.195)

Image of Gotama Buddha



Master Teacher Gotama Buddha (The Tathāgata)

This artistic drawing of Gotama Buddha was composed from the description provided of him in The Pāli Canon, the most complete collection of his Teachings. Wat Na Pah Pong in Krung Thep, Thailand commissioned this artwork of Gotama Buddha based on the descriptions found within the Pāli text.

Gotama Buddha was born in current day Nepal. This artwork resembles the appearance of an individual known to originate from that region of the world and was not created to appear from the culture in which the artwork was commissioned.

I know this image to be an accurate representation of Gotama Buddha's appearance during his lifetime.

Simile of a Man Were Wounded by an Arrow Thickly Smeared with Poison

Suppose, Mālunkyaṇḍita, a man were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, brought a surgeon to treat him. The man would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble or a Brāhmin or a merchant or a worker.’ And he would say: ‘I will not let the surgeon pull out this arrow until I know the name and clan of the man who wounded me;...until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of middle height;...until I know whether the man who wounded me was dark or brown or golden-skinned;...until I know whether the bowstring that wounded me was fibre or reed or sinew or hemp or bark;...until I know whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated;...until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted — whether those of a vulture or a heron or a hawk or a peacock or a stork;...until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound — whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a deer or a monkey;...until I know what kind of arrowhead it was that wounded me — whether spiked or razor-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or lancet-shaped.’

All this would still not be known to that man and meanwhile he would die. So too, Mālunkyaṇḍita, if anyone should say thus: ‘I will not lead the holy life under the [Enlightened] One until the [Enlightened] One declares to me: ‘The world is eternal’ and ‘the world is not eternal’; ‘the world is finite’; and ‘the world is infinite’; ‘the soul is the same as the body’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’; and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist’, that would still remain undeclared by The Tathāgata and meanwhile that person would die.

Therefore, Mālunkyaṇḍita, remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared.

And what have I left undeclared? ‘The world is eternal’ and ‘the world is not eternal’; ‘the world is finite’; and ‘the world is infinite’; ‘the soul is the same as the body’ and ‘the soul is one thing and the body another’; and ‘after death a Tathāgata exists’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata both exists and does not exist’ and ‘after death a Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,’ — I have left undeclared.

And what have I declared? ‘This is discontentedness’, ‘This is the cause of discontentedness’, ‘This is the elimination of discontentedness’, ‘This is the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness’ — I have declared.

Why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to liberation, to freedom from strong feelings, to elimination, to peace, to direct knowledge (experience), to Enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is why I have declared it.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: MN 63)

Simile of a Man Were Wounded by an Arrow Thickly Smeared with Poison (continued)

Author's Thoughts: This simile uses the “poisonous arrow” to represent “The Three Poisons” that we are all affected by “craving (greed/desire), anger (hatred/ill will), and ignorance (delusion/confusion)”. The Teachings of Gotama Buddha are represented by the surgeon. His Teachings are the medicine to remove “The Three Poisons”. But, if we expect to know all the answers that lead to the removal of “The Three Poisons” prior to practicing these Teachings, which would remove these poisons, then surely we will die before the poisons are removed.

There is no way for you to know all the answers prior to learning and practicing these Teachings as you need to create a “life practice” to clearly see many of the answers to acquire wisdom. Each day you build more and more wisdom in your life practice to *gradually* attain Enlightenment. If you expect to know all the answers prior to practicing these Teachings, surely you will die before the poisons are removed and, thus, have continued discontentedness and be reborn to once again experience life in a new realm - most likely not the human realm.

Gotama Buddha left certain questions undeclared because they do not lead to liberation of the mind. But The Teachings he did declare do lead to complete liberation of the mind, namely starting with “The Four Noble Truths” as mentioned in this simile.

From the Darkness into The Light

When we are deep into the darkness of the mind, we can't see a way out. We think everyone else is "the problem". We do not realize we have a problem. We do not see The Three Poisons are affecting the mind and our intentions, our speech and our actions.

We don't see the bad things happening to us as a result of our own intentions, speech, and actions. The Natural Law of Kamma is at work constantly showing us that we are still in the darkness but without the wisdom of this natural law we think we can somehow gain control.

We do not know there is a problem and, thus, we do not know there is a way out of the darkness. We think we are SO smart and can see so clearly.

The mind is permeating with poison, The Three Poisons of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) but we don't see it. Our excessive cravings and desires keep us clinging, attaching, and clinging some more.

We are bound into The Cycle of Rebirth through The Ten Fetters.

Our existence becomes trying to satisfy this mountain of endless craving and desires. We think we are just living life and everything is normal.

We are angry, we are happy, then we are sad, then bored, lonely, excited, elated, deeply hurt, searching and looking for what's next in this roller coaster of emotions. We are searching for answers but may not know where to look as "the way of life" that explains everything has been affected by impermanence, thus, everyone calls it a "religion" when the original Teacher described it as "a better way of life".

The word religion elicits painful feelings for most and, thus, they turn away.

If we are fortunate, we...

Hear that the world is full of discontentedness, everything is impermanent and constantly changing except for Enlightenment and The Natural Laws of Existence. The mind becomes interested and when this Teaching is practiced the mind sees the truth and agrees.

Hearing we cause our own discontentedness due to our attachments and constant craving and desires, the mind looks inward seeing your last incident of anger, you see your cravings/desires/attachments that caused your own discontentedness.

Hearing that we can eliminate our discontentedness by eliminating our mental attachments and by training the mind to not cling, the mind inhales a few breaths but the darkness holds on. The poisons are well rooted.

Hearing that "The Path" to eliminate our discontentedness is to practice The Eight Fold Path, the way leading to the elimination of discontentedness, the mind can see the light to peacefulness, to contentedness, to inner fulfillment.

From the Darkness into The Light (continued)

But, we must have access to The Teachings and to Teachers. We must study, we must reflect, we must practice so that we can attain the “results”.

A mind free of craving, anger, and ignorance (unknowing of true reality) with the elimination of ego and realizing non-self. A steady, peaceful, calm mind in the sea of darkness that is available for all human beings.

The Enlightened mind, a mental state achievable by all that would create the most peaceful earth ever known to humankind.

- 1.) Universal love for all beings
- 2.) Do no harm
- 3.) Be a good moral person

It has taken us 2,500 years to realize we’ve had the answers all along but impermanence has affected them, just like everything else.

Now, we refocus. We caught The Teachings from the sky, we dust them off, we present them to the world.

We start at home with ourself and work our way out. It’s going to take a long time.

A peaceful world free of The Three Poisons is possible. But first, you must realize you have been shot with an arrow full of poison.

Are you ready to take it out?

Start learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha today!

(Written by the author of this book.)

Continue to read and understand “The Words of The Buddha - The Path to Enlightenment - Revealing The Hidden” book series that has been laid out for all of us to achieve a better way of life.

You can connect to a group of people in a supportive environment for discussion, sharing, and learning through the Facebook group.

Daily Wisdom - Walking The Path with The Buddha

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DailyWisdom999/>

All members are accepted without judgment. It is a healthy place to talk, discuss, learn, and grow. There are resources to help you further on this Path to Enlightenment accessible online through a Group Learning Program.

Group Learning Program: LIVE Interactive Online Classes, Books, Audiobooks, Videos, Podcast and Personal Guidance are available for you.

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 24) - Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/CjnGRfVw5ec>

Ep. 524 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter 24) - Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--524---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-24---Misunderstandings-of-Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-e272v27>

Youtube Video(s)

(Group Learning Program) - Chapter 24 - Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

<https://youtube.com/live/fX6byF6Hnnk>

Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Misunderstandings About Meditation

<https://youtu.be/GQYYHJ5Xfd0>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 492 - (Group Learning Program) - Chapter 24 - Misunderstandings of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--492---Group-Learning-Program---Chapter-24---Misunderstandings-of-Gotama-Buddhas-Teachings-e27a9n5/a-aa5l0bn>

Ep. 196 - Guided Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and Misunderstandings About Meditation

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--196---Guided-Breathing-Mindfulness-Meditation-and-Misunderstandings-About-Meditation-e165edi/a-a6cmk13>

Quiz

Misunderstanding of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

<https://forms.gle/PXhQGSQyFAebGSFx9>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

Frequently Asked Questions

1.) How do I become a Buddhist?

Many times people ask, “How do I become a Buddhist?”.

This question often comes from the mind seeking a label or category for what one is choosing to “become”.

In actuality, in my opinion, Gotama Buddha himself was not a Buddhist. The term “Buddhist” did not originate until after Gotama Buddha’s death so we know he was not a Buddhist. He discovered and shared Teachings that lead to a better way of life, the awakened and Enlightened mind.

I do not think labels or categorizing people in any way is beneficial. We are all human beings.

I see the question of “How do I become a Buddhist?” as “How do I awaken the mind to Enlightenment?”.

Let me answer this question “How do I awaken the mind to Enlightenment?” which is more beneficial than the previous question mentioned in the title of this question.

To awaken the mind to Enlightenment a person needs to choose to learn and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha to progress on The Path to Enlightenment with the guidance of a Teacher.

There is nothing formal one needs to do in order to learn and practice The Teachings other than to have dedication and commitment to learning and practicing The Teachings to awaken the mind to the Enlightened mind, have access to The Teachings, and access to a Teacher.

To awaken the mind, each Practitioner will need a Teacher. It is impossible to awaken the mind to Enlightenment without the guidance of a Teacher. A Teacher will be able to provide you The Teachings and personal guidance along The Path to Enlightenment.

The only person who would be able to awaken the mind to the Enlightened mind without Teachers is a Buddha. The last Buddha currently known by the world existed over 2,500 years ago. So, you and everyone else will need guidance from a Teacher.

Once you find a Teacher, they should have resources to assist you in learning and practicing The Teachings to independently acquire wisdom along The Path. As you learn and practice The Teachings, there is no aspect of The Teachings from Gotama Buddha that is based on belief. Belief will not liberate the mind to awaken to the Enlightened mind.

A Student will need to *gradually* learn and practice The Teachings to independently observe the truth in The Teachings to acquire wisdom. It is this new found wisdom that will allow the mind to function through the Enlightened wisdom one acquires. In this way, the mind can *gradually* progress towards attaining a permanent mental state that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - the Enlightened mind.

Gotama Buddha did not share any Teachings that include rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship. He taught that these things do not lead to Enlightenment so there is no rite, ritual, ceremony, or worship that is required in order to pursue The Path to Enlightenment.

The Enlightened mind will not experience any discontentedness. All discontent feelings will be eliminated 100% to include the elimination of sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

The mind will reside permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

Are you on The Path to Enlightenment? Are you learning The Teachings and progressing along The Path?

If not, you can be, and life is so much better as the mind *gradually* awakens to "true reality" - to Enlightenment.

2.) Do I need to give up all my possessions, occupation, and relationships to attain Enlightenment?

Absolutely not.

While living a simple life can provide a lot of peace, the type of life you create for yourself and your existence is your personal choice.

These Teachings are not about eliminating possessions, occupations, and relationships but rather training and purification of the mind. You need to eliminate how the mind relates to possessions, occupations, and relationships, etc. having these things while practicing non-attachment. The mind needs to eliminate The Ten Fetters, taints, or pollution of the mind, not

possessions, occupations, and relationships, while cultivating other beneficial qualities of the mind.

You can have possessions, an occupation, and relationships while practicing non-attachment to attain Enlightenment.

3.) What is reincarnation and rebirth? Are they the same thing?

Reincarnation and rebirth are different. They are not the same.

Reincarnation: the reemerging of a soul in a new body.

Reincarnation typically relates to a new existence from a soul, spirit, or entity of a previously existed being. The new existence is seen as being the same as the previous being just in a new body. Reincarnation requires a permanent soul or entity that emerges repeatedly in new existences. Gotama Buddha did not share this as part of his Teachings.

The concept of reincarnation conflicts with Gotama Buddha's Teachings on The Universal Truth of Impermanence and The Universal Truth of Non-self, thus, was not taught by Gotama Buddha. In Gotama Buddha's 45-years of teaching, his Teachings never contained any contradictions.

Reincarnation is dependent on a permanent soul or spirit transcending multiple existences. Gotama Buddha left The Teaching concerning a soul as "undeclared" having never taught the concept of a permanent soul or a permanent self that transcends multiple existences.

The concept of reincarnation conflicts with three specific aspects of Gotama Buddha's Teachings. Reincarnation conflicts with 1.) The Universal Truth of Impermanence, 2.) The Universal Truth of Non-self, and 3.) Gotama Buddha left The Teachings on the soul as an "undeclared" Teaching, thus, Gotama Buddha never taught reincarnation.

Rebirth: a new being that has come into existence through The Cycle of Rebirth based on a previous being's craving and Kamma.

Gotama Buddha taught rebirth through The Cycle of Rebirth.

Rebirth is a new existence of a new being that has been reborn based on a previous being's craving. Craving is the fuel that causes rebirth. If there is craving at the time of death, there will be rebirth into a new existence. If Enlightenment has been attained (i.e. all craving, anger, and ignorance are fully extinguished), there will be no rebirth.

The new being may or may not have residual memories of previous existences in its new consciousness that may be recalled over time during the new being's life. Rebirth is not based on a permanent soul or spirit of any kind but instead is caused by the craving of the previous being which produces a new birth into a new existence.

Each new birth is a new existence or new life. In reality, this should be shared and discussed as The Cycle of New Existence because there is nothing that is actually being reborn.

Kamma of the previous being will determine the destination and life situation of the new being. Kamma of the previous being determines in which realm the new being will be reborn, Hell, Animal, Afflicted Spirits, Human, or the Heavenly realm. Kamma from the previous being also determines the quality of life of the new being. For example, the family and life situation (poverty vs. wealth) one is born into, the appearance of the new being, and the condition of the new being's body and mind are all determined based on the Kamma of the previous being.

If the previous being generated significant amounts of wholesome Kamma to be reborn into the human realm, the new being is reborn into a favorable destination within a wealthy family, beautiful appearance, and/or with a healthy body and mind.

If the previous being generated significant amounts of unwholesome Kamma, the new being is reborn into an unfavorable destination of the lower realms (Hell, Animal, or Afflicted Spirits Realm) or if reborn into the human realm, the being will be reborn into difficult circumstances in the new existence based on the previous being's Kamma.

Difficult circumstances that result from the previous being's Kamma would include in what realm the new being is reborn, what part of the world, the type of family, the amount of wealth, ability to acquire necessities to sustain life, appearance, and the health of the body and the mind.

Craving determines if there is rebirth while Kamma determines in what realm, what situation, and the condition of the new being upon rebirth.

4.) Can I be a Buddhist without believing in rebirth?

Yes, one does not need to understand, believe, or know the truth regarding rebirth to learn and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Let's explore this topic further to provide you additional information for a deeper understanding.

Considering a person Buddhist or not is only a label. Labels of being a Buddhist or not will not determine whether you are or are not learning and practicing these Teachings closely. There is nothing to determine whether you are or are not a Buddhist.

In fact, Gotama Buddha himself was not a Buddhist. This label did not exist during his lifetime. The Teachings and practices Gotama Buddha shared were offered to humanity as a "life practice" that would improve the condition of the mind through awakening it to true reality, Enlightenment.

There are many people who have advanced in their practice to the point of observing past lives. It is through these observations that people, including Gotama Buddha, know that rebirth is the truth. You may or may not ever observe past lives as part of your pursuit to attaining Enlightenment.

The good news is that you do not need to observe past lives in order to attain Enlightenment. What transpired in the past is in the past and has no impact on whether you attain Enlightenment in this very life. Part of this good news is that your Kamma in your previous lives was wholesome enough that you were able to obtain the human state for this rebirth and now you have an opportunity to attain Enlightenment in this very life.

What happened in the past or may happen in the future is not important to attain Enlightenment in this very life. The mind needs to reside in the present moment learning and practicing The Teachings that lead to good wholesome decisions to attain Enlightenment.

Additionally, there are no Teachings in this practice that one should merely "believe". Belief does not allow you to attain the wisdom that would ultimately liberate the mind. It is only when you learn The Teachings putting them into practice that you will be able to independently verify the truth in The Teachings that will ultimately liberate the mind to attain Enlightenment.

You should never believe anything in these Teachings but instead, work to learn and practice The Teachings so that you can independently verify the truth for yourself. This will ensure you are gaining wisdom to liberate the mind.

For more details on how rare it is for one to obtain the human state, see Gotama Buddha's simile "Rare That One Obtains the Human State" available in this book in the Chapter titled "Why Study Gotama Buddha's Teachings?" (Chapter 2).

5.) What does it mean to take refuge in The Buddha, The Dhamma, and The Sangha and is there a ceremony to do this?

Refuge: Shelter or protection from danger or distress. A place that provides shelter or protection. Something to which one can receive help in difficulty.

Buddha: A being who has attained Enlightenment on their own without the assistance of Teachers to independently discover Teachings that lead to their own Enlightenment, with the ability to share their independently discovered Teachings that lead countless others to Enlightenment during their lifetime and after their death. The last Buddha currently known to the world existed 2,500 years ago, whom I refer to as Master Teacher Gotama Buddha or Gotama Buddha. (You will see other ways people refer to him.)

Dhamma: The Teachings of Gotama Buddha based on The Natural Laws of Existence that lead to awakening of the mind, Enlightenment.

Sangha: The entire Community of Practitioners to include Ordained Practitioners and anyone who has attained one (1) of The Four Stages of Enlightenment, this includes Household Practitioners. These are the Teachers who can guide others to attain Enlightenment through The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

When we say, take refuge in The Buddha, The Dhamma, and The Sangha we are saying that one's mind can be protected through having confidence in The Buddha, through learning The Dhamma, and through seeking guidance from The Sangha.

One would need to take refuge in all three, not just one. This is also referred to as the Triple Gem or the Triple Jewel.

When one learns and practices these Teachings with guidance from Teachers, the mind can reside permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. The mind is unshakable because on this path you will know the "truth" and have deep wisdom. The mind will be unshakable meaning nothing and no one can ever cause the mind to be angry, frustrated, irritated, annoyed, or have even the slightest stress or discontentedness.

The mind will be protected from these and all other discontent feelings like boredom, loneliness, guilt, shame, fear, shyness, jealousy, resentment, anxiety, etc. Absolutely nothing will ever negatively affect the mind once it is experiencing Enlightenment. The Enlightened mind is fully protected.

If one seeks refuge in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community, the mind will be permanently protected through your own learning and practice to attain Enlightenment as you are guided by the Teachers of The Community.

The mind will be unshakable.

People throughout time have come up with rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship that they say are an acknowledgment of taking refuge in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community. However, these were not taught by Gotama Buddha and is only something that people developed along the way. There is no benefit to a ceremony. A ceremony does not have the power to change anything about the mind. It is only through learning and practicing The Teachings that the mind can develop and improve its condition to experience Enlightenment.

One of the aspects of the mind Gotama Buddha taught to eliminate in order to attain Enlightenment is:

Wrong behavior and observances (Elimination of the mind's belief that rites, rituals, ceremonies, and worship will help a Practitioner to attain Enlightenment. Well developed practice of The Eight Fold Path.)

One needs to eliminate this fetter, or pollution, from their mind to even attain the first Stage of Enlightenment. This is one of The Ten Fetters. All Ten Fetters need to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment. If the mind thinks that rites, rituals, ceremonies, or worship is going to improve the condition of the mind and progress a Practitioner to Enlightenment, the mind still has the pollution of "Wrong behavior and observances". Therefore, the Practitioner's mind is not Enlightened and will not be Enlightened until this pollution, or "wrong view", is removed from the mind.

Taking refuge to Gotama Buddha would be to learn and practice The Teachings. In this way, the more you learn and practice the more and more protected the mind will become. A ceremony cannot do that for you. It is only through your own dedication and commitment to learning and practicing that will allow one to have protection of the mind taking refuge in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community.

All human beings can take refuge in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community. All human beings should take refuge in The Buddha, The Teachings, and The Community.

This is the only way for the entire world to experience “worldwide peace”.

6.) What is our purpose in life? What is the purpose of our human existence?

This is a common question some ask of themselves and we sometimes ask of Spiritual Teachers. Various answers to these questions have been provided by various Spiritual Teachers around the world.

Let’s explore this question and the nature of this question arising in the mind.

The human mind contains the human ego. These types of questions are asked from the human ego.

It is our ego that has a craving or desire to have importance and a purpose in this life. The ego craves for there to be a special purpose or higher calling for human existence on this planet.

The human ego is always looking for significance, purpose, and importance so the question of “what is our purpose in life?” could surely arise in the mind.

The short answer is: There is no purpose to life. There is nothing here and there is no point or significance in life.

This could be considered a pessimistic view but let’s examine it more closely.

If humans completely vanished from the earth in the snap of a finger, would there be grieving or sadness? Who would grieve or be sad?

Would the monkeys, whales, or birds grieve that humans have vanished?

Would the world’s seas have dismay that humans have vanished?

Would the sun and moon still rise and set if humans instantaneously disappeared?

If you answer these questions honestly, you would come to the conclusion that the monkeys, whales, nor birds would grieve the vanishing of humanity.

In fact, they would probably be pleased and see humanities disappearance as beneficial.

The world's seas would not have dismay if humans vanished and again, would probably benefit enormously from our disappearance.

The sun and moon would still rise and set based on the same cycles that have always existed and human disappearance would have no effect or change to these natural cycles.

Who is going to even remember you and your existence on this planet a few hundred or a few thousand years from now? If you answer this question honestly, no one will remember you or care that you existed.

So, who would truly grieve, have sadness or dismay at the disappearance of all of humanity? Only humans, right?

We have such a strong craving to exist that we continue to exist on this planet and oftentimes search for meaning or purpose in life. This outward searching and seeking importance is just the human ego seeking significance.

In this way, we crave possessions, wealth, relationships, job titles, or self image, all products of the mind seeking importance.

Similarly, it is the human ego that holds, grasps, and clings to the idea that humanity must and shall always continue.

In the world as it existed during prehistoric times with massive creatures roaming the earth, I suspect that the human ego was practically non-existent.

If we lived during those times and ventured out from our cave, we knew that there were massive creatures that were much more powerful and significant in the world than us humans.

Prehistoric humans most likely were very aware of their presence and the presence of creatures that were much more dominant and powerful than humans. These more dominant creatures could eliminate a human's life practically instantaneously with their power and might.

I suspect the prehistoric human mind understood humans are not powerful and that other creatures ruled this planet.

It is only in modern society, that humans have developed an ego that is unbalanced and unchecked. We have created technology and advances in transportation, energy, weaponry, and other fields that have made us the supreme being on this planet.

If a lion or other beast killed a human, we would most likely seek out the beast and kill it with our advances in intelligence and weaponry to track and kill the beast. The modern human ego would find it necessary to exert our dominance over any beast that exists today that killed a human and “got away with it”.

This allows the modern human ego to retain our false sense or craving for dominance and control of the world around us.

Conversely, if a human was killed by another creature during prehistoric times, and there were many creatures to do the killing at that time, humans would have just accepted it and moved on knowing that humans are not the dominant force on this planet. There would not be an attempt to kill all the creatures by prehistoric humans because that objective would be impossible.

Throughout history, humans have evolved significant intelligence and ability to dominant or control the world around us and through that ability to exert our control or will, the human ego has evolved and is firmly rooted in the human mind.

But if we strip away the modern human ego to eliminate seeking importance and significance refocusing on the prehistoric mind, what we would most likely find is that prehistoric human beings had no such desire or interest to understand their “significance” or “importance” on this planet because all they cared about is “existing”. They only cared about “survival”. They depended on the land and the resources it provided.

I propose, the only interest among prehistoric human beings was to exist and co-exist peacefully among all the creatures that resided here on this planet. If they did not seek a peaceful co-existence with all creatures on the planet and live in harmony with earth’s resources, humans would not have existed.

They hunted and gathered to provide food. They created shelters and clothing. They looked for ways to create a better or more comfortable existence with each other. They did not seek importance or significance of why they existed, they just sought a better existence - to live and stay alive.

It is only in modern civilizations that we have created jobs, possessions, titles, hobbies, sporting activities and other activities that we pursue to pacify or occupy our time in this existence to create some sort of importance or purpose the human ego can latch onto to feel important.

As various Teachers have been asked these same questions over the years, various answers have been provided. The mind of the seekers and Teachers have an overwhelming desire for an answer and to provide an answer.

As a Teacher, it does not make me feel more important, significant, or wiser to provide an answer to the questions of “what is our purpose in life?” or “what is the purpose for our existence?”.

Can a Teacher and, thus, the Student just be content with the answer “there is no purpose, we just exist”?

It is the human mind and human ego that is constantly trying to create purpose for this existence that we continue to exist and continue to add more and more obligations and relevance to our existence. We are the dominant and controlling creature on this planet, so the ego expects and craves the answer that there must be some sort of significance or importance to our existence.

I can be content to share “there is no purpose for human existence and there is no purpose for humans on this earth”, I have no interest to please an ego to sound wiser if I provided a definitive answer to this question.

Can the mind be content with the answer “there is no purpose for human existence and there is no purpose for humans on this earth” or do you still have a craving or desire for a purpose?

Does your ego still crave and desire an answer to “what is your purpose in this life”? Is the ego still seeking importance and significance?

If so, here is the answer I will provide you...

Your purpose is to attain Enlightenment, which includes dissolving of the ego so that once you dissolve the ego, you will see that there is no purpose to the human existence.

Upon attaining Enlightenment, you will have escaped “The Cycle of Rebirth” and, thus, you will not be reborn into a new existence of nothing or no purpose.

Sustain your life through the daily activities that are required to sustain life, attempting to do no harm to other beings or the planet. Seek Enlightenment in this life. Dissolve the ego and realize there is nothing that exists here for you in this world and we do not need to continue human existence.

Elimination of the craving for importance and significance in this life is to eliminate and dissolve the ego that craves an answer to this question.

You have made yourself constantly busy and occupied with tasks, objectives, goals, and responsibilities that are pleasing to the mind and to the ego. The mind and, thus, the ego feels important and significant.

However, there is no purpose for humanity to exist and until we realize that the mind and, thus, the ego has us on a never ending pursuit to feel important and significant, then we will continue to have craving for existence. If there is craving at the time of death, we will be reborn through The Cycle of Rebirth eventually returning to a new human life of constant pursuit of importance and significance. Craving is the fuel that leads to rebirth. To eliminate rebirth, one needs to extinguish craving.

It is not until we fully dissolve the ego, along with other realizations on this Path, that we attain Enlightenment so that we will not return to a new existence with a purpose of.....“nothing”.

7.) Can I exercise the physical body and still attain Enlightenment?

Yes, you can.

The Path to Enlightenment involves training of the mind, not training of the body. To sustain this life, you need the body and the mind to reside together.

Without the body, you have no ability to train the mind.

So, you should exercise the physical body, if you like, and maintain its health in prudent ways. There is less effort for the body and the mind when the body is healthy. An unhealthy body will put strain on the body's systems and also the mind.

Proper hygiene, proper food supply, proper sleep, physical fitness, and medical check ups are helpful to ensure you are maintaining the body's physical health.

The mind can also become attached to having excessive hygiene, proper food supply, physical fitness, and extensive worry about poor health causing

discontentedness so it's important that you maintain your health without craving/desire/attachment.

For example, if you plan to workout each day at 8:00AM and that is your permanent schedule, it will be impossible for you to maintain this schedule permanently because of The Universal Truth of Impermanence. It will be impossible to maintain a fixed, steady, or permanent schedule.

Just because you missed a workout at 8:00AM, can the mind still be content?

Missing a workout does not give you permission to be grumpy, upset, or angry to those around you. You also should not show arrogance that you are a superior athlete who looks down on all those who choose not to implement a fitness plan. You should also not rush through daily activities just to get to your workout. Take things at a calm steady pace and workout when you have the time and ability, if you choose.

You will find that having regular physical activity of some type will improve the condition of the physical body and clarity of mind.

8.) Is medicine and medical procedures for the body a craving/desire/attachment?

Determining if something is or is not a craving/desire/attachment is based on how the mind relates to the person, object, or situation. If there is a mental longing with strong eagerness, that is a craving/desire/attachment.

There are many health conditions that can be improved by medications. Pain relief medicine is helpful in certain situations. In life, you may experience headaches and other pains in the body. This is normal and pain relief medication can be helpful to temporarily relieve various pains in the body.

Once you attain Enlightenment, the body and the mind will be tranquil, light, and peaceful.

If you are experiencing pain in the body, it is challenging to train the mind. Temporarily relieving the body of its pain through medication can be helpful but you must ensure that you do not become dependent or addicted to medications that influence the mind.

If a Practitioner is taking medicines without understanding the root cause of the medical concern to solve the health issue, then one is perhaps going to never find the solution to the problems they face. For example, if a Practitioner is experiencing ongoing headaches and just continues to always

seek medicine without investigating the root cause, then they will not eliminate what is causing the headaches and be relegated to the expense and harmful side effects due to continuous use of chemically based medicines. There is most likely a non-biological cause to something like a headache such as poor diet, lack of sleep, lack of water, difficulty addressing stressful situations, and other external causes.

A wise Practitioner would look to solve the root cause of the headaches rather than continue to always revert to medicines. While medicines can provide a temporary solution, a wise Practitioner will look for the root cause and address that through wise decision making which may or may not involve medical intervention.

Headaches and other medical issues are a way to tell the mind that unwise decisions are being made and through identifying those and through implementing wiser decision making, a Practitioner can completely resolve their medical issues that lead to such things as headaches, stress, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and a whole range of other symptoms that are remedied through a well trained mind based on these Teachings but may be falsely understood as a biological medical problem.

Discuss medications and the use of them with your Doctors ensuring you have selected Doctors and medical professionals who have eliminated craving for wealth and are dedicated to providing respectful beneficial patient care with no other motivations.

Medications that are prescribed for mental health can be a craving/desire/attachment as described in a previous Chapter. There are no medications that will permanently eliminate emotions, feelings, past traumas, or expectations you place on yourself that cause a discontent mind.

Mental health medications will suppress the unwelcome emotions and feelings but they will not eliminate them. Medications and medical interventions are only temporary solutions or perhaps only providing minimal improvements while one works to develop their life practice in these Teachings to completely eliminate unwelcome emotions and feelings.

The only permanent solution to attain a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy is Enlightenment.

9.) What significance can I apply to dreams?

The mind can produce various thoughts and experiences including dreams. There are always questions about how to interpret dreams. The person who experiences the dreams can oftentimes look to others for the meaning and

purpose of a dream to help guide them in life. This practice can oftentimes be misleading at best.

The potential subject matter of dreams and how they are interpreted are countless. For every dream one experiences, there can be any multitude of explanations that one may gather from others. Who is to say what is accurate or inaccurate with the various interpretations and methods used to acquire such information?

When you experience a dream, it's best to not be attached to its meaning or needing an explanation. Whatever is produced during sleep and what that means does not make a dream a reality.

It is best to stay focused on reality and truth in life experiences learning and practicing these Teachings. You may notice as you near Enlightenment and attain Enlightenment that dreams become less frequent or are actually eliminated 100%. While there are some who put a lot of belief and superstition into dreams and dream interpretation, it is best that as you remember dreams to just move past it, remaining unattached to acquiring the meaning of a dream. Consider a dream in the past while focusing on what you need to do in the present moment to continue your progress on this path.

Being attached to the past or past experiences can only burden the mind and leave one craving answers to past experiences when one of the goals of these Teachings is to bring the mind into the present moment without concern of what has happened in the past or what may happen in the future.

10.) Why is Enlightenment permanent?

Gotama Buddha taught that “all conditioned thoughts and feelings” that arise are impermanent. He did not teach “everything is impermanent”.

What is a conditioned thought or feeling?

A conditioned thought or feeling is an arisen thought or feeling that is dependent on an impermanent source or object. It is a thought or feeling that can be observed to arise, change, and then ceases to exist. A conditioned thought or feeling is impermanent or in other words, temporary.

For example, “I am happy because I got a new car”.

The “new car” is the condition that is causing the happiness. The happiness has arisen in the mind due to the condition of the new car.

The feeling of happiness arises based on an impermanent condition, the feeling changes over time, and then the happiness eventually ceases to exist. The conditioned feeling of happiness is impermanent or temporary.

Since the happiness was based on an impermanent condition of the new car, the happiness experienced is impermanent. The thought or feeling of happiness that has arisen, changed, and ceased to exist as all conditioned feelings are impermanent.

Another example, “I am sad because my pet animal died”.

The “pet animal” is the condition that is causing the sadness. The sadness has arisen in the mind due to the impermanent condition of the pet animal. The animal is not permanent and due to the mind craving it to be permanent, it is causing itself to be sad or discontent.

The feeling of sadness arises based on an impermanent condition of the pet. The feeling changes over time and then the sadness eventually ceases to exist. The conditioned feeling of sadness is impermanent or temporary.

Since the sadness was based on an impermanent condition of the pet, the sadness experienced is impermanent. The thought or feeling of sadness has arisen, changed, and ceased to exist as all conditioned feelings are impermanent.

This is what is experienced in the unEnlightened mind. The unEnlightened mind bases its internal feelings on impermanent conditions.

The unEnlightened mind craves/desires/attaches to impermanent conditions, has a mental longing with a strong eagerness for something holding on to it tightly. When the condition changes due to impermanence, the mind produces thoughts or feelings such as, happiness or sadness, for example.

Then, the unEnlightened mind is not comfortable when impermanence is experienced because it is not trained to understand impermanence. The unEnlightened mind experiences discontentedness (pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant) and the suffering these feelings cause due to craving/desire/attachment for permanence when all conditioned objects are impermanent.

This is not how an Enlightened mind functions.

An Enlightened mind has been liberated from the constant craving/desire/attachment to impermanent conditions that cause internal feelings. The Enlightened mind has eliminated craving/desire/attachment, all mental

longing with a strong eagerness for permanence has ceased to exist, therefore, it no longer bases its internal feelings on impermanent conditions.

An Enlightened mind will have been trained to extinguish the primary problem discovered by Gotama Buddha which is craving/desire/attachment to impermanent conditions. The Enlightened mind no longer craves permanence.

Having eliminated the mind's mental longing with a strong eagerness for permanence, (i.e. craving/desire/attachment), the mind no longer grasps, longs, or seeks fulfillment (pleasant feelings) in impermanent conditions. An Enlightened mind knows that the conditioned thoughts and feelings are impermanent, (i.e. temporary), and therefore has been trained not to seek fulfillment (pleasant feelings) based on impermanent conditions.

An Enlightened mind has removed, eliminated, eradicated, and extinguished all craving/desire/attachment and, therefore, no longer has mental longing with a strong eagerness, being inwardly peaceful and content no longer basing its internal feelings on impermanent conditions.

The mind has been liberated, has attained Enlightenment, and is Enlightened. The mental state of Enlightenment is unshakable and permanent.

Once a mind has been trained to eliminate craving/desire/attachment, it will not ever go back to seeking fulfillment (pleasant feelings) from impermanent conditions. The mind has acquired the wisdom that seeking fulfillment (pleasant feelings) from an impermanent condition only welcomes and brings sadness, anger, or worse and, thus, no longer has an interest or desire to seek fulfillment (pleasant feelings) from impermanent conditions. Once one acquires this wisdom and has been trained, the mind will not unlearn this wisdom and, thus, it is permanently trained based on this wisdom to reside peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy.

The Enlightened mind is permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy not based on any impermanent conditions. All conditions have been removed and, thus, the mind resides in the natural Enlightened mental state that is permanent described as an unconditioned mind.

One who has attained Enlightenment will have a permanent mental state of joy. Having attained Enlightenment, the joy experienced is without conditions, or unconditioned, and not based on an impermanent situation, object, or experience and, therefore, is permanent.

The unEnlightened mind is affected by the impermanent nature of impermanent conditions while an Enlightened mind has been trained and liberated through wisdom to no longer be affected by impermanence.

Gotama Buddha's Teachings provide guidance to train the mind to attain a permanent place to reside unaffected by the impermanent nature of conditioned thoughts and feelings.

This is the Enlightened mind, completely pure and without conditioned thoughts or feelings.

An Enlightened mind is permanently peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy not based on any conditions. All conditions are eliminated and the mind is unconditioned. The mind has been purified with all fetters, taints, or pollution of mind removed and eliminated.

An Enlightened mind is liberated from the outward seeking and searching for satisfaction based on impermanent conditions and is inwardly peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently.

11.) Why are donations of support for Teachers of Gotama Buddha's Teachings so important?

There are two primary reasons why donations of support are important as it relates to Gotama Buddha's Teachings.

Let's explore those reasons...

Continuation of Gotama Buddha's Teachings

Gotama Buddha's Teachings have existed on this earth for over 2,500 years only because people have offered support for their continued growth and expansion. There is no centralized organization responsible to collect and distribute Gotama Buddha's Teachings and, thus, it is up to individuals like you and me to continue the support and growth of these Teachings worldwide.

For over 2,500 years, people have provided food, water, clothing, shelter, medical supplies and financial donations to support those who are sharing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. In this way, the Teachers are able to focus their time on practicing The Teachings to gain experience and on sharing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha for the benefit of others.

Teachers receive no inherent benefit for themselves in sharing The Teachings but what you will find is that people deeply practicing The Teachings will

oftentimes make the decision to share their experiences through formal teaching for your benefit.

Legitimate Teachers will openly and freely share The Teachings with any and all beings without reservation. They will accept any and all Students who respectfully choose to learn and progress in their practice of these Teachings.

While they may freely offer The Teachings for Students to learn and progress, it is not free for Teachers to offer The Teachings. There are many resources needed to support a Teacher's ability to exist in this life and share The Teachings openly and freely.

Teachers will setup their life in such a way that requires only basic support of food, water, clothing, shelter, medical supplies and financial support. A dedicated Teacher will not be interested in anything other than basic support and supplies to sustain their life.

Without continuous donations to support Teachers, the Teachers would not be able to exist in the world to offer The Teachings for Practitioners to learn and progress on The Path to Enlightenment. The Teachings would not have reached you in this life had countless people prior to you not offered donations of support so that Teachers could continue to learn, practice, and offer The Teachings openly and freely to all beings.

It is the people before you that have provided regular donations of support to allow The Teachings to continue and ultimately reach you for your benefit.

It is your donations of support that will help you and people after you to learn and practice these Teachings.

Generosity Leads to Enlightenment

The primary problem that Gotama Buddha discovered in the mind is "craving/desire/attachment".

The unEnlightened mind experiences discontent feelings because it "holds on" with a mental longing and strong eagerness. This is referred to as "craving/desire/attachment".

The mind causes itself to be discontent because with craving/desire/attachment it "holds on" and, therefore, the mind experiences sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

To learn and progress in the practice of these Teachings, a Student can completely and entirely eliminate discontentedness in the mind and all discontent feelings are eradicated to attain the Enlightened mind.

Craving/desire/attachment is the cause of the discontent mind and eliminating this unwholesome quality will eliminate discontent feelings from the mind.

There are two remedies that Gotama Buddha shared to train the mind to eliminate craving/desire/attachment.

Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity are the two practices Gotama Buddha shared to eliminate the unwholesome quality of craving/desire/attachment.

Through practicing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation with guidance of Teachers and practicing generosity, the mind is trained to “let go”. Without practicing Breathing Mindfulness Meditation and generosity, among other Teachings, a Practitioner would not be able to attain Enlightenment.

Through practicing generosity (i.e. giving and sharing) the mind is *gradually* trained to “let go” and practice selflessness. The mind has a tendency to “hold on” and accumulate “things” with selfish desires, but through generosity, the mind can be trained to recognize the interconnectivity of all beings through giving and sharing without expectation of anything in return.

Teachers who are openly and freely sharing these Teachings are practicing generosity of their time, effort, energy and resources with loving-kindness and compassion for all beings. Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are designed to guide a Practitioner in cultivating these qualities of mind so any legitimate Teacher would openly and freely share The Teachings with all beings, without expectation of compensation or setting a price for sharing their Teachings. But they will need and do accept donations of support to exist in the world and to offer The Teachings.

With that said, it is up to the Students to regularly support their Teachers.

While a Teacher is practicing generosity to openly and freely share The Teachings with Students, if the Students are not also practicing generosity, there is not support for the Teacher to continue their work to help Students attain Enlightenment.

Essentially, if a Teacher is openly and freely sharing with you, this tradition of Teachings only “works” if Students are also openly and freely sharing resources with their Teacher on a regular basis.

It is common for Students to share food, water, clothing, shelter, medical supplies and financial support, along with time, effort, and energy to help their Teacher to openly and freely share The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Without this generosity, a Student would not be able to train the mind to practice non-craving, non-desire, or non-attachment, therefore, a Student would be unable to attain Enlightenment.

Without generosity, this tradition that leads to awakening of the mind, to liberation, to Enlightenment will not continue for the benefit of all beings to attain a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

While a legitimate Teacher is not interested to openly request donations from their Students, for Students who deeply understand these Teachings and who are practicing these Teachings to eliminate discontentedness in the mind, they would freely make offerings of donations and supplies to help their Teacher without a need for the Teacher to request support.

Students will need to openly, freely, and continually make offerings to their Teachers to support the continuation of The Teachings, to train their mind to “let go”, and to make progress on The Path to Enlightenment.

The entire Buddhist tradition and The Teachings of The Buddha shared with the world is based on loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity of all beings. The foundation and continuation of this tradition is based on Teachers openly and freely sharing The Teachings with loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity. And, the foundation and continuation of this tradition is based on Students making offerings with loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity.

Cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity throughout humanity is highly beneficial for all beings to create a kinder, more peaceful and loving society.

If we enjoy and expect Teachers not to set a price to offer and share Gotama Buddha's Teachings, then Students need to take the initiative to openly and freely make offerings to support the Teachers and The Teachings they share for the benefit of all beings.

To learn more about developing a practice of generosity, see the book titled "Generosity" (Volume 13) of this same book series.

You can support our efforts to share The Teachings of Gotama Buddha with you and worldwide for all people using this link.

<https://www.buddhadailywisdom.com/supportbuddha>

If Beings Knew the Results of Giving and Sharing

Monks, if beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of selfishness obsess them and take root in their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared it, if there were someone to share it with.

But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they eat without having given, and the stain of selfishness obsesses them and takes root in their minds.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: ITI 26)

Learning Resources for Further Exploration

Audiobook

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter FAQ) - Frequently Asked Questions (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/RNHzgznwYs>

(Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - About) - About Author, Glossary & Closing Credits (Read & Listen)

<https://youtu.be/O8ODUvITOWA>

Ep. 525 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - Chapter FAQ) - Frequently Asked Questions

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--525---Audiobook---Volume-1---Chapter-FAQ---Frequently-Asked-Questions-e272v3c>

Ep. 526 - (Audiobook) - (Volume 1 - About) - About Author, Glossary & Closing Credits

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--526---Audiobook---Volume-1---About---About-Author--Glossary--Closing-Credits-e272v4e>

Youtube Video(s)

Frequently Asked Questions and How to Determine If You Are Enlightened - (Group Learning Program)

<https://youtu.be/51UmDIKc5Es>

Podcast(s)

Ep. 197 - Frequently Asked Questions and How to Determine If You Are Enlightened - (Group Learning Program)

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/buddhadailywisdom/episodes/Ep--197---Frequently-Asked-Questions-and-How-to-Determine-If-You-Are-Enlightened---Group-Learning-Program-e16bosh/a-a6dckae>

Quiz

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

<https://forms.gle/6UumH32YvCbsksZ48>

(Confirm your understanding of this Chapter by completing this online quiz. You are the only person who will see the results of the quiz.)

How to Determine If You Have Attained Enlightenment

1.) Never Stop Practicing The Teachings.

Enlightenment, or the pursuit of Enlightenment, is exactly that, a pursuit. Even when you think Enlightenment has been attained, you should never think you are done and stop practicing The Teachings. The most Enlightened beings, in my opinion, would never consider themselves Enlightened and always continue to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings developing deeper wisdom each day.

To attain Enlightenment, you will need a well established understanding and practice of these Teachings. If you have developed a solid practice of these Teachings and see the benefits, you will not be interested to stop practicing or even consider yourself as Enlightened.

Even when you experience what you think is Enlightenment, you need to never consider yourself as having attained Enlightenment. Continue to practice The Teachings always pursuing deeper and deeper wisdom through your well developed learning and practice of these Teachings.

2.) You will be fully practicing The Eight Fold Path which includes The Three Universal Truths, The Four Noble Truths and The Five Precepts.

(See previous Chapters for details on these Teachings and practices.)

3.) When you have fully attained Enlightenment as an Arahant, you will have eliminated all The Ten Fetters.

(See previous Chapters for details on these Teachings and practices.)

4.) You have cultivated a mind that is completely practicing The Brahmā-vihāras.

(See previous Chapters for details on these Teachings and practices.)

5.) You will be fully practicing The Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

(See previous Chapters for details on these Teachings and practices.)

6.) You will know for yourself you have attained Enlightenment because you will have eliminated 100% of discontentedness from the mind.

This means you will no longer experience any of these feelings.

- A pleasant feeling (happiness, excitement, elation, thrill, exhilaration, euphoria, etc.)
- A painful feeling (sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.)
- A feeling that is neither painful-nor-pleasant (boredom, loneliness, melancholy, shyness, displeased, uncomfortable, unsatisfied, etc.)

In the unEnlightened state, you will experience pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and feelings that are neither painful-nor-pleasant. These are the feelings Gotama Buddha's Teachings guide you to eliminate from the mind. They are all impermanent feelings and completely eliminated for one who has attained Enlightenment.

Enlightenment is a permanent mental state that is unaffected by these impermanent feelings and is a permanent place for the mind to reside.

The mind will be protected, unshakable, peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy. The body and the mind will feel light and completely at peace.

To understand more about "What is Enlightenment?", see the Chapter titled "Enlightenment: What is Enlightenment?" (Chapter 3).

Additional Notes

It is important to pursue Enlightenment without craving or desire to attain it but use it as a goal, an interest, or an objective.

If there is craving, even craving for Enlightenment, you will not be able to attain full Enlightenment as an Arahant. And if there is craving at the time of death, there will be rebirth.

There is no finish line to the attainment of Enlightenment. Once a mind reaches the fourth Stage of Enlightenment, the mind can continue to ascend to higher degrees of the Enlightened mind. A Practitioner needs to focus on the one (1) step in front of them that leads to further progress on The Path to Enlightenment. If the mind is focusing on the imaginary non-existent finish line, the craving/desire/attachment for Enlightenment will inhibit and hinder the mind from experiencing Enlightenment.

Instead, a Practitioner may be interested to understand that Enlightenment is the true nature of the human mind, and they are just working to remove all the pollution of the mind that is inhibiting them from experiencing the true nature of Enlightenment. In this way, the mind is not attempting to attain anything at all but instead, the mind is already Enlightened and a Practitioner's life practice is to purify the mind removing the pollution that is hindering one from experiencing the radiance and brightness of Enlightenment.

You should not compare or profess to another person which Stage of Enlightenment you think you have attained. Self declared attainment has no beneficial purpose and oftentimes comes from arrogance and pride, the ego, while being fraught and filled with errors. You should never believe you have attained Enlightenment, and constantly pursue this path your entire life.

Should you ever think you have attained Enlightenment and are "done", the mind will become "sluggish" and halt your progress on this path. If the mind is sluggish, you are not practicing The Seven (7) Factors of Enlightenment and, thus, have not attained Enlightenment.

If you profess your Stage of Enlightenment to others, then you do so with ego and, therefore, it is well known that you have not attained Enlightenment.

The Four (4) Stages of Enlightenment are provided as a personal guide to assist you on the path to higher and higher degrees of attainment but never to be compared to others or feel that you are more important than another person.

If you feel this way, you have not attained Enlightenment.

Now that you have completed reading (Volume 1) of this book series and may decide to read this book multiple times, I would like to take a moment to personally “thank you” for your determination, dedication, and diligence to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings of The Buddha on The Path to Enlightenment.

The time, effort, energy, and resources that you devote to this path are serving to help you and countless other beings. As you choose to learn and practice these Teachings, you will significantly reduce then eliminate any harm that you are putting into the world through your unknowing of true reality. The unEnlightened mind does not understand what it does not understand.

You are now applying time, effort, energy, and resources to improving the condition of the mind, the condition of your life, and, thus, the condition of the world through investigating The Teachings to acquire wisdom. The world becomes a better place when we each individually choose to improve our own life practice taking responsibility for our own intentions, speech, actions, and livelihood while improving our wisdom and mental discipline.

I admire individuals who choose to walk towards harmlessness. I admire individuals who choose to realize there is a better way of life and create that better way of life for themselves through seeking guidance. And, I admire individuals who do not shrink back from the struggle to move the mind towards Enlightenment when the natural tendency might be to remain complacent.

Why have I chosen to share these Teachings with you?

“That it may be for the benefit and peacefulness of the multitude (many people), out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and peacefulness of heavenly beings and humans”. (Gotama Buddha)

“Because if they understand even a single sentence, that will lead to their welfare and peacefulness for a long time”. (Gotama Buddha)

May you discover the freedom associated with a mind that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy permanently - the Enlightened mind.

As you need help to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings, you are welcome to seek guidance which is available openly and freely to “all beings”.

Author



David Roylance is a dedicated Practitioner and Teacher of Gotama Buddha's Teachings who has been part of the Thai community since 2001. He visited Thailand for the first time in 2002 and brought the Traditional Thai Healing Arts back to the United States of America to share with people in the Western World.

His Traditional Thai Healing Arts centers, located in the Washington DC area, provided traditional Thai healing arts to clients and educational opportunities to Students to explore the Thai healing arts, Thai culture, and The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. David is a published author with books on the topics of Traditional Thai Healing Arts and The Path That Leads to Enlightenment.

David has taught Gotama Buddha's Teachings since 2005 in the United States of America. In 2015, he closed his businesses and relocated to Chiang Mai, Thailand to be closer to the Thai culture and the Thai Community of Buddhist Practitioners.

David shares Gotama Buddha's Teachings with Household Practitioners and Ordained Practitioners in Chiang Mai, Thailand and around the world through courses, retreats, and special events providing guidance to help people attain Enlightenment - a peaceful, calm, serene, and content mind with joy.

For more information on participating in courses, retreats, special events or to invite these Teachings to your learning venue, use the contact information below:

Teacher - David Roylance
hello@buddhadailywisdom.com
www.BuddhaDailyWisdom.com

Restoration of The Buddha's Teachings

The Path to Enlightenment

The Buddha taught over 2,500 years ago. He taught The Path to Enlightenment guiding countless beings to a mental state that is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy that is permanent, where the mind has eliminated 100% of all discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

Immediately following the death of The Buddha (i.e. Gotama Buddha), The Teachings were shining in the world continuing to guide countless people to Enlightenment. But, over the course of many generations, just as Gotama Buddha predicted, people's understanding of his Teachings gradually diminished due to modifications and adjustments made by people after him. The modifications made to his Teachings, handed down through oral transmission, have made it increasingly difficult for human beings to attain Enlightenment.

The goal of David's Teachings is to root the learning and practice he shares in "The Words of The Buddha" based on The Teachings that existed during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, so that countless beings can now attain Enlightenment based on the original Path to Enlightenment discovered and declared by Gotama Buddha.

David does this through connecting what he teaches to the largest most complete source of Teachings from Gotama Buddha - The Pāli Canon. The Pāli Canon is the original source text of The Teachings from Gotama Buddha as spoken by him during his lifetime.

David has spent countless hours dedicated to restoring The Words of The Buddha by updating a significant portion of the translations of Gotama Buddha's Teachings from The Pāli Canon. He now offers several resources for Students to learn, reflect, and practice The Path to Enlightenment to experience the results of an Enlightened mind.

David offers books, audiobooks, videos, podcasts, online learning programs, personal guidance, and retreats without any requirement for financial support. All the work that is being done is offered openly and freely for all beings without any requirement to provide any financial support. David accepts donations but Students are not required to provide donations for any work that he does in supporting them on The Path to Enlightenment.

David does not request donations and instead, just accepts whatever is offered to him, if anything at all.

His dedication to sharing these Teachings is not motivated by finances. He shares openly and freely with everyone who has a sincere interest in learning and practicing The Path to Enlightenment.

Ultimately, David plans to preserve The Teachings of The Buddha in a format that is easily, readily, and openly accessible to anyone in the world while offering support to learn, reflect, and practice to experience the results of the Enlightened mind.

His plan is to guide countless people to Enlightenment during his lifetime and leave a Community of Enlightened beings who can continue to share The Teachings long after his death. Through developing a Community of Enlightened beings and preserving The Path to Enlightenment in resources that are easily, readily, and openly accessible to anyone in the world, David is revealing the hidden Teachings of Gotama Buddha and doing the best he can to remove any obstacles one might have to learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings, allowing countless people to experience the results of an Enlightened mind.

Upon his death, David predicts that his closest Student, his son and a continued lineage of Teachers, will share these same Teachings continuing to support and grow The Community of Enlightened beings long into the future - for the next 1,000 years.

These efforts will culminate into restoring The Path to Enlightenment back into the world so that all of humanity can experience Enlightenment evolving the human species to one where every being has the opportunity to attain Enlightenment creating "heaven on earth".

The Goal

An Entire Species of Enlightened Beings

Having experienced Enlightenment and knowing the peace, calm, serenity, and contentedness with joy that comes with having attained Enlightenment, a Buddha's goal is to share his Teachings worldwide so that "all beings" can experience Enlightenment.

The Enlightened mind no longer experiences any discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, anxiety, stress, etc.

All discontent feelings have been eliminated 100% from the Enlightened mind (i.e. all suffering is eliminated).

An Enlightened mind will have loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, and generosity among many other wholesome qualities.

Can you imagine an entire world where all human beings have liberated their mind to no longer experience these discontent feelings and are practicing wholesome qualities of mind at all times?

With "The Buddha" (Gotama Buddha) having attained this permanent mental state of Enlightenment on his own as The Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, he would have known that through his dedicated and persistent pursuit to Enlightenment, he had acquired the wisdom needed to guide "all beings" to this same mental state.

However, his teaching career of 45 years would not be enough time to share his Teachings worldwide. He knew, that it would require many centuries for his Teachings to reach all parts of the world. During his lifetime, travel of people and information was limited based on several constraints.

Today, we are in a unique time in history where these same constraints have been eliminated. A time when people and information are able to travel around the world in an instant.

Not only can information travel quickly but all of humanity is slowly coming to the point where there is a common language spoken around the world - the English language.

Criteria exist today that did not exist during Gotama Buddha's lifetime that make now the perfect time for all of humanity to gradually attain Enlightenment realizing a better existence.

- People can travel worldwide.
- Information can be shared worldwide in an instant.
- Commonly spoken language among a large percentage of the worldwide population and this is only growing.

These criteria did not exist during the lifetime of Gotama Buddha and it is only now that the world has come into an age where his original goal is realistically possible.

But, during Gotama Buddha's lifetime it seems they had something that we may not have....

The people during Gotama Buddha's lifetime had perseverance and dedication to learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings to realize the results of experiencing the Enlightened mind. They were not afraid of hard work.

With our modern day conveniences, I am unsure how many people are willing to apply their determination, dedication, and diligence with time, effort, energy, and resources towards The Path to Enlightenment with the goal to experience the Enlightened mind.

When a being decides they are finished with the sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fear, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, etc., that is the time when one can turn towards The Teachings and goal of experiencing Enlightenment.

Through each individual deciding to learn and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, as a collective world, our species will gradually evolve. We evolve to a higher consciousness where we train the mind to not harm others through our intentions, speech, nor actions.

Through each individual deciding to learn, reflect, and practice The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, each person benefits and we all benefit as there will be less and less harm in the world.

Through individuals deciding to focus on developing a comprehensive approach to learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha with guidance from a Teacher, your life drastically improves and the entire world improves essentially creating "heaven on earth".

We do not need to "fix" the world. That is not the problem. The problem is the unEnlightened mind does not understand The Natural Laws of Existence and it is quite a struggle to live in a world that one does not understand.

Through learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha, a Practitioner comes to deeply understand The Natural Laws of Existence to acquire wisdom that will end the struggles and misery one may face on a regular basis.

Are you ready to apply determination, dedication, and diligence with time, effort, energy, and resources towards The Path to Enlightenment with the goal to experience Enlightenment?

If one enjoys anger, sadness, boredom, loneliness, resentment, etc., there is nothing to do.

But, if you are interested to eliminate these unwelcomed feelings from the mind, then I suggest you turn towards The Path to Enlightenment and apply your dedication and diligence to learning, reflecting, and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

And then, as all of humanity gradually experiences Enlightenment we will have accomplished “the goal”.

“An entire species of Enlightened beings”.

Why Have I Decided to Teach The Path to Enlightenment as Taught by Gotama Buddha?

I have chosen to share these Teachings out of compassion for the world.

Compassion (Pāli: karuṇā) is concern for the misfortunes of others.

And due to this compassion, it is important to share Teachings that are based in wisdom, not belief.

There are countless traditions and ways of sharing those traditions throughout the world. All of these, in one form or another, are essentially sharing to cultivate and practice 1.) Universal Love for All Beings 2.) Do No Harm and 3.) Be a Good Moral Person.

However, the way each tradition is shared and the clarity of those teachings is unique to each tradition.

The Path to Enlightenment as taught by Gotama Buddha (“The Buddha”) over 2,500 years ago as documented in The Pāli Canon, is the most clear, concise, and precise Teachings I have ever encountered that leads exactly where he said they do, to Enlightenment.

The Enlightened mind is peaceful, calm, serene, and content with joy - permanently. The Enlightened mind will no longer experience any discontent feelings such as sadness, anger, frustration, irritation, annoyance, guilt, shame, fears, boredom, loneliness, shyness, jealousy, resentment, stress, anxiety, etc.

This is accomplished through not believing The Teachings of The Buddha but instead, through learning, reflecting, and practicing to discover the truth. The mind can be trained to eliminate all the conditions that are causing it to be stuck in the unEnlightened state. Through eliminating the pollution of mind by training the mind, one can experience liberation of mind, freedom from strong feelings, peace, Enlightenment.

The Buddha’s Teachings are the only Teachings that I have encountered that do not rely on belief. With belief, one does not know what is true or false because they are just believing. Instead, Gotama Buddha’s Teachings are shared in such a way that, a Practitioner can investigate and examine them to determine the truth which leads to wisdom and thus, Enlightenment. If one was to only believe The Teachings of The Buddha, they could not acquire wisdom nor attain Enlightenment.

These Teachings are perfectly suited for today's society where there is a proliferation of misinformation and untruths. These Teachings, with guidance from a Teacher, guide a Practitioner to independently discover the truth through deeply investigating The Natural Laws of Existence (i.e. The Teachings of The Buddha). Through doing this inner work on The Path to Enlightenment, one can discover that these Teachings are the solution to the challenges we experience in the world and the solutions of how to heal from what hurt us so that we never need to hurt again. The mind can completely and entirely eliminate 100% of all discontent feelings once it is Enlightened.

This cannot be accomplished through belief.

Instead, a Practitioner needs to be determined, dedicated, and diligent to doing the inner work to develop the mind and progress towards the Enlightened mental state by acquiring wisdom.

As far as I have discovered, there are no other teachings on the planet that can guide an individual to the complete elimination of discontent feelings through independently verifying the teachings to acquire wisdom. The Buddha did something very unique during his lifetime that no other person or Teacher has accomplished.

He independently attained Enlightenment, dedicated the rest of his life to sharing his independently discovered Teachings guiding countless people to Enlightenment, and he left his Teachings in such a condition that countless more people have attained Enlightenment after his death. He meets all the criteria of a true Buddha. Gotama Buddha was a true Buddha.

My work during this life has been to rediscover these Teachings, in such a way, that they can now be shared worldwide in the international language of English so that countless people all throughout the world can attain Enlightenment during this lifetime and after my death.

The only way to accomplish this goal is to share Teachings that are not based in belief but instead, are based in independently verifiable truth so that a Practitioner can acquire wisdom.

These Teachings are clear, concise, and precise. They invite investigation and examination. Through doing this work, one can gradually train the mind to gradually practice these Teachings and gradually progress to Enlightenment. As discontentedness is gradually diminished and then eliminated from the mind, one can see the truth for themselves that these Teachings work to guide one to Enlightenment.

These Teachings lead exactly where Gotama Buddha said they do, to Enlightenment, and through each individual choosing to attain Enlightenment, humanity will evolve the human species and at the same time create “heaven on earth”.

Why Have I Decided to Reside and Teach in Thailand in Order to Restore The Teachings of The Buddha Back into Humanity and Create “Heaven on Earth”?

1.) Largest Population of Theravada Buddhist Practitioners Anywhere in the World: Thailand is the largest population of Theravada Buddhist Practitioners and Teachers anywhere in the world. Theravada Buddhism considers The Pāli Canon to be the original source Teachings of The Buddha in The Words of The Buddha. Theravada Buddhism teaches the importance of not changing The Teachings of The Buddha and practicing The Path to Enlightenment as a Buddha has taught, without any modifications.

The Pāli Canon is an important text that should not be believed to be the true Teachings of The Buddha but instead, one can learn, reflect, and practice to independently verify The Teachings to acquire wisdom observing the truth in The Teachings as the mind awakens and discontent feelings are gradually diminished and ultimately eliminated.

Once I dedicate the remaining time of this life sharing these Teachings to restore them back into the world, the Thai people and all other diligent Students who choose to learn with me will not ever allow these Teachings to be changed, modified, degraded, or lost over time. The Thai people and diligent Students are well aware that since the lifetime of Gotama Buddha, that is what has occurred and, through having these Teachings restored during the remaining time of this life, the Thai people and diligent Students will not allow this to occur again.

The Thai people will support these Teachings and ensure they continue to be offered in the world for the benefit of “all beings” while being hosted in Thailand and supported by dedicated Students from many international locations.

These Teachings have existed in Thailand for 800-1200 years and they have received significant support from countless people over many generations. The Thai people understand just how impactful The Teachings of The Buddha are to their society and for all of humanity. The Thai people can observe my dedication and commitment to sharing these Teachings, and where possible, they will support me in sharing these Teachings throughout Thailand and throughout the world.

Due to these Teachings existing in Thailand for approximately 800-1200 years, there is a significant amount of infrastructure already created through over 30,000-40,000 Temples where local Thai people and visitors to Thailand can actively learn, reflect, and practice these Teachings to acquire wisdom and then integrate them into their lives. The Temple and Ordained Practitioner infrastructure is not isolated to only Thailand but extends throughout the world and is readily accessible to the benefit of “all beings”. The Thai people have laid the groundwork for these Teachings to now be shared worldwide through the Temple and Ordained Practitioner foundation and infrastructure that has been created over multiple generations.

Thailand is a favorite destination for international travelers with many people visiting Thailand to gain exposure and understanding of these Teachings allowing them to be learned and then practiced “worldwide”. There is an international audience that regularly visits Thailand who can learn these Teachings to then return back to their home country where these Teachings will be able to take root within all international societies. As these Teachings flourish around the world, Thailand has the knowledge and resources to support all of humanity to develop a Temple and Ordained Practitioner infrastructure that can be created within each individual country based on the interest of each country to more deeply integrate these Teachings into their local communities.

2.) Students Have the Ability to Learn and Practice Among Millions of Practitioners: One aspect of learning and practicing The Teachings of The Buddha that will aid one’s development and progress towards the attainment of Enlightenment is, to be part of a Community of Practitioners and Teachers that can provide guidance for gradual training and gradual practice to experience gradual progress on The Path to Enlightenment.

Through me residing and teaching in Thailand, Students have the opportunity to live in a Community of Practitioners and Teachers who are deeply committed to these Teachings and can serve as a role model for Students to gain deeper understanding of how to practice these Teachings in everyday life - even if on a semi-temporary basis during short visits to learn.

Through Students traveling to Thailand to learn while being surrounded by millions of Practitioners, they can more readily absorb how one might choose to integrate these Teachings into their daily life through observing how the people of Thailand live with countless nationalities residing peacefully and harmoniously with each other throughout the Kingdom of Thailand. Students will not only be able to learn these Teachings in a classroom setting at a Temple but, they will also experience day-to-day interactions with people who are choosing to deeply practice these Teachings creating “real life lessons” in a “classroom without walls”.

The entire Kingdom of Thailand can serve as a real life classroom environment where these Teachings are readily practiced and observable by those who choose to visit this Kingdom. I often refer to Thailand as “heaven on earth”.

3.) Can Live With Minimal Expenses: To be able to offer these Teachings at “no cost” I needed to find a location where I could reside with minimal expenses. This allows me to live based on donations rather than charging Students a price for the time, effort, energy, and resources that I expend to share these Teachings worldwide. This allows me to serve the widest audience possible without a need to require payment for my services and The Teachings that are shared.

The basic necessities to live life are readily available and are offered at a minimal cost in Thailand. This provides me the ability to live a basic lifestyle from donations shared by Students. I am able to purchase food, water, clothing, shelter, and medical care at a relatively nominal cost. And, services that I might need to support the development of learning resources are also readily available at a nominal cost.

Whether it be an audio studio to record an audiobook, printing services, technology, classroom supplies, or a full range of other needs to support the continued sharing of these Teachings, Thailand offers these at a nominal price so that there is the best utilization of any and all donations received.

As a result, I am able to help any and all beings regardless of their financial situation through creating a lifestyle where I only need basic necessities to survive and those are provided at a nominal cost while being supported by donations that are fully utilized by purchasing goods and services that are made available at a reasonable price.

4.) Healthy Environment to Live Life and Work: A wise choice for a place to live and teach would need to include a healthy food supply, weather, environment, and lifestyle. All of these are readily available in Thailand which is able to support me in leading as healthy of a lifestyle as possible.

The food in Thailand is healthy and readily available. There are many fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, nuts, seeds, and other foods that are a regular part of the Thai food offerings and readily accessible among countless fresh food markets. This allows me to ingest quality food that is supportive to a long and healthy life, thus, being able to support the learning of many Students for as long as possible due to an elongated duration of life.

Thailand's weather and environment provides the least impact to the physical body without significant weather changes or weather events that can be taxing to one's physical health.

The Thai economy is conducive to living a balanced lifestyle that supports a significant amount of time with family and friends. A work-life balance is highly understood, appreciated, supported, and straight forward to create while living in Thailand. I am able to remain dedicated and determined in my work life while also being dedicated to quality time within our immediate family. This creates the very best environment to ensure consistent health and longevity of life while enjoying a fulfilling life.

5.) Can Share Teachings Within Thailand Throughout the Day and Can Share Teachings with the Rest of The World in the Mornings and Evenings:

Through living and sharing these Teachings from Thailand and needing minimal sleep, I am able to help countless people throughout the day based on the Thai timezone, while helping countless people in other timezones during the early morning hours and evenings. This allows me to be effective at sharing these Teachings around the clock and throughout the world without any limitations based on restrictive timezones.

The timezone in Thailand is favorable to allowing me to share these Teachings worldwide without limitations based on the time of day. I can be helpful from morning, afternoon, and evening where there are Students who are readily interested to learn - whether in-person or online.

6.) Students Have Easy Access to Visas to Gain Access to Classes, Courses, and Retreats: To be successful at sharing these Teachings worldwide, in-person learning is ideal. While there is much that can be learned online and that is one way to be able to share these Teachings, there is no better way to develop your life practice than to learn through in-person access to a Teacher.

Through residing and teaching in Thailand, Students from all over the world have easy access to classes, courses, and retreats from within Thailand due to easy access to visas and as a result, me as their Teacher. Thailand does not have restrictive visa requirements that would bar people from certain countries which would inhibit "all beings" from gaining access to these Teachings.

Instead, Thailand is open and accessible to a wide majority of the world and where needed, I am able to travel.

I live in Chiang Mai, Thailand which is an international destination for countless people around the world. I live within a 4000 km distance to fifty percent (50%) of the world's population. This means that half of the world's population is a short drive or plane ride away. This creates the ability for a large majority of humanity to more easily gain access to these Teachings. And, where needed, I am able to easily travel to all other parts of the world and teach online.

People often travel to Thailand for the sole purpose of learning The Teachings of The Buddha on The Path to Enlightenment. So, by sharing these Teachings from within Thailand, there are countless people who are coming here specifically to learn and practice in the exact location where I reside and teach.

In conclusion, through residing and teaching in Thailand as a “home-base”, I am able to readily share these Teachings worldwide and work towards the restoration of The Teachings of The Buddha back into humanity so that countless people can attain Enlightenment during this lifetime and after my death.

Thailand is the perfect location for these Teachings to be shared and to serve as a “home-base” or “headquarters” for the international community to be invited and welcomed with “open arms”. There is no other location on earth that could provide for a better location to share these important Teachings and to then be preserved for future generations.

The Kingdom is here in Thailand and ready to support you in the development of your life practice towards the attainment of Enlightenment so that we can all create “heaven on earth”.

The Teachings are hosted in the east and visible in the west.

They are readily available to you and there will be a period of 1,000 years that they will “shine in the world” for all those who choose to learn, reflect, and practice to experience the peace and joy of the Enlightened mind. Then, with all of us doing the work towards developing our own individual practice of these Teachings, they will never again diminish, be degraded, or lost. Once restored, these Teachings can continue to support humanity for the rest of time.

May you discover the peace and joy of the Enlightened mind in this lifetime.

May you be peaceful, may you be safe, may you be well, and may you be free of all discontentedness and the suffering it causes.

Wander forth, O Monks, for the welfare of the multitude, for the peacefulness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and peacefulness of heavenly beings and humans.

Teach, O Monks, The Teachings that are good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing.

Reveal the perfectly complete and purified holy life. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear The Teachings. There will be those who will understand The Teachings.

(Gotama Buddha)

(Reference: SN 4.5)

**The only “war” worth waging is
the war within the mind.**

**Win that “war” and you have
“won everything”.**

- The Teacher

Glossary

Aryan: is a term that was used as a designation by Indo-Iranian people. The word was used by the Indic people of the Vedic period in India as an ethnic label for themselves and to refer to the noble class as well as the geographic region known as *Āryāvarta*, where Indo-Aryan culture is based. Today, we translate this word to be “Noble”.

Attention: concentration of the mind on a single object or thought. The action of paying close observation to something (i.e. focus, alertness, concentration).

Awareness: knowledge or perception of a situation, fact, or thought.

Craving/Desire/Attachment/Wants/Expectations/Grasping/Holding/Clinging: a mental longing for something with a strong eagerness. The mind pulling in a direction for objects of its affection.

Bhikkhuni: an ordained female Student of Gotama Buddha.

Bhikkhu: an ordained male Student of Gotama Buddha.

Buddhawajana: The Words of The Buddha.

Complacency: sluggish mind, laziness, lethargic, lack of motivation or energy. A feeling of self satisfaction combined with a lack of awareness of pending trouble or accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.

Consciousness: refers to your individual awareness of your unique thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations, and environment; the mind.

Defilement: The Three Poisons, The Three Unwholesome Roots, The Three Fires; Craving, Anger, and Ignorance (i.e. the unknowing of true reality), or Greed, Hatred, and Delusion.

Dhamma: Teachings of Gotama Buddha; The Natural Laws of Existence.

Discernment: is wise decision making based in wisdom. Discernment is helpful to the mind and needs to be cultivated to attain Enlightenment.

Eon: an eon is an incalculable length of time. An eon is so significant and lengthy that it is immeasurable.

Fetter: a taint, an unwholesome quality of the mind, pollution of the mind, a chain or shackle used to restrain a prisoner, typically placed around the ankles.

Frivolous Speech (Idle Chatter): is described as speaking “unbeneficially” and “unpurposefully”. This is typically done with the mind’s craving/desire/attachment where one may just be rambling pointlessly without any real purpose or need to speak but instead, just because there is a craving/desire to talk. There is no purpose or value to the speech. In some cases, one could be speaking quickly and continuously without the ability for a mutual conversation.

Goal/Objective/Interest: the object of a person’s ambition or effort; an aim for a result. To have the intention of achieving something.

Harm: is an injury caused by one being to another being or group of beings (physical injury, material possessions, reputation, etc.). An individual can cause harm to another being but, they cannot cause another being to be discontent. If you cause harm to others, harm will come back to you. This is unwholesome Kamma or the unwholesome results of your decisions.

Household Practitioner/Householder: a person leading a typical life within the home environment who is learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Judgment: attempting to determine what is right or wrong for another person while placing oneself above others with arrogance or pride (i.e. the ego). Comparing that one is superior or inferior to another person. Attempting to declare who is wholesome or unwholesome, good or bad. Judgment is based in “conceit”. Judgment is harmful to the mind and needs to be eliminated to attain Enlightenment.

Lay Follower/Lay Person: a person leading a typical life within the home environment who is learning and practicing The Teachings of Gotama Buddha. A Household Practitioner.

Mind: is our consciousness where all intentions for speech and actions originate along with our thoughts, ideas, perceptions, feelings, and emotions arise, are experienced, and then cease to exist.

Non-Judgment: peacefully co-existing with all beings while accepting all beings “as they are” with loving-kindness and compassion practicing “true love”.

Pāli: the language used as a source for The Teachings of Gotama Buddha.

Pāli Canon or Pāli Text: Gotama Buddha's full collection of Teachings in the Pāli language, no longer a spoken language today. All Teachings can be learned in English. It is not required that you understand Pāli to attain Enlightenment.

Patience: is the ability to wait, or to continue doing something despite difficulties, without complaining or becoming annoyed.

Pursue/Pursuit: to continue or proceed along a path or route.

Samsara: The Cycle of Rebirth; The Cycle of New Existence.

Sangha: The Community of Bhikkhunis, Bhikkhus, Novices and Household Practitioners.

There are also more detailed definitions for specific aspects of The Sangha.

- Ariyan "Noble" Sangha: Community of anyone who has attained any of the four (4) stages of Enlightenment including Household Practitioners.
- Bhikkhuni Sangha: Community of female Ordained Practitioners.
- Bhikkhu Sangha: Community of male Ordained Practitioners.

Slander (Gossip): speech or communication that is damaging to the reputation of an individual/company/organization/country/group of people, etc., whether true or false.

Sotāpanna: stream enterer, stream winner, the first Stage of Enlightenment.

Tathāgata: A Fully Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, A Fully Perfectly Enlightened One, A Buddha.

Thought: the action or process of thinking

Wisdom: the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good insight; the quality of being wise.

The Lord's Prayer (Explained)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Our God (The Father) who created heaven, your name is special, unique, and you are greatly honored.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I will do the work in this life to improve my life practice, such that, I will aim to function as a heavenly being practicing these Teachings in a way that is wise and wholesome, helping to bring the qualities of heaven to earth through my own practice.

Give us this day, our daily bread.

I will use this day to make things better and improved in my life. Just as bread nourishes the body, I will use this day to improve the mind and my life.

Forgive us of our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Forgive me for the wrongs/harms I have done and those things that I find challenging to accomplish, just as I will aim to forgive those who do wrongs/harms against me.

(God has already forgiven us and knows we are not perfect. This is just a way to admit to ourselves and God that we are not perfect and thanking him for his forgiveness. This is to admit to ourselves and God that there is still work to be done in our own life and life practice. This phrase helps to cultivate a mind of non-judgment towards others realizing, that we cause harm and so do others. We do not need to hold grudges or resentment, just as God does not hold grudges or resentment towards us. It helps to cultivate humbleness in the mind.)

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

I am open to your guidance towards wholesomeness, leading me away from unwholesomeness, but I realize I am the one that needs to do the work.

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Forever and ever,
Amen.**

Your wisdom is the perfect place to reside. You are the all powerful and I glorify you, forever and ever.....Amen.

(This is not a rite, ritual, ceremony, or worship but instead, affirmations to remain determined, dedicated, and diligent in developing your life practice.)

Invitation to Learn

I would like to invite you to a kind, compassionate and loving community of Practitioners to learn and grow with these Teachings.

I would like to invite you to join this online group.

You will find it to be an online learning center for these Teachings and there is a Teacher there to help provide guidance as you have questions.

Daily Wisdom - Walking The Path with The Buddha

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DailyWisdom999/>

Additional Learning

Visit BuddhaDailyWisdom.com where you will discover a full range of courses, retreats, and online learning resources to assist you on The Path to Enlightenment.

Donations for Learning

Learn The Teachings of Gotama Buddha that lead to a stable, calm, and peaceful mind. A more peaceful and loving world where all beings have care and compassion for each other.

By supporting this learning opportunity, you will learn how to progress along The Path to Enlightenment and help offer these Teachings to others through online and in-person learning. Through these Teachings, the world will become a kinder, more peaceful, and loving society.

Consider contributing \$5, \$10, \$15 or any amount you wish to help us continue to offer these Teachings to you and others around the world.

You can make a donation for the development and creation of these Teachings to help you and others using this link.

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Volume 4

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(Stream-Enterer)

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