

**THE ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MARAṄASSATI
IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM**

By

Phramaha Pisit Maṇivaṃso (Maneewong)

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

International Master Degree of Arts Programme
Graduate School
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
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B.E.2553 (C.E.2010)

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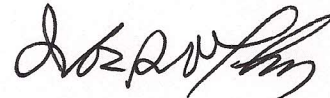


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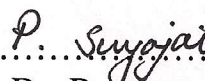
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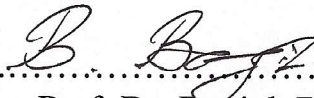
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Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to study the concepts of *Maraṇassati* and show its meanings and practices which are mentioned in *Tipiṭaka*, the Commentaries, the Sub-Commentaries, the special texts and all other related data, to analyze the roles and benefits of *Maraṇassati*, and to study how to apply *Maraṇassati* to the present societies. From the study, it was found that contemplation of death means to remind oneself that, for both human beings and animals, death can occur at anytime. One should accept and consider that death is inevitable so that one's mind should not suffer through worry and fear of death. Moreover, one should remember and remind oneself that someday one will die. It cannot be avoided. It is a practical way to remind oneself not to be careless in living one's life so that one will practice good deeds.

The result of the study shows that the development of *Maraṇassati* is an approach to face the death with a peaceful mind, to realize the painful and soulless nature of existence, at the moment of death, one is devoid of fear, and remains mindful and self-possessed. It is found that *Maraṇassati*, when properly applied to the present societies in the right way by giving a new viewpoint about the death, will lead to accepting the reality of death and showing us how to overcome our fears and be prepared for it when it happens. Because mindfulness of death can even be an opportunity to gain insight into the true nature of ourselves

and all things, this insight will enable us to become free from all suffering. Practicing the contemplation of death is suitable for all kinds of people, genders and languages without being limited to places and time. It can be practiced all the time and good results will always follow for the practitioner. Practicing the contemplation of death is very useful to life. It helps all humans accept death peacefully and to be conscious of this. Besides, it can be used as a tool to stimulate one's mind not to be careless in doing good deeds. Morality will be the focus in one's mind and it results in indescribable good deeds.

The development of *Maranassati* is the way which helps us to treasure our time more without making us more attached to the present thing, because our life is not sure. We should spend our time wisely. On the other hand, we should not get too attached to our bodies, as we understand clearly that they are subject to old age, illness and death. This also helps us to let go of other things as all formations are transient, and it leads us to live with heedfulness. It is very proper that one should reflect daily on death, because *Maranassati* is one of the four-fold subjects of Buddhist meditation prescribed for Buddhists as suitable to be practised everywhere and every time. Contemplation on death and other forms of sorrow such as old age and disease, constitutes a convenient starting point for the long line of investigation and meditation that will ultimately lead one to Reality. The practice of the contemplation of death will help humans at the end of their lives be reborn with all good deeds while terminating all bad deeds because one maintains oneself in goodness. By being conscious of reminding oneself about death, it can be said that one is suitably prepared for death, being well-versed in the teachings of Buddhism. This practice leads to the cultivation of wisdom and to the attainment of Enlightenment.

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List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations employed in these references are, primary, standard abbreviations which are the most recurrently used for references in my thesis are:-

| | |
|------|--------------------|
| A | : Anguttara Nikāya |
| D | : Dīgha Nikāya |
| M | : Majjhima Nikāya |
| S | : Saṃyutta Nikāya |
| Dhp | : Dhammapada |
| Sn | : Sutta Nipata |
| Vism | : Visuddhimagga |

Others Abbreviations :

| | |
|----------|---|
| BD | : Buddhist Dictionary |
| DB | : Dictionary of Buddhism |
| MCU | : Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya University |
| P | : page |
| PED | : Pali-English Dictionary |
| Pp | : pages |
| PTS | : Pali Text Society |
| ed | : edited by |
| etc | : et cetera and others |
| e.g. | : (From Latin 'exempla gratia') For example |
| f. | : forward |
| ibid. | : ibidem/in the same book |
| i.e. | : that is to say |
| loc. cit | : (loco citato) in the place cited |
| n. | : note |
| no. | : number |
| op. cit | : (Opere citato) as referred |
| pl. | : place (of publication) |
| pub. | : published, publication |
| tr. | : translated |
| vol(s) | : volume(s) |

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

This thesis is an analytical study of *Marāṇassati*¹ (the mindfulness of death) as it appears in the Pāli canonical and post-canonical texts, especially in the *Visuddhimagga*² (The Path of Purification) which is a special literary exposition of Theravada Buddhism.

According to the Buddhist way of thought, everyone has to confront death without any exemption, but if human beings know and understand the true meaning of death, death shall no more be threatening. “It is by understanding the death that we understand the life,” says *V.F.Gunaratana*.³ He further points out that in another sense, life and death are two ends of the same process and if we understand one end of the process, we also understand the other. Therefore, in the Theravada Buddhist notion, death is just a natural phenomenon of life, which has the basic condition as a compounded thing that will be split off at the final stage. So, the meaning of death according to Theravada Buddhism is the state of not being able to be re-combined again of body and mind (*Rūpa* and *Nāma*); indeed, the five aggregates (*Pañcakhandha*)⁴. In other words, it is the separation of the five aggregates or the cessation of life elements in this life span.

However, the reason why death has become a problem or a cause of suffering is that the people do not understand the truth of life and

¹ E.M.Hare, tr., **The Book of the Gradual Sayings**, (London: PTS, 1978), Vol.IV., pp. 212-215.

² Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, tr., **The Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*)**, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2001), pp.247-259.

³ V.F. Gunaratna, **Buddhist Reflection on Death**, (Colombo: Unknown Publication Place, 1996), p.2.

⁴ P.A.Payutto, Bhikkhu. **Dictionary of Buddhism**, (Bangkok: MCU Publishing Ltd, 2000), p.189.

its processes. Human beings fill up their lives with compounded things and cling tightly to the idea of the self (*Attānudiṭṭhi*). However, the nature of compounded things does not give in to anybody's desire; therefore whenever desire goes against the truth of nature, suffering occurs (*Jātipi dukkhā, maraṇaṃpi dukkhaṃ*).

The main purpose of the Buddha's teaching on death is to eradicate or to reject the idea of the self (*Attānudiṭṭhi*), not to attach or cling to the five aggregates (*Pañcakhandha*). In this aspect, the Buddhist Meditation is engaged with death by *Maraṇasati* (the mindfulness of death) or *Maraṇānussati* (the recollection of death). In accordance with Buddhist meditation, it is believed that the process of *Maraṇasati* (the mindfulness of death) enables people to accept death calmly and mindfully. Moreover, it helps one to enhance morality and good moral conduct. That is, it makes one alert to discharge one's duty diligently, being aware of the fact that death may occur at any moment.

Above all, death is one of the universal characteristics of human life. Seeing the truth of life in this manner not only gives benefits to individuals but also serves to stimulate in human beings the feeling of sharing fortunes or misfortunes with other human beings which further enhances compassionate feelings toward one another in societies. Since one understands clearly about death, one should not be reckless in life and should lead one's life cautiously and carry out what one should do; that is, doing good deeds. As the Buddha says in The Bhaddekaratta Sutta⁵:- “*Ajjeva kiccamaṭappaṃ ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve...*” (Today itself, one should strive for the accomplishment of one's task; who else should know whether death would strike tomorrow...). Furthermore, *Maraṇassati* (the recollection of death) affords solace to the multitudes' to those who lament and torment themselves, unable to bear the pangs of sorrow caused by separation from their beloved ones.

Therefore, *Maraṇassati* (mindfulness of death) is very useful in that it helps us to treasure our time more without making us more attached to the present thing, because our life is not sure. We should spend our time wisely. On the other hand, we should not get too attached to our bodies, as we understand clearly that we are subject to decay and death. This also helps us to let go of other things as all formations are transient

⁵ M.III.233-235; Nāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, tr., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1995), p. 1039.

and leads us to live with heedfulness (*Appamāda-dhamma*). It is very proper that one should reflect daily on death, because *Maraṇassati* (the recollection of death) is one of the four-fold subjects of Buddhist meditation which are prescribed for Buddhists as suitable to be practised everywhere (*Sabbatthakammatṭhānas*)⁶. Moreover, the study of *Maraṇassati* (the recollection of death) is also the basis of heedfulness (*appamāda-dhamma*), as being the Buddha's final instruction to his disciples just before he passed away which encouraged them to be diligent: 'Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay. Strive on with diligence.'⁷

This study will analyse *Maraṇassati* (mindfulness of death) in the *Pāli* canonical and post-canonical texts, especially in the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification). I essentially hope that this study will be beneficial and advantageous to Buddhists and Non-Buddhists alike. When we need not fear death anymore, and simply reflect on it or be aware of it in daily life, then a peaceful and calm mind will arise. When a peaceful and calm mind arises, *appamāda-dhamma* (heedfulness) appears and it is the basis of the higher level of insight meditation. Then it can be the way leading to *amata-dhamma*⁸ (deathlessness) at the same time.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

1.2.1 To study the concept of *Maraṇassati* in Theravada Buddhism.

1.2.2 To analyse the roles and benefits of *Maraṇassati* in Theravada Buddhism.

⁶ *Sabbatṭha Kammatṭhā* are; 1. *Buddhānussati* (The Recollection of the Buddha), 2. *Mettā Bhāvanā* (Loving-Kindness), 3. *Asubha Kammatṭhā* (Meditation on the Foul things or Impurities and 4. *Maraṇānussati* (The Recollection of Death), *(Pa Auk Sayadaw, **The Practice Which Leads To Nibbāna: Part One**, Compiled and tr., by U. Dhamminda, (Yangon: Mawlamyine, 1998), p.104.

⁷ D. II. 156. Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīghanikāya)**, (Kandy: BPS, 1996), p. 270.

⁸ *Amata-dhamma*, here, means *Nibbāna* or ultimate truth which is the final goal of Buddhism. See Rhys Davids, T.W and William Stede, **Pali-English Dictionary**, (London, PTS. 1998), p.73.

1.2.3 To apply the knowledge of *Maraṇassati* to the practice in daily life.

1.3 Statements of the Problems Desired to Know

1.3.1 What is the concept of *Maraṇassati* in Theravada Buddhism?

1.3.2 What are the roles played by and the benefits of *Maraṇassati* in Theravada Buddhism?

1.3.3 How can *Maraṇassati* be applied to the practice in daily life?

1.4 Definitions of the Terms Used in this Thesis

Appamāda-dhamma means the doctrines of right mindfulness, diligence, earnestness, heedfulness, carefulness, zeal, and non-laxity in *Theravada* Buddhism.

Amata-dhamma means the doctrine of ultimate truth in *Theravada* Buddhism - *Nibbāna*.

Bhāvanā means the development by means of thought; meditation. Here, it refers to two forms of meditation, both *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*.

Maraṇassati refers to the mindfulness of death, the contemplation of death, especially in *Theravada* Buddhism.

Maraṇānussati is a synonym of *Maraṇassati* which is one of the 10 *Anussatis* (the ten recollections) used as a subject of meditation in *Theravada* Buddhism.

1.5 Review of Related Literature and Research Works

John Ross Carter. *Dhamma Western Academic and Singhalese Buddhist interpretations*. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1978.

This book discusses the *Dharma* or *Dhamma* interpretations in the Western academic tradition, *Dhamma* in the *Pāli suttas* and

commentaries, Recollection of *Dhamma* in the *Visuddhimagga*, *Dhamma* as one and manifold, *Dhamma* in Sinhalese Buddhist literature prior to the nineteenth century, and *Dhamma* in the continuing tradition.

Nataya Wasinghon. “The Meaning of Death: A Buddhist Philosophical Interpretation.” **M.A.Thesis** (Thai version), Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University, 1997.

This work is an academic research on the interpretation of the meaning of death in the Buddhist point of view. The meaning of death according to this research work is the state of not being able to be re-combined again of body and mind or *Rupa* and *Nāma* or the five aggregates. It also refers to the state of rising and falling of every thought or feeling and is thus called in Buddhist terms as momentary death (*khanikamarāṇa*). This kind of death appears constantly until the decomposition of the body and mind or in other words the separation of the five aggregates or the cessation of life element. However, as long as human beings are overcome by ignorance, craving, and attachment, a cycle of birth and death will go on incessantly in an answer to their deeds. That is, if they perform good deeds throughout their lives, after death, they will go up to *Sugati* (a world where they can enjoy various kinds of pleasure) depending upon their own *kamma*. But those who largely do evil deeds will be rewarded with a life of *Dugati* (miserable life). That is the work of the natural law of cause and effect. Body and mind or *Rūpa* and *Nāma* do not refer to any entity or personality at all.

This work shows that the process of *Maraṇassati* (the mindfulness of death) enables the people to accept death calmly and mindfully. Moreover, it helps one to enhance morality or good moral conduct, that is, it makes one alert and diligently discharge one’s duty, being aware that the death may occur at any moment. Above all, death is one of the universal characteristics of human life. Seeing the truth of life in this manner, serves to stimulate in human beings the feeling of sharing fortunes or misfortunes with other human beings which further enhances compassionate feelings toward one another.

Nyānaponika Thera. *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1996.

This is an excellent source of the actual practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, with a specific reference to the Burmese technique by Most Ven. U Narada, as taught by great meditation Master, Most Ven. Mahāṣī

Sayadaw. This book provides the basic principles of practice and a complete translation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. This book combines academic rigor and personal experience and is of particular importance for this research when examining the major current meditation traditions of *Satipaṭṭhāna* and for the basic method of *Maraṇassati Bhāvanā* by using the way of mindfulness.

Phramahā Wanchai Dhammajayo. “A Critical Study of the Concept of Death in Buddhādāsa’s View.” **M.A. Thesis** (Thai version), Bangkok: Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, 2006.

This is a study of Death in the Most Ven. Buddhādāsa’s view which is related to nature. In the Most Ven. Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu’s teaching, all natures are the states of *Dhamma* (*Dhamma* as Nature). To conduct oneself in compliance with nature is to do everything rightly according to the principle of nature. Ven. *Buddhadāsa*’s basic beliefs are economical, that is to use everything as necessary, not to demolish the environment, healing oneself as necessary, without trying to run away from death, using real life situations by learning from one’s sickness so as to understand nature and to learn how to live with nature joyfully.

Phramahā Wuddhijaya Vajjiramedhi’s book entitled “Looking Death in the Eye”, tr. by Nopamat Veohong. Bangkok: Amarin Publishing, 2006.

In this book, it is described how to see through the nature of death, seeing death as a progressive step or a change in life that one need not be afraid of. There is no need for escape, because this has been inherent in us from the day we were born. Without a fear of death, we should be able to do a lot more good things in our lives. Moreover, this book guides us to look at death in a positive way. Because most people in society have the behavior of denying death, death is considered highly sinister and should never be mentioned unless it is entirely unavoidable. This is how most people view death negatively, fearfully and with hostility. Such an attitude towards death is entirely contrary to the Buddhist teaching, because the Buddha instructs his disciples to interact with death with a positive attitude. He preaches that an awareness of death is favourable and beneficial to living. He also insists firmly on the practice of contemplating death as frequently as with “every moment of breathing in and out.” Whoever implements this is considered as a person who practises heedfulness.

Sayadaw U Kuṇḍalābhivamsa. *The Practice that Leads to Nibbāna.*, tr. by Daw Than Than Yi, Penang: Malaysia, Inward Path, 2000.

In this book, *Sayadaw U Kuṇḍala*, drawing from the experience of many years of teaching, explains the path that the Buddha clearly mapped out 2500 years ago. He clearly and methodically points out the benefits of the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation and the method of practice. He then goes on to explain the five *Indriyas* (controlling faculties) and the nine factors which sharpen the *Indriyas*, leading one along the path to liberation as taught by the Buddha. Meditation teaches us not to hold on to things that cause suffering in our lives and how to cultivate the conditions that bring about happiness. Through meditative experience we come to understand that anger, depression, jealousy, sadness, and so on are not caused by external circumstances but from within the realm of our own mind. We can see the conditions that create them, and thus we can bring about circumstances in which they can no longer arise. This provides fertile ground in which kindness, generosity and compassion can grow. A strong foundation of morality and striving with ardent effort in *Vipassanā* meditation will result in progression along a clearly defined path of insight, with the final fruits being the noble and pure liberation called *Nibbāna* that is freedom from suffering. This book provides information of the method of practice which is useful to be applied to this study.

Vilailuck Saisane. “A Comparative Study of the Concepts of Death and Rebirth in Theravada and Vajrayāna Buddhism.” **M.A. Thesis** (Thai version), Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1994.

In this thesis concerning the comparison of the concepts of death and rebirth in *Theravada* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, there is an important difference to be noted. In Theravada doctrine, there is only spontaneous rebirth after death but *Vajrayāna* Buddhism believes in the existence of the intermediate state after death; one must be, for a while, in an intermediate state before rebirth. This different concept is derived from their different notions of liberation. According to *Vajrayāna*, there are two kinds of liberation: Self-dependent liberation and external-power-dependent liberation. However, in *Theravada*, liberation is based only on self-dependence.

1.6 Method of the Study

This work will be a documentary research. The research methodology can be divided into five stages as follows:

1.6.1 Collecting data to be analyzed and categorized from the primary sources of the Pāli Canon, Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries, and the secondary sources of the books written and composed by well-known Buddhist scholars.

1.6.2 Analyzing the raw data as well as systematizing the collected and analyzed data to give a clear and interrelated picture of *Maraṇassati* and its significance for oneself and societies.

1.6.3 Constructing the entire outline of the work.

1.6.4 Discussing the problems encountered.

1.6.5 Formulating conclusions and identifying significant results and areas for further research.

1.7 Advantages of the Study

After doing this research, the following advantages and outcomes are to be obtained:

1.7.1 Having a clear comprehension of the exposition and the concept of *Maraṇassati* in Theravada Buddhism.

1.7.2 Understanding the roles and benefits arising from *Maraṇassati* found in the context of Theravada Buddhism.

1.7.3 Understanding the practical guidelines for applying the practice of *Maraṇassati* to daily life.

Chapter II

The Concept of Marañassati in Theravada Buddhism

The Buddha says that life is suffering, caused by desire. To end the suffering, we must end desire. From a greater perspective, death causes pain because of our desire for life. We fear death because we hold on to life. Here, the folly of attachment is brought into the sharpest relief, because we know that the body is as sure to die as it was born. Death is all around us. We will die and all the people we love will die. Being understood in this way, the only sensible course of action seems to be to seek that state where death cannot follow: *Nibbāna*, the state of being awake.

As it is found, once upon a time *Mogharāja* said to the Buddha; “I’ve come with a question: How does one view the world so as not to be seen by the King of Death?” Then the Buddha replied: “View the world, *Mogharāja*, as empty and always mindful to have removed any view about self. In this way one is above and beyond death. This is how one views the world so as not to be seen by the King of Death.”⁹

For most people, a discussion about death is regarded as an inauspicious or bad omen. If anyone brings up this topic out of the blue while traveling in a vehicle on a long journey, or while in a meeting, a seminar, or any other place with a large gathering of people, that person would be frowned upon as someone who does not know proper social etiquette. This is why a discussion about death out of context such as when there is no actual death or when we are not in an actual funeral ceremony is considered a social taboo, especially in Thailand.

⁹ As the Pali say:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>“Suññato lokam evekkhassu</i> | <i>Mogharāja sadā sato,</i> |
| <i>Attānuḍḍhiṃ ūhacca evaṃ</i> | <i>Maccutaroṣiyā</i> |
| <i>evaṃ lokamevekkhant</i> | <i>Maccurāja na passati.”</i> |

Mogharaja-manava-puccha, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr. Retrieved on July 20th, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.5.15.than.html>.

In Buddhism, on the contrary, Lord Buddha said that the contemplation on death or the frequent discussion about death is a good and auspicious thing for a mindful person's life. Anybody who frequently reflects on death and encourages others to see that life is impermanent and that we are actually flirting with death all the time is highly admired as a mindful person who truly follows the Buddha's teaching to the world.

This is how Buddhism addresses the issue of death, and it has an intuitive and practical logic to it. Buddhism not only teaches that thinking about death is auspicious to our lives and directly contributes to smart living, but also provides clear guidelines on how to reflect on death. People always think that we are young, healthy and will live forever. Sickness, death, or bad fortune just happens to other people. We live in this delusion until these things strike us and, without preparation, we do not know how to handle sickness, death, or bad fortune. The purpose is to help build our mindfulness and wisdom on The Ultimate Truth (*Nibbāna*). These guidelines are called the cultivation of “*Maraṇānussati*” or “*Maraṇassati*” in short.

2.1 The Definition of the term *Maraṇassati*

First of all, we must be clear about the concept of *Maraṇa* (death) in order to explore the terms *Maraṇassati*. Then we will clarify the definition of the terms *Maraṇassati* in etymological function and concept.

The definition of *Maraṇa* (death) according to Ven. Nyānatiloka¹⁰ is that it is ordinarily called “the disappearance of the vital faculty confined to a single life-time, and therewith of the psycho-physical life-process conventionally called ‘Man, Animal, Personality, Ego’ etc. Strictly speaking, however, death is the continually repeated dissolution and vanishing of each momentary physical-mental combination, and thus it takes place every moment.”

¹⁰ Nyānatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2004), pp. 97-98.

Etymologically, the term “*Marāṇassati*”¹¹ is a compound formed from two terms, *Marāṇa* and *Sati* or *Anussati*. Generally the term “*Marāṇassati*” itself consists of two words. One word is “*Marāṇa*” or “Death.” The other word is “*Sati*” or “*Anussati*” which means “Mindfulness, Reflection and Consideration.” The two words combined together become *Marāṇassati* and *Marāṇānussati*, which are translated into “Mindfulness of Death.” However, in the terminology of the Buddhist Dictionary, the most comprehensive meaning of *Marāṇassati* and *Marāṇānussati* would be, “the practice of mindfulness meditation by using death as the object of meditation.”¹²

2.1.1 *Marāṇassati* in the *Tipiṭaka*

The term *Marāṇa* as used in the *Nikāyas* denotes the ending of the existence or physical death, i.e. the dissolution of the combination of the five aggregates in the form of individuality. The *Saccavibhanga Sutta*¹³ has defined ‘*Marāṇa*’ as follows: “And what is *Marāṇa* (death)? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, breaking up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called *Marāṇa* (death).”

In *Majjhima Nikāya, Sammāditthi Sutta*, the Buddha defined death as the following: “The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of the aggregates, laying down of the body -- this is called death.”¹⁴

The term *Marāṇa* or Death itself is described in various ways throughout the canon. The *Dhammapada* and *Suttanipāta* frame it poetically (“just as ripe fruit falls quickly from the tree” or “like a cow being led to slaughter”), but the later *nikāyas* and *Abhidamma* literature are more analytical. Here, death is explained as the cessation of the

¹¹ Rhys Davids, T.W and William Stede, op. cit., p. 45.

¹² Phramahā Wuddhijaya Vajjiramedhi, **Disasters Within: Buddhist Guide on How to Gain Wisdom from Life’s Inevitable Crisis**, tr., Nashara Siamwalla, (Bangkok: Amarin Publishing, 2006), p.39.

¹³ M III 248; Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi Bhikkhu, tr., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society (BPS), 1995), pp.1097-1101.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.132-144; M. I. 46.

continuity of the five *khandhas* (aggregates), the crumbling of the body and the ending of the *Āyus* (life span) or *jīvitendriya* (faculty of living). Generally the *jīvitendriya* is the force that sustains human life through the continuous changes to the five aggregates, and is held to be of predetermined length.

This is the death in “due time,” and it is contrasted with “untimely” death caused by encountering unexpected circumstances, such as being murdered, being eaten by a wild animal, succumbing to illness, and so on. In the Commentaries, the final moments of consciousness are described in detail: when past Karmic deeds or signs of such “settle” on the individuality, and then a vision of one’s future destiny occurs, such as the appearance of fire signifying the hell, a mother’s womb indicating rebirth in the human realm, or pleasure groves and divine palaces for a future in a heavenly realm. Then comes a momentary “death awareness” (*Cuti-citta*) followed immediately by “rebirth-linking consciousness” (*paṭisandhiviññāna*) signifying the next life. The relationship between these two is said to be one of neither identity nor otherness; likened to an echo, it is caused by previous events but not identical to them.

2.1.2 *Maraṇassati* in the *Visuddhimagga*

The description of “*Maraṇassati*” also comes under the title “*Anussati*” or “*Anussatikammaṭṭhāna-nidesa*”, as explained in *Visuddhimagga*. The *Visuddhimagga* says that it is suitable for those of temperaments inclined towards intelligence.¹⁵ Buddhagosa makes an important proviso for the practice by warning against the unwise recollection of death in the case of someone whose death arouses great grief as for one’s own child, or gladness, as for someone hated. He also advises against considering one’s own death as too fearful an object for direct consideration.

Once again, in accordance with the *Visuddhimagga*, death is the interruption of the life faculty included within (the limits of) a single becoming (existence).¹⁶ But death as termination (cutting off), in other words, the Arahant’s termination of the suffering of the round, is not intended here, nor is momentary death, the momentary dissolution of

¹⁵ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 147; *Vism.III*. 121.

¹⁶ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification**., *ibid*.

formations, nor ‘death’ in conventional usage in such expressions as ‘dead tree’, ‘dead of mind’, and so on.¹⁷

Buddhaghosa began by stating the kinds of death he was not considering: the final passing of the *Arahant*; “momentary death” (i.e., the moment-to-moment dissolution of formations); or metaphorical uses of the term “death.” He refers to the timely death which comes with exhaustion of merit, or the life-span, or both, and to untimely death produced by *kamma* that interrupts other (life-producing) *kamma*.

One should go into solitary retreat and exercise attention wisely thus: “Death will take place, the life faculty will be interrupted,” or “Death, death.” Unwisely attention may arise in the form of sorrow (at the death of a beloved one), joy (at the death of an enemy), indifference (as with a cremator), or fear (at the thought of one’s own death). There should always be mindfulness, a sense of urgency, and knowledge. Then “access-concentration” may be gained—and this is the basis for the arising of Insight.

Concluding Remarks

A *bhikkhu* devoted to mindfulness of death is constantly diligent. He acquires perception of disenchantment with all kinds of becoming (existence). He conquers attachment to life. He condemns evil. He avoids much storing. He has no stain of avarice about requisites. Perception of impermanence grows in him, following upon whom there appear the perceptions of pain and not-self. On the contrary, while beings who have not developed mindfulness of death fall victims to the fear, horror and confusion at the time of death as though suddenly seized by wild beasts, spirits, snakes, robbers, or murderers, he dies undiluted and fearlessly without falling into such any state. If he does not attain the deathless state, here and now, he is at least headed for a happy destiny on the breakup of the body.

Mindfulness of death is aimed at fostering existential acceptance of the reality of death and allowing that realization to influence one’s life fully. The Buddha was appalled at how common it was for people to go

¹⁷ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification.**, ibid.

through life as if they were not going to die, and this form of meditation uses eight topics for the practitioner to contemplate:

1. Death as executioner,
2. Death as ruin of all forms of happiness and success,
3. Death as inevitable for everyone regardless of their power,
4. Death as coming about by an infinite number of causes,
5. Death as close at hand,
6. Death as signless, or coming without warning signs,
7. Death as the end of a life span that is, in fact, short,
8. Death as a constant in life.¹⁸

2.1.3 The Concept of *Marāṇassati* in the Contemporary Buddhist Scholar's Perspective

Death and the fear of death were prominent among the problems considered by many ancient religions. Buddhism, in particular, proposed rational solutions to the fear of death, solutions which required counter-intuitive emotional assessments of the human condition and the nature of death. Buddhist solutions to the fear of death attempted to accommodate the emotions to the reasonable certainty of death. These solutions depended upon the assumption that death was inevitable.

In recent times, a kind of immortalism has arisen which challenges the assumption of death's inevitability. Expectations about future advances in science and technology have raised the prospect of combating death itself by rational methods. This contemporary immortalism does not assume the inevitability of death and sees the fear of death as both a logical warning and a problem to be solved. The questioning of the inevitability of death disturbs the ancient rational solutions to the fear of death found in Buddhism.

The concept of *Marāṇassati* in accordance with the Buddhist scholarly perspective, is to realize death as one of the universal characteristics of human life. Seeing the truth of life in this manner not only gives the benefits to individuals but also serves to stimulate in human beings the feelings of sharing fortunes or misfortunes with other human beings which further enhances compassionate feelings toward one

¹⁸ Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, tr., **The Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*)**, op.cit., pp. 248-259.

another in societies. Since one understands clearly about death, one should not be reckless in life and should lead one's life cautiously and carry out what one should do; that is, doing good deeds. As the Buddha says, "Today itself, one should strive for the accomplishment of one's task; who else should know whether death would strike tomorrow". Furthermore, *Maraṇassati* (mindfulness of death) affords solace to the multitudes' to those who lament and torment themselves, unable to bear the pangs of sorrow caused by separation from their beloved ones.

The Concept of *Maraṇassati* (mindfulness of death) is detachment, which is a solution to the problem of death, grief, and fear of death, which is concluded from tenet that the release from pleasure is necessary for the release from suffering. The abandonment of pleasurable attachments is necessary to quell the suffering caused by the eventual and inevitable loss of all the sources of pleasure which constitutes our lives.

2.1.4 *Maraṇassati* as defined by Ven. Ajahn Chah

Ven. Ajahn Chah¹⁹ mentioned that "as soon as we're born, we're dead. Our birth and death is just one thing. It's like a tree: when there's a root there must be twigs. When there are twigs there must be a root. You can't have one without the other. It's a little funny to see how at a death people are so grief-stricken and distracted, tearful and sad, and at a birth how happy and delighted. It is a delusion and nobody has ever looked at this clearly. I think that if you really want to cry, then it would be better to do so when someone was born. For, actually birth is death, death is birth, the root is the twig, and the twig is the root. If you've got to cry, cry at the root, cry at the birth. Look closely: if there was no birth there would be no death."

2.1.5 *Maraṇassati* as Defined by Ven. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

According to *Ven. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu*,²⁰ the word "*Maraṇa*" or "death" in his view is divided into two meanings; the first meaning is the people's language (*Phāsā-khon*) meaning that the bodily function has stopped, which is the kind of death we can see with our eyes, but in the

¹⁹ Ven. Ajahn Chah, **Our Real Home: A Talk to an Aging Lay Disciple Approaching Death**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, Unknown Date), p. 8.

²⁰ Ven. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, **No Religion**, (Bangkok: The Dhamma Foundation, 1993), pp. 14-15.

Dhamma language (*Phāsā-Dhamma*) the word “death” has the opposite meaning - it is a spiritual death much more cruel than the being buried in a coffin. He further explains that the meaning of “death” in *Dhamma* language means the end of every good thing, the end of happiness, the end of everything which is worthwhile. Most of us die in this way many times on each day.

He says that the meaning of *Maraṇassati* is the recollection of death with the right wisdom leading to the cause of non-negligence; heedfulness.²¹

2.1.6 *Maraṇassati* as Defined by Ven. Paññānanda Bhikkhu

Ven. Paññānanda Bhikkhu²² explained about the concept of *Maraṇassati* that “Birth and death are normal. You and I, we are in the same boat. Because the peoples of the world are all the same, all of us are the sentient beings who have birth, old age, sickness and death in the same way as anybody else. Most people when they think of death, fear about death and feel exhaust not do anything by thinking that it is useless for doing the contemplation of death. This is the wrong way, if they think like that. It’s not the purpose given by the Buddha by doing so. The Buddha pointed the way of the contemplation of death by using the analytical thought (*Yonisomanasikāra*) and put ourselves on heedfulness with hurry to do the right thing while living. Thinking like this is the way to *Nibbāna* in this very life or the next life.”

He further explained that attending a funeral ceremony gives us the chance to contemplate death and gain wisdom. It helps us to realize that death is inevitable. Death can happen to anyone at anytime and anywhere; therefore we should always live our lives with mindfulness. If we come to a funeral ceremony without thinking, it is just as another face among the consoling guests who gather around the living, the relatives of the dead. Then, it is nothing more than a social function. We should gain wisdom and see the truth, when we attend a funeral ceremony, because everything, from a dead body to all the decorations, points to Dhamma, the truth. They are reminding us, telling us and begging us to understand.

²¹ Ven. Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, *Kwarm-tai (Death)*, (Bangkok: Sukkhapap Jai, B.E.2548), p. 89.

²² Ven. Paññānanda Bhikkhu, *Maraṇānussati*, (Bangkok: Dhammasabha Printing Press, 1993), p. 13.

We sometimes do not open our ears to listen, our eyes to see, or our mind to think; sometimes we look, but do not understand. Therefore, we fail to gain any insight.

Death was explained in detail. I want to bring up some points for us to consider. They will show us how we should approach the death as follows:²³

1. Every living being in this world is like a dewdrop; the moisture, naturally condensed upon the surfaces of cool bodies at night, glistens on leaves and grasses in the early morning light. Later in the day when the sunshine is stronger, the droplet vaporizes and disappears. Our lives are like the dewdrops. We are born, become old, become ill, and die. Every atom in our bodies is racing toward death. Nobody can avoid death.

2. Like a drop of rain; A raindrop, naturally standing up for a short while when the rain falls hard on the ground then it breaks. It is the same with our lives. Since a life is formed from many congregates, when these combinations break apart, we die.

3. Like a line which a stick draws on water; It is ordinarily one expanse of water. If someone uses a stick to draw a line on the water, it will break along the length and the width of that stick. Once the stick is raised, that water will be united as one again. Life, like a line on water, happens only temporarily. Our lives are temporarily created from desires. Without desires, there will be no life. That is the death. The Buddha said, “When age and warm water vaporizes, this physical body, which is without matters, will lie down.”

4. Like a brook from a mountain; a brook naturally flows rapidly from a mountain. Bringing with it all kinds of residues, it never stops flowing. So is a life. It continues to be of old age with the passing of time, never stops for a rest.

5. Like saliva; A strong man can easily spit saliva from the tip of his tongue. This life is that which easily passes away.

²³ A. IV. 136; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr. “**Arakenanusasani Sutta: Araka's Teaching.**”, Retrieved on July 20th, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.5.15.than.html>.

6. Like a piece of burning meat; A meat that is left on a hot pan all day will eventually be burnt. It cannot last. This life that is continually burned by desires will eventually perish.

7. Like slaughtering a cow; each step that the cow takes will bring it closer to a slaughterhouse where death is waiting. The life, as time passes, is closer and closer to death.

Mindful people should consider these points.²⁴ They will wisely agree with the truth that our physical body is impermanent; because once we are born we will become old and die. They will be weary of suffering. They will become calm with this insight and be able to root out delusions. They will no longer fear death. They will see the truth that death is just a normal happening. Death is always with us and it is impossible for us to fight or avoid death. Realizing this truth, they will not be afraid of death. They will prepare themselves for it by performing only good deeds. As citizens of the world and as Buddhists, they will try their best to do their duties. Whenever death arrives, they will be ready. They have already accumulated all the merits they could in this life. Any bad deeds or evil acts that bring troubles to them have been avoided. They have purified their bodies, speeches, and minds and are no longer afraid of death. When the time comes, they can watch and greet death with calm minds. They can peacefully look on, while their physical bodies perish. Their death is not death because it does not destroy “them”. This is what we should realize. I wish that each of us will be ready for death.

2.1.7 *Maranassati* as Defined by Ven. Phra Brahmagunāporn (P.A.Payutto)

P.A.Payutto gave a special talk on the topic entitled “Aging and Dying”,²⁵ in which he said that “Death, in particular, which is the central

²⁴ Paññānanda, Bhikkhu. Dhamma talks on entitled “**Saeng Dharma Song Thang.**” Phramahā Ritthi Thirajitto tr. Atammayatarāma Buddhist Monastery, Seattle, Washington, USA., Retrieved on April 10th, 2010, <http://www.panya.iirt.net/newswatchon/Buddhism.html>.

²⁵ P. A. Payutto, “**Aging and Dying**” Retrieved on April 20, 2010, <http://www.buddhanet.net/cmdsg/aging.htm>

point or culmination of these facts, is a special focus of contemplation. Buddhists are advised to practise mindfulness or contemplation on death (*marāṇasati*).”

This mindfulness or contemplation is far different from imagination or fanciful thinking, which often leads one to fear, sorrow and downheartedness. That is called an unwise attention. The right and wise contemplation of death leads one to the acceptance of the fact of the impermanence of life, and further to leading a life of diligence or earnestness to get the best of life before it comes to an end. Furthermore, it leads to the realization of the truth of the impermanence of all things. The insight into the true nature of all things will bring about wisdom that liberates the mind. The mind of the wise who realize the truth, being freed, is set to the equilibrium and stands in equanimity. The person who is in this state of being is in the position to enjoy the highest happiness. Old age and death are natural phenomena. In accordance with the law of nature, all conditioned things are impermanent and liable to change, being subject to causes and conditions. Everything that has a beginning must at last come to an end. The lives of all beings, after being born, must decay and die. Aging is just the decline of life and the decay of the faculties; and death is the passing-away, the termination of the time of life, the break-up of the aggregates, and the casting off of the body.

2.1.8 *Marāṇassati* as Defined by Some Western Buddhist Scholars

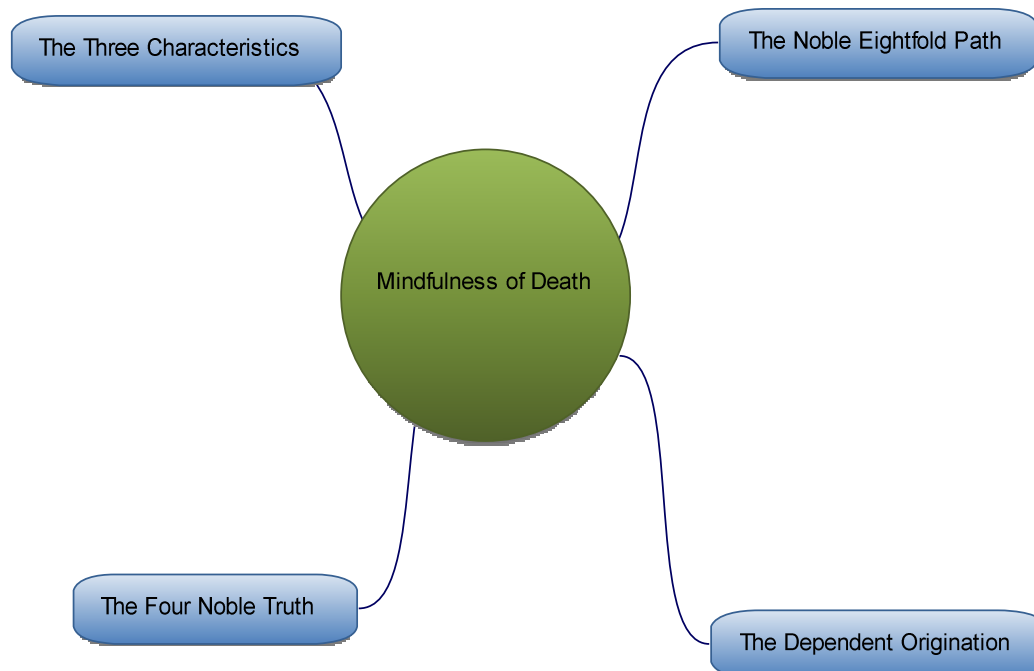
Buddhist scholars seem to have recognized *Marāṇanusati*, because they saw reincarnation not as the preservation of an unchanging soul, but rather as the provisional transfer of some ever-changing elements. Later sects of Buddhism developed the concept of “mind-stream” to handle the continuity of patterns in the chain of causes and effects associated with a person. This allowed Buddhists to refer to the progression of an individual through many changes within one life and across many reincarnations. This mind-stream, then, was eternal and unchangeable as a pattern, but it was not eternal or unchangeable as manifested in a particular self in a particular life. It was the particular self in a particular life which was subject to change, and it was this change which caused suffering.

Was Buddhism making a virtue of a necessity? Things do change, and people change over time. Accepting this fact of life would seem to be the reasonable course of action. A critical assumption in the framing of the problem here was that humans desire unchangeableness. Detachment as a solution depends on a presumed choice between two options, (1) chaotic change that destroys our attachments and frustrates our desires, and (2) an unattainable, pure, and the eternal unchangeableness. Surely, however, many people do not desire pure unchangeableness, but rather reasonable control over the circumstances of their lives. They wish the things to change, but only in certain ways. For example, we may want our friends to grow and mature, but we do not want them to be sick or die. We may want our bodily appearance to vary in beauty, but not to become ugly. It is possible to be happily attached to a continuity which changes in the ways we like, by desirable variety, or by desirable progress and evolution – that is, changes which relate one instant of life to another, or one form of a self to another, in a positive and desired manner.

Detachment during suffering eliminates suffering, but detachment during enjoyment would seem to eliminate enjoyment. Is attachment necessary for enjoyment? If one enjoys something, one will reasonably wish it to continue so that one can continue enjoying it. It is not always the case that enjoyment will continue, but if it does, the desire to have the source of it to continue is entailed. If one subtly separates enjoyment from the desire to continue enjoyment, provisional and temporary enjoyment is possible, but detachment means accepting an end to enjoyment, if the source of enjoyment ends. This subtle resignation confronts the emotion of frustration with the reasonableness of accepting the inevitable.

Therefore, the remedy of Buddhism proposed for emotionally accepting the inevitability of physical death was detachment, and the remedy it proposed for endless future physical deaths (by reincarnation) was also detachment. Detachment was thus the price of overcoming the fear of death in this life, and it was also the price of preventing any future deaths in future reincarnations.

2.2 The Categories of *Dhamma* Which are Related to the Concept of *Marāṇassati*



In accordance with my research, I have found that when a person has developed mindfulness of death, he will realize the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self, because he sees that life is the condition of sickness, old age and death. All human beings cannot escape from these kinds of sufferings. After realizing the three characteristics, he will fully understand the Four Noble Truths of Suffering, namely; 1) the truth of suffering, 2) the truth of the origin of suffering, 3) the truth of the cessation of suffering and 4) the truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering. These Four Noble Truths are the ways to see the cause of suffering in the natural process which must be comprehended. The cause of problem with the entire process of causes and conditions, although internal or external, material or immaterial, physical or mental. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths are analyzed as the causes of suffering.

The solution of the way leading to the realization and the attainment *Nibbāna* is the Eightfold Noble Path, because it is the path leading to purify one's mind and body. Furthermore, the conception of mindfulness of death also leads a person to reject an idea of self as "I" or "Mine".

2.2.1 The Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa*)

The Buddha presented the teaching of three characteristics (*Tilakkhaṇa*) to describe this natural law of flux. The teaching is outlined in this way:

Whether the Tathāgata were to appear in this world or not, this principle would still prevail as an enduring aspect of the natural order:

All compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are *Aniccā*...
 All compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are *dukkha*...
 All *dhammas* are without essence or self (*anattā*)...²⁶

The Tathāgata, having achieved enlightenment, understands this principle. He declares it, teaches it, and sets it down as a model to reveal, explain, and facilitate an understanding that all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are impermanent, all compounded things (*saṅkhārā*) are *dukkhā*s and all *dhammā*s are without essence or self (*anattā*).²⁷

Definitions of the three characteristics are as follows:

1. *Aniccatā*: Impermanence, instability, and inconstancy; the condition of arising, deteriorating, and disintegrating.

2. *Dukkhatā*: State of *dukkha*; the condition of oppression by birth and decay; the tension, stress and conflict within an object due to alteration of its determinant factors, preventing it from remaining as it is; the internal imperfection of things, which prevents true satisfaction for someone whose desires are influenced by craving (*taṇhā*), and cause suffering to a person who clings to it (*upādāna*).

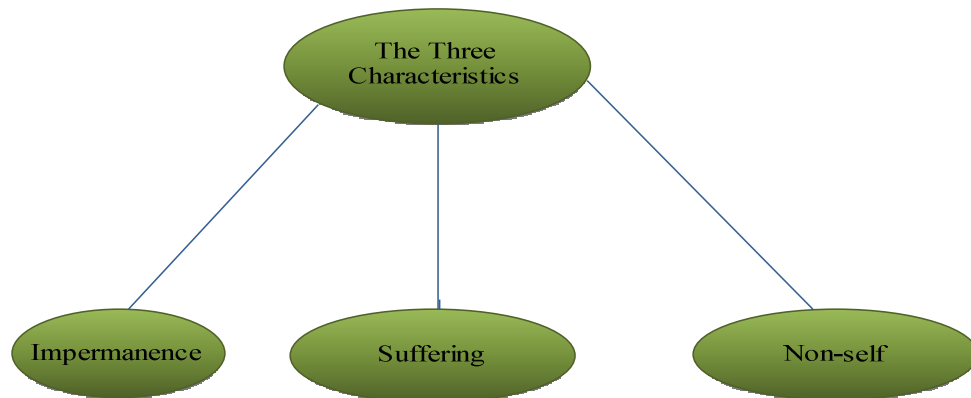
3. *Anattā*: The condition of *Anattā*, non-self; the condition of things being void of a real abiding self.²⁸

²⁶ A. I. 285.

²⁷ A. I. 286; S. IV. 1.

²⁸ P.A Payutto, **The Three Signs: Anicca, Dukkha & Anattā in the Buddha's Teachings**, Suriyo Bhikkhu, tr. (Bangkok: Chandrapen Publications, 2007), p. 2.

The *Pali* adjectival terms for these characteristics are *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattatā*, respectively. The abstract noun forms are *aniccatā*, *dukkhatā*, and *anattā*. As characteristics they are known as *anicca-lakkhaṇa*, *dukkha-lakkhaṇa*, and *anatta-lakkhaṇa*. The commentaries occasionally refer to the three characteristics as ‘universal characteristics’ (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇas*).



All things exist in a state of flux, made up of interdependent conditioning factors, which arise and pass away in unbroken succession: things are impermanent. Because of their instability and casual dependence, things are subject to stress and friction, revealing an inherent imperfection. Since each component likewise exists as a continuous and causally dependent flow, things do not have a distinct individuality. They do not have a true substance or core. Impermanence (*aniccā*) means that the compounded things are constantly being born and dying, arising and passing away. *Dukkha* means that as they are constantly being conditioned by conflicting and opposing forces, they are unable to maintain any constancy. Not-self (*anattā*) means they are not a self or intrinsic entity, they merely follow supporting factors. Any form they take is entirely at the direction of supporting factors. This is the principle of the condition arising, the most basic level of truth. *Anattā* is very controversially difficult to be understood and it is unique in Buddhism, because it could not be found in any other religions at all.

The Buddha was enlightened to these truths, after which he declared and explained them. This first principle is a very important one, the basis of Buddhism. Buddhism regards these natural laws as fundamental truths.

The first two verses make use of ‘*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*, and *sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*’. However, the third verse is ‘*sabbe dhammā*

anattā'. The differences made are *saṅkhārā* and *dhammā*. The former denotes the five aggregates as all conditioned, interdependent, relative things and states, both physical and mental. The latter is of much wider meaning than the former. As we mentioned in early thesis, no term in Buddhist terminology is wider than *dhammā*. *Dhammā* (in plural) includes not only the conditioned things and states, but also the non-conditioned, viz. the Absolute, *Nibbāna*.

In my present thesis, the explanations made respectively and relatively will present the following:

Impermanence (*Aniccā*)

According to doctrine of impermanence (*aniccā*), there is amomentariness in the point of view of *Abhidhamma* while in the Suttanta, it is called a universal impermanence. There are two ways of knowing things which are impermanent, as follows:

1. Empiricism; Knowledge through observation.
2. Rationalism; Knowledge through reasoning or logic.

The former comprises three characteristics of the conditioned; condition-marks of the conditioned (*saṅkhatalakkhaṇa*).

1. Its arising appears (*uppāda*).
2. Its persisting, alteration or changeability appears (*Ṭhitassa aññathatta*).
3. Its passing away or subsidence appears (*vaya*).²⁹

All sentient things are impermanent or all conditioned things are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā* or *aniccā vata saṅkhārā*), because they continuously change according to Buddhism. Moreover, *aniccā aniccasaññā* is the perception of impermanence in impermanence.

Even the Buddha's last words emphasized impermanence (*aniccatā*) as follows: "Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay- strive on untiringly."³⁰

²⁹ A. I. 152.

³⁰ *Handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo: vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādettha.* D.II. 120-156; Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (Dīgha Nikāya), (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1996), p. 270.

Finally, the understanding of impermanence is an aid to understanding the ultimate nature of things. Seeing that all things are perishable and change every moment, we also begin to see that things have no substantial existence of their own. That is to say, in our persons and in the things around us, there is nothing like a self. So, in this sense, impermanence is directly related to the third of the three characteristics, the characteristic of not-self. The understanding of impermanence is a key to understand the concept of not-self. We will talk more about this later. For the moment, let us now go on to the second one of the three characteristics, the characteristic of suffering.

Suffering (*Dukkha*)

The term *dukkha* is very important in Buddhism. Moreover it is very difficult to find an English term fully conveying its wide range of meaning. It conveys a much broader sense than its English equivalent, “suffering.” *Dukkha* is frequently encountered in most of the Buddha’s teachings, such as the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*), dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the Four Noble Truths (*ariyasacca*). In order to understand the *Dhamma* more clearly, it is indispensable to first understand this word *dukkha*. It is, therefore, essential to discard the narrow meaning that “suffering” has in the English language and view *dukkha* from the Buddhist perspective. Three types of *dukkha* are distinguished:³¹

1. *Dukkha–dukkhatā*; all kinds of suffering in life in a general sense, birth, decay, disease and death, association with what is unpleasant (*appiyehi sampayoga*), disassociation from what is pleasant (*piyehi vippayoga*), and not to get what one wants is also suffering (*yaṃ piccham na labhati taṃ pi dukkham*), which are universally accepted as suffering or pain, are included in *dukkha* as ordinary suffering.

2. *Vipariṇāma–dukkhatā*; the suffering which is inherent in change; a happy feeling, a happy condition in life, is not permanent, not everlasting. It changes sooner or later. When it changes, it produces pain, suffering, and unhappiness. This is the suffering caused by the changes

³¹ D. III. 216; S IV 259; S V 56. See also *Vism* 499.

within and the cessation of happiness. This vicissitude is included in *dukkha* as suffering produced by change (*vipariṇāma–dukkhā*).

3. *Sanḅhāra dukkhatā*; the suffering inherent within all *sanḅhāra* and as conditioned states is the most important aspect of the First Noble Truth and it requires some analytical explanation of what is considered as a ‘being’, as an ‘individual’, or as ‘I’. The grasping of five aggregates is suffering; *saḅkhittena pañcupādanakkhandhā dukkhā*.

As the Buddha said: Now this, *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth of suffering: Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.³²

These three can be summarized in the following table:

| No. | Dukkha | Sub–dukkha |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | <i>dukkha dukkhatā</i> ; <i>sabhāvadukkha</i> permanent or ordinary | <i>jāti</i> birth <i>jarā</i> decay <i>marāṇa</i> death |
| 2. | <i>vipariṇāma–dukkhatā</i> <i>pakiṇṅkadukkha</i> ; visiting or temporary (short–termed) | <i>soka</i> sorrow <i>parideva</i> lamentation <i>dukkha</i> pain <i>domanassa</i> grief <i>upayāsa</i> despair <i>sampayoga</i> association with what is unpleasant <i>vippayoga</i> disassociation from what is pleasant <i>alabha</i> not to get what one wants is also suffering |
| 3. | <i>Sanḅhāra dukkhatā</i> ; <i>Nibaddhadukkha</i> | The grasping of five aggregates is suffering; <i>saḅkhittena pañca</i> <i>upādānakkhandhā dukkhā</i> . |

³² S. V. 421; Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (Saḅyuttanikāya), (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2000), p.1844.

The most important kind of suffering is the third one, which describes the nature inherent to all conditions, both physical and mental. On the contrary, the first two forms of suffering mentioned above are easy to be understood and common experience in day-to-day life, frequently held by the other religions too, but the last form which is symbolized and unique, is only taught and stressed by Buddhism. However, the five aggregates are constantly changing invisibly. Life is, therefore, suffering, according to Buddhism. It is not correct to say that, “there is suffering in life” but it would be better to say, “life is suffering”. Buddhism holds that *saṅkhāra* perceives everything visible, smelt, tasted, heard, touched, and known. Both mental and physical sufferings can be experienced and encountered and even an *Arahanta* can experience the physical suffering, such as, death, decay, but not mentally experience suffering anymore.

On many occasions the Buddha pointed out that Dhamma is mainly concerned with *Dukkha* and its cessation. He says: “As I did formerly, even now I preach about *Dukkha* and the cessation of *Dukkha*.”³³ The Pāli term ‘*Dukkha*’ has different shades of meanings and denotes a very complex concept, it is generally rendered into English as pain, ill, disease, unsatisfactoriness, conflict, etc. as opposed to the *Domanassa* ‘sorrow’ which is exclusively mental. While some of these English terms are misleading, none of them brings out the exact meaning of the term *Dukkha* which is both physical and mental. Therefore, it is left untranslated. All things are unsatisfactory (*Dukkha*). The word *Dukkha* is rendered variously as ‘ill’, ‘suffering’, ‘pain’, and so on, which may be correct in certain contexts.

Early Buddhism never denied the satisfaction that man can derive from worldly things, but this satisfaction is generally followed by evil or harmful consequences (*Ādīnava*). The nature of man is such that he craves for eternal or permanent happiness, but the things from which he hopes to derive such as happiness are themselves impermanent. Happiness or satisfaction deriving from impermanent things would surely be temporary and therefore fall short of one’s expectation, that is, permanent happiness.

The Buddha said “whatever is impermanent is suffering, and whatever is impermanent and suffering is also not-self. Whatever is impermanent is suffering because impermanence is an occasion for

³³ M. I.140; S.III.119.

suffering. It is an occasion for suffering and not a cause of suffering because impermanence is only an occasion for suffering so long as ignorance, craving and clinging are present. How is that so? In our ignorance of the real nature of things, we crave and cling to objects in the forlorn hope that they may be permanent, that they may yield permanent happiness. Failing to understand that youth, health and life itself are impermanent, we crave for them, we cling to them. We long to hold on to our youth and to prolong our life and yet because they are impermanent by nature, they slip through our fingers like sand.”³⁴

When this occurs, impermanence is an occasion for suffering. Similarly, we fail to recognize the impermanent nature of possessions, power and prestige. We crave for and cling to them. Once they end, impermanence is an occasion for suffering. The impermanence of all situations in *samsāra* is a particular occasion for suffering, when it occurs in the so-called fortunate realm. It is said that the suffering of the gods is even greater than the suffering of the living beings dwelling in the lower realms of existence when they see that they are about to fall from the heavens into lower realms of existence. Even the gods trembled when the Buddha reminded them of impermanence. So, because even those pleasant experiences which we crave and cling to are impermanent, impermanence is an occasion for suffering and whatever is impermanent is also suffering.

In this section, let us consider the *anattā* which is the last factor of *tilakkhaṇa* and one of the outstanding teachings of the Buddha.

Non-self (*Anattā*)

Before the analysis of non-self will be presented, we should understand the opposite view of *anattā*. At the time of the Buddha, there were 62 views concerning soul and world according to the *Brahmajāla Suttanta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*³⁵ which elucidates the material for the study of early Buddhism. There were 18 kinds of views concerning the past and 44 kinds of views concerning the future, and *Sassatavāda*, the doctrine of an eternal soul, is found among the 18 kinds of view concerning the past.

³⁴ M. I.140; S.III.119.

³⁵ D. I. 55-56; Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (*Dīghanikāya*)**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1996), pp. 67-90.

This view asserts that self (*attā*, *Skt. Ātman*) and the world (*loka*) are eternal. Buddhism gives the general name of eternalism (*sassatadiṭṭhi*) to the assertions that all things are perpetual. Concerning the eternality of atman, the Buddha gave no answer that is called “inexpressible” (*avyākata*).

Apart from some beliefs about God and World, some beliefs about soul were the next problems of religious and philosophical speculations and trends at very early times. It would be noted that a number of *suttas* in the *Dīghanikāya* involving the attention of the religious teachers of the time was the one concerned with the ‘soul’. As evident from these sources, almost all teachers, except the Buddha, accepted the existence of the soul. Of six heretical teachers contemporary with the Buddha, some of them did not say anything positive about soul. If it is held, a single being is always tempted to say, “This is mine, this is I, and this is my soul”, also “that which is the self is the world, having passed away, that I shall be permanent, stable, external not subject to change.” All those problems were not easy to answer. The Buddha himself dared to give no categorical answer. When he was confronted with the question “Is the body the soul, or is body one thing and soul another?”, he declared it as indeterminate (*avyākata*), or not fit to be talked about.

The reasons why the Buddha declined to reply to questions concerning the soul, the self, and the world are as follows:

Firstly, such questions are most importantly based on wrong assumptions, such as the concept of self, soul and world which are not correlated with truth. As the Buddha would say, “You have asked the question wrongly.” Secondly, the truths that these questions seek for an answer are not accessible to the logical mind and are indescribable and beyond words. It is like trying to look at a picture with one’s ears believed to be a waste of time. Thirdly, debating these questions inaccessible to rational thinking would yield no practical results. Fourthly, the Buddha was born at a time in which these questions were the subject of intense interest, and the teachers and philosophers were debating them heatedly all over the country. Whenever people approached religious teachers or philosophers, they would tend to ask these questions. Such questions had become so much of an obsession that people had gotten out of touch with practical reality, and so the Buddha would remain silent when presented with them. His silence was not only a check on such discussion, but also a

powerful jolt to the listener to take heed of what the Buddha did have to teach. And finally, one reason that the Buddha gave was that whether or not *Atman* was eternal was a metaphysical question to which discussion there would be no end, so it would be of no use for the Holy Path, nor would it lead to *Nibbāna*.

The Buddha criticized the self with two aspects in Upanisadic theory. One is the permanence or eternality of the ‘self’ and the other is the agency attributed to it. The theory of non-substantiality is also considered to be the ‘middle view’ between the two extremes of eternalism (*sassata-vāda*) and annihilationism (*uccheda-vāda*).

*Anattalakkhaṇasutta*³⁶ is described as the second discourse which the Buddha proclaimed his principle against the prevalent theory of self or soul at that time, and it is looked upon as the non-moral natural law in order to understand the main teachings of Buddhism in early Buddhism.

The Buddha first delivered this to the group of five ascetics at that time of residing at the deer park, Isipatana, near Benares, and addressed them saying the *Anattalakkhaṇasutta* concerning mainly five *khandha*, viz. *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā*, and *viññāṇa*, which is soulless or without self (*anattā*). Then he mentioned if there were in these a soul, and then this body, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness would not be subject to *Dukkha*, they must be forced or ordered to be thus or not thus. Such a possibility would also exist. However, in as much as they are soulless or without self (*anattā*), they are subject to *Dukkha*, and they must not be or do such and such.

The Buddha questioned the monks whether the five *khandha* are permanent or not. The reply is that they are impermanent. Asking if those which are impermanent are happy or painful, painful is the reply. The Buddha stressed that it is justifiable to think of what is *aniccā*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*: This is mine; this am I, this is my soul. It is not so. The Buddha stated that all form, and other *khandhas* whether past, present, and future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be understood by right knowledge in its real nature as: “this is not mine (*n’etam mama*); I am not this: (*n’eso ’ham asmi*); this is not my soul

³⁶ S. III. 66.

(*na me so attā*). There are the three misconceptions (*Maññamāna*) namely:

1. With craving (*taṇhā*) one wrongly thinks that is mine.
2. With pride (*māna*) one thinks that this I am.
3. With false view one thinks that this is my soul.³⁷

Here the Buddha explicitly states that an *Ātman*, or soul, or self, is nowhere to be found in reality, and it is foolish to believe that there is such a thing.

Those who look for a self in the *Buddhadhamma* may quote few examples concerning the self which are wrongly translated and misinterpreted. Most Ven. Walpola Rahula in his well-known work '*What the Buddha Taught*'³⁸ makes a careful notice by exemplifying the four famous scenes in the Buddha's teaching on self which is misunderstood as follows:

Firstly, the well-known line *attā hi attano nātho*³⁹ which is mistranslated as 'Self is the lord of self', and then misinterpreted to mean that the big self is the lord of the small self.

Secondly, another example of the attempt to introduce the idea of self into the Buddha's teaching in the well-known words *attādīpa vihāratha, attasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā*, which is really meant: 'Dwell, making yourselves your island (support), making yourselves your refuge, and not anyone else as your refuge.'

Thirdly, another attempt to seek the self in Buddha's teachings when on the way to *Uruvelā* from Benares asking the thirty young princes: 'What do you think, young men? Which is better for you? To search after a woman, or to search after yourselves?'

³⁷ S. II. 94; III 18, 42, 43, 180.

³⁸ W. Rahula, Dr., **What the Buddha taught**, (Bangkok: Haw Trai Foundation, 1999), pp.58-63.

³⁹ Dh. 160; Narada, Thera. tr. **The Dhammapada** (Pali Text & Translation with Stories in brief & notes), (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p.145.

Fourthly, question of a certain *paribbājaka* (wanderer) named *Vacchagotta* who asked him whether there was an *Ātman* or not. The Buddha was silent as the reasons are mentioned above.

The two patterns of the teachings of *anattā*. The first pattern is to deny such statements as *etaṃ mama* (this is mine), *eso ’hamasmi* (this is I) and *eso me attā* (this is my self). An example of this way of teaching is clearly seen in *Saṅyutta Nikāya*. The second pattern is to deny that the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*) are the self or that the self has five aggregates and that there are five aggregates in self.

The doctrine of *anattā* or no-Soul is the natural result of, or the corollary to, the analysis of the five aggregates and the teaching of conditioned genesis which has already been discussed in preceding segment of *Maraṇassati* in general. This is the reason for the Buddha’s denunciation of any hidden “essence” in these *dhammās*, which he so openly and unequivocally expressed in his statement: “All *dhammas* are non-substantial” (*sabbe dhammā anattā*).⁴⁰ *Anattā* is one of three common characteristics, embracing and belonging to *asaṅkhatadhamma* with its characteristics of the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata-lakkhaṇa*) as follows:

No arising appears.

No passing away appears.

It persisting, no alteration appears.⁴¹

And this is a vivid rejection of the conception of *atman* which contains in the teachings of both the *Upanisads* and the *Bhagavadgīta*.

2.2.2 The Four Noble Truths (*Caturāriyasacca*)

Buddhism arose from the desire to eliminate suffering (*dukkha*) or the fear of *dukkha*. Buddhism owes its origins to a fear of suffering, including all the problems experienced during the time of living. Many other religions seem to have come into existence owing to a fear of danger, an awareness of danger, stemming from the will of God, or supernatural forces, and a desire to pamper to the favor of God’s grace. At other times the source of danger was thought as located in natural phenomena, such as floods, earthquakes and so on. This awe of natural

⁴⁰ M. 228, 230; S III 132-33; Dh.p.v. 279.

⁴¹ A. I. 152.

phenomena then resulted in religious positions aimed at minimizing, or eliminating these dangers.⁴² In the ancient times, attempts were made at describing the universe, and the natural environment, which involved the notion that spirits and gods inhabit the natural environment, such as in the sea, in rivers, mountains and even celestial bodies like the sun and the moon. Their favors were sought in order to guarantee and ensure the fertility of the soil and the rotation of the seasons as well as human security. Gradually, it must have been noticed that there were certain regularities in nature that the sun, for instance, always rose in the east and set in the west, whether or not a sacrifice had been performed in honors of the sun god.

The source of *Dukkha*⁴³ lies in the natural process, which must be understood. Buddhism looks for the source of the problem within the entire process of causes and conditions, be they internal or external, material or immaterial, physical or mental. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths appear many times, throughout the Pali Canon. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path were the heart of the Buddha's teaching. The Four Noble Truths were the Buddha's analysis of the cause of suffering. The Eightfold Path was the solution. Together they formed the Dharma, or the doctrines of Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths are:⁴⁴

1. The Truth of Suffering: Suffering consists of disease, old age, and death; of separation from those we love; of craving what we cannot obtain; and of hating what we cannot avoid. In this world no one experiences total satisfaction. Nothing lasts. Even the happiest moments vanish.

2. The Truth of Origin: All suffering is caused by desire and the attempt to satisfy our desires. People suffer because they want to keep

⁴² P.A. Payutto, Bhikkhu, **Toward Sustainable Science**, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1993), p. 53.

⁴³ D. III. 216; S. IV. 259; S. V. 56. *Dukkha*, in a Buddhist sense, is defined by the Buddha and the commentaries as being divided into the three types: *dukkhadukkhatā*, *vipariṇamadukkhatā*, and *saṅkhaṇaradukkhatā*.

⁴⁴ P.A. Payutto, **Buddhadhamma: An Expanded and revised (Abridged version)**, tr., by Bruce Evans, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1996), pp. 561-62.

things. They crave and grasp them and are never satisfied with them. They become greedy and self-centered.

3. The Truth of Cessation: Therefore, suffering can be overcome by ceasing to desire. It is possible to see why people fight to keep things. Such feelings can be recognized and rooted out.

4. The Truth of the Path: The way to end desire is to follow the Eightfold Path. This way of rooting out can be done by following new ways of thinking, speaking and acting. Whole attitudes to life can be changed and a new consciousness and outlook gained by following a simple and reasonable Eightfold Path.

2.2.3 The Noble Eightfold Path (*Aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*)

The *Ariyamagga*⁴⁵ is the way or path leading to the *Nibbāna*; the end of *Dukkha*. The *Aṭṭhaṅgikamagga* is believed to be a way of life. It is matter of detailed description or guidance of the way to live, think, act, and speak, which will enable one to put this whole fivefold mass of *Dukkha* to an end. The path is only one path that is why it is so called the path but it is comprised of eight components or eight ways. But all paths lead to the one path which leads to the ultimate truth (Nirvana). Therefore, it called the Eightfold Path

The term *Ariya*⁴⁶ was originally used to refer to the invading race, the *Ariyan* Clan. Two important characteristics of the Eightfold Path are that it is the middle of the moral life as well as a middle way.⁴⁷ Thus it is the middle part of the noble life better known as the middle way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) between two extremes (*anta*); a life of indulgence in the pleasures of sense (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and indulgence in self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*).

A life of the former is rejected for social reasons, because it is low, vulgar, and individualist. The *Pāyāsi Sutta* shows that materialism was a widely prevalent doctrine at the time. The Buddha's disciples had to contend with teachers who put forward such teachings, and from the

⁴⁵ D. II. 312; M. I. 61; M. III. 251.

⁴⁶ Kalupahana, David J. *Ethics in Early Buddhism*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai Press, Unknown date), p.77.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.78.

point of view of Buddhism, such teachings were considered extremely harmful to the well-being of the people, here in this life and in the hereafter. The latter is avoided mostly for psychological reasons. It is not characterized as low, vulgar, and individualist; it is simply painful. Both, however, are ignoble and unfruitful. This would mean that the path avoiding these extremes should be both noble and fruitful. The Buddha was aware that usefulness could be interpreted in a rather selfish way by adding the adjective *ariya* as a characteristic of the path. This is the function of the term *sammā* (right), used to qualify and characterize all the eight constituents of the Noble Path.

The term *sammā* carries the sense of comprehensiveness, which implies avoidance of shortcuts in deciding what is right and wrong, and renunciation of any attempt to account for everything, the Eightfold Path is the moral life that serves as a bridge between the life of virtues and ultimate freedom. There is much evidence that the Buddha praised the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of *Dukkha*. It is noted that the word ‘right’ (*sammā*) is placed before each factor opposing to the wrong (*micchā*) path.

The following discourses by the Buddha and his chief disciple *Sāriputta*, explain and set forth the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha questioned *Sāriputta* what this *Nibbāna* is. Then he himself replied that it is the destruction and non-existence of lust, hatred, and delusion, Friend, this is called *Nibbāna*. *Sāriputta* asked is there any path, any approach to the realization of the experience of *Nibbāna*. The Buddha replied that there is such a path, such an approach. It is the *Ariyan* Eightfold Path for the realization of *Nibbāna*, viz. right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration;⁴⁸ such is this path, this approach to the attainment of *Nibbāna*, and a proper occasion for earnestness, too.

For more understanding of the *Aṭṭhangikamagga*, the Buddha gave metaphors of it in numerous manners through many *Suttas* especially in the *Samyuttanikāya*.⁴⁹ The Noble Path is compared to ancient path, divine vehicle, ancient city, the crossing over, the pot, the river Ganges, the species of seed and vegetation, strong wind, and the case of sea-faring vessel.

⁴⁸ S. V.I 170.

⁴⁹ S.II. 105; S.V. 4-5.

The main characteristic of this *Dhamma* is taken as the middle path succinctly explained by the Buddha in the first sermon. The passage about these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by one gone forth from the family life to the monk's life, that is to say, there is devotion to indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire, which is inferior, low, vulgar, ignoble, and leads to no good; and there is devotion to self-mortification, self-torment, which is painful, ignoble, and leads to no good.

The path leading to this goal is the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga*) which has to be treads on gradually. Owing to successfully following this course, one is able to elevate oneself morally and mentally by completely eradicating all defilements that keep one tied to this *Samsāric* existence: 'So too, Bhikkhus, I saw the ancient path, the ancient road traveled by the Perfectly Enlightened Ones of the past...

The way by which he traveled is elsewhere called the middle course: Friends, the evil herein is greed and hate. There is a Middle Way (*Majjhimā Paṭipadā*) for the abandoning of greed and hate, giving vision (*Cakkhukaraṇa*), giving knowledge (*Ñāṇakaraṇī*), which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment (*Sambodhi*), to *Nibbāna*. And what is that Middle Way? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view (*Sammādiṭṭhi*), right thought (*Sammāsaṅkappa*), right speech (*Sammāvācā*), right conduct (*Sammākammanta*), right livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*Sammāvāyāma*), right mindfulness (*Sammāsati*), right concentration (*Sammāsamādhi*). This is Middle Way (*Majjhimā Paṭipadā*) for the abandoning of greed and hate, giving vision (*Cakkhukaraṇī*), giving knowledge (*Ñāṇakaraṇī*), which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment (*Sambodhi*), and to *Nibbāna*.⁵⁰

Right View (*Sammādiṭṭhi*)

Before the enumeration of the right view in Buddhism, there are sixty-two views mentioned in *Brahmajāla Sutta* of *Dīghanikāya Suttanta* which is in brief related to two views which should be understood and considered as wrong, imperfect or false. The first view is eternalism, and the second view is annihilationism –the view of the annihilationists.

⁵⁰ P.A. Payutto., **Buddhadhamma: An Expanded and revised (Abridged version)**, op. cit., pp. 286-87.

The former deals mainly with the eternal life or eternal things. Before the Buddha's time, it was prevalently taught that there is an abiding entity which can exist forever or eternally and that we have to live the eternal life to preserve the eternal soul in order to be in union with a Supreme Being (*Brahmā*). This teaching is called *Sassatadiṭṭhi*-the views of eternalists. It is noted that this view is prevalent in the modern world also. Buddhism denies or rejects this as totally wrong. In reality, nothing is permanent or exists forever. Things change and continue to do so according to their conditions. All religions may be categorized under this view of *Sassatavāda* except Buddhism. So this view is wrong.⁵¹

The latter view deals with the beliefs of no life after death. When a man dies it is the end. This view also belongs to materialists because they lack knowledge of mental conditionality. Life in the materialistic view cannot then be understood fully but just only in part. The other side of life concerned with mental conditionality should not be ignored. Two aspects of conditions both mental and material should be clear by understood, otherwise, there is the belief in no life after death and that there is no further becoming after passing away. Also this view is referred to as materialism because of no beliefs in any God or any religion, and there is no life according to it. Then this view is considered false, because it is not complete.

Buddhism arose so as to reject both the above mentioned views, which had created the disputes and mutual conflicts among other religions and materialism by showing the *Dhamma* or Dependent Origination called the middle doctrine. Buddhism holds that *Ucchedavāda* arises owing to *Vibhava-taṇhā* (desire for non-existence). *Sassatavāda* arises owing to *Bhava-taṇhā* and *Kāmasukhallikānuyoga* due to *Kāmatanḥā* (desire for sensual pleasure) also rejected by Buddhism. When asked what then right understanding is, it is the understanding of *dukkha* or the unsatisfactory nature of all existence, its arising, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation.

Here are the Buddha's sayings: 'It is, *Bhikkhus*, because of not understanding, not penetrating the four noble truths that you and I have roamed and wandered through this long course of *Saṃsāra*...' Here there

⁵¹ Ibid.,p.289.

are two conditions⁵² that conduce to right understanding: Hearing from others, which is hearing the *Saddhamma*, the good law, from others (*Paratoghosa*), and systematic (wise) attention (*Yoniso-manasikāra*). The first condition is external, that is, what is from outside, while the second is internal, what is self-cultivated.’

Hearing brings about food for thought and directs in forming one’s own views. It is, thus, needed to listen, the second condition, systematic attention, is harder to cultivate. It entails constant awareness of the things that one meets in everyday life. *Sammādiṭṭhi* is the first factor in the Noble Eightfold Path-the Buddhist way of life. In *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta, Majjhimānikāya*, Ven. Sāriputta gave the four ways resulting in the *Sammādiṭṭhi* as follows:

The first is by way of moral causation; the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind have to be clarified.

The second is by way of nourishment or nutriment.

The third is by way of the Four Noble Truths.

The last is by the way of Conditionality (*Paṭiccasamupāda*).⁵³

In *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* the Buddha said: ‘And what, monks, is right view? It is monks, the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of the origin of suffering, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and the knowledge of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called Right View.’⁵⁴ When right view has been well-established, it continues to evolve towards the final goal with the support of various factors: ‘*Bhikkhus*, right view, which is assisted by five factors, brings about *cetovimutti* and the *paññāvimutti*.’

The Five Factors are:

1. Proper conduct (*sīla*);
2. Knowing how to study, read a text, and make further interpretations (*suta*);

⁵² A. I. 14-18; S. V. 2-30.

⁵³ M.I. 46-55; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), op. cit., pp.132-144.

⁵⁴ D. II. 311–312; Walshe, Maurice, tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (Dīgha Nikāya), op. cit., p.348.

3. Discussing, debating, and exchanging views; being able to answer other people's questions (*sākacchā*);
4. Attaining tranquility and peace of mind, not being deluded (*samatha*);
5. Using wisdom to consider various phenomena and circumstances in accordance with their conditions, that is, in accordance with reality or their true nature (*vipassanā*).⁵⁵

Right Thought (*Sammāsaṅkappa*)

Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*) is the second factor in the Eightfold Path, consisting first of thoughts free from lustful attachment or greed or thoughts associated with renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṅkappa*), secondly, it involves the thoughts free from hatred or malevolence (*avyāpādasāṅkappa*) and lastly, consists of the thoughts free from violent intention (*avihimsāsaṅkappa*). According to Buddhism, such thought is considered to be the psychological basis of benevolent moral action. As the Buddha mentioned: 'And what, monks, is Right Thought? The thought of renunciation, the thought of non-ill-will, the thought of harmlessness. This, monks, is called Right Thought.'⁵⁶

Two perspectives of *Sammāsaṅkappa* are divided by Buddha:

(1.) The mundane (*lokiya*) one is still tainted by intoxication, still meritorious and has consequences for the aggregates, and

(2.) The supramundane (*lokuttara*) one is most noble, without stain, supramundane, and a factor of the Path which involves reasoning the initial application of thought (*vitakka*), thought (*saṅkappa*), the focusing of thought, the determination of thought and concentrating on the predispositions of speech (*vacīsaṅkhāra*). The three following factors of the Noble Eightfold Path viz. *sammākammanta*, *sammāvācā*, and *sammā-ājīva* under the *sīla* heading will be explained respectively.

Right Speech (*Sammāvācā*)

Right speech (*sammāvācā*) consists first of the abstention from false speech (*musāvādā*) and the cultivation of truthfulness and

⁵⁵ A. III. 20.

⁵⁶ D. II. 311–312; M. III. 251; Walshe, Maurice, op.cit., p. 348.

trustworthiness. Secondly it involves the abstention from slanderous speech (*pisuṇavācā*) intent on causing dissension among people and the cultivation of speech which promotes harmony among those who are divided and strengthens the bonds of those who already united in bonds of friendship. Thirdly, it involves the avoidance of harsh speech (*pharusavācā*) and the cultivation of speech which is pleasant, lovely and delightful to hear. Fourthly, it consists of the abstention from frivolous or vain talk (*samphappalāpa*) and the cultivation of meaningful, purposeful, useful and timely speech.

In the *Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha said: ‘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.’⁵⁷

It is worth noting as well the Buddhist attitude to speech. Moderation in speech is considered a virtue, as one can avoid four unwholesome vocal activities, namely, falsehood, slander, harsh speech and frivolous talk. In its positive aspect, moderation in speech paves the way to self-awareness. Buddhism commends speaking at the appropriate time, speaking the truth, speaking gently, speaking what is useful, and speaking out of loving-kindness; the opposite modes of speech are condemned. The Buddha’s general advice to the monks regarding speech was to discuss the *Dhamma* (the teaching, the universal law) or to maintain noble silence.⁵⁸

Right Action (*Sammākamanta*)

Right action (*Sammākamanta*) being the fourth factor in the Eightfold Path involves abstention from wrongful bodily action and the cultivation of right modes of bodily behavior. It consists first of all abstention from injury to life, abstention from violence and acts of terrorism, the laying aside of all weapons used to cause injury to living beings and the positive cultivation of a mind full of love and compassion, leading to compassionate action. Secondly, it recommends abstention from theft and fraudulent behavior and the cultivation of honesty. Thirdly,

⁵⁷ D. II. 311–312, Walshe, Maurice, op.cit., p.348.

⁵⁸ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha** (Majjhima Nikāya), op. cit., pp.145-55; M. I. 126.

it involves abstention from unchastely and wrongful gratification of sensuous desires, especially with respect to sexual behavior.

In the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha said: ‘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.’⁵⁹

Right Livelihood (*Sammā-Ājīva*)

Right livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*) is the fifth item of the middle path emphasizes the moral and noble means of livelihood avoiding those occupations which might be materially rewarding but morally reprehensible. Considered in Buddhism as wrong means of livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) is engaging in any occupation resulting in harmful social consequences. Lay Buddhists are expected to avoid trading in weapons, animals, flesh, intoxicants, and poisons. In the case of Buddhist monastics, conditions for right livelihood are much more stringent than those for the laymen. Right livelihood for the monk is determined by the consideration that his life should be in conformity with a life of detachment and renunciation.

In the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha said: ‘And what, monks, is Right Livelihood? Here, monks, the *ariyan* disciple, having given up wrong livelihood, keeps himself by right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.’⁶⁰

Right Effort (*Sammāvāyāma*)

Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*) is the first factor in the section relating to *samādhi* or the higher mental training (*adhicittasikkhā*) which will be explained in the next section.

Let us consider the following of proper effort found in *sutta*: Bhikkhus, what is proper effort? Proper effort means that you bhikkhus in

⁵⁹ Walshe, Maurice, tr., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Dīghanikāya), op. cit., p.348; D. II. 311–312.

⁶⁰ Walshe, Maurice, tr., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Dīghanikāya), op. cit. ; D. II. 311-312.

the *Dhamma-vinaya* should make: There are four kinds of right effort (*sammāpadhāna* or four *padhānas*) :-

1. The effort to eliminate the evil dispositions (*pahāna-ppadhāna*),
2. The effort to prevent the growth of evil dispositions, (*saṃvarappadhāna*),
3. The effort to cultivate wholesome dispositions (*bhāvanāppadhāna*), and
4. The effort to stabilize the wholesome dispositions of character already acquired (*anurakkhanappadhāna*).

Buddhism puts much emphasis on effort which is of utmost importance and a vital factor. As the following passage states: This *Dhamma* is only for those who are industrious; not for those who are of laziness.

As the Buddha says: Bhikkhus, I clearly understand two valuable things about the *Dhamma*: I am not merely content with the good things I have already done; I do not allow any backsliding in the course of ceaseless efforts. Therefore, all of you should know that we will establish effort that does not cease, until only skin, sinew, and bones remain. Our tissue and blood may dry up, but we will continue to seek the fruit that can be attained via human energy, hard work, and struggle. There is no slack in our efforts all of you should know this and carry on in this way.

Right Mindfulness (*Sammāsati*)

Right mindfulness (*Sammāsati*) is the seventh factor of the path and second member of its *Samādhikkhandha*. The stock description runs as follows: And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world. He

abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.⁶¹

Sammāsati places emphasis on *satipaṭṭhāna* meaning the “foundation of mindfulness” or the “emergence of mindfulness.” As the Buddha put forth in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: In brief, *satipaṭṭhāna* can be defined as follows: The first contemplation of body (*kāyānupassanā*) is comprised of the five sub-items viz. a) *ānāpānasati*, b) *iriyāpatha*, c) *sampajañña*, d) *paṭikūlamānasikāra*, e) *dhātumānasikāra*, and f) *navasīvathika*. The second contemplation of sensation (*vedanā*) is comprised of three kinds of feelings viz. *sukha*, *dukkha*, or neutral *upekkhā*. The third contemplation of mind implies understanding our state of mind at any given moment. The last mindfulness of *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*) is comprised of the five kinds of objects viz. a) *nivāraṇa*, b) *khandha*, c) *āyatana*, d) *bojjhaṅga*, and e) *ariyasacca*.

Marāṇassati lays emphasis on the importance of *sati* at every level of ethical conduct. *Sati* is synonymous with *appamāda*, which is of central importance to make progress in the Buddhist system of ethics because when one develops mindfulness of death that means he or she loves himself or herself and loves other living beings too.

The role and importance of the application of *appamāda* at various levels of moral practice can be gleaned from the words of the Buddha: ‘Bhikkhus, the footprints of all living beings that walk fit into the footprint of the elephant and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be the chief among them, that is, with respect to size, so too, whatever wholesome states there are, they are all rooted in diligence, converge upon diligence declared to be the chief among them. When a bhikkhu is diligent, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.’⁶²

‘Monks, as a matter concerning the self I know not of any other single factor so conducive to great gain as earnestness. Earnestness indeed conduces to great gain. Monks, I know not of any other single thing so

⁶¹ Walshe, Maurice, tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha** (Dīghanikāya), op. cit., pp. 348-9; D. II. 313.

⁶² Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., **The Connected Discourses of the Buddha** (Saṃyuttanikāya), op. cit., p.1551; S. V. 43; A. V. 21.

conducive to the establishment, to the non-disappearance of true *Dhamma* as earnestness.’⁶³ Even before passing away, the final instructions given by the Buddha still lays emphasis on *appamāda* as follows: “Now, monks, I declare to you: All conditioned things are of a nature to decay. Strive on untiringly (*appamādadhamma*).”⁶⁴

Right Concentration (*Sammāsamādhi*)

Right concentration (*Sammā samādhi*) being the eighth factor of the path stands for the clear mental condition which brings about the dawning of wisdom resulting in the final elimination of all evil dispositions and culminating in the perfection of moral character.

Samādhi can be divided into three levels:⁶⁵

1. Momentary concentration (*khaṇikasamādhi*)
2. In the neighborhood concentration (*upacārasamādhi*)
3. Attainment concentration (*appanāsamādhi*)

The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyaṭṭhaṅgikamagga*) is a *Dhamma* as moral natural law, because it is concerned with nature and morality intended for a result in accordance with the natural process. Then, it can be adapted to time and place. Next, it is a graduated system of practice of human invention, relying on the gradual accumulation of goodness and finally, it is also a technique, a method and tool which lead to putting an end to *Dukkha*.

The Noble Eightfold Path is also praised and mentioned by the Buddha in the last period of his life: In whatever doctrine or teaching in which the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, there will neither be found those who have become *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadagāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, or *Arahanta* (four levels of sainthood). On the contrary, in those teachings where the Noble Eightfold Path is found, there you will also find the *Sotapanna*, the *Sakadāgāmī*, the *Anāgāmī* and the *Arahanta*. In this teaching of mine, O *Subhadda*, is to be found the Noble Eightfold Path, and in it alone the

⁶³ Woodward F.L. tr., **The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttaranikāya)**. Vol. I. pp.1,2; A. I. 16-7.

⁶⁴ Walshe, Maurice. tr., **The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)**, op. cit., p. 270; D. II. 156.

⁶⁵ Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary**, op. cit., pp.155-156.

Sotāpanna, the *Sakadāgāmī*, the *Anāgāmī*, and the *Arahanta* are found, in no other schools of religious teachers can such *Ariya* beings (saints) be found. And if only my disciples live rightly and follow my precepts or training rules, the world will never be without genuine *Arahantas*.⁶⁶

The Buddha also said: “The *Tathāgata* is the discoverer of a way that was unknown. Now I perceived, O monks, the ancient path along which the previous Buddhas walked. Having directly known, I have explained them to the bhikkhus, the bhikkhunis, the male lay followers, and the female lay followers. This holy life, bhikkhus, has become successful and prosperous, extended, popular, well-proclaimed among *devas* and humans.” Ultimately, the Buddha praising the middle way as passage says: “Monks, as compared with things compounded the *Ariyan* eightfold way is reckoned best of them.”⁶⁷

2.2.4 Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*)

The Buddha himself, stressing the importance of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*⁶⁸, stated: “One who sees dependent origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) sees the *Dhamma*; one who sees the *Dhamma* sees dependent origination, *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.” From this evidence, *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is believed to be comparable to the genuine *Dhamma*. And in many sources, *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is often mentioned. *Vinaya Piṭaka* recounts the time after the Buddha’s enlightenment and bliss of *Vimutti* already discussed in the preceding chapter, and reviews dependent origination which is being presented in this chapter as *Dhamma* as non-moral natural law, until he decided not to preach the *Dhamma* because of the difficulty of understanding it.

This present thesis is not only confined to a one by one description but also the attempt is made to understand why this *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is related to the concept of *Maraṇassati*. Therefore, numerous passages of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* in the *Pāli* canon were described by the Buddha as a natural law, a fundamental truth which

⁶⁶ Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Saṃyutta Nikāya)*, op. cit., pp. 603-04; S. II. 92.

⁶⁷ Woodward, F. L. tr., *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttaranikāya)*, op. cit., Vol. II. p. 39; A. II. 34.

⁶⁸ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, tr., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majjhima-nikāya)*, op. cit., p. 283; M. I.191.

exists independently of the arising of enlightened beings: “Whether a *Tathāgata* appears or not, this condition exists and is a natural fact, a natural law: that is, the principle of conditionality.”

The *Tathāgata*, enlightened to and awakened to that principle, teaches it, shows it, formulates it, declares it, reveals it, makes it known, clarifies it and points it out, saying, “See here conditioned by ignorance is volitional impulse. This suchness, monks, this invariability, this irreversibility, that is to say, the law of conditionality, I call the principle of Dependent Origination.”

To understand *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is said to be one of right views (*Sammādiṭṭhi*) which will be discussed in the next section and known as the middle teaching (*Majjhenedesaṇā*) one of the main characteristics. Before the detailed elucidation of this *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, the extreme views should first be clarified in order to clearly understand Dependent Origination as *Dhamma* as non-moral natural law, arranged in pairs as using the Buddha’s words.

Let us now consider the four extreme views opposite to *Paṭiccasamuppāda* presented by Ven. P. A. Payutto⁶⁹ as follows:

The First Pair:

1. *Atthikavāda*: The views or theory which holds that all things really exist (extreme realism).
2. *Natthikavāda*: The view or theory which holds that all things really do not exist (nihilism).

The Second Pair:

1. *Sassatavāda*: The view or theory which holds that all things are eternal (eternalism).
2. *Ucchedavāda*: The view or theory which holds that all things annihilate (annihilationism).

⁶⁹ P.A. Payutto, Ven., **Dependent Origination; The Buddhist Law of Conditionality**, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1999), pp.76–84.

The Third Pair:

1. *Attakāravāda* or *sayañkāvāda*: The view or theory which holds that happiness and suffering are entirely self-determined (kammic autogenesisism).

2. *Parakāvāda*: The view or theory which holds that happiness and suffering are entirely caused by external factors (kammic heterogenesisism).

The Fourth Pair:

1. *Kāravāda-ekattavāda*: The view or theory which holds that the doer and the recipient of the fruit of actions are one and the same (the monistic view of subject-object unity).

2. *Kāravāda-nānattavāda*: The view or theory which holds that the doer and recipient of the fruit of actions are separate things (the dualistic view of subject-object distinction).

The above-mentioned views or theories or schools of thought have a special relation to the concept of *kamma*, and also clash with the principle of dependent origination.

From the arising of ignorance is the arising of the *kammic* formations; from the stopping of ignorance is the stopping of the *kammic* formations. This Noble Eightfold Way is itself the course leading to the stopping of the *kammic*-formations, that is to say; right view...When a noble disciple comprehends 'condition' thus, its arising, its end, and the course leading to its end thus, he is called an *ariyan* disciple who is possessed of right view, of vision, one who has come into this true *Dhamma*, who sees this true *Dhamma*, who is endowed with the knowledge and lore of a learner, who has attained the stream of *Dhamma*, who is an *Ariyan* of penetrating wisdom, and who stands knocking at the door of Deathless.

According to Buddhism, there is no 'First Cause', ignorance or craving are not regarded as the First Cause with a capital 'F' and a capital 'C'. Things are neither due to one single cause nor are they causeless, those held that all things have a root or "first cause" and there are things that exist outside the natural order (supernatural). Searching for the facts regarding the question of a First Cause, a Creator God and such, has little value in the Buddhist view, because it is not essential to a meaningful life. Even though reflecting on these matters can provide a wider world view

as mentioned above, such reflection can still be passed over, as the value of Dependent Origination in terms of life fulfillment already covers the benefits desired.

As explained in the formula of Dependent Origination arising things are of multiple-causes. Craving, like all other things, physical or mental, is also conditioned, interdependent and inter-relative. It is neither a beginning nor an end in itself. Though craving is cited as the proximate cause of suffering, it is not independent, but interdependent. Dependent on feeling or sensation arises craving; feeling arises dependently on contact and so forth. Conditionality is referred to as the view that an effect is brought about the term *Idappaccayatā* usually occurs with a prefix to the term *Paṭiccasamuppāda* which is the Buddhist canonical term for both the idea of causation and the formula of twelve factors (*avijjā, sankhāra, viññāṇa*, etc. illustrating or exemplifying the Buddhist law of causes and conditions. The two terms, *Idappaccayatā* and *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, are synonymous and they are merely two parts of a compound word.

Paṭiccasamuppāda is regarded as the Middle Teaching (*majjhena-dhammadesanā*) and taught as an impersonal, natural truth, a description of the nature of things as they are, avoiding the extreme theories or biased views. The cycle of Dependent Origination telling the problem of *dukkha* comprises two limbs: the first one called the *samudayavāra* (origination mode) is a description of the arising of *dukkha*, corresponding the second Noble Truth, the cause or origin of *dukkha*, and the second one, the third one called the *nirodhavāra* (cessation mode), is a description of the cessation of suffering, corresponding to the third Noble Truth.

The General Principle⁷⁰

The interrelation and interdependence of all things: Buddhism teaches the Law of Dependent Origination. In brief, the law states: When there is this, this is; when this is not, neither is this. Because this arises, so does this; because this ceases, so does this. This is a truth, a natural law. It is the natural law of cause and effect at its most basic level.

⁷⁰ P.A. Payutto, **Buddhadhamma Expanded and revised**, tr., and edited by Bruce Evans, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.1996), pp.79-80.

The Principle in Effect

The Buddha expressed constituent factors linked together in a chain in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Two processes of *paṭiccasamuppāda*⁷¹ are described as follows:

***Samudaya*; The Origination Mode:**

What, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering?
 Dependent on ignorance arise volitional formations;
 Dependent on volitional formations arises consciousness;
 Dependent on consciousness arise name and form;
 Dependent on name and form arise six sensory bases;
 Dependent on six sensory bases arises contact;
 Dependent on contact arises feeling;
 Dependent on feeling arises craving;
 Dependent on craving arises clinging;
 Dependent on clinging arises becoming;
 Dependent on becoming arises birth;
 Dependent on birth arises ageing and death;
 Dependent on ageing and death arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise, this, monks, is called the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering.⁷²

***Nirodha*; The Cessation Mode:**

‘And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of cessation of suffering?
 Through the complete cessation of ignorance cease volitional formations;
 Through the cessation of volitional formations ceases consciousness;
 Through the cessation of consciousness cease name and form;
 Through the cessation of name and form cease six sensory bases;
 Through the cessation of six sensory bases ceases contact;

⁷¹ SN. II. 1; Vism 517. The twelve links of the standard principle of dependent origination format are counted from ignorance to aging and death only, since sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are only by-products of aging and death. Ignorance turns the cycle once more because outflows (*āsava*) and defilement becoming the ‘fertilizer’ for the further arising of the *āsavas*.

⁷² P.A.Payutto, **Buddhadhamma Expanded and revised**, tr., and edited by Bruce Evans, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

Through the cessation of contact ceases feeling;
 Through the cessation of feeling ceases craving;
 Through the cessation of craving ceases clinging;
 Through the cessation of clinging ceases becoming;
 Through the cessation of becoming ceases birth;
 Through the cessation of birth ceases aging and death, sorrow,
 lamentation, pain, grief and despair;

Thus does this whole mass of suffering cease. This, monks, is called the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.⁷³

The Buddha used to address the noble disciples to clearly see dependent origination and the interrelatedness of things with right wisdom (*Sammāpaññā*). It is not possible to pursue questions, such as, ‘In the past, did we exist or not? In the past, what were we? In the past, what were we like? In the past, what was it that made us the way we are now?’ or pursuing question to the other extreme, such as, ‘In the future, will we exist or not? In the future, what will we be? In the future, will we exist or not? In the future, what will we be? In the future, what will be like? And once we have attained that, what will we be like?’ Even wondering about the present asking, ‘Do we exist or not? What are we? How are we? Where do we come from and where will we go?’ Why is it these are improbable questions? Because the noble disciples with proper wisdom have already clearly seen dependent origination and the interrelatedness of dependent origination as it is.

An uninstructed ordinary person does not comprehend as it really is that material shape, feeling, perception, the impulses, consciousness are of the nature to originate, to decay, both to originate and decay; nor does he comprehend as it really is the satisfaction and peril in them or the escape from them. The Buddha cautions against understanding the profundity of the principle of dependent origination in the following exchange with Venerable *Ānanda*: How amazing! Never before has it occurred to me, Lord. These principles of Dependent Origination, although so profound and hard to see, yet appear to me to be so simple! Say not so, *Ānanda*, say not so. This principle of Dependent Origination is a profound teaching, hard to see. It is through not knowing, not understanding and not thoroughly realizing this teaching, that beings are confused like a tangled thread, thrown together like bundles of

⁷³ P.A.Payutto, **Buddhadhamma**, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

threads, caught as in a net, and cannot escape hell, neither the worlds and the wheel of *Samsāra*.

2.3 The Concept of *Marāṇassati* and the rejection of the Self (*Attā*)

In Buddhism it is considered to be: mind or consciousness (*Citta*), mental activities (*Cetasika*), body (*Rupa*) and extinction (*Nibbana*). They are described as ‘arising’ and ‘ceasing.’ Mind or consciousness, mental activities, and the body are described within the teaching of the five *khandhas* (*Pañcakkhandha*),⁷⁴ as well as in the teachings of dependent origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). Mind or consciousness, mental activities and the body are noted as ‘arising’ and ‘ceasing’ is noted as *Nibbāna*. These four phenomena are described as ultimate realities, and are interdependent without the presence of a ‘self.’ These phenomena have the qualities of impermanence, the possibility of suffering and non-self. In Buddhism, the teachings of self, permanence, stability, immortality and eternity are considered to be incorrect teachings or perversion (*vipalāsa*).

All kind of permanent self which is called ātman or transcendental ego are rejected by the Buddhists:

“Whatever be the theories about the ātman held by the various thinkers during the time of the Buddha and thereafter, the Buddhist doctrine of anattā, as preserved in the Theravada tradition, contradict them all in all-embracing sweep.”⁷⁵

Buddhism rejected the self by the concept of non-self. It means that they are not self or have no selves. The concept of non-self (*anattā*) rejected self directly. The other doctrines believed that the mind or the consciousness is eternal self, but Buddhism rejected that mind or consciousness is self, because the mind or consciousness appears and disappears gradually all days and nights. One mind appears and disappears, after that a new mind will appear. The mind is not a permanent self. Consequently the concept of non-self is a rejection of the

⁷⁴ S. III. 47.

⁷⁵ De Silva, L.A., **The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity**, (Unknown Place: The Study Centre for Religion and Society Inc., 1967), p. 25.

self directly. Non-self is, however, not the opposite of self, for example, if the meaning of self is equal to the white colour, non-self will be equal to non-white colour and not equal to black colour. If self is equal to black colour, non-self will be equal to non-black colour, and not be equal to the white one. Therefore, the concept of non-self is not the opposite of self.

In conclusion, the four ultimate realities are mind, mental activities, body, and extinction. All are non-self and dependently originated and go along with the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. They are classified as right thought, and the opposite, believing that mind, mental activities, form and extinction are all selves, that is a perversion doctrine, which is classified as wrong thought. Why should we care to reject the idea of self? How can we benefit by rejecting the idea of self? Here too, we can benefit in two important ways.

First of all, in our everyday lives, at a mundane level, we can benefit in that we will become more creative, more comfortable, and more open people. So long as we cling to the selves, we will always have to defend ourselves, to defend our possessions, property, prestige, opinions, and even our words. On the contrary, once we give up this belief in an independent and permanent self, we will be able to relate to other people and the situations without paranoia. We will be able to relate freely, spontaneously and creatively. Understanding, not-self is, therefore an aid to living.

Even more importantly, understanding the not-self is a key to enlightenment. The belief in a self is synonymous with ignorance, and ignorance is the most basic of the three defilements. Once we identify, imagine, or conceive ourselves as an entity, we immediately create a schism, a separation between ourselves and the people and things around us. Once we have this conception of self, we respond to the persons and things around us either with desire or with aversion. In this sense, the self is the real villain of the peace. Seeing that the self is the source and the cause of all suffering, and seeing that the rejection of the self is the cause of the end of suffering, rather than trying to defend, protect and preserve the self, why should we not do our best to reject and eliminate this idea of the self? Why should we not recognize that personal experience is like a banana tree or like an onion, that when we take it apart piece by piece, that when we examine it critically and analytically, we find that it is empty of any essential, substantial core that it is devoid of the self?

Concluding Remarks

When we understand that all things are impermanent, are full of suffering, and are not-selves, and when our understanding of these truths is not merely intellectual or academic, but through study, consideration and meditation, the facts of impermanence, suffering and not-self become part of our immediate experience. Through the understanding of impermanence, suffering, and not-self, we will free ourselves from the fundamental errors that imprison us within the cycle of birth and death - the error of seeing things as permanent, the error of seeing things as pleasant, and the error of seeing things as self. When these delusions are removed, wisdom arises. Just as when darkness is removed, light arises. And when wisdom arises, one experiences the peace of *Nibbāna*.

Chapter III

The Analysis of the Roles and Benefits of Marañassati in Theravada Buddhism

3.1 The Problems of Death in Expectation of Human Beings

The world in which we live contains many dangers that severely affect our lives, and consequently magnify the suffering that result from natural disasters and many diseases. However, if we are still frequently reborn in this world, we will imminently encounter these natural disasters and diseases unavoidably.

The natural disasters that will be addressed hereafter will commence when the life expectancy of human is less than one hundred years. This will cause the deaths of a significant number of human beings. When there are approximately twenty billion people in the world, many natural disasters will occur. Many people will drop dead from these unavoidable and inescapable natural disasters.⁷⁶

As above mentioned, it is showed that our lives are faced with many problems which cause us death inescapably. In accordance with natural disasters, there are eight major classifications, namely:⁷⁷

1. Tumultuous winds both on land and water.
2. Heavy floods.
3. Landslides and earthquakes.
4. Droughts and forest fires.

Other natural perils will ensue:

5. Toxic pollution affecting the surrounding environment and animals.
6. Contamination and all kinds of diseases.

⁷⁶ Thoon Khippapanyo, **Natural Disasters**, tr., by Neecha Thian-Ngern), (Bangkok: Neecha Thian-Ngern Publishing, 2008), p. 29.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

7. Starvation.
8. Unrighteous people committing theft and burglary.

So, all these natural disasters will occur and cause many human beings suffering and death unavoidably. Every corner of the earth will be subject to natural perils. Each and every country will be devoid of assistance from any other because of the widespread impact of natural disasters. One more thing, the natural disasters will happen at any time and in any single season such as summer, rainy and winter. The perils will occur continuously, leaving behind a trail of loss in each incidence. This is especially true of tumultuous winds.⁷⁸ The suffering from destruction of natural disasters which occur inescapably, and they have arisen many times within the many millions of years in the past. The natural diseases will occur only when the expectancy of human life is on the decline, starting from 100 years. In Buddhism, it is said that they are impermanent, because they are not permanent; they are *dukkha* (suffering).⁷⁹

These natural disasters will occur continuously, for a prolonged period of time, throughout both day and night and create suffering to the people. Whereas, the natural disasters of wind, water and land will happen from suppression of changing atmospheric layer. The wind will group in small and large clusters and the remaining empty space will incite swirling winds. Many people have been abroad by airplanes that have bumped into whirling winds. These turbulent winds cause an airplane to dip as if falling down a level. Or sometimes, the aircraft will be shaken when it encounters irregular and shifting winds.⁸⁰

Furthermore, small airplanes will traverse these winds with danger, unable to be manipulated. The aircraft's balance will be disrupted and will either be swallowed up in the wind current or plummet to the ground, resulting in the deaths we see in the news these days. But large aircrafts will be able to navigate through small wind clusters. If the swirling wind is sizeable and its current is strong, even a big airplane will not be able to pass through. Taking off and landings will be dangerous as

⁷⁸ Thoon Khippapanyo, op. cit., p. 31.

⁷⁹ Ledi Sayadaw, **The Manuals of Buddhism** (The Expositions of the Buddha-Dhamma), (Yangon: Mother Ayeyarwaddy Publication House, 1981-2004), p. 440.

⁸⁰ Thoon Khippapanyo, op. cit., p. 36.

well. Every airport experiencing treacherous winds will prohibit aircrafts from taking off and landing. We will be at the mercy of the powerful wind currents until the intensity dies down.

Presently, satellites are useful and beneficial for us to communicate, because human beings have created the internet, telephones and many kinds of communication devices to facilitate work efficiency. These devices are reliant on satellites and will be rendered inoperable without a coherent signal. One should prepare oneself for the inevitable future of malfunctioning satellites. Humans will be unable to travel to the apparatus to repair it, because tumultuous winds will be in the process of churning violently. Aircrafts of all kinds will be unable to traverse the chaotic skies. Satellite will encounter difficulties sending data and signals. This will serve as the root of the problems as electronic devices, internet, telephone, and other contraptions reliant on satellite communication malfunction. Even though humans have created these devices to facilitate convenience, it will all come to an end in that era.

Meteorology agencies which are proficient in instituting systems that detect and warn of natural disasters will cease operation. No one will know when or how natural disasters will occur. It is difficult to stay in the earth.⁸¹

Once natural disasters occur, humans will be impacted instantly. Both tumultuous winds and heavy floods will have arisen successively with tremendous force for prolong periods. Humans will lives, eat and sleep with difficulty.⁸²

In the subsequent era, the earth's outer layers will deteriorate immensely, inciting even more natural disasters. As the decay cycle of the earth's outer layers is complete, the following will arise: protecting against or a method to end these natural disasters will be impossible to find. Every human born in the era of natural perils will be affected. In present time, there are many countries which have seen countless natural catastrophes and have suffered and died as a result. One more thing, the earth's inner layers will experience intense pressure. The deteriorating

⁸¹ There are two kinds of earth: (1) Natural Earth and (2) Prepared Earth. Solidity is the property of nature earth. This is called natural earth. What is made of earth dug out by man a man himself or by another is called prepared earth. Earth is of Four colours, namely, white, black, red and dawn.

⁸² Thoon Khippapanyo, op. cit., p. 38.

areas of the outer layers will be subject to this pressure. The earth's crust will be separated as air pressure the rocks within the inner layers of the earth to shatter and scatter far and wide. If this occurs as mentioned above, it is called an earthquake.

The magnitude of the quake is dependent upon the force of the air pressure. Thus, the humans have created the Richter scale to quantify the intensity of the quake. Communities in which strong earthquakes happen will experience a great deal of destruction of housings and buildings. The wreckage of buildings will accumulate. Humans will die, unable to help one another. Earthquakes with these characteristics will be coupled with simultaneous and increasingly frequent occurrences of both tumultuous winds and landslides and earthquakes. These earthquakes will register at least eight on the Richter scale.⁸³ Those of greater magnitudes of ten or twelve will happen in the future. Buildings, houses will be demolished and countless humans will die. As the result, it will be difficult to protect against or prevent the earthquakes.

These types of happenings can be attributed to the long existence of the earth's elements⁸⁴. Everything must change as a result of the specific catalysts and causes within itself. The elements of earth⁸⁵, water⁸⁶, wind⁸⁷, fire⁸⁸ and air both the sky and the inner layers must change accordingly. Another manner in which the natural disasters will happen simultaneously consists of tumultuous winds, heavy flood and landslides and earthquakes.⁸⁹ If the earth's inner layers deteriorate in the middle of the ocean, air pressure will force the weakened sections of the earth's crust to separate from one another. This is what a powerful

⁸³ Thoon Khippapanyo, op. cit., p. 40.

⁸⁴ Element is referred to the retention of own form.

⁸⁵ The Nature of hardness; nature of strength; nature of thickness; nature of immobility; nature of security; and nature of supporting are called essence of earth element.

⁸⁶ Nature of oozing, nature of humidity; nature of fluidity; nature of trickling; nature of permeation; nature of increasing; nature of leaping, and nature of cohesion are called the essence of water.

⁸⁷ Nature of supporting; nature of coldness; nature of ingress and egress; nature of easy movement; nature of reaching low; and nature of grasping are called the essence of wine.

⁸⁸ Nature of heating; nature of warmth; nature of evaporation; nature of maturing; nature of consuming and nature of grasping are called the essence of fire.

⁸⁹ Thoon Khippapanyo, op. cit., p. 41.

earthquake in the middle of the ocean is. As the air pressure collides in the hard and rocky layers, there will be an expansive explosion. There will be numerous deaths in many countries as a result.

Once the rocky layers separate from one another, there will be huge gaps in many locations. The ocean's water will rush off into the chasm beneath the earth's inner layers in the absorbent amounts, causing the water level to decrease noticeably. When the water fills, the expensive chasm, tumultuous winds in the earth's inner layers will press the ocean water in reaction. Air pressure will force the water to flood in various locations. Homes and structures will be destroyed. People and animals will die in large numbers. These characteristics of tumultuous winds, heavy floods, landslides, and earthquakes in the earth's inner layers, If tumultuous winds affect human inhabited areas, the intensity of natural disasters will multiply considerably. Add incessant, heavy rainfall to the heavy floods and add all that rainfall and winds above ground to the tumultuous winds of the earth's inner layers.

The ocean water is turbulent as it is. Once the winds and rains add insult to injury, how will people live? Devices used to warn of catastrophes will not be able to communicate with satellites. Who will tell people where to go or whether the storm will arise? There will be a fear of death for human beings. The people will see their families, relatives and friends drop dead in front of their eyes. There will be rampant chaos and safety will not exist within any hiding place. Different problems will arise subsequently such as drought and forest fires, toxic pollution and starvation. Starvation and hunger, various diseases stemming from toxic pollution will be incurable by doctors or medicine. You will have nothing left but only bare bone. Just reflect on what it would like to be one immersed in this situation. Moreover, the other natural disasters will also occur such fire, pollution, diseases, hunger and crime. So, human beings will face these natural disasters.

The natural disaster of fire is referred to as the intense warming of the earth from a lack of seasonal rainfall. In the past natural disasters have arisen, as previously described. These include perils of winds, land, diseases, hunger, crime and pollution. These natural disasters arise in succession and bring with them only misery, trouble and suffering for human beings. If the disaster of fire occurs in addition to the aforementioned disasters, the quality of life will worsen for everyone further. People will live in poverty, struggling as severe drought dies up

any hope of cultivating crops. The transformation of the land and the skies will take place all over the world. In some areas there will be no rainfall. The heat from the sun's rays will scorch the fields. Famine and death from prolonged starvation will occur sadistically as the result of widespread drought and barren fields. The disasters of burglary will arise as a consequence of people's resorting to thievery to sustain any chance of human survival. Animals will also die from the lack of food available and starvation.

The disaster of fire that will happen in the distant future will be unavoidable for people who are born in that era and a staggering number of human beings will die as a result of the fire disaster. The heat from the sun will increase in multitude. Survival will be progressively more difficult in light of this. From here on out, this intense heat will multiply exponentially. The searing combination of heat from the sun and from within the earth itself will span the globe, causing the death of both human beings and animals. It will be impossibly difficult to find a secure place to hide from these perils. If we find ourselves in this kind of situation, we will be impacted by suffering just like everyone else. When the disaster of fire occurs, there will be the shortage of food, water and other necessities subsequently followed by starvation will occur and continue and all kinds of diseases will follow. In the current time, the cause of many diseases is unknown and their cures have not yet been discovered. Epidemics such as AIDS/HIV, bird flu and SARS have arisen and impacted both humans and animals. In the advent of severe contamination and all kinds of diseases, finding doctors and medication will be a challenge.

Once the complications of shortage of food and diseases are experienced, theft for the purpose of acquiring food will occur. Humans will terrorize one another. People will be anxious and fearful for their lives and belongings. The lives of mankind will be ridden with extraordinary suffering. Each family will suffer from losing their beloved ones and will be displaced from mothers, fathers and grandchildren. It will seem as though we were stuck in darkness. We will not know any news about our beloved ones who have fled death in separate directions. Travel will not be convenient as it is in present times. There will not be electricity available for night usage. Finding firewood to ameliorate freezing conditions will pose a formidable task. Likewise, there will be a shortage of clothing, food, and shelter.

These things will happen in the future with absolute certainty. If these natural disasters do not hit home, we tend to feel nothing. Despite the natural disasters currently arising in our era, we are not distressed. Because these perils are not considered to bear a personal impact nor require any personal involvement, there is no apparent grief or suffering. Instead, there is an underlying and understanding that these disasters are problems causing people's deaths.

Once again, in this modern era, drought and forest fires have already begun to produce an impact and its effect will worsen considerably and human beings will live with great adversities and sufferings. The heat will be difficult to protect against, because it is a peril that is organic in nature. Although humans are partially responsible for global warming, the truth is that it will happen because of the deterioration of the earth's outer layers. The disaster of fire will cause increasingly frequent volcanic eruptions and then the natural disaster of wind will press volcanoes to erupt violently. Volcanic ash (lava ash) will scatter and disperse up into the air and shower back down on the earth. Human beings will consequently feel the immense impact of the widespread pollution. Thereafter, various kinds of diseases will occur. People will be seriously afflicted with diseases and living in hardship with more suffering in tow. Homes will be blanketed in volcanic ash.

In addition, the disaster of fire will affect the storage of weapons of mass destruction that humans have created. These include lethal nuclear weapons. Many countries have these weapons of mass destruction and will explode the ones affected by the intensifying heat. Chemical poisons will scatter up into the air and the wind will spread the toxins throughout the world. Numerous humans will fatally be affected by the poisons. The people who created these weapons did not know the adverse effects that would go after. Humans will have difficulty to find the cure and there will be no way to protect against it. The peril of pollution (toxic pollution) will subsequently arise by way of water, and the clean or usable water will be contaminated by poisons, chemicals, as well as dirty and rotting articles. These spoiled items deriving from the chemical contamination coming from factories of weapons of mass destruction, which they themselves experienced complications from prolonged flooding.

The pollution by way of air involves the contaminated poison from the smoke and dust in the air. Once people inhale it and then they

will become afflicted with disease and death. Additionally, diseases from trash and sewage which are things that humans themselves have produced, will be swept out by water to further rot, spoil and become infectious pathogens. These types of diseases will have an enormous effect on the surroundings that human beings are dependent on. The effect on the human body will be aches, fever and a multitude of severe diseases. Human beings have created scientific and chemical inventions to be used advantageously, but what they did not foresee was how these very concoctions would generate detrimental repercussions. Even land and water also have been affected as already evident in the present day. On the other hand, the natural disaster of pollution has an effect on the human body, and it also affects the human psyche, producing a sense of irritation stemming from the effects of toxic pollution.

Thus, these mentioned above are the causes and problems of death of human beings in this current era. These natural disasters are tumultuous winds both on land and water; heavy floods; landslides and earthquakes; drought and forest fires; toxic pollution affecting the surrounding environment and animals; contamination and all kinds of diseases; starvation and unrighteous people committing theft and burglary will occur any time. When these natural disasters happen, it is unable to prevent them. As its result, human beings will face suffering and death unavoidably. Therefore, we have to train ourselves to develop mindfulness of death.

With the proper training and preparation, a peaceful and positive death is possible for each and every one of us. It is important to examine the thoughts, feelings and attitudes we have regarding death and dying, to see whether or not they are realistic and healthy. How do you feel when you read or hear the news of natural disasters where many people were killed suddenly and unexpectedly? How do you feel when you hear that one of your own family members or friends has died or been diagnosed with cancer? How do you feel when you see a hearse, or drive past a cemetery? What do you think it will be like to die? And do you believe in anything beyond this life, on the other side of death? There are two unhealthy attitudes of people sometimes towards death. One is to be frightened, thinking that it will be a horrible, painful experience, or that it means total annihilation. This fear leads to denial and wanting to avoid thinking or talking about death. Is this a good idea, considering the fact that we will have to go through it one day? Wouldn't it be better to accept

the reality of death and then learn how to overcome our fears and be prepared for it when it happens?

The other unhealthy attitude is carelessness, flippant one where one might say, “I don’t have any fear of death. I know I’ll have to die one day but it will be ok, I can handle it.” I had this attitude when I was younger, but one day I sat through an earthquake and for a few moments truly thought I was going to die, and then I discovered that I had been wrong; in fact, I was terrified of death and totally unprepared for it. If you notice that you have either of these two attitudes, it might be a good idea to do more research into what death is all about. More knowledge about death and dying will help decrease the fear of death (because we tend to be afraid of what we don’t know about or understand), and will help those who have a flippant attitude to take death more seriously and realize the importance of preparing ourselves for it. This booklet is just a brief introduction to the subject of death and dying, and the recommended reading list at the end will let you know where you can find more information. First of all, let’s look at how death is viewed in the Buddhist tradition.

3.1.1 The Denial of Death

Death and the fear of death were prominent among the problems considered by many ancient religions. Buddhism and Epicureanism, in particular, proposed rational solutions to the fear of death, solutions which required counter-intuitive emotional assessments of the human condition and the nature of death. One more thing, death is the interruption of the life faculty included within a single becoming.⁹⁰ Buddhist and Epicurean solutions to the fear of death attempted to accommodate the emotions to the reasonable certainty of death. These solutions depended upon the assumption that death was inevitable.

In recent times, a kind of immortalism has arisen which challenges the assumption of death’s inevitability. Expectations about future advances in science and technology have raised the prospect of combating death itself by rational methods. This contemporary immortalism does not assume the inevitability of death and sees the fear of death as both a logical warning and a problem to be solved.

⁹⁰ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 247.

Questioning the inevitability of death disturbs the ancient rational solutions to the fear of death found in Buddhism.

It is accepted as a general truth that everybody fears death.⁹¹ We fear death because we crave for life with all our might. It is also a fact that we fear the unknown. We know least about death; therefore we fear death for a duality of reasons. It seems reasonable to conjecture that the fear of death, or the fear of harm to life, lurks at the root of all fear. Therefore each time we become frightened we either run away from the source of fear or fight against it, thus making every effort to preserve life. But we can do so only so long as our body is capable of either fighting or running away from danger. On the contrary, when at last we are on the deathbed face to face with approaching death, and the body is no longer strong enough for any protest, it is very unlikely that we will accept death with a mental attitude of resignation.

We will mentally try hard to survive. As our yearning for life (*tanhā*⁹²) is so strong, we will mentally grasp (*upādāna*⁹³) another viable place, as our body can no longer support life. Once such a place, for example the fertilized ovum in a mother's womb, has been grasped, the psychological process of life (*bhāva*⁹⁴) will continue with the newly found place as its basis.

⁹¹ Dh. 129: (*sabbe bhayanti maccuno*). Narada Thera, tr., The Dhammapada, op. cit., p.123.

⁹² **Tanhā** is the chief root of suffering and of the even continuing cycle of rebirths because it is that craving which gives rise to ever fresh rebirth and bound up pleasure and lust, now there, finds ever fresh delight. (Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p.117).

⁹³ **Upādāna** is literally means 'clinging' and it is an intensified degree of craving. There are Four kinds of Clinging:-(Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., pp. 184-185)

1. Sensuous Clinging (*Kāmūpādāna*)
2. Clinging to Views (*Diṭṭhūpādāna*)
3. Clinging to mere Rules and Ritual (*Silabhatūpādāna*)
4. Clinging to the Personality-Belief (*Attavādūpādāna*)

⁹⁴ **Bhāva** means 'feminine or masculine', Nature, refers to the sensual characteristics of the body, and belongs to the Group of Corporeality. It is a commentarial term for the Faculties of Femininity and Masculinity. (Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p.31).

Birth (*jāti*⁹⁵) will take place in due course. This seems to be the process that is explained in the chain of causation as: craving conditions grasping, grasping conditions becoming or the process of growth, which in turn conditions birth. Thus the average man who fears death will necessarily take another birth as his ardent desire is to survive. And when the inevitable death comes to them, imagine how they, someone who never wanted to think about death, would deal with it. It would be very pathetic, very pitiful indeed. Their final moments could be best summarized as “Fearful, restless and not knowing what to do, what would happen next, where they would be going next.”

On the other hand, the people who always reflect on death would be fully equipped to handle the final moment calmly and with a clear mind. They would not be shaken by fear of separation. Moreover, they are most likely guaranteed to go to a good place in their next reincarnation, because the Buddha himself has affirmed that, in our final moment, “If one’s mind is clear and calm, one can be assured of going to a good place.”⁹⁶

3.1.2 The Problem of Suicide

Before I describe the problem of suicide, firstly I would like to give brief meanings of suicide. Suicide means the act of taking one’s own life voluntarily, and intentionally; self murder or self killing. The word derived from two Greek words: *Eu* meaning good, and *thanathos* meaning death. Put together, it means good death. Or he act of causing one’s own death. Moreover, most of the people who commit suicide are depressed. The highest incidence occurs in those whose depression is accompanied by a persistent sense of hopelessness and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities. In addition, people are older, have serious disease, single, divorced or widowed, and especially those who are addicted to alcohol or

⁹⁵ *Jāti* means ‘Birth’ comprises the entire embryonic process beginning with concept and ending with parturition. The birth of beings belonging to this or that order to beings, their being born, their concept (*okkhanti*) and springing into existence, the manifestation of groups (corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness), acquiring of their sensitive organs: this called *Jāti* (birth). (Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p. 69).

⁹⁶ Ajahn Lee Dhammaddharo, “**Starting Out Small: A Collection of Talks for Beginning Meditators**”, Thanissaro, Bhikkhu tr. Retrieved on April 20, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/lee/startsmall.html>.

drugs, are at higher risk. Those who are homeless also have more serious suicide risk than others. Some experts feel that the increasing number of suicides are due to the complexity and stress of modern life.

It is also known that television dramas and news stories about suicide produces a temporary increase in the number of youngsters who take their lives. Unemployment and pressure to achieve are also factors. A fatal suicidal act tends to cause grief reactions and guilty feelings on the part of those who may feel that they could have prevented it by caring and loving more than they did. Unsatisfied craving or failure to gain what people wanted become causes of committing suicide, because suicide is a way to solve various types of personal problems, for example, these personal problems are loneliness, hate, desire for revenge, fear, physical pain, feelings of guilt, older age, and serious disease, etc.

In accordance with Buddhism, suicide is coming from *Dukkha* and its origin. The word '*Dukkha*' means pain, painful felling, which maybe bodily and mental.⁹⁷ In the Four Noble Truths is also mentioned as suffering.⁹⁸ The concept of '*Dukkha*' can be viewed from three aspects:⁹⁹ (1) *Dukkha-dukkha* (*Dukkha* as ordinary suffering), (2) *Vipariṇama-dukkha* (*Dukkha* as produced by change), and (3) *Saṅkhāra-dukkha* (*Dukkha* as the conditioned state). This suffering has birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, grief, despair, associated with unpleasant persons and conditions, separation from loved ones, the not getting of what is wished for is suffering.¹⁰⁰ And this suffering is included in *Dukkha* as ordinary suffering.¹⁰¹ According to this viewpoint as mentioned above, it can be said that suicide is associated with ordinary suffering.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary (Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines)**, (Taipei: Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 54.

⁹⁸ Paṭhamkyaw Ashin Thittila, tr., **The Book of Analysis (Vibhaṅga)**, (London: PTS, 1969), p. 139.

⁹⁹ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University, 2007), p. 1681.

¹⁰⁰ Upatissa, **The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā)**, (Penang: The Penang Buddhist Association, 2005), p. 269.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, *ibid.*

Once again, the origin of suicide is a form of suffering according to the Four Noble Truths¹⁰³ and must derive from craving or desire (*Taṇhā*).¹⁰⁴ Craving is divided into three types, namely, (1) craving for sensual pleasure (*Kāma-taṇhā*), (2) craving for existence (*Bhava-taṇhā*), and (3) craving for non-existence (*Vibhava-taṇhā*).¹⁰⁵ The craving for sensual pleasure arises from desire for attractive and for things visible¹⁰⁶ regarding forms, sounds, odors, tastes and touch. Human beings are often compelled to search for and preserve these types of craving, such as a luxurious and comfortable house, new model cars and new fashion clothes and the like. However, sometimes we feel very disappointed and desperate when we cannot get what we wish for. Craving for existence refers to desire to have and to be; for instant, in this very life, all of us would like to be endowed with good luck, dignity, praise, and happiness.

The craving for non-existence, which is contrary to the second type, indicates the negative aspects that are expressed by the desire not to have and not to be. Nobody wants to encounter bad luck, disgrace, blame, and suffering in his or her daily life.¹⁰⁷ The third type of craving may be accompanied by wrong view which holds that nothing remains after death; there is complete annihilation of life. In other words, some people believe that suicide is the final solution or the end of suffering. Thus, a suicidal or homicidal impulse can be considered as a type of craving for non-existence. Of these three kinds of cravings, there is only the third one (craving for non-existence) which is closely related to a suicidal impulse. In fact, suicide can be the outcome of any types of craving.

¹⁰³ **The Four Noble Truths are:-**

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.
4. The Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.
(Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p. 151).

¹⁰⁴ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁵ Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary** (Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines), (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 177.

¹⁰⁶ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification**, *Op. cit.*, p. 655.

¹⁰⁷ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *op. cit.*, p. 1682.

3.1.2.1 The Buddhist Attitude Toward Suicide

Suicide is unwholesomeness of unskillful action, it does not end suffering. Suicide is wrong in Buddhist morality. Therefore, Buddhists do not support suicide, and, instead, they encourage the useful using of this life to diligently practice goodness, thus changing the present and future for the better. We all suffer. Many of us experience tremendous suffering, and for some of us, the suffering of our occurrence seems impossible. When suffering seems impossible, the thought of suicide commonly arises, and some of us will try to take our own lives. Suicide is the most important cause of death in the West, and while death is never agreeable, suicide seems to be a particularly terrible way to die. In view of the fact that we all have to die in the end, anyone who thinks of death as an end to suffering has misunderstood the First Noble Truth which clearly states that death itself is one of the most basic aspects of suffering and that in this way it is the problem, not the solution. So, suicide is a harmful matter in the human society. Therefore, Buddhists have clearly said that suicide is unacceptable.

In accordance with the code of monastic discipline (Vinaya), a monk should not attempt suicide or encourage another person to commit suicide. In fact, suicide or suicidal behavior is motivated by cravings, particularly craving for non-existence or destruction.¹⁰⁸ According to the five precepts or morality¹⁰⁹ (*Pañcasila*), suicide is against the first of five precepts, which is abstinence from killing.¹¹⁰ Life is dear to all, and all tremble at punishment, all fear death and value life.¹¹¹ And the other four of five precepts are abstinence from stealing, committing sensual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicated drink or drugs. Another thing is

¹⁰⁸ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, op. cit., p. 1683.

¹⁰⁹ **Morality** (*Pañcasila*), in Buddhism is essentially practical in that it is only a mean leading to the final goal of ultimate happiness. On the Buddhist path to Emancipation, each individual is considered responsible for his or her own fortune and misfortune. Each individual is expected to work his or her own deliverance by understanding and effort. Buddhist salvation is the result of one's own moral development and can neither be imposed nor granted to one by some external agent. In short, All Buddhist Morality can be summarized in three simple aspects: 1) to avoid evil; 2) to do good, and 3) to purify the mind. This is the advice given by all Buddha.

¹¹⁰ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What Buddhist Believe**, (Taipei: Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 82.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

that all fear punishment, to all life is dear. Comparing others with one's self, let one neither hurt nor kill.¹¹² We should abstain from taking a life which we ourselves cannot give and we should not harm other sentient beings and ourselves.¹¹³

The first precept is to abstain from killing other beings. This precept also includes the act of murdering and suicide.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, suicide destroys something of great value in the case of a virtuous human life and prevents such a person from acting in the service of others. Based on the Buddhist doctrine, human beings cannot escape from suffering because everything has the qualities of impermanence, suffering and non-self. The teaching of the three characteristics expands the scope of investigation to cover both the individual person and external objects.

All things exist momentarily, at a specific time and place, then cease immediately. An object in the past does not exist in the present; and an object present now does not exist in the future.¹¹⁵

Moreover, when one was born, one always faces with many problems that are unavoidable, because everything is the object of *Dukkha* (suffering) and *Sukha* (happiness). In other words, *Dukkha*, which is the basic condition, prevents happiness from being sustained.¹¹⁶ A foundation for suffering produces various kinds of affliction, e.g., pain, discomfort, and distress. The happiness exists only as feeling. The basic condition is that of suffering – pressure, tension and friction which is a feature of all formations. This pressure causes feelings of oppression and stress which we call pain. The reduction of pressure, free from pain, we call happiness. In the same way, some people who are in great discomfort, or pain such as duress, deprivation, yearning, diseases, separated from beloved ones, etc., try to solve these problems by committing suicide by thinking that it is the best way for them to end all these sufferings.

¹¹² Egerton C. Baptist, *Nibbāna or the Kingdom*, (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd, 2002), p. 200.

¹¹³ K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhist Believe*, op. cit., p. 82.

¹¹⁴ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, *Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)*, *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ P.A. Payutto, *The Three Signs: Anicca, Dukkha & Anatta*, tr., by Suriyo Bhikkhu, (Bangkok: Chanrapen Publication, 2007), p. 12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.15.

However, suicide is unwholesome and an unskillful action. This does not end suffering, it is wrong in accordance with Buddhist morality. In addition, human beings cannot avoid suffering by taking their own lives, nor do they escape from the ‘wheel of suffering’ by doing so.¹¹⁷ Suicide is the outcome of the desire to annihilate oneself and the fruit of that act is a rebirth in the woeful planes¹¹⁸ of existence and hence they further suffer endlessly.¹¹⁹ Thus, suicide should be avoided, because it is not the way to solve problems, but it is the way to bring us more suffering after death.

3.1.2.2 Faith and Belief in Life after Death

Life is not just limited to one single lifetime; however, it is the subject of the cycle of death and rebirth based on dependent origination. For a human being, life in the present time is always imperfect, because the mind is full of craving in a world of delusion in which things are pleasant and unpleasant. Sensation arises and flows according to impulses. So human beings are anxious and struggle to fulfill their desires which are impossible for anyone to do. The more they search, the more anxious they become. Suffering follows all the way. There is no balance and fulfillment, because people's minds are dominated by ignorance. Therefore, imperfection will always be present.

If we say the word ‘death’ according to Buddhism, mostly we refer to four kinds of death. Owing to the various tendencies, desire and attachment there arises a reproductive kamma¹²⁰ at the time of death resulting in (another) birth. This reproductive kamma that has caused birth may end in four days, and then, it is said, death has occurred.¹²¹ The four ways in which ‘death can occur are as follows:

1. Death which is due to the expiration of reproductive *Kamma* force that gives rise to birth, is exhausted, death occurs.

¹¹⁷ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Four woeful states - namely hell, the animal kingdom, the Peta Realm, and the Asura Realm.

¹¹⁹ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, *op. cit.*, p.1683.

¹²⁰ Reproductive Kamma means kamma which produces results.

¹²¹ Egerton C. Baptish, **Nibbāna or the Kingdom**, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

As a rule, the thought volition, or desire, which is extremely strong during a life-time, becomes predominant at the time of death and conditions the subsequent birth. In this last thought moment is present a special potentiality. When the potential energy of this Reproductive *Kamma* is exhausted, the organic activities of the material form in which is corporeally the life-force cease even before the approach of old age.¹²²

2. The expiration of the life-term or death is due to the expiration of the age-limit.¹²³ This is commonly understood to be nature of deaths due to old age.

There are also various planes of existence, and to each plane is a natural assigned definite, age-limit. Irrespective of the *Kamma* force that has yet to run, one must, however, succumb to death when maximum age-limit is reached. However, if the force is extremely powerful, *Kamma*-energy rematerializes itself in the same plane or in some higher realm as in the case of *Devas*.¹²⁴

3. The simultaneous exhaustion of the Reproductive *Kamma*-energy and the expiration of the life-span (a combination of the above two).¹²⁵
4. Death due to the intervention of destructive *kamma*¹²⁶. It is sudden death such as the death due to car-accident or suicide. Or untimely death.¹²⁷

The first three types of death are collectively called ‘timely death’; the last one is known as ‘untimely death’.¹²⁸ Among the latter are usually those deaths resulting from what are called accidents; in point of

¹²² Ibid, p. 201.

¹²³ Mehn Tin Mon, **Abhidhamma (Higher Level. Volume I)**, (Yangon: Kaba Aye Printing Press, 2005), p. 176.

¹²⁴ Egerton C. Baptish, op. cit., p. 201.

¹²⁵ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, op. cit., p.1684.

¹²⁶ Destructive *Kamma* is one the *Kammas* that destroys the result of other *Kamma*.

¹²⁷ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, tr., **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p. 247.

¹²⁸ Egerton C. Baptish, **Nibbāna or the Kingdom**, op. cit., p. 202.

face, however, they are not ‘accidents’ to the Buddhist, but the result of some past strong *kamma* which at the opportune moment, has taken its toll. Moreover, the fourfold advent or arrival of death may be compared to the four ways of extinguishing a lighted oil-lamp.¹²⁹

The flame of an oil-lamp may go out when:

1. The wick burns out,
2. The oil burns out,
3. Both the wick and the oil burn out, or
4. The wind blows suddenly or the light is put out purposely even though the wick and the oil still remain.

Once again, untimely death (*Akāla Maraṇa*) is associated with a powerful evil *Kammic* effect. Among the four classes of death, untimely death (*Akāla Maraṇa*) is common nowadays because most people live without *Sati*¹³⁰ and clear comprehension (*Sampajañña*¹³¹). In other words, their lives are closely associated with heedlessness. Suicide is also considered as a kind of untimely death. According to the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, when a person is approaching death, he or she needs good quality of mind.¹³² If a wholesome thought process, in the form of unconscious impulses, prevails to the moment of death that person will be reborn in the blissful planes of existence, which include the human world, realm of the gods and realm of divine beings of the Form or Formless Spheres.

On the contrary, if a person has unwholesome impulses at the moment of death, he or she will be reborn in the woeful planes of existence which consist of hell (*Niraya*), hungry ghosts (*Peta*), demons (*Asurakāya*) and the animal kingdom (*Tiracchāna*). Hence, suicide is not

¹²⁹ Mehn Tin Mon, **Abhidhamma (Higher Level. Volume I)**, ibid., p.176.

¹³⁰ *Sati* means ‘mindfulness’ is one of the five spiritual faculties and powers; one of the seven factors of enlightenment; and the seven links of the eightfold Noble Path; and is, in its widest sense, one of those mental factors inseparably associated with all Kammically wholesome (*kusala*) and Kamma produced lofty consciousness. (Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p.165).

¹³¹ *Sampajañña* literally means ‘clarity of conscious or clear comprehension. This term is frequently met with in combination with mindfulness (*sati*). It is said that clarity of conscious is he in going and coming. Clearly conscious in looking forward and backward, clearly conscious in bending and stretching his body such as in walking, standing, falling asleep and awakening; clearly conscious in speaking and keeping silent. (Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., pp.159-160).

¹³² Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, op. cit., p. 1683-1684.

the way to end suffering. Since suicide is a form of craving and craving is the cause of suffering, any person who commits suicide cannot escape from suffering and they have to be reborn in the woeful planes of existence. Furthermore, pertaining to Buddhist psychological view point, any person who tries to commit suicide is usually motivated by anger or aggressive impulse. This concept is strikingly supported by the psychodynamics of suicide in psychiatry.¹³³ For instance, in his paper 'Mourning and Melancholia', Sigmund Freud postulated that suicide results from displaced murderous impulse against the self.¹³⁴

In other words, suicide represents aggression turned inward against and interjected ambivalently cathected love object.¹³⁵ In accordance with Karl Meninger, in 'Man against himself' believe at least three wishes might contribute act: 1) the wish to kill, 2) the wish to be killed, and 3) the wish to die.¹³⁶ He conceived of suicide as inverted homicide because of patient's anger toward another person. This retroflected murder is either turned or used as an excuse of punishment. In accordance with Buddhist doctrine, any person who wishes to commit suicide owing to anger or aggressive impulses is bound to be born in the realm of hell or other woeful planes after death. Some suicidal persons may have fantasies which often include escape or sleep, rescue, rebirth, reunion with the death or even new happier life. Such fantasies or belief cannot become true because they are contrary to Buddhism. On the other hand, suicide is not an end of all suffering; however, it brings you to be reborn in woeful states. Thus, we have to believe in life after death. If we don't harm others and ourselves, we will not be reborn in woeful states; and we will be reborn in blissful states after death.

¹³³ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Freud S. Mourning and Melancholia: Strachery J, editor, **The Standard editor of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), Vol.14, pp. 237-260.

¹³⁶ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid.*

3.1.2.3 Buddhists' Doctrine Can Prevent One from Committing Suicide

Owing to my research work on how to prevent the people from committing suicide, that is to provide them with the right knowledge, clearly comprehension of disadvantages of committing suicide, training them to believe in life after death, taking the precepts, and to practise Eightfold Noble Path because Eightfold Noble Path contains three training, namely, 1) Morality (*Sīla*), 2) Meditation (*Bhāvanā*), and 3) Wisdom (*Paññā*).¹³⁷ In accordance with Thai Buddhist history, Buddhism has become integrated with the Thai way of life that the two are hardly separable. Buddhist influence can be detected in Thai character, traditions, arts, literature, architecture, language, and all other aspects of Thai culture. In Thai societies, monks play important roles in the field of mental health. Most Thai people then consult monks when they have personal or psychological problems including some persons with suicidal thoughts or impulses.¹³⁸

Many monks have ability to give good advice and counseling to these persons in dealing with their stress, anxiety, and emotional problems. The monks usually use the Buddhist doctrine and their own experience to console and teach those who are afflicted with different kinds of mental problems.¹³⁹ Therefore, in order to help suicidal persons effectively, they must have the general knowledge and understanding about suicidal persons, particularly with regard to risk factors, etiology, and suicide prevention.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, they must have good knowledge about the processes of death and life after death according to Buddhist psychology. They must realize the fact that any kinds of suicidal acts, is not the right way to escape or end mental suffering.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Nyanatiloka, BD, op. cit., p.92.

¹³⁸ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, op. cit., p. 1684.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bostwick JM, **Suicidality**, In: Wise MG, Rundell JR, eds. **Textbook of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry**. 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publication, 2002), pp. 127-148.

¹⁴¹ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, ibid.

Furthermore, at this modern society, most of young persons are associated with alcohol and drug abuse. They are at the strongest risk factor for suicide, the prevention and early treatment of psychiatric disorders would undoubtedly have a significant effect on the number of suicide.¹⁴² On the other hand, the educational programs should be opened to teach the monks how to recognize or detect mental disorder as early as possible and promptly refer patients to mental health professionals for effective treatment. This approach is an important strategy in the prevention of suicide.

Several Buddhist universities, institutes, organizations and monastic schools should open the educational program or mental curriculum, so that monks may learn about mental disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and risk factors associated with suicide as well as early intervention focusing on primary and secondary prevention. After finishing the educational program, a lot of monks returned to their hometowns or villages and established the programs in the temple of villages to promote mental health and to reduce the rate of suicide in their communities. One more thing, the doctrine of the Noble Eightfold Path should be given in a *Dhamma* talk to the people. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of three groups such as Morality group, Concentration group and Wisdom group.¹⁴³ Morality group comprises Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood; Concentration group comprises Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration; and Wisdom group contains Right Understanding and Right Thinking.¹⁴⁴

The most important point is to prevent suicide especially with regard to right livelihood, because right livelihood is a factor under moral conduct which refers to how we earn our living in society.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, livelihood is an extension of the two other factors of right speech and right action which refer to the respect for truth, life, property and personal relationships.¹⁴⁶ Right livelihood means that we should earn a living

¹⁴² World Health Organization, **Primary Prevention of Mental, Neurological, and Psychosocial Disorder**, (Geneva: WHO, 1998), pp. 1-90.

¹⁴³ Mahā Thera Ledi Sayadaw, **The Manuals of Buddhism (The Expositions of the Buddha-Dhamma)**, (Yangon: Mother Ayeyarwaddy Publishing House, 2004), pp. 430-431.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

without violating these principles of moral conduct. On the other hand, Buddhists are discouraged from being engaged in the five kinds of wrong livelihood. They include dealing in weapons, human beings, meat, liquor, and poison. Buddhists are advised to abstain from wrong livelihood that brings harm to others beings, such as trading the arms, the intoxicating drinks, and poisons.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the practice of the Eightfold Noble Path can prevent one from suicide as it has a great deal of impact for morality, concentration and wisdom on the control of committing suicide.

Another important factor for the prevention of committing suicide is the development of meditation or mental development. In Buddhism, there are two kinds of meditation, namely, tranquility meditation (*Samatha bhāvanā*) and insight meditation (*Vipassanā bhāvanā*).¹⁴⁸ The purpose of tranquility meditation is the development of calmness, tranquility, peace and stability of the mind. This form of meditation is conducive to non-distraction and one-pointedness of the mental state. Loving-kindness meditation is a form of tranquility meditation that is commonly practised to control anger or aggressive defilements¹⁴⁹ which is closely associated with suicide. Contemporary suicidologists believe that suicidal persons usually have fantasies associated with wishes for revenge, anger, aggression, power, control, or punishment.¹⁵⁰

Suicidal persons tend to act out suicidal fantasies because of a loss of love objects or a narcissistic injury they may experience overwhelming affects like rage and guilt or identify with a suicide victim. These persons can be advised to practise the extension of loving-kindness meditation to themselves and others in order to counteract the destructive effect of aggressive impulse. Another form of meditation is the development of insight meditation which is essentially a Buddhist contribution to the spiritual wealth of the world. This is a method of analysis in which the

¹⁴⁷ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Basic Level)**, (Yangon: Religious Publication Permission, 2004), p. 61.

¹⁴⁹ There are ten kinds of defilements, namely, greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, views, uncertainty, rigidity, agitation, immodesty, indecorum. Here, views and uncertainty are destroyed through the path of stream-entrance. Hatred is destroyed through the path of non-return. The other seven defilements are eliminated through the path of Saintship. (Nyanatiloka, BD, *op. cit.*, pp.86-87).

¹⁵⁰ Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *op. cit.*, p. 1685.

emphasis is placed on the development of mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*Paññā*) of ultimate reality. The term “ultimate reality” refers to the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.¹⁵¹

All things in this world are characterized by the three characteristics. There is nothing that should be attached to as ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘self’. This kind of wisdom and insight can lead someone to understanding the craving that is the primary cause of suicide which will be significantly reduced. Insight meditation helps to purify the mind from defilements, such as greed, anger, and delusion, and it can free the mind from suicidal thoughts and impulses. In general, meditation helps to create will power and increase self-confidence and self-esteem. Meditation not only promotes mental health but it is also an effective way to prevent various disorders and suicide.

The World Health Organization has developed the steps to prevent suicide in many areas, such as identification and treatment of people suffering from mental disorder, restricted access to the instruments of suicide, control of alcohol, drugs and toxic substances, and responsible media reporting¹⁵², which is in accordance with the Buddhist approach to suicide prevention by trying to integrate the relevant doctrines of the Buddha with those topics as mentioned above.

Summary Conclusion

Taking one’s own life under any circumstances is morally and spiritually wrong. Taking one’s own life owing to frustration or disappointment only causes great suffering. Suicide is a cowardly way to end one’s problems in life. A person cannot commit suicide if his mind is pure and tranquil. If one leaves this world with a perplexed and frustrated mind, it is most unlikely that he would be born again in a better condition. One more thing, suicide is an unwholesome or unskillful act since it is encouraged by a mind filled with greed, hatred and delusion. Those who commit suicide have not learnt how to face their problems, how to face the facts of life, and how to use their minds in a proper manner. Such people have not been able to understand the nature of life and the worldly

¹⁵¹ P.A Payutto, tr., by Suriyo Bhikkhu, **The Three Signs: Anicca, Dukkha & Anattā in the Buddha’s Teachings**, op. cit., pp. 12-40.

¹⁵² Chamlong Disayavanish & Primprao Disayavanish, **Special Article (A Buddhist Approach to Suicide Prevention)**, *ibid.*

condition. Some people sacrifice their own lives because they deem it as a good and noble cause. They take their own lives by such methods as self-immolation, bullet-fire, or starvation. Such actions may be classified as brave and courageous. However, from the Buddhist point of view, such acts are not to be condoned. The Buddha has clearly pointed out that the suicidal states of mind lead to further suffering.

3.2 The Roles and Benefits of *Maranassati* in Theravada Buddhism

The proper practice of mindfulness of death as described above has tremendous benefits, both in the present and in the future, long after this very body is disintegrated by death itself. Those who practise mindfulness of death are possessed of diligence regarding the higher meritorious states, and of dislike regarding the demeritorious.¹⁵³ They do not hoard clothes and ornament. They are not stingy.¹⁵⁴ People who reflect on death will correctly enjoy the following benefits:¹⁵⁵

- 1) They will be able to live mindful lives.
- 2) They will be able to let go of the mental attachment which is the root cause of all suffering.
- 3) They would not cling on to life desperately at the moment of death.
- 4) They would be shameful and fearful of sin and choose to do only good deeds.
- 5) They would not be greedy for worldly materials because they know well that, eventually, at the time of death, everyone has to leave them all behind.
- 6) They would understand the Ultimate Truth of life that everything is impermanent and that the change is the common nature.
- 7) They would not be afraid of death.
- 8) They would die peacefully.
- 9) They would have a solid foundation for a higher level of meditation.

¹⁵³ Upatissa Thera, **The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga)**, (Penang: The Penang Buddhist Association, 2005), p. 166.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

- 10) After death, they would be reborn in a good world as human beings or angels.

3.2.1 The Development of *Marāṇassati* can prevent the Bad Deeds

Death is the termination or cutting off the life faculty which is included in the mental stream of the present existence. It does not mean the death of an *Arahant* which is the cutting-off of the misery of the round of rebirths, nor does it mean momentary death which the momentary dissolution of formations nor the death of conventional usage in such expressions as dead tree, dead mentality, and so on.¹⁵⁶ As intended here the death is of two kinds:¹⁵⁷

1. Timely death (*Kāla Maraṇa*)
2. Untimely death (*Akāla Maraṇa*)

Timely death is the death through exhaustion of reproductive *Kamma* that gives rise to the present existence or the death through exhaustion of the normal life-span of men at the present time or the death exhaustion of both.¹⁵⁸ Death through suicide, murder or disease or through being cut off in the prime of life without (assignable) cause is called untimely death.¹⁵⁹ Most people are afraid of hearing the word death, but for those who have developed mindfulness of death, they come to realize that life is uncertain but death is certain. One way of understanding life is to face and understand death which is nothing more than a temporary end to a temporary existence.¹⁶⁰ Recollection of death with the right mental attitude can give a person courage, calmness and insight into the nature of existence as well as the belief in *Kamma* and its result after death.

Besides understanding death, one will realize and understand his or her daily activities. Based on these realizations and understandings, she or he will then try to be more aware of what and how she or he thinks, speaks and acts. They will consider if their thought, speech and action are

¹⁵⁶ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced level)**, (Yangon: Religious Publication Permission, 2004), p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ Egert C. Baptist, **Nibbāna or The Kingdom**. op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁵⁸ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced level)**, ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Upatissa, **The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga)**, op. cit., p. 167.

¹⁶⁰ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p. 135.

beneficial, out of compassion and have good effects for herself or himself as well as others. One more thing, he will believe in life after death in accordance with the law of one's own action. Rebirth will take place owing to the quality of his or her deeds. A person who has done many good deeds may be born in favorable conditions where he enjoys wealth and success, beauty and strength, good health and meets good spiritual friends and teachers. Wholesome deeds can also lead to rebirth in the heavens and other sublime states, while unwholesome deeds lead to rebirth in suffering states.

When a person understands the law of *Kamma*, he will then make the effort to refrain from performing bad actions, and to try to cultivate good deeds. By so acting, he gains benefits not only in this life, but in many other lives to come. On the other hand, he will realize the true value of walking on the road that leads to complete self transformation which is known as the Noble Eight Constituent Path.¹⁶¹ This Path can help a person to develop morality through restraint of negative actions and the cultivation of positive qualities conducive to personal, mental and spiritual growth.¹⁶² In addition, it contains many techniques which a person can apply to purify his thoughts, expand the possibilities of the mind, and bring about a complete change towards a wholesome personality.

This practice of mental culture (*Bhāvanā*) can widen and deepen the mind towards all human experience, as well as the nature and characteristics of phenomena, life and the universe.¹⁶³ In brief, this leads to the cultivation of wisdom (*Paññā*). As his wisdom grows, so will his love, compassion, loving-kindness and joy.¹⁶⁴ He will have greater awareness to all forms of life and better understanding of his own thoughts, feelings and motivations. Thus, the development of *Maraṇassati* can prevent the bad deeds and bring only performing good actions. He will strive to eradicate greed, hatred, delusion and develop wisdom and compassion, and to be completely liberated from the bounds of *Samsāra*.

¹⁶¹ Paṭhamakyaaw Ahin Thiṭṭila, tr., **The Book of Analysis (Vibhaṅga)**, (London: PTS, 1969), p. 308.

¹⁶² K. Sri Dhammananda, **What Buddhists Believe**, op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ K. Sri Dhammananda, *ibid.*

3.2.2 The Development of *Maraṇassati* can share Loving-Kindness to all living beings

Mindfulness is a meditation practice that involves being aware of whatever is happening in our body and mind accompanied by equanimity, free of attachment to what is pleasant and aversion to what is unpleasant. Strong familiarity with this practice gives one the ability to cope with pain and discomfort, keep the mind free from disturbing emotions, and remain peaceful while dying. On the other hand, a person who has practised mindfulness of death¹⁶⁵ is possessed of diligence as regards the higher meritorious states, and of dislike as regards the demeritorious. He is able to live longer, does not cling to things, and is endowed with the perception of impermanence,¹⁶⁶ the perception of subject to ill and the perception of not-self.¹⁶⁷

In addition, the practice mindfulness of death involves cultivating feelings of care, concern and kindness towards all other human beings. When we face difficulties or pain, our strong attachment to ‘I’ augment our suffering, whereas being less concerned with ourselves and more concerned for others diminishes our suffering. At the time of death, thinking of other beings and wishing them to be happy and free from suffering would bring great peace to our mind. Not only do we help them have a more peaceful death, but we also purify their negativities and accumulate positive potential or merit which ensures a good rebirth in the next life.

Spiritual development and ultimate awakening to death also are based upon the firm foundation of loving-kindness for all beings. To help establish this essential foundation, practise this meditation daily for at least 15 to 20 minutes, or longer. For ease of recollection, only the first line of each phrase of this meditation is used. It is not necessary to repeat the words in parentheses. If you wish, you may also create your own words for this practice. On the other hand, when you earnestly wish for the welfare of

¹⁶⁵ The mindfulness of the destruction of the faculties is called mindfulness of death. The practice of the perception of impermanence and the perception of non-self is called the rejection of pride. A person who practises mindfulness of death can dwell in the perception of impermanence and the perception of subject to ill through the thought of the cutting off of life and the destruction of the mind.

¹⁶⁶ The perception of the passing away of the aggregations is called the perception of impermanence.

¹⁶⁷ Upatissa, **The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga)**, op. cit., p. 166.

all beings and emanate loving-kindness to them, it is the practice of *metta-bhāvanā*.¹⁶⁸ First you cultivate *mettā*¹⁶⁹ in your mind and then try to develop it so that your whole self may become suffused with *metta*.

1) Begin by directing loving-kindness to yourself. Love for self comes first. This is not a selfish love, but a pure love for oneself that has the power to dissolve anger, hatred, and selfish tendencies. By overcoming any sense of unworthiness and cultivating genuine love for yourself, you are able to share this love with others. Allow the heartfelt radiance of loving-kindness to fill your being as you recite each phrase of this meditation slowly and with deep feeling: ‘May I be happy and peaceful...’ and so forth.

2) Visualize a person whom you feel love, respect, and gratitude. Radiate heartfelt loving-kindness to this person, reciting each phrase of the meditation slowly and with deep feeling: ‘May you be happy and peaceful...’ and so forth.

3) Visualize a person toward whom you feel neutral or indifferent. This may be a stranger or an acquaintance, somebody you have no particular feelings for or against. Extending loving-kindness to those toward whom we feel indifferent develops the ability of the heart to love all beings without exception. Radiate heartfelt loving-kindness to this person, reciting each phrase of the meditation slowly: ‘May you be happy and peaceful...’ and so forth.

4) This may be the most difficult part of the practice. Visualize a person with whom you experience tension, fear, hurt, conflict, resentment, anger, or aversion. Radiate heartfelt loving-kindness to this person as well: ‘May you be happy and peaceful...’ and so forth.

5) Finally, radiate heartfelt loving-kindness to all living beings throughout all realms of existence:- ‘May all beings be happy and peaceful...’ and so forth. The Buddha suggests that we remain in this

¹⁶⁸ Ashin Janakabhivamsa, **Abhidhamma In Daily Life**, tr., U. Ko Lay & Revised by Sayadaw U Silānanda, (Yangon: Meikkaung Press, 1999), p. 179.

¹⁶⁹ There is no particular mental factor (*cetasika*) as *metta*. The *adosa-cetasika*, when it is meant to connote wishing others welfare, peace and progress, is known as *metta*. Therefore, note that *metta* is the sincere will to help others to be well and prosper.

mindful state of loving-kindness at all times and cherish all living beings with a boundless heart, radiating kindness over the entire world.¹⁷⁰

The benefits of practicing this form of meditation are immense. We develop the valuable skill of concentration. We dissolve the barriers in our hearts that create separation between ourselves and others. We transform fear and negativity into courage and kindness, and we learn to care for and love all beings without exception. The simple yet powerful radiance of our loving-kindness brings protection from harmful influences and offers blessings and beneficence to all it touches. Even if we do not recognize the immediate effects of our practice, nevertheless, we should always persevere and never doubt or underestimate the power of loving-kindness!

The Buddha does not offer us his teachings merely to be studied and recited. He asks us to follow and practise the instructions so they become a reality in our awareness, in our actions, and in our ways of life. It is action, not speculation; it is practice, not theory that really matters. Therefore, we should not be satisfied with the mere recitation of the *Mettā Sutta*. We must strive to know and feel its meaning. We must allow the teaching to suffuse our entire being, and have the heartfelt intention to bring it into full practice in our daily lives.

It is said in the Buddhist teachings that helping another person to die with a peaceful, positive state of mind is one of the greatest acts of kindness we can offer. The reason for this is that the moment of death is so crucial for determining the rebirth to come, which in turn will affect subsequent rebirths. However, helping a dying person is not an easy task. When people die, they experience numerous difficulties and changes, and this would naturally give rise to confusion as well as painful emotions. They have physical needs of relief from pain and discomfort and the assistance in performing the most basic tasks such as drinking, eating, relieving themselves, bathing and so forth.

They have emotional needs to be treated with respect, kindness and love; to talk and be listened to; or, at certain times, to be left alone and in silence. They have spiritual needs to make sense of their life, their suffering, their death; to have hope for what lies beyond death; to feel that they will be cared for and guided by someone or some thing wiser and

¹⁷⁰ Ashin Janakabhivamsa, **Abhidhamma in Daily Life**, *ibid.*

more powerful than themselves. Thus, we should spread our loving-kindness, care and guide them to be peaceful in their minds at the moment of death.

3.3 *Marāṇassati* in the practice of *Samatha* and *Vipassanā Kammaṭṭhāna*

Buddhist meditation is *Kammaṭṭhāna*¹⁷¹ which means the foundation of action or working ground. It is derived from the two words *Kamma* meaning action and *ṭhāna* meaning foundation. A synonym of *Kammaṭṭhāna* is *bhāvanā* which means mental development or mental training. There are two kinds of Buddhist meditation (*Kammaṭṭhāna*): (1) Tranquility or Calming Meditation (*Samatha Kammaṭṭhāna*) or Mental Development (*Samatha Bhāvanā*). (2) Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā Kammaṭṭhāna*) or Intellectual Development (*Vipassanā Bhāvanā*).¹⁷²

Samatha Bhāvanā means tranquility, serenity or calmness. It is a synonym of “*samādhi*” which means concentration, one-wontedness of the mind (*cittakaggatā*), or mental absorption (*Avikkhepa*).¹⁷³

On the other hand, *Samatha bhāvanā* is the mental training which calms down the five hindrances¹⁷⁴ and develops tranquility and mental concentration which is the concentrated, unshaken, undefiled and peaceful state of the mind.¹⁷⁵ In the very beginning therefore it is essential to focus the attention upon the objects (*ārammaṇa*) of *Samatha Bhāvanā* as found in the *suttas* of the *Nikāyas*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines**, op.cit.,pp.31-32.

¹⁷² Ibid, p.157.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p.27.

¹⁷⁴ The five hindrances are sense-desire, ill-will, rigidity and torpor, agitation and anxiety and uncertainty. Here uncertainty is destroyed through the path of stream-entrance; sense-desire, ill-will and anxiety are destroyed through the path of non-return; rigidity and agitation are eliminated through the path of Saintship.

¹⁷⁵ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Basic Level)**, (Yangon: Religious Publication Permission, 2004), p. 61.

¹⁷⁶ A. I. 34-40.

Vipassanā means “Insight.” It is the intuitive light flashing forth and exposing the truth of impermanency, suffering and the impersonal, insubstantial nature of all the corporeal and mental phenomena of existence. In other words, to see thing as they really are in many special ways.¹⁷⁷ It is insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) that is the decisive liberating factor in Buddhism, but it has to be developed along with the two other Higher Trainings, Morality and Concentration. The culmination of Insight practice leads directly to stages of Holiness.

Vipassanā Bhāvanā signifies a mental state which clearly comprehends all physical and mental states according to the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) and the Four Noble Truths. Insight development involves five stages: (1) Discernment of the corporeal (*rūpa*), (2) Discernment of the mental (*Nāma*), (3) Contemplation of both (*nama-rūpa*), (4) Viewing both as conditioned (by Dependent Origination, *paticcasamuppāda*), and (5) Application of the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and non-self) to mind, body, and conditions.¹⁷⁸

Furthermore, *Vipassanā* stands for ‘*Paññā-cetasika*’, a mental factor which is associated with wholesome consciousness. *Paññā* literally means ‘knowledge or wisdom’.¹⁷⁹ *Vipassanā bhāvanā* develops the *Paññā-cetasika* by constantly investigating and contemplating on the three characteristic marks of all psycho-physical phenomena, namely, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*).¹⁸⁰ *Vipassanā bhāvanā* can develop insight wisdom (*vipassanā ñāṇa*) one after another until the path-wisdom (*magga- ñāṇa*) and its fruition-wisdom (*phala- ñāṇa*) are realized. Then the meditators become the noble persons (*ariyā*), so they can enjoy the unique *Nibbāna* bliss.

However, if a meditator wants to develop *Maraṇassati*, he, firstly, should practise *Samatha bhāvanā* because *Samatha bhāvanā* is developed to calm down to unshaken and peaceful state of mind. When he succeeds in the development of mindfulness of death through *Samatha bhāvanā*, his mind is calm, peaceful, and he will not be afraid of death. Thus, it will be seen that mindfulness of death not only purifies and

¹⁷⁷ Mehm Tin Mon, *Samatha (Basic Level)*, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁷⁸ A. I. 197.

¹⁷⁹ Mehm Tin Mon, *Samatha (Basic Level)*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁸⁰ Mehm Tin Mon, *Samatha (Basic Level)*, *ibid.*

refines the mind but also has the effect of robbing death of its fears and terrors, and helps one at that solemn moment when he is gasping for his last breath, to face that situation with fortitude and calmness. He is never unnerved at the thought of death but is always prepared for it. With the proper training and preparation, a peaceful and positive death is possible for each and every one of us. It is important to examine the thoughts, feelings and attitudes we have regarding the death and dying, to see whether or not they are realistic and healthy. This type of training is based on *Samatha bhāvanā*. While concentrating on that you should note either:

1. I am certain to die, Life is impermanent (*maraṇaṃ me dhavaṃ, jīvitāṃ me adhavaṃ*).
2. I will certainly die (*maraṇaṃ me bhavissati*).
3. My life will end in death (*maraṇpariyosanaṃ me jīvitāṃ*).
4. Death, death (*maraṇaṃ, maraṇaṃ*).¹⁸¹

When a meditator has successful mindfulness of death with an unshaken, peaceful state of mind, then he can develop it with *Vipassanā bhāvanā*. The practice of *Vipassanā bhāvanā* can widen and deepen the mind towards all human experience, as well as the nature of things and realization of three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). Contemplation on death and on other forms of sorrow such as old age and disease constitutes a convenient starting point for the long line of investigation and meditation that will ultimately lead to Reality. This practice leads to the cultivation of wisdom, and then to the attainment of Enlightenment.

Concluding Remarks

It is the contemplation of death that helps to destroy the infatuation of sense-pleasure. It is the contemplation of death that destroys vanity. It is the contemplation of death that gives balance and a healthy sense of proportion to our highly over-wrought minds with their misguided sense of values. It is the contemplation of death that gives strength and steadiness and direction to the erratic human mind, now wandering in one direction, now in another, without an aim, without a purpose.

¹⁸¹ Pa Auk Sayadaw, **The Practice Which Leads To Nibbāna: Part One**, Compiled and Translated by U. Dhamminda, op.cit., p.103.

This contemplation of death is one of the classical meditation-subjects treated in the *Visuddhimagga* which states that in order to obtain the fullest results; one should practise this meditation in the correct way, that is, with mindfulness, with a sense of urgency and with understanding. For example, supposing a young disciple fails to realize keenly that death can come upon him at any moment, and regards it as something that will occur in old age in the distant future; his contemplation of death will be lacking strength and clarity, so much so that it will run on lines which are not conducive to success.

How great and useful is the contemplation of death can be seen from the following beneficial effects enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga*: The disciple who devotes himself to this contemplation of death is always vigilant, takes no delight in any form of existence, gives up hankering after life, censures evil doing, is free from craving as regards the requisites of life, his perception of impermanence becomes established, he realizes the painful and soulless nature of existence and at the moment of death he is devoid of fear, and remains mindful and self-possessed. Finally, if in this present life he fails to attain *Nibbāna*, upon the dissolution of the body, he is bound for a happy destiny.

Chapter IV

The Application of *Marāṇassati* to Daily Life

4.1 The Application of *Marāṇassati* to Our Daily Lives

As we already know, we are living in a world in which we daily see ever new achievements in the fields of modern science and modern technology. Practically all systems of philosophical thought deal only with living in daily life. For example, as Confucius said, “We do not even know life, how can we know death.” From the practical point of view, it is true that the problems concerning living are more important and relevant to us. However, this approach evades and avoids a real answer to my question. The fact of death and the questions as to what happens afterward, remain. In fact, it could be that our attitude toward living could change greatly, if we know what will happen after death. It should be noted that Confucius did not say that death is extinction, nor did he say that there is no future life after death. He simply meant that to live as a decent person on earth is more important than to question the nature of life after death.

However, the most important point in our daily lives is to search for a natural purpose of life. Once we realize the nature of life¹⁸² as well as the nature of man’s greeds and the means of getting them satisfied, we can then understand the reason why happiness so desperately sought by many people is so elusive like catching a moonbeam in their ends. In addition, they try so hard to gain happiness through accumulation. When they don’t get what they want in accumulating wealth, gaining position, power and honest and deriving pleasure from sense satisfaction, they feel dissatisfaction and suffering, envying others who are successful in doing so.¹⁸³ However, even if they are successful in getting these things, they still suffer as well because they now fear and worry losing what they have

¹⁸² The nature of life is referred to the three characteristics of suffering, impermanence, and non-self.

¹⁸³ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What Buddhists Believe**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993), p. 137.

gained, or their desires have now increased for more wealth, a higher position, more power, and greater pleasure. The more they crave for their property, the more they have to suffer.

Wealth, position, power, honor, etc. do not give happiness to them because these things cannot help to realize the nature of life. There is a failure to think about death and a failure to identify the things as they really are. They sometimes think of death as a punishment for bad things they have done, or as a failure or mistake, but it is none of these. It is a natural part of life just like the sun rising and setting; the seasons coming and going; beautiful flowers becoming white, red, and brown; people and other beings are born, live for some time, and then die. One of the principal things the Buddha discovered and pointed out to us is the truth of impermanence: that things change and pass away. Thus, we may die at any time. Therefore, when we are alive, we have to be aware of death, because it can help us to realize the truth of impermanence.

There are two aspects of impermanence, namely; gross impermanence and subtle impermanence.¹⁸⁴

Gross impermanence refers to the fact that all produced things, which include humans and other living beings, all the phenomena in nature, and all human-made things, will not last forever, but will go out of existence at some point. As the Buddha himself said: What is born will die. What has been gathered will be dispersed, what has been accumulated will be exhausted, what has been built up will collapse, and what has been high will be brought low. And this existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds. To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at the movements of a dance.¹⁸⁵ A lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the sky, rushing by, like a torrent down a steep mountain.

Subtle impermanence refers to the changes that take place every moment in all animate and inanimate things. The Buddha said that things do not remain the same from one moment to the next, but are constantly changing.¹⁸⁶ This is confirmed by modern physics, as Gary Zukav points out in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*: Every subatomic

¹⁸⁴ Sangye Khadro, **Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying**, (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

interaction consists of the annihilation of the original particles and the creation of new subatomic particles. The subatomic world is a continual dance of creation and annihilation, of mass changing into energy and energy changing to mass. Transient forms sparkle in and out of existence, creating a never-ending, forever newly created reality.

Those mentioned above, are impermanent, because they are subject of decay and passing away. When we deny and forget to think of death, it makes us tense, attach and cling to ourselves, property, honour, power, become selfish, etc. To accept death brings peace and helps us become aware of what is really important in life and to cut off attachment of life. For example, being kind and loving others, being honest and unselfish, so that we will put our energy into those things and avoid doing what would cause us to feel fear and regret in the face of death.

Of all perceptions, remembering death and impermanence is supreme. Awareness and remembrance of death are extremely important in Buddhism for two main reasons:¹⁸⁷

1) By realizing that our lives are transitory, we will be more likely to spend our time wisely, doing positive, beneficial and virtuous actions, and refraining from negative, non-virtuous actions. The result of this is that we will be able to die without regret, and will be born in fortunate circumstances in our next lives.

2) Remembering death will induce a sense of the great need to prepare ourselves for death. There are various methods (e.g. prayer, meditation, and working on our mind) that will enable us to overcome fear, attachment and other emotions that could arise at the time of death and cause our mind to be disturbed, unpeaceful, and even negative. Preparing for death will enable us to die peacefully, with a clear, positive state of mind. The benefits of being aware of death can be corroborated by the results of the near-death experience. The near-death experience occurs when people seem to die. When we exercise it merely in this way, the hindrances get suppressed; mindfulness becomes established with death as its object.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Sangye Khadro, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁸⁸ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2005), p. 248.

When we apply *Maranassati* to our daily lives, it reduces fear and deepens the acceptance of death; increases concern for helping others; enhances vision of the importance of love; lessens interest in materialistic pursuits; leads to a growing belief in a spiritual dimension and the spiritual meaning of life; and, of course, leads to a greater openness to belief in the afterlife. One more thing, it can help us to cut off attachment to life, to avoid the improper search and amassing wealth, to have the ability to face death fearlessly and peacefully and to head to a happy destiny after death.¹⁸⁹

4.2 The Application of *Maranassati* for the Individual

In this modern age, as modern technology advances, many new things are invented and developed in order to bring happiness and to make one live more comfortably and peacefully and to give him or her more attachment, hatred, delusion, greed and ignorance about the true nature of life. He fails to realize that life is uncertain, but death is certain. Moreover, he does not like even to hear of the word ‘death’. He forgets that death will come, whether he likes it or not.¹⁹⁰ He may fear that accepting and thinking about death will make him morbid, or spoil his enjoyment of life’s pleasures.

When he denies it, it does not help him to be free from suffering and he is unable to realize the nature of life (characterized by unsatisfactoriness, change, and egolessness) as well as it brings only fear and regret in the face of death. Among individual aims to get a better life as a politician may aim to be a prime minister or a president; an artist may wish to paint masterpieces that will live long after he is gone; a young executive may aim to become a managing director of a multinational company; a scientist may want to discover some laws, formulate a new theory or invent a new machine.¹⁹¹ However, when we ask them why they aim such, they will reply that these achievements will give them a purpose in life, make them happy and living in a better life. Everyone aims and wishes to live in a happy and comfortable life, but forgets to think about the death. When death is coming, they feel fear and worry. As they are dying, they may find themselves experiencing physical

¹⁸⁹ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level, Volume I)**, (Yangon: Dhipati, 2004), p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What the Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.137.

discomfort and pain. In addition to this, they may also experience disturbing thoughts and emotions, such as regretting about the past, fearing about the future, being sad about having to separate from their loved ones and possessions, and angry about the misfortunes that are happening to them. Therefore, everyone needs to think and practise mindfulness of death, because it is very important to keep our mind free from such negative thoughts, and instead to have positive thoughts at the time of death¹⁹². Examples of positive thoughts include:¹⁹³

- Keeping in mind an object of his faith such as *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*.
- Calming his acceptance of death and the problems associated with it,
- Non-attachment to his loved ones and possessions,
- Feeling positive about the way he has lived his life, remembering good things he has done,
- Feeling loving-kindness and compassion for others,
- Not confusing his mind during death,
- Not feeling regrets about the past; not having fears about the future, and without attachment to his property,
- Facing death with a comfortable and peaceful mind.

Recollection on death with the right mental attitude can give a person courage and calmness as well as insight into the nature of existence.¹⁹⁴ Surprisingly the opposite is true - denying death makes him tense; accepting it brings him to have ability to face death fearlessly and peacefully.¹⁹⁵ And it helps him to become aware of what is really important in life, for example, being kind and having love for others, being honest and unselfish, so that we will put our energy into those things and avoid doing what would cause us to feel fear and regret in the face of death.

Besides understanding death, he needs a better understanding of his life. He lives a life that does not always proceed as smoothly as he would like it to be. Very often, he faces problems and difficulties. He

¹⁹² Sangye Khadro, **Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying**, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What the Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁹⁵ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha (Advanced Level, Volume I)**, op. cit., 7.

should not be afraid of them, because the penetration into the very nature of these problems and difficulties can provide him with a deeper insight into life. The worldly happiness in wealth, luxury, respectable positions in life which pills and tranquillizers, admissions to mental hospitals, and suicide rates having increased in relation to modern material progress is enough testimony that we have to go beyond worldly and material pleasure to seek real happiness.

In addition, if one wants to develop *Maraṇassati*, one should learn this meditation subject from a qualified teacher, go into solitary retreat, and exercise attention wisely in this way: ‘Death will take place; or the life-faculty will be interrupted; or death, death’.¹⁹⁶ If he exercises his attention unwisely in recollecting the death of an agreeable person, sorrow arises, as in a mother on recollecting the death of her beloved child she bore; gladness arises in recollecting the death of a disagreeable person; as in enemies on recollecting the death of his enemies; and no sense of urgency arises on recollecting the death of neutral people, as happens in a corpse-burner on seeing a dead body; and anxiety arises on recollecting one’s own death, as happening to a timid person on seeing a murderer with a poised dagger.

In all the recollecting of death in that way there is neither mindfulness nor sense of urgency nor knowledge. So he should look here and there at the beings that have been killed or have died, and advert to death of beings already dead but formerly seen enjoying good things, doing so with mindfulness, with sense of urgency and with knowledge.¹⁹⁷ After that he can exercise his attention in the way beginning with ‘Death will take place’.¹⁹⁸ By doing so, he exercises it wisely and with right meaning. When he exercises it merely in this way, his hindrances get suppressed, his mindfulness becomes established with death as its object, and the meditation subject reaches access.¹⁹⁹

However, if one does not reach access by merely exercising his attention as above, he should recollect death in eight ways. 1) as having the appearance of a murderer, 2) as the ruin of success, 3) by comparison, 4) as to share the body with many, 5) as to the frailty of life, 6) as

¹⁹⁶ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p. 248.

¹⁹⁷ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha** (Advanced Level, Volume I), op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁹⁸ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

signless, 7) as to the limitedness of the extent, and 8) as to the shortness of the moment.

1) As having the appearance of a murderer: he should do his recollecting thus, ‘Just as a murderer appears with sword, thinking ‘I shall cut this man’s head off’, and applies it to his neck, so death appears’.²⁰⁰ Why? Because death comes with birth and it takes away the life.

As mushroom buds always grow up lifting bust on their tops, so beings are born along with old age and death. For surely their rebirth consciousness reaches aging immediately next to its arising and then breaks up together with its associated aggregates, like a stone that falls from the summit of a mountain top. Thus, momentary death comes with birth. Moreover, as it is certain that a person who has been born must die, so the death that is here intended comes together with birth.

Therefore, just as the risen sun moves on towards its setting and never turns back even for a little while from where it has gone to, or just as a mountain torrent sweeps by with a rapid current, even for a little while, so too this living being travels on towards the death from the time when he is born, and he never turns back even for a little while. Hence, it is said: Right from every day, a man has been conceived inside a womb, he cannot but go on and on, nor going can he once turn back.²⁰¹ So death which comes along with birth is just like a murder with poised sword. And like the murderer who applies the sword to the neck, it carries off life and never returns to bring it back. So death should be recollected as ‘having the appearance of a murderer’.

2) As the ruin of success: here, in this world, prosperity shines so long as it is not overpowered by adversity, and success shines as long as failure does not overcome it. Furthermore, all health ends in sickness, all youthfulness in old age, all life in death. Besides, all worldly existence is procured by birth, haunted by aging, oppressed by sickness, and struck down by death. This is how death should be recollected as the final ruining of life’s success.

3) By comparison: the meditator should be aware of death by comparing himself with others in seven ways, that is to say: with those of

²⁰⁰ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, *ibid.*

²⁰¹ Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha** (Advanced Level, Volume I), *op. cit.*, p. 15.

great fame, with those of great merit, with those of great strength, with those of great supernormal power, with those of great wisdom, with Pacceka Buddhas, with fully enlightened Buddhas. Death should be recollected in this way by comparing himself with others. When he himself does his recollection in this way himself with others of such great fame, etc., in the light of the universality of death, thinking “death will come to me as it even did to those distinguished beings”,²⁰² then his meditation subject reaches an access.

4) As to the sharing of the body with many: one has to share one’s body with many. Firstly, this body is shared with eighty families of worms. Those worms that live in dependence on the outer skin feed on the outer skin; those that live in dependence on the inner skin feed on the inner skin; those that live in dependence on the flesh feed on the flesh; those that live in dependence on the sinews feed on the sinews, those that live in dependence on the bones feed on the bones, and those that live on the marrow feed on the marrow.

When they are born, they grow old, defecate, urinate and die. The body is their maternity home, their hospital, their charnel ground, their latrine and their urinal. The body can perish through the upsetting of those worms. As it is shared with the eighty families of worms, so too, it is shared with several hundred internal diseases. It can also be brought to death by external causes such as snakes, scorpions, etc. In addition, when a target is set up at cross-roads and arrows, spears, pikes, stones, etc., come from all directions and fall upon it, so it is similar to all kinds of accidents falling upon the body and the body can come to death through these accidents.²⁰³

Hence, the Buddha said: “Here, bhikkhus, when a day is departing and a night drawing on, a bhikkhu reflects thus: For me the causes of death are many. A snake may bite me, or a scorpion may sting me, or a centipede may sting me: I may die, or meet with danger. Or I may stumble and fall, or the food I have eaten may disagree with me, or my bile may get upset, or my phlegm may give me trouble, or the winds that cut like knives may give me trouble. And in consequence I may die

²⁰² Mehm Tin Mon, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

or meet with danger”. That is how death should be recollected as sharing the body with many.²⁰⁴

5) As to the frailty of life: this life is impermanent and frail, for the life of beings is bound up with breathing, with the postures, with cold and heat, with the four primary elements, and with nutriment. Life goes on only when the in-breaths and the out-breaths occur evenly, but when breath that has gone out does not go in again, or when that which has gone inside does not come out again, one dies. Once again, life goes on only when the four postures are functioning regularly, but with the prevailing of any one of them, the life process is interrupted.

The life proceeds only when it gets an equal measure of heat and cold, but it fails when a man is overcome by excessive heat or cold. Again, life goes on only when the four primary elements are occurring evenly, but with the disturbance of the element of extension or the element of cohesion or any other element, even a strong man may have a rigid body, or his body may become feeble and weak and purifies with a flux of bowels or his body is consumed with high fever, or his joints are broken, and so his life can be terminated, and life continues to exist in one only if he gets physical nutriment at the proper time. On the contrary, if he gets none; his life will come to an end. Therefore, this is how death should be recollected as to the frailty of life.

6) The absence of a sign: the span of life, the sickness which causes death, the time of death, the place where the body will be laid, and the destiny after death are unpredictable and can never be known by the living world as there are no signs which foretell them. Moreover, the span of life has no sign, because there is no limitation such as: ‘One should live to such an extent, no further’. Beings die during the first embryonic stage (*kalala*), the second embryonic stage (*abbuda*), the third embryonic stage (*pesi*), the fourth stage (Ghana), the first month, the second month, the third month, the fourth month, the fifth month, the tenth month, at the time of birth and thence within or beyond a hundred years.

The sickness which causes death has no sign since it cannot be determined as: ‘One must die of this sickness, not of another’. For beings die of eye-disease, ear-disease, or of any other diseases. The time of death is also signless since it cannot be determined as: ‘One must die at this

²⁰⁴ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p. 253.

time, not at any other'. For beings die in the morning, at middle, and so on. And the place where the body will be laid is also signless since it cannot be determined as: 'Here should the body of the dying be laid, not elsewhere'. For the body of one born inside the village is laid outside the village; the body of one born outside the village is laid inside the village. Likewise that of those born on land are dropped on water, and that of those born on water are dropped on land. And this can be multiplied in many ways.

Once again, the destiny after death is also signless, since it cannot be determined as: 'One who passes away should be born in this place'. For passing away from the *deva* world, beings are born among men; passing away from the world of men, they are born in the *deva* world or other worlds; and so on. And in this way the world goes round and round the five kinds of destinies (*niraya*, *tiracchāna*, *peta*, *manussa* and *deva*) like an ox yoked to the mill. Thus, this is how death should be recollected as signless.

7) As to the limitedness of the extent: the extent of the human life is short. One who lives long lives a hundred years or a little more. Hence the Blessed One said: 'Bhikkhus, this human life span is short. There is a new life to be gone to; there are profitable deeds to be done; there is the life of purity to be led. There is no not-dying. He who lives long lives a hundred years, more or less.....'²⁰⁵

The life of human kind is short; A wise man holds it in contempt and acts as one whose head is burning; Death will never fail to come.²⁰⁶

The Blessed One said further: 'Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death thus, 'Oh let me live a night and a day so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching; surely much could be done by me'. And another bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death thus, 'Oh let me live a day so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching; surely much could be done by me. The third bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death, thus, 'Oh let me live as long as it takes to eat a meal so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching; surely much could be done by me.' The fourth bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death thus, 'Oh! Let me live as

²⁰⁵ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p. 255.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

long as it takes to chew and swallow four or five mouthfuls so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching; surely much could be done by me.' These are called bhikkhus who dwell in negligence and slackly develop mindfulness of death for the destruction of cankers.

'Oh, Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death thus, 'Oh let me live as long as it takes to chew and swallow single mouthfuls so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching; surely much could be done by me', and when a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of death thus, 'Oh let me live as long as it takes to breathe out and breathe in, or as long as it takes breathe in and breathe out so that I may attend to the Blessed One's teaching, surely much could be done by me'; these are called bhikkhus who dwell in diligence and keenly develop mindfulness of death for the destruction of cankers'. Therefore, this is how death should be recollected as being limited extent or time.'²⁰⁷

8) As to the shortness of the life-moment: the ultimate sense of life-moment of living beings is extremely short, being only as long as a single conscious moment. Just as a chariot wheel, when it is rolling, it touches the ground only on one point of the circumferences of its wheel, and, when it is at rest, it rests only on one point, so too, the life of living beings lasts only for a single conscious moment. When that consciousness ceases, the being is said to cease, in accordance with the past conscious moment he did live, not he does live, not he will live. In a future conscious moment, not he did live, not he does live, but he will live. In the present conscious moment, not he did live, he does live, and not he will live. This is how death should be recollected as to the shortness of the life moment.²⁰⁸

When one develops the death in one or other of these eight ways, his mind, owing to repeated attention, gets the support of repetition, mindfulness is established with death as object, the hindrances are discarded, the *jhāna* factors are manifested because the meditation subject is the dreadful nature of death and it awakens a sense of urgency, the *jhāna* does not reach absorption but it is only access. This *jhāna* gets the name of death-mindfulness, "*Marāṇassati*", since it arises by the strength of death-mindfulness. One more thing, when he gets successful with the development of death, he will not fear or regret in the face of death,

²⁰⁷ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p. 256.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

because his mind already trains and develops the mindfulness of death *Marāṇassati*.

4.3 The Application of *Marāṇassati* to Societies

Before we discuss applying *Marāṇassati* to society, first and foremost, I would like to explain a little more about what we are facing in our daily lives, how we accept death and how our practise requires a poignant awareness of death. Without understanding its way of practise, it is useless to apply it to society and they will misunderstand and be confused by its term. Because most people frantically run after transitory pleasures and material objects, there is the foolishly believing that wealth, power, friends, and family will bring lasting happiness. Therefore, it is hard for them to accept and practise *Marāṇassati* without clarifying the explanation and its clear method. On the other hand, we are even taught to avoid discussion and talking of death, since this is seen as being inappropriate in polite company and over morbidity. Instead, people tend to focus on things that turn their attention from death surrounding themselves with an image of superficial happiness and material pleasure.

In order to apply *Marāṇassati* to society, we need to understand the definition of the society and how we apply it in order to get benefit for human beings. Based on my understanding, society or human societies are of the manner or form in which the members of a community live together for their mutual benefits. By extension, the term society denotes the people of a region or country, sometimes even the world, taken as a whole. Used in the sense of an association, a society is a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence, possibly comprising the characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language or hierarchical organization. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions. Like other communities or groups, a society allows its members to achieve needs or wishes they could not fulfill alone.

However, a society may be ontologically independent of, and utterly irreducible to, the qualities of constituent individuals; it may act to oppress. The urbanization and rationalization inherent in some, particularly Western capitalist, societies, has been associated with feelings of isolation and social "anomie". More broadly, a society is an economic, social or industrial infrastructure, made up of a varied

collection of individuals. Members of a society may be from different ethnic groups. A society may be a particular ethnic group, such as the Saxons; a nation state, such as Bhutan; a broader cultural group, such as a Western society. The word society may also refer to an organized voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes. A “society” may even, though be more by means of metaphor is referred to as a social organism such as an ant colony.

In short, a society which as referred to the group of people or community lives together for their common benefit for human beings. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions just like other communities or groups, a society allows its members to achieve needs or wishes they could not fulfill alone. The group of people may be teachers, politician, artists, students, scientists, etc., so in order to apply *Marāṇassati* to a society; we have to know which society it is. Otherwise, it will be useless and achieve nothing. Because the understanding of death should not result in passivity, resignation, or morbidity; rather it should spur one to great diligence in religious practice in order to be in awareness of death.

If we talk about death, it is known that death is a subject that most people do not like to hear about, talk about, or even think about. Why is this? After all, whether we like it or not, each and every one of us will have to die one day. And even before we have to face our own death, we will most probably have to face the deaths of other people, our family members, friends, colleagues, and so forth. Death is a reality, a fact of life, so wouldn't it be better to approach it with openness and acceptance, rather than fear and denial? Perhaps the discomfort we have towards death is because we think it will be a terrible, painful and depressing experience. However, it doesn't have to be so. Dying can be a time of learning and growth; a time of deepening our love, our awareness of what is important in life, and our faith and commitment to spiritual beliefs and practices. Death can even be an opportunity to gain insight into the true nature of ourselves and all things, an insight that will enable us to become free from all suffering.

To understand suffering basically means coming to an acceptance of the various problems, difficulties and painful experiences which are an inevitable part of life, and learning to cope with them. If we

can learn to cope with the smaller sufferings that we encounter as we go through life, we will be better able to deal with the bigger sufferings that we will face when we die. We can ask ourselves: how do we react when problems, physical or mental, happen to us? Is my way of reacting healthy and satisfying, or could it be improved? What are some ways I can learn to cope better with problems? After asking ourselves, we shall understand how to deal with all sufferings which happen to us.

Many of us go through life without a clear idea as to what is the purpose and meaning of our existence. This lack of clarity can become a problem as we become older and closer to death because we become less capable and more dependent upon others. When we are alive, we always face many kinds of problems, but the greatest problem of all that we fear most, is death, because it is the final cessation of all our hopes and dreams, our success and failure, our loves, hates, worries, and plans. If we incept the death, we will be aware of death, every moment becomes a lesson in death and impermanence. Our dreams also provide an opportunity for mindfulness of death.²⁰⁹ One more thing, it can help us to be able to escape from death by following the teaching of the Buddha.

Furthermore, the Buddhist meditation texts point out that we have ample evidence of death all around us, since everything is changing from moment to moment. A person wishing to ponder about death need not go to a cemetery or a funeral home: death is occurring everywhere and at all times. Even the cells of our bodies are constantly being born and dying.

All of us are inexorably moving toward physical death in every moment. Since every created thing is impermanent, everything we see, hear, touch, taste, love, despise, or desire is in the process of dying. There is nothing to hold onto, nothing that remains unchanged from moment to moment, and so anyone who tries to find happiness among the transient created thing is doomed to disappointment.²¹⁰

In accordance with this quotation, it is shown why we are prone to unhappiness and suffering, since everything we desire eventually

²⁰⁹ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1995), p, 286.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 285.

breaks down, and we often have to put up with things that we find unpleasant. Impermanence is also essential for liberation, since the constantly changing nature of cyclic existence makes progress possible. Every moment presents an opportunity to train the mind to accept the three characteristics of things as they really are, namely; suffering (*Dukkham*), impermanence (*Aniccam*), and non-self (*Anattā*).

4.3.1 *Marāṇassati* for Youths

It is important for the youths to learn and understand death. When we say the word ‘death’ in accordance with treatises on death, there are two kinds of death: 1) untimely death, which is the result of violence or accidents and 2) death that is the result of the natural end of one’s life-span.²¹¹ The natural end of life-span occurs when the *Karmic* predisposition that provided the impetus for the present life is exhausted. One can also die prematurely. Untimely death is the death due to the intervention of destructive *kamma*.²¹² It is a sudden death as the one encountered through violence, accident or through lack of the necessities such as food and water.²¹³ The second type is the inevitable result of one’s own karma and so it cannot be averted.

According to the Dalai Lama, the three causes of death are: 1) the end of one’s lifespan has been reached; 2) all positive, life-sustaining energy has been used up; and 3) all the *Karmic* supports of life have been exhausted.²¹⁴ There are various techniques for supporting the counteraction of each of these, but when all three are present, there is no way to overcome all of them. Thus, it is useful to let all the youths understand and apply *Marāṇassati* to their daily lives, because when they really understand ‘death’ and then it will lead them to believe in life after death. After believing in life after death, they will choose and follow an ethical moral system that restrains them from evil deeds, to do good, and enables them to purify their minds from a false identity of the bloated, self-seeking ego, craving for material pleasure, and clinging to the five aggregates.

²¹¹ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, op. cit., p. 287.

²¹² Mehm Tin Mon, **Samatha** (Advanced Level, Volume I), op. cit., p. 14.

²¹³ Powers J, op. cit., p. 288.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, they are able to realize that life is uncertain, but death is certain. They are also living with belief in life after death and *Kamma* and its result. They are the heirs to their own *Kamma* and the master of their destinies. In order to gain greater happiness, they must be prepared to forego short-term pleasure. On the other hand, they are able to realize the nature of life and the purpose of life. If they do not believe in life after death, even then it is enough for them to lead a good, noble life on earth, enjoy a life of peace and happiness here and now as well as performing actions which are for the benefit and happiness for others. Leading such a positive and wholesome life on earth and creating happiness for oneself and others is much better than being selfish and trying to satisfy one's ego and greed.

However, if they believe in life after death, then according to the law of kamma, rebirth will take place according to the quality of their deeds. They who have done many good deeds may be born in favourable conditions where they enjoy wealth and success, beauty and strength, good health and meet good spiritual friends and teachers. Awareness of death can also lead them to do good deeds and to see that rebirth is a suffering state. When they understand death, believe in life after death and the law of kamma, they, then, will make the effort to restrain from performing bad actions, and to try to cultivate good actions. By so acting, they can gain benefits not only in this life, but also in many other lives.

Based on the realization and understanding of death, people are fully aware that their lives are impermanent and they should, therefore, strive to do good deeds and practise the Dhamma while they are still in a position to do so. They realize that doing the good actions and practise the Dhamma can lead them to be reborn in favourable state, in heaven and in other sublime states which enable them to realize the true potentials trapped within their minds by ignorance and greed.²¹⁵

They will then try to be more aware of what and how they think, speak and act. They will consider if their thought, speech and actions are beneficially done out of compassion and have good effects for themselves as well as others.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ K. Sri Dhammananda, **What the Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p.139.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

It is the performing of negative actions²¹⁷ which lead one to harm and violation of oneself and others. They also realize the true value of walking on the road that leads to complete self transformation which is known to Buddhists as the Noble Eightfold Path. This path can help them to develop their moral strength (*sila*) through the restraint of negative action and the development of positive qualities conducive for personal, mental and spiritual growth.²¹⁸ In addition, it contains many techniques which help them to apply *Maraṇassati* to purifying their thoughts, to expand the possibilities of the mind and bring them to realize impermanence or to a complete change toward a wholesome personality. This practice is called ‘*Bhāvanā*’ (mental culture) which can lead their minds toward all the human experience as well as the nature and the characteristics of phenomena, the life and the universe.

In short, this *Maraṇassati* can lead them to the cultivation of wisdom (*Paññā*). As their wisdom grows, so will their love, compassion, kindness, and enjoyment. They will then have greater awareness of all forms of life and better understanding of their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, actions, and speech. They will strive to eradicate defilements, to develop wisdom, loving-kindness and compassion for others. They also are able to completely liberate themselves from the bounds of *Samsāra*. All that is necessary for *Maraṇassati* is to help the youths to use their reason to realize the impermanence of life, and also to lead them to understand ‘mindfulness of death’ and believe in life after death. So, they will have fully awareness of their own actions and their speech, because they are responsible for their own actions and speech and they must pay for the consequences of their actions and speech.

²¹⁷ Negative action is referred to right action, right speech and right livelihood. Right speech involves respect for truth and respect for the welfare for others which means to avoid lying, back biting or slandering, harsh speech and idle talk; right action entails respect for life, property and respect for personal life which means abstaining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; and right livelihood means that we should earn a living without violating the moral conduction which avoiding from being engaged in the five kinds of wrong livelihood such as 1) trading in human being, 2) trading weapon, 3) trading in flesh, 4) trading in intoxicating drinks and drugs and 5) trading in poison. (K. Sri Dhammananda, **What the Buddhist Believe**, op. cit., p.140).

²¹⁸ K. Sri Dhammananda, *Ibid*.

4.3.2 *Marāṇassati* for the Old Aged

Dying is the biggest problem which all beings are mostly afraid of because when it happens to anyone, it is unavoidable. Human beings are born into a life situation in which they are destined to suffer and die. This is the result of former contaminated actions and afflictions, which have been accumulated since beginningless time.²¹⁹ Because of this process, physical and mental afflictions are deeply rooted in sentient beings and so it is generally considered as necessary to prepare oneself before death comes. If anyone wants to know how to be free from the suffering of death, he has to know about death. Death gives a good chance to him to free himself from suffering.

Marāṇassati is needed to be practised by all ages, but it is particularly useful and beneficial for the old aged because it can help them to get peace and happiness at the time of death and they will not have a confused mind on their death bed. So it is good to make preparations for death. It means that they sacrifice their happiness in the morning for happiness in the afternoon. They sacrifice their happiness and peace today for the happiness and peace tomorrow. They sacrifice their happiness and peace in this year for the happiness and peace next year. So why not sacrifice their happiness and peace in this life for the happiness and peace at the time of death? When they are alive, they can get help from others, from their family, teachers, friends, relatives, but at the time of death, they cannot get any support from them. They alone have to face it. No matter how dear friends, family and relatives are, they cannot do anything. And they also face it as well.

Therefore, it is very important to develop their precious human life and prepare themselves to die without fear, regret, confusion, to face it positively, and to die happily and peacefully. Only one way that can help them to do so is to develop *Marāṇassati* because it can lead them to the experience of birth, aging, sickness and death. Through these experiences, they have nothing to attach to or crave in their body. If they organize their minds and develop *Marāṇassati*, they will die without fear. Therefore, they need to remind themselves about their death, not to make life miserable but rather to awaken wisdom and compassion to be a good human being. When they develop it well, it is just like the fact that their minds are already accepting the impermanence, so they have no fear at

²¹⁹ Powers J, op. cit., p. 219.

all. However when they do not develop it, they have no idea and they are lost just like having an unknown place to go. There is a lot of fear, doubt, worry and hesitation.

Therefore, in order to die positively without fear, it becomes very important to develop *Maraṇassati*. If they want to practise mindfulness of death, they should learn this meditation subject from a qualified teacher, go into solitary retreat and give their attention wisely in this way: death will take place; or the life-faculties will be cut off; or simply death, death. But if they give their attention unwisely, sorrow will arise in them when recalling the death of beloved ones; joy will arise when they recall death of their enemies; no sense of urgency will arise when recalling the death of neutral persons; and fear arises in recalling one's own death.

All the sorrow, joy, fear and so on, arise in one who lacks mindfulness, a sense of urgency and knowledge. Thus, they should look here and there at those beings who have been killed or have died normally, and they recall the death of those persons who were formerly seen enjoying good things. They should do thus mindfulness with a sense of urgency and with knowledge. Then they can develop their attention in the way beginning as "Death will take place". By doing so, they are exercising their attention wisely. Just giving their attention in this way, they can suppress the hindrances, and they can establish their mindfulness on death and reach access in their mindfulness of death.

In addition, in order to develop *Maraṇassati* in an effective way and also with a quick method of developing mindfulness of death, in accordance with the instruction given in the *Visuddhimagga*, one who has successfully developed the first *jhāna* by reflecting on the foulness of a corpse can easily change his meditation to mindfulness of death. They first recall the acquired sign or the counter image of a corpse which they have developed before and reflect on its foulness to develop the first *jhāna*. They then emerge from the first *jhāna* and reflect on the nature of their death as: "this body of mine has the nature to disintegrate; I will surely die; I cannot escape from death."²²⁰

One more thing, they should constantly focus their attention on the nature of their death, establishing mindfulness on death and

²²⁰ Mehm Tin Mon, op. cit., p. 24.

developing a sense of urgency together with the knowledge of death. Soon they will observe with their meditation on the disgusting corpse of a dead body in place of the external corpse. After that they discern with their wisdom the nature of the cutting off life faculty in a dead body, and then focusing their meditative mind on the object of the cutting off of the life faculty, they reflect repeatedly one of the following ways:

My death is certain, my being alive is uncertain; My death will certainly occur; My being alive has only death as its end; Death, death.²²¹

They should ardently strive to concentrate their meditative mind on the object of the cutting off of the life faculty in a dead body for one hour, two hours or more. If they do so, they will be successful and will find that the *jhāna* factors become distinct. As the object of meditation is the nature of death and frightening, this awakens a sense of urgency. Only access *jhāna* arises, when they dwell in diligence and keenly develop mindfulness of death for the destruction of cankers and attachment to self.

Herein, the application of *Maraṇassati* for the elderly is very important, needing to prepare now because when they prepare it well by developing wisdom, compassion and other mental qualities arise. So at the time of death, it is just like pushing the button. That button we have to prepare for dying is like going to sleep. One more thing, there are no fears, worries and regrets and there is also nothing they can attach to, only dying without fear, worry, and to die positively, happily, and peacefully. However, for those who do not prepare well, they are like going to an unknown place and have no idea of where they are going, so it will be at the time of death or when they are facing the death. There will be a lot of fear, worry, doubt and negative thoughts arising in their minds. Therefore, in order to die without fear and worry, and to die happily and peacefully, it is useful to apply *Maraṇassati* now without waiting for death which is coming.

4.3.3 *Maraṇassati* for the Patients

In Thailand, most people who are sick always invite monks or older people to help them as patients to be aware and prepare themselves well before their death. Why do so? Because for one reason, people tend

²²¹ Mehm Tin Mon, *ibid.*

to be afraid of death because they do not know what will happen to them. For another thing, they still have attachment to and craving for their “self”, “property”, “family”, and “relatives”. However, helping a patient or sick person is not easy. When people die, they experience numerous difficulties and changes, and this would naturally give rise to confusion as well as painful emotions.²²² So, the patient or a sick person needs some help from others in order to guide him or her to die in a positive way, happily and peacefully, without confusing the mind at the time of death.

They have spiritual needs to make sense of their lives, their suffering, their death; to have hope for what lies beyond death; to feel that they will be cared and guided by someone or something wiser and more powerful than themselves.²²³

Therefore, patients need help from a wise man who can guide them in the right way to keep their minds free from negative thoughts, and instead to have positive thoughts at the time of death. One more thing, a patient should learn how to apply *Maraṇassati* and mindfulness to him or herself. When he or she develops mindfulness of death well, he will see the impermanence of ‘self’, so he or she has nothing to cling to as his or her ‘self’ any more. Also, as he or she approaches death, it is good to start giving away his or her possessions, or at least make a will. The application of mindfulness of death will help one to reduce one’s attachment and worry.

Learning spiritual teachings such as those given by the Buddha will help patients to overcome delusions and negative behaviors and thoughts, and it will help them to become wiser and more compassionate. Also, the more he understands reality or truth, the nature of life, the universe, karma, and his capacity for spiritual development and how to bring it about, the less he will be afraid of death. He will realize that everything is impermanent, marked by birth, aging, death, joy, sorrow, pain, grief and despair. Everything is in the process of becoming and

²²² Sangye Khadro, **Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying**, op. cit., p. 23.

²²³ Ibid.

dying. Mindfulness of death is thus the reflection on the inevitability of death and that life is impermanent.

Patients should be given advice to chant the words, “death, death”. Chanting this will serve to remind him that he must certainly die on one day. Death is powerful. He can never know what diseases or *kamma* will bring him to death, nor can he know the time he will die. So he should make haste in the development the *Maraṇassati*, no need to wait to do it, since life is impermanent. Thus, in contemplating on death, the restless mind will become calm and will become disillusioned about false thoughts and ideas about life and death. Realizing that death arises at any time while we are still alive in the conventional sense is also very helpful to defeat fear of death. This is the law of impermanence, something the Buddha takes as an ultimate truth. Death in this sense is happening here and now. It is important to see and accept it scientifically.

During the time of the Buddha, Kīsa Gotamī, a young mother, suddenly lost her only child. She could not and did not accept that her toddler son was now dead. She refused to be convinced by the appeal of common sense reality. She went on looking for a cure to bring him back to life. It was only too understandable that she as a mother would react in the way she did. The child meant everything to her. The same happened to Paṭācārā, a young lady who lost her two sons, husband and parents within a matter of days so mercilessly and unbelievably. It was too much for her to take. She had a complete breakdown. She could not accept that such thing had happened to her. From the point of view of meditation, the suffering of these two young mothers increased because they did not accept what had really happened but kept rejecting it. The grief was being multiplied any time they refused to accept it in their mind.

Both had the good fortune of meeting the Buddha who could convince them to accept what had happened and show them to see the way things are. The Buddha asked Kīsa Gotamī to bring mustard seeds to make medicine she was looking for to bring her son back to life. The Buddha said that the seeds must be from a family which has never experienced death. She went out in search for the seeds only to find that there was no such family that had never experienced death. Kīsa Gotamī came back to her senses, buried her dead child and returned to the Buddha for the path to the deathless. Both, Kīsa Gotamī and Paṭācārā accepted what had happened to them and became noble disciples of the Buddha not

long after that. Paṭācārā became the one who excelled most among the female disciples in the disciplines of the monastic community (Vinaya).

How to practise meditation and cultivate mindfulness of death? By way of the three roots, nine reasons, and three reflections in accordance with the Buddha's teachings, one should fully understand it and try to reflect it every day in order to be aware of death at every moment. This is the lesson in death and impermanence. As given in the table below, one should try to remember and reflect it.

| Three Roots | Nine Reasons | Three Reflections |
|---|--|---|
| Death is certain | 1. Death comes, no matter what you are. | To reflect that death is certain. |
| | 2. Our lifetime cannot be extended and it constantly diminishes. | |
| | 3. While we are alive, there is little time for spiritual practice. | |
| The time of death is uncertain | 4. The life-span in this world is uncertain. | To reflect that the time of death is uncertain. |
| | 5. There are more causes of death than those supporting life - accidents and illness. | |
| | 6. The time of death is uncertain because the body is very fragile and subject to various afflictions. | |
| At the time of death, nothing can be of help except spiritual practice. | 7. At the time of death, family, friends, relatives and beloved ones cannot help. | To reflect that at the time of death, nothing can help or support except spiritual practise which leads one to die happily and peacefully without fear and worry. |
| | 8. At the time of death, your resources cannot help. | |
| | 9. At the time of death, your body cannot help. | |

In order to get the best results from being mindful of death, it is advised that the patients should follow three instruction factors as follows:

1. Have a sense of urgency about death and cultivate awareness of its inevitability;
2. Have a full understanding about impermanence of “self”, that one is sure to die one day, nothing can help and support.
3. Maintain mindfulness during recollections of death and keep the mind fully observant on it.²²⁴

The patient is advised to develop mindfulness of death. He should first cultivate awareness of its inevitability.²²⁵ Everyone who has ever lived has died, and there is no reason to suppose that anyone presently alive will be able to escape from death. Even the Buddha, *Arahantas*, and Buddhist saints of the past have all died, and so it should be clear to a person who thinks on this that the same fate awaits us all. This understanding should not result in passivity, resignation, or morbidity; rather, it should spur him to greater diligence in religious practice. Every moment should be viewed as being infinitely precious, and we should make the utmost effort to use our time to the best advantage.

After making this decision, he, then, considers the uncertainty of the time of death and decides that it might occur at any moment, which should lead to a resolution to begin practicing Dharma immediately.²²⁶ Practice should not be put off until the future, but should begin right now. A person who thinks, “I will wait until the children are grown up,” “After I finish this semester, I will begin meditating,” or “I just don't have enough time right now” or “I will practise meditation after recovering from my diseases or illness” will probably never get around to meditation, and even if he does, meditation will most likely be halfhearted. A person who wishes to make real progress must feel a strong sense of urgency, like a person caught in a burning house looking for a way out.

²²⁴ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1995), p. 286.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid. p. 287.

The next stage in this process is coming to understand that at the time of death only spiritual accomplishments or developments will be of any worth. Material possessions, friends and relatives, worldly acclaim and power all vanish at the time of death, leaving nothing behind. None of these can be carried over into the next life. Moreover, one's future birth will be determined by one's actions in this life, and so one should resolve to practise meditation and other religious activities diligently. A patient who understands this situation should become keenly aware of death and resolve to "extract the essence" of the present life.²²⁷

Therefore, a patient should be taught how to develop *Maraṇassati* and recitation, by using standard Buddhist prayers, or by praying in their own words, in their own hearts. For example, they can pray to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha or whichever Buddha figure he is familiar with, to be with them during this difficult time, to help him find the strength and courage to deal with his suffering, to keep his mind peaceful, and to guide him to a good rebirth in the next life. Also, to help his mind to be free of worry and anxiety, encourage him to not worry about his loved ones and his possessions and to assure him that everything will be taken care of and not to be afraid of what lies ahead but to have faith in the Three Jewels. Also, to help him cultivate positive thoughts, such as faith, loving-kindness and compassion, and to avoid negative thoughts such as anger and attachment. Thus, he will be able to face death without fear or worry and to die with happiness and peace.

4.4 Preparing and Reminding Ourselves about Our Death

Most people are careless about how to deal with and face death. They are also afraid of talking about death as well. In fact, death is what all human beings are not to be afraid of, because we accept it and it will help us to be free from the suffering and to face it positively. So, it is good to make a preparation for death. When we are alive, we can get some help or support from others such as our family, friends, relatives and teachers. At the time of death, they cannot help us. We are alone to face it. So, it is important to utilize our precious human life and prepare ourselves to die without any fear and worry. On the other hand, no matter how rich or poor, happy or peaceful we are during this life but at the time of death, we will have experience all these just like a dream; an illusion to leave behind which cannot help us from death. Thus, we should apply *Maraṇassati* to us and

²²⁷ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, ibid.

remind ourselves about our death in every daily life. If we prepare well, we will die happily and peacefully, but, if we do not prepare well, at the time of death, there will be a lot of fears, worries, doubts and negative thoughts to arise in our minds, and we will die in miserable and unhappy state.

Therefore, we need to remind ourselves about death and develop *Marāṇassati* now, no need to wait until death is coming. One should to cultivate and meditate on the subject of death: *Marāṇassati* (mindfulness of death). Practising *Marāṇassati* helps us to the preciousness of being alive and to treasure it by leading life well and meaningfully. If we practise mindfulness of death, we will then be more aware of death and develop a sense of urgency in life that prompts us to do good while we can with the time we have before the end comes. We should recall the words, “*maranaṃ, maranaṃ* or death, death”.²²⁸ It will give sufficient evidence of death all around us, since everything is changing from moment to moment.

We surely are going to die someday, because death is certain; there is no time for wasting, so we need to be ever mindful of death. While we are alive death comes at any time, whether we are in youth or old age, sick or not sick, strong or weak, poor or rich. A person wishing to ponder about death need not go to a cemetery or a funeral home: death is occurring everywhere and at all times. Even the cells of our bodies are constantly being born and dying. All of us are inexorably moving toward physical death in every moment. Since every created thing is impermanent, everything we see, hear, touch, taste, love, despise, or desire is in the process of dying.²²⁹ There is nothing to hold onto, nothing remains unchanged from moment to moment.²³⁰ So anyone who tries to find happiness among transient, created things is hopeless owing to dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, material pleasure is the reason why we are prone to unhappiness and suffering, since everything we desire eventually breaks down, and we often have to put up with things that we find unpleasant. Impermanence is also essential for liberation, since the constant changing nature of cyclic existence makes progress possible. Every moment presents an opportunity to train the mind in the direction

²²⁸ Mehm Tin Mon, op. cit., p. 24.

²²⁹ Powers J, op. cit., p. 285.

²³⁰ Ibid.

of seeing things as they really are, and since there is no fixed element to personality, every person is constantly engaged in the process of becoming something else. We do, of course, tend to fall into patterns of behavior, and it is all too easy to become caught up in negative patterns, but since every moment is a rebirth, there is always an opportunity to initiate the change.

Thus, we have to prepare ourselves before death comes. We don't wait until the storm pounds the shore before we start to prepare. Similarly, knowing that death is looming off shore, we shouldn't wait until it overpowers us before developing the meditation skills necessary to achieve the great potentiality of the mind at the moment of death. Because human life is short, we need to do good things for our next life and also to for benefit at the time of death. Just as Lord Buddha said:

Bhikkhu, this human life span is short. There is a new life to go to, there are profitable (deeds) to be done, and there is the life of purity to be led. There is not dying for the born. He who lives long lives a hundred years, more or less. The life of human kind is short; a wise man holds it in contempt and acts as one whose head is burning; Death will never fail to come.²³¹

As mentioned above, this means that we should live and act purely and try to develop mindfulness of death now, because the human life span is too short. When we devote and well develop mindfulness of death, we are constantly diligent. We acquire perception of disenchantment with all kinds of becoming or existence. We conquer attachment to life or self. We are able to avoid much storing. We have no stain of avarice about material pleasure. Perception of impermanence grows in our minds, following upon which there appears the perception of pain and not-self.²³² If we do not develop mindfulness of death, we fall victim to fear, horror and confusion at the time of death as though suddenly seized by wild beasts, spirits, snakes, robbers, or murderers.²³³

We are born as human beings, so we are intelligent enough to recognize the problems and sufferings of cyclic existence unlike lower types of beings such as animals, and we are not so overwhelmed by either

²³¹ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, op. cit., p 255.

²³² Ibid, p. 259.

²³³ Ibid.

suffering or happiness that causes us to be blinded to the realities of cyclic existence. We have to realize what is important for our lives in order to live and die happily and peacefully. Through understanding the impermanence of life, we should become keenly aware of death and resolve to the present life. Because only practising meditation can help us to be freed from suffering, we will die undeluded and fearlessly without falling into any such a state.²³⁴ If we do not attain deathlessness here and now, we are at least headed for a happy destiny on the breakup of the body.

4.4.1 How to Face Death with a Peaceful Mind

The greatest problem of all is death, because it is the final cessation of all our dreams, hopes, our success and failure, our loves, hatreds, worries, and pains. We are always afraid of facing death because our minds are not trained and developed yet. From its conception, Buddhism has stressed the importance of death, since the awareness of death is what prompted the Buddha to perceive the ultimate futility of worldly concerns and pleasures.²³⁵ Realizing that death is inevitable for a person who is caught up in worldly pleasure and attitudes, the Buddha resolved to renounce the world and devote himself to finding a solution to this most basic of existential dilemmas. After years of diligent and difficult practice, he then became enlightened, and through this, he transcended death.²³⁶

So, most of his teachings are focused much on impermanence, suffering and non-self, and even today most Buddhists try hard to follow his Dhamma in order to free themselves from suffering. Some of them are advised to meditate on death or impermanence, since they are powerful counteragents to short-sighted concern with the present life and one's own transitory happiness. There are many techniques for developing awareness of death. A common exoteric practice involves visualizing corpses or skeletons and recognizing that these represent the final fate of one's own body. Sometimes, they even go to cemeteries or cremations in order to be confronted with the inevitability of death.

Another powerful technique for developing mindfulness of death is concerning with the visualizing oneself lying on one's deathbed, with life

²³⁴ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, **The Path of Purification**, *ibid.*

²³⁵ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

slowly ebbing away. All one's friends and relatives are gathered around the bed, weeping and lamenting and one's body progressively degenerates. The glow of life fades from the face, and the pillow of death replaces it. Breathing becomes shallow. The lips dry up, slime forms on the lips, and the body becomes a lump of flesh unable to move freely. Bodily temperature drops, eyesight, hearing, and other senses lose clarity and then one becomes aware of past negative deeds.

These negative deeds weigh heavily on a dying person, since they will negatively affect one's future birth. One should think of how one will look around for help, but no one can help. One is responsible for one's own actions and not outside force can intervene. Through cultivating this meditation, we should develop a sense of urgency regarding religious practise and a poignant awareness of death.²³⁷ Through development of death which can help us to realize the impermanence and also to reduce our attachment of self and material pleasures.

Of all perceptions, remembering and developing awareness of death and impermanence is supreme. Awareness and remembrance of death are extremely important in Buddhism for two main reasons:²³⁸

1) By realizing that our lives are transitory, we will be more likely to spend our time wisely, doing positive, beneficial, virtuous actions, and refraining from negative, non-virtuous actions. The result of this is that we will be able to die without regret, and will be born in fortunate circumstances in our next life.

2) Remembering death will induce a sense of the great need to prepare ourselves for death. There are various methods that will enable us to overcome fear, attachment and other emotions that could arise at the time of death and cause our minds to be disturbed, unpeaceful, and even negative. Preparing for death will enable us to die peacefully, with a clear, positive state of mind. The benefits of being aware of death can be corroborated by the results of the near-death experience. The near-death experience occurs when people seem to die, for example, on an operating table or in a car

²³⁷ Powers J, **Introduction & Tibetan Buddhism**, op. cit., p. 289.

²³⁸ Sangye Khadro, **Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying**, op. cit.,

accident, but later they come back to life and describe the experiences they had.

We have noted a startling range of aftereffects and changes: a reduced fear and deeper acceptance of death; an increased concern for helping others; an enhanced vision of the importance of love; less interest in materialistic pursuits; a growing belief in a spiritual dimension and the spiritual meaning of life; and, of course, a greater openness to belief in the afterlife. Also, to help our minds be free of worry and anxiety and cultivate positive thoughts, such as faith, loving-kindness and compassion, and to avoid negative thoughts such as anger and attachment at the time of death.

In addition, when we prepare well on developing mindfulness of death, it is diligent, disenchantment with all kind of existences, cutting of our attachment to life, censuring evil doing, avoiding much storing and has no stain of attachment to and avarice for material pleasure or requisites or properties²³⁹, accepting impermanence grows in us; consequently the perception of suffering and the perception of non-self also appears in us. At the time of death, we will die happily, peacefully without any fears or worries and also without falling into such woeful states. If we don't attain the deathlessness in the present existence, we are at least headed for a happy destiny on the breakup of our body.²⁴⁰

4.4.2 How to Teach and Help the Dying

It is said that helping another person to die with a peaceful, positive state of mind is one of the greatest acts of kindness and merit that we can offer. The reason for this is that the moment of death is so crucial for determining the rebirth to come, which in turn will affect subsequent rebirths. However, helping a dying person is no easy task. When people die, they experience numerous difficulties and changes, and this would naturally give rise to confusion as well as painful emotions. They have physical needs, relief from pain and discomfort, assistance in performing the most basic tasks such as drinking, eating, relieving themselves, bathing and so forth. They have emotional needs and to be treated with respect, kindness and love; to talk and be listened to; or, at certain times, to be left alone and in silence. They have spiritual needs to make sense of their lives, their

²³⁹ Mehm Tin Mon, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁴⁰ Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

suffering, and their death; to have hope for what lies beyond death; to feel that they will be cared for and guided by someone.

Thus, one of the most important skills in helping a dying person is to try to understand what his needs are, and do what we can to take care of them. We can best do this by putting aside our own needs and wishes whenever we visit them, and make up our minds to simply be there for them, ready to do whatever has to be done, whatever will help them to be more comfortable, happy and at peace. There are many excellent books available on how to care for a dying person in terms of his physical and emotional needs. Here we will focus on the spiritual needs and how to provide for these.

As mentioned above, when people approach death, they will at times experience disturbing emotions such as fear, regret, sadness, clinging to the people and things of this life, and even anger. They may have difficulty coping with these emotions, and may find themselves overwhelmed, as if drowning in them. What is helpful to them during these difficult times is to sit with them, listen compassionately and offer comforting words to calm their minds, but to be able to do this effectively; we need to know how to cope with our own emotions. Being in the presence of death will most probably bring up the same disturbing emotions in our mind as in the dying person's mind such as fear, sadness, attachment, a sense of helplessness, and so forth. Some of these emotions we may never have experienced before, and we may feel surprised and even confused to find them in our mind. Thus we need to know how to deal with them in ourselves before we can really help and deal with turbulent emotions. If the dying person is a family member or friend, we will have the additional challenge of having to deal with our attachments and expectations in relation to him or her. Although it is difficult, the best thing we can do is to learn to let go of the person.

Clinging to them is unrealistic, and will only cause more suffering for both of us. Again, remembering impermanence is the most effective remedy to attachment, someone else to deal with them. One of the best methods for dealing with emotions is mindfulness meditation (see above). Another is reminding ourselves of impermanence: the fact that we, ourselves, other people, our bodies and minds, and just about everything in the world around us, is constantly changing, never the same from one moment to the moment. Awareness and acceptance of impermanence is one of the most powerful antidotes to clinging and attachment, as well as to fear,

which is often a sense of resistance to change. Also, cultivating firm faith in the Three Jewels of Refuge of the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, is extremely valuable in providing the strength and courage we need to face and deal with turbulent emotions.

If the dying person is a family member or friend, we will have the additional challenge of having to deal with our attachments and expectations in relation to him or her. Although it is difficult, the best thing we can do is to learn to let go of the person. Clinging to them is unrealistic, and will only cause more suffering for both of us. Again, remembering impermanence is the most effective remedy to attachment. One more thing is that the two methods that are very important in helping a dying person are giving hope and finding forgiveness. When dying, many people experience guilt, regret, depression or a sense of hopelessness. You can help them by allowing them to express their feelings, and by listening compassionately and non-judgmentally. It is, however, to encourage them to remember the good things they have done in their life, and to feel positive about the way they have lived. Focus on their successes and virtues, not on their failings and wrongdoings.

If they are open to the idea, remind them that their nature is basically pure and good (in Buddhism we call this “Buddha’s nature”) and that their faults and mistakes are transitory and removable, like dirt on a window. Some people may be concerned that their wrongdoings are so numerous and great that they could never be forgiven. If they believe in God or Buddha, assure them that the nature of God and Buddha is pure, unconditional love and compassion, so they always forgive whatever mistakes we make. If the person has no such belief, then what he needs is to forgive them. You can help them to do this by encouraging them to express their heartfelt regret for their mistakes and asking for forgiveness. That is all they need to do. Remind them that whatever actions were done in the past are over and cannot be changed, so it’s best to let them go. However, we can change from this moment. If the person truly regrets his mistakes and wishes to transform himself, there is no reason which he cannot find forgiveness. If there are specific people the person has harmed and who are still alive, encourage the person to express his regret and request forgiveness.

Of these, and do whatever you can to provide them with confidence and inspiration to do these practices. If they have difficulty in practicing on their own, owing to pain or tiredness or a confused state of

mind, do the practice with them. If possible, place images of the Buddha, Guan Yin, Amitābha, and so forth within the sight of the person. If he or she has any Spiritual Teachers, you can put their pictures as well. It's also very beneficial to recite the names of Buddhas to the person, because the Buddhas have promised to help the living beings to avoid from being reborn in states of suffering. Speak to the person, or read passages from books, about impermanence and other Buddhist teachings—but do this only if they are receptive, do not force it on them. Also, be cautious about teaching them something that would cause their minds to be confused or upset (for example, if the subject is too difficult for them to understand, or if it is new and unfamiliar). Remember that the most important thing is to help the person have a peaceful and positive state of mind before and during his death. It may be that the dying person does not know how to meditate or pray. In that case you can meditate or do other prayers or practices in their presence, dedicating the merit of these that they have the peaceful minds at the time of death and a good rebirth.

You can also teach them how to pray, using standard Buddhist prayers, or by praying in their own words, in their own hearts. For example, they can pray to the Buddha, whichever Buddha figure they are familiar with, to be with them during this difficult time, to help them find the strength and courage to deal with their suffering, to keep their mind peaceful, and to guide them to a good rebirth in the next life. Here is a simple meditation you could teach the dying person to do: ask them to visualize in front of them whatever Buddha-figure they have faith in, seeing it as the embodiment of all positive, pure qualities such as compassion, loving-kindness, forgiveness and wisdom. Light flows from this figure, filling their body and mind, purifying them of all the negative things they have ever done or thought, and blessing them to have only pure, positive thoughts in their minds.

The person's mind becomes oneness with the Buddha's mind, completely pure and good. If the dying person is not able to do this meditation (e.g. if they are too ill, or unconscious) then you can do it for them, imagining the Buddha-figure above the person's head. Also, to help their minds to be free from worry and anxiety, encourage them not to worry about their loved ones and their possessions assure them that everything will be taken care of and not to be afraid of what lies ahead but to have faith in the Three Jewels. Do what you can to help them cultivate positive thoughts, such as faith, loving-kindness and compassion, and to avoid negative thoughts such as anger and attachment.

If the dying persons belong to another religion, make an effort to understand what they know and believe, and speak to them accordingly. For example, if they believe in God and heaven, encourage them to have faith in God and pray to God, and to feel confident that they will be with God in heaven after they leave their lives. And have a respectful attitude towards the person and their beliefs and practices. Remember, the most important thing is to help the persons to have positive thoughts in their minds, in accordance with their religious beliefs and practices. Do not attempt to impose your own beliefs or try to convert them. To do that would be disrespectful and unethical, and could cause them to become confused and disturbed.

If the person has no religion, use non-religious terminology to speak to them in the ways that will help them to be free of negative thoughts such as anger and attachment, and develop positive thoughts and a peaceful state of mind. If they show interest in knowing what you believe in, you can tell them, but be careful not to preach. It might be more effective to have a discussion in which you openly share ideas with each other. For example, if the person asks you what happens after we die, instead of immediately launching into an explanation of rebirth, you might say something like “I’m not really sure. What do you think?” And take it from there. If they genuinely wish to know about Buddhist beliefs and practices, it’s perfectly OK to explain these to them. You can talk about the Buddha’s life and teachings, the Four Noble Truths, impermanence, loving-kindness and compassion, and so forth. Just be sensitive to their response, be careful not to be pushy, otherwise the person could become negative.

To learn really to help those who are dying is to begin to become fearless and responsible about our own dying, and to find in ourselves the beginnings of an unbounded compassion that we may have never suspected. Helping to look after people who are sick and dying is itself the best preparation for our own death.²⁴¹

4.5 The Influence of Marañassati to the Buddhist Funeral Rites in Thailand

Funeral rites are the most elaborate of all the life-cycle ceremonies and the ones entered into most fully by the monks. It is a basic teaching of Buddhism that existence is suffering, whether birth,

²⁴¹ Sangye Khadro, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

daily living, old age or dying. This teaching is never in a stronger position than when death enters a home. Indeed Buddhism may have won its way the more easily in Thailand because it had more to say about death and the hereafter than had animism. The people rely upon monks to chant the sutta that will benefit the deceased, and to conduct all funeral rites and memorial services. To conduct the funeral rites for the dead may be considered the one indispensable service rendered the community by the monks. For this reason the crematory in each large temple has in secular society.

In an ordinary funeral rite in Thailand, the cremation takes place within three or seven days. Sometimes the cremation is deferred for a week to allow distant relatives to attend or to show special honor to the dead. Most Thai people always held funeral ceremonies in accordance with Thai tradition and custom when one of their family members passes away.

According to Thai tradition, when a person is dying an effort should be made to fix his mind upon the Buddhist scriptures or to get him to repeat one of the names of Buddha, such as 'Arahant' or 'Buddho'. The name may be whispered in his ear if the person is far gone. Sometimes four syllables which are considered the heart of the *Abhidhamma*, *ci*, *ce*, *ru*, and *ni*, representing "*Citta, Cetasika, Rūpa and Nibbāna*" are written on a piece of paper and put in the mouth of the dying man. It is hoped that if the last thoughts of the patient are directed to Buddha and the precepts, that the fruit of this meritorious act will bring good to the deceased in his new existence. In a village, at the moment of death, the relatives may set up a wailing both to express sorrow and to notify the neighbors who will then come to be of help. After death, a bathing ceremony takes place in which relatives and friends pour water over one hand of the deceased. The body is then placed in a coffin and surrounded with wreaths, candles and sticks of incense. If possible a photograph of the deceased is placed alongside, and colored lights are suspended about the coffin. Then the family of the dead can continue to benefit them by doing positive, virtuous actions, such as ordain his own son as novices in order to get merit from his own son's ordination and dedicate the merits of these actions for the dead person to have a good rebirth, and to quickly become free from cyclic existence.²⁴² In addition, they invite monks to recite or chant *Abhidhamma* and also give a Dhamma talk.

²⁴² Sangye Khadro, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

The chanting of *Abhidhamma* mostly is held in the evening because at that time their family members are free from their work and also gives an opportunity for them to listen to *Abhidhamma*. During the Recitation of *Abhidhamma*, the dead person's family, relatives, friends, and guests should listen to it with mindfulness and try to realize it by concentrating on *Maraṇassati*. Doing this, it can help them to realize impermanence of 'self'. Everything is impermanent, marked by birth, aging, death, joy, sorrow, pain, grief and despair. Everything is in the process of becoming and dying. When they realize that everything is impermanent, it can help alert them to the preciousness of being alive and to treasure it by living life well and meaningfully. If they practise mindfulness of death, they will then be more aware of death and develop a sense of urgency in life that prompts them to do good things when they can in the time they have, before the end comes.

A man carrying a white banner on a long pole often leads the procession to the crematorium grounds. He is followed by some elderly men carrying flowers in silver bowls and then by a group of eight to ten monks walking ahead of the coffin and holding a broad ribbon (*bhusa yong*) which extends to the deceased. Often one of the monks repeats portions of the *Abhidhamma* en route. The coffin may be carried by pall bearers or conveyed in a funeral car drawn by a large number of friends and relatives who feel that they are performing their last service for the deceased and engaged in a meritorious act while doing so. If the procession is accompanied by music the players may ride in ox carts or in a motor truck at the rear. During the service at the cemetery the monks sit facing the coffin on which rest the *Pangsukula* robes. After the chanting the coffin is placed on a pyre made of brick; the people then come up with lighted torches of candles, incense and fragrant wood and toss them beneath the coffin so that the actual cremation takes place at once. At that time, we can learn and realize the truth of life that 'All of us must die' or 'Surely we shall die.' Later the ashes may be collected and kept in an urn.

As Ven.Paññānanda Bhikkhu said once at a Dhamma talk during a funeral:²⁴³

“Attending a funeral gives us the chance to contemplate death and gain wisdom. It helps us realize that death is inevitable. Death can

²⁴³ Paññānanda Bhikkhu. “**Saeng Dharma Song Thang.**” Retrieved on April 10, 2010, <http://www.panya.iirt.net/newswatchon/Buddhism.html>.

happen to anyone anytime anywhere; therefore we should always live our life with mindfulness. If we come to a funeral without thinking, just as another face among the consoling guests who gather around the living, the relatives of the dead, then it is nothing more than a social function.”

We should gain wisdom and see the truth of life when we attend a funeral because everything, from a dead body to all the decorations, points to Dhamma, the truth. They are reminding us, telling us, begging us to understand. We sometimes do not open our ears to listen, our eyes to see, or our mind to think; sometimes we look but do not understand. Therefore, we fail to gain any insight from it.

He further said that “I would like to remind all of you. Every time you go to a cemetery or attend a funeral, use that occasion to learn, to awaken wisdom so that you will be more careful in how you live your daily life. If you do something wrong, behave in a non-virtuous way, defame your good name, you will change. Or during attending a funeral ceremony, you must be able to see clearly that all those are evils and we must realize them along with the corpse. Most of you pay the last respect to the dead by putting by on the coffin flowers, candles, incense sticks, and decorations. It is called a fake burning. Later there is a real burning of the corpse or the cremation (*phao sop*). There still is another kind of real burning that does not involve any corpse.”²⁴⁴

The frequent chanting while attending the funeral are as follows:

Adhuvan̄ jivitaṃ, Living is impermanent,
Dhuvan̄ maranaṃ, Death is permanent,
Avassaṃ maya maritabbaṃ, Surely we shall die,
Maraṇapariyosanaṃ me jivitaṃ, My life has death as the end,
Jivitaṃ me aniyataṃ, My living is not permanent,
Maranaṃ me niyataṃ. My death is certain.

²⁴⁴ Paññānanda Bhikkhu. “**Saeng Dharma Song Thang.**” *ibid.*

Therefore, a funeral ritual which is held according to the Thai tradition and custom is not only to make merit and dedicate the merit for this ritual to dead person, but also to help people who are alive to prepare themselves well before death comes. To show them that everything is to face the change, they have to do good deeds for their property in the next existence.

Summary Remarks

Death is a subject that most people do not like to hear about, talk about, or even think about. Why is this? After all, whether we like it or not, each and every one of us will have to die one day. Moreover, even before we have to face our own death, we will most probably have to face the deaths of other people—our family members, friends, colleagues, and so forth. Death is a reality, a fact of life, so it would be better to approach it with openness and acceptance, rather than fear and denial. Perhaps the discomfort we have towards death is because we think that it will be a terrible, painful and depressing experience. However, it doesn't have to be so. Dying can be a time of learning and growth; a time of deepening our love, our awareness of what is important in life, and our faith and commitment to spiritual beliefs and practices. Death can even be an opportunity to gain insight into the true nature of ourselves and all things, an insight that will enable us to become free from all suffering.

Of all perceptions, remembering death and impermanence is supreme. Awareness and remembrance of death are supreme because by accepting it, it brings peace. And it helps us become aware of what is really important in life, for instance, being kind and loving to others, being honest and unselfish, so that we will put our energy into those things and avoid doing what would cause us to feel fear and regret in the face of death. One more thing, when we develop mindfulness of death and prepare well, it will enable us to overcome fear, attachment and other emotions that could arise at the time of death and cause our mind to be disturbed, unpeaceful, and even negative. Preparing for death will enable us to die peacefully, with a clear, positive state of mind. The benefits of being aware of death can be corroborated by the results of the near-death experience.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1 Results of the Study

Marāṇassati is one type of Buddhist meditation which is mindfulness of death following eight ways of practice: 1) through the presence of a murderer; 2) through the absence of an efficient cause; 3) through inference; 4) through the body being common to many; 5) through the weakness of the life-principle; 6) through the distinguishing of time; 7) through the absence of the sign; and 8) through the shortness of the moment. Thus, a meditator should develop his meditation subject in these eight ways. In the *Vimuttimaggā* (The Path of Freedom), it is mentioned that there are four kinds of mindfulness of death, namely, 1) association with anxiety; 2) association with fear; 3) association with indifference; and 4) association with wisdom.

The mindfulness associated with the loss of one's own beloved child is associated with anxiety. The mindfulness connected with the sudden death of one's own child is associated with fear. The mindfulness of death by burner (of corpse) is associated with indifference. Remembering (the nature of) the world, one develops aversion called mindfulness of death associated with wisdom. Here, a meditator should not practise the mindfulness of anxiety, fear, or indifference because through them he is not able to remove tribulation. Tribulation can only be removed through the development mindfulness of death associated with wisdom.

In *Pathama Marāṇassati Sutta*, the term *Marāṇa* as used to denote the ending of the existence or physical death, i.e. the dissolution of the combination of the five aggregates in the form of individuality. Lord Buddha suggested various techniques on how to contemplate on death strategically. This contemplation of death is one of the classical meditation-subjects treated in the *Visuddhimaggā* which states that in order to obtain the fullest results one should practise this meditation in the correct way, that is, with mindfulness, with a sense of urgency and with understanding. For example, supposing a young disciple fails to realize

keenly that death can come upon him at any moment, and regards it as something that will occur in old age in the distant future; his contemplation of death will be lacking strength and clarity, so much so that it will run on lines which are not conducive to success.

How great and useful the contemplation of death is can be seen from the following beneficial effects enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga*: The disciple who devotes himself to this contemplation of death is always vigilant, takes no delight in any form of existence, gives up hankering after life, censures evil doing, is free from craving as regards the requisites of life. His perception of impermanence becomes established, he realizes the painful and soulless nature of existence and at the moment of death he is devoid of fear, and remains mindful and self-possessed. Finally, if in this present life he fails to attain to *Nibbāna*, upon the dissolution of the body, he is bound for a happy destiny.

This is how Buddhist meditation solves the issue of death, and it has an intuitive, practical logic to it. Buddhism not only teaches that thinking about death is auspicious to our life and directly contributes to smart living, but also provides clear guidelines on how to reflect on death. Its purpose is to help us to build on our mindfulness and thus wisdom of the Ultimate Truth (*Nibbāna*).

However, if we talk about death, death is a subject that most people do not like to hear about, talk about, or even think about. Why is this? After all, whether we like it or not, each and every one of us will have to die one day. And even before we have to face our own death, we will most probably have to face the deaths of other people, our family members, friends, colleagues, and so forth. Death is a reality, a fact of life, so wouldn't it be better to approach it with openness and acceptance, rather than the fear and the denial? Perhaps the discomfort we have towards death is because we think it to be a terrible, painful and depressing experience. However, it doesn't have to be so. Dying can be a time of learning and growth; a time of deepening our love, our awareness of what is important in life, and our faith and commitment to spiritual beliefs and practices. Death can even be an opportunity to gain insight into the true nature of ourselves and all things and an insight will enable us to become free from all suffering.

According to the Buddhist way of thinking, death, far from being a subject to be shunned and avoided, is the key that unlocks the

seeming mystery of life. It is by understanding death that we understand life; for death is part of the process of life in the larger sense. In another sense, life and death are two ends of the same process and if you understand one end of the process, you also understand the other end. Hence, by understanding the purpose of death, we also understand the purpose of life. It is the contemplation of death, the intensive thought that it will someday come upon us, that softens the hardest of hearts, binds one to another with cords of love and compassion, and destroys the barriers of caste, creed and race among the peoples of this earth all of whom are subject to the common destiny of death. Death is a great leveler. Pride of birth, pride of position, pride of wealth, pride of power must give way to the all-consuming thought of inevitable death.

It is the contemplation of death that helps to destroy the infatuation with sense-pleasure. It is the contemplation of death that destroys vanity. It is the contemplation of death that gives balance and a healthy sense of proportion to our highly over-wrought minds with their misguided sense of values. It is the contemplation of death that gives strength and steadiness and direction to the erratic human mind, now wandering in one direction, now in another, without an aim, without a purpose. It is not for nothing that the Buddha has, in the very highest terms, commended to his disciples the practice of mindfulness regarding death.

Thus it will be seen that mindfulness of death not only purifies and refines the mind but also has the effect of robbing death of its fears and terrors, and helps one at that solemn moment when he is gasping for his last breath, to face that situation with fortitude and calm. He is never unnerved at the thought of death but is always prepared for it. Of all perceptions, remembering death and impermanence is supreme. Awareness and remembrance of death are supreme because by accepting, it brings peace. And it helps us to become aware of what is really important in life, for instance, being kind and loving to others, being honest and unselfish, so that we will put our energy into those things and avoid doing what would cause us to feel fear and regret in the face of death. One more thing, when we develop mindfulness of death and prepare for it well, it will enable us to overcome fear, attachment and other emotions that could arise at the time of death and cause our minds to be disturbed, unpeaceful, and even negative. Preparing for death will enable us to die peacefully with a clear, positive state of mind. The

benefits of being aware of death can be corroborated by the results of the near-death experience.

Furthermore, if one who practises mindfulness of death (*Maraṇassati*) is possessed of diligence as regards the higher meritorious states. He does not hoard clothes and ornaments. He is not stingy. He is able to live longer; he does not cling to things, and is endowed with the perception of impermanence, the perception of suffering and the perception of non-self. He faces the will and approaches the ambrosial. When he comes to death, he does not suffer in bewilderment. Moreover, awareness and remembrance of death are extremely important in Buddhism for two main reasons:

1) By realizing that our life is transitory, we will be more likely to spend our time wisely, doing positive, beneficial, virtuous actions, and refraining from negative, non-virtuous actions. The result of this is that we will be able to die without regret, and will be born in fortunate circumstances in our next life.

2) Remembering death will induce a sense of the great need to prepare ourselves for death. There are various methods (e.g. prayer, meditation, and working on our mind) that will enable us to overcome the fear, the attachment and other emotions that could arise at the time of death and cause our mind to be disturbed, unpeaceful, and even negative. Preparing for death will enable us to die peacefully, with a clear, positive state of mind. The benefits of being aware of death can be corroborated by the results of the near-death experience.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research Works

My present research work is “**The Analytical Study of Maraṇassati in Theravada Buddhism**” which deeply concerns its meanings, its development, and its benefits which are mentioned in *Tipiṭaka*, *Visudhimagga*, and also later texts. The matters which have been explained and discussed in this present research work are related to how to develop *Maraṇāssati* in the correct way, and how to face death in with a positive, peaceful state of mind, without any fear, worry and also without confusing the mind at the time of death.

Early Buddhism was concerned with the problem of all types of suffering, especially the suffering caused by aging and death. The desire

for immortality was recognized: In being a subject to sickness, old age and death, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to sickness, old age and death' but this is not to be achieved by wishing. In Buddhism, the root of all types of suffering, including grief and fear of death was the desire for unchangeableness in a world in which all things were continually changing. To end the suffering, we must end desire.

Therefore, my research work represents the right way to develop mindfulness of death (*Marāṇassati*), especially for those who want to live without fear of death. Essentially I hope that this study will be beneficial and advantageous to Buddhists and Non-Buddhists alike. I do hope that this present thesis will inspire keen interest for the readers and practitioners in pursuing them in their academics both theoretical and practical.

This research work is just only a small part of the theoretical and practical aspects of *Marāṇassati*. I do suggest and hope that the next researcher would like to research on this field more widely and more in detail in order to benefit, and for the happiness to beings with the following topics:

1. The Study of the Influence of the Practice of *Marāṇassati* in Modern Society.
2. The Comparative Study of *Marāṇassati* between Theravada and Mahayana.
3. The Comparative Study of *Marāṇassati* between Theravada and Vajrayana (Tibetan).
4. The Study of the Attitudes of People toward Death and the Practice of *Marāṇassati* in the Information Technology Age.

I also expect and believe that my research work will be beneficial and useful for future research work to helping them in their further research in the field.

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Appendix A.

The Development of Maraṇassati in Suttanta Piṭaka

Maraṇassati Sutta: Mindfulness of Death (1)²⁴⁵

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying at Nadika, in the Brick Hall. There he addressed the monks, 'Monks!'

'Yes, lord,' the monks replied.

The Blessed One said, 'Mindfulness of death, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit & great benefit. It gains a footing in the Deathless, has the Deathless as its final end. Therefore you should develop mindfulness of death.'

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I already develop mindfulness of death.'

'And how do you develop mindfulness of death?'

'I think, "O, that I might live for a day & night, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal." This is how I develop mindfulness of death.'

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I, too, already develop mindfulness of death.'

'And how do you develop mindfulness of death?'

'I think, "O, that I might live for a day, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal." This is how I develop mindfulness of death.'

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I, too, develop mindfulness of death...' I think, "O, that I might live for the interval that it

²⁴⁵ A. 6. 19; A. III. 303. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr.

takes to eat a meal, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal"...

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I, too, develop mindfulness of death...'I think, "O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal"...

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I, too, develop mindfulness of death...'I think, "O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal"...

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, 'I, too, develop mindfulness of death...'I think, "O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal." This is how I develop mindfulness of death.'

When this was said, the Blessed One addressed the monks. 'Whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, "O, that I might live for a day & night... for a day... for the interval that it takes to eat a meal... for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal" — they are said to dwell heedlessly. They develop mindfulness of death slowly for the sake of ending the effluents.

'But whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, "O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food... for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal" — they are said to dwell heedfully. They develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the effluents.

'Therefore you should train yourselves: "We will dwell heedfully. We will develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the effluents." That is how you should train yourselves.'

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Maranassati Sutta: Mindfulness of Death (2) ²⁴⁶

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying at Nadika, in the Brick Hall. There he addressed the monks, 'Monks, mindfulness of death — when developed & pursued — is of great fruit & great benefit. It gains a footing in the Deathless, has the Deathless as its final end. And how is mindfulness of death developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the Deathless, and has the Deathless as its final end?

"There is the case where a monk, as day departs and night returns, reflects: "Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me." Then the monk should investigate: "Are there any evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die in the night?" If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

²⁴⁶ A 6 20; A III 306. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr.

'Further, there is the case in which a monk, as night departs and day returns, reflects: "Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me." Then the monk should investigate: "Are there any evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die during the day?" If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die during the day, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, undivided mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful mental qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die during the day, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities. 'This, monks, is how mindfulness of death is developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the Deathless, and has the Deathless as its final end.'

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

And who is the person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for sensuality... who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for the body... who has done what is good, what is skillful, has given protection to those in fear, and has not done what is evil, savage, or cruel... who has no doubt or perplexity, who has arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. When he comes down with a serious disease... he does not grieve, is not tormented, does not weep or beat his breast or grow delirious. This is another person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.

Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect... that "I am subject to death, have not gone beyond death"? There are beings who are intoxicated with a [typical] living person's intoxication with life. Because of that intoxication with life, they conduct themselves in a bad way in body... in speech... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that living person's intoxication with life will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker...

Now, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: "I am not the only one subject to death, who has not gone beyond death. To the extent that there are beings — past and future, passing away and re-arising — all beings are subject to death, have not gone beyond death." When he/she often reflects on this, the [factors of the] path take birth. He/she sticks with that path, develops it, cultivates it. As he/she sticks with that path, develops it and cultivates it, the fetters are abandoned, the obsessions destroyed.²⁴⁷

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him: "Well now, your majesty, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?"

"Just now, lord, I was engaged in the sort of royal affairs typical of head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth."

"What do you think, your majesty? Suppose a man, trustworthy and reliable, were to come to you from the east and on arrival would say: 'If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the east. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings [in its path]. Do whatever you think should be done.' Then a second man were to come to you from the west... Then a third man were to come to you from the north... Then a fourth man were to come to you from the south and on arrival would say: 'If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the south. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings. Do whatever you think should be done.' If, your majesty, such a great peril

²⁴⁷ A. 5. 57; A. III. 71. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr.

should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life — the human state being so hard to obtain — what should be done?"

"If, lord, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life — the human state being so hard to obtain — what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"I inform you, your majesty, I announce to you, your majesty: aging and death are rolling in on you. When aging and death are rolling in on you, great king, what should be done?"

"As aging and death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"There are, lord, elephant battles [fought by] head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth; but there is no use for those elephant battles, no scope for them, when aging and death are rolling in. There are cavalry battles... chariot battles... infantry battles... but there is no use for those infantry battles, no scope for them, when aging and death are rolling in. In this royal court there are counselors who, when the enemies arrive, are capable of dividing them by their wits; but there is no use for those battles of wits, no scope for them, when aging and death are rolling in. In this royal court there is abundant bullion and gold stored in vaults and depositories, and with such wealth we are capable of buying off enemies when they come; but there is no use for those battles of wealth, no scope for them, when aging and death are rolling in. As aging and death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"So it is, your majesty! So it is, your majesty! As aging and death are rolling in on you, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, further said this:

"Like massive boulders, mountains pressing against the sky, moving in from all sides, crushing the four directions, so aging and death come

rolling over living beings: noble warriors, priests, workers, outcastes, & scavengers. They spare nothing. They trample everything. Here elephant troops can hold no ground, nor can chariots or infantry, nor can a battle of wits or wealth win out. So a wise person, seeing his own good, steadfast, secures confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha. One who practices the Dhamma in thought, word, & deed, receives praise here on earth and after death rejoices in heaven."²⁴⁸

He would not chase after the past, nor place expectations on the future. What is past is left behind. The future is as yet unreached. Whatever quality is present he clearly sees right there, right there. Unvanquished, unshaken, that's how he develops the mind. Ardently doing his duty today, for — who knows? — Tomorrow death may come. There is no bargaining with Death & his mighty horde. Whoever lives thus ardently, relentlessly both day & night, has truly had an auspicious day: So says the Peaceful Sage.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ S. 325; S. I. 100. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr.

²⁴⁹ M. 131; M. III. 187. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, tr.

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