

# BUDDHIST MEDITATION TO HARMONIOUS FAMILY, HEALTHCARE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

---

by Ven. Dr. Thich Nu Hang Lien\*

---

## ABSTRACT

In the spirit of “invariable immutable”, Buddhist meditation has been merged and developed with the culture of each nation forming the lineage with various nuances of flexibility. In Vietnam, meditation that is combined by the patriarchs in a flexible way and harmony with the national identity, come into life to create a very heroic history of Vietnamese. Nowadays, it can be said that Vipassana Meditation is the enlightened essence of Buddhism with the only guiding principle of enlightenment towards the complete liberation from suffering. Most Buddhist sects have taken it as the basis for the practice on the path to spiritual improvement and the building of a sustainable society. The meditation technique has spread throughout the East and West as a living art and is taught as an educational system that combines Buddhist teachings with modern scientific knowledge.

Indeed, Buddhist meditation has a profound influence on all aspects of social life today. Many studies have shown that the positive effects of meditation on physical health as well as the spirit of those who practice frequently. The application of meditation in modern society has been contributed to create a civilized world, which

---

\* Lecturer in Bst Philosophy  
Vietnam Bst University, HCMC, Vietnam

is stable and safe. It is a world of physical and mental well-being, virtuous personality, and high moral standards. This is a sustainable society with good people who are knowledgeable, without ignorance and craving; certainly, no more suffering; peace, happiness, heart with full of love and positive energy will be present in life.

In general, Buddhist meditation based on the Noble Eightfold Path - Eightfold ethical aspect must be perfected to be the righteous person. The practice of mindfulness helps each individual cultivate virtue, persevere with the ideal and promote his or her talents. The meditation life brings people happiness, avoid bad habits and ignorance but lives for the community and share love. In short, practicing mindfulness will contribute to create a harmonious family; build a civilized and sustainable society - on the basis of each individual of every family must “knows” living meditation.

## 1. BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN THE MODERN LIFE

### 1.1 Awareness of Buddhist Meditation

Beginning from the cradle of Indian Buddhism, the Buddha’s meditation method is widely taught around the world in time like these. This is the liberating process established firmly on three stages: Morality (Sila), Concentration (Samadhi) and Wisdom (Panna). Meditation, according to the Pāli language ‘Bhàvanà’, means ‘practice’, ‘cultivating’ or ‘practicing to get used to it’, but due to the translation of the scriptures, there is often confusion between the two words Bhàvanà and Jhàna (states of mind in meditation with no objective); therefore meditation becomes mysterious and difficult to understand for those who want to practice. The Buddha is said to have identified two paramount mental qualities arisen from wholesome meditative practice:

- Samatha, calm abiding, which steadies, composes, unifies and concentrates the mind;
- Vipassanā, insight, which enables one to see, explore and discern “formations” (conditioned phenomena based on the five aggregates).

In the Pāli canon, the Buddha never mentions independent *samatha* and *vipassana* meditation practices; instead, *samatha* and

*vipassana* are two “qualities of mind” to be developed through meditation. When [the Pāli suttas] depict disciples of the Buddha to meditate, they never quote him as saying ‘go do vipassana,’ but always ‘go do jhana.’ And they never equate the word “vipassana” with any mindfulness techniques. In the few instances where they do mention vipassana, they almost always pair it with samatha — not as two alternative methods, but as two qualities of mind that a person may ‘gain’ or ‘be endowed with,’ and should be developed together. The main difference between these two qualities of meditation shows that concentration meditation, which helps practitioners achieve peace of mind, alleviates defilements but does not completely take the end of suffering; while insight meditation is capable of the root of affliction through the development of wisdom on impermanence, suffering and non-self. It can be said that, Samatha Meditation was born before Buddhism, but Vipassana meditation was the great discovery of Buddha devoted to humanity.

According to the history of Buddhism, the Buddha is a Great Wisdom and Compassion of historical person, not a mythical one. More than 26 centuries ago, the achievement of the supreme path of righteousness has been the practice of experiencing through the path of Concentration meditation (Samatha) and insight meditation (Vipassana), to purify the mind and pass on suffering. However, Buddhist meditation practice is not just for Buddhists to practice but can be applied to anyone who aims to the highest spiritual goal of enlightenment and complete liberation. The training of the mind by the meditation method is step by step to purify the mind, transform delusion into wise understanding, and ultimately overcome suffering and reaches true happiness. Generally, using meditation in life at any age will help people to adjust their misconceptions and live in accordance with the rules of nature.

## 1.2. Educate meditation to fulfill the spiritual needs in modern life

In the past, people often had false judgments about Buddhist meditation, because it was thought that meditation is a supreme spiritual practice only for the Buddhist practitioners for liberation, not related to social life. In fact, meditation is a cultivation within

the human mind stream, which is abstract, without the experience of guidance, it will be easy to fall into paranoia and mental crisis, or “Cultivate Insanity”. Because of this point, meditation seem to be framed in some Buddhist traditions, but not so many people understand the noble value of this technique and dare to practice Meditation in life.

However, in the scientific civilization, people re-research religion in the past, so no scholar can deny the great contribution of Buddhism in general or Meditation in particular for humanity in all perspective. Particularly, human education is an important field mentioned by The Buddha, and at the same time He offers very specific methods of human education. The Buddha taught that educating people is an act in practical, not a philosophy or a moral argument. The application of Buddha’s teachings not only has a great impact on personal life but also on human society. Scientist Albert Einstein once said: “Buddhism is a scientific religion that has made great contributions to human life.” A recent religious seminar also acknowledged: “Buddhism is the most peaceful religion in the world”.

The most effective method of education in Buddhism is to emphasize on each individual education to recognize responsibility in the group, because each person has a different cognitive, emotional, intellectual and living environment. Therefore, depending on each person, there are psychological education measures to develop different potentials. The teaching “Everyone to control oneself. Master the current moments in life” is one of the unique ways of education that The Buddha taught in the Samyutta Sutra,<sup>1</sup> Chapter “The Reed”:

“Not complain about the past,  
 Not expect the future,  
 Live with the present,  
 Therefore, maintain peace.  
 As expect coming things,  
 As complain past things,

---

1. Samyutta Nikaya, S.I. VI.

So, the fools worn out,  
Like green leaves shedding”

When researching on modern psychological education, especially psychotherapy, we will encounter many people with psychological disorders, melancholy spirit of the youth due to unhealthy individual thinking. Especially the thinking about the past is not practical, as well as the dreams about an illusory future, make people lose control, or even lose themselves. Therefore, the study of meditation helps people master the feelings of themselves as an indispensable necessity in the modern world. As humanity approaches the peak of material civilization, it is when people need to practice spiritual values to balance in life.

In the international period of integration and development is an opportunity for people to flourish their lives, but on the contrary, they become much busier, more tired and more stressful with challenges and competition. Advanced scientific means which has increased the hustle and bustle of life make people feel not enough time to perform all day-to-day tasks. It can be said that the dream of finding the ideal life of man has exchanged all his strength and talent so that he has never found happiness.

Thus, humanity education that transmits knowledge, physical and moral education, aesthetics, physiology and labor has not yet been able to express the overall meaning of happiness. Young people, specifically, these days are increasingly falling into moral degeneration. The media information on newspapers, television about pitiful stories in the school, as well as in the social life takes place and make life more and more complicated. All those things as a wake-up call for every one to recognize the value of spiritual education. People need to be educated about the way of life to calm down, to master themselves and to let go more in life. Vipassana Meditation is the most urgent and effective solution for people and society today, because meditation has the ability to train and transform the flow of consciousness, overcome the craving of self-esteem to have a true peaceful and happy life.

In the world today, from India to The West, meditation has been widely popularized in the areas of life. Meditation education

is applied in Indian schools, to help students well-prepared and confident to live their lives thanks to meditation techniques: “Awareness and letting go”. Military police and some institutions of the Indian government also learn and practice meditation. Not only that, meditation education is extended to prisoners or drug addicts; 10-day meditation courses are opened every month at major prisons in India with the hope of changing the wrong thinking and dignity of the person who committed the crime. In 1994, an experimental meditation course for 1,000 inmates at Tihar-New Delhi prison, one of the largest prisons worldwide (10,000 people) in India, applied Vipassana meditation and achieved remarkable achievements in reforming the dignity of prisoners.<sup>2</sup>

Meditation education by scientific technique is really a great contribution of Buddhism to humanity if we can discover the great effects of meditation on those who know how to practice.

In terms of sentiment, meditation education helps people develop the ability to concentrate to gain peace of mind, so that life becomes clear, excited and joyful.

In terms of psychology, meditation education is the process of psychological transformation from passive to active; from greed, anger, and ignorance - the source of sin, suffering becomes inattentive, unfounded, ignorant - the shore of holiness, happiness.

Practicing meditation daily helps the human mind to be stable in health, maintain good memories and increase the ability to concentrate and think and create. Especially for young people, if they know how to train themselves in meditation, they will have better knowledge and eliminate tired, passive, depressed, melancholy due to the passion for electronics.

Therefore, meditation technique becomes a living art of busy people; they use meditation in painting, music, poetry, tea ceremony, and teaching etc. Meditation education based on science, if applied thoroughly in life, will surely become a good factor for a humanized and comprehensive education.

---

2. Raja.M, Vipassana in Prisons, (VRI Serise No.126), pp. 1-4.



## 2. MEDITATION TO HEALTHCARE AND HARMONIOUS FAMILY

### 2.1 Meditation to healthcare

Modern life has expanded human needs beyond the basics of eating, drinking and resting. The number of beauty salons, medical centers and community learning centers is on the rise to meet the pursuit of people today for beauty, health and intellect. Spirituality is sought after as a gateway to these virtues as it leads to the stillness of the mind. Meditation and yoga, for this reason, have become increasingly popular with a good variety of different sects such as Qigong meditation, Mantra meditation, Hatha yoga, yengar yoga and Bikram yoga. In fact, Practitioners of meditation yoga pursue these techniques to achieve only for the physical healthcare, but vipassana Meditation is really to attain calmness and to purify the mind and body, which together leads to good health. Good health in the mean refers to a state of completely refreshing physical, mental and social well-being, not just simply a state without disease or disability.

Everyday life has become a source of constant stressors to many people which lead to numerous deleterious effects on physical and mental health. While disease states of the body such as those of the digestive, cardiovascular, genital, endocrine and immune system can be addressed to a certain extent by modern medicine, the suffering of the mind cannot. In other words, diseases of the body and the mind persist despite medical advances.

The seven kinds of emotion experienced by man are mentioned in the book of “Emperor of Inner Royal,” a famous work of ancient Chinese medicine dated back 5000 years ago. These emotions form the cornerstone of disease prevention as they drive many disease states of both the body and the mind. In accordance with this philosophy, modern psychology classifies mental states into positive and negative ones. Positive states manifest as joy, happiness, optimism, confidence and are beneficial to a healthy mind and body. On the other hand, negative states such as sadness, anxiety, fear, anger, dissatisfaction, jealousy, envy, pessimism and depression are harmful. According to Oriental medicine doctrine, anything in excess is no good. Too much happiness can injure the heart; too

much anger can damage the liver; too much sadness can hurt the lung; too much worry can wound the spleen; too much fear can debilitate the kidney; too much horrors can harm the stomach.

Hai Thuong Lan Ong, a master of medicine of Vietnam, once said that disease states of the body have their roots in a diseased mind. However, treating the body is not equivalent to and does not necessarily cure the mind. Despite the intimate connection between the body and the mind, a healthy mind is essential to resolve illnesses of the body. In the treatment and prevention of mental illnesses, meditation is an effective therapy. Not only can it dissolve negative emotions, but it can also prime changes of the mind leading to improved behavior, enhanced resilience and increased adaptability to external environment.

Meditation and other health benefits. A research review by Dr. Dao Huy Phong, Director of FNC Nutrition Food Research Center, shows that:

Phakyab Rinpoche escaped a leg amputation for foot necrosis through meditation. In stillness and harmony, cells gradually recover energy and reconstruct body and mind.

Dr. Lazar, Massachusetts Hospital, found that the mental density of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) participants has changed positively in areas of the brain related to learning, memory and emotions, the ability to connect, as well as the ability to stand in another person's shoes.

Research has shown that meditation has the potential to reduce depression, stress, lethargy, headache, insomnia and forgetfulness.

According to Dr. William Bushell, Director of Research Institute for East-West Research for Tibet House in New York, modern medicine is yet able to explain what this type of energy is, but there is a lot of scientific evidence showing that meditation helps regulate blood vessels, boosts immunity and provides more oxygen to the body.

Buddhist Meditation in general and Vipassana meditation in particular has quickly become popular as a moral and spiritual education. Vipassana technique not only calms, heals wounds caused by negative emotions, but also helps practitioners grasp



and eliminate the roots of the sufferings of the mind. It is Vipassana meditation that transcends the boundaries of religions, unites the body and the mind, and cures many psychological problems of the modern society, bringing happiness and health.

## 2. 2. Meditation brings peace to the harmonious family

There's an ancient saying: "manage the family, lead the country, control the world". Family is the cell of society: each happy family will contribute to building a peaceful society, and each individual in the family is a crucial factor in that process. If each person in the family is in a peaceful state, being able to listen to and sympathize with one another, the family will be a harmonious, united body without conflicts. However, it is not easy to achieve such a state, especially in a modern family. Economic burden, child care, relationship with other family members and other marital issues undoubtedly put a strain on the marriage, creating inner turmoils that push the couple to seek the pre-marital freedom they once had and unfortunately end the marriage. The divorce rate is getting higher and higher every year. The sociological research project led by Dr. Nguyen Minh Hoa (Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities) shows that the divorce rate in Vietnam is 31.4%; that is, for every 3 married couples, one will end with a divorce<sup>(4)</sup>.

The modern life seems to put extra burden on the family. Both partners now have to work. In addition, the modern view that one has to be able to express oneself tends to add tension to disagreements in the family. These disagreements often stem from trivial things that unfortunately under stress and pressure became much bigger issues. Under stress and pressure, one is often unable to control one's words and behavior, and often ends up hurting one's partner. Such behavior creates a vicious cycle of family members hurting one another, resulting in cold wars and eventually separation or divorce.

In fact, whether the family is happy or not depends largely on the attitude of each partner, and one of the important factors is harmony, sympathy and concession. It is undoubtedly easier said than done, but one must keep in mind that it is essential to remain calm even in anger, so that one can control one's words and emotions. It is best to talk to one's partner once the anger has faded,

in a gentle manner, with respect and positiveness. It is essential that this rule is followed through or the couple will grow further and further apart.

With so much burden from the modern life, to maintain family harmony, every family member must learn to be calm and patient. Meditation, through watching the breath and the state of the body, is considered the optimal way to help the angry person control himself. Medical research has shown that when a person is angry, blood flow becomes turbulent, heart rate increases and breathing becomes fast and shallow. These signs represent the body's display of anger: through blood flow, heart rate and breathing. Breathing meditation was created with the goal to disintegrate the focus of the mind on anger, using each breath as an anchor. This method is called "Anapanasati".

Breathing is related to the movement of the body, and so is anger. Moreover, both breathing and anger can be controlled by our conscious mind. As soon as the meditator is aware of the anger that is coming, he or she has mastered the anger and mastered him- or herself, and all the harms caused to others will not have the opportunity to arise. Each of the family members who practices meditation through mindfulness thus minimizes all conflicts and violence. And certainly, harmony and peace will be present in their family life. In the Singalovada Sutta,<sup>3</sup> the Buddha taught about the duties of husband and wife to each other, but all these things must be done based on love and mindfulness in order to be lasting and create true harmony. This shows that the peaceful spiritual life of each individual by the meditation method taught by the Buddha helps to control negative emotions and plays an extremely important role in building a harmonious and happy family.

### **3. THE LIFE OF MINDFULNESS CREATES A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY**

#### **3.1 Mindfulness - meditation in life**

In a translation works of the late Venerable Thich Minh Chau, writing about how to create happiness: "We can say a pure spiritual

---

3. Dīgha Nikāya, Sutta 31.

life, good reaction makes the body clean and free of disease. And a clean, robust body leads to a pure spiritual life. It is impossible to either stay healthy in a sick soul, or be holy be in a weak body. There is always a smile on the Buddha's face, because his body and mind are truly liberated. Therefore, to the Buddha, none happiness can exist with an impure life." And practicing and maintaining mindfulness is the most optimal way to keep the body and mind of practitioners clean, pure and happy. Because Mindfulness (Pali: *sammā-sati*) is a full awareness of what exists or is happening right in the present, and any idea of love or hatred that arises in thinking. It is consciousness and attention in the present, purposely with a calm attitude and unbound attachment. Remember, think and focus on what is happening in the present without judgment. As soon as mindfulness is present, all the grief in your mind has no chance of being developed. It is crucial and meaningful for everyone's life, it is closely related to the moment of peace in the present and the premise for the next peace.

A person who practices mindfulness will always be aware of his presence in all actions, words, and deeds. Therefore, controlling self's mood and thinking is also much more preciser. That mindful people always balance their emotions in time helps them calmer in their decisions, less mistake causing suffering for themselves and others around. And that is essential in current 4.0 society.

### 3.2. Current social situation

Currently, our country is in the period of integration and globalization. Crossing different cultures is inevitable; however, if it is selected on a solid moral foundation, it will help the country, people and society developed and civilized more; on the contrary, lacking of wise consideration based on moral foundation will create fluctuations and imbalances in different aspects of the country.

It must be acknowledged that the existence of technology 4.0 helps our country make great progress in most aspects of culture, economy, politics and society. Every citizen has the opportunity to approach the modern world. with advanced information technology quickly and promptly. However, the downside of such technological developments also makes social morality face to an

alarming recession and increasing crime in which victims are those who live in modern times. According to annual reports and statistics of the Department of Health, Department of Crime Prevention etc., crime rate is increasing and rejuvenating. The number of children with autism, hyperactivity, depression, especially in adolescents, greatly increased compared to previous decades. As stated by the director of the Institute of Mental Health, “If there were only 20-30 patients coming to the doctor each day, currently, 200 to 250 patients will be coming every day to check-up psychological, mental problems”<sup>4</sup>.

All of the above evidence shows that in modern society, people’s ability, especially young ones’, to control and restrain themselves is lower and lower. It is believed that the reason comes from the pressure of living and learning. Technological devices trap people into a virtual world, make them forget their reality and presence at that moment. According to the Dharma, it is the state of losing mindfulness and the seeds of greed, hatred and ignorance in unconsciousness that have the opportunity to dominate, control behaviors and words in an uncontrolled way.

Thus, it is crucial to establish mindfulness in life as a basis for personal happiness and to build a peaceful and sustainable society. Because mindfulness is the basis for dexterity. When we see clearly what is happening in the present, knowledge and insight can guide us to choose and act, not to follow the conditioned condition. And moreover, the Buddha also taught in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, mindfulness is a straight path to enlightenment: “This is a straight path to purifying the body and mind, to overcome melancholy and suffering, to end grief, to attain virtue, and to realize Nibbana.”

### 3.3 Meditation life - the foundation for sustainable society.

In the face of these crisis situations, people are increasingly inclined to find ways to purify their minds, reduce stress. And meditation practice is chosen as the best method. Meditation is no longer a separate, esoteric practice in Buddhism as it was in Vietnam, but it

---

4. <http://www.nhandan.com.vn/suckhoe/item/38336102-so-nguoi-den-kham-dieu-tri-tam-ly-ngay-mot-gia-tang.html>

is taught in a diverse way according to the needs of different subjects and learning objectives. Today, meditation in Vietnam becomes popular with many different forms such as chakras meditation and yoga meditation, etc. Meditation also goes deeper into the real life of society with many Specific meditation classes such as Master Le Thai Binh - founder of Vietnamese meditation were recognized by the Institute of Research and Application of Human Potential, carried the projects: Meditation therapy to support detoxification and anti-drug addiction. drugs, meditation improves health for veteran, meditation for children with disabilities, meditation supports cancer treatment, Meditation awakens school thinking, applied psychology, meditation against stroke for cardiovascular patients and meditation for businessmen.<sup>5</sup>

The value of meditation has made significant contribution to build a safer, happier and more sustainable society. Because that the process of meditation helps to maintain mindfulness in every thought, action is the factor which creates self-control and maturity in life and success in business. However, the practice of meditation to maintain mindfulness must be established in a concrete, solid and strong way in daily life. Without the eight elements of mind and body as the Buddha taught in the Eightfold Path<sup>6</sup>, meditation is easy to fall into paranoia, panic and even superstition. The basis of the path of the eightfold path includes:

- Right view, (Sammàditthi): right understanding.
- Right thought (Sammàsankappo): Thinking righteously.
- Right action (Sammakammanto): Legitimate action, not be deceitful.
- Right speech (Sammàanda): honest words.
- Right life (Sammaajivo): Living righteously, without greed, taking advantage and away from humanity.
- Right effort (Samavàyanto): Trying to be honest.

---

5. <https://dantri.com.vn/tu-van/hoc-thien-xu-huong-moi-cua-nguoi-tre-hien-dai-20180205111031281.htm>

6. <https://dantri.com.vn/tu-van/hoc-thien-xu-huong-moi-cua-nguoi-tre-hien-dai-20180205111031281.htm>

Right mindfulness (Sammāsati): Think truly.

Right concentration (Sammāsamādhi): steadfastly concentrates on the righteous path and cannot be discouraged and distracted.

A society with individuals, families, organizations, communities, and countries that know how to live a conscious life in meditation and not far from the Noble Eightfold Path is certainly a sustainable society where people know how to get along, balance their own interests and others'; know how to reside in yourself with changes in life. Applying the eight true elements according to the Buddha's teaching will create a pure, healthy soul, avoiding evilly bad and dirty things arising from body, words and thoughts. At the same time, create clear and compassionately wisdom mind to apply their abilities and advantages to build a society which is progressive, civilized humanity and ensure social welfare.

In the world of modern science like these, it depends on condition of each person to find back meditation as an art of life. We can learn meditation in many different ways and aspects, but the most common characteristic for those who practice meditation, is truly peace and very useful for the insight as well as other aspects in life. of a human being. Vipassana meditation is really an indispensable need for human beings at all times, is a remedy or cure of the suffering diseases of the mind, and is an art that is never backward to apply into personal life, in order to benefit human beings and also to benefit the world.