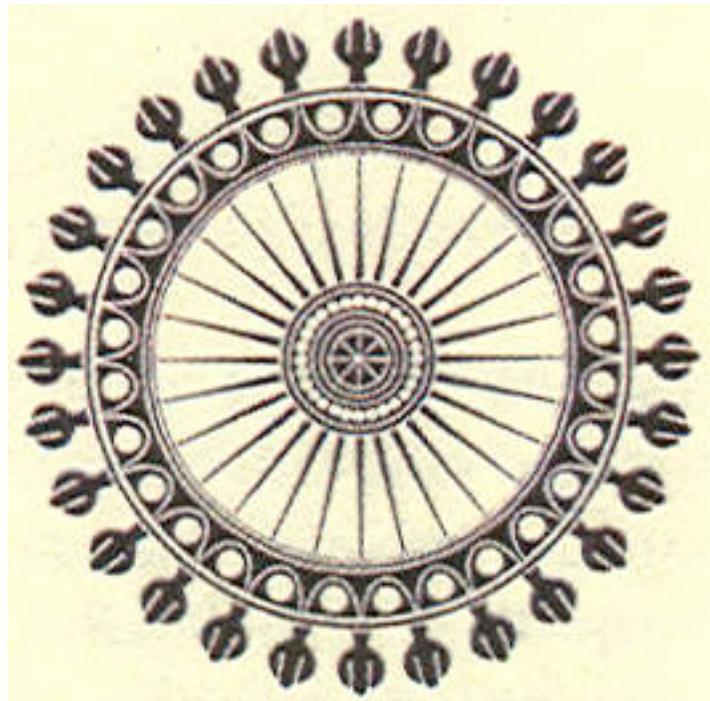


# The Basic Teachings of Buddhism

Textbook



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## 1. Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures

The Precious Three are the basic elements that Shakyamuni Buddha taught his disciples as the spiritual foundation of Buddhism soon after he began his missionary work: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Because of their supreme value, they are also called the Three Treasures.

Before dying, the Buddha said, "Make the self your light, make the Dharma your light." These are words Shakyamuni spoke to Ananda, one of his ten great disciples. Ananda became anxious about the future and asked, "When the World-honored One, who is an unparalleled leader and teacher, dies, who on earth can we depend on in our practice and life?" In response to Ananda's anxiety, the Buddha said, "Ananda! In the future, you should make yourself your light and depend upon your own self. You must not depend upon other people. You should also make the Dharma your light and depend on the Dharma. You must not depend upon others."

This is the essence of a spiritual path. Buddha taught us that we could depend on ourselves and walk the Way through our own efforts. He also taught us that by learning the Dharma (Universal Truth as taught by the Buddha) we will be living in the light. Thus, though we should live through our own efforts, we should always live in accordance (harmony) with the Dharma.

The Dharma is the Truth or Universal Law, whose true state is very hard for ordinary people to grasp. Therefore, they feel insecure in building their mental attitude upon it and basing actions in their daily lives on it. For this reason, Shakyamuni Buddha explained the Dharma in terms of the following three principles: the Buddha; the Dharma – the teachings of the Buddha; and the Sangha, whose meaning has been greatly misunderstood since ancient times.

The Sangha has been interpreted as the community of Buddhist monks and nuns. But, in the case of the words, "I, with all the Sangha", the term indicates the idea of believers in a broader sense. The Sanskrit word *sangha* means "an intimate and faithful group consisting of many believers." Shakyamuni Buddha gave the name Sangha to the community of fellow believers who seek the same teachings as his disciples.

People find it difficult to practice the Dharma (Buddha's Teachings) in complete isolation. Most of us are apt to become lazy and lose the Path. But we can steadily advance by sharing the teachings, helping each other with our awareness, and encouraging one another. This is the reason the Buddha regarded the Sangha as one of our mental foundations.

The things on which we can depend spiritually are the Three Treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. If we depend spiritually upon the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of believers, we can faithfully practice the Dharma in our daily lives. Therefore, Buddhists always take refuge in the Three Treasures.

These words mean, “We depend on the Buddha, on the teaching of the Universal Truth taught by him, and on the community which is closely unified for the purpose of believing in and practicing these teachings, and we devote ourselves to these Three Treasures.” Shakyamuni taught these three principles to his believers to help them have faith and strength to practice with a positive attitude. This would help focus their devotion.

## 2. Dependent Origination (Law of Causation)

Shakyamuni Buddha regarded this universe as the result of the relation between cause and condition by which all phenomena are produced (dependent origination). Causation means a cause and a condition combining to produce an effect and reward. In this physical world, there is nothing unchangeable or fixed in form.

All things have a direct **cause**. When this comes into contact with a **condition** or opportunity, the result of this contact appears as a **phenomenon** or **effect**. This effect leaves behind traces – **reward** (impression). This is the way Shakyamuni Buddha interpreted all things in the world.

The combination of cause and condition leads every action to have an effect and recompense. When a cause does not come into contact with a condition, or when a cause has been extinguished, it does not produce an effect and reward. Therefore, in this physical world there is nothing existing in an eternal, fixed, and unchangeable form.

When we acknowledge that we are “cause” in our lives, not only are we never a victim, we are empowered to live in harmony with Universal Truth. We have the opportunity to create a positive approach to life by being aware of each moment and making life choices that are a result of knowing the Dharma.

### 3. The Three Seals of the Dharma

The core teachings of Buddhism are, “all things are impermanent”, “all things are nonself”, and “nirvana is tranquility.”

#### **(1) “All things are transient” (everything is constantly changing)**

Modern science has proven that the sun, which seems to shine in the sky without changing, is actually changing every moment. We think that there is no change between ourselves of yesterday and ourselves of today, but the fact is that the cells of the human body are constantly dying and being born, so that all the cells of the body are replaced every seven years. Each cell of our body is changing continuously, though we are not aware of it. Everyone knows from experience how suffering, sorrow, joy or pleasure can change in an instant. It would be an error to think that things are consistent in this transient and unreliable existence. The Universal Law that "All things are transient", is the teaching by which we become aware of the changing nature of all things and therefore are not be surprised at or shaken by changes in phenomena or circumstances.

#### **(2) “All things are nonself” (everything is interconnected)**

All things in this world, without exception, are related to one another. There is nothing that leads an isolated existence that is wholly separated from other things. When we consider that even tiny insects, birds flying high in the sky and pine trees growing on a distant hill were part of the same matter at the beginning of time on earth billions of years ago, we realize that these creatures are permeated by the same life energy that gives us life. The same applies to earth, stone, clouds and air. When we turn our attention to the present and consider our own existence, we know that if there were no clouds in the sky, we would have no rain; if there was no rain, no plants would grow; if there were no plants, we would have no food nor would the plants produce oxygen; and if there were no air, we could not live even for a few minutes. Without exception, we have some invisible relationship even with those things that seem externally to have no connection with us. Since most of the human body consists of water containing minerals, we live by the grace of salt, calcium, iron and copper. This fact demonstrates how things exist in connection with one another and are interdependent. It goes without saying that we have a much closer and stronger relationship to other human beings. We are inseparably bound with one another and we all exist permeated by the same life energy. In spite of this, opposition, dispute, struggle and killing cause each of us to be swayed by our ego, and to live selfishly for personal profit alone. This is the important reason why we must realize the truth of the teaching "All things are nonself." (Everything is interconnected)

#### **(3) Nirvana is tranquility (transcending illusion will create tranquility)**

This is an ideal state of mind and body that completely extinguishes all the sufferings of human life and obtains peace, balance and harmony. We can completely extinguish all the sufferings of human life and obtain peace and quietude when we destroy all illusions. How can we reach this state? The only way is to realize the two Universal Laws "All things are transient" and "All things are nonself." The reason we worry about various kinds of suffering

is that we forget that all phenomena in this world are impermanent, that all things continuously change according to the Universal Law of “cause and effect.” We are deluded by phenomena and influenced by considerations of immediate gain or loss. If we study the way to Buddhahood and by practicing it realize the Truth of the transient of all things, we become able to attain a state of peace and quietude in which we can never be swayed by shifting circumstances. This is the state of "Nirvana is tranquility." We sometimes feel troubled by setbacks in business or personal conflicts. This is because we lack harmony with others and the world around us. Why are we not in harmony? It is because we have forgotten, or we do not realize the Truth that "All things are nonself" (Nothing has a separate self). We can attain harmony with others spontaneously when we remember the Truth that all things and all people are permeated by one great life energy, that all things are invisibly interconnected and when we make the best use of this interconnection by abandoning the idea of ego (separateness), it enhances the interconnection to benefit both ourselves and others. When in harmony with others, we can give up excess and deficiency, struggle and friction, and can maintain peaceful minds. This is the state expressed in the Universal Law "Nirvana is tranquility." (Transcending illusion will create tranquility)

There is a Fourth Law: All will be suffering, if we do not remember that “All Things are Transient” and “All Things are Nonself.” If the Truth is forgotten, suffering is the outcome. We can remember this at any time.

#### 4. The Four Noble Truths

##### **Truth of Suffering, Truth of the Cause of Suffering, Truth of Extinguishment of Suffering, and Truth of the Way that Extinguishes Suffering**

The first of the Four Noble Truths is the **Truth of Suffering**. This means that all things in this world cause suffering if we do not listen to or if we forget the Buddha's teachings. In other words, "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." To acknowledge the real condition of pain or suffering and see it through - without avoiding it or meeting it only halfway, is the Truth of Suffering.

The **Truth of the Cause of Suffering** means that we must reflect on what causes and conditions have led us to suffer, and then we can deeply investigate them to understand them clearly. The investigation of the cause of suffering is shown in the doctrines of the "Reality of All Existence" (Ten Suchnesses) and the Twelve Causes and Conditions. The original cause of all suffering is "ignorance" as seen in the Twelve Causes and Conditions.

The **Truth of Extinguishment of Suffering** is the state of absolute quietude we experience when our human sufferings have been extinguished. This state is attained when we awaken to the three Universal Truths: "All things are transient," "All things are nonself," and "Nirvana is tranquility." These three truths, called the Three Seals of the Dharma, are so important that they form the three fundamental principles of Buddhism. When we recognize and let go of sufferings caused by physical, mental, or emotional attachments, we are then able to recognize this physical world as the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light (referred to in the Sutra of the Method of Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage as the land of the Buddha Vairocana).

The **Truth of the Way that Extinguishes Suffering** is that by practicing the teachings in our daily lives we will realize these great Truths. We follow the Bodhisattva Way with our minds, words, and actions by practicing the Eightfold Noble Path and the Six Perfections. The truth of the way shows the way to a dynamic state of harmony and balance, of absolute peace and quietude, which is attained by practicing these teachings.

The Law of the Four Noble Truths teaches us to acknowledge and face the reality of human pain and suffering, the Truth of Suffering; to grasp its real source, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering; to know there is a way to extinguish suffering, the Truth of Extinguishment of Suffering; to practice the Bodhisattva Path daily to remove the suffering, the Truth of the Way that Extinguishes Suffering.

<b>Truth of Suffering</b> <i>(Buddha saw birth, sickness, old age and death)</i>	<b>Truth of the Cause of Suffering</b> <i>(Twelve Link Chain of Causation)</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> step is to acknowledge the suffering, which can be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spiritual</li> <li>- physical</li> <li>- mental</li> <li>- economic</li> <li>- emotional</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> step is to investigate the specific and deep cause of suffering found in the teachings of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Ten Suchnesses (“Reality of All Existence”)</li> <li>- Twelve Causes and Conditions</li> </ul>
<b>Truth of Extinguishment of Suffering</b> <i>(Seal of the Three Laws)</i>	<b>Truth of the Way that Extinguishes Suffering</b> <i>(Guidelines for action)</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> step is knowing that there is a tranquil state, without suffering, whether it be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spiritual</li> <li>- physical</li> <li>- mental</li> <li>- economic</li> <li>- emotional</li> </ul>	Method of practice for extinguishing suffering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Eightfold Noble Path</li> <li>- The Six Perfections (Bodhisattva Way) (The Six Paramitas)</li> </ul>

The Buddha said:

“One thing only do I teach: suffering and the cessation of suffering.”

**5. The Ten Suchnesses**  
(Ultimate Reality of All Things)

<p>...and yet, in every case such an ultimate integration of them all (<i>their equality despite their differences</i>)</p>	<b>Such an Appearance</b>	<p><b>Phenomenon</b> <i>Perceived by six senses (five senses plus the mind)</i></p>
	<b>Such a Nature</b>	<p><b>Character</b> <i>Personality</i></p>
	<b>Such a Embodiment</b>	<p><b>Embodiment</b> <i>Entity</i></p>
	<b>Such a Potential</b>	<p><b>Ability</b> <i>Potential Energy</i></p>
	<b>Such a Function</b>	<p><b>Activity</b> <i>Energy in Action</i></p>
	<b>Such a Cause</b> <i>( choose this "position" when reflecting on situations in your life)</i>	<p><b>Embodied substances</b> <i>Initial Thought, Word, Action</i></p>
	<b>Such a Condition</b>	<p><b>Circumstance or Occasion</b> <i>Environmental conditions</i></p>
	<b>Such an Effect</b>	<p><b>Result</b> <i>Outcome</i></p>
	<b>Such a Reward</b>	<p><b>Impression</b> <i>Intangible Impact</i></p>

This teaching consists of ten words prefaced by "such a" or "such an" – "Such an Appearance," "Such a Nature," "Such a Embodiment," "Such a Potential," "Such a Function," "Such a Cause," "Such a Condition," "Such an Effect," "Such a Reward," and from the first to the last, such an "ultimate identity."

When we learn to view our world through this teaching, we begin to see the deepest reality

of the existence of all things in the universe. Another name for Ten Suchnesses is “The Ultimate Reality of All Things.”

Modern science has analyzed physical substances to the extent of subatomic particles. However, the “Principle of the Ultimate Reality of All Things” is even more profound because it extends to the mental world.

**"Such an Appearance"**

The existence of all things invariably has an appearance, as perceived by the six senses (five senses plus the mind).

**"Such a Nature"**

That which has appearance, invariably has a nature (intangible qualities).

**"Such an Embodiment"**

That which has a nature, invariably has an embodiment.

**"Such a Potential"**

That which has a substance invariably has potential (potential energy/power).

**"Such a Function"**

When it has potential, it invariably produces functions (energy in action).

**"Such a Cause"**

Innumerable embodied substances exist in the universe. For this reason, their outwardly-directed functions are interrelated with all things. Nothing in the universe has an isolated existence. All things have relation to each other - sometimes a very complicated connection. Through this interdependence, their interaction causes various phenomena.

**"Such a Condition"**

Even when a cause exists, it does not produce its effect until it comes into contact with some occasion or condition. For instance, there is always vapor in the air as the cause of frost or dew. But if it has no condition that brings it into contact with the ground or the leaves of a plant, it does not become frost or dew.

**"Such an Effect"**

When a cause meets with a condition, this interaction produces a phenomenon or effect.

**"Such a Reward"**

An effect not only produces a phenomenon, but also invariably leaves some trace or impression. For example, the effect of frost forming will give a pleasant feeling to someone who enjoys the patterns that it makes on the window pane, while the same effect will give an unpleasant feeling to someone whose crops have been damaged by it. The function of an “effect” leaving a trace or impression, is called “Such a Reward.”

Another example of cause, condition, effect, and reward could be seen in a simple action. Suppose you are waiting in a crowd of people and you notice that the person next to you has a very sad look on her face. After a while, without any desire for reward or recognition, you make eye contact with this person and you smile at her. She returns the smile and for that moment she is no longer sad. She sees kindness in your face and feels a connection once again to others. You also feel the connection and it refreshes your outlook.

It will be helpful to explain cause, condition, effect, and reward in more detail. Suppose during a shopping trip, a cashier makes a mistake and gives you too much change. Upon discovering the error, you return the excess amount pointing out the error. This action has saved the cashier from a possible reprimand and, possibly the loss of money, as they would have to make up the shortage in the receipts. Upon leaving the store you think, "I have done something good." This is reward. This reward comes from one's mind and from outside. The former comes first to him, and it is the most important reward.

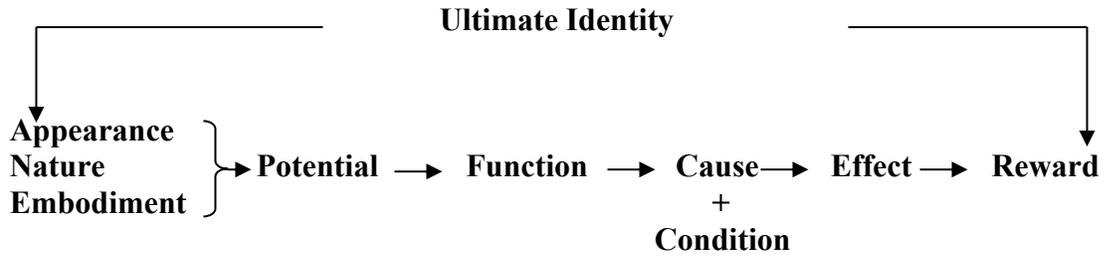
**"Such an Ultimate Identity"** (equal to "emptiness" or "oneness")

The nine suchnesses mentioned above occur continuously in society, and in the universe as a whole. They are interconnected in a complex web, so that in most cases, we cannot discern what is a "cause" and what is an "effect." But these suchnesses never fail to operate according to the Law of Universal Truth, and no one, nothing, and no function can depart from this Truth. Everything functions according to this, from Appearance to Reward - from beginning to end. This is the meaning of "...and from the first to the last, such an ultimate identity."

Shakyamuni Buddha expounded this rule through the doctrine of the Twelve Causes and Conditions (Dependent Origination), meaning that all phenomena are produced and extinguished by causation. This term indicates that a thing arises from, or is produced, because of a condition. Nothing makes an appearance unless there is an appropriate condition. This Truth applies to all existence and phenomena in the universe. The Buddha intuitively perceived this so deeply that even modern science has found nothing to contradict this teaching.

When the conditions change, the substances produced change and create another appearance. When water comes into contact with a high temperature as a condition, it evaporates. When vapor comes into contact with cold air as a condition, it condenses and forms a cloud. Events and the function of the mind are similar. Everything follows this rule.

Because this law explains how all things work - not only objects of the physical world, like human beings, but also ideas and issues of the mental world, such as our relationships with one another - it is called the "Principle of the Ultimate Reality of All Things."



As you can easily recognize, this is a detailed analysis of the Universal Law of Causation that you previously learned. “Nature” is very important in this teaching. It represents the heart and mind. We are a composite of first five suchnesses. When we interact with each other, our natures are a key element.

## 6. The Twelve Causes and Conditions

This law, also known as the twelve-link chain of causation or dependent origination, teaches that all phenomena in this world constantly change, appearing and disappearing, and that all changes are based on an established rule. Though all things change, this teaching is undeniable. It is known as the Twelve Causes and Conditions because the teaching is divided into twelve stages. However, it is easier for us to understand this law by limiting it to people than by trying to apply it to all phenomena at once.

The Buddha taught the Law of the Twelve Causes in detail to Ananda in the Dirghagama Sutra. This law governs the growth of the human body (outer causation), as well as the changes in one's mind (inner causation). "Outer causation" explains the process, through which a human being is born, grows, ages, and dies - in the light of the three temporal states of existence: the past, present and future. "Inner causation" shows how one's mind changes, and the fundamental method of purifying it and removing illusions.

The twelve links or stages are (1) Ignorance, (2) Actions, (3) Consciousness, (4) Name and Form (mind and body), (5) the Six Senses (the five senses, and the mind), (6) Contact, (7) Sensation, (8) Craving, (9) Clinging, (10) Existence, (11) Birth, (12) Aging and Death

### Outer Causation

For the physical body, the first link of the Twelve Causes is **ignorance**. We are born into this world as a continuation of a karmic cycle. We are conceived through the **action** of intercourse (or the implantation of a fertilized egg). This life has no information to begin with, but at the moment of conception, **consciousness** begins to grow. Consciousness means, "something living," something like a human being (a fetus) is produced, although it is still incomplete. As the incomplete consciousness is gradually taking shape, it grows into **name and form** (mind and body). "Name" means an immaterial being (spirit), and "form" indicates a material being, (human body). So, with "name and form" there is body and spirit.

As name and form (mind and body) grow, they develop the **Six Senses**. These are the five sense organs - eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body - and the part of the mind that relates these senses. At this time, we are still in the mother's womb and incomplete. This stage is called the "Six Senses" because the functions of our minds and bodies are on the point of dividing into the six different senses.

We are physically born into this world at the stage of the Six Senses (at the moment of birth - body, mind, and spirit come together as one). When we grow to the age of two or three, these entrances are completed and sensibility is developed. That is, we become able to discern shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, and physical sensations. This stage is called

## Contact.

As sensibility is maturing, we develop likes and dislikes. This state is called **Sensation**. When such feelings appear, **craving** for things arises spontaneously. In this context, craving is physical (sexual) attraction. In other words, this is a state of mind that has preferences and that clings to what it likes. When we have craving for something, we try to hold on to it. Conversely, we try to avoid what we consider unpleasant or undesirable. This is called **Clinging**. Clinging leads to various feelings, ideas, and assertions. This is **Existence**, or the possessive mind. It is during this stage that we usually get married or find a life partner, and perhaps have children. Due to this possessive mind, opposition and struggle occur among people, and human life with its pain and suffering begins. This stage is called **Birth**. We **Age** before we know it, and finally one encounters **Death**.

In short, the Law of the Twelve Causes teaches that until we remove ignorance, we continue to be reborn in this cycle. The Law also teaches that if we eradicate our ignorance in the present world, and understand our true essence is not the physical form - the essential form of our life as it was meant to be, will be revealed in our future life. Here we should not limit the meaning of "future life" to life when we are reborn after death, but should regard it rather as the life before us from this moment forward. If we abandon this meaning of "ignorance" and set our minds in the direction of the Dharma, a bright and serene life will begin to unfold.

Living in this type of ignorance, causes us to become self-centered, experiencing suffering. The Japanese character for this ignorance means, "There is no light"

## Inner Causation

The Twelve Causes and Conditions (Dependent Origination) also applies to the growth and changes in one's mind. "Ignorance" is failure to know Universal Truth, or to disregard the Way even if we know it. It is the cause of all illusion and a failure to deeply understand basic Buddhist principles. This predisposition is the cause of repeated actions which are contrary to Universal harmony. This involves actions in the present as well as those of the past. Because of ignorance of the Truth, one repeatedly behaves, speaks, and thinks contrary to the Truth. One action, thought, or word leads to another. These actions, thoughts, or words begin to add up or accumulate. This is expressed by sayings such as, "You reap what you sow." One action based on ignorance leads to another based on ignorance, and so on. It is this accumulation of actions, thoughts, and words over time which is the basic idea behind karma. If we act in ignorance, our actions, thoughts, and words build up negatively. Through learning the Universal Truth and acting in harmony with it, our actions, thoughts, and words build up for our benefit, as well as for the benefit of all beings. This is a simple way of looking at karma.

Consciousness is awareness and perception of what is happening around us each moment, moment by moment. That awareness is colored by our past experiences (karma). As we act, think, and speak, our awareness and perceptions change. If we continue in ignorance, our

consciousness changes in ignorance. If we learn and understand the Truth, our consciousness changes in beneficial ways. Our consciousness is always changing.

Immaterial being (spirit) and material being (body) refers to the mental realities and perceptions we have of the world around us through our sensory organs – shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, and the feel of things through touch. These two together, refer to our existence (human being). It is the development of mind and body. It is through consciousness that we are able to have a faint idea of our existence.

The Six Senses are the functions of the sense organs. The six sense organs are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. The functions of these organs are sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and perception. This is a very important stage - affecting the future of the baby after it is born.

Though we are aware of our own existence (name and form), through consciousness, it is still too vague to constitute an awareness to true knowledge.

At the same time that the senses are developing, our mind by which we perceive the existence of things through the other senses, matures. At this point we first gain the power to discern things clearly. This is called Contact.

Contact is the stage at which we are born and we discern, or see, the world around us.

Sensation (perception) is the pleasure or pain we experience from mental development and sensing the world around us. These feelings are colored by our past experiences.

Feelings give rise to craving, which are spontaneous or impulsive and based on ignorance. It is the state of mind in which we not only have preferences – we cling to them passionately.

Clinging (attachment) is manifested by our reaching out to attain when we crave. This is called clinging and is often expressed in our thoughts, and through physical or verbal action. This continues the cycle of rebirth.

Existence is seeing the duality, and is the evolution of the person's intellect, temperament, and skills as influenced by and as a result of craving.

Birth in this realm of inner causation is the realization of the evolving self, the self influenced by past actions, thoughts, and words arising out of ignorance. These perpetual thought patterns create a karmic cycle.

Aging and Death is the inevitable result or consequence of these preceding processes. It is sorrow, grief, and suffering which arise out of actions, thoughts, and words repeated out of ignorance.

Ignorance in the context of Buddhism, creates repetition of the cycle of physical birth and death. We can break this cycle, by attaining Enlightenment and knowing Universal Truth. To ignore this teaching creates suffering (human nature). To follow this teaching creates nirvana (Buddha-Nature).

	<i>Inner Causation</i>	<i>Outer Causation</i>
<b>1. Ignorance</b>	Basic cause of suffering. Failure to know and understand the Universal Truth	Human life, the result of karmic ignorance
<b>2. Actions</b>	Thoughts, words, and actions (karma)	Intercourse (or implantation of fertilized egg)
<b>3. Consciousness</b>	Awareness and perception	Conception
<b>4. Name and Form (mind and body)</b>	Mental realities, shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, the feel of things	Development of spirit and body in the womb
<b>5. Six Senses</b>	Perception and functions of the sense organs: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and mind	Birth, which occurs after growth of the five sense organs and the mind
<b>6. Contact (of name, form, and six senses)</b>	Discernment of the world around us	The development of discernment of the environment
<b>7. Sensation</b>	Feeling pleasure or pain	Development of likes and dislikes
<b>8. Craving (feelings)</b>	Attachment or a state of mind that has preferences	Sexual desire (physical)
<b>9. Clinging</b>	Trying to fulfill wants (craving)	Desire for partnership or marriage. (Possessive thoughts, words, actions)
<b>10. Existence</b>	Evolution of the intellect, temperament and skills	Creating family with suffering that arises from clinging
<b>11. Birth</b>	Mental suffering or new ideas	Birth of child
<b>12. Aging and Death</b>	Inevitable consequence of repeated thoughts, words, or actions arising out of ignorance	Result of a life of suffering

**Past** ----- Ignorance and Actions

**Present** ----- Consciousness, Name and Form, Six Senses,  
Contact, Sensation, Craving, Clinging, Existence

**Future** ----- Birth, Aging, and Death

## 7. The Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Noble Path consists of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

The word *right* that is prefixed to every word in the doctrine of the Eightfold Path means to be in accord with the Buddha's Teaching of Universal Truth. It means to be in harmony with the Dharma. It involves looking at things from a viewpoint that is not self-centered. This is a viewpoint that comes from a clear, open mind that takes into account other perspectives and other possibilities.

The meaning of *right* is expressed in the term "The Middle Path" which is illustrated by the Parable of the Harp\*, where we learn that a person who looks at life with a well-balanced point of view and without prejudice; who sees things with a clear mind - can see the real state of things. A person who has truly attained enlightenment, is one who has chosen a way of life that is in harmony - a life perfectly fit to deal with any circumstance.

**Right View** means to abandon a self-centered way of looking at things, to have a right view of the Buddha, and to see all things clearly.

**Right Thought** means to go beyond a self-centered attitude and think from a higher standpoint. It teaches us to abandon the "three evils of the mind," greediness (thinking only of personal gain); resentment (becoming angry when things don't turn out the way we want them), and evil-mindedness (wanting to have our own way in everything). With Right Thinking, one begins to think of things with a generous mind - a Buddha mind.

**Right Speech** teaches us to use right words in our daily lives and avoid the "four evils of the mouth": lying (false language), a double tongue (gossip), ill speaking (slander) and improper language (careless language.)

**Right Action** means daily conduct according to the precepts of the Buddha. It is important to refrain from the "three evils of the body" that hinder right action: unnecessary killing, stealing, and irresponsible sexual practices.

**Right Livelihood** means to gain food, clothing, shelter and the other necessities of life through a vocation that is useful to society and beneficial to one's mental, emotional, and physical health.

**Right Effort** means to apply oneself diligently on each aspect of the Path, and to engage constantly in right conduct without being idle or deviating from the right way, avoiding such wrongs as the three evils of the mind, the four evils of the mouth, and the three evils of the body mentioned above.

\* Buddhism for Today, at page 193

**Right Mindfulness** means to be mindful and remain in the present moment without judgment, practicing with a right mind as the Buddha did. It can not be truly said that we have the same mind as the Buddha unless we have a right mind not only toward ourselves but also toward others, and still further, toward all things. If we hope that only we ourselves may be right, we will become stubborn and self-satisfied people who are alienated from the world. We cannot say we have the same mind as the Buddha unless we address ourselves to all things in the universe with a fair and balanced mind.

**Right Concentration** (often referred to as meditation) means to practice quieting the mind and developing the ability to single-pointedly focus the mind so that we do not become agitated by any change of circumstances. This reminds us to practice consistently the right teaching of the Buddha.

Taken all together, the doctrine of the Eightfold Path is the teaching that guides us in the daily practice of mindful living. It purifies thoughts, words, and deeds.

<b>1. Right View</b>	To see all things clearly, based on the Buddha's wisdom which discerns and understands the principle of the "Reality of All Existence." Abandoning self-centered ways.
<b>2. Right Thought</b>	To think clearly, avoiding the three evils of the mind: greed, resentment, and wanting your own way
<b>3. Right Speech</b>	To speak right words, avoiding the four evils of the mouth: lying, double tongue, slander, improper and careless language
<b>4. Right Action</b>	To act with integrity, avoiding the three evils of the body: unnecessary killing, stealing, and irresponsible sexual practices
<b>5. Right Livelihood</b>	To gain food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities in a way that is beneficial to society and to your mental, emotional, and physical health.
<b>6. Right Effort</b>	To always do good and never do evil. Avoid idleness or excessive behaviors, evils of the mind, mouth, and body.
<b>7. Right Mindfulness</b>	View yourself, other people, and all things with Buddha's mind. Self-importance will cause separation and alienation from others.
<b>8. Right Concentration</b>	To constantly strive to understand and follow the Buddha Dharma. Do not be agitated by any change of circumstances

## 7. The Six Perfections (Six Paramitas)

This doctrine teaches us the six kinds of practice that bodhisattvas can follow to attain enlightenment. They are: Donation (generosity), Keeping the Precepts (Morality), Forbearance (endurance), Effort (diligence), Meditation (concentration), and Wisdom.

Bodhisattvas are people who wish not only to extinguish their own illusions but to help others as well. Therefore, the goal of the doctrine of The Six Perfections is the transformation and Enlightenment of all living beings.

The practice of **donation** (generosity) comes first. This involves another being (external to us). There are three kinds of donation: donation of material goods - gifting of money or goods, donation of teaching the Dharma, and donation of your actions and energy to help remove another's suffering. These can be done with sincere intent.

Everyone can do some form of donation. Perhaps you are physically disabled but have knowledge you can teach. You may have life experiences from which you have gained wisdom you can share. You may have a special talent you can teach. You can donate physical labor to help someone. Even if you are only able to give a very small amount of money, it is the repeated act of doing so with total awareness that develops a generous heart in all aspects of your life.

**Keeping the precepts** (morality) is the second of The Six Perfections. This teaches us that we cannot truly help others unless we are striving to live the precepts given to us by the Buddha. It is by seeing our daily actions that others learn. We must not think that we need to be perfect to guide someone. A major point of keeping the precepts is to render service to others. The more we do for others, the more we grow ourselves, and the more we grow, the more we can render service to others. Each reinforces the other.

The third of The Six Perfections is **forbearance** (endurance) – a quality that is especially important for people today. Shakyamuni embodied all the virtues and became the Buddha through his constant practice. Perhaps his greatest virtue was generosity. Nowhere is it recorded that Buddha ever became angry. If he was severely persecuted or his disciples treated him coldly and left him, he was always sympathetic and compassionate. If there was one characteristic of the man that stood out, it would be that he was a person of perfect generosity. As we learn to persevere in the practice of the bodhisattvas, we cease to become angry or reproachful toward others or toward anything in the universe. Sometimes we complain about the weather when it rains and grumble about the heat when the sun shines. But by being patient in our daily lives, we attain a calm and untroubled mind. We become thankful for both the rain and the sun, and our minds become free from undue concern about changes in our circumstances.

When we advance further, we lose our tendency for anger and hatred toward those who hurt or insult us, whether they do so knowingly or unknowingly, we can even wish actively to help them. On the other hand, we should not be swayed by flattery or praise of the good work we do. Rather we learn to quietly reflect on our conduct. There is no need to feel superior. We can have an honestly humble attitude when everything goes smoothly. All these attitudes come from perseverance. It doesn't happen immediately, but we can attain an attitude of compassion for those who cause difficulties, sooner than we expect. If people throughout the world practiced this kind of forbearance (perseverance), this alone would establish peace and make humanity immeasurably happy.

The fourth of The Six Perfections is **effort (diligence)**, which means to go straight toward an important goal without being distracted by trivial things. Even if we devote ourselves to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings, if our ideas and conduct do not remain pure, we have not really given our effort to our actions. If we experience adverse effects or if outside influences try to hinder our spiritual practice, these are nothing more than small waves rippling on the surface of the ocean. They will disappear when the wind dies down. Therefore, once we have decided to practice this Path, we should advance single-mindedly toward our destination.

The fifth of The Six Perfections is **meditation (concentration)**. It means having a quiet mind. It is important for us to devote ourselves to the practice of the teachings. To view things thoroughly with a calm mind and to think them over, is essential. Only then can we see the true aspect of all things and discover the highest and most harmonious way to cope with them.

The ability to discern the differences among things and to see the truth common to them is **wisdom**, the last of The Six Perfections. To help others, we must develop wisdom. When we take action to do something kind or useful for another person, we are most effective when we do so from a foundation of wisdom. This is essential when practicing the Bodhisattva Way.

Each of these Perfections is a strong link to the others. Together they make a reinforced circle of action.

1. <b>Donation</b> (generosity)	<i>"Make one who is miserly one aspire to generosity."</i> To sincerely serve the community and other people.
2. <b>Keeping the Precepts</b> (Morality)	<i>"Make one who is arrogant aspire to keeping the precepts."</i> To be ethical, humble and disciplined.
3. <b>Forbearance</b> (endurance)	<i>"Make one who is angry aspire to forbearance".</i> To remove irritability and endure.
4. <b>Effort</b> (diligence)	<i>"Make one who is lazy aspire to diligence."</i> To endeavor constantly and to give one's effort at all times.
5. <b>Meditation</b> (concentration)	<i>"Make one who is distracted aspire to meditation."</i> To calm and clear one's mind.
6. <b>Wisdom</b>	<i>"Make one who is ignorant aspire to wisdom."</i> To remove prejudice and selfish thinking through increased awareness and experience.

## **9. Transmigration and Karma**

### **(1) Transmigration**

What happens to us after death? Buddhism teaches that we remain for some time in the state of intermediate existence in this world after death, and when this time is over, in accordance with the karma that we have accumulated in our previous life, we are reborn in another appropriate world. Buddhism also divides this other world into the following Ten Realms: Hell, Hungry Spirits, Beasts, Asura, Human Beings, Heaven, Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas.

If we die in an unenlightened state, our spirits will return to a former state of ignorance, will be reborn in the six realms of illusion and suffering, and will finally reach old age and death through the Twelve Causes and Conditions discussed previously. We will repeat this cycle. This perpetual repetition of birth and death is called “transmigration.” But, if we purify our spirits by hearing the Buddha’s teachings (Dharma), and practice the Bodhisattva Way, the state of ignorance is extinguished and our spirits can be reborn into a better world. The expression, “to cut the causes”, applies to this state.

### **(2) Karma**

The discussion of karma helps us to attain a better understanding of the Twelve Causes and Conditions. Briefly, karma means “deed” (action). It is produced by all the deeds that we do. Any deed is invariably accompanied by a result. All that we are at the present moment, is the result of the karma that we have produced in the past. For example, the fact that you are now reading this, is the result of the causes and conditions that have occurred due to the accumulation of various past deeds. The phenomenon that the results of deeds leaves behind as a trace or impression, is called recompense.

Karma is complete and serious. Our deeds however small leave traces physically, mentally, and environmentally. The impressions left in our minds include memory, knowledge, habit, intelligence, and character. They are produced by the accumulation of our experiences and deeds over a long period of time. The traces left on our body, are seen for example, when heavy eating or drinking leads to sickness. They are also seen where a proper amount of exercise trains our body and builds up our constitution. These physical traces are so clearly visible that anyone can perceive them.

Our mental attitudes also leave impressions. Most obvious are those on our faces. However handsome he or she may be, their mental attitudes, will show on their face. People who are tender-hearted and virtuous, seem somehow happy looking, clear-headed, and dignified. It

is also generally known that a person's work causes changes in his or her looks. This is what Lincoln was referring to when he said that a man over 40 should feel responsible for his looks.

Part of the traces of our deeds that are left in our minds, remain on the surface of our minds. This includes memory, knowledge, habit, intelligence, and character. Another portion of the traces remain in the subconscious, in the hidden depths of our minds. Moreover, all the influences of the outer world by which we have been unconsciously affected, which include the experiences we have had before our birth (deeds since the beginning of humanity), are sunk in the subconscious. Karma includes all of this. Though it was simply defined as deeds, in reality, karma implies the accumulation of all our experiences and deeds since the birth of humanity, and since even before that time. This is called the "karma of a previous existence". The action of this karma is called, "power of karma".

This power can be explained by understanding the workings of the subconscious mind. Even things that the human race experienced hundreds of thousands of years ago remain in the depths of our minds, as do the much stronger influences of the deeds and mental attitudes of our ancestors.

The "karma of previous existence" that Buddhism teaches is still more profound as it includes the karma that our own life has produced through the repetition of birth and death, from the infinite past, to the present.

What does the idea of karma teach us? There are people who think, "I never asked my parents to bring me into this world," or "I am not responsible for what I am, because everything, including my brain, nature, and physical constitution, come from the nature of my parents."

Such ideas seem to be half reasonable, but they are imperfect. Indeed, one's parents or ancestors must be responsible for half of the nature of their descendants, but the other half is the responsibility of the descendants themselves. This is because, though half of the present self must be the effect of karma produced by one's ancestors and parents, the other half is the effect of the karma that one has produced oneself, in one's previous lives. Moreover, the self that exists after one's childhood, is the effect of the karma that one has produced oneself, in this world. So, the responsibility of one's parents is very limited.

The idea of karma teaches us clearly that one will reap the fruits of what one has sown. Suppose that we are currently unhappy; we are apt to lose our temper, and express discontent if we attribute our unhappiness to others. But if we consider our present unhappiness to be the affect of our own deeds in the past, we can accept it and take responsibility for it.

Besides such acceptance, hope for the future wells up strongly in our hearts: "The more good karma I accumulate, the happier I will become, and the better recompense I will receive. Alright I will accumulate much more good karma in the future." We should not limit this idea only to the problems of human life in this world. We can also feel hope concerning the traces of our lives after death. For those who do not know the Buddha's teachings, nothing

is so terrible as death. Everyone fears it. But if we truly realize the meaning of karma-result, we can keep our composure in the face of death, because we can have hope for our next life. When we do not think only of ourselves but realize that the karma produced by our own deeds exerts an influence on our descendants, we will naturally come to feel responsible for our deeds. We will also realize that we, as parents or guardians, must maintain a good attitude in our daily lives in order to have a favorable influence (reward) on these children. We will feel strongly that we must always speak to our children lovingly and bring them up properly with affection.

The word “karma-result” has often been interpreted as something negative, but this is a mistaken way of teaching this idea. We can consider the idea of karma-result in a positive and forward-looking way.

This is an example of inherited karmic causation:

If we hybridize 2 white morning glories – it will create a white flower.

If we hybridize 2 red morning glories – it will create a red flower.

If we make a hybrid from a white and red morning glory, it creates three kinds of flowers: white, red, and pink.

Even if we produced a white flower on the second generation, the colors can be random in the following generations, hence, in the third or fourth generation, a red flower may come from the seed of a white flower.

In the case of vegetables, if we hybridize tall and short varieties of peas. It may create tall kinds in the second generation, but in the third or fourth generation, it begins to create a short kind.

The karma of ancestors which is invisible on the surface, but inherited through to the third or fourth generation, reveals its appearance when the time comes.

Karma is ALL deeds: intentional and unintentional. We are ethically responsible for the intentional deeds.

## 10. The Three Thousand Realms in One Mind

### (1) The Six and the Ten Realms

The six realms that we talk about in Buddhism can be representative of mental realms or actual worlds of transmigration. Viewed from the mental realm aspect, the six realms are the worlds in which our minds constantly revolve. They are: **hell** (anger), **hungry spirits** (greed), **beasts** (ignorance), **asuras** (fighting), **human beings** (normal), and **heaven** (joy). Because these are not stable, we constantly suffer.

However, even an ordinary person sometimes rises to the level of the four heavenly realms. These are: **shravaka** (one who listens to the teachings and learns), **pratyekabuddha** (one who has a private spiritual practice of the teachings), **bodhisattva** (one who practices the teachings, but also wishes to live for the benefit of all beings), and **buddha** (Awake and Enlightened). When these four realms join with the six realms, we see the ten realms. It is seldom that we are able to maintain these upper levels of absolute compassion constantly. It is common for us to once again return to the six realms.

It is through great compassion and awareness that we can exit the six realms and enter the four heavenly (transcendent) realms. It is by constant study and application of the Dharma in our daily lives that we travel toward awakening.

### (2) The Ten Realms found in each other

Everyone's mind contains all ten realms, and the ten realms exist in the mind of each person, in each of those ten realms. This explains how the ten realms are found in each other.

The seed of Buddha-Nature is also possessed by those who are in the worlds of hell and demons, although it is very undeveloped. The doctrine of the Three-Thousand Realms in One Thought teaches that even those who are in such a state of mind have the possibility of attaining enlightenment, and that the chance of liberation from suffering can be found anywhere. In other words, this doctrine teaches plainly that the Buddha's compassion extends to all living beings. On the other hand, even when one thinks one has realized and become free of the bonds of illusion and suffering, by studying this teaching, one will become able to reflect on one's remaining seeds of illusion, and will begin to devote themselves to a deeper level of practice.

### (3) Three Thousand Realms in One Mind

Each of the ten realms exists in the mind of everyone in each of the ten realms ( $10 \times 10 = 100$ ). These one hundred minds appear in ten ways according to the teachings of the Ten Suchnesses ( $100 \times 10 = 1,000$ ). When we multiply 1,000 times the three worlds of: individual

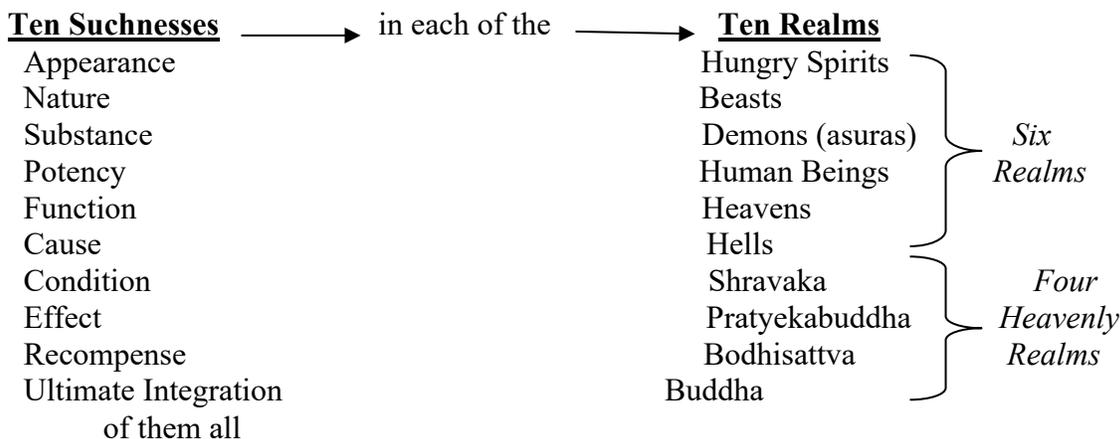
environment, society, and the whole world, that shows us a total of 3,000 realms in one thought.

This teaching clearly shows the need for compassion for ourselves and others. It also shows great empowerment when we acknowledge the opportunity to reach liberation from suffering and achieve enlightenment, starting from any point.

Nichiren extolled this teaching in the following way, “Unless people attain enlightenment through the teaching of the Three-Thousand Realms in One Thought, their attaining nirvana and becoming buddhas will be little more than a mere name.” He praised this teaching a total of eighteen times in his writings.

**Three Thousand Realms in One Mind**  
(from Nagarjuna and T’ien-T’ai)

*Nature (the “suchness” of things) embraces the Ultimate Truth.*  
The Ultimate Truth is characterized by the:



With these Ten Realms penetrating each other, this adds up to 100 realms  
 $10 \times 10 = 100$

Since each realm has Ten Suchnesses, these 100 realms embrace 1,000 suchnesses.  
 $10 \times 100 = 1,000$

If we multiply 1,000 suchnesses with the three divisions:  
*individual environment /society /whole world*

$1,000 \times 3 = 3,000$   
There are a total of 3,000 realms

This all-embracing theory reveals that the Ultimate Truth does not limit itself to any domain, but instantaneously confirms all existing things in the universe. Macrocosmically speaking, it is embedded in any entity or any moment of consciousness. There is no hindrance or limitation between the parts and the whole. Any entity is a representation of the whole, and the whole is embodied by any of its parts.

*This interpretation is found on pgs 109 -115 in "Buddhism for Today."*