

# COMMITTING SUICIDE: A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

Chamnong KHANTHIK<sup>1</sup> and Sudaporn KHIEWNGAMDEE<sup>2\*</sup>

1 Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya (Royal Academy) Foundation under Royal Patronage, Thailand

2 Department of Pali and Sanskrit, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand; sudaporn\_khiewngamdee@hotmail.com (Corresponding Author)

## ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 19 September 2024    **Revised:** 3 October 2024    **Published:** 17 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

Death is the most frightening for ordinary people. Even death is scary, there are still several people decide to commit suicide. That shows that, for them, death is not the most frightening thing. There is something more terrifying than death, so they decide to end their lives. In Buddhism, there are more implications than it is generally known. Therefore, it is a matter worthy for the study. The results of the study are: 1) There is a kind of suicide to escape from suffering and boredom. 2) Suicide occurred due to insane delusion or Saññā vippalāsa (distortion of perception). 3) Suicide is committed as a method of achieving a specific goal or a special method. 4) Suicide is considered a means of death of some Arahants. 5) Suicide is believed to be the highest act of worship that may help one become a Buddha in the future. In all of these, ordinary people may fall into suffering, but only the noble ones do not suffer from any kind of suffering. As for direct teaching on suicide prevention, it has been found yet. In the cause of setting forth the third code of conduct in Pārājika, the Buddha criticized the suicide as something that should not be done, but there are teachings that mitigate and eliminate suffering, such as the teaching not to have attachment, the teaching on how to consider the disappointment of separation as a normal condition. That can be considered as an indirect teaching to prevent committing suicide.

**Keywords:** Committing Suicide, Buddhism, Suffering

**CITATION INFORMATION:** Khanthik, C., & Khiewngamdee, S. (2024). Committing Suicide: A Buddhist Perspective. *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(10), 19.

## INTRODUCTION

1) Avijjāya nivuto vemicchā (pamādā) nappakāsati/jappālanam brūmi dukkhamassa mahabbhayam (Syāmaratthassa tepitakam, 2013f: 488). The world covered by ignorance because of stinginess and negligence is not bright and clear. I said: Desires plaster the world. Suffering is a great and terrifying danger of all beings. 2) Jātipi dukkhā jarāpi dukkhā maranampi dukkham, even though birth is suffering, old age is suffering, and death is suffering. (Syāmaratthassa tepitakam, 2013b: 276-277)

The Buddha's proverbs above show that death is suffering and suffering is very frightening for the world beings. The suffering is classified into birth, old age (illness, grief), and death. All these no one wants. It is quite clear that no one wants the death. How much they are afraid of death can be seen from that they avoid seeing the symbols of death and talking about death. Talking about death is considered a bad omen or an unlucky topic. In hundred sections of Buddhist teachings, attempts are made to clarify and understand the death as a normal or natural phenomenon. When there is birth, there are old age and death to follow. However, even after reading that teaching, not everyone can follow it. There are only really a few people understand and recognize that they are afraid of death. In meditation practice, there is a topic on "maraṇasati", frequent recollection of death, and a teaching how to adjust the mind to be familiar with death.

Knowing that death is a scary thing to be avoided the utmost, many people plunge into committing suicide for various reasons. It seems to be a contrast to their feeling. It can be noted here that humans and animals are afraid of death, but there is still no clear proof that animals committed suicide. (It is said that there is a kind of hawks commit suicide when their physical strength declines). Most people commit suicide because they cannot tolerate suffering and few of them commit suicide because of other causes. In this study, human suicide is focused. In the animal kingdom, sacrificing the life to save their offsprings seems to be a little bit, but it should not be looked over. Human suicide has the following points to be studied as follows: 1) Committing suicide to escape suffering, unable to tolerate to both mental and physical suffering 2) Committing suicide due to misunderstanding or an insane delusion 3) Committing suicide with the thought that it is the last way to attain Dhamma (Jīvitasamasīsi) considered to achieve the Path to and the Fruit of Nibbāna in a special way 4) Committing suicide of some noble monks with determination that it is a proper time to enter to Nibbāna, no need to continue Samkhāra Khanda further 5) Committing suicide for worship or ultimate belief that doing so will lead to Buddhahood, etc.

## COMMITTING SUICIDE BECAUSE OF TOO MUCH SUFFERING

When people cannot bear it and are hopeless for relief from other people or other methods. They opt to choose the last option, to commit suicide to end all problems.

From news information dated 10 September 2023 (Bangkokbiznews, 2023). On September 10th of every year, the World Health Organization (WHO) designates "World Suicide Prevention Day". Thailand has 7.35 suicide cases per 100.000 people in 2021, increasing to 7.97 per 100.000 people in 2022. Moreover, in Thailand, there are more than 1.5 million people suffering from depression (that may cause them to continue thinking about committing suicide).

In Buddhism, depression is based on a depressed mind (together with a distracted mind that is opposite, but both are considered mentally ill). In mental treatment, one must clearly know that one's own mind is depressed (saṃkhittam vā cittam saṃkhittam cittanti pajānāti) (Syāmaratthassa tepitakam, 2013b: 271). They will be aware and not allow their mind to be like this and find the reasons for the depressed mind. There are several causes of depressed mind. The prominent ones are to depart from the beloved, called "Vippayoga dukkha, and to obtain what is unwanted, called "Sampayoga dukkha". The example of the first one is that a

young man and a young woman fall in love, and they are separated. Either one becomes depressed and unable to resolve. When there is no way to solve the problem, and looking around, there is only darkness. Finally, one wants this situation to stop. So, committing suicide is the best choice for them.

The example for Sampayoga dukkha, a young woman forced to marry a man without love or satisfaction, the one with over-debt or the one with severe problems in family, they tend to commit suicide to end their unsolvable problems. Someone once used to have honor, high praise, and a good reputation in society. When there is a cause for removal of rank or reduction of position, he lives with the feeling of dishonor, no praise, hurt feeling, worthlessness (to live a life depending on external honor and praise), and feeling embarrassed in society. In the end, he decides to close his way of life by committing suicide.

Most of the above is due to mental stress. As for people who are chronically ill and suffering from disease, they have spent a lot of money, but the disease is not cured. Physical disease suffers the body and affects the mind. They think that their life is useless and is a burden on others (unlike the ones who have trained their mind firmly). So, they decide to end their life. Someone committed suicide at a funeral pavilion in the temple or in front of a crematorium in the temple. It is noted that there is no record in the Tipiṭaka about the people who have so severe suffering that they commit suicide, there are stories about the Buddha teaching to relieve suffering and then the problems can be solved. For example, Paṭācālā is suffering because of the loss of her husband and children, Santati Mahā Amātya (Great Minister) who lost his beloved one, etc.

In modern time, monks committed suicide because of such suffering, not because of the suicide in Jīvitasaṃsaṃsī as in the Buddha's time. Normally, monks are the ones who teach the Dhamma and console the folks to relieve from their suffering. When the monks themselves are suffering and cannot alleviate that suffering, they commit suicide. If we think in the sense that monks are just common men, not the noble ones, it should be sympathized and forgiven.

In the cause of suffering leading to committing suicide of each person, unconcerned individuals should not say that it is trivial, it is not worth killing oneself. One person's small matter is a big matter of another one. For example, a girl raises a cat and loves her cat very much. Her father does not understand it and feels annoyed. He takes away the cat and releases it somewhere. Having known the matter, his daughter feels very sad and decides to commit suicide. If the father had known and understood his daughter's feeling, the tragedy would not have happened. In the case of a child making an appointment with his friends to go to the temple fair or festival, when it is the time for a group of friends come to pick up the boy, his parents do not let him go. The boy is ashamed of his friends and decides to commit suicide. In conclusion, anyone's disappointment, embarrassment and regret are always big for that person.

## COMMITTING SUICIDE DUE TO AN INSANE DELUSION

In the Suttanta Piṭaka, there are 4 kinds of distortion: 1) Saññāvipalāsa (distortion of perception): Perception that is different from reality, such as a person is frightened in seeing a rope as a snake. 2) Cittavipalāsa (distortion of thought): Perception that is different from reality, such as a mad man thinking of using grass as his food. 3) Diṭṭhivipalāsa (distortion of views): Perception that is different from reality, especially one is based on "Saññāvipalāsa or Cittavipalāsa". For example, Saññāvipalāsa; seeing a rope as a snake and Diṭṭhivipalāsa; making a conclusion that there are lots of snakes in that area. Or Cittavipalāsa; believing that everything in the world is created by a creator, thus resulting to Diṭṭhivipalāsa; that the cause of earthquakes comes from the power of God.

These three levels of insane delusion are the base of 4 distortions: 1) To regard what is impermanent as permanent 2) To regard what is painful as pleasant 3) To regard what is non-self as a self-4) To regard what is foul as beautiful (Payutto, 2023: 138).

The significant evidence of committing suicide in the Vinaya Piṭaka (Syāmaratṭhassa *tepiṭakam*, 2013a: 194-109) is the suicide of monks in Vesāli. The brief contents are as follows: Once, the Lord Buddha was dwelling in the pavilion of the Gabled Hall in the Great Wood of Vesāli. At that time, the Lord talked on the subject of the impure in many ways to the monks (In Commentaries, 500 monks). Then the Lord addressed the monks thus: Monks, I wish to go into solitary retreat for a half-month; I do not wish anyone to come up to me except the monk who brings my alms-food. Accordingly, no one went up to the Lord. Having listened to the talk on the impure in many ways from the Lord, those monks dwelt intent upon the practice of developing the impure in many different aspects. They were troubled by their own bodies, ashamed of them, loathing them. It is as if a young woman or a young man who has washed himself thoroughly and then is hung by a carcass of a snake, of a dog or of a human round his neck. Those monks deprived themselves of life, deprived one another of life, asked Migalaṇḍika to deprive their life, or asked other monks to deprive their life for the sake of bowl and robe. Then Migalaṇḍika felt guilty because he took life of well-behaved monks. When he went to the banks of the Vaggumudā River for washing his blood-stained sword, a certain devatā of the retinue of Māra said to him: It is good; it is rightly gotten by you; much merit attaches to you because you bring those across who had not crossed. After that, Migalaṇḍika taking a sharp sword approached the monks, told them and took away the life of monks (who wish to commit suicide), one monk, two monks, three monks, ten monks.....or sixty monks each day.

At the end of the half-month, the Lord, arising from his retreat for meditation, addressed the venerable Ānanda: How is it that the company of monks is so diminished as it is? The venerable Ānanda told all what had happened to the Lord and asked the Lord to give another instruction so that the company of monks might be established in profound knowledge. The Lord told the venerable Ānanda to call a company of monks together in the assembly-hall and then addressed the concentration with mindfulness on in-breathing and out-breathing together with its various advantages.

In the case that monks deprived their life because of the contemplation of the impure, the Lord rebuked them in various ways: it is not suitable, not appropriate, should not be done, is not a business of recluses etc. What those monks have done is not for the benefit of non-believers, but for the reduction in the number of believers, and then the rule of training is set forth: Whatever monk should indulge in depriving human life or searching for a sharp weapon to take away human life is one who is defeated, he is no longer in communion.

The Samantapāsādikā Commentary (Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation, 1992a: 587-589) explains that the Lord Buddha has known that those monks will commit suicide, but He does not prevent them from doing that because of the Kamma result in their past life. In the former lives, those monks were born as 500 hunters. They caught animals with sticks and nets, surrounded the forest to capture animals and killed deer and birds for food with pleasure. After death, they went to hell and returned to be born as humans. They were ordained in the doctrine of the Lord Buddha due to some wholesome deeds and Aparāparacetanā (Volition action to be experienced in some consequent lives) has resulted yet. It is the time when the power of unwholesome will result in destroying the life by one's own action or other's action within the half-month. The results of Kamma that cannot be prevented at all occurred to monks who attained Arahat, lower consequences or were ordinary persons.

It is explained in the Commentaries that the monk who is an Arahant sees only the emptiness, emptiness from beings. He will not die with delusion, will not be reborn. The noble one in the lower level can achieve blissful states of existence. The states of existence for ordinary people are uncertain.

It can be noted here that both the Tipiṭaka and the Commentaries do not specify that those monks committed suicide due to distortion of perception or distortion of thought. In general

view, the Lord Buddha talked about the subject of the impure in other places and the monks who followed the contemplation on the impure did not want to commit suicide, but they attained the higher qualifications instead. Here, it seems that suicide occurs from distortion of perception. The noble ones are except, but ordinary persons who commit suicide after listening to the Dhamma tend to be insane delusion. The Commentary confirms that the Lord Buddha let it go because He realized the round of Kamma results. The contents in the Vinaya Piṭaka specify that the Lord Buddha went into solitary retreat even though He realized what would happen. This case is a special case and the origin of the code of training in prohibiting human killing.

We must clearly identify the case that monks loathed their bodies and then committed suicide. In this case, monks did not have any sufferings as ordinary people did, but they felt loathsome in their bodies while practicing for salvation.

## COMMITTING SUICIDE AS A SPECIAL WAY TO ATTAIN SUPREME DHAMMA

The end of life together with the attainment of supreme Dhamma may be the end of life naturally or committing suicide, called “Jīvitasamasīsi”. In some cases, life still remains, but some diseases are completely cured at the same time of Dhamma attainment. It is called “Rogasamasīsi”. Some monks have a severe suffering while cultivating Dhamma and their suffering disappears together with the end of their defilement. This is called “Vedanāsamasīsi”. Some monks are in any one of postures and they eradicate their defilement together with the end of that posture. This is called “Iriyāpathasamasīsi”.

In these four kinds of life ending, Jīvitasamasīsi should be taken into consideration thoroughly. In the end of life of 3 noble monks; Venerable Godhika, Venerable Channa, and Venerable Vakkali, here, the story of Venerable Godhika will be taken to study because there are some supporting details.

### 1) Venerable Godhika

Venerable Godhika was practicing meditation at Black Rock on Mount Isigiri near Rājagaha. He was heedful, ardent and resolute. He attained deliverance of mind belonging to this world and later he declined from that attainment. In the second time, he started practicing as before and he experienced the same result. The third time.....seventh time, Venerable Godhika was also heedful, ardent and resolute until he attained deliverance of mind belonging to this world. At that time, he thought that he had declined from his attainments six times. In this seventh time, I should bring a sharp weapon (to take away my life).

Māra perceived his intention, therefore he had an audience with the Lord Buddha and said: Oh, the mighty Lord! He who has the eye in Dhamma, mystic potency, excellent wisdom, glory of power and fame, and overcomes all hate and fear. May I pay respect to your feet. Oh, the mighty Lord! Your follower overcome by death has intention to end his life. Oh, the glorious Lord! May the Lord prevent him from carrying out his intention.

Oh, the well-gone Lord! Your followers are satisfied with your teachings and have yet attained the state of Arahant. They are still in the course of perfection. Why do they have intention to carry out their life? At that time, Venerable Godhika laid hands upon the sharp weapon (committed suicide). Then the Exalted One discerning that this was Māra addressed him in a verse: The wise may do it like this, not attach to their bodies. Godhika eradicated the root of desires and entered Nibbāna (Syāmaratṭhassa tepītakam, 2013d: 154). *Evam hi dhīrā kubbanti nāvakaṅkhanti jīvitam samūlam taṇham abbuyha godhiko parinibbuto.*

While arriving at his residence in the Bamboo Grove and having known all the matter, the Lord addressed the monks and went to Black Rock in the slope of Mount Isigiri together with a company of monks. The Exalted One saw the venerable Godhika lying on his couch with his neck twisted round (from cutting his own throat). At that time, the Māra turned himself to be a

smoke or fog going towards the east, towards the west, towards the south, going aloft, going downward and going towards intervening points. Then the Exalted One admonished the monks: Monks. That is Māra the evil one, who is seeking everywhere for the consciousness of Godhika. He is thinking, where has Godhika's consciousness been reinstated? Monks, Godhika's consciousness has not reinstated (appatitthitena). He entered Nibbāna.

After his failure to find venerable Godhika's consciousness, the Māra approached the Lord Buddha and asked for that. The Lord said: The wise (Venerable Godhika) who is strong in purpose, satisfied in absorption, longing not to live, has overcome the host of Māra and has uprooted craving completely enters to Nibbāna.

**Additional Remarks: A case of Venerable Godhika** 1) Lokiyacetovimutti (absorption in Commentaries) is a base for attainment of higher quality. When venerable Godhika patiently practiced meditation until the attainment of absorption and declined from it 6 times because of his chronic illness. He may think that the after-life destination of the one who declines from absorption is uncertain and it is certain for who remains in absorption. He will be reborn in Brahma world at least. 2) He decided to bring a sharp weapon (In Pali: sattham āhareyyam or sattham āharitam, meaning "should commit suicide or have committed suicide"). 3) It seems to be positive that the Māra approached the Exalted One and asked him to prevent venerable Godhika from carrying away his life. But the Lord Buddha has known all around. If the Lord Buddha prevented venerable Godhika from doing that and Godhika died with full defilement, he would be reborn and were under the control of the Māra. If venerable Godhika died while ending defilement, Māra could do nothing. So, the Exalted One let everything go on. The venerable Godhika took away his life at the same time he entered to salvation or Nibbāna. He was a Jīvitasamasī Arahant. We cannot say that venerable Godhika took away his life because of his insane delusion. He has complete consciousness, and The Lord Buddha approves that he uprooted desire entered to Nibbāna.

## 2) Venerable Channa

Venerable Channa was staying on the Gijjakuta Peak near Rājagaha in severe illness. Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Cunda paid a visit to him and asked about his illness. He replied that he had a severe illness, could not bear it, and could not carry it. His illness was increasing, his suffering was increasing and the relief from the illness disappeared. A strong wind attacked his head as if a strong man beat him at the head with a sharp object. He explained his suffering from the illness in many ways. In the end, he told venerable Sāriputta that he would take his life with a sharp weapon (suicide) because he did not want to live (Sattham Āvuso Sāriputta Āharissāmi nāvakaṅkhāmi jīvitam). The venerable Sāriputta requested him not to do that and comforted him to live further by saying: I shall bring you suitable food and suitable medicine. Venerable Channa raised many reasons to support his thought and rejected the request. Then he said: Please remember me. Channa will find a sharp weapon (suicide) without any blemish. After that, Venerable Sāriputta gave a chance for Channa to ask questions on the ultimate reality. The questions and answers were on the six consciousnesses. That does not belong to us, that does not us, and that is not self of ours. Venerable Channa emphasized the Buddha's teachings that should be considered. Ones are shaken because of desire and view, without both conditions, they are firm and calm. There is no this world, no next world, no death, and no birth. Having conversed with Venerable Channa, Venerable Sāriputta left for his residence not in a long time. Venerable Channa found a sharp weapon (committed suicide). Knowing this matter, Venerable Sāriputta paid an audience to the Lord Buddha and asked for the future existence of venerable Channa. The Exalted One said: Do you remember if Channa foretold you about the one who should not be blamed? Channa who took away his life with a sharp weapon should not be blamed, i.e. Channa attained Nibbāna (tamaham upavajjoti vadāmi tam bhikkhuno natthi anupavajjam channo bhikkhu sattham āharesi) (Syāmaratthassa tepitakam, 2013c: 397-401).

**Additional Remarks: A case of Venerable Channa** 1) According to the Sutta, Venerable Channa while suffering from his illness has become a noble man or still was an ordinary man. He had suffering like an ordinary man, but his foretelling to venerable Sāriputta was in the state of Arahāt. 2) From the details of conversation of venerable Channa on detachment of six consciousnesses, both venerable Sāriputta and venerable Channa rose from their seats and left not for a long time. Then Channa brought a sharp weapon to carry away his life. It may be that he used that Dhamma (detachment from the six consciousnesses) in contemplation and attained the supreme Dhamma while taking away his life. 3) It is certain that the Exalted One said: A monk who leaves this body and attaches to other body should be blamed. Venerable Channa is not like that. He committed suicide without blame (i.e. not attach to other body but enters to Nibbāna).

### 3) Venerable Vakkali

It should be noted that committing suicide of those 3 monks occurred in Rājagaha. Venerable Godhika practiced meditation by himself with effort until achievement of absorption. Venerable Channa depended on 2 most distinguished disciples' sermon and then he attained the supreme Dhamma by a special way. For venerable Vakkali, he closely depended on the Lord Buddha and attained the supreme Dhamma with Jīvitasaṃsaṃsī.

When the Lord Buddha was staying at Bamboo Grove at Kalandakanivāpa near Rājagaha, venerable Vakkali was very ill, had excessive suffering, and had intense cold. He sent for his attendant to inform the Exalted One saying that: With compassion, may the Lord grant a visit to me.

The Exalted One accepted it in silence. Then the Lord went to see venerable Vakkali and asked about his illness. The Buddha: Can you blame yourself by Sīla? Vakkali: No, Master Venerable. The Buddha addressed on the uselessness of decayed body and taught about the Three Common Characteristics (based on Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta). After that, the Exalted One rose up from his seat and departed to Mount Vulture Peak.

The venerable Vakkali's attendants carried him on bed to Mount Isigiri. In the history of venerable Vakkali, a deva approached the Lord Buddha and told the venerable Vakkali's illness conditions to the Lord. The Lord said that Vakkali's death will not downfall, he will die without deterioration. In this case, the deva behaves like a diplomat between the Buddha, venerable Vakkali and monks. Later, monks came to see venerable Vakkali and transferred the Buddha's address to him. Before the start of listening the Buddha's address, venerable Vakkali asked his attendants to carry him down from the bed saying that he should not take a higher seat while listening to Dhamma. When the group of monks left, venerable Vakkali brought a sharp weapon (to commit suicide). Those monks paid homage to the Lord Buddha at his feet and said that they did not suspect and doubt in the impermanence of form, the impermanence of..... After that the Lord Buddha convened a company of monks and proceeded to Black Rock beside Mount Isigiri where Vakkali was lying.

When the Buddha arrived there with a company of monks, he saw venerable Vakkali lying on the bed with a twisted neck from a far (*addasā kho bhagavā āyasmantam vakkaliṃ dūratova mañcake vivittakkhandhaṃ seyyamānaṃ..* which means that the Lord saw Vakkali who had already died by committing suicide). After that, Māra the evil turned himself to be a smoke or fog going elsewhere to find where venerable Vakkali's consciousness existed as he did for venerable Godhika (but in vain) and Māra felt disappointed and suffering (*Syāmaratṭhassa tepitakam*, 2013e: 121-126).

**Additional Remarks: A case of Venerable Vakkali** 1) Venerable Godhika and venerable Channa may concern with the Buddha near the end of their lives not closely. However, having known that matter, the Lord addressed as such. 2) Venerable Vakkali concerned with the Lord Buddha closely. The Lord acknowledged from a monk and went to teach him at his residence, and then he left to Mount Vulture Peak. Venerable Vakkali requested other monks to carry him

to the slope of Mount Isigiri and passed away there. The Lord Buddha went there after venerable Vakkali committed suicide lying on the bed with a twisted neck. The Lord clearly addressed that venerable Vakkali's death would not downfall, his death would not be deterioration. *Apāpakante bhavissati apāpikā kālakiriya*. (*Syāmaratthassa tepitakam*, 2013e: 124)

This address indicates that venerable Vakkali attained Arahat in the end. His attainment to the supreme Dhamma depended on the assistance and support of the Lord. However, for the end of life, the Lord let it be according to cause and factor. Even if it is not pleasurable in the eye of people in general, but it is perfect.

## COMMITTING SUICIDE OF NOBLE MONKS

Monks who have completely eradicated their defilement and mental suffering (*cetasikadukka*) still have physical aggregates. They may have some physical suffering by nature (*kāyikadukkha*). When the physical components dissolve, they may pass away in different postures, such as reclining on the right side. Again, there are some monks who can force their body to dissolve by magical power. In general view, it is a kind of suicide, but it cannot be included in the suicide of ordinary people. The proper word that can be used in this case is “entering Nibbāna by a special way”.

### 1) Committing suicide of Venerable Bakkula

According to the Suttanta, venerable Bakkula became a monk for 7 days and attained the Arahat on the eighth day. At the age of 80 years, his former friend named Kassapa came to see him. Kassapa asked the venerable that: How many sexual intercours did you have after becoming a monk for 80 years? Bakkula: You should not ask that question, but you should question me how many sexual perceptions I have. He said that sexual perception never occurs to him even once. And then they conversed in other topics in Dhamma. Kassapa had faith and appreciation in the venerable, and then he asked for ordination. He attained the Arahat later.

On the day of his Nibbāna, venerable Bakkula informed monks in every residence that: May you please come outside. Today is the day of my Nibbāna. His Nibbāna is wonderful, that is, he entered Nibbāna in a seated position amid a company of monks. (*Syāmaratthassa tepitakam*, 2013c: 219)

In the Tipitaka, there is only a word: He sat entering Nibbāna amid a company of monks. It is wonderful. In the study, it should be concluded that he committed suicide. *Papañcasūdanī* Commentary (Thai version) 23/80 explains that: In the word “enter Nibbāna in a seated position” (*nisinnakova parinibbāyi*), venerable Bakkula thought that even he lived a life, he would not be a burden of others. His body should not create malaise to other monks after his Nibbāna. He entered fire-contemplation and Nibbāna. The flame of fire burnt his body, skin, flesh, and blood completely. The remains are relics looking like jasmine buds.

So, the Nibbāna of venerable Bakkula can be concluded into committing suicide according to the contents in *Papañcasūdanī* Commentary.

### 2) Committing suicide of Venerable Dabbamalla Putta

According to *Pathama Malla Putta Sutta* (*Syāmaratthassa tepitakam*, 2013f: 198), the Lord Buddha was dwelling at a hall in Bamboo Grove. Venerable Dabbamalla Putta approached him and informed him that: Master Venerable, now is the time for my Nibbāna. The Lord said: Dabba, you should find a suitable time now.

Then, Venerable Dabba rose from his seat, paid homage to the Lord, walked clockwise round the Lord, floated onto the sky, seated with cross-leg and entered fire-contemplation. His body was burnt completely without any relics and ashes left. His body was burnt as butter. The Lord Buddha addressed in a verse:

*Abhedi kāyo nirodhi vedanāpītidahaṃsu sabbadā  
Vūpasamīṃsu saṅkhārā viññāṇaṃ atthamāgamāti*



Physical form dissolved, perception extinguished,  
All aggregates calmed down, Consciousness could not exist.

Paramatthadīpanī Commentary (Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation, 1992c: 251-252) explains that Venerable Dabba enters fire-contemplation, exits from the attainment, contemplates his body, and enters fire-contemplation to burn his whole body with fire (Not as venerable Bakkula who has relics left.) This indicates that it depends on one's determination.

### **3) Committing suicide of Venerable Ānanda**

According to Pali Dhammapada Commentary (Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation, 1992b: 562), Venerable Ānanda contemplates the decay of his body when he is 120 years old. He said to his followers that he would enter Nibbāna on the seventh day from that day. People who live on the banks of Rohinī River said that they provided support to the venerable. He should enter Nibbāna on our bank. The venerable thought: It cannot be said that people on that side give support to me, not the other side, or vice versa. If I entered Nibbāna on this side, people on both sides would make a quarrel because of my relics. The quarrel can occur and end because of me. He told the people on this side to assemble in this side and those on the other side to assemble in that side.

In the seventh day, he floated onto the sky and seated (by his magical power) in the middle of the river as high as seven times of palm trees. He gave a sermon to people, determined his relics be separated into two portions; one to fall in this side and the other to fall in that side, seated in the same position and entered fire-contemplation to have his body burnt. His relics are separated into 2 portions and fell on both sides. The people cried and moaned with sorrow.

Venerable Ānanda is one of the great disciples who enters Nibbāna with a special way. Generally speaking, it is a suicide, but his practice depends on suitable reasons, not depends on any suffering.

## **COMMITTING SUICIDE IN OTHER WAYS**

### **1) Committing suicide because of ideal faith**

It is believed that to do like this is the ultimate worship to the Lord Buddha and will lead to the Buddhahood in the future. This belief is mentioned in Anāgatavaṃsa scripture, which is a sub-scripture, not the Tipiṭaka.

At one time, Saṃkha the emperor addressed to the Exalted One that: Venerable sir, the Lord addressed Nibbāna is ultimate and foremost of other Dhammas. I will cut off my head which is the topmost part of my body to worship your teachings as a special sacrifice. After that, he cut off his head and placed it on his palm. It is the head of Bodhisatva. He expressed a verse that:

Bhante sirimattabuddha amataṃ yātha pūrato

Iminā sīladānena pacchato yāmi nibbānaṃ

Oh, Lord Sirimatta Buddha,

May I attain the immortal Dhamma due to the head offering,

May I enter Nibbāna at a later time.

In the end of his verse, the king passed away and was reborn in Tusita heaven. (Phra Kassapathera (South-Indian), 2010: 91-92.)



Source: Khaosod. (2024, April 25)

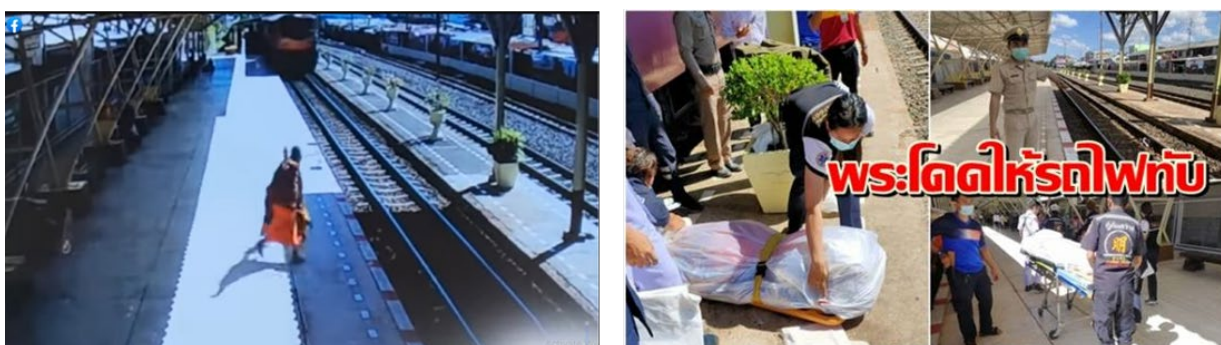
There may be such a belief in this scripture. A monk named “Thammakorn” at Phu Hin Kong Sangha Residence in Nong Bua Lamphu province committed suicide by using a self-made guillotine to cut his neck with a purpose to offer it to the Lord Buddha. There is a statue of Indra, seated on his knees, the head held in both hands reaching out. At present, the statue was destroyed being afraid that this belief may be spread out and continued. (16 April 2021)

In the case of Thammakorn, it depends on intellectual consideration if it is a practice with insane delusion or the right practice in his belief. The source of this case may come from the influence of a content in *Anāgatavamsa* scripture. However, in the third cause of setting forth the *Tatiya Pārājika* (the third item of Defeat) of the Discipline, the Lord Buddha does not praise and admire the deed as such. (*Syāmaratṭhassa tepitakam*, 2013a: 108)



Source: Dailynews. (2024, April 26)

A monk named “Saratoon” of Wat Tham Pratun in Chonburi province committed suicide in an extra-ordinary way. He used electric wire to tie round his neck and plugged in the other end with an electric socket in his Kutti, and then he jumped into a big jar. He got electrocuted and died a tortured death. The reason for his suicide came from his stress. He used his cellular telephone to video record the situation from the start to the end. (4 October 2023)



Source: Springnews. (2024, April 26)

A monk named “Sompong Suvanno”, 55 years old, of Wat Ban Pa Aao in Si Sa Ket province went to Si Sa Ket Railway Station and jumped onto the rail while a train approaching. He was run over with the head cut off and died at once. The cause of his suicide is from accumulated stress in his illness. (24 November 2021)

## 2) Assistance to others in critical situations

The practice is done in protection of the nation or people. Sometimes, life must be sacrificed. It is similar to suicide. For example, the pilots of Kamikaze squadron of Japan in World War II flew to attack frigate chimneys of their enemy even though they knew very well that they had to die. The minority of soldiers in fighting arena is the same.

Some animals sacrifice their lives too. For example, a baby deer is swimming across a river with plenty of crocodiles. The mother deer rushes to jump into the river to save her baby deer by keeping herself on the side full of crocodiles and she is bitten. The baby deer rushes to jump up to the riverbank at once with safety. The life sacrifice of animals is because of their instinct or praiseworthy devotion.

In many Jātaka tales, there are stories in which Bodhisattvas devote their lives for the sake of others or for cultivation of perfection. For example, Sasapaṇḍika was born as a rabbit. He devoted his life to a Brahmin. However, whatever Bodhisattvas have done is more excellent than that of animals’ and of ordinary people’s.

There is a Buddha’s verse supporting this thought as follows:

Caje dhanam aṅgavarassa hetu

Aṅga caje jīvitam rakkhamāno

Aṅga dhanam jīvitañcāpi sabbam

Caje naro dhammanussaranto (Syāmaratṭhassa tepitakam, 2013g: 132)

Human beings should sacrifice their wealth to save their body organs,

Should sacrifice their body organs to save their lives,

And to save Dhamma, they should sacrifice their wealth, body organs and lives.

## CONCLUSION

From the study, we can conclude the causes of suicide as follows: 1) Committing suicide caused by separation from the beloved ones or things or obtaining unsatisfying things occurs to people in general who feel stressful and find no way to overcome it. Buddhism teaches people to consider and contemplate the separation from the beloved ones or things or obtaining unsatisfying things. We must live our lives under these two conditions. Regular contemplation on it can create immunity (against suicide). 2) Committing suicide to escape from chronic diseases is similar to the first item, but the cause comes from the physical part. The solution is to cure the diseases and then to calm the mind. Buddhism places a focus on “Compassion”; thinking and giving assistances to others in order that they may overcome their suffering. The one who is thinking of committing suicide may change their mind. 3) Committing suicide in a special way is a practice of the one who aims to attain a noble state called “Jīvitasamasīsi”. The practitioner must achieve the realization. In the Buddha’s time, the Lord Buddha came to bestow assistance and comfort to them. In the present time, a noble monk possessing supreme insight is in need, otherwise committing suicide may be a mistake and become useless. 4) Entering Nibbāna in a special way for some Arahantas who enter fire-contemplation is an individual identity that cannot be duplicated. 5) Committing suicide because of extreme belief, cutting off the head to worship the Buddha etc., is on a thin line between misunderstanding and aiming the Buddhahood. Practitioners should study it deeply and clearly under the guidance of good masters. 6. Committing suicide should not be condemned by the ones who have compassion and wisdom at all.

## REFERENCES

- Bangkokbiznews. (2023). รู้หรือไม่ว่าในแต่ละปีทั่วโลกมีคนฆ่าตัวตายสำเร็จกว่า 1 ล้านคน: Retrieved <https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/health/well-being/1087814> (2024, April 10)
- Dailynews. (2023). สยอง! เจอศพพระสงฆ์ในโอ่ง. Retrieved from <https://www.dailynews.co.th/news/2777275/>.
- Khaosod. (2021). ย้อนคดี 'พระกิโยติน' ตัดหัวถวายพุทธบูชา. Retrieved from [https://www.khaosod.co.th/newspaper-column/live-from-the-scene/news\\_6359351](https://www.khaosod.co.th/newspaper-column/live-from-the-scene/news_6359351).
- Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation. (1992a). *samantapāsādikā nāma vinayaṭṭhakathā (paṭhamo bhāgo) mahāvibhaṅgavaṇṇanā Vol. I (The Commentaries)*. Bangkok: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation. (1992b). *dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (paṭhamo bhāgo) Vol. XVII (The Commentaries)*. Bangkok: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press
- Mahamakut Buddhist Foundation. (1992c). *paramaṭṭhadīpanī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā udānavāṇṇanā Vol. XIX (The Commentaries)*. Bangkok: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Payutto, P. A. (2023). *Buddhadhamma: Dictionary of Buddhism with Numerical Dhammas*. Bangkok: Accurate Press company limited
- Phra Kassapathera (South-Indian). (2010). *phrakhambhī anāgatavaṃśa (The Commentaries)*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Springnews. (2020). พระกระโดดลงไปในไร่ไฟฟ้าที่ จ.ศรีสะเกษ. Retrieved from <https://www.springnews.co.th/news/802733>.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013a). *vinayaṭṭake mahāvibhaṅgo (paṭhamo bhāgo) Vol. I*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013b). *suttantaṭṭake dīghanikāyo (mahāvibhaṅgo) Vol. X*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013c). *suttantaṭṭake majjhimanikāyo (uparipaṇṇāsakam) Vol. XIV*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013d). *suttantaṭṭake saṃyuttanikāyo (sagāthavaggo) Vol. XV*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013e). *suttantaṭṭake saṃyuttanikāyo (khandhavaravaggo) Vol. XVII*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013f). *suttantaṭṭake khuddanikāyo (kuddakapāṭha dhammapada udāna itivuttaka suttanipātā) Vol. XXV*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.
- Syāmaratṭhassa teṭṭakam. (2013g). *suttantaṭṭake khuddanikāyo jātakam dutiyo bhāgo (paññāsanipāṭa-mahānipātājātakam) Vol. XXVIII*. Nakhon Pathom: Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalyaya Press.

**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. This is a fully open-access article distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).