



Nancy, 02/14/2021

The Prince's Renunciation

Hi everyone, this is Nancy. Today is Feb. 14th, 2021. Wish you a peaceful Valentine's Day. As you know the Buddha renounced his royal family, left the palace, his wife, his newborn son, his throne, his wealth and fame behind, and walked onto his long and hard journey of enlightenment. He found the Way, and then returned to preach the Dharma to sentient beings.

However, more than one time, I heard people saying, "Oh yes, but he abandoned his wife and his child." To these people, though the Buddha found the light and lightened the hearts of countless sentient beings, leaving his wife and his son behind was an unforgettable and pity thing.

Our February subject is complying with the operation of the Heaven and Earth, or in another word, following the Way. Everyone may have different understanding of the Way, which may depend on this person's level of awareness, the opposite of ignorance. Today, let's talk about why the Buddha renounced his family and the Buddha's following the Way.

The Buddha's renunciation was just a result. There were many causes that led to his renunciation. Prince Siddhartha grew up in the palace not short of any material things or fun things to do. Especially his father knew the prophecy that his son might abandon his throne and become a great sage one day. The king did not want the prince to leave, so he did his best to keep the prince happy. Though the king tried all means to cover the truth of life and filled the prince's life with playful women and things, reality still revealed itself before the prince from every possible corner. The prince saw the hardships and suffering of the lowly people; the prince saw the inequality of the society; the prince saw the officials and brahmins scheming for power. All of these firmly imprinted on his mind. Especially, on the three trips that his father arranged for him, the prince saw aging, ailment and death.

One day, the prince asked his father to allow him to visit the forests. The King agreed and ordered the city streets to be thoroughly swept clean. He also banned the elderly, the diseased, the poor, and the starving from these streets, and removed any corpses from sight. The king did not want the prince to see any suffering of the world.

However, on his first trip, outside of the city walls, the prince spotted a frail elderly person. He was startled and confused. Through conversation with his driver Chandaka, he understood that in this world no one could avoid aging. When one got old, one's skin color changed, memory faded, worries grew, and happiness waned. Every part of the body would not function as well as in youth. The prince was saddened or frightened by aging and returned to the palace. His mind was occupied with thoughts of aging, and he felt lonely, empty, and frustrated. The palace, to him, became a tomb.

When the king saw that his son was depressed, he was concerned and encouraged him to get some fresh air outside. He arranged the second trip, on which the prince saw a person in illness. A man lay on the side of the street, his stomach bloated despite his emaciated body.



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His breathing was difficult, his limbs were weak, and he was moaning. The prince was filled with sympathy. He asked Chandaka why this man was like that, and Chandaka told the prince, "This man is sick. In the body, if the organs do not work in harmony, then pain and illness will manifest. And prince, as long as one has a body, one will grow sick."

The prince was frightened again. He said, "Life truly is filled with pain. How can I pass my days in peace? The beings in this world are mired in ignorance and darkness. They do not know that illness can overtake them at any moment, instead chasing blindly after the insubstantial five desires."

Again, the prince ordered to return to the palace shortly. Thinking about aging and illness, he felt helpless.

The king questioned Chandaka and other servants about what happened, and he was deeply shaken and afraid. He arranged more beautiful women and lovely music to the prince. He personally left the palace and found a flourishing grove. This time, he ordered to have the roads cleaned more carefully and remove any sign of suffering. However, on the road, the driver was lost, and this time, they saw a coffin with a corpse in it. The prince sighed deeply, "The people of this world are deeply misguided. With death so close, how can we relax? We are not like trees or stones. How can we live, unaware of the impermanence of things, passing our days in leisure and games? Death is certain. How can I sit and watch as life quietly slips by?"

Ever since then, the prince spent his days agonizing over aging, illness and death, ignoring everything around him. He was like a wounded lion, or a caged elephant. No matter what he was doing, he saw aging, illness and death just by the door. Until one day, when the causes and conditions were ripe, he fled to look for liberation.

To put this from another perspective, the journey of enlightenment was the prince's unavoidable mission. It's the Heaven's Will, and it's his past vow. The prince had to do what he needed to do. That's his inner driving force. He was never alone. He was not alone before the birth; he was not alone every minute in his whole life, and he was not alone after nirvana. He came to show the Way. He came to awaken sentient beings. He came to sow the light. His compassion extended to all sentient beings. So he could not just be the husband of his wife, or the father of his own son. He belonged to all sentient beings. Renouncing the royal family was following the Way, and you may do the same at least in one life of the future when it's your time.

Amitabha! This is today's Dharma sharing. Following the Way may have different meanings for different sentient beings. What is your Way in this life? Thank you everyone for being here watching this video. Consider subscribing this channel for weekly Dharma talks, meditation sessions, sutras and mantras. I will see you next time. Bye!