

A VISION FOR THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE YOUNG SIDDHARTHA'S RENUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

According to traditional Buddhist history, in the journey to seek liberation, while he was still very young, Siddhartha received teachings from two of the most famous teachers of his time, namely, Ārāḷa Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. They taught him different techniques for meditation, and he eventually succeeded those practices and realized that he was still unable to grapple with his more significant concern: liberation from the suffering of samsara. He left the two teachers unflinchingly. Some historical accounts suggest that he spent the next few years struggling with different kinds of practice, some of which almost cost him his life. With energetic, youthful determination, finally, young Siddhartha accomplished the ultimate spiritual path and became the Buddha.

In this paper, I hope to critically engage Siddhartha's renunciation from various Pali suttas. My main argument will emphasize the life of Siddhartha and his decision to renounce the world in search of spiritual enlightenment. I seek to articulate how his renunciation could become a source of inspiration for youth to develop the necessary qualities for a leadership role. While I would like to ground my argument in specific

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ideas about what the components of ideal leadership are, I hope to explore further the obstacles that young people may encounter and how the teachings of the Buddha might help them overcome those challenges. Although there are various accounts about Siddhartha's renunciation, I seek to understand the human aspect of Siddhartha's renunciation, rather than the god-like or legendary aspects, as many Buddhists commonly believe. From this understanding, I hope I can shed light on the path for youth development and leadership to guide many bewildered youth leaders.

There is a wide range of theories about why Siddhartha left his palace life to become a monk. One of the most prominent arguments is that, although he lived a luxurious life, he was not satisfied with the happiness stemming from sensual pleasures. He yearned for an alternative path to achieve eternal satisfaction. Furthermore, he may well have understood the nature of samsara, which is the suffering of birth and death, and he could not ignore it. Other people argued that he had practiced and accumulated the Bodhisatta path for eons and it was in the last birth that Siddhartha fulfilled his commitment. These accounts are reasonable and widely accepted among many Buddhist followers. What I am focusing on is how these accounts could become a motivation to inspire young people to live a meaningful life. A closer investigation into his youth before leaving the household life will undoubtedly provide some insight into why he renounced his lay life.

Naturally, human nature tends to find comfort from sensual pleasures. However, the young prince was not happy at all with those mundane feelings. At first, we may think that he was a prince, so he took it for granted that sensual entertainments would be there for him when he needed them. His father was a king; therefore, he could rely on that power to do whatever he wanted. However, he did not. There are many cases in our society in which children from affluent and powerful families rely too much on their parents, which generates a habit of dependence on family wealth. They believe that their parents are wealthy and influential; therefore, it is not necessary to strive for anything. In contrast, Siddhartha understood that those worldly sources of sensual pleasures did not bring about a long-lasting, satisfying experience; instead, they were

the cause of more craving and suffering. In the following passage of the *Buddhacariya*, Asvaghosa describes how Siddhartha rejected worldly pleasures:

*“I show no contempt for pleasures of sense,
I know that people are obsessed with them;
But knowing that the world is transient,
My heart finds no delight in them at all”.*⁽¹⁾

It seems to suggest that Siddhartha had experienced sensual pleasures, but found neither delight nor attachment in them. He wanted to find something different from the rest of what human beings always wished for. In other words, he realized the capricious nature of life and that nothing remained permanently. Some people may argue that Siddhartha had cultivated the path over the course of many lifespans; therefore, during this last birth, he did not crave sensual pleasures anymore. It may be correct, but I want to look at his life from a very human perspective, which may help to inspire young people to reflect on their life values, including personal growth, lifestyle, and leadership.

Through the rejection of sensual pleasures, Siddhartha went against the stream of samsara to search for something that he later called, in the *Ariyapariyesana sutta*, *The Noble Search sutta*, “the noble quest.” To elaborate on what the noble search is, we will discuss what it is *not*, which is “the ignoble.” The Buddha defined an “ignoble search” as follows: “There is the case where a person, being subject himself to birth, seeks (happiness in) what is likewise subject to birth”⁽²⁾. The ignoble search seems to be similar to what almost everyone strives for. I think it is not incorrect to pursue something in life, especially when people live a household life. Even the Buddha, before he attained enlightenment, was also in search of the ignoble cause, and he admitted it. There is a passage in this same sutta where he states, “I, too, monks, before my Awakening, when I

1. Aśvaghōṣa, *Buddhacariya* and Patrick Olivelle, *Life of the Buddha* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

2. MN, 26: *Ariyapariyesana Sutta: The Noble Search Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

was an *unawakened bodhisatta*, being subject myself to birth, sought what was likewise subject to birth.”⁽³⁾ This appears to suggest that whoever is not awakened will continue to search for happiness, which is subject to birth, old age, sickness, and death. Therefore, I would assume that perhaps our quest for happiness is somehow “ignoble,” but having something to strive for is not ignoble at all, especially when it conventionally benefits many other people.

There is another passage in a different sutta where the Buddha uses the phrase “unawakened bodhisatta”, but indicating a different realization, he says, “I myself, before my Awakening, when I was still an unawakened bodhisatta, saw as it actually was with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, and greater drawbacks”⁽⁴⁾ In this passage, the Buddha, though he was not awakened, realizes that sensual pleasures are the source of suffering. Is the stage of the “unawakened bodhisatta” of this sutta and that of the Ariyapariyesana sutta equivalent? I find the ways in which these two stages of being “unawakened” were described very motivating. They seem to suggest that there are different stages in our lives, given that those stages are “unawakened” ones, and that sometimes we are caught in thoughts that lead to negative consequences and thoughts that liberate us from miserable conditions. We have a chance to lead our lives in the right direction even though we are not awakened yet.

Many young people in our generation are being dragged away by the flux of social media. They are fed by newsfeeds from people in the virtual and digital world whom they do not even know. Comparing their lives to other people’s lives and feeling “not good enough” is a common disease of this generation. They do not understand that people may have a perfect social media life, but they may be miserable in real life. The Buddha brought out two different realizations from two stages of being “unawakened” to encourage us by the fact that although many of us are unawakened in many ways, we still can realize something meaningful in our lives.

3. *Ibid.*

4. MN 14, Cula-dukkhakkhandha Sutta: The Lesser Mass of Stress Sutta, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.014.than.html>
Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

We may not have a perfect life and our pursuits may be “ignoble,” but acknowledging that it is an important act, and we can work from there.

I would further argue that an acknowledgment of our generally “ignoble” quest could provide ethical guidance for young people as well. We live in a world where suffering and dissatisfaction are always unavoidable, and where everyone has been through something in their lives that involves one or another kind of suffering. Many people may not realize that the goals that they are seeking, and even their own selves, are subject to birth, old age, sickness, and death. Having understood that, we will be more sympathetic to the people around us. We can generate more compassion toward them and at least will not do any harm to them. It is because we, too, having similar problems with our ignoble search, simply wish for happiness. Therefore, if young people understand this, they will not be depressed by comparing themselves to other people; they will be more compassionate toward others because deep down, they understand that people are suffering.

Realizing the shortcomings of the ignoble search, prince Siddhartha sought to search for something else that worldly pleasures could not replace. I propose that he did not really *know* what exactly he was looking for when he first left his palace. He only knew later what he described as “the noble search,” which was to “seek the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: Unbinding.”⁽⁵⁾ The point is that, at the beginning of his spiritual quest, he was not certain about what he would get himself into. It was just that he was not satisfied with the royal life and he wanted to find an alternative way to liberate himself and then others from the circle of birth and death. It is very striking to think about a journey in which we do not know where it will take us. Fearlessness is another quality that, I think, we can learn from his renunciation.

Many young and inspired leaders often encounter fear when they try to do something new. Fear of failure, fear of uncertainty, and

5. MN, 26: Ariyapariyesana Sutta: *The Noble Search Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

fear of judgment are the dominant forces that hold them back from what they want to pursue. Fear is the result of our brain trying to protect us from danger. It would be unwise to think that Siddhartha did not feel afraid when he left home and practiced before his enlightenment. In one sutta, the Buddha described how terrified he was when again an “unwakened bodhisatta”, dwelling alone in the isolated forest: “It’s not easy to endure isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. It’s not easy to maintain seclusion, not easy to enjoy being alone. The forests, as it were, plunder the mind of a monk who has not attained concentration”⁽⁶⁾. However, he did not let his fear obstruct his spiritual pursuit. If he gave up his path out of fear, we would not have inherited the wonderful teachings that benefited many people. If, out of fear, many young and inspired leaders do not pursue their callings for the benefit of themselves and of many other people, consider how many people would have suffered because of that failure. Therefore, looking at the young Siddhartha’s renunciation can motivate and inspire us to overcome our fear and maybe do something good for ourselves and society.

Another elaboration on the quality of fearlessness of his renunciation is that he dared to do something that many people thought impossible. In ancient Indian society, a man’s life was supposed to go through four stages, namely, being a student, a householder, a retired person, and a renunciation. It seemed that no one approved his choice. He says that his parents cried “with tears streaming down their faces”⁽⁷⁾ and were unwilling to let him go. However, having seen enough suffering of people and potentially of himself, he knew that he had to leave. What young people can learn from this is to dare to do the impossible. It will be painful when people, especially our loved ones, do not approve of what we do, but it is our calling, our decision to make. I think it is a message that Siddhartha wanted young leaders to understand.

6. MN 4, Bhayabherava Sutta: *The Fear and Terror Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.004.than.html>. Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

7. MN, 26: Ariyapariyesana Sutta: *The Noble Search Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

It is not unusual that Siddhartha, after he left his palace, searched for spiritual teachers who could guide him to find an answer to his concern. Historically, his first meditation teacher was Alara Kalama,⁽⁸⁾ who was a renounced meditator at that time. After practicing under the guidance of Alara Kalama, he soon realized that those teachings were not sufficient to tackle his questions. While he hoped to learn the teachings that could lead to dispassion, direct knowledge, and Unbinding, the teachings from Alara Kalama did not lead to such results; instead, those teachings led to a meditative stage in the dimension of nothingness, which was bound by *samsara*. Similarly, it happened when Siddhartha practiced under Uddaka Ramaputta – his second meditation teacher. The practice that he received from Uddaka only led to another stage of meditative experience, which still did not help him answer his burning question about liberation from birth and death. The encounter and practice under these two teachers may have been historical facts, Siddhartha may have practiced and achieved these highly meditative stages, but what I want to emphasize is his attitude toward the teachings that he found unsatisfactory; he said, “So, dissatisfied with that Dhamma, I left.”⁽⁹⁾

Siddhartha left these two teachers unflinchingly just like when he left his household life. It exemplifies a kind of quality that contributes to the character of a person and a leader, namely, effort. We may wonder what effort has to do with his decisions to leave. Generally, effort is understood as the physical or mental energy that we need to accomplish certain tasks. In this context, effort is deemed a crucial component derived from the four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*), which is one component of the Thirty-seven Wings to Awakening.⁽¹⁰⁾ The concept of four right efforts elaborates

8. The account of his visit to Alara Kalama is mentioned in MN 26: *Ariyapariyesana* Sutta: the *Noble Search* Sutta, MN 36: *Maha-Saccaka* Sutta: The Longer Discourse to Saccaka, MN 85: *Bodhirajakumara* Sutta: To Prince Bodhiraja Sutta.

9. MN, 26: *Ariyapariyesana* Sutta: The *Noble Search* Sutta, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

10. Thirty-seven Wings to Awakening are: The Four Frames of Reference (*satipaṭṭhāna*), The Four Right Exertions (*sammappadhāna*), The Four Bases of Power (*iddhipāda*), The Five Faculties (*indriya*), The Five Strengths (*bala*), The Seven Factors for Awakening (*bojjhaṅga*), The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-magga*). For more details, visit <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html#table>

the idea that one should abandon whatever is not conducive to the path of liberation, and one should cultivate whatever is conducive to the path. Effort does not only mean striving for something good, but it also indicates that whatever is unwholesome should be discarded. He saw that the practices of these two teachers could not liberate him; therefore, once again, he left for another journey that, to him, was not entirely predictable.

Effort plays a vital role in every aspect of our lives, as it had in the young Siddhartha's practice. There are many occasions in our lives that require tremendous effort for decision-making. We may have a magnificent idea that could benefit many people in the world. However, if we do not execute it with effort, we would never succeed in accomplishing it. While effort means that we always strive for the right cause, it also indicates that whatever is unskillful should be abandoned. For instance, on the path of leadership, there will always be many dilemmas that require our right decision to tackle appropriately in order to protect our integrity. This is where right effort comes to the fore. Right effort informs what the most skillful action should be for any given situation. Within the framework of right effort, "do" and "do not" seem to suggest that there is a component of ethical consideration that is essential to youth development and leadership as well. We will discuss further the ethical component of youth development and leadership in the next part of this essay.

Siddhartha's renunciation was one of the biggest quandaries that he had ever encountered. It is generally believed that renunciation does not bring any good to society. Is it a rejection of a social life to live in recluse? In fact, Hajime Nakamura, in his book entitled *Gotama Buddha*, points out that Siddhartha's renunciation encountered various criticisms from the modern resistance about the idea of abandoning one's family. It seemed even more unacceptable when he abandoned his duty as a king-to-be, a husband, and a father of a newborn. It is reasonable and valid from a modern perspective. He writes "there is modern resistance to the idea of abandoning one's family for the life of a wandering practitioner... Such criticisms have been raised in the past by Hindus, particularly those of the Mimamsa school, which was tended to value lay life; by Chinese

Confucianists; and by Japanese nativist scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”⁽¹¹⁾. Nakamura pushes back, stating that we must look at the social conditions of ancient India, when leaving home was a necessity so that one could pursue the spiritual path.

The Buddha said that he left home for a higher purpose that could benefit more people than just his beloved family. In the *Parinibbana* sutta, he taught, “In age but twenty-nine was I, *Subhadda*, when I renounced the world to seek the Good”⁽¹²⁾. “The Good” that he discovered and taught to the world is almost irreplaceable by anything that he could have done if he would not have left home. However, in order to discover the Good, he had to endure tremendous hardships physically and emotionally. For example, Siddhartha practiced self-mortification for several years, which almost killed him. The *Nidanakatha*⁽¹³⁾ describes the different types of austerity that Siddhartha performed, such as that he “lived off one sesame seed,” and even “fasted completely,” such that “his body became emaciated to an extreme,” and “he was wracked with severe pain and lost consciousness”⁽¹⁴⁾. It is unfathomable how much sacrifice he made to fulfill his journey. Indeed, there are always sacrifices for the right cause that everyone may have to confront.

I do not think that leaving a loving family and a great career behind to pursue something *uncertain* would be deemed an easy task. Young Siddhartha underwent enormous sacrifices, from emotional challenges to physical breakdowns, with the hope of finding the threshold to spiritual revolution. It is a beautiful lesson that young leaders should take into consideration. When asked “what do we want?” many of us probably have a similar answer: “we want to be happy, successful and have a good life.” It is not unusual to wish for these things. However, to achieve these qualities for our lives, we should ask “what sacrifices do we want to make?” There

11. Hajime Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts*, (Kosei Publishing CO.: Tokyo, 2000), 106.

12. DN 16, *Mahaparinibbana Sutta: The Days of the Buddha Sutta*, translated by Sister Vajra and Francis Story. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

13. It is a part of Jataka genre about the Buddha’s previous lives.

14. Hajime Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts*, (Kosei Publishing CO.: Tokyo, 2000), 141.

is no such thing as “easy success” in life. It depends on how much hardship we can bear, how much difficulty we can overcome, and how much sacrifice we are willing to make to achieve our goal. Siddhartha did not achieve enlightenment through an easy path. His sacrifices can be seen as living proof of his achievement of the ultimate spiritual goal.

After attaining enlightenment, young Siddhartha became young Gotama Buddha, and he did not keep the teachings to himself. Out of compassion, he delivered the Dhamma to serve the world. It was a spiritual revolution against the belief that renunciation equals rejection of the world. The act of coming back to teach people what he realized contradicts the notion of worldly rejection. What concerned him was the complexity of different philosophical teachings, which caused confusion to people. There were many contemporary thinkers⁽¹⁵⁾ whom the Buddha did not agree with. Considering that he was young⁽¹⁶⁾ when he became the Buddha, as opposed to those philosophers, he was not afraid to raise his concerns about the incorrectness of those philosophers. This is an interesting account that deserves a further elaboration and can contribute a valuable lesson to young leaders.

Traditionally, young people’s voices do not weigh much in family and societal structures. The belief that young people do not have enough lived experience compared to that of elderly people has been dominant in many societies. Specifically, in the Asian society, complete obedience to one’s parents is seen as showing a person’s good character, which may confine his or her creativity, agency, and autonomy. Siddhartha, however, overcame this hierarchical system to raise his opinions and declare what was right or wrong. In terms of spiritual achievement, a fascinating fact is that many of his contemporary thinkers were much older than him, but, in spite of his young age, Siddhartha was able to achieve the liberation that many other older thinkers may have not. Undoubtedly, suspicion about his highly spiritual realization was inevitable. A king named

15. DN 2, *Samannaphala Sutta: The Fruits of the Contemplative Life Sutta*, mentions more than sixty different philosophers.

16. Some historical accounts write that he was thirty-five when he achieved enlightenment, while other accounts states that he was thirty years old when he became the Buddha.

Pasenadi of Kosala, who was one of the Buddha lay disciples, questioned him about how a young person like the Buddha claimed to “have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening,” whereas those philosophers had not.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Buddha, in the same sutta, answered the king that although someone or something may appear insignificant, they have the potential to accomplish significant tasks. In the following passage, to answer the king’s doubt, the Buddha illustrates an example about four phenomena that should not be looked down upon: “A noble warrior, great king, shouldn’t be despised and disparaged for being young. A snake... A fire... And a monk should not be despised and disparaged for being young”⁽¹⁸⁾. The Buddha further explains that each of these four things, despite “being young,” would turn out to be enormous and could have a tremendous effect on many lives. This is an encouragement reminding young people that age cannot determine the quality of a person. Being young is a privilege to explore one’s potential to have an impact on society. The Buddha also suggested that young leaders have the opportunity to challenge the traditional stigma about the ability of young people. Moreover, young Siddhartha was a living proof of this, who challenged the entire ancient Indian society, in which he succeeded.

It is not difficult to raise our concern to challenge social injustice, gender inequality, and/or anything in the world. However, the principles on which our arguments and our lives stand in order to make that challenge valid are very critical. Siddhartha did not ground his arguments on mere reasoning or in vain speculation. His life is the proof of what he said. Young people may be inspired by learning about his renunciation and achievement, but if their lives are not established on certain principles, it will be difficult to achieve any great accomplishment. Therefore, one of the most critical principles that can help establish the foundation of their lives and leadership is ethical conduct or moral precepts. Someone may think that the ethical codes that the Buddha taught are only useful for spiritual practice, especially for the monastic community.

17. SN 3.1, *Dahara Sutta*: The *Young Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn03/sn03.001.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

18. *Ibid.*

However, they are vital for every aspect in life, especially for the moral development of young people and those who aspire to be leaders.

The benefits of the ethical component in the precepts of the Buddha's teachings for young people are manifold. Firstly, there is a guide for living a moral life that connects to the "do" and "do not" aspects indicated above in the right effort. Secondly, it protects us from unwholesome activities that may occur from an untamed mind. Most importantly, it is deemed as the essential starting point of every journey, whether spiritual or worldly. Thanissaro Bhikkhu in one of his articles entitled *The Healing Power of the Precepts*, states, "The Buddha's path consisted not only of mindfulness, concentration, and insight practices, but also of virtue, beginning with the five precepts. In fact, the precepts constitute the first step in the path"⁽¹⁹⁾ to indicate that the [five] precepts⁽²⁰⁾ are the cornerstone of every great achievement, not only in spiritual practice, but also for a healthy lifestyle and personal development. Thus, youth development and leadership start from the very humble practice of having the ethical conduct.

With a solid foundation built on ethical conduct, young people may be able to encounter challenges in life. The Buddha was well aware of the difficulties that many young people would eventually confront. In the *Sukhamala* sutta: *Refinement*⁽²¹⁾, the Buddha points out three different obstacles that, typically, a young person would face, namely, the three forms of arrogance: the arrogance of youth, arrogance of health, and arrogance of life. These three kinds of arrogance were, in fact, experienced by Siddhartha when he was a young person living a luxurious life in his palace. These three arrogances indicate that being young is a privilege and, at the same time, can invite obstacles. For instance, it is not unusual to think that young age means having more time to finish any task;

19. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *The Healing Power of the Precepts* <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/precepts.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.

20. For more details about the five precepts, we can go to AN 8. 39, *Pancasila: The Five Precepts*. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/pancasila.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.

21. AN 3.38, *Sukhamala* sutta: *Refinement*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.038.than.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.

therefore, we may think, why bother doing it now, which would lead to procrastination. Thus, if young people take “being young” for granted, they would undermine the privilege of young age and could miss chances for great success.

Ultimately, there will be more obstacles, challenges, and problems that young people and young leaders have to confront. Regardless of how those difficulties may arise, whether externally or internally, there are always moments when perplexity and bewilderment penetrate our decisions and leave us wondering what to do. The Buddha may not have direct answers for everything regarding differences in time and space. What we could inherit from his teachings is the power of discernment stemming from the lessons and meanings of his renunciation. In the following passage from a discourse entitled the *Kalama* sutta, the Buddha allows us to figure out how we want to tackle our perplexity based on our own experience: “When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to harm and to suffering’ then you should abandon them.” Maybe we are not entirely certain of what action may be appropriate, but we “try it out,” and learn from it to “know for ourselves”. Siddhartha figured out by himself the path to liberation by going against many commonly-held beliefs. He suggested that a belief, be it from tradition, scripture, or legend, cannot be accepted as if it is true without the understanding to “know for ourselves”. Thus, when it comes to personal callings, we are the authors of our lives and we have to decide what should be done. Ultimately, we are the heirs of our decisions.

The renunciation of Siddhartha has been understood and translated through various approaches. While many people may look at the young Siddhartha’s renunciation as a myth or a legend, and other people may criticize him for abandoning his family, his duty, and his country, the fact is that his renunciation has contributed to transforming the ways in which people live their lives. His renunciation has been a source of inspiration for young people in various forms pertaining to personal transformation, social challenge, and spiritual revolution. It required sacrifices,

audacity, effort, and many distinct qualities that many people thought were impossible to accomplish. Through his renunciation, Siddhartha proved that anything is possible. Though the youth are inspired to challenge the world, to accomplish tremendous success, and to pursue their dreams, it all starts with a simple step, which is to have an ethical foundation. Ethical conduct is the solid ground on which we stand to encounter difficulties in life.

Understanding his renunciation from its human dimension and perspective motivates us to live meaningful lives. We may have a different search than that of Siddhartha's, and our quest may not be as "noble" as his, but we all have ambitions, dreams, and purposes. We wish to accomplish something that is greater than ourselves. We want to contribute to the world and to make it a better place. These are genuinely legitimate pursuits. However, we are also perplexed, confused, and bewildered. We are so afraid of failure that we do not dare to carry on our tasks. I think Siddhartha, too, was perplexed and confused when he encountered the world after a long time spent in the palace. He wanted to understand the world in order to transform it. So, at least we have something in common with him, and we may start from there. I genuinely believe that if we study his renunciation and take it into our hearts, it will benefit our mundane lives enormously, especially for young people and those who are inspired to become leaders in their society.

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DN 2, *Samannaphala Sutta: The Fruits of the Contemplative Life Sutta*, mentions more than sixty different philosophers.

Some historical accounts write that he was thirty-five when he achieved enlightenment, while other accounts states that he was thirty years old when he became the Buddha.

SN 3.1, *Dahara Sutta: The Young Sutta*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn03/sn03.001.than.html> Access date: Dec 8, 2018.

Ibid.,

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *The Healing Power of the Precepts* <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/precepts.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.

For more details about the five precepts, we can go to AN 8. 39, *Pancasila: The Five Precepts*. <https://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/pancasila.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.

AN 3.38, *Sukhamala sutta: Refinement*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.038.than.html> Access date: Dec 7, 2018.