

THE LACK OF MODERATION IN *THE GREAT GATSBY*:

A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

SIRIWAT WONGUDOMSIN



Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in English

at Srinakharinwirot University

December 2015

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AN ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the characteristics of Jay Gatsby, the main character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, from a Buddhist perspective. The researcher claims that the downfall of Gatsby arises from the lack of moderation, the concept that urges people to stay in the "Middle Path", known as the "Noble Eightfold Path". The Noble Eightfold Path is one of the Buddhist teachings that help guide men in living a happy life in the secular world.

The study shows that because of Gatsby's illusion that Daisy loves him, he allows himself to get involved with illegal and improper business to speed up his wealth as well as to lead his life in extremity. Gatsby believes that such actions would bring Daisy back to him. In terms of a Buddhist perspective, Gatsby's works and life are seen as extreme in a way that results in his downfall. His decadence is rooted from the lack of moderation, which can be seen in two of the eight of the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path, the Right Livelihood and the Right Action. Gatsby's bootlegging alcohol is considered as against the Right Livelihood, which suggests that man should work proper and righteous jobs that do not harm others. His extravagant ways of living reflect the lack of the Right Action, which suggests people to live moderately. It can be concluded that Gatsby's downfall is caused by his lack of moderation.

การขาดความพอเพียงในนวนิยายเรื่อง *The Great Gatsby*: แนวทัศนะทางพุทธศาสนา



บทคัดย่อ
ของ
ศิริวัฒน์ วงศ์อุดมศิลป์

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

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การศึกษานี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อที่จะวิเคราะห์คุณลักษณะของ เจย์ แกสตีปี ตัวละครเอกในนวนิยายของ เอฟ สก็อต ฟิตซ์เจอร์รัลด์เรื่อง *The Great Gatsby* จากมุมมองชาวพุทธ ในการศึกษานี้ผู้วิจัยได้กล่าวว่าความหายนะของแกสตีปีนั้นเป็นผลมาจากการขาดความพอเพียงซึ่งความพอเพียงนั้นเป็นสิ่งที่ช่วยชี้นำให้มนุษย์นั้นดำรงชีวิตอยู่ได้ใน “ทางสายกลาง” หรือที่รู้จักกันในนาม “มรรคแปด” โดยมรรคแปดนั้นเป็นหนึ่งในคำสอนทางพุทธศาสนาที่ชี้แนะให้มนุษย์อยู่อย่างมีความสุขในโลกแห่งฆราวาส

การศึกษารครั้งนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าอันเนื่องมาจากภาพฝันของแกสตีปีว่าเดซีรักเขา เขาจึงนำตัวเองเขาไปยุ่งเกี่ยวกับธุรกิจที่ไม่เหมาะสมและยังผิดกฎหมายเพื่อที่จะนำความมั่งคั่งมาสู่ตัวเขาและยังนำชีวิตของเขาไปในทางสุดโต่ง แกสตีปีเชื่อว่าพฤติกรรมเหล่านั้นจะนำพาเดซีกลับมาหาเขาซึ่งในแนวทัศนะทางพุทธศาสนานั้น การงานของแกสตีปีและชีวิตของเขาสามารถมองได้ว่าเขาไม่ได้ใช้ชีวิตในทางสายกลางซึ่งนำไปสู่จุดจบของเขาในท้ายที่สุด ซึ่งจุดจบของเขานี้มีผลมาจากการขาดความพอเพียงซึ่งสามารถมองเห็นได้จากสองในแปดด้านจากมรรคแปด ได้แก่ สัมมาอาชีวะและสัมมากัมมันตะ การค้าหลอกลวงของแกสตีปีนั้นได้รับการมองว่าเป็นสิ่งที่ขัดแย้งกับแนวคิดสัมมาอาชีวะซึ่งเป็นสิ่งที่ชี้แนะให้มนุษย์นั้นประกอบอาชีพที่เหมาะสมและสุจริตโดยไม่นำพาซึ่งอันตรายไปสู่ผู้อื่นอีกด้วย วิถีชีวิตที่หรูหราของเขานั้นยังสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงการขาดแนวคิดสัมมากัมมันตะที่แนะนำให้คนใช้ชีวิตอย่างพอเพียง กล่าวโดยสรุปว่าความหายนะของแกสตีปีนั้นเกิดขึ้นมาจากการขาดความพอเพียงในตัวเขา

The Master's Project

titled

“The Lack of Moderation in *The Great Gatsby*: A Buddhist Perspective”

by

Siriwat Wongudomsin

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

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December....., 2015

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Siriwat Wongudomsin

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many people struggle to fulfill their needs in numerous ways because they believe that wealth and material possessions are indicators of desire in success. Changizi and Ghasemi (2012) and Dorn (1996) believe that materialism may lead to moral decadence in society and, as a result, various problems. In Charles Shaw's *Material Progress and Moral Decadence*, "speed, radio, sex, over-emphasis on health, jazz, modern psychology, and money" are seven things that could destroy human life (6). Moreover, it is prescribed in Buddhism doctrine that the over attachment to something would result in the destruction of life. According to Buddhism, living in moderation urges people to stay on the "Middle Path" which leads men to keep balance of life. One can see that the seven areas that Shaw mentions reflect the lack of moderation in people's lives, and that writers always take it as a cause that leads to the destruction of the characters in novels. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, one of the greatest American novels, the story portrays the deterioration of Jay Gatsby, the main character, whose life is led by the belief that the desire to gain money and material possession would bring him success and fulfillment of life.

The Great Gatsby was written in 1925, the time when American people fully enjoyed extravagant lives in capitalist society. According to Leland D. Baldwin's *The Stream of American History*, American people in the age of 1920s believed that wealth and possession of materials would bring happiness in life, so they had to struggle for luxurious lifestyles in order to fulfill their enjoyment in life (420-423). As a result, this situation allowed people to compete among themselves to obtain success, both material

and financial, regardless of social classes. The belief of materialism is related to what James Truslow Adams stated in *The Epic of America* that all “life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (215). According to Adams, the “American Dream” offers an equal opportunity for everyone in American society to strive for success, at all costs, in material or financial wealth no matter what class he was born. By allowing to be overtaken by the “American Dream”, to become richer and fuller in any aspects of life, they have to quest for materials or financial success.

Jay Gatsby, the main character of *The Great Gatsby*, represents one who follows the American Dream without a true understanding of it. Gatsby has a strong material and financial wealth would lift his social status up to par with Daisy, the woman whom he is in love with. When he finds out that Daisy married Tom Buchanan, a wealthy old rich man, Gatsby still believes that it is because of wealth and social status. Gatsby believes that Daisy still loves him. This allows Gatsby to try by all means to be equal with Buchanan’s financial status so that he could fulfill his love with Daisy once again.

However, the more American people enjoyed their financial and material success, the less morality they became. Without realizing it, people began to risk their lives with excessiveness and extravagance. The American way of life has been distorted from the meaning of American Dream originally described by Adams. People believed that the material and financial wealth was taken as a means to elevate people’s social status in American society, it, in the meantime, gradually deteriorates people’s morality. As a result, such lack of morality leads to the absence of moderation or the deficiency of self-evaluation of people.

Gatsby’s struggle to win Daisy heart is an example of those who distorted American Dream, and became a victim of extravagance. Gatsby involves himself with

illegal business to raise his social status. He sees this as the only path to wealth since it brings him close to the goal faster. Gatsby shows to the society that he is rich by possessing material wealth such as a mansion, glamorous cars, and a lot of flamboyant parties. Gatsby does not enjoy his wealth but he uses it as a tool to reach his goal. However, the financial and material wealth could not fulfill Gatsby's goal that is Daisy, it, in return, destroys himself.

To understand Gatsby's decadence, which the researcher believes is caused by his lack of moderation, the concept of self-sufficiency is employed in this study. Self-sufficiency is one of the key concepts in Buddhist teachings. It suggests that people should not overly value the attachment towards material things (Loy 55). Loy also explains that material wealth brings secular happiness to men rather than psychological happiness. The secular happiness refers to happiness that is caused by material possession, while the psychological happiness means the happiness from within. According to Loy, the teaching of detachment advises the Buddhists to be satisfied with "minimum material needs" (55). The "minimum material needs" that Loy refers to is the four requisites instructed by the Lord Buddha to help guide laymen to live happily.

In Buddhism, the four requisites explain that man only needs four basic factors in living. The first basic thing is "food sufficient" (Loy 55). People need food "to alleviate hunger and maintain one's health" when they are born and continue to need from then onwards which keep people alive (55). The clothing sufficient is vital because it keeps people "to be socially decent and to protect the body" (55). Thirdly, "shelter sufficient" could accommodate them "for serious engagement with cultivating the mind" and protect them from dangerous animals and harsh weather (55). Finally, the fourth requisite is medical care since humans are subject to sickness and old age, they will need medicine to

prolong their lives (55). The four requisites guide people to live their lives with balance and moderation.

Moderation or sufficiency plays an influential role in the philosophy of sufficiency economy as one of the three key concepts. The key concepts of the philosophy consist of three principles: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, and two conditions: knowledge and morality. The philosophy is explained as an approach to life which promotes the Middle Path principle, which aims at maintaining balance and being ready to adapt and manage with any changes in terms of physical, social, environmental, and cultural aspects (UNDP 2007, Warr 2007). The real purpose of sufficiency economy is to help people live their lives moderately. According to the philosophy, moderation refers to a living within a limited means in guided as the middle path or balance. It requires individuals to exercise moderation and due consideration in all facets of life as well as to develop adequate protection from internal and external shocks (Mangsawad 2010). Significantly, the philosophy can enhance the level of psychological happiness in life without much relying on materials. Being moderate is believed to be a key to keep human beings lives happily in peace. According to Buddhist teachings, the “Middle Path,” is known as the “Noble Eightfold Path”. On the other hand, being influenced by material wealth is a cause of the lack of moderation.

Many studies about *The Great Gatsby* and its characters have been carried out from various aspects, but none of the studies demonstrate the lack of moderation as a cause that leads the main character to his downfall. Thus, it is in the interest of the researcher to analyze the characteristics of Jay Gatsby from a Buddhist perspective.

Scope of the Study

This study analyzed the lack of moderation of Jay Gatsby, the main character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* through the perspective of Buddhism. In doing so, the researcher employs the concept of the "Noble Eightfold Path" as an empirical framework in the study.

Procedures

This research was conducted in the following steps:

1. Accumulation of information including:
 - 1.1 The novel of *The Great Gatsby* and the 1920s American social background
 - 1.2 Moderation from the Buddhist perspective
 - 1.3 Related Studies concerning the selected novel
2. Analysis of Jay Gatsby, the main character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*
3. Discussion and conclusion
4. Suggestion for further study.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are to demonstrate how the novel can be viewed from Buddhist perspectives, which readers and instructors can use as an alternative way to understand and to study the characters and the novels.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part provides a synopsis of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as well as the background study of the main character, Jay Gatsby. In this part, the 1920s American social background is also provided as it is seen as one of the causes that influences the main character's actions. While the second part provides details on the conceptual framework of the Buddhism Noble Eightfold Path, the last part includes studies related to the novels.

The Great Gatsby: Gatsby and His Illusion with Daisy

The Great Gatsby is a story that centers around the life of a man named Jay Gatsby. Gatsby loves Daisy Fay, a woman who is from a middle-class family. He later becomes obsessed about his idealized love and has an illusion that Daisy loves him too. However, while Gatsby is serving in the military, Daisy gets married to Tom Buchanan, a wealthy old rich man. Having found out that Daisy gets married, Gatsby uses all means to raise his social status on par with Tom.

Jay Gatsby represents the new rich in the 1920s American society. He was born with the name "James Gatz" or "Jimmy Gatz". He was the son of an unsuccessful poor farmer in North Dakota. He later changed his name to Jay Gatsby in order to build up his new identity of a man with wealthy and highly educated background. He left home to pursue his fortune at the age of fifteen, and at the age of seventeen, he met Dan Cody who introduces Gatsby to illegal business, that is bootlegging alcohol.

In order to become rich, Gatsby agrees to be a bootlegger upon meeting Mr. Wolfsheim, a business associate and a friend of Gatsby's. Having risen up to become a

successful man in financial, Gatsby spends his money on buying a big mansion across from Daisy's place, simply to see her mansion, and his luxurious car. Gatsby has hopes that by throwing big parties on the weekends, he would have an opportunity to meet Daisy and bring her back to him.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays the decadence of the American society caused by capitalism and high consumption of materials. In *The American Literature in Early-Mid of the Twenties: Historical Critic* written in 1979, Chaichit argues that Jay Gatsby represents people in the Mid-West of the United States who believe that money can buy anything they want, even love. Due to his innocence, Gatsby is deceived by "The American Dream"--a dream that postulates equal opportunity for everyone to pursue happiness, wealth, and success no matter which class he was born in (Adam 1931). Thus, *The Great Gatsby* is seen as a reflection of American society and its decadence of the 1920s.

The 1920s was a decade of mass change in the United States. It was the time when people freely enjoyed luxurious lifestyle. Many scholars refer to this period of time as the "Jazz Age". The Jazz Age represents the amusement of jazz music originated in the U.S., and this allowed people to go to parties and consume alcoholic beverages. Consequently, the American way of living was full of complexity than it used to be in the past. American people satisfied themselves with extravagant materials such as throwing big parties, consuming excessive alcoholic beverage, and buying luxurious cars and houses. They were trapped by technology, business, and advertisements which brought them too much comfortable life and gradually led them away from a sense of moderation.

According to Leland D. Baldwin's *The Stream of American History*, Americans in the 1920s believed that wealth and possession of materials would bring happiness in life, so they had to quest for luxurious lifestyles in order to fulfill their enjoyment in life (420-

423). As a result of materialism, American way of life has turned into more material aspects. The following parts provide details how capitalism affected the American way of life in the 1920s in many ways.

Firstly, during this period, money was believed to bring about better opportunities in life. According to Richard P. Coleman's *Social Standing in American: New Dimensions of Class*, the wealthy could travel to other countries and buy as many luxurious things as they wished for. As a result, many people had to work hard so that they could live like the affluent (29-33). For their own pleasure, they preferred to have luxurious and comfortable lives, so they spent money on automobiles and facilities to show off their wealth. International travel also became one of their favorable hobbies. In *Only Yesterday*, Frederick Lewis Allen discussed that American people in the 1920s favored to having their own cars as they spent most of the time on the road (132). By spending most of the time on the road, they could show off their wealth. On the other hand, there were many bourgeoisies--the new wealthy people who came from the working class. According to Samorn Nitithanprapart, the *nouveau riche* people were called "robber barons" (100) because they earned money from illegal business. At the same time, they donated money so as to gain respect from the public. Additionally, the newly wealthy loved big houses and decorated them with many styles of room. Similar to the newly wealthy, Gatsby used his wealth to purchase his assets. His luxurious lifestyle included a gigantic mansion, flamboyant parties, and luxurious cars to attract his love which caused him to resort into illegal business for such money to invest.

Secondly, the roles of women had been dramatically shifted during this time,- According to Donald A. Ritchie's *Heritage of Freedom: History of the United States*, women had more freedom than before, both freedom in politics and freedom in their private spheres (585). Women shifted their orientation from domestic-focused to more

public. The female characters in *The Great Gatsby*, portray how women represent dramatic change of women's perspectives. Women spent time in the public space more and joined plenty of clubs and societies. In addition to Ritchie, Frederick Lewis Allen stated that women did not engage in housework as much as before, on the contrary, they had plenty of time to spend with their associates outside their homes. Employment opportunities outside of their home became available for women (97-98). In Lerner's *American as a Civilization: Life and Thoughts in the United States Today*, the clubs and organizations portrayed social status of their members, which the wealthy or upper class people were more respected than the lower class (630-641). This can be seen through Myrtle Wilson, a female character in *The Great Gatsby*. Myrtle represents a working class woman who has an affair with a rich man for money. Myrtle has an affair with Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, for money while Tom takes her for pleasure.

In the 1920s American capitalist society, people had more chances to obtain wealth through abundant of jobs arisen with various kinds of business. Money became a means to enjoy extravagant life, purchasing luxurious cars, big houses, and anything that bring comfort to their living. It can be seen that American people in the 1920s were able to enjoy their lives to their full extent. Such extremity could result in pain if they rely on it too much.

Moderation: Buddhist Perspective

Moderation is one of the key concepts of Buddhism. Buddhism sees that living life in extremity does not bring happiness and peace to life. The Lord Buddha suggests that living a life in an extreme way but between both sides of extreme because living with moderation and balance can also bring more happiness in mind with less stress (The Path

to Peace, “Buddhism is the Middle Way”). Additionally, moderation suggest man to be satisfied with what one already possesses, being happy with basic needs which are described as the four requisites (clothes, diet, shelter, and medicine), and living moderately and righteously with what one can gain from his own career (Loy 2003, Thitapanyo 2005). The meaning of moderation is also clarified by Payutto (1997), one of the most revered monks in Thailand, that the scope of moderation or *Mattanuta* in relation to how one should live and act on a daily basis.

[T]he right amount in such areas as consumption and spending; he [practitioner] knows moderation in speech, work and action, in rest and in all manner of recreation. He does all things with an understanding of their objectives and for the real benefits to be expected, by acting not merely for his own satisfaction or to accomplish his own ends, but rather to achieve a proper balance of supporting factors that will produce the beneficial result as revealed to him by wisdom (15).

According to Payutto, man should maintain their lives in moderation as it helps eliminate the coming obstacles consciously and reasonably.

Moreover, the concept of moderation teaches man to overcome the sufferings, to consider the causes from which the laity suffers, and to settle all the sufferings to the right way without nonsenses (Thitapanyo 28). Thus, the notion of moderation is the main practice that leads all the practitioners to balance in life and happiness. Thitapanyo, a graduate monk in Thailand who studies *The Concept of Moderation in Theravada Buddhism and H. M. King’s Sufficient Economy*, explains that moderation can be concluded into two categories: self-evaluation and other-assessment.

Thitapanyo explains that self-evaluation means knowing how to make a living with the Dharma doctrine or Right Livelihood (30). Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk,

further clarifies that Right Livelihood means that people should “earn their living without transgressing their ideas of love and compassion” (113). Those who employ the self-evaluation aspect of moderation can reasonably commit their living as guided in their career without exploiting or causing troubles to the others. One engaged with self-evaluation is the person who is not too ambitious in making a living beyond his own ability as he knows what he is doing (113).

In addition to self-evaluation, people with moderation should know about other people--that is “other-assessment”. The other-assessment indicates that people should know whom they should associate with (Thitapanyo 32). The people whom we should be companion with are those who seek “Dharma doctrine, knowledge, improvement, and growth” (32). We have to know with whom to be and whom not to be sociable with. In Buddhism, friends or people that should associate with are those who have *Metta* or loving kindness, *Karuna* or compassion, *Muditha* or altruistic joy, and *Upeksha* or equanimity (Arunthavanathan, “Article on Friendship-Concept of Friendship”).

Apart from self-evaluation and other-assessment, moderation is also suggested in the practice of the “Middle Path” known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path

The notion of moderation is generally referred to as the “Middle Path”. According to the Buddhist teaching, the concept of the “Middle Path,” best known as the “Noble Eightfold Path” suggest the way of living in non-extremeness: the right or moderate amount of practice. The path provides guidelines for laymen to practice in their daily life in order to attain a happy and peaceful life.

Buddhist teaching explains that the Noble Eightfold Path consists of eight “Right” aspects. The Path consists of Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. By being “Right”, it means the right amount of committing anything in a moderate way, not too much or too little. The practice of “Right” can eliminate the greediness in oneself as it helps people to know the limit of their actions. Ultimately, this Path serves as the “uprooting of the causes of suffering, and thus to increasingly stable and profound peacefulness, wisdom, virtue, and happiness” (Hanson 1). If layman thoroughly practices or is engaged with this path, he can discern all causes of suffering and meet the real meaning of life by not engaging their lives in any extreme acts. Furthermore, Buddha pronounces, “if you do practice the Noble Eightfold Path, wherever the Noble Eightfold Path is practice, joy, peace, and insight are there” (qtd. in Nhat Hanh 49).

Firstly, Right View is described as “the Mother of All” (Nhat Hanh 56). It entails “understanding what is unwholesome and avoiding it, and understanding what is wholesome and doing it” (Hanson 2). For the unwholesome, Buddha means, “all forms of greed, hatred, delusion, and the belief in a separate self” (2). In contrast to the unwholesome, wholesome are “equanimity and renunciation, compassion and loving-kindness, wisdom, and releasing the ‘conceit’ of self” (2). Vision or perception is very crucial in seeing what should be right to commit, then the practitioner can avoid the consequent expression. Right Speech influences Right View, and it, at the same time, prospers Right View. Moreover, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration help strengthen and deepen Right View of men. Also, Right Action is based on Right View, while Right Livelihood clarifies Right View. Thus, Right View is “both a cause and an effect of all the other elements of the path” (58). Provided that man is fully understanding

with the Right View concept, all of his verbal and non-verbal expression will be exhibited in the correct and rightful way.

Right View is a foundation of Right Thinking. The Right Thinking expresses the “determination, firmness of aim, heartfelt conviction, and persistence” (Hanson 3). Because Right Thinking mirrors the way things are, Nhat Hanh states that “wrong thinking causes us to see in an ‘upside-down way’” (59). Man needs to be trained to think in the correct way in order to avoid destruction. In addition to Nhat Hanh’s explanation, Hanson further discusses that Right Thinking aims at “not causing pain, loss, or destruction to any living thing” because our thought is the master of what we act. To avoid pain in self, man should have the Right Thinking. However, Right Thinking is in accordance with Right View because it is like a map that leads us to the destination. Moreover, when we, at present, practice Right View and Right Thinking, we can touch the seeds of “joy, peace, and liberation” so that we can “heal and transform” (59) the suffering within self and express the practiced to others.

Nhat Hanh clarifies that once we have trained the Right View and Right Thinking in our head, the first expression that should be right and can easily be seen is our speech, so Right Speech is another important element in living moderately. Right Speech can be classified into four aspects: speaking truthfully, not speaking with a forked tongue, not speaking cruelly, and not exaggerating or embellishing (85). For speaking truthfully, one must abstain from false speech, knowing what one says is true or not. Moreover, one should avoid malicious or fork-tongued speaking. Sometimes, it is hard to say the truth directly, but it can be described in different way so that the listeners will understand the intention of the speaker rightfully. In addition to the two categories of Right Speech, one should abstain from harsh speech by not shouting, slandering, cursing, encouraging sufferings, or creating hatred (85). The mentioned elements of harsh speech can hurt

someone even though we speak with good-heart wills. Nhat Hanh also points out that “our words are very powerful” because “they can give someone a complexity, take away their purpose in life, or even drive them to suicide” (85). It is excellent to avoid such actions of speech. Lastly, people should withhold from saying something embellishing or exaggerating. One should remain with the purpose of speaking or telling any certain things without adding or dramatizing its elements. Purposely, the practice of Right Speech is “to help our society to move again in the direction of peace, joy, and faith in the future” (91). The Right Speech would bring many benefits to those who practiced and society, for people can live peacefully.

Right Action means “the practice of touching love and preventing harm, the practice of nonviolence toward ourselves and others” (Nhat Hanh 94). To practice the Right Action thoughtfully, we should consider these following elements: abstain from the destruction of life, refrain from taking what is not given, and avoid sexual misconduct (Hanson 6). First of all, refraining from making any destructive behaviours to one’s life is one of the key concepts of Right Action. Such destructive behaviours refer to living life to extremes, taking what is not given, and engaging in sexual misconduct. In the novel, Jay Gatsby portrays his destructive actions through his strong desire toward Daisy and the way he tries to bring her back because of his extreme desire. According to Hanson, this further refers to “not killing human beings through murder or through war” (6). The practitioner should learn the way to protect lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. Nhat Hanh discusses that laymen should not agree with “any act of killing in the world” (94). By doing this, the layman should not harm not only human beings but also other living things. In addition to avoid the destruction of life, man should not steal things or even not take what is not freely offered (Hanson 6). To refrain from such action, it leads the practitioners to live justly in society. The final aspect of Right Action is to avoid

sexual misconduct by not engaging in “infidelity, rape, or incest” because sexual misbehaviours can break other families and bring suffering not only to ones who committed but also those who affected (Hanson 2007, Naht Hanh 1999). It can be said that to practice Right Action, one can avoid destruction to life. The destruction to life includes living to extremes, taking anything without permission, and involving oneself with sexual misbehaviours. In short, Right Action refers to a moderate way of living one’s life. That is to avoid any harmful behaviors to oneself and others.

In addition to Right Action, laymen should live in accordance with the Right Livelihood. To implement the practice of Right Livelihood, you have to find “a way to earn your living without transgressing your ideals of love and compassion” (Naht Hanh 113). The doctrine defines Right Livelihood as a way of living that does not deal with “arms, [in] slave trade, the meat trade, the sale of alcohol, drugs, or poisons, or making prophecies or telling fortunes” (113). Moreover, Naht Hanh suggests that laymen should not practice any career that also brings harms to themselves and others.

Likewise, Hanson sees that man should consider the “proper use of wealth” which means the wealth that is acquired by “energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his or her arms, earned by the sweat of his or her brow, righteous wealth righteously gained” (8). It can be concluded that Right Livelihood reflects the way of living one’s life. The practice of Right Livelihood brings us to the way to eliminate the sufferings in terms of occupations because people should know their limit of gaining wealth. If one lacks this practice, his life will be full of obstacles caused by misconduct of work. To sum up, Right Livelihood explains that people should perform all areas of their career in a moderate way.

Another path prescribed in the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Diligence. Right Diligence refers to energy that drives people away from any misconduct, such as

diligence in possessions, sex, or food (Naht Hanh 99). The associated practices of Right Diligence can be referred to as:

preventing unwholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen from arising, helping the unwholesome seeds that have already arisen to return to our store consciousness, finding ways to water the wholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen and asking friends to do the same, and nourishing the wholesome seeds that have already arisen so that they will stay present in our mind consciousness and grow stronger (100).

As Naht Hanh stated, people should know how to prevent the seeds that are unwholesome because they might stimulate the bad action. Even the unwholesomeness is produced, one should maintain it, so it can be stored into the right place. In addition to preventing and maintaining the seeds of unwholesomeness, people should preserve the wholesome seeds so it can be attached with them, expressing in every part of life.

To maintain the Right Diligence, people should perform in a mindful way. Right Mindfulness refers to the way people practice their mind through the way of meditation. It simply means “a continuous, non-judgmental, accepting awareness of your inner and outer world” (Hanson 12). The establishment of Right Mindfulness is portrayed through four aspects: body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. The body establishment means “both as an objective entity and as a subjective experience of sensations, sights, sounds, smells, and tastes”, while the establishment of feelings mean “not emotions but the tones of pleasant or unpleasant or neutral that come with every experience”. Moreover, the foundation of our mind means “consciousness and states of consciousness”, and phenomena refer to all the other contents of mind (Hanson 13). Thus, meditation is essential in living ones’ life as it paves the mind of those who practice in the right way.

The last Middle Path is Right Concentration. It indicates the cultivation of mind to become greater steady (Hanson 2007, Naht Hanh 1999). This practice leads man to happiness as it can be resulted in the acts of Right Action because Right Concentration helps cultivate the will and train the mind to a “greater steadiness”, for it nourishes both *sila* and insight so that people can commit anything in the right and concentrate way (Hanson 17). Moreover, Hanson suggests that Right Concentration denote the way to overcome the hindrances which are “greed/lust, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt” by the mediated mind (17). In addition, the practitioner of Right Concentration should concern five factors of concentration: “applying your attention, sustaining attention, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness” (18). According to Hanson, Right Concentration also helps abandon the pleasure and pain so that people’s mind will become purified and mindful (20). In short, the Right Concentration can be seen through the way we act because it comes from the meditation as it helps purify our mind. This can also eradicate all the hindrance of laymen.

The Related Studies

Alfred Kazine, in *An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, explored how literature could reflect the society. Kazine found that *The Great Gatsby* was like a mirror reflecting the prosperity of the United States during the 1920s. The novel also reflected American Dream where opportunity for being rich and successful and a high social class could be achieved through hard work. This allowed the American to have luxurious lives. Gatsby, in search for wealth, was eager to be accepted in society, and he was a symbol of both the dream and reality during that time.

John Henry Raleigh, in “*The Great Gatsby: Legendary Bases and Allegorical Significance*,” portrayed that Jay Gatsby was known as the irony of American history and the corrupt of American Dream. Raleigh compared Nick to Gatsby as he found that Nick was a representation of an ordinary man who viewed the world as reality and tragedy while Gatsby represented a person who was full of imagination. Gatsby’s imagination was portrayed through the pursuing of the green light as his bright future.

In the study on *Jay Gatsby’s Trauma and Psychological Loss*, Thi Huong states that *The Great Gatsby* illustrates “traumatic neurosis and psychological loss in the fantasy world of Jay Gatsby” (42). According to Huong, Gatsby does not allow himself to face the reality that occurred. The psychological-loss is caused by the sexual drives that can be seen as “impulses that sought immediate and unconditional satisfaction, defined in part as the elimination of the unpleasurable tension from the psychic apparatus” (Forter 263 cited in Huong). Thi Huong further discusses that Gatsby is “traumatized by the loss of his idealized love” or Daisy because he cannot keep her in his life.

In *Modernizing Love: F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Fictions of Romance*, Doni Marie Wilson studied love and adultery in Fitzgerald’s novels. According to Wilson, *The Great Gatsby* did not present adultery as a moral violation in relation to psychology and social progression. By means, marriage and adultery became more common in American culture.

There are many Thai researchers who conducted the research regarding *The Great Gatsby*. Firstly, in Ritthirong Kongsri’s *Need Fulfillment in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Novel The Great Gatsby*, Kongsri concludes that the causes of Gatsby’s needs were his family background and the influence of the American Dream which ultimately was a society of extreme materialism. As Gatsby believed that wealth would bring him everything, he, as a result, tried to fulfill his needs with material and luxurious items. The study showed that

Gatsby lost his moral awareness, his inner-self and finally his life. This affirms that life without moral will lead to destruction.

Preeyanuch Pawanarith, in *The American Notions of Success as Expressed in the Early Twentieth Century American Novels*, studied the American notions of success as expressed in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Pawanarith found that the main characters' notions of success could be categorized as: strong will to succeed, accomplishment in terms of wealth, luxurious life, and material, and social recognition.

Surapong Pukdee, in *An Analysis of Leading Male Characters in Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's Novels*, examined the leading male characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels and compared the characters with the author's life. Five novels were studied: *The Side of the Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Demand*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, and *The Last Tycoon*. Fitzgerald's leading male characters were analyzed in their personalities and ways of living--economic and social status, education, careers, behaviors, ideas and relationships with other characters. The comparative study between the author and his leading male characters revealed that they were similar in their personalities and ways of living.

Aree Ruangsuksud's *A Study of Adultery Behavior in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* portrayed the adultery of the main characters Daisy Buchanan, Tom Buchanan, and Myrtle Wilson. It was shown that the female characters committed adultery because they had desires in love and wealth. In contrast to the female character, lust and pride characteristics drove the male character to committed adultery.

CHAPTER 3

JAY GATSBY AND HIS LACK OF MODERATION

In this chapter, the researcher employed the Noble Eightfold Path as a conceptual framework to analyze the character of Jay Gatsby. The focus is on Gatsby's life goal, his work, and his way of living.

Gatsby's Life Goal

I [Gatsby] can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her [Daisy], old sport. I even hoped for a while that she'd throw me over, but she didn't because she was in love with me too (Fitzgerald 115).

In a conversation with Nick, Daisy's cousin, Gatsby admits that Daisy is the first woman that he is fond of. The above quote reflects how Gatsby sees Daisy as the most extraordinary woman whom he has ever met. He believes that Daisy also loves him. Such belief becomes a drive force for Gatsby to push him to reclaim her. He even compares his status that he is "from much the same stratum as herself" with Daisy (115). By building up his new identity, Gatsby "deliberately give[s] Daisy a sense of security" that "he was fully able to take care of her" (114-115). To build up his identity is to assure Daisy that he is the person for whom Daisy should love and await marriage, offering her a security which he does not possess. This also can be viewed immoral act of speaking falsely, lacking the Right Speech. The excitement of competition with other men for Daisy's attention encourages Gatsby, a "penniless young man", to be brave enough to attempt sexual relations with her, a woman of different class (114).

Gatsby is not content to simply think about getting Daisy back. He crafts plans based on those thoughts and his plans are translated into action. He expresses to Tom, Daisy's husband, that "[y]our wife doesn't love you," and "[s]he's never loved you. She loves me" (Fitzgerald 100). Potentially, Gatsby's false speech can also destroy the relationship between Tom and Daisy, conveying that Daisy loves someone else rather than her husband. Moreover, he explains his reasoning as to why Daisy married Tom during the big fight they have over her that "[s]he only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved anyone except me" (100). Gatsby has been thinking for five years that Daisy married Tom solely because of his financial status, as Gatsby himself was only a young and poor man at the time, lacking the competence to taking care of a fine girl like Daisy. Additionally, Gatsby continues to attempt to convince Daisy by saying "[j]ust tell him [Tom] the truth--that you never loved him--and it's all wiped out forever" (101). He angrily tells Tom that "[y]ou're not going to take care of her any more" because "Daisy's leaving you" (102). However, later in the novel, Daisy does not follow the course of action that Gatsby plotted for her. They clearly live in two different realities. The above quotes demonstrate that Gatsby is attempting to manipulate people for his own personal gain. He is driven to take what he wants and cares little for the harm he inflicts on others in the process of attaining his goals. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that Gatsby does not try to live his life in the right way of speech that is resulted into the action, which will lead him directly to his downfall because he is absent to balance his life following the doctrine of Right Action.

Gatsby's attempt to take Daisy, a married woman, back to him can be explained from a Buddhist perspective as a wrong action. In the Buddhist's Noble Eightfold Path, Right Action is an action in the moderate way, being not too extreme. One of the three

aspects described in Right Action explains that one should refrain from the intention to take what is not given (Naht Hanh 94). Gatsby's illusion that Daisy loves him leads him to do an unacceptable thing. By having "no real right" means that Gatsby does not have the authority to possess it, and he cannot control himself, his intent, as he allows the illusion dominate his thinking which is translated into his actions (Fitzgerald 114). It can be concluded that Gatsby lacks the conducts of Right Action by longing for the only goal in his life and denying the truth that the woman he loves would never go back to him, living in his own illusion. Consequently, trying to take what is owned can bring problems to those who are related.

Due to his intention, trying to take a married woman away from her husband is not only socially unacceptable, it is also against religious practice. According to the Buddhist teaching, it is prescribed in the "Five Precepts" that one should "undertake the training to avoid sensual misconduct" ("Buddhist Ethics"). Moreover, Gatsby's action and intent can be viewed as he lacks the notion of Right View because it is the "mother of all" other doctrines in the Noble Eightfold Path, the way to live moderately (Nhat Hanh 56). The Right View is prescribed that it is the "understanding what is unwholesome and avoiding it, and understanding what is wholesome and doing it" (56). Gatsby allows the unwholesome actions, that are "all forms of greed, hatred, delusion", to predominate his thinking (Hanson 2). His greediness or thirst in achieving his goal and his delusion unconsciously drive him to become delusional as a perception is focal in committing something righteously. In addition, Nhat Hanh suggests that "wrong thinking cause[s] us to see in an 'upside-down' way" (59). Additionally, it can be seen that Gatsby does not accept the fact of the consequence that his love is not his anymore.

Being driven by the false thinking, Gatsby believes that gaining wealth and status is the key to bring back Daisy, his lover. By becoming too caught up in the world of

materialism, his ways of living reflect immoderation and, as a result, the performance of casually destructive behaviors occurs more easily in him.

Gatsby and Illegal Business

In Stephen Brauer's *Jay Gatsby and the Prohibition Gangster as Business*, Gatsby is seen as a self-made man. This means that he makes his way by starting with little and is able to achieve great economic success. He sees that the means to success "do not matter so much as the result" (52). Many Americans in the 1920s, similar to Gatsby, saw money as an ultimate goal, they did not care whether the source of the money was righteous or not. At this point in time within the American Dream, people of the early 1920s were transitioning from the notion of traditional work as a virtue, to a more "secular understanding of the American dream" which means that society, as a whole, was moving further away from a belief in moral obligation (Berman 178 qtd. in Brauer 53). Thus, they defined the concept of success as if there was no moral component within the world of business. In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby has been recognized as a "bootlegger", a person who engages in the illegal business of selling and transporting alcoholic beverages. The book is set within the Prohibition era, when alcohol was completely illegal within the United States, thus bootlegging was quite a serious crime. Gatsby's lack of morality, as Brauer displayed, is represented through the association of Gatsby with the "gangster and business" and between the "criminal and self-made man" in the 1920s (53).

Gatsby's illegal business is revealed during the meeting at the hotel, by Tom Buchanan, as Gatsby and Tom argue about the love that Daisy has for both of them. Gatsby is exposed as a "bootlegger" because he has been involved in selling illegal alcohol in the "side-street drug-stores" and sold the "grain alcohol over the counter" (Fitzgerald 103). According to Brauer, Gatsby and Wolfsheim provide "services" to their

clients, which in turn bring them a lot of money. Such “services” probably include “bootlegging, gambling, loansharking, and selling stolen bonds” both fulfilling and creating additional demand for leisure activities, such as drinking alcohol and prostitution (55-56). Buddhist teaching suggests that laymen avoid consuming alcohol because it can be viewed as a destructive item because those who consume it too much can lose consciousness. Further, by losing consciousness, one can do harms to oneself and others easily.

The relationship between Gatsby and Wolfsheim as illegal business partners is also portrayed in the novel. After the death of Gatsby, Nick invites Wolfsheim, whom Nick assumes to be both Gatsby’s friend and business associate. His refusal to attend drives Nick to anger. Later, the revelation of Gatsby as a “business gonegion” is made, as Wolfsheim explains that

I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw right away he was a fine appearing gentlemanly young man and when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good (Fitzgerald 132).

Gatsby was chosen because he had a “fine” appearance as a young man, and he claimed to have an “Oggsford” education. Wolfsheim raises Gatsby up “out of nothing” because he sees Gatsby’s potential as a man who can make good connections and represent his “gangsters” or “underground” organization well. Moreover, the word gangster, chosen by Wolfsheim, conveys negative connotation as a group of people who gather to perform illegal acts. His part within Wolfsheim’s corporation proves Gatsby’s involvement in illegal business, violating directly the Buddhist tenet of Right Livelihood, which specifically states that people avoid participation in selling alcoholic beverages. His choice of career brings him to wealth quickly by focussing on prohibited and immoral tasks. At the same time, he moves still further down this slippery slope because he does

not realize the danger to which his extreme career choices may lead. Gatsby's violation of the tenet of Right Livelihood can be interpreted as earning a livelihood immoderately.

Not only does Gatsby involve himself in such illegal business, which brings harm to him, but he also tries to convince Nick to be a part of his "underground" business. To that end, Gatsby says, "Well, this would interest you [Nick]. It wouldn't take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing" (Fitzgerald 62). Gatsby tries to tempt Nick with the lure of quick riches, saying it would not "take up much of your time", and explaining he could "pick up a nice bit of money". The word "confidential" which Gatsby uses to describe the type of work he offers to Nick can be assumed to be a code for "illegal" or "under the table". Gatsby gives a clue as to just how lucrative his illegal business is, by stating that he spent "just three years to earn money and bought it [mansion]" (68). The involvement in illegal alcohol business reflects Gatsby's choice to become rich faster regardless of social acceptance.

Gatsby's involvement in this racket is driven by a motivation to recapturing the illusory goal due to the lack of Right View. Buddhist teaching explains Right Livelihood as to not be involved in any occupation that causes harm to oneself and the others, as well as not gaining money from the sale of alcohol. Further, it is advised, according to the Buddhist's "Five Precepts" that laymen should refrain from consuming alcohol because it can bring harms to physical and mental health of the undertaker ("Buddhist Ethics"). It can be viewed that alcohol is a source of the sufferings for those involved and consumed. Gatsby's involvement in illegal business can be described as the wrong choice of living.

Gatsby and Materials Possession

Despite the fact that Gatsby is an intelligent and successful man, he is lured into the world of materialism by the illusion that Daisy loves him and his will to bring her back. Gatsby's materialistic obsession leads him to act beyond what can be claimed as "moderation" from Buddhist perspective. He lives his life excessively starting from buying a big mansion, throwing big parties, and having luxurious cars of which he has little practical use or enjoys them. All of his actions are devoted to one singular goal, which is to Daisy.

Gatsby tries to convince Daisy into believing that he is a man who can fully take care of a woman by attempting to appear as if he were of the same social status as she is. His thirst for Daisy pushes him to struggle for equivalency with Daisy's husband, Tom Buchanan. Gatsby's perception of these realities may be irrational, perhaps even falsely believing that Daisy is married to Tom solely for financial reasons. Both the reasons for his obsession with material wealth and the acquisition of the wealth itself demonstrate immoderation and extremity of behavior in Jay Gatsby. He has to build up his personal wealth in order that he could fulfill his ultimate goal, to resort himself into illegal business.

Comparing to his status, Gatsby lives an imbalanced life. He demonstrates his extremity through his life choice, a material gain. He is confident that his life will never be fulfilled. Accordingly, Jay Gatsby deludes himself into believing that true happiness can only be achieved through re-capturing the love of his past. Further, he believes that his love may only be re-captured through gains in social status and material acquisition. Based on this false premise, Gatsby pursues his hollow dream by making a fortune and living an exceedingly luxurious life.

In the first party that Nick attends, Gatsby convinces Jordan Baker, Daisy's friend, to inform Nick to arrange a meeting between Daisy and himself because Gatsby "wants her [Daisy] to see his house," she explained. "And your house is right next door" (Fitzgerald 59). To his innocence, he tries to move closer to his dream of winning Daisy's heart through his personal gains: a gigantic mansion, a luxurious car, and big parties.

Gatsby first earns himself money so that he can buy a mansion "just across the bay" from Daisy's house (Fitzgerald 58). Purchasing a mansion to live alone and to attract his love demonstrates Gatsby's immoderation and lack of Right Action by making such a large and immodest financial commitment, based solely upon his desire for a woman who is already committed to another man. Fitzgerald describes the picturesqueness of Gatsby's mansion was a "colossal affair" and a "factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (4).

Gatsby's mansion is far too large and impractical to stay in alone because it is prescribed, as suggested in the four requisites, "shelter sufficient for serious engagement with cultivating the mind" (Loy 55). According to the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC, the design of the Hotel de Ville in Normandy is "inappropriately grandiose for a dwelling house" (3). The mansion's bedrooms are "swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers, through dressing rooms and poolrooms, and bathrooms with sunken baths" (Fitzgerald 69). It is unsurprising that Gatsby's bedroom is described thusly "his bedroom was the simplest room of all--except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold" (69). The embellishment of Gatsby's mansion provides a sense of luxury that is both impractical and unsuitable for a solitary man from the American Midwest. Thus, Gatsby's house is likely to exist for the purpose

of being viewed, not for the purpose of being lived in. It is a showpiece, built upon a foundation of desire.

Gatsby's penchant for materialism is not only demonstrated by his gigantic mansion, but also in his choice of cars. Fitzgerald depicts Gatsby's car as a "rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of windshields that mirrored a dozen suns". Instead of buying a classic black or red car, the opulence of Gatsby's car indicates that it is a representation of his personal wealth and the "rich cream" color of the car is so unique that "everybody had seen" it as it "mirrored a dozen suns" (47). The purpose of Gatsby's car is meant to solely be impressed by Daisy. He seems to direct large amount of his wealth toward personal glorification or enhancement of self-image with the gaudy "new money".

While Buddhist teaching allows for happiness gained through possession of wealth or *Atthi sukha*, it is a lesser happiness than *Bhoga sukha*. *Bhoga sukha* is gained through the utilization and sharing of one's possessions (Saranapala, "Concept of Happiness: A Buddhist Perspective"). It is unlikely that Jay Gatsby ever reaches this higher happiness because of his extreme focus on material acquisition for the purpose of self-aggrandizement.

It is not only a luxurious car that Gatsby believes will attract Daisy, but also big parties. He hopes that by throwing extravagant parties, Daisy will be able to see the light across her bay. Gatsby dearly hopes to see her in one of his big parties. His parties are always full of people like "moths" or insects that come and go via his Rolls-Royce car, and they have short lives or time to live. They enjoy drinking alcohol and playing on his beach, like they are at home. His excessively extravagant parties are even compared

thusly “[it] looks like the World’s Fair” (Fitzgerald 61). Seemingly, many guests who come to his parties do not care much about the host.

Buddhist teachings suggest that becoming too obsessed with material possessions does not constitute right action because it signifies a lack of balance within oneself, which may ultimately bring suffering. He does not contemplate the ultimate consequence of his actions. The way to eradicate all suffering is to live life in accordance with Right Action. This means performance of all action with mindfulness and moderation. One must learn to evaluate one’s own choices and determine whether they may have negative impacts or consequences, or they may lead to a deviation from the middle path. The behaviors portrayed prove that Gatsby does not follow the course of Right Action. He lives his life extravagantly, throwing big parties, possessing a big mansion and luxurious cars of which he has little practical use. All his life’s energy is devoted to one singular and precarious goal, to win the heart of a woman whom he loved in the past.

In addition, his involvement in illegal and immoral business causes harm to himself, and he also brings harm to those affected by the vices his business sponsors. It can also be said that he unknowingly brings harm to his only real friend, by inviting Nick’s involvement in this criminal enterprise. Due to a disregard for himself and others, within the realm of his work, the conclusion can be drawn that Gatsby lacks the notion of moderation that is necessary to properly observe the Buddhist concept of Right Livelihood.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Gatsby’s desire for his Daisy binds him within a trap of which he is unable to ever free himself. The desire leads him to get involved with wrong livelihood and wrong action. The illegal alcohol seller that he chooses to work on brings him to his downfall. In addition, the money he earns is spent on such extravagant things beyond necessity. The big mansion for one person, the flamboyant parties on every

weekend, and the luxurious cars, bring with them an illusion that they will fulfill his dream. However, the exceeding of materials as an ultimate goal is never completed, it, instead, brings him an eventual doom. An illegal work and extravagant ways of living reflect Gatsby's lack of moderation that play a crucial part in bringing him to the downfall.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, there are two main parts. The first part provides conclusion and discussion of the study while the second part contains suggestions for further study.

Conclusion and Discussion on Gatsby's Lack of Moderation

Jay Gatsby, the main character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, represents a man who is filled with desire in both action and livelihood. He utilizes all available means to elevate his social and financial status so that he can pursue his singular goal, that is to win his lost love back. His goal can be seen that it is a result from his sexual drive (Thi Huong "Jay Gatsby's Trauma and Psychological Loss"). However, his plan to obtain Daisy, a woman who is married to a wealthy man named Tom Buchanan, does not ultimately result in what he hopes. This study investigates the lack of moderation with the researcher claims that was instrumental in causing Jay Gatsby's life to downfall. The researcher employs the Noble Eightfold Path, namely Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration as a conceptual framework in this study. The study finds that Gatsby's lack of moderation is caused by the lack of Right Livelihood and Right Action.

The Lack of Right Livelihood

In the Buddhist teaching, Right Livelihood refers to a moderate way to earn one's living, which should not be harmful to one or others. As well, it states that one should not involve oneself in any illegal or morally questionable business, such as dealing in arms, slavery, meat, alcohol, drugs or other poisons. Gatsby neglects the concept of Right

Livelihood due to the intensity of his desire. This allows him to resort to illegal business; both selling alcoholic beverages and providing some other underground services, with the cooperation of Wolfsheim. Gatsby believes that by involvement in such questionable business, he can more quickly make his way to his ultimate dream of living with his love, Daisy Fay, once again. Gatsby's way to make his dream or success is driven by the strong will to succeed and the accomplishment in wealth and materials, and it comes from the impulse that Gatsby needs to fulfill his needs (Kongsri 2012, Pawanarith 1992).

Moreover, his career is not a wise choice according to the practice of Right Livelihood, as he only sees it as a means to win back the object of his desire. Also, he does not spend the fruit of his labor wisely, as his money primarily pays for an extravagant and luxurious life, in hope that Daisy will notice how affluent a man he is and therefore deem him a desirable mate.

Not only does Gatsby cause harm to himself by involving himself in illegal business, but he also attempts to involve Nick, his only real friend. From a Buddhist perspective, the career that Gatsby chooses to earn his living and his intent to bring his friend into the world of unsavory business, demonstrates that he is not aligned with the practice of Right Livelihood. Lacking understanding of this precept may potentially endanger one's life, as well as the lives of one's friends and family that living far beyond morality will lead to destruction.

The Lack of Right Action

It is first found that Gatsby lacks the practice of Right Action. The practice refers to the conscious act of avoiding destructive actions or behaviors in life. Such destructive actions depicted within the novel include dwelling within extremes, obtaining something that is not given, and committing sexual misconduct. The ultimate goal of the practice is the elimination of suffering caused by the actions of laymen. In this study, the researcher

finds that Gatsby lives an extreme life in two aspects. Gatsby's irrational purpose leads him to dwell within extremity and to seek to obtain something that does not belong to him.

Gatsby's dwelling within extremes takes multiple different forms. He throws big parties every Saturday, primarily so that someone not even in attendance will see the lights. He buys a gigantic mansion, for which he has little practical use, "just across" the bay from his object of desire. He drives an extravagantly unique car that later transports him to his eventual doom. He is deceived by the specter of material gain because he is under the impression that Daisy married wealthy Tom Buchanan for purely financial reasons. His ostentatious lifestyle demonstrates that he lacks one of the qualities of the Right Action, as he allows himself to drown in a river of materialism. His way of life, with its singular aim, demonstrates that he resides within extremity. This, according to the concept of Right Action, means that he continually initiates suffering, rather than vanquishing it.

The desire to regain his lover leads Gatsby to become obsessed with the acquisition of material wealth. He believes that gaining wealth and status is the key to bringing Daisy back to him. By becoming too caught up in the world of materialism, his life lacks moderation and the performance of casually destructive behaviors come more easily to him. He fervently hopes that all of his material possessions and wealth will bring him closer to his singular dream. Gatsby is eager for accepted Daisy as well as society (Kazine 1942). Unfortunately, he does not begin to comprehend that these same motivations, which guide his behavior are also the ultimate cause of his suffering.

In addition to his exhibitionistic lifestyle, Gatsby's propensity for destructive action is illustrated by his attempts to take Daisy as his own, a woman already married to another man, Tom Buchanan. Thus, we can see that Gatsby's deterioration is directly

caused by a lack of moderation, beginning in his motivation and carrying through to his real-world actions and their ultimate effects.

He longs for his love, as she was the first nice girl that he fell in love with. To ensure that she is swept up by his desire for her, he creates a new and appealing identity for himself. His desire, known in Buddhism as *tanha*, pushes his mind to dwell in focus on this singular goal. Even though there is no trace found in the novel that Gatsby has sexual intimacy with Daisy, his goal to take his love back is strongly evident in many parts of the story. Consequently, the relationship between Daisy and her husband may be destroyed because of Gatsby's destructive desire, demonstrated by his intent to win back his love.

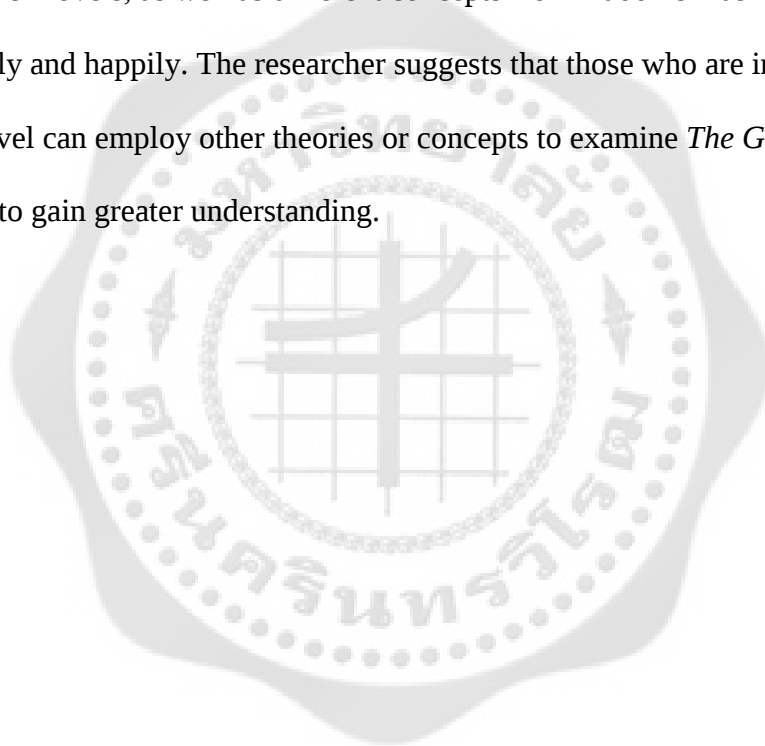
Literary works capture many wonderful elements of the human experience, through the eyes of the authors. They can serve as a representation of society and a reflection of the human mind. In addition to this fact, readers can relate some interesting aspects of novels to their own lives and to society at large. Similarly, in *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald uses his fictional characters to represent the decadence of American society in the 1920s, a time when people were less interested in morality and more interested in the acquisition of wealth and personal satisfaction. Jay Gatsby, together with other characters, represents an embodiment of this general societal attitude. Gatsby crafts his own dream and strives hard toward the materialization of that ultimate goal, without much consideration for his own personal welfare or the welfare of those around him. Further, he lives a life far beyond moderation, struggling to feed his desire with money that is not gained righteously.

In this modern era, the researcher believes that money has become the singular means by which we either survive or thrive. It cannot be denied that most of us now view money as a path to happiness. However, it is still possible to gain a sense of joy in life

without struggling to fulfill our unlimited desire with money. Living a life in moderation or walking the middle-path means attempting to dwell in moderation and avoiding extremity. This lesson is one of the keys that allow us, according to Buddhist doctrine, to potentially open a door that leads to the ultimate eradication of all suffering.

Suggestions for Further Study

The notion of moderation from Buddhist perspective should be viewed and studied in other novels, as well as different concepts from Buddhism as it guides man to live peacefully and happily. The researcher suggests that those who are interested in this particular novel can employ other theories or concepts to examine *The Great Gatsby* and other novels to gain greater understanding.



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