

Tony Bernhard 5-26-2010

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The Buddha taught dukkha (suffering) and the end of dukkha. One of the most important parts of this was the first section of the Eightfold Noble Path – *Right View*.

"Right View" is not a good translation of *samma ditthi*. "Right" is not the opposite of Wrong – the meaning is more like "skillful." A Right View is the kind of view that does not create more suffering. "Right View" is sometimes translated as Right Understanding. In this context View means all your thoughts and what you think you know about the world, or who you think you are.

Examples of wrong views are when we think things are permanent, or think things can provide satisfaction. These cause us to chase after things we want.

The question to ask ourselves is "does holding this view make things better or worse?" What makes a view right is that it doesn't cause any suffering. Our thinking is the source of our suffering. We create a story and live in it.

Everything is conditioned by everything else. There are no *things*, only *processes*. That is, everything is constantly changing. We think of an equilateral triangle, and then, later, we think of it again. Is it the same triangle? No. We think there are "things" but the map is not the territory. Nirvana is a verb, not a place. So it is with view. Right View is not a noun but a verb. St. Theresa of Avila expressed this in a prayer she had written as a bookmark, found when she died:

Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing frighten you.
All things are passing;
God only is changeless.

Whenever we think that something shouldn't be, we have a wrong view. Things are the way they are, and "Shouldn't" shows a wrong understanding.

If something you are about to do will cause suffering to yourself or others, there is nothing that will justify it:

Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias toward a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them.

- *Kalama Sutta*

A Right View is one that bases actions on an intention of compassion, metta, or generosity, rather than greed, hatred, or anger. Many people are activists out of anger. This is not Right View. Karma is not about justice, but about intention.

Right View is characterized by direct knowing, rather than thinking.

“And what is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress (dukkha), knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the cessation of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress. This is called right view.”

- Maha-satipatthana Sutta: The Great Frames of Reference (DN 22)

In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bahiya, there is no you in terms of that. When there is no you in terms of that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.

- Udana 1.10

Meditation is where you study yourself and watch the stories you create, but the spiritual path is off the cushion. Striving for Right View in daily life is striving to see things as they are.

May all beings be happy at heart. Let no one deceive another or despise anyone anywhere, or through anger or irritation wish for another to suffer. As a mother would risk her life to protect her child, her only child, even so should one cultivate a limitless heart with regard to all beings. With good will for the entire cosmos, cultivate a limitless heart: Above, below, & all around, unobstructed, without enmity or hate. Whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down, as long as one is alert, one should be resolved on this mindfulness. This is called a sublime abiding here & now.

-Karaniya Metta Sutta: Good Will (Snp 1.8)