



Right Thought: A Noble Pathway to World Peace

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Abstract

There is nothing in all the world more beautiful than the prevalence of universal brotherhood among mankind and there is no greater blessing in all the world than peace. It is true that only human being can bring peace to this world making it a heaven like place. However, by creating violence, he can turn this world into a hell as well. It is evident that in various cultures certain great persons have been elevated to divinity. This implies that one can be a god or a demon based on his thoughts and deeds. Religions and social philosophies teach and guide people to refrain from vicious thoughts, speech and deeds and to practice good instead. For instance, the *Dhammapada* summarizes the entire teaching of the Buddha into one stanza of four lines. “Not to do all kinds of wrong doings, to perform wholesome acts, cleansing of one’s mind, this is the admonition of all the Buddhas”. In this teaching,¹ without exception, all sorts of bad actions which are condemned by the civilized world as harmful are rejected whereas whatsoever good action is there for the benefit of all beings are praised. So, in brief, what we all need for a meaningful life is recommended therein.

Keywords: Buddhism, Right Thought, World Peace

¹Sabbapāpassaakaraṇaṃ - kusalassaupasampadāSacittapariyodapaṇaṃ - taṃbuddhānasāsaṇaṃ, The Dhammapada, 183 verse.

Introduction

In the religious context, what is Right Thought (*sammāsaṅkappo*) of Buddhism? It is the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path (*MajjhimaPaṭipadā*). As it has been defined in the teachings of the Buddha, right thought means thought of renunciation, thought of non-ill will, and thought of harmlessness. Right thought can be applied as a remedy to minimize our inner and outer turmoils caused by wrong thought and misunderstanding. In this discussion we will examine how this concept can be applied to our daily life to practice global peace with universal brotherhood. Wrong thought becomes a cause for the arising of many problems whereas right thought is conducive to solve problems and create peace. Wrong thought affects the society directly or indirectly and disrupts human relations and peace. This would become a global issue when people are misguided and deceived by wrong views, ideologies, or misconceptions. We are experiencing such problems in some parts of the world today. For instance, religious intolerance has become a greater problem in some countries.

Life without right understanding and right thought is like a cart without a charioteer. We know that a cart is drawn by bullocks but guidance is given by a charioteer. In the absence of the charioteer, the cart will be drawn by the bullocks where they desire to go. But a skillful charioteer who knows the routes correctly could reach his destination. Likewise, right thought will direct us to reach our goals and expectations. Another point is that we should correct ourselves if we are wrong in the same way that a charioteer canes the bullocks to drive them on the right path. This is called mindfulness based self-correction. If people practise in this manner, world crises will be diminished and global peace will be the ultimate result.

The *MahāvedallaSutta* teaches two conditions for the arising of right view: the voice of another (*paratocagghoso* - which means by listening to others) and the wise attention (*yonisocamanasikāro*). These are the two conditions for the arising of right view”.² One can learn good things from teachers, parents, elders, good friends, etc. After listening to others, he can wisely reflect on the facts, which lead to right understanding. Right understanding leads to have right thought which leads to practise of non-attachment, non-hatred and non-violence. This is the beginning of peace within oneself which is called inner peace which leads to practise love and brotherhood locally and globally going beyond all boundaries.

As we believe there shouldn't be any restriction for any person to read and understand religious others and explore their knowledge in various religions for a better life specially,

²The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Bodhi tr., p.390.

with mutual understanding. This should be a fact that both the world leaders and the religious leaders should take into consideration and work together to enlighten their people in other faiths so that they could be free from religious extremism, fundamentalism, fanaticism, and chauvinism. I believe that we are not late and still this can be put into practice.

Right thought is extremely important regarding the practice of any religion. What is the purpose of practising a religion? Of course, the main objective is to achieve happiness and peace of mind. We are living in a global village and many countries have become multinational, multicultural and multi-religious places. Within such kind of atmosphere people have to bear and tolerate with different faiths, cultural practices of fellow countrymen, neighboring countries and the whole world. Religious tolerance is one of the important paths to enter the world peace. Regarding this issue right thought plays a big role promoting social and religious integration among the people. What is the point of disparaging one's religion, its related practices and cultural differences? As a responsible person one should act to promote peace and harmony within and without while diminishing all sorts of social, geographical or biological boundaries which damage the universal friendship or brotherhood. Buddhism as a religion offers such a great teaching which emphasizes the practice of four illimitables, namely, universal loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) altruistic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

It is due to ignorance people attach to wrong views and misconceptions and do harm which is unwelcome by any civilized society. People do not know the difference between dharma (wholesome things) and adharma (unwholesome things). Today the whole world is facing a hectic situation due to lack of peace, harmony and safety whereas terror, insecurity and fear are increasing instead. Because of lack of understanding, people are creating unnecessary problems among them. Right thought is conducive to promote harmony, unity, and peace. Again we can say that the ultimate result of right thought is nothing but peace and happiness.

As we mentioned earlier, Buddhism as a religion, teaches a universally applicable Dhamma which promotes brotherhood, unity, peace, equanimity, love and compassion among the humankind and all the other beings. Buddhism removes itself from all sorts of boundaries either social or religious and it advocates realism, naturalism, pragmatism, pluralism etc. while avoiding whatsoever pessimistic and optimistic views on humanity. Some people have, therefore, prefer to call Buddhism 'a way of life' rather than treating it as a religion. In many suttas the Buddha has explained social ethics should be followed by people for their own benefits and also of others. Instead of being good, certain people, with corrupted mind,

are making this world an awful place. Spread of love means not just to love and care only about one's own kith and kin, his race, people of his own faith but to love all the people in the world. The Buddhist teaching of love means to spread boundless love towards every being like a mother who loves and protects her one and only child. And Buddhism proposes that living with metta, universal friendship or brotherhood is called the highest living in this world. (Mettañcasabbalokasmiṃmānasambhāvayeaparimāṇaṃ.... thaṃsatimadhiṭṭheyyabrahmametaṃviharamidhamāhu). ³This moral life which is praised by the Buddha is essentially wholesome, peaceful, perfectly harmonious and blessing.

Before the conclusion, I would like to quote an interesting passage from the *BījaSutta*. “Suppose. Bhikkhūs, a seed of neem, bitter cucumber or bitter gourd were planted in moist soil. Whatever nutrients it would take up from the soil and from the water would all lead to its bitter, pungent, and disagreeable flavor. For what reason? Because the seed is bad. So too, for a person of wrong view...”⁴ This teaches us that whenever one holds a wrong view, the result always becomes harmful or bitter. When the mind is impure, the action becomes impure as well (*cittebyāpannekāyakammampibyāpannaṃhoti*).⁵ Therefore, think rightly, act rightly and behave rightly. This is the way to world peace.

B. this is not an academic paper but my speech to be read at the conference

³Suttanipāta, p.26.

⁴The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Bodhi tr., p.1485.

⁵A. I, p.262.