

INSIDE DHARMA

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together."

Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activist

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The Eightfold Path



Right Understanding
Right Thought
Right Speech
Right Action
Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Mindfulness
Right Concentration

Represented by the eight-spoked Dharma Wheel, and one of the central teachings of the Buddha, the Noble Eightfold Path is the prescription for the cessation of suffering, and it is the regimen for achieving Enlightenment

The word "Right" can also be translated as complete or whole or perfect.

The Eightfold Path addresses:

wisdom (prajña),
virtue (sila), and
mind (samadhi).

This issue is dedicated to walking the Eightfold Path together...not hypothetically, not in our imaginations, but here and now, where we are, in the present.

As inmate James Pate writes,

Responsibility: responding to my ability to experience, to live, to feel.

I do know that I am responsible not for what happens, but for what I make of it.



The Eightfold Path

by David Snyder - Hondo, TX

"Life is a tragedy by the passion that relives it." - DeVries, The Tents of Wickedness

The Eightfold Path is the road leading to salvation. The methodology was created with the mind and heart united in the state of extreme loving kindness by Lord Buddha after diagnosing an ailment common among his fellow man, that of suffering. Determining that yes, there is suffering, there is also a cause, an end, and the Eightfold Path that leads out and away from suffering.

Inner peace and harmony are brought about from recognizing desire as the root cause of suffering. The Four Noble Truths are the foundation on which we build the concept of the Eightfold Path;

simple, yet thoroughly tested, a house of grace, humility and intelligence, created not for our sole benefit, but for those nameless faces with whom we coexist in our global community.

For when we seek understanding and peace for ourselves, we help establish both peace and decency in our community, irrespective of the physical location. I would hope that when one sees another walking with peace and dignity, their smile ablaze, one would think, "I'd like some of that too..."

Appreciating and understanding how to put that smile there and make it last should appeal to all men and women, for who does not genuinely want happiness? Who truly

enjoys chaos? At the time the individual comes to understand that yes, desire begets suffering, peace should follow soon after, as the sun follows a storm.

The Eightfold Path is a small, intelligently and compassionately designed guideline to help one maintain proper direction in this current bout of existence. Undertaking the goal to understand that suffering exists, and maintaining the Path, with meritorious deeds, we do not do these things for a cosmic pat on the back, but rather to wear that elusive smile.

The process to make oneself a better person for one's own sake as well as for the

sake of others is not contingent on any specific physical location whatsoever. For those of us in correctional facilities, we have the blessing of having the vast majority of the physical manifestations of

our desire removed from us. The sentencing judge generated merit as a result of his or her action. Provided with this opportunity is a gift.

It is my heartfelt intention to use this opportunity not only for my welfare both short and long term, but to pray as well that the multitudes come to the same realization that I have been allowed to. In the nomenclature derived from the culture of this environment, I did not "find God" but am instead discovering who I am. I value peace immensely, and the more I let go, and vanquish desire with its attendant problems, the more abundant it makes itself.

I would hope that when one sees another walking with peace and dignity, their smile ablaze, one would think, "I'd like some of that too..."

What is “Right”?

by Daryl Inge - Mineral Point, MO

In response to your questions, the summation of these “rights” can be a guide to shaping one’s mind, because they are the stages through which the character of a man can be developed.

I would practice each right way until I feel that each one of them is a functioning part of that makes up the whole, a benefit to carry throughout my life. As far as how and where I would start will determine my daily interactions with others and for my self-approbation.

Right Understanding to me is when I each a decision in my thought process of view toward something worthwhile.

Right Thought is turning my intention toward the betterment of situations involving people, places and things, or at least to always consider such.

Right Speech is making the best choice of words in ways that best suit a situation as it arises, and knowing what those words will mean when I use them.

Right Action is doing, and determining whether my behavior shows moderation and does not exceed boundaries.

Right Livelihood means earning a living that is supportive of life as well as of me.

Right Effort is trying to accomplish something earnestly without someone pushing the issue that I do something because of their whims.

Right Mindfulness is paying attention to things that improve my condition and my well being.

Right Concentration for me is directing my undivided attention to all my experiences in ways that will be a fresh approach to solving problems.

I earnestly hope this work is well defined and fulfills its intended purpose.



Quiet Time at the Zoo

Moments do occur
Much to my surprise
When the doors to cages
Are shut
When the sun has set
And joy has fled
Or our notion of it
Anyhow
Which the animals
That we made of ourselves
Become still
Become silent
Quite possibly mindful
If not of anything seemingly
Tangible
Real
The breath remains.

David Snyder - Hondo, TX



Lessons on Precepts

by Thubten Tsultrim - Forrest City, AZ

I. The Buddha did not teach dogmatic beliefs, such as, If you do this you will not go to heaven, or, If you do this you will go to hell.

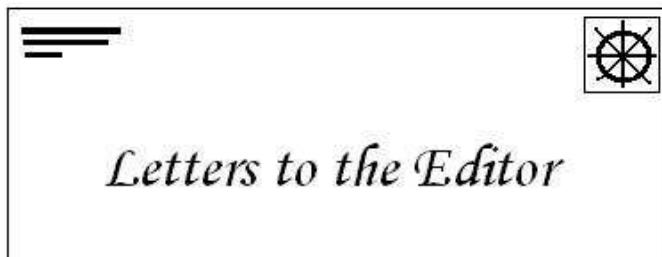
II. The Buddha did request and advise that all followers of the Dharma to follow the Five Precepts:

1. Avoid taking the life of any sentient being.
2. Avoid taking anything that is not given.
3. Behave morally and avoid sexual misconduct.
4. Speak only the truth.
5. Avoid ingesting any substance that will lead to heedlessness.

III. These are not rigid laws or commandments. They are guidelines that the Buddha followed, and these guidelines were very instrumental in his liberation from suffering. So if we call ourselves Buddhist we should also follow these guidelines, these pratimoksha vows, these precepts that lead to liberation. If we live by these guidelines, this is to be a Buddhist, and to walk in the footsteps of the Buddha. But we must make this choice on our own. These guidelines were given to bring us closer to Nirvana.

IV. If we call ourselves Buddhists, we are setting ourselves up on a lamp stand, and any and every thing we do will be observed and judged by all who see. I believe from past experience that Buddhists seem to be judged according to a much higher standard of moral and ethical standards than some other religions, so please think long and hard about what is appropriate conduct so that others will not say and think, Oh, look at

so and so, he is a Buddhist and he does this and that, so all Buddhists must do the same, and so the Buddha must not teach ethics and morality. Please be mindful at all times, for your sake as well as for all others, and for the benefit of the Buddhadharma.



SEND your letters to the editor at:

Letters to the Editor
Inside Dharma
PO Box 20721
Kirkwood, MO 63122

Dear Dharma Friends:

Below is a copy of my monthly Buddhist column. This column will appear in the Kansas City Star newspaper on Saturday, Nov. 7th in the Faith Section. As always comments are welcomed.

Your Friend In The Dharma,

Lama Chuck Stanford
(Lama Changchup Konchok Dorje)
Rime Buddhist Center

Question: "Should you not ask for help in getting out of a situation that you created?"

Answer: Buddhism is a unique religion that is nontheistic; therefore, there is no supreme being to ask help from. So, where do Buddhists turn for help?

On a fundamental level, we believe that we

have created all of the situations in our life as the result of our past karma. Karma is often misunderstood as some kind of pre-destiny, but in its most simple form, it is simply cause and effect - every action produces seeds of karma that will ripen in this or future lifetimes. Therefore, everything that happens to us in this lifetime is the result of past karma and everything that we do in this lifetime produces new seeds of karma. So karma is constantly at play.

When going through a difficult experience there is nothing wrong with asking for help from our friends or family. Buddhism places great emphasis on the spiritual community that is referred to as "sangha."

We are all going to have to deal with difficult or painful situations in our lives and from time to time all of us need help and emotional support. If we respond negatively we are only going to make the situation worse and sew negative seeds of karma for the future.

Through the practice of meditation, Buddhism's main practice, we can develop awareness and insight to respond to every situation with compassion and wisdom.

Dear Shoshin,

It is my understanding that you will be training as a VIC. Will this affect the newsletter, and will you still be writing to inmates?

First, it has been my great pleasure during the last few years to visit our practice groups at Pacific, Bowling Green, Bonne Terre, and Licking. I have always felt welcome, and I have found the dedication and eagerness of our sangha members both inspiring and

educational. That has been a part of my decision to train as a VIC.

I will complete my training November 14, and then as soon as I can complete the required medical tests and orientation, I will be serving our Dharma practice group at ERDCC in Bonne Terre. Because of my professional responsibilities, I will likely start out visiting once a month, but if I can manage it I will go more often. I am hoping I can begin the new year as a VIC, and I am looking forward to working with the dharma group there, who generously welcomed me upon my last visit. It's a great group, and I will enjoy learning alongside them as a fellow student of the Dharma.

Our great friend and teacher, Kalen McAllister, is now serving as a chaplain at Farmington, and it is her change in duties that left the opening for me at Bonne Terre. I only hope I can do half as good a job as she has done. She is a terrific sensei, as you all know.

I will continue to produce the newsletter as usual, but I will not be allowed as a VIC to continue corresponding with my friends Andy and Leonard and Rick, all three of whom have shared in my path and who have also taught me much. Even though some personal difficulties have hindered my correspondence recently, I will miss those letters.

We must all continually strive to practice with diligence, in spite of changes and challenges, or maybe because of them. We cannot allow ourselves to think that when external things change then our practice must change. It is change itself, the First Noble Truth, that gives rise to our practice. And no gap or obstacle prevents our choosing to begin again. I am eager for this next step on the journey. Keep writing, everyone!

Wide Open Spaces

It's hard to know
What you think
When you're lost
In your thoughts
And most of them
Stink.
Who's to say
What's right or wrong,
When both of your brain cells
Are gone?
Because the place you are in
Is all wrong.
You have to ask yourself.
Self,
Where did I go right?
Why do I find
Myself on the left?
Sit and locate
Your mind's eye,
And try
To open the gate.
It's all wrong.
The gate was left
Open all along.
As it is left
Up to me
To ease my thoughts,
I would find
Myself
With no place to be.
Even DaVinci
Found his place,
Lost in his thoughts.
Maybe someday
I'll find out
Who left the gate open,
Sit down
And have a few good thoughts.

B.J. - Bonne Terre, MO



A Simple Buddhist Practice, Part IV

by Z.L. King - Menard, IL

It has now been eleven years since I started on my spiritual journey to become a Buddhist.

From the beginning I read just about everything I could get my hands on that had been written by a Buddhist author. I read books and literature from all of the Buddhist traditions that I was aware of, including:

Zen
Forest Tradition
Mahayana
Tibetan
Pure Land
Chan
Theravada
Shambala

Almost immediately I realized that Buddhism was a deep and profound religion that embraces peace, love and harmony.

At first I was content to be the best Buddhist I could be, without any hope that I could become a bodhisattva or buddha. And I certainly did not think or believe that I could ever reach Nirvana.

Many Buddhist books point out the need for prisoners and others to select a good teacher who can help guide us along the noble path to buddhahood.

English is the only language that I know or understand. In the past I attempted to learn French, Spanish and Arabic, but I was too ignorant to learn and master any language other than English. It would take me the rest of my life to learn Chinese, Tibetan or Pali.

In 2006 I read books that pushed me to live and be a Buddhist. This means that I should seek to become enlightened. As I continued to read great and noble books, I was pushed to become a baby bodhisattva.

Buddhism is a great and noble religion, and often as I read, study or meditate, I cry profusely just to reflect upon the Buddha and his noble teachings. Crying is indeed a major part of my practice. It is rare for a day to go by without crying over the plight of people and animals.



The Thief Shall Remain: An updated old Zen story

There was once a very popular Zen priest. Since she was very good at teisho (dharma talks) many local people would attend services at the temple just to hear her speak. She developed a faithful and devoted audience of regulars.

It so happened that there was a thief among her congregation. The thief would steal from the dana bowl every once in a while during services. Each time the thief was caught, the priest would counsel him, and then ask the congregation to forgive him.

This went on for a while until the congregation got sick of this thief. On one particular day, one of the senior students, representing the congregation, issued an ultimatum to the priest. Either she expelled the thief or the entire congregation would leave.

The priest answered, "Then all of you, please leave". She then explained to the shocked crowd, "All of you know that stealing is wrong, but our brother the thief doesn't. If I don't teach him, who will? This man needs my guidance and my love more than any one of you. If I have to lose all of you to keep him, let this be the case".

The thief was so touched by this that he started to cry. From that day on, he never stole again.

Worse Than a Clown: An old Zen story

There was a young monk in China who was a very serious practitioner of the Dharma.

Once, this monk came across something he did not understand, so he went to ask the master. When the master heard the question, he laughed and laughed. The master then stood up and walked away, still laughing.

The young monk was very disturbed by the master's reaction. For the next three days, he could not eat, sleep nor think properly. At the end of three days, he went back to the master and told the master how disturbed he had felt.

When the master heard this, he said, "Monk, do you know what your problem is? Your problem is that YOU ARE WORSE THAN A CLOWN!"

The monk was shocked to hear that. "Venerable Sir, how can you say such a thing?! How can I be worse than a clown?"

The master explained, "A clown enjoys seeing people laugh. You? You feel disturbed because another person laughed. Tell me, are you not worse than a clown?"

When the monk heard this, he began to laugh. He was enlightened.





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**All who have donated art,
time, effort and support to
the November 14
Insider Art event.**

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