

## I. Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path

- Class Exercise: "Use the Syllabus Readings or your lecture notes to help you answer the following questions."
  - I. The Buddha described Four Noble Truths that would help us find the Middle Way. What are the Four Noble Truths?
  - II. The Eightfold Path serves as a guide for living (see below)
    - what do you think about this advice?
    - would we be better off as a society if everyone practiced

## II. Meditation

- Professor Goetsch suggested that the 8-fold path is really like training wheels for the non-Enlightened. The real self-discovery and truth discovery will come with meditation.
- Class Exercise: "Everyone sit silently with upright posture, and don't think about anything except the exact point that your inhaling becomes exhaling and vice versa." Sit for two or three (often painfully long) minutes. (p.s. - I have no experience in yoga or meditation so I am just using this simple example to make a point)
- Questions:
  - Was it difficult to do this?
  - Were you successful in thinking only about your breath? What other thoughts came to mind?

For the Buddha, these "extra" thoughts are our ego obsessions and desires interfering with our meditation. We cannot possibly focus on truth or on ridding ourselves of suffering without first ridding ourselves of such mental garbage. This includes perceptions of bodily discomfort!

So Buddhist meditation is not about relaxation or "finding your happy place," it is about concentration and focus of the mind - it is hard work and takes hours (or years) of practice.

## III. Close Readings

- Twins (pp. 59-60) - all about self-control and moderation
  - What might the Buddha advise us to do to Saddam Hussein? –
  - What might the Buddha think of our Thanksgiving football feast rituals?
- The Pleasant (pp. 63-65) - especially #3-6
  - what might Buddha say about loving your girlfriend or boyfriend?
  - is this about renunciation or moderation?
  - is love a bad thing? (segue to Metta Sutta)
- The Metta Sutta (p. 66) - unlimited friendliness
  - treat everyone like you would treat your child?
  - is it practical or desirable to love or treat everyone equally? Even your enemies?
  - no "levels" of attachment?
  - compare to Mencius's Well Example and his favoring of parents and "appropriate" relationships

## IV. Varieties of Buddhism

- Theravada school
  - favors following Buddha's example of taking vows of poverty and chastity

- favors giving up possessions and joining a monastery in the individual search for Nirvana
- they can only own a few things (like a bowl and three robes) and must beg for their food
- The Mahayana School
  - not just one group, but many and varied
  - some groups began to worship Buddha as an eternal force or being, of which the man was a temporary manifestation
  - some even built shrines with statues of Buddha to worship
  - began to compile the sacred texts and writings of Buddha to form what we might call the Buddhist scriptures
  - Mahayana groups also usually focus on the figure of the bodhisattva - this is a person who almost achieves Nirvana, but stays behind to help relieve the suffering of other people

The Theravada school spread across Indian Ocean trade routes to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, where it is still followed today. But Mahayana Buddhism quickly became more prominent by spreading along the Silk route into China, Korea and eventually Japan. Buddhism's interaction with new cultures in East Asia resulted in new branches of the old Mahayana school. Pure Land Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism are all variants of the Mahayana school.

#### V. Egalitarianism!

- Even you can become a Buddha!
- stressing this may be useful when comparing to Hinduism, which appears to be much more hierarchical

#### VI. Buddhism Worksheet The Four Noble Truths:

- I. \_\_\_\_\_
- II. \_\_\_\_\_
- III. \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. The Eightfold Path:

1. Right Understanding - understanding the Four Noble Truths and that Nirvana is attainable
2. Right Resolve - being resolved to undertake the journey toward Enlightenment by eliminating all sensuous desire and ill-will
3. Right Speech - no lying, harsh language, gossip, or idle chatter
4. Right Conduct - acting honestly, no killing, no stealing, and no inappropriate sexual intercourse or intoxicants
5. Right Livelihood - avoiding any occupation that harms people directly or indirectly
6. Right Effort - put away distractions and temptations of the flesh
7. Right Mindfulness - being aware of one's deeds, words, and thoughts
8. Right Concentration - total discipline and training of the mind