

## **Very basic Buddhism**

(1) To kill is to destroy a living part of us. We can do what we like with life, except don't kill it. Life is given to us by our parents out of deep love. In the first years of our lives they make us human, and then we learn to live with others who love life, too. Life is about learning: we often call this suffering. Suffering means that we're alive, and that we have a lot more to learn. But we get better with age. Above all, we love our life, so do others: in that case, we should not do to others what we do not want them to do to us.

(2) To steal is to try to own what we don't deserve. We can take what we need from others, but less of what we want, and none at all of what does not belong to us, not without permission, that is. What others have, they have worked for it so that it will work for them. They deserve whatever they have, rightly or wrongly. Taking what is not given is taking the happiness of others. If everyone were to steal, then no one would work: that would not work!

(3) Sexual misconduct is disrespecting others, body and heart. We can have all the fun we want, but never at anyone's expense, not of their bodies, anyway. Even though our body is not ours, our mind lives in it for life. It's like living in a rented mansion. It's our home, and we love it, we should. We want our body to be a safe place for our heart, too. The body is also head and heart, a place for thinking and feeling. It is a place to love. If we love our body (we should), then we should respect it with just the right food, sleep, rest, play and pray (meditate). If we love our own body, others do, too. It's the only body we have, so we should respect those of others, too.

(4) Truth makes life good. Why are we reading this? We know this is true. Or, at least we expect this reflection to be true. Otherwise, it's not worth reading it at all. So, too, with the words we speak – they should be true, reflecting life itself. If we try to fool others with words, then we are just fooling ourselves because there will always be those who know we are lying: we know it! How long can we live with ourselves when we cannot even trust ourselves? True speech is the radiant light of our mind and heart, a clear light that shows us the way in life. A light in which we embrace others, so that we can see them clearly, and know them for what they really are. We must accept them just as they are. We can only begin from here. For beauty is truth, and truth beauty: this is what we need to know to be truly free.

(5) We each have our own heads, but we must be of only one heart. Our words should not break up friends, couples, family, community or the world. Doing so is like cutting down the shady trees, uprooting the beautiful plants, burying the gurgling streams and flattening the misty hills: we create a hellish environment for ourselves. Our speech should bring people together, in love, in learning, in togetherness. This is the best way for good and joy to happen.

(6) Healing is helping others to grow. Our words can hurt or heal. Why hurt then? Healing is better. When our words hurt, it means that the hurt is already in us. We must speak to what hurts in us, and speak to it with love. There is really no hurt there, we only think it is -- like a dark shadow that frightens us. But there's nothing there. Let the memories of joy light up our lives. Where joy is, hurt cannot be. Let the joy speak for itself.

(7) Helpful words are worth treasuring. Let our words be useful, helpful, healing, healthy to others. People will love us for that. Wherever we go we see love and healing, even with simple words. From simple words – true, pleasant, unifying and useful – come simple joy. We may eat all the food we love; it only makes us fat, sleepy and slow. We need joy most of all: it is the best food for a true life of truth and beauty.

(8) Loving words heal like good medicine. We love the gentle wind that cools us, clears the air, helps us fly and sail. It is the air that we breathe and live with. Just as such a wind is non-

violent, let our body, speech and mind be harmless, too. Violence brings pain; we hate pain. Violence breeds violence. Non-violence allows us to speak freely and fruitfully, from our hearts, to do the good that is in our hearts. It allows more good from more people for the good of even more. Violence seems quick and easy, but the costs and pains are greater and last very much longer. Non-violence is like a seedling that grows into a spreading shady tree that flowers with fragrance and fruit with plenty.

(9) We don't deserve kindness, we need it. It seems hard for us to be kind to others, but we want others to be kind to us, even when we don't say it. People tend to copy one another: one kind turn deserves another. But kindness is not really ours: so we need to return it. That's called gratitude. Let the world turn on kindness: this is more than gratitude; it is called compassion. Compassion is to be kind to others even when they do not deserve it. Isn't it amazing if others are kind to us even when we do not deserve it?

(10) We are the world. We are nothing but our five senses and our mind; nothing more. These six senses are the only doors of our knowledge and the windows of our wisdom. This is the world we have created for ourselves. We are born into religion, or turn to it, or leave it. Good religion moves us to speak what is true, good, and beautiful. Yet, what is truth is neither Buddhist, nor any other religion. Kindness is not a religion. Beauty is not a religion. Religion is a way we think as a crowd, but our greatest religious teachers are all alone when they touch the liberating truth – the Buddha is always alone under the Bodhi tree, but he is peaceful and radiant.

(11) Time is everything. There's a time to be together, a time for be alone. There's a time for words, a time for silence. There's a time for loving, a time for letting go. There's a time for looking outside, a time for seeing within. There's a time for deeds, a time for stillness. Then we have time for everything, and we have everything in time.

(12) A world of our own. The "all" that we are, are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Our world is how we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. Don't make God out of any of these; there's no religion in any of them, or all of them, within them or without. They are all but passing moments.

For, how do we see, if light does not change? How do we hear, if sound does not move? How do we smell, if it is always the same? How do we taste, if not for the flirting flavours? How do we touch, if we do not feel? How do we understand, if the moments do not change? Like an old movie flick, life moves rapidly, yet a frame at a time: moving, yet not moving. It's all in the mind.

(13) Thinking makes it so. It's the mind that sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches and thinks. The world out there is real all right, but we can do nothing about it, we should not. The world is neither good nor bad: our minds make it so. (But good and bad are real enough whether we think them or not.)

(14) Mind the mind. An impure mind is like a sluggish beast of burden dogged by a turning wheel of pain. A pure mind leads pure words and deeds that faithfully shadow and shape us, never departing. As we think so we are. This means that we should keep our minds unclouded by intoxicants and drugs.

Our minds need to be calm and clear so that we are able to free truth from untruth, clear vision from views, win liberation without captivation, and awaken from religion. It's as simple as that, let's make it no harder.

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