SD 65.6

Micchā,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta

The Discourse on Overcoming Wrong View | **S 35.164**
Theme: Reflecting on impermanence helps us abandon wrong view
Translated and annotated by Piya Tan, 2009, ©2026

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 The Micchā,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta (S 35.164) is a "meditation lesson" the Buddha gives to "a certain monk" on **the impermanence** of our dynamic being in its 5 aspects—*the internal sense-faculties*, their respective *sense-objects*, their respective *consciousnesses*, their respective *contacts* and their respective *feelings*. When we know and see this, then, "**wrong view is abandoned**."

1.1.2 Like the 3 Koṭṭhika Suttas (S 35.161-163) [SD 65.3-5]—**the Micchā,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta** is a "meditation lesson" on abandoning wrong view (*micchā,diṭṭhi*) especially the notion that there is "something" that is *permanent or eternal* either as an aspect of our mind (such as feelings, memories, karma or consciousness) or the body itself, in form or in essence. Thus wrong view is to be abandoned.

1.2 SUTTA NOTE

1.2.1 A note on "wrong view"

1.2.1.1 Following the sutta text, *micchā,diṭṭhi* has been rendered as "wrong view"; that is, as a collective uncountable noun.[1] It refers to any kind of wrong view, the notion that there is "something" substantial, pleasurable, or some kind of abiding essence or "Soul" that is *internal* (body-based or mind-based) or external, an abiding entity pervading everywhere like a "Cosmic Soul."

1.2.1.2 Rooted in the notion of some kind of permanent or eternal "self," one then imagines that such a Self will go on to suffer eternally in "hell" or enjoy eternal happiness in "heaven." When we speak of something "eternal" in this way, it means that there is neither impermanence nor change which characterizes real experience. Without pain, we will not know pleasure; when we are caught up with pleasure, we feel pain when the pleasure ends. This basic and natural reality clearly shows that the whole idea of "eternal" hell, heaven, suffering and happiness simply are untenable.

2 Right view

2.1 HOW DOES RIGHT VIEW LEAD TO THE ABANDONMENT OF WRONG VIEW?

2.1.1 Right view and propositions

2.1.1.1 From what we have examined so far, it seems that with right view we abandon wrong view. In Buddha's teachings, *how does right view correct or remove wrong view*? As a start, we should under-

[1] "A collective uncountable noun" or mass noun is a collection of individual items, objects, or concepts treated as a single, indivisible mass; that is, the various wrong views collectively.

stand the differences and uses of propositional language and experiential knowledge [2.2.1]. "**Propositional**" (the nature of being a proposition[2]) refers to the realm of declarative facts, statements, and logical claims about reality that can be objectively evaluated as either true or false. It deals with the content of our thoughts and language rather than physical actions or direct sensory experiences. Essentially, this is what intellectual learning is.

Propositional knowledge or "knowledge-that" is considered *universal* because it deals with objective facts, rules, and concepts that are independent of personal experience, culture, or geography. It is context-independent which makes it universally verifiable, logically applicable, and useful in common or global communication. However, it is neither always reliable nor is it the only form of human knowledge.[3] We will now very briefly look at a few other kinds of knowledge, and then examine the kind of knowledge that Buddhist practice cultivates for gaining mental liberation.[4]

2.1.1.2 In philosophy and cognitive science, this distinction in *how we know things and state them* is often found in **epistemology** (the study of knowledge), and it breaks down into a few specific concepts such as:[5]

- **knowledge-how (procedural or practical).** Knowing how to perform a task (such as riding a bike or playing the guitar) rather than knowing *that* something is the case. Also included here is the knowledge of how to meditate.
- **knowledge by acquaintance.** Direct experiential familiarity with someone or something (such as "knowing" the taste of a food, "knowing" a specific city, or feeling in a certain way). Examples also include love and kindness.
- **non-propositional attitudes**. Mental states—such as certain types of sensory experiences, feelings, emotions, or moods—that convey ideas, meaning, impressions, or sensations but cannot be easily translated into a strict "true or false" claim. Examples include joy, sadness and equanimity.

However, when such knowledge is expressed or communicated to others, it invariably becomes propositional. Even when the speaker knows what he is expressing—such as a skill he knows, or the kind of taste he has experienced, or a feeling he has—it does not mean that the listener or audience will hear or understand exactly what he is saying, or, even less likely, what he means by his words or gestures.

The Buddha regards such statements or "propositions" as being **doubtworthy**. This is not because they are all false—indeed most of such statements may well be true (that the words express what the speaker knows), but the listener is unlikely to fully know how far this is true, or, more importantly, how real such statements are; that is, whether such statements speak of **true reality**. Only when we ourselves experience such a reality, and rightly know it for ourselves can it be said to be empirical, verifiable and truly real.

2.1.2 Doubtworthy points

2.1.2.1 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta (A 3.65), popularly known as the Kālāma Sutta, far from being what we today imagine to be "a charter of free inquiry," it is really about how to know things rightly for per-

[2] In logic, a "**proposition**" is a statement that affirms or denies something, and is either true or false.

[3] Readings: Knowledge [Wiki]; Propositional logic [Wikidocs]; Knowledge: a priori & a posteriori [Quirk's]; The analysis of knowledge [Stanford]. B Stableford, "Religion," in *Science Fact And Science Fiction: an encyclopedia,* Routledge, 2006: 433-437.

[4] See R Gethin, "Wrong View (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) in the Theravāda Abhidhamma," 2004:212 f; P Fuller, *The Notion of* Diṭṭhi *in Theravāda Buddhism,* 2005:109 f.

[5] For an intro and refs, see [Declarative knowledge]. 21 June 2026.

sonal, social, universal and spiritual good, based on the 10 "doubtworthy points" (*kaṅkhāniya-ṭ,ṭhāna*) regarding propositional knowledge. The Buddha points out that all forms of knowledge are "doubtworthy" whether "falsifiable" or not.[6]

The 10 kinds of doubtworthy knowledge are those (1) of oral communication (tradition); (2) of received tradition (lineage); (3) of hearsay; (4) of scriptural authority; (5) by pure reason (logic); (6) by inference and deduction; (7) by specious reasoning (personal reasoning); (8) by being convinced by someone; (9) by one's seeming ability (charisma); and (10) even of a well respected teacher or holy man.[7]

2.1.2.2 In other words, no matter how practical and necessary such forms of knowledge and information may be, they are all ultimately to be doubted or they leave room for doubt. There are at least 2 practical reasons for such an attitude:

(1) We cannot always be certain of the truth or factuality (something based on fact) of what we communicate to others or even know for ourselves.
(2) This room for doubt allows for investigation and development beyond what we now know for general progress or for self-betterment.

Almost all our common daily knowledge and communications, then, are provisional; they serve the purpose of the moment and allow us to function as members of a community, so as to express ourselves as individuals. Such truths may be useful for human communication, endeavours, educational progress, and the common good, but they are mostly conventional or convenient truths, not the real truths. "Doubtworthy" then does not necessarily mean *useless,* but rather it is the best tool we have right now. It also means that we simply need to work on having and using better tools for human communication and growth.

2.1.2.3 The Kesa,puttiya Sutta goes on to suggest the most beneficial purpose of human communication and action. The Sutta is essentially saying that moral good is not merely beliefs, rituals or vows dictated by any kind of authoritative fiat or populist quip, but by what is *true and real, experienced for oneself in a wholesome manner*. It has very much to do with how we cultivate our minds and live our lives so that we are characterized with *love, ruth, joy and peace*. Finally, the Sutta teaches us why doing good is clearly better than doing bad.[8]

2.1.3 Why early Buddhism is not a religion

2.1.3.0 It is a well-known fact amongst insightful Buddhists and scholars that **early Buddhism** is *not* a religion. But, first of all, what is religion? It has been described as:

> A system of metaphysical[9] beliefs associated with reverential rites. Most religions involve belief in and worship of one or more gods, although Buddhism reveres human teachers whose

[6] "Falsifiable" here means "capable of being tested—verified or falsified—by experiment or observation."

[7] (1) *mā anussavena,* (2) *mā paramparāya,* (3) *mā iti,kirāya,* (4) *mā piṭaka,sampadānena*, (5) *mā takka,heru,gāhena,* (6) *mā naya,hetu,gāhena,* (7) *mā ākāra,parivitakkena,* (8) *mā diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khantiyā,* (9) *mā bhavya,rūpatāya,* and (10) *mā samaṇa no garu*: (A 3.65,3 *passim*), SD 35.4a.

[8] **A 3.65**/1:188-193 (SD 35.4a).

[9] R Audi: "**Metaphysics,** most generally, the philosophical investigation of the nature, constitution, and structure of reality. It is broader in scope than science, eg, physics and even cosmology (the science of the nature, structure, and origin of the universe as a whole), since one of its traditional concerns is the existence of non-physical entities, eg, God. It is also more fundamental, since it investigates questions [that] science does not address but the answers to which it presupposes. Are there, for instance, physical objects at all, and does every event have a cause? | So

> accounts of universal metaphysics do not include a personalised creator. The religions of literate cultures usually focus on scriptures that contain definitive accounts of its doctrines, which are often held to have been divinely inspired. The adjectival form of the term is often used in the phrase "religious experience," referring to the alleged apprehension or intuition of metaphysical reality, which usually consists of brief intervals of revelation.
>
> (Brian Stableford, *Science Fact And Science Fiction: An encyclopedia,* 2006:433)

From this definition, we can have a very good idea why early Buddhism is ***not* a religion**:

2.1.3.1 Although Buddhism has a late collection of canonical texts on Buddhist metaphysics—called **the Abhidhamma**—nowhere in the suttas is it stated that it has to do with the process of awakening. Indeed, in the suttas, the term *abhi-dhamma* simply means "in connection with the Dharma."[10]

2.1.3.2 The Vinaya, as a monastic legal system, is full of legal rituals and processes. These rituals have a special practical purpose of *socially* and *psychologically* integrating the rule of the Vinaya with the spirit of Dharma. In this way the sangha is unified by a consensus of practice and understanding that promotes fellowship and spiritual friendship. Otherwise, "attachment to rituals and vows"[11] (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*) is clearly a hindrance to attaining even the 1st stage of the path, streamwinning. [2.3.1]

2.1.3.3 In early Buddhism, blind belief, even with **faith**, is deemed unwholesome and discouraged; such a faith is said to be rootless or unrooted (*amulika,saddhā*), "faith without grounding."[12] Belief must always be rooted in understanding and wisdom, that is, as "**wise faith**" (*avecca-p,pasāda*).[13] Religion demands that you "believe that you may understand,"[14] but spirituality encourages you to "understand that you may believe."[15]

2.1.3.4 The suttas are full of accounts of **gods** (devas of the sense-world and brahmas of the form and formless worlds) who routinely visit the Buddha uttering teachings they heard from past buddhas, or who play various roles in sutta teachings. This shows that the Buddha and some arhats are familiar with such celestial beings (whom we may imagine, in modern terms, to be "aliens").

A few of the "great brahmas" (*mahā,brahmā*) of the form world even imagine that they had created their world, but were proven wrong by the Buddha [SD 19.8b (14.2)]. As a rule, too, gods are never worshipped in early Buddhism. Hence, although Buddhism is not atheistic, it must be said to be **non-theistic**.

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understood, metaphysics was rejected by positivism on the ground that its statements are 'cognitively meaningless' since they are not empirically verifiable." (*Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* 1995, 2nd ed 1999:563). On "metaphysics," see Stableford 2006:300 f.

[10] See **Citta Hatthi,sari,putta S** (A 6.60,5) SD 51.9; SD 26.1 (1.1.1); SD 60.1e (8.3.1).

[11] *Sīla-b,bata* is resolved as *sīla* (ritual conduct) + *vata* (religious vows). Comy on **Ratana S** (Sn 231d) explains the term ***sīla-b,bata*** as "The rituals (*sīla,* 'habit') consisting of cow-virtue, dog-virtue [M 1:387 f], etc, and the vows (*vata*) consisting in cow-duty, dog-duty, etc, stated in the suttas about outside recluses and brahmins in the way beginning with, 'Purification by rituals, purification by vows' (*Ito bahiddhā samaṇa,brāhmaṇānaṃ sīlena suddhi vatena suddhī ti evam-ādīsu* [Dhs 183 *passim*; Vbh 365, 375] *āgataṃ go,sīla,kukkura,sīl'ādikaṁ sīlaṁ go,vata,kukkura,vat'ādikañ ca vataṃ* ***sīla-b,batan*** *ti vuccati*) (KhpA 189 = SnA 178; Nm 86 f @ Sn 790; VismMHT:Be 2:326).

[12] SD 10.4 (2.2); SD 56.18 (1.2.1.2).

[13] **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,11 n) + SD 3.3 (4.2).

[14] SD 49.2 (3.5.2); SD 62.1 (2.4.1.5); on dual faith SD 63.4 (4.4.4).

[15] See **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65), SD 35.4a comy on §3.1 (6) pt 4: Faith in Buddhism. See also SD 61.13 (4.2.2.1).

2.1.3.5 Early Buddhism rejects unequivocally the idea of **creation**, especially that by a Creator-God. The notion of creation (creationism) is often considered untenable by the scientific community because the idea relies on supernatural causation, which is untestable and unfalsifiable scientifically. It also fundamentally conflicts with observable realities in physics, geology, and biology—including the sequential age of the Earth and evolutionary common ancestry of all life.[16] Instead of creation, the Buddha teaches that everything, both the physical and the mental worlds, function relatively and interrelatedly by way of a network of **causes and effects**. Since this causality occurs naturally in time, we cannot point to any first cause: time has no beginning.

2.1.3.6 Because of its long history and geographical spread, Buddhism has produced a wealth of **literature** ranging from simple conversations of the Buddha himself with others, to analytical philosophical commentaries to didactic writings. The core of Buddhist literature is known as **the** "**3 baskets**" (*ti,piṭaka*), namely, the Vinaya (monastic rules and procedures), the Sutta (records of teachings and practices for self-awakening), and the Abhidhamma (late canonical systematization of psychological aspects of Buddhism), and exegetical works or commentaries compiled a few centuries later.

The Ti,piṭaka was transmitted in the early centuries by way of a meticulous system of oral tradition and was first written down at the start of the Common Era. Even with such a well-preserved canon of teachings, Buddhists do not treat their scriptures as sacred in the way other religions do. In fact, informed Buddhists regard the Pali canon, especially **the suttas**, as direct records of the teachings of the Buddha and his early saints regarding their awakening experiences, and how we too can similarly attain that awakening by way of self-reliance.

2.1.4 Self-verification

2.1.4.1 Although Buddhism accepts the external world as real and seeing its true nature brings spiritual insight, such insight, especially awakening itself, is *not* regarded as any kind of revelation from any deity or external divine source, or as arising because of such external reality. The physical reality of things is "seen" or experienced by our mind and senses (the "internal faculties" or *indriya*) as "external objects" (*dhamma*).

In other words, the world (the external reality and oneself) are all "**mind-made**" (*mano,mayā*). It is our mind that is able to truly and fully see, that is, understand, the true nature of reality (*yathā,bhūtaṁ*). This understanding is known as "awakening," ***bodhi,*** and it has the synonym, ***sambodhi***, "self-awakening," since it is the result not of any divine revelation, but of self-realization through self-reliance and self-effort. The "self" (*attā*) here refers to the mind (*mano*).[17]

2.1.4.2 With our mind, we are able to verify (*sacchikaroti*) the nature of true reality, which we can and must "see for ourselves" (**ehi passati*).[18] To "see for ourselves" is to verify directly what is true and real. In Buddhism, **verification** is the principle that spiritual truths must be validated through direct, personal experience rather than be accepted with blind faith. The Buddha encourages us to test his teachings —like a goldsmith tests gold—and to accept them only when they are proven to let us see what is real and true.[19]

Seeing true reality is a good thing—indeed, the best thing—because it strips away cognitive biases, unverified delusions, and blind assumptions. This clarity allows us to make more accurate decisions, adapt

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[16] "Creation science" [Wiki]; Creationism debunked [ScientificAmerican]. 22 June 2026.

[17] On **self-effort**: SD 26.9 (2.1.2.4); **self-reliance**: SD 3.1 (3.2), SD 27.3 (3.1.1).

[18] Comy: "It is thus proclaimed, 'Come and see this Dharma; come and see the way to arhathood'; hence, it is said ***ehi,passika***" (*Ehi passa imaṃ dhamman ti evaṃ pavattaṃ ehi,passa,vidhiṃ arahatī ti* ***ehipassiko***, SA 1:43,18 f).

[19] "Verify for yourself" [Buddho]. 23 June 2026.

effectively to the present, and deeply reduce mental suffering and negative emotions caused by resisting the way things are.[20] Seeing true reality further improves decision-making, fosters better connections with others and with our experiences, uncovers deep truths that broaden and free the mind, and inspire us with clearer vision and greater creativity to enrich our life and wisdom.

This kind of knowledge—that verifies true reality—is called **experiential knowledge** [2.2.3].

2.2 WORLDLY KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

2.2.1 Propositional language

2.2.1.1 The fact *that right view abandons wrong view* shows an important distinction between ordinary or worldly right view and *the right view of the path* [2.3.1.1]. While worldly right view is propositional, right view of the path is that it is ***not* propositional**. It is a direct experiential understanding of true reality, what is true and real right here and now [2.2.3].

"**Propositional language,"** on the other hand, means "declarative facts, statements, and logical claims about reality that can be objectively evaluated as either true or false" [2.1.1.1]. This kind of language is, as a rule, used in academic discourse, where it serves as the tool for ideas and opinions.

Academic language is often said to be "scientific" knowledge or used in scientific learning. **Scientific** refers to anything related to science, or characterized by a methodical, evidence-based approach used in systematic study and measured progress. To be considered "scientific," a method, a concept or an action must have the following traits:[21]

- it is **systematic.** It relies on organized procedures and methodologies that is a scientific method rather than guesswork.
- it is **evidence-based**. Conclusions are drawn from objective observation, data collection, and measurable facts.
- it is **testable and falsifiable**. Theories and hypotheses must be structured in a way that they can be rigorously tested and potentially proven false.

2.2.1.2 Early Buddhism, especially the Buddha's teaching of awakening, is neither scientific nor unscientific. Scientific study and understanding concerns the palpable world, that is, aspects of it that are measurable in a testable way. The early Buddhist teaching of awakening can thus be said to be "non-scientific" in the sense that it is not only concerned with the present physical and mental conditions, but also the hereafter, all of which are considered by way of what is bad/evil and good (*puñña,pāpa*), unwholesome and wholesome (*kusalâkusala*), possible or impossible (*ṭhāṇâṭṭhāna*).

A vitally central teaching of the Buddha is that of **not measuring** anyone or anything. To measure someone or something is to regard them as beautiful or as ugly, and to be drawn to the beautiful and to reject the ugly. In the practice of **the divine abodes**, the practitioner cultivates a boundless mind (*appamāṇa,citta*) of *lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity* towards others and towards the world as a whole. While science measures things, Buddhism accepts everyone just as they are with immeasurable *love, ruth, joy and peace.*

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[20] Readings: Reality [Wiki]. The theory of two truths in India [Stanford]. The correspondence theory of truth [Stanford]. Mind in Indian Buddhist Philosophy [Coseru]. Free will [Stanford]. Sense data [Hatfield]. 23 June 2026.

[21] E O Wilson, "The natural sciences," *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, NY: Vintage. 1999:49-71. J L Heilbron et al, Preface, *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science,* NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2003:vii-x. [Cambridge]. [CK-12]. 24 June 2026.

2.2.2 Science and its consequences

2.2.2.1 Science translates into **power** by discovering or formulating fundamental rules of the natural world, which allow scientists and those who use those rules to predict outcomes and build technologies that reshape the world. Thus to science, "knowledge is power." Science applies power through education, technology and politics to assert the superiority of those who make use of science. **Technology** converts physics, chemistry, and biology into functional tools, medicines, and weapons. These advancements give those who possess them massive political, economic and military advantages such as follows:

- **predictive capability**. Science relies on rigorous data and mathematical models to forecast events—from severe weather and climate shifts to disease spread and control—enabling proactive decision-making and crisis management.
- **resource management**. Understanding energy generation, agricultural genetics, and material science allows policy makers and administrators to harness natural resources, dictate infrastructure, and drive global markets.
- **policy influence**. Reliable scientific consensus shapes governmental laws and institutional frameworks, allowing authorities to manage public health, economics, and environmental sustainability, even dictate world events.

2.2.2.2 One of the most beneficial social consequences of scientific development is its enhancement of public education for advancement of beneficial knowledge and useful skills for global economic growth. Scientific advancement significantly contributes to the rise of cities, megalopolises and conurbations,[22] that is, **urbanization**, that often provides better facilities for public living, transportation, education, health and leisure. One of the most significant contributions of science to modern living is to dispel the superstitious and dehumanizing aspects of religion so that people have a better understanding of beliefs, balanced with proper information of the real world, and promote mental and social health by a better understanding of the nature of the mind.

One of the most vital new scientific developments may be said to be **meditation science**[23] or **mindfulness psychology**[24] which may offer itself as a better mental health and belief system than faith-based sectarian or cultish religions.

2.2.2.3 While science has contributed to the rise of urbanized living, it also means that **cities** tend towards very crowded, with less natural space for health, relaxation and aesthetics, and more people become lost and lonely in the urbanized crowds. Better health and disease control that medical science brings also means people will live longer healthier lives. This in turn creates systemic challenges including the expansion of morbidity (more time spent in chronic ill health), overwhelmed healthcare systems, escalating retirement costs, and significant social impacts like caregiver strain and societal rigidity.

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[22] A "conurbation" is sprawling urban regions or continuous networks of towns and cities considered collectively.

[23] "When science meets mindfulness." 24 June 2026.

[24] "**Mindfulness**" is heavily rooted in the Buddhist practice of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our actions, thoughts, feelings (bodily sensations and emotions), and surrounding environment through an unconditional, nurturing lens. It is heavily integrated into clinical treatments to help people observe their thoughts without judgement or habitual reaction. "Effects of mindfulness on psychological health" [APA], "Mindfulness" [Wiki] 26 June 2026.

Some of the main areas of concern that can create more complex problems include the following:

1. Healthcare and biological burden

- **the health-lifespan gap.** While life expectancy has steadily risen, healthy life expectancy (years lived without chronic disease) has not kept pace. This becomes a "gap" where people live longer, but with years burdened by conditions like dementia, cardiovascular disease, and arthritis.
- **multimorbidity**. With advanced age comes the increased likelihood of managing multiple chronic conditions all at the same time. Treating complex, co-occurring diseases requires more time, resources, and heavy strains on the health infrastructure.
- **geriatric syndromes**. Prolonged survival exposes the body to secondary conditions related to natural aging—such as frailty, falls, cognitive decline, and urinary incontinence.[25]

2. Economic and financial strain

- **workforce and productivity**. As populations age, the labour force participation rate decreases. Older adults may face ageism (bias against the aged) or physical limitations that force early retirement, reducing the tax base and consumer spending.
- **retirement sustainability**. Those who enter retirement may sometimes spend some 20 to 30 years without the financial means to sustain themselves. This has led to massive, projected global retirement savings gaps.
- **government spending**. Longer lifespans require more spending for government programmes such as social security, pensions, and public health systems.[26]

3. Societal and family impact

- **caregiver strain**. As the elderly population swells, the burden of care often falls heavily on families. Adult children may be forced to leave the workforce to care for aging parents, damaging both individual earning potential and broader economic productivity.
- **social neglect**. Affluence may make spouses live less dependent on or caring towards one another; they are less likely to care for their aged parents or relatives. Status demands may cause the young to reject and isolate seniors, resulting in the alienation of the aged.
- **social isolation**. Living longer means outliving friends, spouses, and peers. This can lead to increased loneliness and a higher risk of mental health challenges like depression in late life.
- **societal rigidity**. Societies structured around linear, traditional lifestyles struggle to adapt to longer lives. Policies governing housing, work, and retirement need massive overhauls to support aging demographics.[27]
- **dehumanization**. When people are measured in monetary terms, they become dehumanized currency; they will find it difficult to express *love, compassion, joy or peace*. Marriages are less likely to work. Intolerance, tyranny and hatred are likely forms of politics; people are exploited systematically on the social media; those meeting within the same space feel alienated from one another; and the dissatisfied mind seeks various mundane or outlandish ways of leisure and distraction. We lose our humanity.

2.2.2.4 Although science is at the root of human development, science alone is not to be blamed for any of these negative patterns. It really depends on how our leaders, businesses and popular media tend

[25] Ageing and health [WHO]. Longevity and public health [PMC]. Too well to die, too ill to live [Jugran]. 25 June 2026.

[26] H J Aaron, "Longer life spans: boon or burden?" 2006 [Daedakus]. "The nutrition source" [Harvard]. 11 July 2026.

[27] Longer life spans: boon or burden [Daedalus]. The issue with living longer [Time]. Consequences of longevity [Oxford]. 25 June 2026.

to use science for their agenda. Organized human endeavours may not be able to stop many of the negative impacts of development, but we can try to correct them or lessen their bad effects, or even offer better, more human and life-centred alternatives.

2.2.3 How Buddhism helps

2.2.3.1 Certain practical Buddhist teachings and practices (such as mindfulness) can inspire some profoundly healing and supportive behaviours from those who plan or execute development and social programmes. People at the receiving end can reject what they see as unwholesome or dehumanizing, and initiate healthy alternatives based, for example, on the Buddhist philosophy of **kindness** (*mettā*) **beauty** (*kalyāṇa* and *sobha*).

Buddhist morality, to begin with, envisions "bodily beauty" or "personal aesthetics" as expressed in the respect for *life*, for *work*, for *freedom*, for *truth* and for the *mind*. These human values are practised by way of the 5 natural precepts: the respect for life, property, freedom, truth and the mind.[28]

A beautiful mind is one that is *calm*, *clear* and *joyfully* discerning of true reality. Such a mind not only cultivates the good and wholesome in oneself, but sees them and inspires them in others, too. When expressed as the "**divine abodes**" (*brahma,vihāra*), they are love, compassion, joy and peace. **Love**, for example, is an unconditional acceptance of others just as they are; **compassion** is active love that reaches out to those who need help and healing; **joy** is a spontaneous response to the goodness and happiness in others; and **peace** or equanimity keeps one steadily grounded in reality accepting things as they are after one has done one's best to better things. We have then shaped our own future.

2.2.3.2 Buddhism encourages us to be "**bodily cultivated**" (*bhāvita,kāya*)—to live healthily in body and morally with others—and to be "**mentally cultivated**" (*bhāvita,citta*)—to cultivate joy and enjoy peace in the heart and with others. With this healthy mind in a healthy body, we become positively **creative**, which means that we are inspired to initiate works that express **truth and beauty**.

Truth, even painful truths, can be *beautifully* expressed to help us to see true reality for ourselves and to live full and wholesome lives. **Beauty** is *true to reality*, reminding us of the lights and shadows in our lives so that we are moved by good and joy to live beautifully and truthfully. In this sense we live *creative* lives; we create good and joy in ourselves and in others. The fundamental benefit of this sort of life is that we feel a constant bright spaciousness—like heaven here and now.

In this joyful space of our present lives, we are better prepared to study and practise the Dharma more effectively, with wonderful benefits. With our joy and peace, and the calm clarity of our minds, we are ready to feel and taste the liberating truths behind the words of the text. When we free the truth from the texts, we are ourselves liberated from the limits of our senses by opening up our minds to true reality in its breadth and depth. We are then ready to move closer to the path of liberation.

2.2.4 Experiential knowledge

2.2.4.1 The kind of knowledge that arises in us when we taste the truth in the suttas and teachings comes from our direct experience. We can loosely call this **spiritual knowledge**, which is in fact what the early teachings inculcate in us. This direct knowledge of true reality is information and actions that are neither secular (worldly) nor religious (beliefs) but are ultimately liberating. This knowledge is so called because:

[28] On the 5 values or respects, see **SD 65.1** (3.4); SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5); SD 63.12 (3.2.2); SD 64.9 (2.1.1.3).

(1) it records teachings and practices that keep us happy, both in body and mind, as a community even here and now; this knowledge is based on this common good of moral conduct, and
(2) it has teachings and practices for personal growth and mental cultivation that lead to the path of liberation.

We can call the knowledge that constitutes moral conduct a kind of **social knowledge**, that is, teachings for a wholesome and progressive society. What is of interest in our study here is the knowledge related to mental cultivation; we can call this **experiential knowledge**. It is our personal experience or direct insight into true reality—seeing *impermanence, suffering and nonself*—that brings us to the path of awakening.

2.2.4.2 Seeing the true reality that is **impermanence**, we free ourselves from wrong view (from seeing anything conditioned as not impermanent), as taught in **the Miccha,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta** (S 35.164) [1.1.1]:

seeing the true reality that is **suffering**, we free ourselves from identity-view (from seeing anything in the body or the mind as "my" self and so on), as taught in **the Sakkāya,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta** (S 35.165) [SD 65.7]; and

seeing the true reality that is **nonself**, we free ourselves from self view (from seeing any kind of abiding entity in the body or the mind), as taught in **the Attā'nudiṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta** (S 35.166) [SD 65.8].

Hence, it is said:

All conditioned things are	impermanent,	*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*;	
All conditioned things are	suffering,	*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*;	
All things are	nonself,	*sabbe dhammā anattā.*	(Dh 277a, 278a, 279a)[29]

All conditioned things (*saṅkhārā*) refers to whatever that *arises from conditions*, whether mental or physical; in other words, they are subject to causes and effects (such as our body and our mind). Hence, they are impermanent, they change and become other; since these conditioned states are impermanent, we cannot really enjoy them beyond the moment that they arise in; then they pass away—hence they are also said to be unsatisfactory; they bring **suffering**.

2.2.4.3 The term "**conditioned**" (*saṅkhata*) means whatever is subject to causes and effects, especially when we are driven by greed or by hatred.

Greed causes or conditions more greed: when we desire for something we will want more of it; greed thus feeds greed.

Hatred is the opposite of greed, but functions in a similar way: when we hate something we will reject it and keep doing so; hatred thus feeds hatred.

When we do *not* show greed, we will also not show *hatred*. To the extent that we accept and understand the idea of impermanence, we let go of **the wrong view** (*nicchā,diṭṭhi*) that the pleasure we see or seek is permanent. Then, we reflect on the *impermanent* nature of pleasure, that it cannot really satisfy us, not for long anyway.[30] Hence, we cultivate the idea of suffering; we then better understand that there is no point in identifying with any object of desire or of hatred. Essentially, this means we do not identify with the object. We do not regard it as "This is mine," "This I am," or "This is myself."[31]

[29] All dharmas are "nonself" (*sabbe dhammā anattā*): **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134/1:286), SD 26.8.
[30] On the reflection of impermanence, see **Micchā,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna S** (S 35.165), SD 65.6.
[31] See eg **Cha,chakka S** (M 148,16-21/3:284), SD 26.6.

When we see this suffering nature of pleasure (and of hatred), we are able to *weaken* the notion of **self-identity** (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*); we are unlikely to be often troubled by it.[32] However, the notion of self-identity is profoundly powerful and still lurks in our unconscious as a latent tendency (until we attain arhathood).

2.2.4.4 The broad term "**things**" (*dhammā*) here refers both to conditioned things as well as unconditioned things. The "unconditioned," however, does *not* include nirvana because nirvana is *not* conditioned in the sense of having *no attributes whatsoever*. On the other hand, when we see sense-objects or mental objects as being *impermanent* and *suffering*, we temporarily remove both greed and hatred. Hence, we also remove the conditions for wrong view and identity view; to the extent that our mind is *not* conditioned by wrong view or by identity view, to that extent it does not suffer mental pain.

Nonself is a deep understanding of how wrong view and self view work. By weakening our **self view** (*attā'nudiṭṭhi*), we weaken the root of views. Nonself then is **the principle** behind freeing our mind from allowing these views to recur in other forms, with other forms of desire and other forms of hatred. When we have given up **self view** we also fully abandon the other two views; this difficult endeavour is only fully accomplished by the arhat.

2.3 RIGHT VIEW AND THE PATH

2.3.1 Right view and streamwinning

2.3.1.1 In terms of early Buddhism, **right view** is best understood as the right view of the path. We must first be able to see the path of liberation in our mind before we can turn towards it. With such a vision, we will have true meaning and willful purpose to work on the goal. Thus right view is traditionally placed first in the list of the 8 limbs of the noble path, the way to awakening and true freedom.

The noble path begins, in practice, with the attaining of **streamwinning**. Right view then is best understood in the context of how it functions to bring about breakthrough into awakening itself. This means that right view cannot be *propositional* [2.2.1.1]; we cannot merely make statements or formulate dogmas about it; much less merely read writings about right view and write more words about right view. We have then merely made use of right view; or worse, have made a religion out of it.

2.3.1.2 Although mere propositional statements about right view may not help us see rightly, they may may have a cognitive function. It helps us to *know* what to do; but more so, we must have a feeling, the **will** (*chanda*), to move towards the path, with **effort** (*viriya*) and with all our focused **mind** (*citta*) to **investigate** deeper into true reality. We are then guided proactively by **the 4 paths of spiritual power** (*iddhi,pāda*).[33]

This path of spiritual power needs to be extended into **the 7 awakening factors** (*satta bojjhaṅga*), that is,[34]

(1) **mindfulness** (*sati sambojjhaṅga*) keeps the mind directed on the object and to stay there:
(2) **investigation of states** (*dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*); that is, to see their impermanence;
(3) **effort** (*viriya sambojjhaṅga*) should be sustained in keeping the mind focused;
(4) **zest** (*pīti sambojjhaṅga*) then arises, inducing us to sustain the mindful investigation of states;
(5) **tranquillity** (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*) of the body and mind follows, removing all hindrances;

[32] On the reflection of suffering, see **Sakkāya,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna S** (S 35.166), SD 65.7.

[33] See **Cattāro Iddhi,pāda** (SD 10.3); **Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20), SD 28.14; SD 57.22 (1.2.39).

[34] See **(Bojjhaṅga) Sīla S** (S 46.3), SD 10.15; **Mahā Sakul'udāyī S** (M 77,20) + SD 6.18 (7); **Aggaññā S** (D 27,30), SD 2.19.

(6) **concentration** (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*) arises, which leads to:
(7) **equanimity** (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*), which refers to attaining any of the 1st dhyana and so on.

2.3.1.3 Since **wrong view** (*micchā,diṭṭhi*) is always rooted in *greed, hatred or delusion*, and distracts the mind from its object, *reading or thinking* about these negative states does not really work to remove the distraction. While one is reading or thinking, the feeling rooted in *greed, hatred or delusion* remains. The mind (that is, the attention) has to free itself from the unwholesome feeling, that is, by the arising of a wholesome opposite, that is, *charity, or lovingkindness, or wisdom.*[35]

A simple way of explaining this would be to say that **right view** is that aspect of wisdom that is free from any unwholesome root. Right view enhances our understanding of reality;[36] it's like we see the right jigsaw pieces, put them together, and see a whole picture (a cameo), or we see *the* whole picture.

Similarly, when we study a sutta with what we already understand, we recognize and connect the cognitive aspects of the sutta, and read the contextually. The idea is not to seek the suttas to prove some fixed idea that we may have, but rather to let the sutta, as it were, speak for itself; we mindfully listen—we are then true "listeners" (*sāvaka*).

Rupert Gethin observes as follows:

> In the Theravāda, understanding the tendency to fixed opinion can only exist prior to stream-attainment, since the wisdom of stream-attainment is characterised as *samma-diṭṭhi*, a form of *paññā* that precisely turns away from the inclination to hold fixed opinions; once the four truths have been directly seen, the mind has no inclination to either eternalism or annihilationism, the mind has no tendency to misinterpret Buddhist theory in terms of either annihilationism or eternalism. (Gethin 2004:221)

2.3.1.4 When we look at the suttas in this manner—by "experiencing" the text [2.3.1.3]—we can see why there are both **ignorance** (*avijjā*) and **wrong view** (*micchā,diṭṭhi*) on the negative side, and **wisdom** (*paññā*) and **right view** (*sammā,diṭṭhi*) on the positive side. Intellectually, "wisdom" is often seen as "what ought to be done" while "right view" is "seeing what is." Ignorance means we do not know the danger of **watersnakes** (to use a well-known metaphor). Wrong view is to grasp *the watersnake* by the tail—it will sting us with deadly venom.[37]

We are then taking the teachings only as *propositional statements* [2.1.1.1]—merely as doctrines and dogmas—and not seeing them **experientially**, without any direct vision into true reality. To firmly and safely hold the watersnake by its neck, we need to practise *wisdom* (what ought to be done) as moral virtue, and cultivate *right view* as mental development that leads to insight into impermanence, suffering and nonself. We need to let go of what is not ours (*yaṁ na tumhākaṁ taṁ pajahatha*).[38]

2.3.1.5 When there is **greed, hatred or delusion**, it is impossible to truly know things, that is to have wholesome knowledge, that brings wisdom, joy and peace. Greed always looks for "something"; hatred seeks to make "nothing" of someone; delusion imagines there is "some thing" when there is none.[39]

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[35] "Wisdom" here refers to the feeling of impermanence, and so on.

[36] "Essentially the same thing may be experienced more fully and deeply"; R Gethin, "Wrong View (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) and Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) in the Theravāda Abhidhamma" [1997b], *Contemporary Buddhism* 5,1 **2004**:216. [Academia] 25 June 2026.

[37] On the parable of the watersnake (*alagaddûpama*), see **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,10), SD 3.13.

[38] **"**Let go of what is not yours!": **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,40) + SD 3.13 (4.2).

[39] See also Fuller 2005:109 f.

True knowledge arises only to the calm and clear mind. When calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) work in harmony on this knowledge, it becomes wisdom, that is, liberating knowledge. Thus calm and insight are essential for the realization of the path.

In a sense, *right view* holds these ideas in symmetry. We know that *right view*, in the early Buddhist texts, is explained as a type of *knowledge* capable of transforming into wisdom. However, when we are still unawakened, even "correct" doctrine or truth (both translated as *dhamma*) can be grasped in such a way as to make it **wrong view**.

Thus, it is not simply a case of one proposition replacing another. Whether the view is wrong or right depends on both its content (what it proposes) and how the view is held: the view shapes experience; as one thinks, so one acts (Dh 1 f). Only by seeing this *rightly* do we abandon its wrongness. In this way, right view abandons wrong view.[40]

2.3.1.6 The role of *right view* is to emphasize freedom from mental rigidity so that one attains the path, especially when one becomes **a streamwinner**. Essentially, this happens when the mind's tendency to grasp is loosened and is freed in 3 ways.

Firstly, one breaks the fetter of grasping to a self-identity (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*); one does not see any self in one's body (any of the senses) or the mind (feeling, thought or action).

Secondly, one breaks the fetter that holds on to doubt (*vicikicchā*), a lack of clarity or confidence that one is doing the right thing. Specifically, this refers to doubting that human awakening (buddhahood) is possible; doubting that there is the path (method) for awakening; and doubting that one is capable of attaining the path. Positively stated, this means that one clearly knows bad as bad, one abandons the bad that is done; one knows good as good, and cultivates the good.

And thirdly, one breaks the fetter that attaches one to any ritual as action, as speech or as thought, making propositions of what actually needs to be rightly done and experienced. One sees how the mind works behind every act of body, of speech and of mind. One corrects oneself right there in one's own mind, without seeking any solution or succour in some external agency, whether a teacher, a teaching or some God.[41]

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[40] See Fuller 2005:222.

[41] See SD 65.7 (2).

Micchā,diṭṭhi-p,pahāna Sutta

The Discourse on Letting Go of Wrong View

S 35.164

1 [Thus have I heard. At one time …]

2 Then a certain monk approached the Blessed One, and having approached, saluted him and sat down at one side.

3 Sitting at one side, the monk said this to the Blessed One:
"Bhante, how should one know, how should one see, so that **wrong view** is abandoned?"

4 "Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the eye** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **forms** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **eye-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **eye-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with eye-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

5 Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the ear** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **sounds** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **ear-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **ear-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with ear-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

6 Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the nose** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **smells** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **nose-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **nose-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with nose-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

7 Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the tongue** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **tastes** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **tongue-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **tongue-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with tongue-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

8 Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the body** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **touches** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **body-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **body-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with body-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

9 Bhikshu, when one knows and sees **the mind** as **impermanent**, wrong view is abandoned.
When one knows and sees **thoughts** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **mind-consciousness** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees **mind-contact** as impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*
When one knows and sees whatever **feeling** arises with mind-contact as condition—whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant—that too is impermanent, *wrong view is abandoned.*

10 Bhikshu, it is when one knows and sees thus that wrong view is abandoned."

—evaṁ—

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