

BE MINDFUL IN ALL YOU DO

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There are some fundamental beliefs. One is the universal regime of cause and effect. The second is the idea of interdependence of all phenomena. The third is in understanding that there is certain dependence in origination itself that is that which originates, changes, disappears and disintegrates. This idea is inbuilt in origination. The fourth is the impermanence of conditioned things and absence of inherent existence, the cognizer and the cognized. The fifth is the suffering that follows from mistaken perceptions in the permanence of reality. In our social as well as individual lives, we have to encounter suffering caused by false apprehensions of reality and happiness.

Buddhism does not believe in mortifying the flesh; it does not believe in ignoring the demands of life, or the potential for expanding knowledge about the universe; it does not deny that knowledge can help to reduce suffering or improve conditions of living. It has therefore no distaste for science or technology. On the contrary, it believes that skilful use of science and technology can improve the quality of our lives. But since technology involves the choice of goals, nature of the goals, as well as the motivation that prompts the choice and pursuit of goals become very important. If they ignore or violate any of the beliefs that are listed above, they are bound to increase individual and social suffering, and not welfare. Hence what we believe will contribute to our pleasure sometimes could turn out to be the cause of aggravated suffering.

To the Buddhist, ethics and morality are not extraneous to the realm of cause and effect. Nor have their observance to be induced by a system of reward and punishment. The belief that actions take place in the realm of cause and effect has turned Buddhism away from the need to look for an external source of authority or reward and punishment administered by an external authority. Actions have their inescapable consequences as they are governed by the law of cause and effect. Thus my motivations and actions will have their effects on me and the social and even natural environment in which I live. I cannot overlook this effect and, therefore, the responsibility to see that my conduct creates a conducive effect on me as well as my social and natural environment.

Advances in science and technology are not based on an analysis of motives, or the impact and chain reactions that these are likely to cause on the psyche and environment. The negative consequences of this absence of mindfulness have now been brought to our attention. What do we do?

Persist in the mindless pursuit of individual power and material possessions, unconcerned with their consequences – in other words running the risk of a suicide of the species?

The answer lies within us, within our minds. To a believer in Buddha Dharma it is this mindfulness which is the basis on which to choose the path that leads to freedom and fulfillment. Among the most powerful enemies of mindfulness are desire, greed and the ego, the desire to promote ones ego at the cost of others or society or the environment. The answer that Buddha Dharma gives is mindfulness even to protect mindfulness, and the ethics and morality that mindfulness makes imperative in a world governed by cause and effect.