

The Importance of Right Speech in Buddhism and Its Relevance Today

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Abstract : The concept of right speech is the third stage of the noble eightfold path as prescribed by the Buddha and followed by millions of practicing Buddhists. The Buddha lays a lot of importance on the notion of right speech (Samma Vacca). In the Angutara Nikaya, the Buddha mentioned what constitutes right speech, which is basically four kinds of abstentions; namely abstaining from false speech, abstaining from slanderous speech, abstaining from harsh or hateful speech and abstaining from idle chatter. The Buddha gives reasons in support of his view as to why abstaining from these four kinds of speeches is favourable not only for maintaining the peace and equanimity within an individual but also within a society. It is a known fact that when we say something harsh or slanderous to others, it eventually affects our individual peace of mind too. We also know about the many examples of hate speeches which have led to senseless cases of violence and which are well documented within our country and the world. Also, indulging in false speech is not a healthy sign for individuals within a group as this kind of a social group which is based on falsities and lies cannot really survive for long and will eventually lead to chaos. Buddha also told us to refrain from idle chatter or gossip as generally we have seen that idle chatter or gossip does more harm than any good to the individual and the society. Hence, if most of us actually inculcate this third stage (namely, right speech) of the noble eightfold path of the Buddha in our daily life, it would be highly beneficial both for the individual and for the harmony of the society.

Keywords : Buddhism, speech, individual, society

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