

# Ideology Leads to Strife

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 3 min read

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The Buddha had this to say of opinions: a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. MN 2.8 When Master Kaccana was asked by a Brahmin why ascetics fight ascetics, he answered: 'It is because of attachment to views, adherence to views, fixation on views, addiction to views, obsession with views, holding firmly to views that ascetics fight with ascetics.' (AN 2:iv,6- Bhikkhu Bodhi: In the Buddha's Words. A view in this sense is a tightly held belief, substantiated by personal experience and rational thinking. And it has three components which make it rock like. The first is the wrong view itself -*diṭṭhi*. Take the three predominant ones of the previous century. The science of eugenics which pointed to the purification of the race, a central tenet of Nazism; the revolution against capitalism and rise of the doctrine of the ownership of the means of production by proletariat giving rise to communism; the present politico-economy of neoliberalism of a free market driven by 'natural' forces, with its stress on privatization, deregulation, fiscal austerity and free trade, that has led to the recent and ongoing economic collapse. Added to this is the conceit -*māna*. I am right and everyone else is wrong. In fact, they are so wrong they need to be annihilated or at least ignored. When the 'I' becomes a 'we', social upheaval is in the making. And the emotional attachment to it -*tanha*. Such is the devotion to a view that one is prepared to give up one's life, sacrifice one's own spouse and children for the cause. All in all this is ideology. And you see it in all religions. The examples I gave above were all secular, but the present day worst religious example of this is Islamic fundamentalism. What is the escape from this continual strife? First, as to views and opinions, the Buddha did not say we should not have them. He had very clear view of what would help humanity, namely the Four Noble Truths. However, whatever views or opinions we hold, let them be held lightly as perspectives that can be changed and nuanced by others. We don't need to identify with them or own them. It's just one view or opinion amongst many. This demands humility which undermines conceit, for we may have misunderstood or only partially understood. Although the Buddha pointed to a single 'right view' in terms of how to overcome suffering, as regards the practical matter of living in the world, some have said that he was a true pragmatist. Whatever works. We can see this in how the Rule (Vinaya) for the Sangha was developed. He does not seem to have come from some sort of preconceived ideal, but as time passed and the behaviour of monastics seemed inappropriate, rules were established. To give but one example. Lay people complained that monastics were coming at all times of the day on alms round and sometimes more than once! The Buddha established the rule that an alms round could only be done once in the morning and that all food had to be eaten by midday. There is also the celebrated change of mind concerning women joining the order. He had refused the request from women of his own family and court. Ananda asked him if women could become liberated and if so should, should they not be given the same opportunity as men to join the

order. The Buddha relented. It's an interesting exercise to list all our views and opinions around religion, society, economy, and politics. Then ask what makes me so sure I am right and the other is wrong? How do I react when someone disagrees with me? Have I really listened to the other with an open heart? And, if you find you have no strong views, to ask: Do I need to put more energy into clarifying the beliefs that are guiding me through life? How might I do this? <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/Bitter Lake>

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