

Buddhism Speech

Hello, today I am here to talk to you about the need for equality and fair treatment for all and to raise awareness about the Buddhist teachings. Prejudice and discrimination are huge problems today in society which could partially be because people do not fully understand the meaning of those words. Prejudice is forming an unfavourable opinion or feeling about a person or group of people without a full examination of the situation. On the contrary, discrimination is making a distinction against a person or thing based on the group, class or category they belong to rather than basing any action on individual merit. The difference between the two is that prejudice is to do with attitude rather than action. Both, however, are wrong as they cause different groups of people to be labelled under false ideas and opinions about them which is not fair. These people can come under any group really including different religions, different genders, races and ethnicities but across the board, discrimination and prejudice is wrong. Well, besides positive discrimination which gives special privileges to compensate perceived disadvantages to people who are say, disabled however, some still do not wish to be treated any different to anyone else and have these differences highlighted. Therefore, positive discrimination is all down to choice really. All humans are equal in their rights and should be treated the same no matter who they are the opinions surrounding them. Buddhists believe that there is no fundamental difference between any human and every individual should be valued and treated with justice and fairness. In Buddhism, although the definitions of the two words remain the same, they also have their own way of viewing prejudice and discrimination. Buddhists teach that prejudice is caused by ignorance which is one of the three poisons taught in Buddhism which are to be extinguished. When people show ignorance and present an ignorant attitude against others, they are discriminating. Buddhists further believe that this ignorance causes people to suffer, using the Buddhist term dukkha to represent this. Although suffering is obviously a part of life for everyone, it is important for people to do what they can to avoid unnecessary suffering from their own actions in life. This means that we can all cut out extra suffering caused by no one but ourselves with our own selfish ignorant actions. Another key belief taught throughout Buddhism is karuna meaning compassion which helps Buddhists and hopefully others, to understand the importance of not only reducing our own suffering but also providing help to do the same for others.

I want to finish on the remaining Buddhist teachings which highlight the importance of treating others well and equal to ourselves. Buddhists believe in equanimity meaning an equal attitude towards everyone despite their differences to you and I and they try to ensure throughout their lives that everyone is treated as such in society. However, you do not need to be a Buddhist to do so; everyone can envelop these ideas/morals for themselves no matter their religion or otherwise so that together, we can ensure that society is full of much less prejudice and discrimination and more justice and fairness alongside compassion. Mahayana Buddhists have an interesting belief called tathagatagarbha which is the belief that within everyone is the ability to become enlightened and their race, culture or otherwise has no part to play in it. Therefore, we should all be treated equally as we all share this special ability inside of us. Further, they believe that once enlightenment has been reached there are no divisions anyway. As I close this speech, I want to leave you on this idea that no matter what you look like, what religion or culture you follow there is no excuse for prejudice and discrimination and the only way society can be freed from the idea that there is, is if we all follow through with our ability to change it and do our parts for a better bigger outcome. Thank you.