

Right Action

What, now, is Right Action?

Abstaining from Killing

1. Herein someone avoids the killing of living beings, and abstains from it. Without stick or sword, conscientious, full of sympathy, he is desirous of the welfare of all living beings.

Abstaining from Stealing

2. He avoids stealing, and abstains from it; what another person possesses of goods and chattels in the village or in the wood, that he does not take away with thievish intent.

Abstaining from Unlawful Sexual Intercourse

3. He avoids unlawful sexual intercourse, and abstains from it. He has no intercourse with such persons as are still under the protection of father, mother, brother, sister or relatives, nor with married women, nor female convicts, nor lastly, with betrothed girls.

This is called Right Action. (*Anguttara-Nikaya*, X. 176)

Mundane and Supermundane Action

Now, Right Action, I tell you, is of two kinds:

1. Abstaining from killing, from stealing, and from unlawful sexual intercourse: this is called the 'Mundane Right Action' (*lokiya-samma-kammanta*) which yields worldly fruits and brings good results.

2. But the avoidance of the practice of this threefold wrong action, the abstaining, desisting, refraining therefrom—the mind being holy, being turned away from the world, and conjoined with the path, the holy path being pursued—this is called the 'Supermundane Right Action' (*lokuttara-samma-kammanta*), which is not of the world, but is supermundane, and conjoined with the path.

Conjoined with other Factors

Now in understanding wrong action as wrong, and right action as right, one practises *Right Understanding* (1st factor); and in making efforts to overcome wrong action, and to arouse right action, one practises *Right Effort* (6th factor); and in overcoming wrong action with attentive mind, and dwelling with attentive mind in possession of right action, one practises *Right Mindfulness* (7th factor). Hence, there are three things that accompany and follow upon Right Action, namely: Right Understanding, Right Effort and Right Mindfulness. (*Majjhima-Nikaya*, 117)

Source: Nyanatiloka (compiler, translator). *The Word of the Buddha: An Outline of the Teaching of the Buddha in the Words of the Pali Canon*. 14th edition. Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1967. (Pages 51-52.) [This format has been produced by Alexander Peck.]