

Present View

Editor Xianyang Carl Jerome explains here that reconciliation is our practice, and addresses this idea again in the context of Buddhist social engagement in the article *Those Pictures* on page 24.



Xianyang Carl Jerome's first teacher was Zen Master and Beat Poet Zenshin Philip Whalen in San Francisco. For the past six years, Carl has been a student of Master Ji Ru at the Mid-America Buddhist Association (MABA) and the International Buddhism Friendship Association (IBFA) in Chicago. In 2006 Master Ji Ru granted him Lay Teaching Endorsement and Carl continues to teach Buddhism classes and lead retreats. He is the editor of Rightview Quarterly magazine and editor and founding teacher of Rightview Online.org.

The more we look at questions of social engagement for articles in Rightview Quarterly and for teachings at Rightview Online, the more I keep coming back to the Buddhist idea of reconciliation, which is more an implicit than an explicit teaching. Ultimately I have begun to think that Buddhism can be viewed simply as the path of reconciliation. This can be seen both on the macro and micro levels, in terms of world events and in terms of our moment-to-moment everyday lives.

I have grown to understand that reconciliation is always possible, if we are just able to suffer life's perceived injustices without hostility arising in us. We see this in the example of the Dalai Lama who has been able to reconcile his differences with the Chinese government. His remarkable practice, in the bleakest of situations, is inspiring, and a model for all of us.

On a micro level, every moment is a chance to reconcile our differences with the universe. From this perspective, the Buddhadharma is the path to reconciling our "self" and its everyday understanding of the world with the ultimate reality of how things are. Viewing each moment as a chance for reconciliation means every moment is a moment of engagement. The practice question, then, is "How do we engage?" and reconciliation is the skillful means. From this perspective, the aim of Buddhism is to allow us to understand and practice reconciliation and to give us the necessary tools in support of that practice

so that we can unite with the here and now in tranquility. *And nirvana is the result of our full reconciliation with ultimate reality as impermanent, contingent, and without fixed identity.*

In my personal practice I use "mantras" and catch phrases as tools to keep myself on track. When I notice that I'm overreacting in some way, I find myself leaning on two particular phrases, repeating them over and over, contemplating them and allowing them to penetrate my consciousness as deeply as possible. The phrases are: "**This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am**" from *SN 22.59*, the Buddha's second discourse; and "**This is just a perceived injustice**" from Bodhidharma's *Outline of Practice*. These teachings have gotten me through some tough decisions and some rough times. When they are not enough, though, I use the ultimate tool in the Buddhist repertoire: I go to my teacher for guidance.

The neat thing about practicing with reconciliation is that it is self-perpetuating. The more I practice with it, the more conditions arise for further reconciliation (develop and maintain); the more I practice with it, the less likely it is for conditions to arise that allow greed, anger, and delusion to propagate (abandon and restrain). That's one of the key scriptural formulas for practice: **develop and maintain** that which is beneficial, **abandon and restrain** that which is not.

It is another understanding of the pure precepts: stop doing evil, do only good, work solely for the benefit of others. And that makes reconciliation another right view.