

A point of Philosophy for your Contemplation - the MIDDLE path - walking the razor's edge

By James & Radhika

The Middle Path has been contemplated by many great people.....

In the Middle

Both excessive and insufficient exercise destroy one's strength,
and both eating and drinking too much or too little destroy health,
whereas the right quantity produces, increases or preserves it.

So it is the same with temperance, courage and the other virtues.

This much then, is clear:

in all our conduct it is the mean that is to be commended.

Aristotle

The middle way is a simple approach, but complex path in practice. It is easiest to follow something which is definite, distinct, and which can be clearly said or named. You may be disappointed to find that this middle path of life often has no clear boundaries or definition, and may have no distinct pathways. The extremes are often much easier to follow, and maybe this is why many people are more readily drawn towards the extremes. In a simplistic way, there are 2 extreme paths of living prevalent in our world.

The Material Path

Many people advocate the “material” way of life, believing that material wealth and support can bring happiness – but many people have found this NOT to be true. Material can give us some comfort, some security, but when we strive for more - more comfort, more pleasure, more power, more wealth, more anything, we can find happiness still escapes us as we are not FREE. Having more, may lead to more problems, more unmet desires, more thirst, more craving, more clinging and a mind, which has become disturbed by wanting more and finding no satisfaction. When there is no balance in the mind, then there is no balance in life.

The Spiritual Path

The other extreme is to drop all that is material – to renounce our life, give up our responsibilities, our families, our work, our desires, and sometimes even our needs and follow the spiritual path. The problem is that one can give up work and responsibilities, renouncing the world without insight into what it is that really needs to be renounced. If we turn our face away from these, it is the ego rejecting the natural path provided. Even those who go into the forest or become sannyasis (renunciates) need to accept material things to support their life, and monks living in a monastery exist within a community. Those who insist on rarefied conditions and resist what is being given to them by life are usually being driven by spiritual ambition. They may become famous teachers, but will still be bound by their own self-importance and desire for power. Their work may appear more profound and valuable than the materialist, but in fact they are developing an equally superficial side of life, limited

by what might be called spiritual materialism.

Of course most of us don't follow these paths to such extremes, however, we can still find ourselves teetering between extremes throughout our life.

The Middle Path

The key to following the Middle path is one of PRACTICE rather than philosophy. It is the practice of AWARENESS. We have to see the extremes we are following in life, and to watch ourselves, attending to all our activities. The middle path is the way of balance, neither to the left nor the right, neither to the wrong nor the correct, but we shall not have this balance through trying to grasp it. It will come when the extremes are properly looked at and dissolved.

The mind is wanting to grasp something in order to stay with it and not let it go, but in doing so, it is not open, and for the middle path it needs to be open. It is essential to look at the mind and how it creates things to reassure itself.

The MIDDLE Path according to the Buddha Philosophy – Be Fully Present

The Middle Path as described by the Buddha is neither self-mortification nor self-indulgence, but rather a way of total balance. To develop insight, to meditate, to be aware of what is going on here and now, and to live fully in the present, without being swayed by the past or the future.

The RAZORS Edge

The middle path is not just the path between two poles, but is beyond them. In the ultimate sense we can say that the middle path of life has no concept of what is right or what is wrong, what is good or what is bad. When we have concepts we try to justify our behavior by them. Our concepts impose upon us so that we don't really look into the action in order to see it as it is. Usually things are judged according to a standard or an authority, whether religious, political, social, legal, parental or personal, which is secondhand. But if we look for ourselves, without denying all authorities but understanding things at first-hand, we shall have the basis for a balanced way of life.

NO WAY, ALL WAYS – Osho suggests to live life in all possible ways; don't choose one thing against the other, and don't try to be in the middle. It is counter-productive to try to balance yourself - balance is not something that can be cultivated. Balance is something that comes out of experiencing all the dimensions of life. Balance is something that *happens*; it is not something that can be brought about through your efforts. If you bring it through your efforts it will be false, forced. And you will remain tense, you will not be relaxed, because how can a person who is trying to remain balanced in the middle be relaxed? You will always be afraid that if you relax you may start moving to the left or to the right. You are bound to remain uptight, and to be uptight is to miss the whole opportunity, the whole gift of life.

Don't be uptight, he says. Don't live life according to principles. Live life in its

totality, drink life in its totality! Yes, sometimes it tastes bitter - so what? That taste of bitterness will make you capable of tasting its sweetness. You will be able to appreciate the sweetness only if you have tasted its bitterness. One who knows not how to cry will not know how to laugh, either. One who cannot enjoy a deep laughter, a belly laugh, that person's tears will be crocodile tears. They cannot be true, they cannot be authentic.

Rather than concentrating on the middle way, consider the total way. Then a balance comes of its own accord, and then that balance has tremendous beauty and grace. You have not forced it, it has simply come. By moving gracefully to the left, to the right, in the middle, slowly a balance comes to you because you remain so unidentified. When sadness comes, you know it will pass, and when happiness comes you know that will pass, too. Nothing remains; everything passes by. The only thing that always abides is your witnessing. That witnessing brings balance. That witnessing *is* balance.

BALANCE

The greatest art is to attain a balance,
a balance between all opposites, a balance between all polarities.
Imbalance is the disease and balance is health.
Imbalance is neurosis, and balance is well-being.

Osho