

Right Understanding
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Like many people coming to Buddhism in the West, my journey into training in meditation and precepts began with reading books. And one book stood out from all the others that I read and really “blew my socks off.” That book was *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom* by Roshi Jiyu-Kennett. It is an account of Rev. Master’s deep and extended meditation retreat in 1976, when she was told that she was going to die soon. That compelled Rev. Master to open her heart completely to the Cosmic Buddha, the Eternal. As a result, she was given teachings at the deepest levels a human being can experience this side of death itself. And with great courage in the face of disbelief and criticism she related what she had been taught in *Lotus Blossom*. Those teachings inspired me, and many others, to begin training, and they continue to inspire me to this day.

One of the teachings that was illuminated for Rev. Master was the Noble Eightfold Path, the fourth of the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths. The steps on the Path are Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration (meditation).

Rev. Master spent a good deal of time going over the first step of Right Understanding as the foundation and springboard to the Path. This helped me a great deal in understanding the deeper meaning of the Eightfold Path and the deeper purpose for which we train: recognized reunion with the Eternal.

An aspect of Right Understanding that helped Rev. Master is how to relate to *adversity*. The tests and trials of life—often disappointed expectations— are things that take us out of our comfort zones and that we naturally try to avoid. When we inevitably experience adversity we often react with distress and fear. But in her retreat Rev. Master realizes that we must “be absolutely grateful for *everything* that happens since it is a means of teaching.... Right Understanding can be nurtured in this world of delusion if only we use everything, including adversity, as an opportunity rather than an impediment to our training.”

Something Rev. Master emphasizes is that adversity can plant the seed of *faith* that grows to sustain us in our training and in our life. She references the difficulties and resistance she experienced while training in Japan, recounted in her diary *The Wild, White Goose*. She now understands that “without the difficulties I encountered...this seed of faith would have been weak and, when put to the test in the darkest place, could not have borne fruit...”. And that we must learn, in our own “darkest hour to bless, rather than curse, adversity; for it is on adversity that the seed of faith...thrives; it is as rain to a plant—adversity gives strength in the darkest hour.”

Throughout *Lotus Blossom* Rev. Master stresses how important and necessary it is to keep faith in the pure and unconditional love of the Eternal and to always keep listening to It. Many, many times in a quiet way I have tried very hard to live my life with this "Right Understanding." I really have to say how helpful this has been to me during many difficult times. I am eternally grateful for Rev. Master's teaching on this vital step on the Path of training.