

Wisdom versus Intelligence

A wise action – whether through bodily action, verbal action or mental action – is an act that is beneficial to the doer, the recipient and the community. For example, an act of generosity is a wise action because it brings benefits to the doer, the recipient and the community. A wise person is one who acts wisely.

In contrast, a foolish action is one that is harmful to oneself, to others and to the community. For example, a raging (angry) action brings harm to oneself, to others and to the community. A fool is one who thinks that his or her foolish action is beneficial to himself or herself, when in fact, it is not. Often, this is because he or she is only able to see the short-term gain but unable to see the long-term loss.

An intelligent person is one who is able to use his knowledge and skills to solve a problem or attain a goal. Therefore, most professionals are considered intelligent people because they help to solve problems with their knowledge and skills.

A stupid person is one who is unable to solve a problem even when he or she may have access to the knowledge or skills to do so.

Therefore, a wise person may not necessarily be intelligent, nor an intelligent person necessarily be wise. History has shown us that there are a lot of intelligent people who are not wise, but a lot fewer wise people who are not intelligent. Unfortunately, we have too many politicians who are intelligent but not wise, thus their choices and actions bring about corruption and destruction to communities, states and countries, bringing suffering to millions of people.

There is a general belief that an intelligent person is wise. There is also a belief that a stupid person is foolish. These beliefs are false. They arise from our own inability to differentiate wisdom from intelligence. Because of these false beliefs, we end up putting our trust in intelligent people, believing that they would make wise decisions, only to suffer for our misplaced trust.

Wisdom and Virtues

Virtues are qualities that are beneficial to oneself, to others and to the community. For example, love, compassion, generosity, kindness and altruism are all virtues because they are beneficial to the doer, the recipient and the community.

In contrast, qualities like hate, anger, rage, greed, stinginess and cruelty are harmful to oneself, others and the community. Therefore, they are considered vices or non-virtues.

Wise people are inclined towards virtues. Fools incline towards non-virtues.

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