

The Eightfold Noble Path – Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration

The Eightfold Noble Path is the Path that Buddha realized under the Bodhi tree. The Buddha himself also practiced this Path to achieve Enlightenment so there is no other Path other than the Eightfold Noble Path to achieve Enlightenment. The Buddha taught in his first sermon (*Dhammacakkha Sutta*),

"There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects: base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-mortification: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathagata -- producing vision, producing knowledge -- leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding."

"And what is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that -- producing vision, producing knowledge -- leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding? Precisely this Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that -- producing vision, producing knowledge -- leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding."

Therefore anyone who has adopted a practice that is not the Eightfold Noble Path, and was told that it is the direct path to Enlightenment taught by the Buddha, should immediately abandon that wrong practice.

Furthermore, the Eightfold Noble Path is not eight ways of practicing a path nor is it eight different paths. It is eight factors on a single path.

The Eightfold Noble Path is not practiced by practicing one factor on the Path at a time and practicing another factor at another time. It is by practicing and fulfilling all eight factors at a time one can achieve Enlightenment. How will one be able to practice this at one time? It will be fully

explained in the Practice section.

May all beings gain insight and be freed from sufferings!

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

The Eightfold Noble Path - RIGHT VIEW

The Buddha taught in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

The Blessed One said: "Now what, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors -- right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, & right mindfulness -- is called noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions."

The Buddha began the discourse with the above speech, and addressed the monks how the Eightfold Noble Path is practiced with all its factors. As the Buddha taught, it is the singleness of mind that is equipped with the other seven factors. Here singleness of mind means concentration, which can also be expressed as "unification of mind."

Then the Buddha began to explain how each factor relates to other factors on the Path,

Right View

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong view as wrong view, and right view as right view. This is one's right view. And what is wrong view? 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no priests or contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is wrong view."

The Buddha strengthened here that one must be able to rightly discern what is right view and what is wrong view, and it is an important factor on the Path. The wrong view stated in brief here is the view that denies the work of kamma, such as action won't produce result. This is the kind of view one should abstain from and avoid.

"And what is right view? Right view, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right view with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right view, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

The Eightfold Noble Path has two stages, one mundane and the other supramundane. One must first practice the mundane Eightfold Noble Path, and when the factors on the Path mature, the supramundane Path will appear (this is explained in the commentaries). Here the Buddha is showing the distinction of the mundane and the supramundane.

"And what is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are priests & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

In brief, the mundane right view is the view that accepts the existence of kamma, such as there is action and the result of action.

"And what is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor for Awakening, the path factor of right view in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

Here the Buddha is describing the supramundane right view, which is freed from attachments as a Noble factor on the supramundane Path. When this supramundane Path is achieved, one is

said to have reached the Noble Status, and nibbāna can be experienced.

"One tries to abandon wrong view & to enter into right view: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong view & to enter & remain in right view: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, & right mindfulness -- run & circle around right view."

Here the Buddha explains how the other factors come into play with right view. The meaning of right view runs and circles around right view means that one rightly discerns right view as right view. That is, one discerns it as it actually is.

Just like the guard at the door of a castle, he checks what comes into the castle all the time, so one rightly discerns right view as it actually is.

The Eightfold Noble Path - RIGHT INTENTION

The Buddha continued in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong intention as wrong intention, and right intention as right intention. And what is wrong intention? Being intentioned on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. This is wrong intention."

Again, right view is emphasized here as a factor that must be practiced. Here the Buddha points out the three enlisted wrong intentions that one should abstain from and avoid.

"And what is right intention? Right intention, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right intention with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right intention, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

Again, there is the mundane right intention and the supramundane right intention. The mundane right intention is still sided with attachments, and it is the opposite of wrong intention.

"And what is the right intention that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Being intentioned on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness. This is the right intention that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

Here the Buddha points out the three kinds of intentions that make up the mundane factor of right intention.

"And what is the right intention that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The thinking, directed thinking, intention, mental absorption, mental fixity, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right intention that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

The supramundane right intention is when one's mind is free from attachments. This can be reached when the mundane Eightfold Noble Path is practiced to its maturity.

"One tries to abandon wrong intention & to enter into right intention: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong intention & to enter & remain in right intention: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, & right mindfulness -- run & circle around right intention."

Here the Buddha explains how the three factors run and circle around right intention on the Path.

The Eightfold Noble Path - RIGHT SPEECH

The Buddha continued in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong speech as wrong speech, and right speech as right speech. And what is wrong speech? Lying, divisive tale-bearing, abusive speech, & idle chatter. This is wrong speech."

Again, right view is practiced first, and here the Buddha points out the four wrong speeches that one should abstain from and avoid.

"And what is right speech? Right speech, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right speech with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right speech, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

Again, there is the mundane right speech and the supramundane right speech.

"And what is the right speech that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Abstaining from lying, from divisive tale-bearing, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter. This is the right speech that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

Here the Buddha points out that by abstaining from wrong speech, one achieves the mundane factor of right speech.

"And what is the right speech that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of the four forms of verbal misconduct in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right speech that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

When the mundane Eightfold Noble Path matures, the supramundane Path will appear, which is free from bondages and attachments.

"One tries to abandon wrong speech & to enter into right speech: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong speech & to enter & remain in right speech: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, & right mindfulness -- run & circle around right speech."

Here the Buddha explains how the three factors run and circle around right speech on the Path.

The Eightfold Noble Path - RIGHT ACTION

The Buddha continued in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong action as wrong action, and right action as right action. And what is wrong action? Killing, taking what is not given, illicit sex. This is wrong action."

Again, right view is practiced first, and here the Buddha points out the three wrong actions that one should abstain from and avoid.

"And what is right action? Right action, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right action with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right action, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

Again, there is the mundane right action and the supramundane right action, and the Buddha is pointing out the distinction here.

"And what is the right action that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Abstaining from killing, from taking what is not given, & from illicit sex. This is the right action that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

Here the Buddha points out that by abstaining from wrong actions, one achieves the mundane factor of right action.

"And what is the right action that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of the three forms of bodily misconduct in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right action that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

When the supramundane Path is reached, one will be able to achieve the purity of mind that is free from attachments.

"One tries to abandon wrong action & to enter into right action: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong action & to enter & remain in right action: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, & right mindfulness -- run & circle around right action."

Here the Buddha explains how the three factors run and circle around right action on the Path.

The Eightfold Noble Path - RIGHT LIVELIHOOD, RIGHT EFFORT, RIGHT MINDFULNESS, RIGHT RESOLUTION, RIGHT CONCENTRATION

The Buddha continued in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood, and right livelihood as right livelihood. And what is wrong livelihood? Scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, & pursuing gain with gain. This is wrong livelihood."

The points made here must be clarified. The "wrong livelihood" here means gaining one's living by immoral or wrong actions such as killing, stealing, lying, robbing, etc. Anyone who makes his/her living uprightly without partaking the immoral or wrong actions has right livelihood. The translation here is not very clear in the English language.

"And what is right livelihood? Right livelihood, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right livelihood with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right livelihood, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

Again, there is the mundane right action and the supramundane right livelihood, and the Buddha is pointing out the distinction here.

"And what is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abandons wrong livelihood and maintains his life with right livelihood. This is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

Here the Buddha points out that by abstaining from wrong livelihood and enters upon right livelihood, one achieves the mundane factor of right livelihood.

"And what is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of wrong livelihood in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path."

When the supramundane Path is achieved, one will be able to achieve the purity of mind that is free from attachments.

"One tries to abandon wrong livelihood & to enter into right livelihood: This is one's right effort."

One is mindful to abandon wrong livelihood & to enter & remain in right livelihood: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, & right mindfulness -- run & circle around right livelihood."

Here the Buddha explains how the three factors run and circle around right livelihood on the Path.

Right Effort, Right Mindfulness

At this point we have seen what is right effort. The effort to enter upon the five factors (right view, right intention, right speech, right action, and right livelihood) is one's right effort. Similarly, when one is mindful when entering upon the five factors, that is one's right mindfulness.

Right Concentration

As it was taught by the Buddha in the beginning of the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

The Blessed One said: "Now what, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors -- right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, & right mindfulness -- is called noble right concentration with its supports & requisite conditions."

Therefore when the mind fulfills and is equipped with the seven factors, it achieves the support and requisite conditions for the eighth factor - right concentration. And this is how the Eightfold Noble Path may be practiced with all the eight factors. In order to achieve Enlightenment, one must practice the Eightfold Noble Path moment by moment in a continuous way.

However, this is not the actual practice yet. This is the theoretical aspect of the Eightfold Noble Path along with the characteristics of the individual factors. The practical aspect is explained in the Practice section.

May all beings gain insight and be freed from sufferings!

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

The Eightfold Noble Path - LIBERATION

The Buddha continued in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, right intention comes into being. In one of right resolve, right speech comes into being. In one of right speech, right action... In one of right action, right livelihood... In one of right livelihood, right effort... In one of right effort, right mindfulness... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration... In one of right concentration, right knowledge... In one of right knowledge, right release comes into being. Thus the learner is endowed with eight factors, and the Arahant with ten."

Here the Buddha gives a linear account of how right view acts as the foremost on the path that gives rise to the next factor, and the next factor gives rise to the next next factor and so forth.

When one has achieved the supramundane Path, one is endowed with eight factors on the Path. However, the Arahant, who is liberated here & now, is endowed with two more factors - right knowledge and right release, which are the unique characteristics of an Arahant.

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, wrong view is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong view as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right view as their condition go to the culmination of their development. In one of right resolve, wrong resolve is abolished... In one of right speech, wrong speech is abolished... In one of right action, wrong action is abolished... In one of right livelihood, wrong livelihood is abolished... In one of right effort, wrong effort is abolished... In one of right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is abolished... In one of right concentration, wrong concentration is abolished... In one of right knowledge,

wrong knowledge is abolished... In one of right release, wrong release is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong release as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right release as their condition go to the culmination of their development."

Here the Buddha gives an account for the Eightfold Noble Path and how it would abolish the wrong path as one practices it.