

Early Buddhist Doctrines

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

VEN NYANATILOKA

Recommended Reading

Fundamentals of Buddhism:

Four Lectures,

by Nyanatiloka Mahathera

Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is

a path of righteousness and wisdom that really constitutes the *essence of Buddhist practice* —

the **mode of living and thinking** to be followed by any true follower of the Buddha.

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Understanding

The first factor of the Eightfold Path is

Right Understanding

1. True nature of existence as **anicca, dukkha, anatta**
2. **Kamma and Vipaka** – the moral law of cause and effect
3. **Four Noble Truths.**

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Thought

The second factor of the Eightfold Path is

Right Thought

A pure state of mind free from sensual lust, ill-will and cruelty

With thoughts

of **self-renunciation**,

of **generosity**, and

of **goodwill** (lovingkindness).

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Speech

The third factor is *Right Speech* (4th Precept)

Speech that is

not false, not harsh, not scandalous, not frivolous

But *truthful words, pleasant words, harmonising words, and wise words.*

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Bodily Action

The fourth factor is *Right Bodily Action*

abstaining from intentional killing or harming of any living creature (1st precept)

abstaining from dishonest **taking of others' possessions** (2nd precept)

abstaining from **adultery or unethical sexual behaviour**. (3rd precept)

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Livelihood

The fifth factor is *Right Livelihood*,

Livelihood that does not bring harm and suffering to oneself and to other beings.

To avoid trade/business dealing in

animals for slaughter,

slaves,

deadly weapons,

poisons and

narcotics/drugs and intoxicants.

Noble Eightfold Path – Right Effort

The sixth factor is *Right Effort*.

It is the fourfold effort

Unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds

- *1.abandon already arisen ones*
- *2.avoid non-arisen ones*

Wholesome thoughts, words and deeds

- *3.maintain already arisen ones*
- *4.develop and cultivate them to perfection.*

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Mindfulness (Sati)

The seventh factor is *Right Mindfulness* or alertness of mind.

Mental clarity of whatever we are doing, speaking or thinking (5th Precept)

Keeping our mind focused on reality or phenomenality of existence

- Impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self
- (*anicca*), (*dukkha*), (*anatta*)
- *Karma Vipaka, Paticcasamuppada (Conditionality)*

Mahasatipatthana Sutta

Cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

On Body (Kayanupassana)

On Feelings (Vedanupassana)

On Consciousness (Cittanupassana)

On Mental Objects (Dhammanupassana)

Cultivate clear comprehension, knowledge and vision of the five aggregates and the 3 characteristics of anicca, dukkha and anatta

Noble Eightfold Path- Right Concentration

The eighth factor is *Right Concentration*

Mind directed towards a morally wholesome object, and always bound up with right thought, right effort and right mindfulness.

Types of Right Concentration

- access concentration (upacara samadhi)
- 4 Rupa Jhanas
- 4 Arupa Jhanas

Threefold Training – Sila Samadhi Panna

Noble Eightfold Path is a path of Training of

- Wisdom (*pañña*).
 - Morality (*sila*)
 - Mental training (*samadhi*)
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- Culminates in Ultimate Wisdom that purifies and liberates the mind.

Anguttara Nikaya

Book of Tens (X,123)

Ten things, monks, do not have purity and clarity outside the Discipline of the Sublime Master. What are the ten?

Right View

Mundane

Right intention

Wisdom

Right speech

Right action

Right livelihood

Right effort

Right mindfulness

Right concentration

Right knowledge

Supramundane

Right liberation

Wisdom

Threefold Training

Wisdom is indicated by right understanding and right thought.

Morality is indicated by right speech, right bodily action, and right livelihood.

Mental training is indicated by right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration of mind.

Be Your Own Refuge

This liberating Eightfold Path is a path of inner development and inner progress.

By merely external worship, mere ceremonies and selfish prayers, one can never make any real progress in righteousness and insight.

Be your Own Refuge

The Buddha says:

“Be your own isle of refuge,
be your own shelter,
seek not for any other protection!
Let the truth be your isle of refuge,
let the truth be your shelter,
seek not after any other protection!”

Spiritual Progress based on Right Understanding

To ensure inner spiritual progress, **all our efforts must be based upon our own understanding and insight.**

Belief in the moral efficacy of mere external rites and rituals (*silabbata-paramasa*) is a mighty obstacle to inner progress.

One who takes refuge in mere external practices is on the wrong path.

Without right understanding there is no attainment of perfection and liberation

The unshakable peace of Nibbana.

Blind Belief stagnates spiritual growth

Blind belief in mere external practices is the cause of much misery and wretchedness in the world.

It leads to mental stagnation, to fanaticism and intolerance, to self-exaltation and contempt for others, to contention, discord, war, strife and bloodshed.

This belief in mere externals dulls and deadens one's power of thought, stifles every higher emotion in man.

It makes him a mental slave, and favors the growth of all kinds of hypocrisy.

The Buddha says:

The man enmeshed in delusion will never be purified through the mere study of holy books, or sacrifices to gods, or through fasts, or sleeping on the ground, or difficult and strenuous vigils, or the repetition of prayers.

The Buddha says:

Neither gifts to priests,
nor self-castigation, nor
performance of rites and ceremonies
can work purification in him who is filled with craving.

The Buddha says:

It is not through the partaking of meat or fish that man becomes impure,

but through drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deceit, envy, self-exaltation, disparagement of others and evil intentions —

through these things man becomes impure."

NEP Transcend 2 extremes

"There are two extremes:

- addiction to sensual enjoyment
- addiction to bodily mortification.

These two extremes the Perfect One has rejected, and discovered the *Middle Path* which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to penetration, enlightenment and liberation.

It is that Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering, namely right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration of mind."

Importance of Right Understanding

The Buddha teaches that all genuine progress on the path of virtue is dependent upon Right Understanding and insight into reality

all dogmatism is excluded from the Buddha's teaching

Blind faith in authority is *rejected* by the Buddha

Kalama Sutta

In the Kalama Sutta the Buddha says:

Do not go merely

by hearsay or tradition,

by what has been handed down from olden time,

by rumours,

by mere reasoning and logical deductions,

by outward appearances,

by cherished opinions and speculations,

by mere possibilities, and do not believe merely because I am your master.

Kalama Sutta

Now does the Kalama Sutta suggest, as is often held, that **a follower of the Buddhist path can dispense with all faith and doctrine,**

that he should make his own personal experience the criterion for judging the Buddha's utterances and for rejecting what cannot be accepted?

The Wise is the yardstick

But when you yourselves have seen that these things are evil, blameable, **censured by the wise**; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill, 'abandon them...

The Wise is the yardstick

When you yourselves know: 'These things are good, blameless, **praised by the wise**; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them."

The Kalamas

It is true the Buddha did not ask the Kalamas to accept anything he says out of confidence in himself,

but let us note one important point:

the Kalamas, at the start of the discourse, were not the Buddha's disciples.

The Kalamas

They approached him merely as a counselor who might help dispel their doubts, but they did not come to him as the Tathagata, the Truth-finder, who might show them the way to spiritual progress and to final liberation.

Recommended Reading

Kalama Sutta by Bhikkhu Bodhi

http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_09.html

Thank you for your attention