

Chapter Three: The Eightfold Path

(a) The Middle Way: The Fourth Noble Truth

“It is just as if a man, traveling along a wilderness track, were to see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by people of former times. He would follow it. Following it, he would see an ancient city, an ancient capital inhabited by people of former times, complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. He would go to address the king or the king’s minister, saying, ‘Sire, you should know that while traveling along a wilderness track I saw an ancient path I followed it I saw an ancient city, an ancient capital ... complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. Sire, rebuild that city!’ The king or king’s minister would rebuild the city, so that at a later date the city would become powerful, rich, & well-populated, fully grown & prosperous.

“In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path...? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging & death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth ... becoming clinging ... craving ... feeling ... contact ... the six sense media ... name-&-form ... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.

“Following it, I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of fabrications. Knowing that directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers, so that this holy life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well-populated, widespread, proclaimed among the celestial & human beings.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XII, 65]

“Monks, just as a pot without a stand is easy to tip over, and a pot with a stand is hard to tip over, so too the mind without a stand is easy to tip over, and a mind with a stand is hard to tip over. And what is the mind’s stand? Just this noble eightfold path.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 27]

Visakha: ‘Is the noble eightfold path compounded or un-compounded?’

Sister Dhammadinna: ‘The noble eightfold path is compounded The noble eightfold path is included under the three aggregates [namely, virtue, concentration, & discernment]. Right speech, right action, & right livelihood come under the aggregate of virtue. Right effort, right mindfulness, & right concentration come under the aggregate of concentration. Right view & right resolve come under the aggregate of discernment.’

[Majjhima Nikaya, 44]

(b) The Eight Factors of the Path

i. Right View

“And what is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the cessation of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the cessation of

stress: This is called right view.”
[Digha Nikaya, 22]

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Varanasi in the Game Refuge at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five monks:

“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-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathagata [lit. ‘the one thus gone,’ i.e., the Buddha – 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 resolve, 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.

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress:[1] Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming – accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there – i.e., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation

of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path – right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress’... ‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended’... ‘This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the origination of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned’ [2] ... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced’... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been directly experienced.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed’... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

“And, monks, as long as this knowledge & vision of mine [...] was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos [...] But as soon as this knowledge & vision of mine – with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these

four noble truths as they actually are present – was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos....

“Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’”

[....]

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose to Ven. Kondañña the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

[....]

Then the Blessed One exclaimed: “So you really know, Kondañña? So you really know?” And that is how Ven. Kondañña acquired the name Añña-Kondañña – Kondañña who knows.

[Samyutta Nikaya, LVI, 11]

“There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... does not discern what ideas are fit for attention, or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas fit for attention, and attends instead to ideas unfit for attention... This is how he attends inappropriately: ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’

“As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view I have a self arises in him as true & established, or the view I have no self ... or the view It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self ... or

the view It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self ... or the view It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: This very self of mine – the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions – is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity. This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones... discerns what ideas are fit for attention, and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention... He attends appropriately, This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress. As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity-view, doubt, and grasping at precepts & practices.”

[Majjhima Nikaya, 2]

[Kaccayana:] ‘Lord, ‘Right view, right view,’ it is said. To what extent is there right view?’

[The Buddha:] “By & large, Kaccayana, this world is supported by (takes as its object) a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, ‘existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one.

“By & large, Kaccayana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings (sustenances), & biases. But one such

as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on ‘my self.’ He has no uncertainty or doubt that, when there is arising, only stress is arising; and that when there is passing away, only stress is passing away. In this, one's knowledge is independent of others. It is to this extent, Kaccayana, that there is right view.”
[Samyutta Nikaya, XII.15]

“Don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering’ – then you should abandon them...

“When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness’ – then you should enter & remain in them.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, III, 65]

ii. Right Resolve

“And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill-will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“Of two people who practice the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, having a sense of Dhamma, having a sense of meaning – one who practices for both his own benefit and that of others, and one who practices for his own benefit but not that of others – the one who practices for his own benefit but not that of others is to be criticized for that reason, the one

who practices for both his own benefit and that of others is, for that reason, to be praised.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, VII, 64]

“Whenever you want to perform a bodily act, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily act I want to perform – would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily act of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily act of that sort is fit for you to do.

“While you are performing a bodily act, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily act I am doing – is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

“Having performed a bodily act, you should reflect on it... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed and joyful, training day and night in skillful mental qualities.”

...[Similarly for verbal and mental acts]...

“Therefore, Rahula, you should train yourself: ‘I will purify my bodily acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental acts through repeated reflection.’ That is how you should train yourself.”

[Majjhima Nikaya, 61]

iii. Right Speech

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“Monks, a statement endowed with five factors is well-spoken, not ill-spoken. It is blameless & unfaulted by knowledgeable people. Which five?”

“It is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially. It is spoken with a mind of good-will.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, V, 198]

iv. Right Action

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from unchastity. This is called right action.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“Having thus gone forth, following the training & way of life of the monks, abandoning the taking of life, he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, kind, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure. Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof,

refraining from the sexual act that is the villager's way.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, X, 99]

v. Right Livelihood

“And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This is called right livelihood.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“A lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in living beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, V, 177]

vi. Right Effort

“And what, monks, is right effort?”

[i] “There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

[ii] “He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen.

[iii] “He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

[iv] “He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“Abandon what is unskillful, monks. It is possible to abandon what is unskillful. If it were not possible to abandon what is unskillful, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because it is possible to abandon what is unskillful, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' If this abandoning of what is unskillful were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because this abandoning of what is unskillful is conducive to benefit and pleasure, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.'”

“Develop what is skillful, monks. It is possible to develop what is skillful. If it were not possible to develop what is skillful, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because it is possible to develop what is skillful, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' If this development of what is skillful were conducive to harm and pain, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because this development of what is skillful is conducive to benefit and pleasure, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.’”

[Anguttara Nikaya, II, 19]

vii. Right Mindfulness

“And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself – ardent, alert, & mindful – putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves – ardent, alert, & mindful – putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness...”

“This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding – in other words, the four frames of reference.”

[Digha Nikaya, 22]

1. Mindfulness in General

“Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all. And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself – ardent, alert, & mindful – putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings ... mind ... mental qualities in & of themselves – ardent, alert, & mindful – putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

“And how is a monk alert? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Discernment is known to him as it arises, known as it persists, known as it subsides. This is how a monk is alert. So stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLVII, 35]

“Furthermore, when walking, the monk discerns that he is walking. When standing, he discerns that he is standing. When sitting, he discerns that he is sitting. When lying down, he discerns that he is lying down. Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

“In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or focused externally ... unsustained by anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

“Furthermore, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away ... when bending & extending his limbs ... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl ... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring ... when urinating & defecating ... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert.... Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & recollection. And he remains

unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world.

[...]

“And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves? There is the case where a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns that he is feeling a painful feeling. When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns that he is feeling a pleasant feeling. When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns that he is feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling....Or his mindfulness that ‘There are feelings’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & recollection. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world.

[...]

“And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns that the mind has passion. When the mind is without passion, he discerns that the mind is without passion. When the mind has aversion, he discerns that the mind has aversion. When the mind is without aversion, he discerns that the mind is without aversion. When the mind has delusion, he discerns that the mind has delusion. When the mind is without delusion, he discerns that the mind is without delusion....Or his mindfulness that ‘There is mind’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & recollection. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world.

[...]

“And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves?

“There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to *the five hindrances ... the five aggregates for sustenance/clinging ... the sixfold internal and external sense media ... the seven factors of awakening ... the four noble truths* ... In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally ... or both internally and externally

.... Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & recollection. And he remains unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world.”

[Majjhima Nikaya, 10]

“Imagine a tree devoid of branches & leaves: Its buds don’t grow to maturity, its bark doesn’t grow to maturity, its sapwood doesn’t grow to maturity, its heartwood doesn’t grow to maturity. In the same way, when – there being no mindfulness or alertness – a person is devoid of mindfulness or alertness, the prerequisite for a sense of conscience & concern [for the results of wrong-doing] becomes spoiled. There being no sense of conscience & concern ... the prerequisite for restraint of the senses becomes spoiled. There being no restraint of the senses ... the prerequisite for virtue becomes spoiled. There being no virtue ... the prerequisite for right concentration becomes spoiled. There being no right concentration ... the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present becomes spoiled. There being no knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present, the prerequisite for disenchantment & dispassion becomes spoiled. There being no disenchantment & dispassion, the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of release becomes spoiled.

“Now imagine a tree abundant in its branches & leaves: Its buds grow to maturity, its bark grows to maturity, its sapwood grows to maturity, its heartwood grows to maturity. In the same way, when – there being *mindfulness and alertness* – a person is abundant in mindfulness & alertness, the prerequisite for a sense of conscience & concern becomes abundant. There being a sense of conscience ... the prerequisite for restraint of the senses becomes abundant. There being restraint of the senses ... the prerequisite for virtue becomes abundant. There being virtue ... the prerequisite for

right concentration becomes abundant. There being right concentration ... the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present becomes abundant. There being knowledge & vision of things as they are actually present, the prerequisite for disenchantment & dispassion becomes abundant. There being disenchantment & dispassion becomes abundant. There being disenchantment & dispassion, the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of release becomes abundant.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, VIII, 81]

2. Mindfulness of Breathing Instructions

Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so that it bears great fruit & great benefits?

There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

[1] Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. [3] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body, and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. [4] He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication, and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication.

[5] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to rapture, and to breathe out sensitive to rapture. [6] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to pleasure, and to breathe out sensitive to pleasure. [7] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication, and to breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication. [8] He trains himself to breathe in calming mental fabrication, and to breathe out calming mental fabrication.

[9] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the mind, and to breathe out sensitive to the mind. [10] He trains himself to breathe in satisfying the mind, and to breathe out satisfying to the mind. [11] He trains himself to breathe in steadying the mind, and to breathe out steadying the mind. [12] He trains himself to breathe in releasing the mind, and to breathe out releasing the mind.

[13] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on inconstancy, and to breathe out focusing on inconstancy. [14] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on dispassion [literally, fading], and to breathe out focusing on dispassion. [15] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on cessation, and to breathe out focusing on cessation. [16] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on relinquishment, and to breathe out focusing on relinquishment.

This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & is pursued so that it bears great fruit & great benefits.

[Samyutta Nikaya, LIV, 1]

viii. Right Concentration

“And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk – quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities – enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation – internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains in equanimity, mindful, & fully alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, and of him the Noble Ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain – as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress – he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of

equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLV, 8]

“Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they actually are present. And what does he discern as it actually is present?

“‘This is stress,’ he discerns as it actually is present.

‘This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ he discerns as it actually is present

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress This is the origination of stress This is the cessation of stress This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

[Samyutta Nikaya, LVI, 1.]

Chapter Four: Further Ethical Teachings

(a) The Sublime States: Good Will (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Appreciation (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha)

“That disciple of the noble ones, headman – thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful – keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

“That disciple of the noble ones – thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful – keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... appreciation... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLII, 8]

“These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely. Which five?

“When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should develop good will for that individual. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should develop compassion for that individual... equanimity toward that individual... one should pay him no mind & pay him no attention... When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should direct one's thoughts to the fact of his being the product of his kamma: 'This venerable one is the doer of his kamma, heir of his kamma, born of his kamma, related by his kamma, and is dependent on his kamma. Whatever kamma he does, for good or for evil, to that will he fall heir.' Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, V, 161]

“Monks, for one whose awareness-release through good will is cultivated, developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, eleven benefits can be expected. Which eleven?

“One sleeps easily, wakes easily, dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings. The devas protect one. Neither fire, poison, nor weapons can touch one. One's mind gains concentration quickly. One's complexion is bright. One dies unconfused and – if penetrating no higher – is headed for the Brahma worlds.

“These are the eleven benefits that can be expected for one whose awareness-release through good will is cultivated, developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, XI, 16]

“And how is one a noble one with developed faculties? There is the case where, when seeing a form with the eye, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants – in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not – cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful.

“When hearing a sound with the ear... When smelling an aroma with the nose... When tasting a flavor with the tongue... When touching a tactile sensation with the body... When cognizing an idea with the intellect, there arises in him what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants – in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not – cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful.

“This is how one is a noble one with developed faculties.

“So, Ananda, I have taught you the unexcelled development of the faculties in the discipline of a noble one; I have taught you how one is a person in training, someone following the way; I have taught you how one is a noble one with developed faculties. Whatever a teacher should do – seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them – that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhana, Ananda. Don't be heedless. Don't later fall into regret. This is our message to you all.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ananda delighted in the Blessed One's words.

[Majjhima Nikaya, 152]

“In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you: timely or untimely, true or false, affectionate or harsh, beneficial or unbeneficial, with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. Others may address you in a timely way or an untimely way. They may address you with what is true or what is false. They may address you in an affectionate way or a harsh way. They may address you in a beneficial way or an unbeneficial way. They may address you with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. In any event, you should train yourselves: ‘Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person’s welfare, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will equal to a catskin bag – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That's how you should train yourselves.

“Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handed saw, he among

you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding. Even then you should train yourselves: ‘Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That's how you should train yourselves.

“Monks, if you attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw, do you see any aspects of speech, slight or gross, that you could not endure?”

‘No, lord.’

“Then attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw. That will be for your long-term welfare & happiness.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

[Majjhima Nikaya, 21]

“This is to be done by one skilled in aims who wants to break through to the state of peace: Be capable, upright, & straightforward, easy to instruct, gentle, & not conceited, content & easy to support, with few duties, living lightly, with peaceful faculties, masterful, modest, & no greed for supporters.

“Do not do the slightest thing that the wise would later censure.

“Think: Happy, at rest, may all beings be happy at heart. Whatever beings there may be, weak or strong, without exception, long, large, middling, short, subtle, blatant, seen & unseen, near & far, born & seeking birth: May all beings be happy at heart.

“Let no one deceive another or despise anyone anywhere, or through anger or irritation wish for another to suffer.

“As a mother would risk her life to protect her child, her only child, even so should one cultivate a limitless heart with regard to all beings. With good will for the entire cosmos, cultivate a limitless heart: Above, below, & all around, unobstructed, without enmity or hate. Whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down, as long as one is alert, one should be resolved on this mindfulness. This is called a sublime abiding here & now.

“Not taken with views, but virtuous & consummate in vision, having subdued desire for sensual pleasures, one never again will lie in the womb.”

[Sutta Nipata, I, 8]

“There is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although good will has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still ill will keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that – when good will has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release – ill will would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from ill will: good will as an awareness-release.’

“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although compassion has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still viciousness keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak

in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that – when compassion has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release – viciousness would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from viciousness: compassion as an awareness-release.’

“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although appreciation has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still resentment keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that – when appreciation has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release – resentment would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from resentment: appreciation as an awareness-release.’

“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although equanimity has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still passion keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that – when equanimity has been developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release –

passion would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn't exist, for this is the escape from passion: equanimity as an awareness-release.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, VI, 13]

“Rahula, develop meditation in tune with the earth. For when you are developing meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people throw what is clean or unclean on the earth – faeces, saliva, pus, or blood – the earth is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.”

[Majjhima Nikaya, 62]

(b)Kamma (Karma)

“Phenomena are preceded by the heart, ruled by the heart, made of the heart.

“If you speak or act with a corrupted heart, then suffering follows you – as the wheel of the cart, the track of the ox that pulls it.

“Phenomena are preceded by the heart, ruled by the heart, made of the heart.

“If you speak or act with a calm, bright heart, then happiness follows you, like a shadow that never leaves.”

[Dhammapada, 1-2]

“Beings are the owners of their kamma, heir to their kamma, born of their kamma, related through their kamma, and have their kamma as their refuge. Kamma is what creates distinctions among beings in terms of coarseness & refinement....”

[....]

“Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man has a tendency to injure living beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife On the break-up of the body, after death, this person re-appears in the plane of deprivation in hell. Or, if he/she ... instead returns to the human state, then wherever he/she is reborn, he/she is sickly. This is the way leading to being sickly, namely being one who has a tendency to injure living beings.

“But there is the case where a certain woman or man does not have a tendency to injure living beings This is the way leading to being healthy....”

[Majjhima Nikaya, 135]

Moliyasivaka: There are some priests & contemplatives who are of this doctrine, this view: Whatever an individual feels – pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain – is entirely caused by what was done before. Now what does the Ven. Gotama say to that?

The Buddha: “There are cases where some feelings arise based on bile [i.e., diseases and pains that come from a malfunctioning gall bladder]. You yourself should know how some feelings arise based on bile. Even the world is agreed on how some feelings arise based on bile. So any priests & contemplatives who are of the doctrine & view that whatever an individual feels – pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain – is entirely caused by what was done before – slip past what they themselves know, slip past what is agreed on by the world. Therefore I say that those priests & contemplatives are wrong.

“There are cases where some feelings arise based on phlegm ... based on internal winds ... based on a combination of bodily humors ... from the change of the seasons ... from uneven (‘out of tune’) care of the body ... from attacks ... from the result of kamma....”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XXXVI, 21]

“There is the case where a trifling evil act done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment

[....]

“Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in [contemplating] the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?”

‘Yes, lord....’

“Now suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into the River Ganges Would the water in the river Ganges become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?”

‘No, lord....’

“In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil act done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and ... the very same sort of trifling act done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, III, 99]

“These four imponderables are not to be speculated about. Whoever speculates about them would go mad & experience vexation. Which four? The Buddha-range of the Buddhas [i.e., the range of powers a Buddha develops as a result of becoming a Buddha] The jhana-range of one

absorbed in jhana [i.e., the range of powers that one may obtain while absorbed in jhana] The result of kamma Speculation about [the first moment, purpose, etc., of] the cosmos is an imponderable that is not to be speculated about. Whoever speculates about these things would go mad & experience vexation.”

[Anguttara Nikaya, IV, 77]

(c) Miscellaneous Moral Views

“When watching after oneself, one watches after others. When watching after others, one watches after oneself.

“And how does one, when watching after oneself, watch after others? Through pursuing [the practice], through developing it, through devoting oneself to it. This is how one, when watching after oneself, watches after others.

“And how does one, when watching after others, watch after oneself? Through endurance, through harmlessness, and through a mind of kindness & sympathy. This is how one, when watching after others, watches after oneself.”

[Samyutta Nikaya, XLVII, 19]

“If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared, if there were someone to receive their gift. But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they eat without having given. The stain of miserliness overcomes their minds.”

[Itivuttakka, 26]

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Now at that time King Pasenadi Kosala was

together with Queen Mallika in the upper palace. Then he said to her, 'Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?'

'No, your majesty,' she answered. 'There is no one more dear to me than myself. And what about you, your majesty? Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?'

'No, Mallika. There is no one more dear to me than myself.'

Then the king, descending from the palace, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: 'Just now I was together with Queen Mallika in the upper palace. I said to her, 'Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?'

'No, your majesty,' she answered. 'There is no one more dear to me than myself. And what about you, your majesty? Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?'

'No, Mallika. There is no one more dear to me than myself.'

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

"Searching all directions with one's awareness, one finds no one dearer than oneself. In the same way, others are fiercely dear to themselves. So one should not hurt others if one loves oneself."

[Udana, V, 1]

"'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me' – for those who brood on this, hostility isn't stilled.

"'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me' – for those who don't brood on this, hostility is stilled.

"Hostilities aren't stilled through hostility, regardless. Hostilities are stilled through non-hostility: this, an unending truth."

[Dhammapada, 3-5]

"One who neither kills nor gets others to kill, neither conquers nor gets others to conquer, with good will for all beings, has no hostility with anyone at all."

[Itivuttaka, I, 27]

"When embraced, the rod of violence breeds danger & fear: Look at people quarrelling. I will tell of how I experienced dismay. Seeing people floundering like fish in small puddles, competing with one another – as I saw this, fear came into me. The world was entirely without substance. All the directions were knocked out of line. Wanting a haven for myself, I saw nothing that wasn't laid claim to. Seeing nothing in the end but competition, I felt discontent. And then I saw an arrow here, so very hard to see, embedded in the heart. Overcome by this arrow you run in all directions. But simply on pulling it out you don't run, you don't sink."

[Sutta Nipata, IV, 15]

Suggestions for Further Reading

(a) Introductions to Buddhism

Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. Revised Edition (Grove Press). An authoritative summation of the Buddha's original teachings, as distinct from the larger tradition of Buddhist thought and practice generally as it has evolved over several centuries, in several cultures. This book covers exclusively the Buddha's own contributions.

Keown, Damien. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press). A very concise, and yet quite comprehensive and reliable survey of Buddhist thought and, to some extent, practice, briefly covering the Buddha's contribution as well as later developments.

Brazier, David. *The New Buddhism* (Palgrave Publishing). A somewhat controversial, but often compelling reinterpretation of the political implications of Buddhism, by a founder of the Amida Order, based in England.

Bachelor, Stephen. *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (Parallax). A "modernist" interpretation of Buddhism, one that owes a lot to phenomenology and existentialism, and that purges the "religious" aspects of Buddhism in favour of the idea that "dharma practice" implies no beliefs about anything, but only commitment to a set of practices aiming at liberation from attachment, etc.

Titmuss, Christopher. *Light on Enlightenment* (Wisdom Pubs.). A systematic exposition of (Theravada) Buddhism, in a contemporary, conversational style.

Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (Cambridge U. Press). A comprehensive survey of Buddhism, ancient and contemporary, around the world.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *The Noble Eightfold Path* (Buddhist Publication Society). A systematic scholarly exposition of Theravada Buddhism, organized in terms of the factors of the eightfold path. Available online as a free e-book: [.http://www.urbandharma.org/pdf/eightfoldpath.pdf](http://www.urbandharma.org/pdf/eightfoldpath.pdf)

(b) Translations of the Buddha's Discourses (Pali Canon)

Three major, recent translations into English of the Buddha's discourse collections are: (1) Bodhi, Bhikkhu, ed., *The Middle-Length Discourses of the Buddha*, a translation of the Majjhima Nikaya; (2) Walshe, Maurice, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, a translation of the Digha Nikaya; and (3) Bodhi, Bhikkhu, ed., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, a translation of the Samyutta Nikaya. All three are published by Wisdom Publications.

Over 800 translated Suttas (Pali Canon discourses) are available online, along with other resources, at the following web site:

www.AccessstoInsight.org

This web site is an invaluable resource for any student of the Buddha's thought.

(c) Translations of the Mahayana Sutras and Other Traditional Buddhist Texts

The Pali Canon is the "scriptural" basis of Theravada Buddhism (still predominant in countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma/Myanmar). Mahayana Buddhism is the name for a series of schools or sects, now with far more adherents than Theravada Buddhism, predominant in Northern Asia (notably Tibet) and East Asia. The Mahayana schools (Zen, Pure Land, Vajrayana, etc.) accept a series of additional Sanskrit discourses (sutras) not included in the Pali Canon, like the "Lotus Sutra," the "Diamond Sutra," etc., which were probably composed some time later than the Pali discourses anthologized here, but which are nonetheless attributed to the Buddha by many Buddhists.

There are readily available anthologies of Buddhist texts, often including both some discourses [*sutta*] from the Pali Canon and some specifically Mahayana Sutras (none of which appear in the present compilation), as well as other classical Buddhist texts, commentaries, verses, etc. (1) Burt, E.A., ed., *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* (New American Library); (2) de Barry, William Theodore, *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (Vintage); (3) Conze, Edward, ed., *Buddhist Scriptures* (Penguin); and (4) Thurman, Robert, ed., *Essential Tibetan Buddhism* (Harper).

For other Mahayana sutras, traditional texts, and commentaries, see the following web site:

http://www.buddhanet.net/ebooks_ms.htm

(d) Meditation

Gunaratana, Henepola. *Mindfulness in Plain English* (Wisdom Publications). A crystal-clear introduction to meditation as the Buddha taught it.

Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu. *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners* (Wisdom Publications). A much more difficult work, which encourages serious engagement with some of the Buddha's Pali vocabulary, by a renowned "meditation master" from Thailand.

Sole-Leris, Amadeo. *Tranquility and Insight* (Vipassana Publications). A systematic overview of mediation as practiced and taught in the Theravada tradition, making substantial use of the commentarial literature, notably Buddhaghosa (as opposed to focusing only on the Buddha's discourses themselves). But also much information about contemporary approaches to meditation in Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, etc.

Chögyam Trungpa. *The Myth of Freedom* (Shambhala Classics). A very sophisticated and subtle set of reflections on meditation and its role in Buddhism, by an iconoclastic and influential, but controversial Tibetan teacher.

(e) Some Recent Contributions to Buddhist Thought

Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu. *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness* (Wisdom Publications). A fascinating study of the concept of *suññata* (voidness or emptiness) by a famous and influential Thai monk.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *Facing the Future* (Buddhist Publication Society). A provocatively radical critique of capitalism and its impact on human life, from an orthodox Theravada perspective. Available online as a free e-book: http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/facingfuture.pdf

Sivaraksa, Sulak. *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* (Parallax). Another attempt to think through the implications of Buddhism for social criticism and social change.

Allen Hunt-Badiner. *Dharma Gaia: Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (Wisdom Publications). A collection on Buddhism's relation to environmentalism.