

The Eightfold Path

IBDSCL, Sep 1st, Sep 2ed, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! This month, our subject is the Eightfold Path, which is 'the Noble Truth of the Path that frees us from suffering' in the Four Noble Truths. The Eightfold Path is the cultivation method; the living guide, the path from a vulgarian to a saint, and the boat that could take us from this shore of annoyances to the other shore of liberation.

In the Buddha Speaking of Impermanence Sutra, the Buddha told the Bhikkhus, "There are three things in this world that are not lovely, not shining, not thinkable and not satisfying. Which three? Aging, sickness and death... Because of these three things, the Buddha appears in this world and proclaims the Truth that he realized and teaches people the methods to subdue the annoyances."

The Buddha continued to expound, "No matter how beautifully you dress yourself up or make yourself up, your body will age and die one day. Only the truth will exist forever. All the wise people, you need to think over and observe clearly! The aging, the sickness and the death, nobody is not sick of them. All the ugly behaviors are disgusting. The young looking is temporary and soon it will become frail, thin, weak and withered. Even if a person can live up to 100 years old, at the end he/she will meet and be forced by impermanence. The suffering of aging, sickness and death will follow him/her and harm him/her."

People are pursuing all different kinds of desires, but they are reluctant to do good deeds. However, how can you keep this body forever? How can you not see the approaching of the death? Once this life is about to end, every part of the body is about to separate. All the sufferings accompanying the death are coming together, with only lamentations and regrets left. With eyes turning white, the knife of death cuts down with karma. They suddenly become insane; they doubt and fear. Nobody can help now. They have difficulty to breathe; they have pain in the chest; they have short breath and dried and cramping throat. At this time, they can only be driven by the death god and their relatives and dependents who are with them can do nothing to help.

Then the mind and the consciousness are stupid and obscure. They enter the dangerous death world. Now they have to let go of the family and the friends and be led by the karma. They will come to the King Yemma and receive retributions according to what they have done in their previous life. Those who have planted good causes will be born in a good realms and those who have created evil karma will fall into hell or other evil realms.

No eyes are brighter than wisdom; no darkness are darker than ignorance. Sickness is the greatest enemy and death is the greatest horror. Where there is birth, there is death. Evil deeds bring torture. So we all should purify the body, the mouth and the mind, persevere in cultivating blessings and wisdom. All dependents will one day have to be abandoned. For wealth, just let others take it away.

On the dangerous road of birth and death, only the kind root could be used as food. Like the horse carriage resting under a tree, it will not stay there forever. Your wife/husband and children are also like this. They will not be with you without end. Like the flock of birds resting in the same tree during the night, when the day breaks, they all fly away in different directions. You and your family and friends are also like this. You will disperse in succession when death comes.

The Truth that the Buddha realized is the only place you can turn to. Wise people, please carefully think.

Heavenly beings, Asuras and Yakshas, those of you who come to listen to the Dharma, please keep honesty in heart and protect the Buddha Dharma and let it long shine in this world. Cultivate diligently; hold and practice the World Honored One's teachings.

All beings who come to listen to the Dharma, living either on the ground or in the sky, please bring compassion to the worldly people. Day and night, live according to the Dharma.

Pray for the world to be peaceful forever. Pray for the beings with unlimited blessings and wisdom, with all evil karma eradicated, to be away from all sufferings and to return to perfect Nirvana.

Precepts are the real face powder. With them, wipe your clean body. Meditation is the most comfortable clothes. With them, decorate your weak body. Enlightened wisdom is the most wonderful flower. With it, solemnize all the places. If you cultivate the precepts, the Samadhi and the Wisdom, no matter where you are, you are in peace and happiness.

All phenomena are impermanent and all dharmas are non-ego. Today, we will learn about the Eightfold Path from **the Mahasatipatthana Sutra** one more time.

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right View (Samma-ditthi), Right Thought (Samma-sankappa), Right Speech (Samma-vaca), Right Action (Samma-kammanta),

Right Livelihood (Samma-ajiva), Right Effort (Samma-vayama), Right Mindfulness (Samma-sati), and Right Concentration (Samma-samadhi).

And what, bhikkhus, is Right View? The understanding of dukkha; the understanding of the cause of dukkha; the understanding of the cessation of dukkha; the understanding of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha. This, bhikkhus, is called Right View.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Thought? Thoughts directed to liberation from sensuality; thoughts free from ill-will; and thoughts free from cruelty. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Thought.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Speech? Abstaining from lying, from tale-bearing, from abusive speech, and from vain and unbeneficial talk. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Speech.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Action? Abstaining from killing living beings, from stealing and from wrongful indulgence in sense pleasures. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Action.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Livelihood? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, the noble disciple completely abstains from a wrong way of livelihood and makes his living by a right means of livelihood. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Livelihood.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Effort? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu generates an intention, makes efforts, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to prevent the arising of evil, unwholesome states of mind that have not yet arisen. He generates an intention, makes efforts, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to abandon evil, unwholesome states of mind that have arisen. He generates an intention, makes efforts, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to attain wholesome states of mind that have not yet arisen. He generates an intention, makes efforts, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to maintain the wholesome states of mind that have arisen, to prevent their lapsing, to increase them, to cause them to grow, and to completely develop them. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Effort.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Mindfulness? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body with diligence, clear understanding, and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world; he dwells perceiving again and again feelings as just feelings with diligence, clear understanding and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world, he dwells perceiving again and again the mind as just the mind with diligence, clear understanding, and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the

world; he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas with diligence, clear understanding and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Mindfulness.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Concentration? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu being detached from sensual desires and unwholesome states attains and dwells in the first jhana which has vitakka and vicara; and rapture (piti) and sukha born of detachment (from the hindrances). With the subsiding of vitakka and vicara, a bhikkhu attains and dwells in the second jhana, with internal tranquility and one-pointedness of mind, without vitakka and vicara, but with rapture and sukha born of concentration. Being without rapture, a bhikkhu dwells in equanimity with mindfulness and clear understanding, and experiences sukha in mind and body. He attains and dwells in the third jhana; that which causes a person who attains it to be praised by the Noble Ones as one who has equanimity and mindfulness, one who abides in sukha. By becoming detached from both sukha and dukkha and by the previous cessation of gladness and mental pain, a bhikkhu attains and dwells in the fourth jhana, a state of pure mindfulness born of equanimity. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Concentration.

This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha.

Thus he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas (not mine, not I, not self, but just as phenomena) in himself; or he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas in others; or he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas in both himself and in others. He dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual appearing of dhammas; or he dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual dissolution of dhammas; or he dwells perceiving again and again both the actual appearing and dissolution of dhammas with their causes.

To summarize, he is firmly mindful of the fact that only dhammas exist (not a soul, a self or I). That mindfulness is just for gaining insight (vipassana) and mindfulness progressively. Being detached from craving and wrong views he dwells without clinging to anything in the world. Thus, bhikkhus, in this way a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the Four Noble Truths as just the Four Noble Truths.

Amitabha! Time is life! Now you have heard the Dharma, then go back and cultivate diligently. Repent, keep vegetarian diet, chant the name of the Buddha, recite sutras, hold mantras, meditate, dedicate your merits. Cut off all evils and cultivate all goodness; purify the mind and return home successfully. Thank you! See you next week!