

2020-10-27 Eightfold Path Introduction (2 of 2)

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SPEAKERS

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So greetings again and welcome to this second talk on the Eightfold Path. And this will continue to be an introductory talk and then tomorrow I'll start on the first factor the path. And as a way of introducing it, I also want to say briefly, the essence of the first factor of the path. And that has to do with understanding suffering. To really understand the arising, the appearance of suffering, the cessation of suffering. To really understand how to be free of suffering. And so the eight fold path is a path that is walked in relationship to this freedom of suffering.

And there's two general ways that I talked about yesterday, to say it a different way in which the Eightfold Path exists for people. One is, it's the path that people who are awakened walk. And second, it's the path people on the way to awakening walk. And awakening or enlightenment are kind of vague terms. But the essence of it is this freedom from suffering. Those who are free from suffering walk this path. Those who are on their way to freedom walk this path. It's the same path. But in one, it's kind of fully developed, in the awakened ones. And those on the way to awakening, to freedom from suffering, it's being cultivated and developed and grown further. But what's interesting about this is that it's the same path. And it points to a principle that, for me, and it's very important, and I think something very important for me to try to convey as a teacher, is that it is important not to set up too strong of a separation between where we're going in practice, in a sense, the freedom from suffering, to be awake or enlightened. And the practice along that way. And how not to make a strong separation is to understand something about the qualities of a heart, the mind, that's free of suffering. And to have those qualities, practice those qualities, as we walk the path. To have aspects of awakening, in how we practice even as a beginner.

And so, the means, the practice the means, should contain a bit of the goal. And the means doesn't justify the goal. The goal informs the means, how we practice. And so to give you a little different example, to be generous, one practices generosity. To be kind, one practices kindness. The goal is to be generous, and how that's done is by being generous. The goal is to be kind, we practice to be kind.

The goal is to become the Eightfold Path, someone who's fully awakened is said to become the Eightfold Path, to be endowed with the Eightfold Path. To have really entered into the Eightfold Path. The way to become such a person is to practice the Eightfold Path. To say this a different way, the freedom from suffering is synonymous with a freedom from clinging. Clinging is the source, the cause, the condition for suffering. Without that clinging, the suffering that Buddhism wants to address will not exist. The suffering, the dukkha that Buddhism addresses is that which arises from clinging. In common English, we might refer to different kinds of pain, emotional pain as suffering. And some of them it doesn't arise from clinging, a liberated person would feel as well.

But really the clinging based suffering. And so the freedom from clinging is what an enlightened person has. As we practice the path of awakening, we want to bring that sense of non-clinging in the practice itself. All along the way, we want to practice non-clinging. And so we want to not cling to Buddhism, not cling to the Eightfold Path, not cling to different factors of the Eightfold Path. We practice them with devotion, with dedication, but to hold them lightly and openly. And not to live with kind of strong compulsive desire around it, expectation, demands, not a lot of comparative thinking, someone else's further in the path than me. Not a lot of ego involved, like look at me, I'm the great one who's on the Eightfold Path. All those represents forms of clinging. So to be sensitive, all along from being a beginner all the way, to the role that clinging has in our suffering. And to begin practicing non-clinging, even if it's a modicum of it from the very beginning. And it might be, I don't know simple, but it includes not clinging in relationship to how we cling. Not being caught up in desires when we're craving. Like wanting it away, wanting not to show it to people that we have this way. To not have aversion to aversion. So there's this kind of art, of cultivating awareness that lets things be, but doesn't feed them or fuel them. And that's the task of non-clinging.

The eightfold path as how an enlightened person walks, is how someone walks who has no clinging. For someone who is on the path to awakening, it's how they cultivate non-clinging. They cultivate it by having what's called right view, right intention or right consideration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort and right mindfulness and right concentration. And the word fold in eightfold path, kind of refers to it's all one thing that's has different folds in it. The more proper translation to English of the Pāli is the eight factored path, it's a singular path, but has all these different aspects. And those aspects live together in harmony together. And it isn't necessarily that we can practice one after the other. But the idea is that they all are expression of the same thing of non-clinging. And that's kind of part of what one of the tasks is to understand, how these things are an expression of non-clinging.

So these eight factors of the path. And the word right is used in front of each one. And the Pāli word is sammā. And has a number of different meanings. It can also mean complete. So it's the complete view, complete intention or consideration. It can complete speech. They can also be harmonious. That which is harmonious. But what it's in harmony with? It's in harmony with the other factors. In harmony with non-clinging. I don't know if the Buddha understood the etymology of the word, but the ancient

etymology of this word precedes the Buddha is coming along together. These different factors come along together. This coming along together for the same direction, the same purpose is kind of the meaning of sammā. The word right maybe is a fine translation. I like the translation, if we understand right in the sense of using the right tool. You don't want to use a hammer to unscrew a screw. You use a screwdriver. A screwdrivers the right tool. The hammer might be the right tool for nailing in a nail.

And so these eight factors, these eight sets of practices are the appropriate tool, the appropriate means for not just becoming awake, becoming enlightened, but rather living a life of awakening. And this is an important distinction. It isn't that Buddhism is about becoming an enlightened person for its own sake, just become enlightened and live in enlightened retirement. But rather, it's a transformed person to live a life, to walk through life, to live a life, that is an expression of freedom, an expression of non-clinging. And it's all of who we are. It's our entire way of being in the world that is changed or becomes in harmony or comes along with non-clinging, with freedom.

And so these eight factors are both practices to do and they're also wonderful questions, wonderful explorations around a topic of non-clinging. How is it that speech can be informed or could be done without any clinging? How is it that the actions in our world, how we live in the world with our actions, are right actions in the sense that actions without clinging? What is clinging has to do with it? With livelihood? With effort? With mindfulness? Right mindfulness, how does that come along? How is that an expression of non-clinging? And how is concentration become an expression of non-clinging?

So, this idea that the eight factors of this path are the discovery and the expression of non-clinging. It helps us discover it and helps us to express it, to be it. And how does that work? And why is it that non-clinging is so valuable in this sense? And what is it about non-clinging that should provide these wonderful eight qualities for a human being? And why should you want it?

So the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight the eight factored path of the noble ones, so the non-clinging ones. So that's the introduction and tomorrow we'll start with the first factor of the path or right view. And we'll go from there. Thank you.