

# 2020-11-02 Eightfold Path-Right Consideration (1 of 3)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

freedom, sensual pleasures, renunciation, eightfold path, ill, cruelty, consideration, compassion, word, attachment, intention, wholesome, unwholesome, kindness, buddha, life, meaning, friendliness, consequences, motivate

## SPEAKERS

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So, my friends, the topic is the Eightfold Path. And today I start the second factor of the Eightfold Path. And that is usually called in English Right Intention. And I prefer these days to call it Right Consideration, partly because intention involves having a plan. It's usually something that we are aiming to do. It doesn't have to be. It can be broader in meaning, but it's to have an aim, a plan. And it's a little bit more cognitive or elaborate to set an intention, have an intention, consider an intention. And the word sankappa, sammā-sankappa, means more literally, more commonly in Pali means just another word for thinking. And perhaps it's a particular kind of thinking that involves really thinking in a focused way on something. And also thinking in a little bit more of a constructed way, like deliberation. Considering what something is, or considering some topic. And in doing that we're organizing ourselves around it or understanding it better. So it's a little bit more, but it's not quite as intentional as intention. And so it's very closely related in my mind to attitude, or how we think, in addition to what we're thinking of. But how we think, how we're thinking, how we're considering something.

And the tradition says there are three forms of right consideration. The usual translation is, the first one is renunciation. And I'll talk about that and offer an alternative. The second is, literally says non-ill will. And the third is non-cruelty or non-harmfulness, non-harming. And whenever in Pāli there's a negative compound, so starts with the word non and Pāli. So that non-ill will, it implies not only the absence of ill will, but also the presence of a variety of opposites to ill will. And so it's often sometimes you'll see it presented as kindness, loving kindness, friendliness, for the non-ill will. And the non-cruelty or non-harming it's vihimsa. Some of you know the word ahimsa, non-violence that was really made international by Mahatma Gandhi. Vihimsa is basically say meaning, non-harming, sometimes non-cruelty. And it's often said the opposite of that is compassion.

And the first one, usually called renunciation, the opposite is stated to be kamma, the word for kind of very strong sensual desire. Some people will sometimes translated as lust, some people just simply essential desire. But generally, it's considered to be a kind of attachment to sensual pleasures. And renunciation is a broader meaning than just renouncing sensual pleasures. But probably the original meaning of what we call renunciation probably was closer to something like letting go of, turning away from the drive, the lust for sensual pleasures. The attachment to it. And there was a little linguistic play at work here. And that's where the confusion arises. The word for renunciation is something like nekkhamma. And probably the original word for non-sensual lust was is nikamma, something like, approximately that. And so there was a confusion that arose and so it ended up being the word Pali word for renunciation. It doesn't really matter that much. It's all good. But it's kind of interesting. Some people have trouble with the word renunciation.

What's much more interesting about this now is that what motivates? Where does this come from? The right consideration. To consider, to think about things in this way, to have this added. When we go about our life and consider anything, we want to consider it this way. We want to consider it without any ill will. We want to consider what we're doing without any cruelty, wanting to cause harm. And we want to consider things without the strong attachment to wanting or needing sensual pleasure, kamma. But where does that motivation come from? Is it just an admonition? is it just an obligation for Buddhists to be that way? Because it's the second factor of the Eightfold Path and we should live that way? Where's it come from? So this is where it gets very interesting.

So I said last week that there are two kinds of eightfold paths. There's the ordinary eightfold path for people who have not really tasted some quality of freedom yet. And there's the Eightfold Path of the noble ones, the ones who have tasted freedom. When we haven't tasted freedom from ourselves, then the principle behind the Eightfold Path is that actions have consequences. And if you want to have wholesome, beneficial, helpful consequences, act and do and live in wholesome and beneficial ways. And so in that way, then it's beneficial to live a life without addiction to sensual pleasures. Without living with ill will, and acting from it. And even more importantly, not living with cruelty or wanting to harm anybody, hostility. And so those hostility, ill will, cruelty and addiction to sensual pleasures, are all considered unwholesome, unhealthy. They lead in the wrong direction, they lead to suffering. And so the principle is you want to do what's wholesome. So initially a person might just have to believe it, this is what the Buddha's saying, I'll take my chances with it, and try it out and see. But with time the idea is that becomes self verifying. We see for ourselves. My life works so much better when I'm not addicted to sensual pleasure, when I'm not involved in ill will, am not involved in cruelty of any kind. Or my life works a lot better if I'm kind and friendly. If I have compassion. My life works better for myself when I have compassion for myself, kindness to myself, and my life works better when I have that for other people. So it gets verified. But for someone who has a taste of liberation, of freedom, there's a different motivation. And that is that it's motivated by a real sensitivity to freedom itself. In later Buddhism, they talk about practicing, right consideration with Nibbāna as the object. And nibbāna I take to mean release or freedom. And so to have some sense of understanding, appreciation that's

kind of palpable and visceral or alive, of freedom, of letting go, of release, of not clinging, not contracted, not stuck or obsessed by something. And that real sense of in a very deep way kind of in a way that something's been open so widely and fully in our hearts and minds that we see and feel the presence of that non-clinging, that freedom. And so, with that presence, with that being kind of part of how our understanding, then we see that to move towards sensual addictions, to move towards ill will and cruelty is a loss of that freedom. In fact, to be involved in these kind of unwholesome activities requires the contraction, the tightening, the closing down, that is the very antithesis of what freedom is.

And to feel that and know that and experience that, is to feel how we're diminished. How we cause a stress and strain and suffering in us. So someone who's free enough and really opened up the space or freedom in their mind, will be really clear, the consequence of ill will and cruelty and sexual addictions. And it will be really clear, they'll see and feel and know that a natural movement towards kindness, to friendliness to compassion, is almost an expression of that openness. It's almost like that is what keeps it open. And that's not always so obvious, because our relationship to kindness and friendliness and compassion can be complex. There can be attachments and fears that motivate that, and ideas of should and conceit, that are kind of come along with trying to be kind and friendly. I remember the first time in my life, when I was maybe 18. I had this idea to really try to be kind to someone. Really be, you know, really lay it on. And I think the person who almost ran away. I think that there was so much me in it and so much artificial sweetness in it that they felt awful for the person.

So freedom also protects our kindness. It protects our letting go of sensual attachments. And it protects our compassion, because all these axillary, on the side kind of movements of conceit and obligation, and I should be it this way, and I have to be this way, and look at me how good I am, I'm the one who's kind. All those we can feel and see how they're forms of contraction and tightness. And how we're diminished by it. So to have freedom as a reference point is a phenomenal teacher, is a phenomenal movement. And what happens when Nibbāna is an object, I don't really like that expression. But that's what the kind of the tradition, later tradition, talks about. With the nibbāna, with release and freedom as a reference point. Then it's, of course, we will do right consideration. We'll consider things, we'll approach things. Our attitude as we go through our life, we'll do it in a way that is not addictive. It doesn't have ill will or cruelty, of wanting to harm anybody. It'll do the opposite. We'll do love and kindness and compassion in that natural way. Not a forced way. But until the freedom is that strong and clear, then it's really wise and a good thing to do right consideration, right intention, from the wisdom that doing wholesome things is better than doing unwholesome things. Doing wholesome things leads to better results. So to have that kind of in the center.

And finally, and maybe I'll say more about this tomorrow since we've run out of time. now. What's important to note here is that the second two of the right considerations, non ill will and non cruelty, have to do with our relationship to other people. And non essential addiction, maybe it's more about ourselves. It has impact on other people perhaps, but it's more about ourselves, not harming ourselves. And what we see here, the second two about living in the world kindly compassion coming

out of the freedom, is that the liberation and freedom of the Buddha is a condition for these beautiful relationships we can have with other people. And the more free we are, the more that will come out of us in a way that's unique in particular to each of us with all our personalities, whether we're introverted or extroverted. In all different ways it's expressed. But freedom has social consequences. This spiritual freedom of the Buddha.

So thank you very much and I'm happy you're here and those of you who are able to hang in there with our YouTube challenge. And we'll continue on this theme of right consideration tomorrow. Thank you.