

Explain the Nature of the Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is taught as the fourth of the Four Noble Truths. The Noble Eightfold Path consists of 8 elements:

- Right view
- Right attitude
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

All Buddhists follow the Noble Eightfold Path, whether they are monastic or lay.

The Noble Eightfold Path

Moral Discipline

Right speech
Right action
Right livelihood

Meditation

Right effort

Wisdom

Right View
Right Mindfulness
Right concentration

In all of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path, the word "right" is a translation of the word of sammā, which is another word for things like completion, togetherness, and ideal. It is generally not considered to be a series of linear steps which you must progress through; rather through, as the eight elements of the Noble Eightfold Path "are to be developed more or less simultaneously, They are all linked together and each helps the cultivation of the others. The Dharma wheel's eight spokes represent the eight elements of the path.

Right view is the element of the Noble Eightfold Path which refers explicitly to the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, stating that these must be fully understood by the Buddhist practitioner. Right view is sometimes considered to encompass an understanding of the Buddhist idea of the non-permanence of self.

There are two stages for every stage of the eightfold path, a preliminary stage and the higher stages gradually obtained through the journey towards enlightenment.

Right attitude is the element of the Noble Eightfold Path which deals with a Buddhist's reasons for practising Buddhism, and with his/her outlook on the world. It joins renunciation of our world and the reality we experience and the greater commitment to spiritual matters.

Right speech as the name implies, deals with the way in which a Buddhist would best make use of his or her words. Not engaging in "forms of wrong and harmful speech" ultimately means that "one naturally has to speak the truth, has to use words that are friendly and benevolent, pleasant and gentle, meaningful and useful."

Right action deals with the proper way in which a Buddhist would act in his/her daily life. The right action is abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing and abstaining from unchastity.

Right livelihood is based around the concept of harmlessness, which essentially states that Buddhist should not to engage in trades or occupations which result in harm to other living beings. Such occupations include trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, poisons, killing animals, prostitution and cheating. Business methods such as persuadance, belittling and scheming are also forbidden.

Right effort involves the Buddhist effort to keep his/her mind free of thoughts that might impair his/her ability to realize or put into practice the other elements of the Noble Eightfold Path; for example, wishing ill towards another living being would contradict the Right thought. Proper effort is not the effort to make something particular happen - it is the effort to be aware and awake in each moment, aswell as the effort to overcome laziness and defilement.

Right mindfulness is concerned with meditation. "Mindfulness" refers to the practice of keeping the mind alert to phenomena as they are affecting the body and mind. Monks remains focused on their body in and of itself, putting aside worldly desire and aversion. They focus on feelings, the mind and mental qualities in and of themselves.

Right concentration is concerned with meditation. Right concentration is as follows for a monk:

withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unwholesome states, a monk enters in the first 'jhāna' which is a state of mind. With directed thought and evaluation, a monk enters and remains in the second 'jhāna'. The monk remains fully aware, and is physically sensitive of pleasure. The monk enters and remains in the third 'jhāna'. The monks abandon the feeling of pleasure and pain and enter the fourth 'jhāna' – where there is purity of equanimity and mindfulness, a state which is in neither in pleasure nor in pain.

The Buddha explains that cultivation of the Eightfold Path leads to the development of two further stages once enlightenment has been reached. These are 'Right Knowledge' and 'Right Liberation.'