

The Noble Eightfold Path

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular talks during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we will speak about the ‘Eightfold Path.’ When we have met up with a ‘New Life’ then we must follow this new path or we could also that we follow this new path, this way of new life, in order to realize a new life. So this Noble Eightfold Path is a new way appropriate to a new life.

In Pāli, there is the word *Ariya*, the *Ariyāma* – the ‘Noble Path.’ We translate *Ariya* to be ‘Noble,’ what it means is ‘free from dukkha.’ This is what it means by ‘Noble.’ Literally, it means to go away from enemies. By ‘enemies,’ we mean the ‘defilements of mind’ which bother us and lead to all sorts of problems. So we call this the ‘noble path,’ because with it, one walks away from enemies, one walks a way that is free of dukkha – this is what we mean by ‘Noble.’ Now let’s look at the word ‘Eightfold’ – ‘the Noble Eightfold Path.’ When we say ‘Eightfold,’ we mean there are eight aspects, links, or components to the one path – it is one single path, not eight separate paths going off in different directions. There is just one path where these eight factors or components are working together mutually supportive. We can compare this to a rope, a rope that is made of eight strands. The strands are woven together in order to make a one single rope. This is much stronger than when the eight strands are left alone to stray and go off in different directions. So Eightfold Path – one path with eight components or aspects.

A very important word to consider is ‘middle.’ We can call the Noble Eightfold Path ‘the middle path’ or ‘the middle-way.’ It is very important. What

this means is to walk this path correctly – to walk down the middle – correct and proper according to reality or to true nature – not to be pulled off this way or pulled off that way, but to stay correct walking down this path. The mind follows this balanced middle-way according to its true original nature which is pure. When the mind deviates from its true original nature, it leaves this path. But by following the middle-way, the mind follows its true pure nature and it does this naturally. This is what we mean by ‘middle path’ or another way of saying the ‘Noble Eightfold Path.’

So the word ‘middle-practice’ or ‘balanced-practice’ is very important. This means that the clear or the bright mind which is the true nature of the mind, is of the nature to practice in the middle-way, to practice according to reality, according to nature. But when the defilements cover the mind, or possess it, then there is deviation into off onto some side tracks instead of just allowing the bright mind to automatically follow the middle-way or the Noble Eightfold Path. When the bright mind is allowed to just go its way, it will automatically follow the middle-way, the balanced correct way. But when the mental defilements come in and cover the mind, then there is a curving off or straying off of the path. If we look at this from the point of view of modern science, we can say that when the baser instincts take over, then the mind is routed into these lower states of mind and is no longer able to follow the middle-way.

When there is freedom from the defilements – from mental pollutions, then the mind goes according to natural knowledge which is correct and proper. So the bright mind, following this natural knowledge, has no problem following the way – this is its nature. But when the defilements come in (the *kilesa*) these take over and then things are no longer in balance. The bright mind is balanced but the defiled mind is imbalanced. And because it is out of balance like this, sometimes it goes off to the left and sometimes to the right – sometimes it goes up and sometimes it goes down, or there is too much or too little. This is what happens with the defilements – the natural pure balance of the mind is interfered with. So this shows the importance of getting out from under the influence of the *kilesa* – to no longer be under the power of the *kilesa*[s] (the defilements) in order to live and walk in this balanced middle-way. Let’s repeat once again about the instincts. When the instincts are out of control, when we are no longer able to control the instincts, then they become selfish, the out of control instincts become selfish, and this gives rise to all the *kilesa*. The out of control instincts pull the mind off of the balanced middle-way into these dead ends of the *kilesa*

(the mental defilements). This is very important to know. We often call these ‘the defilements’ but we can see that they are just the instincts which are out of control. Seeing this, gives us an insight of how to bring them under control. The instincts no longer become kilesa. This is something to be very interested in, in order to give back on the past to return to the balance right state of mind in order to follow the path.

To make it easier to understand the middle-way, let’s look at some pairs of things which take us off the middle-way. The first pair is extremes of the left and the right. The first extreme off on the left is to go too much according to one’s own wishes and desires – this is the ‘extreme of lust or desire’ of sensuality and the indulgence of sensuality. It’s indulging in things that lead to pleasure – always trying to satisfy pleasure – this is the one extreme. The other extreme up on the right is the opposite of this. It is ‘extreme dislike’ – hating, aversion to things. We can hate ourselves; deliberately inflict pain and discomfort and difficulties upon ourselves. Or we attach, hate or dislike lust, and attaching to this hate of lust, we can deliberately try to damage the sensual organs – the organs of sensuality in the vain hope that lust will be destroyed this way. These are kinds of attachments on the extreme right based on disliking, hating, and aversion to things – deliberately inflicting pain and discomfort on oneself. These are the first pair of extreme – indulgence in pleasure, and indulgence in affliction of pain or self torment. The next pair is very similar to the first, basically a metaphor, to describe them. The one extreme is to be soaking wet, to be damp, moist, to be drowned in sensuality, in sense pleasures, greed, and lust. This is to be sinking in the ocean of desire and to be all wet. The other extreme is to be burning, roasting until one is very dry and then begins to burn – this is the other extreme – to be soaking wet on the one hand and on the other burning up. The first is called *akālahapatipadā* and the second one is *niccamapatipadā*.

The third pair of extreme is to take some things as positive and others as negative. The positive are things which are satisfied with, we take satisfaction in these things and judge them as positive. And other things which we are dissatisfied with, which cause dissatisfaction – these are judged to be negative. These are two kinds of attachment – attaching to things as positive and attaching to things as negative. This means that the mind stupidly goes off in one direction and clings to some things as positive and stupidly bends off into another direction and clings to something else as negative. Positive are negative

are not the middle-way – they are attachment to extremes. So we need to understand this third pair of extreme, which are not the balanced middle-way.

If we look at the world these days, we see that practically everybody has gone off into the positive and has gone off track onto the positive things into satisfaction. So this is a kind of slavery to the positive which causes problems. It also leads to hatred of the negative which causes other problems. To be a slave to the problem to the positive gives rise to problem and being a slave to the negative gives rise to the other problems. The way has to be found to get out of these kinds of slavery and be free of the slavery of both the positive and the negative in order for the mind to be in the middle and balanced.

The fourth pair is to go off and look at the world as ‘Oh everything is good, everything is wonderful!’ This is the extreme of optimism. Its opposite is to look at everything as horrible and terrible of the world’s states. This is the extreme of pessimism. Neither of these are the balanced middle-way. When the mind loses its balance, when the natural balance of mindfulness and wisdom has been lost, misplaced and forgotten, then the mind side-tracks into positivism and negativism – pessimism and optimism. Going off into optimism is attachment of one kind and going off into pessimism is attachment of another kind. Neither of these is correct – the mind becomes a slave to the optimism or pessimism to these kinds of attachment. The mind is no longer free, at peace, or balanced. These extremes, these attachments of optimism and pessimism are misunderstandings or they are kinds of insanity, of craziness – the craziness of thinking that everything is wonderful, the craziness of thinking that everything is terrible. Neither of these are the middle-ways, neither of them are correct, nor allow one to live in accordance to reality, to live naturally and according to the law of nature. These things pull one off and pull the mind off into problems, confusion, attachment, and insanity. And doing this, we no longer see things as they really are. We don’t see the world as in Thai we call it *chen nan eng* which translates something like ‘only this’ or ‘just as it is,’ ‘is-ness,’ ‘suchness,’ ‘just the way things are,’ ‘what is what.’ When the mind is balanced, it sees the ‘isness’ and ‘what is what’ of everything. But when the mind is attaching off into some craziness of pessimism or optimism, then this ‘isness’ cannot be seen. Now let’s look at what it means to be balanced in the middle. In the middle, there is the realization that everything is just changing, flowing according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. *Idappaccayatā* means that *this being, that becomes, this being, that becomes, this being, that becomes, and this being, that becomes* –

the eternal process of the cause and effects being the further cause of the other effects. So *this being, that becomes, and this being, that becomes* – this is what’s going on in the middle. We can also see this as the *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) which you have heard something about. This is what is going on in the middle. This is the process of change following the law of cause and effect. This is the law of nature. When the mind is pulled off into extremes, it is unable to see or understand this law of nature – this law of *idappaccayatā*. But when we come back to the middle and there is balance, things, reality, nature, life, is understood as flowing and processing according to the law of *this is, that becomes, this is, that becomes, this is, that becomes, this is, that becomes*.

To be at the center is to see that there is nothing outside of this law of *idappaccayatā*. It is to make no distinction between anything. So let’s revise my translation a bit. I said ‘this is, that becomes.’ This isn’t quite right. When everything is seen as according to the law of *idappaccayatā* then there is no longer ‘this’ and ‘that.’ There is only ‘this.’ *This is, this becomes, this is, this becomes* – when it is understood fully, there is no distinction between ‘this’ and ‘something else.’ Everything is just ‘this.’ *This is, this becomes, this is, this becomes, this is, this becomes*. There is no longer the division and separation of ‘self’ and ‘others,’ of ‘me’ and ‘them,’ of ‘us’ and ‘they.’ These distinctions no longer have any appearance of validity because everything is seen as the law of *idappaccayatā* (*this is, this becomes, this is, this becomes, this is, this becomes*) and that’s all. So without these separation, divisions, distinctions, then there can be no extremes such as pessimism and optimism, or positivism and negativism because there is just this ‘middle’– the balance of the law of *idappaccayatā* (*this is, this becomes*).

Now let’s look at the pairs of opposites as we all know there are many of these. We have mentioned a few such as optimism and pessimism. Now let’s look at these pairs of opposites – the first one is ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ ‘Good’ and ‘evil’ are once again, when the mind is gone out of balance and is no longer in the middle, is taking sides and making preferences. When something pleases us or goes the way we want it to go, and then we judge as ‘good’ and is evaluated as ‘good’ in an unbalanced and selfish way. When something doesn’t please us and doesn’t go the way we want, that is judged to be ‘evil.’ Neither of these are balanced in the center because they aren’t seeing things as they really are and as just the process of *idappaccayatā*. Out of the middle, we no longer see this

process and then are evaluating things as ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in a selfish egocentric way. This is the first pair – the ‘good and evil’ – the first pair of opposites which illustrates the lack of balance. To be balanced – the most proper way to phrase this is to say that the mind is free or above the meaning of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ when ‘good’ and ‘evil’ have no value to the mind – this is an exact way of stating it.

If you understand what we were saying about the first pair of opposites, then you will understand what is written in the Christian Bible on the first page of Genesis. There is the account where God forbid Adam to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ – God told Adam to leave that fruit alone. He says “If you eat fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of the good and evil, then you will die.” If you understand what we are talking about the first pair of opposites, you will understand what is meant here. Attachment to good and attachment to evil is death. The common person sees everything as they appear to him; everything is judged according to dualism. All these pairs of opposites are believed to really exist, as far as the mind of a common person goes. But this isn’t the truth. The common appearance – these views of the common mind – are not true or real. When we follow these appearances of dualism, this leads to attachment to good and attachment to evil. And this is ‘death.’ This is what is meant in the first book of Genesis – the first chapter.

The second pair of opposites which we will look at is the *sukha* and *dukkha* (happiness and unhappiness). ‘Happiness’ is when there is something that pleases and ‘unhappiness’ when there is something that displeases. Once again there is selfish judging. Now, happiness leads to various problems, getting tired chasing after happiness, the frustration of not getting more happiness, the fear that the happiness will go away and many other things like this. So happiness itself is not free of problems. Unhappiness – we have no doubts about – it’s always leading towards all sorts of problems, so we don’t have to give you any examples. Both of these extremes and both of these kinds of attachments to what pleases and what displeases causes all sorts of problems and difficulties. They tire us out, they frustrate us, and they confuse us. Neither these are the balanced middle-way. So we have to learn about this attachment or we ought to learn about these attachments to what pleases and displeases, to happiness and unhappiness, which are just deceptions and illusions which cause or which encourage the mind to leave the place of balance where things are understood as only the processing according to *idappaccayatā* – when there is this, this arises;

when there is this, this arises – this is, this arises; this is, this becomes. This is the middle – the balance of the realization of the process of the idappaccayatā.

The next pair to look at is ‘getting and losing’ or ‘profit and loss’ where something happens and is judged to be our advantage and to our benefit, something else that happens is judged to be to our disadvantage – one we take as our profit and the other as our loss. Now these aren’t other kinds of attachments we don’t see things as just idappaccayatā or the law or the process of idappaccayatā, which explains everything that happens. But when we start thinking in terms of ‘profit’ and ‘loss’ and attaching to these terms, then the mind is fallen into deception. Winning and losing – everybody is attached to winning and nobody likes to lose – this creates all sorts of problems because there is no realization of or understanding of idappaccayatā (*this is, this arises, this is, this arises – there is this, this becomes*).

A further pair is ‘male’ and ‘female’ – this is another kind of attachment. That isn’t seeing things as idappaccayatā (*this is, this becomes*) – judging things as ‘male’ and ‘female,’ making these distinctions and separation, and then attaching to them – attaching to things as ‘male’ and attaching to things as ‘female.’ And we are all aware of all the problems that arise because of these attachments to some things as being ‘male’ and other things as being ‘female.’ A great many problems arise due to these problems. These attachments only happen because of deception, delusion, the ignorant non-understanding and not-knowing of idappaccayatā which is the middle balanced truth for reality – *this is, this becomes, this is, this becomes*.

To see how this attachment to opposites work or how it arises, let’s look at time. Now we divide time up into ‘day’ and ‘night.’ And after we have made this division, and after we have this attachment, we see ‘day’ and ‘night’ as opposite things – this is only our stupidity in not seeing things as they really are. We think that ‘day’ and ‘night’ are completely different things. But all it is, is the change of thing we call ‘time’ – just change according to the idappaccayatā – that’s all. In the ‘day- time’ there is change and in what we call ‘night’ there is change. This thing we call ‘time’ that’s changing and changing – *this is, this becomes, this is, this becomes*. In what we call ‘day,’ there are these changes where there happens to more sunlight and then these changes continue, there happens to be more and more moonlight. But in this process of change, there is no real thing that we can attach to as day or as night. It’s only our misunderstanding which causes us to fall into this deception. So what we need

to see are the qualities, or the benefits and virtues of things which lead us into deception which cause us to be deceived. Take ‘male’ and ‘female’ again – there are certain things that are of male and certain female things which we attach to, and through this attachment we make this separation of ‘male’ and ‘female’ where there is no real distinction. Instead of just seeing the process of change which lead us to certain things we call as ‘female’ and certain things we call ‘male,’ which keep changing and are never any solid static thing. These things that deceive us lead us in attaching to ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness.’ And this distinction takes us out-of-balance. It’s through not-seeing by being deceived and not realizing the law of *idappaccayatā* that these things happen.

It’s very important to find and notice these causes of our deception. We hope that *idappaccayatā* is Buddhism itself. The Blessed One, the Lord Buddha said that “He who sees the Dhamma, sees the Buddha, he who sees the Buddha, sees the Dhamma.” The Blessed One also said that “He who sees or the one who sees *idappaccayatā* also sees the Dhamma, the one who realizes dhamma realizes *idappaccayatā*.” The one who realizes *idappaccayatā* sees the Buddha – not the physical body of the Buddha but the real true genuine Buddha – the ‘one who knows,’ the ‘awakened one.’ This is why *idappaccayatā* is the heart of Buddhism – it’s the ‘Dhamma,’ the ‘truth,’ the ‘way things are.’

To see and realize this is to follow and practice the middle-way. I would like all of you to become familiar with this word *idappaccayatā* – think about it, repeat it, get to know it so that it’s no longer a strange unfamiliar word. Bring it into your everyday vocabulary so that it is an everyday word for you. *Idappaccayatā* – get familiar with this word. This is because this is the heart of Buddhism. To see and realize and to be familiar with *idappaccayatā* is necessary to continue the study, and practice of Buddhism. In *ānāpānasati*, in each of the sixteen steps, there is non-attachment. When there is realization of *idappaccayatā*, then there is no attachment to any extremes or to any of the pairs of the opposites. So in *ānāpānasati*, there is the realization and practice of *idappaccayatā* because each of the sixteen steps is leading to non-attachment. In none of the sixteen steps is there attachment to any of the pairs of opposites. So *idappaccayatā* is central to the practice of *ānāpānasati* and to the further study and practice of Buddhism. So please be very familiar with *idappaccayatā* – repeat it, see yourself, until it is no longer a strange word. Bring it into your every day usage.

We would like to encourage you, in fact, we insist you to practice saying this word, get the sound right, memorize it, and practice saying it over and over so that you know it well and whenever the time comes to use this word it will roll right up your tongue easily and naturally. It's a long word so practice saying it so that you've got it right so that whenever you get the opportunity to use it, you can use it freely and easily in everyday conversation. It's the kind of word that is appropriate throughout the day so let's practice saying it – 'I-da-pa-ca-ya-tā.' If we use the correct full Pāli name then we add *paṭiccasamuppādo – idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppādo. Idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppādo*, you can use that, or you can just use just *idappaccayatā* or just *paṭiccasamuppādo*. Just keep practicing and repeating until you've got them down and then use them in your normal conversations which we will be beginning again the day after tomorrow so you can practice these to yourself today and tomorrow. Then after that, you can practice using them in conversations. In summary, the realization – the experience and full understanding of *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppādo* will protect the mind. It will maintain it in the middle. *Idappaccayatā* and the realization of *idappaccayatā* keep the mind balanced and protect it so that nothing can pull it out-of-balance. Nothing can pull the mind out of the center. The experience of the *idappaccayatā* makes it impossible for any of the instincts to yank the mind off the middle-way. This realization of *idappaccayatā paṭiccasamuppādo* makes it impossible for any of the defilements (the *kilesa[s]*) to pull the mind out-of-balance. None of the pair of opposites can knock the mind off- balance when it is realizing *idappaccayatā*. So this law of *idappaccayatā* and the realization of it keep the mind on the middle-way. It prevents attachment and all the problems that lead from attachment. It keeps the mind centered and balanced on the middle-way.

So let's go back and talk about the Eightfold Path some more. When there is perception or realization of *idappaccayatā*, then it is very easy to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. When we are following the Noble Eightfold Path, it is not difficult to realize *idappaccayatā*. So let's come back and look at the Noble Eightfold Path. Now, make sure that you understand that the Eightfold Path is the one single path – one single way. Now we can see that it has, we can look at it in three aspects. The first aspect is the 'walking or the progress of the spirit of *satipaṇṇā* (mindfulness wisdom). The second is the 'walking or progress of the body' and the third is the 'walking or progress of the mind.' So it's a one path. We can look at it through these three aspects. The first aspect is spiritual, the second is body, and the third is mental. The first of these three aspects that of

satipaṇṇā (mindfulness wisdom) has two of the eight links in the Noble Eightfold Path. The first of these two links is *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view or right understanding). ‘Right view’ and ‘right understanding’ is the understanding of dukkha, the understanding of the cause of the dukkha, the understanding of the utter extinction of the dukkha, and the path which leads to the utter extinction of dukkha. So ‘right view’ has these four views – this understanding of the four noble truths makes up this first link of the Noble Eightfold Path – *sammā-diṭṭhi*. If we look at *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view) as a belief, it leads one down the middle-way and it keeps one from going off into the extremes. By doing this, ‘right view’ leads one away from or out of dukkha. So this correct understanding leads us along the middle-way and leads us to avoid dukkha which, in turn, will develop the understanding of the four noble truths further. And so the belief gains more confidence through this experience of following the middle path and being free of dukkha. So this is the importance of the first of these eight links – *sammā-diṭṭhi*. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* includes the understanding the truth of all nature to see the reality of all natural things. This is meant by *sammādiṭṭhi* – means the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. It means the right understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-soul) – this is also included in *sammā-diṭṭhi*. Further, it includes the correct understanding of *idappaccayatā* and of *paṭiccasamuppādo*. All these are the proper and right understanding of nature and of all natural phenomena. This is what is meant by ‘right understanding’ – *sammā-diṭṭhi*. We can enumerate all kinds of different types of knowledge which are the true knowledge of things but we can summarize all of these if they are correct knowledge. The summary of all correct knowledge is dukkha and the extinction of dukkha – this is the true understanding of everything – dukkha and the end of dukkha. This is the summary of *sammā-diṭṭhi*.

The second aspect of this first link of the path is *sammā-saṅkappa*. This is ‘right intention,’ ‘right objective,’ and ‘right aspiration’ – sometimes translated as ‘right thought.’ It’s the intention – there are three kinds of intentions which are meant by *sammā-saṅkappa*. The first is the intention to be free of greed and sensuality. The second right intention is to be free of ‘ill will’ – ‘ill intention.’ And the third right intention or right aspiration is free of ‘harming.’ So these are the three kinds of aspiration – *sammā-saṅkappa* – freedom from sensuality and greed, freedom from ill will, and freedom from harming or violence. *Sammā-saṅkappa* is the fruit or result of *sammā-diṭṭhi*. When there is understanding of dukkha and the end of dukkha, then there arises the intention and right

aspiration to act in a way that does not cause dukkha – to act for the end of dukkha – for the extinction of dukkha. For this reason, then there is the intention to act in non-sensual way, to act in non-harmful way, and to act free of ill-will or anger. These three intentions are the result of ‘right view.’ So *sammā-ditṭhi* and *sammā-saṅkappa* are the first aspects of the path.

The second aspect has three factors. This is the aspect that is of the body – the bodily path or the bodily aspect of the path. These three factors are *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sammā-kammanta* (right bodily action) and *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood). Now these three are quite simple and you should all understand them. They are nothing difficult to comprehend so we don’t have to go into detail. Right speech is to speak in a way that does no harm or ill to anyone and only has benefits. Right bodily action has no harm, does no harm or violence to anyone, but only has benefits. And right livelihood does not harm, exploit, or do violence in any way but is only beneficial. These are *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sammā-kammanta* (right bodily action), and *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood). Most of you are practicing these already so you should understand them quite easily.

Now the next aspect is that particularly of the mind. There are three factors in this mental aspect of the path. The first of these is *sammā-vāyāma*. *Vāyāma* means ‘effort’ – it means to dare, to have the courage, to practice. It’s to be certain and sure in that practice to keep moving forward, to never retreat, and to never give up – this is ‘effort.’ Now, ‘right effort’ must be correct, it must be right daring and right certainty, always moving forward in a correct way, so that there are no disadvantages for anyone and only benefits. Or to be correct, right effort will do no harm but will only benefit. Another way to see right effort is in four ways. First of these is to prevent the arising of undesirable things, of unwholesome things – don’t allow them to arise. The second is to abandon these undesirable and unprofitable things that have arisen. Then there are useful, desirable, and profitable things – the ones that have not arisen and need to be developed. The ones that have already arisen should be maintained. There are these four aspects of the right effort – to abandon or avoid unprofitable unwholesome, undesirable things and states, and then to develop and maintain the profitable wholesome desirable states. These four make up *sammā-vāyāma* (right effort). The next factor is *sammā-sati* (right mindfulness). Now when we are practicing *ānāpānasati*, if we are doing so correctly, then we are practicing correct mindfulness. There is mindfulness of the in-breath and mindfulness of

the out-breath, and then we are practicing and developing right mindfulness. Right mindfulness is to be always mindful – mindful before thinking, mindful before speaking, mindful before acting – this is ‘right mindfulness.’ Through the four foundations of mindfulness, we develop *sammā-sati* so that whatever the situation or event are occurring, whatever sensual objects make contact with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – in all of these events or occurrences, with mindfulness, we can struggle, cope with, and solve whatever the situation is. This is ‘right mindfulness.’ We develop and practice it by being mindful of every in-breathe and out-breathe through the sixteen steps of the *ānāpānasati*, the four foundations of mindfulness – it’s the development of right mindfulness. And *ānāpānasati* is the correct way of doing this – of developing and practicing *sammā-sati*.

The last factor is *sammā-samādhi*. This is when all the energy and power is gathered together – this is *sammā-samādhi*. The mind energies are all gathered together and united; the *kilesa* (the defilements) and the *nīvaraṇa* (hindrances) are not present. The mind is extremely powerful because all of its energies have been gathered together. When the mind is like this, gathers all these energies, it focuses them on one thing – on the ‘extinction of dukkha.’ When there is this *sammā-samādhi*, the mind is extremely active as it focuses on this one duty, this one function or activity – the extinction of dukkha. The mind is completely active regarding this function – the extinction of dukkha. The mind is also pure and it is completely steady. *Sammā-samādhi* – when the mind’s energies are gathered together, it’s focused on the single goal of liberation [??], of Nibbāna, of freedom from dukkha. Then the mind is active regarding this duty – its functions. It is pure and it is steady – this is *sammā-samādhi*.

In the practice of *ānāpānasati*, the complete and successful practice of the first four steps or the first tetrad has the result of *sammā-samādhi*. Through completely practicing of these four steps – calming of the breathe, calming of the body, and calming of the mind, *sammā-samādhi* develops through the practice of the first four steps of *ānāpānasati*. This results in the four *jhāna[s]* or the ‘four absorptions.’ *Sammā-samādhi* is the first, second, third, and fourth absorptions. But the first absorption alone – this is *samādhi*. This is the result of successfully practicing the first four steps of *ānāpānasati*. This last factor of the path, *sammā-samādhi*, has the function and duty of cutting the defilements. It has the function and duty of bringing the instincts under control. When all the energy and the power of the mind is set on this goal, then it can go along and

accomplish it. This is the goal of sammā-samādhi – the cutting of the defilements, the controlling of the instincts, freedom from dukkha. This is the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path – sammā-samādhi. When the strength and power of each of these eight factors is gathered together, this is called the ‘Noble Eightfold Path.’ Remember, it’s like a rope with eight strands. For the rope to be strong, the eight strands must be woven together. In the Noble Eightfold Path, each factor must be correct and fully doing its function and must function correctly and properly. When all eight are functioning and correctly together, this is the Noble Eightfold Path. So gathering together of these eight functions and the strength, energy, and power of these eight factors – this is the Noble Eightfold Path. When the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are correct and functioning together, we can change the name. Instead of calling it the ‘Noble Eightfold Path,’ we can call this *Ariya sammā-samādhi* with seven helpers or supporters. When all these factors are working together and functioning to the fullest, in harmony, we can call this ‘Noble right *samadhi* with seven helpers or supporters.’ So we take these eight factors when they are functioning completely and properly, and we see that Ariya sammā-samādhi is the leader and commander of all eight factors with the seven factors supporting it. And when this has happened, *Ariya sammā-samādhi* (the Noble right *samadhi*) is able to cut the defilements and cut the hindrances. It can cut and root out all the ignorance. Whatever there is that needs to be cut, Ariya sammā-samādhi can cut it through this gathering together of the eight factors, through this correctness and power. Ariya sammā-samādhi will cut all the defilements so that the mind is liberated from defilements, from attachments, from self, from soul, from ego, from desire, and from dukkha. This is what happens when the eight factors are developed to the fullest extent so that Ariya sammā-samādhi can take the lead with the support of the other seven and cut everything that needs to be cut so that the mind is liberated.

Now one other thing you should know is that these eight factors are the practice. They are the path that is practiced – that we do. These are the eight factors with Ariya sammā-samādhi as the leader and the other seven as helpers and supporters. When all eight factors are working together and functioning correctly under the leadership of Noble right samādhi, then there arises *sammā ñāṇa* (right knowledge or right realization) *Ñāṇa* is ‘knowledge’ or ‘realization.’ When the eight factors are working fully, there arises right realization. And together with the arising of right realization, arises *sammā-vimutti* (right emancipation). So the first eight factors are the cause and there are these two

factors which are the fruit of the path. These two are ‘right knowledge’ and ‘right emancipation.’ They are the fruits of the path – what arises when the eight factors are fully developed and brought together in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. There are the noble eight and there are the two more rightnesses to make ten. So this Noble Eightfold Path – the practice of it and the walking of it, is what is meant by a new life. A new life arises when this Noble Eightfold Path is practiced. It is practiced for Nibbāna – for the freedom of dukkha – for the complete extinction of dukkha. But even if this progress to Nibbāna is not completely realized, the Noble Eightfold Path can be used in the life in everyone’s life, whether one is ordained as a monk or nun or a priest or whether one is living a householder’s life. One still can have and live a new life by following the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to Nibbāna. For a new life, one needs to be moving towards Nibbāna whether one is ordained or a lay person. This is what is meant by a ‘new life’ – to be practicing the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to Nibbāna. On this point, we will end today’s talk of the ‘Noble Eightfold Path.’

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Transcribed by Tripur Manandhar (*tripur7@gmail.com*) in Sep.-Dec. 2015

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