

### **Eightfold noble path in Sanskrit tradition**

I want to talk about the eightfold noble path in the Sanskrit tradition. It's pretty much the same. There are some slight differences. You can begin to see how it is different when it's the practice of bodhisattvas. In the Sanskrit tradition the eightfold noble path are all ārya paths, as they are in the Pāli tradition. They are divided into four branches. I find this kind of interesting. Here in the bodhisattva practice—because remember these are ārya's paths and we're talking about them here, so you know of course they pertain to hearers and solitary realizers. But we're going to talk about them specifically for bodhisattvas.

#### **Right view: branch of affirmation**

Right view refers to realizing in your post-meditation time, in your break time between sessions, the correct understanding of the four truths that was realized in meditative equipoise. It constitutes the first of the four branches. It is called the branch of affirmation because it affirms the realization of emptiness that occurred during meditative equipoise. This is interesting that right view is defined here as occurring in an ārya's mind, but it's occurring during post-meditation time—and it's affirming the view of emptiness that you had during your meditative equipoise. So it's the branch of affirmation.

**Right intention: branch of promoting understanding in others** Right intention is the motivating intention wishing to correctly explain to others the view of selflessness and emptiness that was realized in meditation. Right intention for a bodhisattva is your wish to teach and share whatever you've realized. You don't keep it just for yourself but you go out and you share it. This is included in the branch of promoting understanding in others. Here you can really see bodhisattva influence, can't you? You've got to be able to affirm your realization of emptiness in post-meditation time so that you can go and teach it to others, so that others can benefit from it. You have the branch of affirming and the branch of promoting understanding in others.

**Right speech, action, livelihood: branch of that develops trust and respect in others** Right speech is speech explaining to others the right view we have realized. Right speech comes back to explaining the right view, both of conventional reality but especially of the ultimate nature. Right action is refraining from physical acts harmful to oneself or to others. Right livelihood is procuring the four requisites without recourse to the five wrong livelihoods. These are pretty much the same as in the Pali. But these three are included in the branch—we're talking about the four branches—that develops trust and respect in others because others will see that we keep pure ethical conduct. If you want to benefit sentient beings, when they talk about the four ways of gathering disciples one of them is acting in accordance to what you teach. Clearly, keeping good ethical conduct is going to be part of that. Ethical conduct makes people trust you and trust is the basis for, or should be the basis for, people making a student-teacher relationship with somebody. I say should be because some people think that charisma is the basis; you're attracted to a teacher for charisma. That's not the right motivation. It should really be somebody's ethical conduct and that we trust that person, we respect that person.

#### **Right effort, mindfulness, concentration: branch of antidotes to opposing factors**

Right effort exerts effort energy to develop the antidotes eliminating the objects to be abandoned on the path of meditation. It really puts our energy into our meditation practice so we can abandon the afflictions and the seeds of the afflictions that are to be abandoned on the path of meditation. This right effort also enables us to advance to higher paths. Right mindfulness does not forget the object of meditation so it prevents hindrances to single-pointedness. Right concentration is the antidote to the obscurations to mental absorption, so those obscurations that refer to the un-serviceability or the lack of pliancy of the mind and the body that hinders developing single-pointedness and śamatha. Through right concentration bodhisattvas become able to cultivate the super-knowledges. These are special powers that they gain by the force of their concentration. Some of them are supernormal powers: walking on water, going under the earth—these kinds of things. Others are, for example, clairvoyance: knowing the minds of others, or knowing the past, knowing the karma of other living beings—these kinds of things. All these kinds of super-knowledges are very helpful if you're a bodhisattva because it helps you see what people you have a close karmic connection with so that you can bring those people into your circle of disciples. These powers also enable you to know what is somebody else's karma. In other words, what's their disposition, what kind of teaching is appropriate for this person according to their particular level of mind and their particular way of thinking at this time. Having these kinds of super-knowledges that come from concentration, if you're a bodhisattva they really enable you to be of much greater benefit to others than if you don't have these. This is because you can really know the disciples much better and can really guide them on an individual basis. These three—right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration—constitute the fourth branch, the branch of antidotes to opposing factors because they overcome and purify different obstructions or different obscurations on the path. So that's the eightfold noble path.

(Above is excerpt from <http://thubtenchodron.org/2015/01/three-higher-trainings/>)

**Seven elements for enlightenment** (Skt. *saptabodhyanga*; Tib. རྒྱନྤ୍ଵାସ୍ତୁྞ୍ଜନ୍ମଶାୟକୁଣ୍ଡଳ, *changchup kyi yenlak diün*; Wyl. *byang chub kyi yan lag bdun*), belonging to the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment, are practised on the path of seeing. They are:

**mindfulness** (Skt. *smṛti*; Tib. དྲାନ ପା, *dran pa*)

discernment of phenomena (Skt. *dharma-pravacaya*; Tib. ཕୂଷାର୍ସ୍ତୁྞ୍ଜନ୍ମଶାୟକୁଣ୍ଡଳା, *chos rab tu rnam par* )

**diligence** (Skt. *vīrya*; ; Tib. ད୍ରତ୍ତେଷ୍ଟାସା, *brtson 'grus*)

**joy** (Skt. *prīti*; Tib. ད୍ଗା' ବା, *dga' ba*)

**pliancy** (Skt. *praśrabdhi*; Tib. ଶିନ ତୁ ଶ୍ବ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗସ ପା, *shin tu sbyangs pa*)

**samadhi** (Skt. *saṃādhi*; Tib. ତିଂ ନେ ଦ୍ଜିନ, *ting nge 'dzin*)

**equanimity** (Skt. *upekṣā*; Tib. ବତଙ ଶ୍ଵ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗସ ପା, *btang stoms*)

The *Sutra of the Ten Bhūmis* says:

"One trains in the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, remaining in isolation, etc.

Similarly for the enlightenment factor of discerning phenomena, the enlightenment factor

of diligence, the enlightenment factor of joy, the enlightenment factor of pliancy, the enlightenment factor of samadhi and the enlightenment factor of equanimity, one remains in isolation, etc. as before."

**Khenpo Namdrol** explains:

"**Mindfulness** is the branch of the remaining, since it prevents one from forgetting the other factors, and thereby ensures that they remain. The **discernment of phenomena**, or wisdom, is the essential branch, because the essence of the ‘awakening’ of the path of seeing is wisdom. **Diligence** is the branch of renunciation, because through diligence the dharmas of ordinary beings are abandoned or renounced on the path of seeing. **Joy** is the branch of benefitting. Pliancy, samadhi and equanimity are the branches of freedom from negative emotions. **Pliancy** is the main branch of freedom from negative emotions.

**Samadhi** is the branch that supports the absence of negative emotions. **Equanimity** is the branch of the nature of freedom from negative emotions."