

The Four Noble Truths, Part 6 of 7

THE PATH LEADING TO DUKKHA'S QUENCHING

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures 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. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:

www.suanmokkh.org,

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

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In today's lecture we will discuss the fourth *ariya-sacca*, which has the rather long name of *dukkha-nirodha-gamini-paṭipada* – the way of practice leading to the quenching of *dukkha*. It also has a short name which is *magga*, meaning 'the path.' Let us review just a bit the framework of everything we're discussing. We're looking into the human problem – into *dukkha* – and we've discussed what it is, where it comes from, and its purpose. Now we talk about the method or the way to realize that purpose. We've discussed *dukkha* itself, how *dukkha* is the problem. Or we could say *dukkha* is the summation or includes all things that we would call 'problems.' *Dukkha* is everything that is undesirable or unsatisfactory in our lives. Everything that dissatisfies us, all is included under *dukkha*. All this *dukkha* arises due to causes, specifically due to attachment regarding the five *khandas*. In short, we usually just say that *dukkha* is caused by craving. Craving leads to the attachment in the five *khandas*. Removing that attachment out from the five *khandas*, this is the end of *dukkha*, the quenching of *dukkha*. We come to the fourth *ariya-sacca* – the way of practice, the way of living that removes attachment from the five *khandas*. This is what we should look at today.

In Pāli we have a word called '*paṭipada*,' which has two meanings: The ordinary common meaning that was used by ordinary people at that time, *paṭipada* meant 'to walk,' meant 'walking.' In a spiritual context it has another meaning, and so at the monastery, *paṭipada* means 'to practice' or 'to observe the spiritual way.' It can be similar to the word 'commitment' that is used in some religious traditions. So *paṭipada* can mean both 'walking' and 'practice and commitment to the spiritual life.' *Gamini* means 'an instrument leading to' – it's the mechanism, instrument, that leads to. So *dukkha-nirodha-gamini-paṭipada* is the *paṭipada* that leads to the quenching of *dukkha*. Altogether we call it '*dukkha-nirodha-*

gamini-paṭipada – the way of practice, an observance which is an instrument leading to the total quenching of *dukkha*. This is a truth, this is the fourth of the four *ariya-sacca*.

Now that we've come to this Fourth Noble Truth, we should take a look at the word 'truth' a bit. We've been using it all along. Each of these has its special truth. The word 'truth' is a special word in itself. We see that *dukkha* – the existence of *dukkha* – has its truth, and then the origination – the source of that *dukkha* – has its truth, and the quenching – the cooling of that *dukkha* – has its truth. The way of practice that quenches *dukkha* also has its truth. Each of these has a reality and a truth to them. Whether in a positive or a negative way, there is a truth in each of these. In everything there is a truth – everything has its truth. So in negative things there is the truth of that negativeness and in positive things there is the truth of that positiveness. In a lie there is the truth of that lie. In any kind of deception or trickery there is a certain kind of truth, there is the truth of that thing. So everything has its truth within it, and it's necessary for us to realize that truth, to get to it, to discover and realize it. And we do this by means of what we call '*paṭipada*,' through practice. Through practice we must get to the truth of these things.

We must try hard to understand the meaning of this word 'truth.' In everything there is its truth. In a lie, in dishonesty, there's the truth of dishonesty that this dishonesty has a truth to it. In any kind of deception or any kind of fakeness or delusion or whatever, there is the truth of that thing. *Dukkha*, which is a negative thing, has its truth. The quenching of *dukkha*, which is a positive thing, it too has its truth. We have our truths which are beneficial and our truths which have no benefit at all. Actually, truth itself is neither positive nor negative. The beneficial truths seem positive and the ones that have no benefit seem negative, but in fact real truth is neither positive nor negative. This is just how we experience them. They seem positive, they seem beneficial or not to us. We have certain truths which seem to be of great benefit to us, especially these Four Noble Truths because they are the truths that help us to get free of all enemies, of all *dukkha*. So it's important to be interested in the beneficial truths. There are all these other truths which don't really have any benefit – they're all kinds of facts and truths which we can interest ourselves in that don't really do us much good. It's important to put our interest in the most beneficial truths, but often it's much more fun to be interested in the worthless truths, the truths that don't really help us. We often find the beneficial truths to not be very enjoyable.

Another way of looking at this is whether it's attractive to the ear or not attractive to the ear. For many people, to hear about removing attachment from the five *khandas*, this is not a very attractive thing to listen to. For the most part people aren't interested in listening, so they don't pay any attention. For one to find this attractive, one must be able to understand, one must be able to see the benefit in it, the value of it. In this way one finds it worth listening to words about the removal of the attachment from the five *khandas*. If one doesn't listen correctly, if one hasn't heard what is really been said, then one takes it to be pessimistic. People often think that removing attachment from the five *khandas* is pessimistic because they haven't really understood. But if one is able to listen properly and one understands the meaning of what is said, then it is optimistic to remove all attachment from the five *khandas*. This is how things can deceive you all by the way it sounds or the way we first take things can be quite deceiving.

When the listener is unable to hear, unable to understand, then they say that, "What this guy is saying, it doesn't make any sense, it has no value, it's meaningless, pointless." They say, "This guy must be crazy just speaking a lot of worthless unintelligible things." In fact it's not the speaker, it's the listener, the listener who doesn't know how to listen and is unable to understand. So we should consider carefully, "Is the speaker stupid or is it the listener who is stupid?" So it all depends on whether the listener knows how to listen and is able to understand. If they don't understand, then they'll always take it that the speaker is stupid, doesn't know what he's talking about, is babbling crazy things, when in reality it's the listener who is foolish, who doesn't understand. It's their own doing that they don't understand. So hearing that one should remove 'self' from the five *khandas*, they think this is of no value whatsoever, that it doesn't make sense, so they accuse the speaker of being stupid. We should look carefully and we should avoid thinking that this speaker is stupid and doesn't know what he or she is talking about. We should prepare ourselves so that we are able to listen, to listen and understand and benefit from whatever is being said. If we just assume that the speaker is stupid, we get no value from it. So we should be ready to listen and understand. If they don't understand what is being said, people will think that removing attachment from the five *khandas* means to kill oneself and they're not gonna like that. So of course they think this speaker is stupid.

Even university students and university professors are coming to ask, "If there's no 'I,' no 'mine,' no 'self,' no soul, no ego, nothing belonging to ego, then how can we live?" These supposedly highly educated people can't understand this. They must understand that it's possible to live without *upādāna* (attachment to things as 'I' and 'mine'), that there's no need for *upādāna* in life. One should understand that there's something neutral. We could call it 'individuality,' which is neutral. There can be the individuality that is attached to and the individuality that is not attached to, and these are drastically different. Individuality itself is just something that exists, but then if it's attached to it's a completely different thing. So we can say that there is 'self' that is taken to be 'the self' and then there is 'self' which is understood to be 'not self.' There's just something real, there's just a reality, and then it's whether we take it to be 'self,' 'the self,' ego, or not. We must understand that this attachment is added later by us. It really has nothing to do with life, with reality. It's not necessary. So we can have a life, we can live with the sense of 'selfhood,' the awareness that there is a 'self,' or we can live without that, live without a sense of 'self.' Which of these is better? Which of these is to live free of dukkha? This is the *majjīmāpaṭipadā* – the Middle Way of Practice – the way of practice leading to the quenching of *dukkha*, the way of practice in life which leads to the end of the 'self.' One no longer has the concept of 'self,' the belief in an individual separate identity. However the mouth still speaks the word 'self, self, self' because in the world this is the way we speak. In language there are still all the words about 'self,' so the mouth uses these words but there is no concept of 'self' within the mind.

If we understand this truth that there is not really any 'self,' then there is no *dukkha*. All *dukkha* ends because there is nothing – there is no 'self' – to be the locus, to be the center and to experience that, to cause that *dukkha*. This is why in Buddhism we always talk about that there is not anywhere any 'self,' and this allows us to be free of the concept of 'self,' which is the source of all *dukkha*. However there are many creeds and religions that teach the existence of an eternal 'self.' Vedanta, for example, teaches that there is a 'self,' there always will be. If we're not careful here, then this could become a point of dispute. We could end up

arguing about it, so we must be careful. We should try to understand that the 'self' of certain religions – or the 'soul' or the '*atman*,' whatever it's called – that it's a 'self' which is not self. So there's no problem talking about the 'self' but we should understand that that 'self' is not really self. We should understand the 'we' which is not 'we,' the 'I' which is not 'I.' Can you understand these words, the 'we' which is not 'we'? If we can understand this way then there's no need for conflict. Those who talk about a 'self' can continue doing so. If we can understand that 'self' is not a self, that way of speaking, that approach, works for them if gets rid of all *dukkha*, well then fine. In Buddhism, we emphasize we don't talk about the 'self' at all in that way, we just say that it is 'not self.'

The mind experiences that there is 'not self,' however the mouth speaks that there is 'self.' This isn't a lie, this isn't dishonesty. To help understand this point, let us interject a little bit that as for human viewpoints on the 'self,' there are basically three: One viewpoint says there's a 'self,' there always is a 'self,' there's a complete eternal 'self.' This is called '*attā*.' There's another view that there is nothing, there's nothing anywhere that has anything to do with 'self.' This is called '*nirattā*.' And then in the middle, there is the Buddhist view which is there is a 'self' which is 'not self.' We call this '*anattā*' (not self). This is the Buddhist understanding. In simpler terms, on this side is full of 'self' and over there is completely without 'self,' and then in the middle the 'self' which is 'not self.'

We come to the very important question, "How are we going to have this kind of experience? What are we going to do in order to come to this realization? Can we have a direct experience of this through philosophy, or is it necessary to really practice it in the heart for there to be realization?" This is an important question, "Can we come to this experience merely by intellectual conclusions or does it take something more – a direct activity within the heart in order to realize that?" Buddhism cannot accept that this experience can be arrived at merely by reasoning. The conclusions that come from thinking and reasoning, these conclusions, Buddhism cannot accept that they are true realization. In Buddhism, realization means a direct inner experience having actually removed *attā* (self) from the five *khandas*. When that is directly experienced through having done it, this is what Buddhism means by 'realization.' We should see very, very clearly, even absolutely, that in *vipassanā* or in mental cultivation meditation there is no reasoning. *Vipassanā* is not reasoning. Mental development meditation is not reasoning. *Vipassanā* and *cittabhavanā* are above reasoning. So this *ānāpānasati* or *vipassanā* is above reasoning. If it was just reasoning, it would only be philosophy, but it's above reasoning.

To help us distinguish this point and not confuse things so they get all mixed together and messed up, we can discriminate, we can distinguish three levels of knowledge of understanding: The first level is that of books, of third-hand knowledge we get from books or listening to others speak. This is the lowest level of knowledge. The second level is that of reasoning, taking that information we've gotten from others and thinking about it. The third level of knowledge – of wisdom – is that which comes from a direct spiritual experience within the heart where the mind has a direct spiritual experience of that thing. It's only this third level that can be called 'Dhamma' that we can call 'absolute truth.' Absolute truth cannot be reached through the first two levels. Genuine realization only happens on the third level. However the fact exists that it's possible to take the methods of *vipassanā* and the understanding of Buddhism and talk about it as a philosophy. One can take *vipassanā* and just treat it as philosophy, and it's quite enjoyable to do so. One can have a lot of fun

philosophizing about Buddhism, then it can go on and on. One enjoys it but it doesn't ever come to an end. If one takes *vipassanā* out of Buddhism and turns it into a philosophy, it's endless. We can go on and on having our fun without ever getting anywhere.

If you ever come across anything called 'Buddhist philosophy,' you should realize that that's not the real thing, it's not the essence of Buddhism. Therefore we should walk the path, and through walking that path remove attachment from the five *khandas*. When we are removing this sense of 'I' and 'mine' from the five *khandas*, then we come to direct realization of this truth. This word 'path' has great meaning, a very important and special meaning. All life is a kind of walking. All life is a kind of path but because of ignorance – because life is so often ignorant – we keep losing the real path. Life is always a walking, a travelling, but we often lose the path because of ignorance. I'm talking about all kinds of life, not just human. There is always an evolution taking place in life – a development, a travel – but because there is ignorance, this travelling very seldom leads to the quenching of *dukkha*. Many living things don't understand what's happening, so they don't find the way to the quenching of *dukkha*. They don't know how to travel, how to walk, correctly.

I'm not sure because I'm not a native speaker of English, but it seems to me that the word 'path' means the actual path or road that is travelled whereas 'way' means the method, the means of travelling, the method of travelling. So what I would ask you to consider carefully, should we call the Noble Eightfold Magga or the Middle Way the 'path' or 'way'? If there's no walking, no travelling, how could there ever be a path? If we don't walk, where is the path? If we just sit still, there's no path anywhere. In order for there to be a path, there must be the walking, the travelling, the practicing.

From the beginning of life, all life forms have evolved. In this evolution there is a path. There are very clear paths and trails which evolution has followed. All life forms must evolve, must develop, and therefore there is always a travelling. It is necessary that all life will walk, will travel. So there is then a path that has been travelled. When we're born from the mother's womb, we must walk, we must travel. If we travel correctly, properly, there is no *dukkha*, but if we walk incorrectly, there will be *dukkha*. When we're born there is no knowledge and understanding of these things and so for the most part we walk incorrectly. We walk incorrectly into *dukkha* because we are born ignorant and because there are so many things around to entice us, to excite us, so many things that lead us to liking and disliking that we are led in this way. So we're unable to walk correctly.

When there is no *dukkha* – when there's no *dukkha* at all – then one is walking correctly, one is practicing properly. One can know from this whether the walking is correct – when there's no *dukkha*, then it is correct. But this can be deceiving. If one isn't careful, one can attach to this happiness. When there's no *dukkha*, that's a kind of happiness, but if we go and attach to it, then it's *dukkha* again. So the real path is to be above, beyond, both *dukkha* and happiness. Otherwise we keep falling into *dukkha* over and over again. The real path, the real walking, is above both *sukkhā* (happiness) and *dukkha*. We must be very careful of the things 'gladness' and 'sadness.' In gladness there is a lot of attachment to the five *khandas*. In gladness there's a whole bunch of grasping and clinging. So we must be very careful not to get caught up in this gladness and all the grasping and clinging of it, but to be above both gladness and sadness.

Sometimes we speak of good and evil, which are representative of all the dualities, of every dualism. We walk to lift ourselves above, to put ourselves above all dualities – good and evil and every other pair of opposites. We have a way of walking that leads higher and higher until it is above good and evil, gladness and sadness, positive and negative, and all the dualities. The mind is above them until it's becoming more and more free of the power and influence of these dualities, until it is completely free.

Something important about the path that should be understood is that the Buddha searched for and then discovered the path. The Buddha discovered this path and walked it completely, then having discovered and found the path, the Buddha pointed it out to others. The path itself is just natural. The path was not created or made up by anyone – it's just existing in nature. The Buddha, after discovering it, pointed it out to the others. This path then is the Dhamma. The Dhamma is the path that must be travelled. The Buddha discovered it and pointed it out. Then the path itself is the Dhamma. And the Saṅgha are those who have followed the instructions and traveled the path until successful. Those who have travelled the path, who have practiced the Dhamma successfully, are called the 'Saṅgha.' The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha – all three are very intimately related with the path and the travelling of the path.

We can see that coming to study about Buddhism means to come and study about walking the path, practicing the path. This is what it means to study Buddhism. If we're going to walk the path we have to know what it is and understand how to walk correctly. Otherwise we just close our eyes and wander off and it will never be correct. We come to study the walking of the path so that we can walk correctly so that it will lead successfully to the quenching of *dukkha*. So it's important to study and understand how to walk the path.

In certain teachings such as Daoism – in fact Dao means 'path,' the Dao is 'the path' – this is the path that is followed until one is free of the influence of 'yin' and 'yang' or the positive and the negative. Through following the Dao, the path, one gets free of all dualism. In other teachings as well, the path is central, so the word 'path' has a very special and important meaning. It's the path that leads beyond the power of all negative and positive. It's a very special thing. If we look in Christianity, we also find the path. There are the words of Jesus Christ that "I am the path" or "I am the way." Christ has said that he is the way to God. What this means is that within Christ, within the way of living and behaving of Christ, there are the characteristics of selflessness, of living without 'self,' of living not for 'self,' of being willing to do anything for the sake of being free of 'self.' So in Christ's life we can see the path as well, the path that leads to God, to that which is beyond positive and negative. This in fact is the heart of Christianity – this removal of the self, removing of the 'I.' This is the kind of understanding we'd like to make amongst the religions – that we can see that in each religion there is the path. We don't need to argue about it. We just follow the path in our own way in order to be beyond the 'self,' beyond all positive and all negative.

We encourage all Christians to see the symbol of the cross in the following way: The upright is the 'self,' the 'I,' and then the cutting of the 'I' is the removal of the 'self.' In this symbol of the cross there is this very clear reminder of the heart of all spiritual practice – this removal of the 'I.' Cutting away the 'self,' this is the stairway to the highest thing, to God. There's the first order of God that forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit that led to the discrimination of good and evil, and the attachment to that good and evil. If one doesn't discriminate good and

evil, if one doesn't regard things as good and evil, there's no attachment to good and evil, and then one is free. Here is the same teaching as Buddhism. In fact in God's first order there is the heart of Buddhism.

Allow us to take a little time to go off the subject for a minute. Across the highway we're building an International Dharma Hermitage, and the purpose of this hermitage is to bring together representatives from all the religions in order to develop a mutual understanding that all true religion – all of the true religions – have at their heart the path, that there is the path in each of these religions. Why bothering arguing about which one is better or more attractive or more this or more that, but to understand and respect each other in terms of this path that exists in all religions, then to help each other and support each other to follow this path? So we're trying to develop an International Dharma Hermitage for this purpose so that all religions can be most successful in following *the* path, the *one* path that is at the heart of every religion, and to stop worrying about the secondary and superficial issues.

All religions teach the path. In Christianity it's taught that Jesus Christ is the way, is the path. In Buddhism the Dhamma is the path. In Daoism the Dao is the path. All religions have the path. All religions teach the path to the highest thing. All religions teach the path to the goal which is beyond all suffering, to live without any *dukkha*, without any conflict and strife, to live in true peace, in perfect peace. This is the heart of every religion, so it's possible that all the religions can get together and cooperate. It's utterly foolish to argue and compete. Instead we should understand each other and see this path that is the center of all religion and then cooperate.

This is enough for an introduction about the path, and now we'll talk about the path directly. The path in Buddhism is called the '*ariyaatṭhaṅgikamagga*,' which means the 'Noble Eightfold Path,' the 'Noble Path with eight components or eight factors.' The details of the Noble Eightfold Path are not something that we have to talk about right here. There are plenty of books about Buddhism that adequately explain the various factors, the various components of the Noble Eightfold Path, so we don't have to use time to talk about them. There're simply right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. As for the details of these eight factors, one can find them in the many books that deal with this subject. There's not anything very tricky or complicated about these eight factors. But what we would like to give special attention to is the word 'right.' All of these are right – right view, right aspiration, and so on, and it's very important that we understand correctly what 'right' means.

In Pāli, the word *sammā* means 'right.' In Thai they use the word *chobb*, which has a sense of 'being just,' 'of being correct.' So when we use the word 'right,' this means most of all that it is correct. If we use the word 'right' it must have some reference – so right according to what? Right in terms of what? This is very important. What is the object or what is the reference of this rightness? In Buddhism if it is right, it must be right in terms of Nibbāna. The reference point of this correctness in Buddhism is Nibbāna – it must lead right to Nibbāna. In Christianity it must be right towards God, the supreme thing. For us here it's enough to say right regarding New Life. This is enough for us because we've already discussed that New Life means life that is beyond positive and negative. So it's plenty, it's enough just to be right to the New Life. In the Pāli it is explained clearly that the meaning of *sammā* is to be right in terms of its goal. It's right if it truly successfully leads to the goal. That means that right view

is right if it's pointing to, leading to the goal, the goal of Nibbāna, or whatever we'd like to call it. Right aspiration – right aim – is right if it's truly pointing to, aiming at, leading to the goal, and the same for right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Four words explain *sammā* clearly, and the meaning of these four words is very important: The first is *viveka* – ‘to be supremely single’ or ‘supreme singularity,’ ‘utmost singleness.’ *Eka* means ‘one’ or ‘single,’ and *viv* means ‘supreme’ or ‘the highest’ or ‘perfect.’ So this means to be perfectly independent. It's perfect freedom to become completely one. The path or *sammā* is to depend on this *viveka*, to lead to this *viveka*. The second word is *virāga* – the path is leading to *virāga*, or ‘fading away.’ If we use the word ‘*virāga*’ in terms of physical things, it would be the stains, the dyes in a piece of cloth fading away and becoming fainter and fainter until completely gone. If we use it in terms of the mind, it means the fading away of attachment. As attachment dissolves, breaks off, and fades away, this is *virāga* until the complete fading away of attachment. This is the second word used to describe the path. The third word, which we've talked quite a bit about yesterday, is *nirodha* – ‘the path which leads to the quenching down,’ ‘the path is the quenching down of *dukkha*.’ The fourth word may be a little bit difficult to hear and understand, but is *vosagga* – ‘always inclining towards,’ ‘always tending towards,’ ‘always tending towards throwing away,’ ‘always tending towards throwing away our burdens.’ The burdens, of course, are any attachment to any of the five *khandhas*. The attachments are the burdens. *Vosagga* is throwing away the burdens of attachment, and *vosaggapariṇāmi* is the mind that's always tending towards, inclining towards the throwing away of attachment. For it to be the path, for something to truly be the path, there must be this constant throwing away. The mind is constantly inclining towards getting rid of attachments, relieving itself of the burden of attachments. Nowadays in this world our tendency isn't to throw away, to get rid of. Our tendency is always to accumulate, to get more, so it's not *vosaggapariṇāmi*. It's the opposite of that. Nowadays the world is cluttered, it's full of all kinds of junk that we don't even need, so there's not a whole lot of *vosaggapariṇāmi*.

There are these four words to explain what we mean by right: *Viveka* is perfect singleness, which means true spiritual independence, perfect freedom. *Virāga* is the fading away, meaning that the mind is not making more attachment and more *dukkha*, it's going towards the fading away of *dukkha*. *Nirodha* is the quenching and the coolness. *Vosagga* is always tending towards throwing away, getting rid of all those burdens, lightening the load. These four then are the basic principles of rightness, of correctness. But nowadays in the world nobody is really interested in this, and so all the things we do are going in the opposite direction. Take giving charity, giving *dāna* – it's usually done not for giving up, not for throwing away, but to receive certain benefits. People give charity in order to be reborn in heaven. Now big companies give charity as a way of getting advertisement or to enhance their image. Keeping morality – behaving decently and peacefully – isn't done for *virāga*, *viveka*, it's done to build up one's pride, to build up one's reputation. Politicians often cultivate this image for various worldly benefits. This isn't really right, at least in spiritual terms. On the worldly level it may be right. That may be correct for the way things work in the world but in terms of ending *dukkha*, it's not correct. Even developing the mind – practicing *samādhi*, meditation – is very often not for *viveka*, *virāga*, *nirodha*, or *vosaggapariṇāmi*. Meditation is often done with all kinds of trying to get magic powers or

being able to read people's minds or to become famous or to go back to the West and be a meditation teacher, and all kinds of things are taken as the goal of meditation. So if don't have these four qualities, then even what superficially may seem to be a spiritual practice is no longer spiritual, it's just turned into another worldly activity.

Some people do *vipassanā* to see all kinds of things – *vipassanā* means 'to see clearly' – some people do *vipassanā* in order to clearly see where dead people have gone and been reborn or to see what heaven looks like or to see what hell looks like, or even to see what the next winning lottery number will be. None of these have anything to do with *viveka*, *virāga*, *nirodha*, and *vosaggapariṇāmi*. Real *vipassanā* must have these four qualities. If it's lacking these qualities, it's just some fake, play, superficial, worldly show of *vipassanā*. So we must be very careful that everything we do – all our spiritual work – has these four qualities.

Giving charity, helping the poor, and doing good deeds – these are generally done for benefits in this world, for worldly benefits such as a good reputation, a happy mind, to feel good about oneself, to respect oneself, to impress other people, to become famous, or to who knows what. This is correct in worldly terms. As far as the way things work in this world that's correct, but it's not correct in terms of being above the world. That kind of attitude and understanding doesn't lead beyond the world – it doesn't free us from worldly conditions. For it to be correct in terms of transcending the world, being above and free of the world, these four qualities are necessary. This means that it must be correct in terms of Nibbanā. So *sammā* – rightness, correctness – must be correct in terms of Nibbanā, and if so it has these four characteristics. Look carefully and you'll see that worldly correctness – what is right according to the world – always leads to being stuck in the world. Worldly ideas about what is correct and right always lead to getting stuck and trapped within worldly conditions. Right in terms of being beyond the world's power, in terms of Nibbanā, in terms of true freedom and peace, has these four qualities of perfect singleness, fading away, quenching, and always inclining towards the throwing away of burdens.

Now we come to the word *aṭṭhaṅgika*, usually translated as 'eightfold.' *Aṭṭha* means 'eight.' *Gika* means 'factor,' 'component,' 'part,' or 'ingredient.' We don't really know what this word 'fold' means – maybe it's right, maybe it's wrong. But the meaning of the Pāli is 'eight factors,' 'eight components,' or 'eight ingredients' which come together to form one unity. It's not eight separate paths or eight parallel paths, it's eight ingredients that come together to form one unity. We can compare it to a rope with eight strands or an eight-ply rope where there are little strings woven together to form one strong rope. Any of the little strings by themselves couldn't do very much but weave them together and we've got one strong rope that's sufficient to do the job. Although the eight factors must fit together in a unified whole, there is one factor which is the leader, which is like the main ingredient. It's like in a medicine, especially in herbal medicine where you mix various things together, there'll be one that is the primary ingredient. In the Noble Eightfold Path there is one factor which is like this – *sammāsamādhi* or right concentration. This may sound a little bit strange to some of you. Many people would think it's that right understanding, right view – *sammādiṭṭhi* – the first factor which is most important, which must be the leader. But the way it really works is that in the path it's *sammāsamādhi* that is the leader, the main factor in doing the work. What's important here is that it's *sammāsamādhi*. It's not just concentration, but it's got to be right concentration, and it's right concentration if that right concentration includes right view. If there's no right view, the concentration can never be right. So for the concentration to be

right, it's being backed up by right understanding. We've got a special word or a new word to describe this. In some places the Buddha called it '*ariyasammāsamādhi*' – noble right concentration or enemy-less right concentration. This noble right concentration has seven supporters. The noble right concentration is doing the work but it's backed up by the other seven factors. Concentration by itself couldn't really do much – it couldn't solve any problems – but if right concentration is backed up by the other seven factors, then it is capable of cutting through all our problems and solving the dilemma of *dukkha*. So it's noble right concentration which is the leader of the path but it's still backed up, supported by, the other seven.

At first it seems strange that wisdom, right understanding, and right aspiration aren't leading the way, that they've now become helpers and supporters of this noble right concentration. We talk so much about wisdom that it sounds a little funny that it's in a support role here. The real power and the real strength of the path is with that right concentration. The other things support it. If we were to talk about wisdom cutting through the defilements, wisdom penetrating to truth, it's only the wisdom that has this noble right concentration. Without that right *samādhi*, wisdom can't really function. At first when we found this in the Pāli, we didn't believe it. It didn't make sense to us. How could concentration be the leader with right understanding and right aspiration as backups or supports? It didn't make much sense to us, but it's written there in the scriptures and so we studied it and tried to check out whether it was true or not. There's noble right concentration – not just right concentration but noble – the right concentration that gets free of all enemies. And this is supported by wisdom, right understanding, and right aspiration, as well as all the other rightnesses of the path. It would be like having something very sharp that has no weight – it couldn't cut through anything. Take a razor blade, which is very sharp but it doesn't have the weight to cut through anything thick like a tree. Unfortunately our defilements are rather thick, so just having the sharpness, the wisdom, and the understanding isn't enough. There has got to be the weight of *samādhi* with it. To do the work of removing the attachments, it takes right view, it takes right aspiration, it takes right morality, it takes enough right energy, enough mindfulness, but there's got to be that strength, that focus, that *samādhi* of the mind to actually do it. So right *samādhi* must be accompanied by all the other factors in order to cut through attachment, to remove attachment.

We tend to have a lot more interest in sharpness than in weight. We respect and honor sharpness more than weight. In society, for example, the ones that are given the higher status are the intellectuals, much more than the workers. In the Pāli, when it comes to really doing the work, the one that's given the emphasis, given the number one place, is right *samādhi*, because in cutting through attachment, it's *samādhi* that does the work. Wisdom may guide things. The wisdom has to be there but what actually does the work is the factor of right concentration. Another name for this kind of concentration is *anantariyasamādhi*. *Anantariya* means 'immediate' in the sense that wisdom is right there with the *samādhi*. It's *samādhi* that is stuck together, is fused together with wisdom. When that wisdom is right there with that *samādhi*, then it can do the work of cutting through the defilements. Literally, *anantariya* means 'without gap' – there's no space, there's not the least little space between wisdom and *samādhi*. Sharpness and weight cannot be separated. If you take these two qualities apart, you don't get any work done. So we must combine the sharpness and the weight in order to cut through the attachments, to chop through the defilements.

It's also necessary for there to be *sīla* – living life in a good proper way, a peaceful way of life, or a normal way of life. *Sīla* means 'normal' and it's often translated 'ethics,' so having an ethical, decent, good life is like a foundation. To do the cutting, to use the sharpness and the weight to cut through the defilements, we need something to stand on and that firm foundation we stand on is *sīla*. For it to be the Noble Eightfold Path, for it to truly be the path, there must be the weight and the sharpness working intimately together with no separation. And the foundation of *sīla* must be there as well. We can't just get by with wisdom, with intelligence. There must be the ethical life and the weight of *samādhi*. We can't get by on just one of these – we must have all three of these key ingredients working together. So within the Eightfold Path, there is the correctness or even the perfection of ethical living. There is the perfection of mental strength and skill of *samādhi* and there is the perfection of wisdom. These three correctnesses are functioning together in an inseparable way in the Noble Eightfold Path. As for the details of each of these eight factors, it's not difficult to find information on them in many of the books that have been published, even the ones that have been written by Western scholars. You can get sufficient information on these but the key ingredient – what's really important – is to understand how these work together. These factors are often considered separately and nobody bothers to put them together. So the question is, "How do they work together? How do they come together into one path? What is the way? How does that path cut through attachment? How does that path remove the attachment?" This is what must be understood.

And so it is that the Fourth Noble Truth answers the question, "By what method?" This Fourth Noble Truth explains the method, and within this Fourth Noble Truth we have the summary or the completion and integration of all the other Noble Truths. The Fourth Noble Truth is the path that leads to the quenching of *dukkha*. The result of this path, the fruits of the path, are the Third Noble Truth, the quenching of all *dukkha*. The way that this is done is by removing the cause of *dukkha*, removing the source of *dukkha*, which is the Second Noble Truth. Then the problem we started with in the beginning – the problem of *dukkha* – is gone. So in the Fourth Noble Truth, all the Noble Truths are completed. In summary, the Noble Eightfold Path is the path of life but it must be a path of New Life, the path of New Life that is completely beyond all problems. This is what the Eightfold Path is about. So we finish today's discussion and our meeting today is complete. We close the school for today.

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