

The Eightfold Path

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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The best of truths are the four sayings.
Nonattachment is the best of states.
The best of bipeds is the **seeing one**.

Dhammapada, v. 273

IV. *And what is that Middle Path, O bhikkhus, that the Tathagata has realized? It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely: Right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is the Noble Eightfold Path realized by the Tathagata. It produces vision, it produces knowledge, it leads to calm, to higher knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbana.*

THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS are essentially a "path of purification." The Buddha never intended that people should worship him or accept his teachings on faith alone. He wanted all beings to be free from the bondage of greed, anger, and delusion. Liberation in Buddhism means freedom from all kinds of mental impurities. In order to accomplish this, one must develop the Noble Eightfold Path. During his forty-five years as a fully enlightened one, the Buddha imparted the Dhamma according to individual capacities, aptitudes, and depths of understanding. But the essence of all the discourses recorded in Buddhist scriptures are to be found in the teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path, which are:

1. right understanding (*samma ditthi*)
2. right thought (*samma san kappa*)
3. right speech (*samma vaca*)
4. right action (*samma kammanta*)
5. right livelihood (*samma ajiva*)
6. right effort (*samma vayama*)
7. right mindfulness (*samma sati*)
8. right concentration (*samma samadhi*)

The order in which the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are listed is not to be understood as successive stages of practice. They are all to be developed together. Since each factor is linked to the others, and all are mutually supportive, the path constitutes a method of training which must be practiced as a whole in order to be effective.