

The Path by Nick Koch

The following is a brief overview of the Buddhist path as described in multiple places in the Pali Canon, the most complete existing early Buddhist collection of teachings. While the Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path are the best known summary of the Buddhist path, the path outlined here is little known and deserves wider recognition. The Noble Eightfold Path includes right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Little known is that two additions of right knowledge and right release were sometimes added, making a ten fold path. Those qualities are divided into three broad themes of ethics (sila), concentration (samadhi), and wisdom (panna). The path described here encompasses the same qualities, but a number of different features will surely stand out. We can view the Noble Eightfold Path as the basic summary of the Buddhist path, and this outline is a somewhat more advanced summary.

Due to the scattered and slightly varying recordings of this path in the Pali Canon, it came to me one day to make a compilation and short commentary. I have taken liberty to compile several versions into one in order to show a more complete progression of the gradual path of practice. Nonetheless, this is still just a short outline, a simple map to show the way. Many additional qualities can be added along the main progression shown bellow. The most complete single list of this path has 12 steps, mainly missing those related to ethics. This longer version is in the Upanisa Sutta, and has been termed transcendental dependent arising. While ordinary or mundane dependent arising explains the arising of suffering & stress, this version explains the means to its end. See the sources at the end of this article for the Pali sutta translations and additional articles. In one of the articles Bhikkhu Bodhi explained:

Despite the great importance of the *Upanisa Sutta*, traditional commentators have hardly given the text the special attention it would seem to deserve. Perhaps the reason for this is that, its line of approach being peculiar to itself and a few related texts scattered through the Canon, it has been overshadowed by the many other suttas giving the more usual presentation of doctrine. But whatever the explanation be, the need has remained for a fuller exploration of the sutta's meaning and implications.

Note that the steps in the path are interrelated, so it will help to read "leads to" or "supports" in between the steps bellow. Some Pali terms are provided in parenthesis to aid further research. Often I have given multiple English words for a Pali word in order to better tease out meaning.

COMPILATION

1. Recognition of suffering / dissatisfaction (dukkha)...begins the path
2. Faith / Confidence (saddha) in the teachings leading to the end of dukkha
3. Discipline (vinaya)
4. Skillful (kusala) virtues & restraint (samvara)
5. Freedom from remorse (kukkucca)
6. Gladness / Joy (pamojja)
7. Rapture / Delight (piti)
8. Tranquility (passaddhi)
9. Pleasure / Bliss (sukkha)
10. Concentration / Unification (samadhi)
11. Knowledge and vision of things as they have come to be, of things as they actually are, in accord with reality (yathabhutananadassana)
12. Disenchantment (nibbida)
13. Dispassion (viraga)
14. Liberation / Release (vimutti)
15. Unbinding (nibbana) through non-clinging. Knowledge of the extinction of the mental effluents or fermentations (asavakkhayenana) that support clinging and suffering...ends the path.

COMMENTARY

1 & 2. Taken broadly, the Four Noble Truths of suffering, origination of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the way leading to cessation of suffering. A degree of trust is needed to begin the path that follows.

3. Discipline. Morals. The monastic code for monks and nuns. The five, eight, and ten precepts. Practice needed to develop skillful, wholesome qualities.

4. Appropriate attention, heedfulness, modesty, contentment, sense restraint, and other essential qualities. Mindfulness (sati) & investigation (dhamma vicaya) are the first two in the list of seven factors of awakening.

5. Remorse is one of the hindrances to meditation. Taken broadly, less mental disturbances lead to a more settled mind and feelings of gladness.

6. Gladness. Energy / Determination (viriya) is a factor of awakening. A beneficial base for the more dedicated meditative practice that follows.

7. Rapture. Refreshment. One of the seven factors of awakening. A shorthand reference to the first meditative absorption (jhana), where piti predominates.

8. Tranquility. Inner serenity. Another of the seven factors of awakening. The second jhana, with deeper levels of stillness, quietude.

9. Pleasure. Bliss. Ease. The third jhana, where sukka predominates.

10. Concentration. The fourth jhana, where equanimity (upekkha) predominates. Samadhi and upekkha are the last factors of awakening.

11. Knowledge and vision refers to insight and wisdom, in short. Becoming less deluded, seeing things as they are. All experiences are perceived as inconstant, stressful, not self, & not worthy of passion, desire, clinging.

12. Disenchantment. Disillusionment. Turning away. Revulsion.

13. Dispassion. Non-attachment. Non-grasping. Subduing of intoxication.

14. Release. Freedom from craving, clinging, and suffering is liberation.

15. Total unbinding refers to full awakening, the completion of the path. The chief defilement of ignorance / delusion (avijja) is uprooted as well as the the four forms of clinging (upadana) to sensuality (kamupadana), views (ditthupadana), practices (silabbatupadana), and doctrines of the self (attavadupadana).

SOURCES

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5) Samyutta Nikaya 12.23 – Upanisa Sutta

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.023.bodh.html>

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7) Digha Nikaya 2

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8) Majjhima Nikaya 7

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10) Transcendental Dependent Arising: A Translation and Exposition of the Upanisa Sutta by Bhikkhu Bodhi

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/wheel277.html>

11) Awakening with Dependent Origination by Gil Fronsdal

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12) The Spiral Path or Lokuttara Pattecasamuppada & related articles by Jayarava

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