

REC006

Today's talk will be entitled

## **The Noble Eight-fold Path \***

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### **Introduction**

Arising out of the Four Noble Truths  
is the Noble Eight-fold Path —

[or in other words]

[The Way to Liberation on the Path to Purity.](#)

This Eightfold Path/ is the centre and apex  
of what makes/ the Buddha-Dhamma  
[unique/, in comparison/ to all other religions  
and philosophies and forms of moral practice.](#)

So let's look, now, at  
The Noble Eightfold Path  
in coherent detail to see  
**why it is unique** in its approach.

\*

[Much of what needs to be said,  
we have discussed earlier,  
under the heading of *The Three Signata*,

in particular the nature of  
ignorance (*avijja*),  
suffering (*dukkha*)  
and the impermanent nature of all things (*anicca*),  
including non-self (*anatta*).

\*

[and]

The Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi's book,  
*The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering*.  
(BPS Wheel Series 308-311)

contains the best explanation  
to read in present-day English/  
for a detailed description/  
of the factors on the path.

And we may note that the  
Venerable Bodhi  
was the former Editor and President  
of the Buddhist Publication Society,

who worked closely with,  
and acted as successor to,

the Venerable Nyanaponika Maha Thera,  
in Kandy, in the Forest Hermitage,  
to bring the BPS' quest to the  
fulfillment of its mission

which was

to translate and disseminate  
the basic words of the Buddha  
to the western world, in the final  
years of the twentieth century,  
before the turn of the millennium.

\*

In the present context,  
we cannot quote quite as  
extensively as we have done  
earlier  
on the *Four Noble Truths*,

so, we will confine ourselves  
instead,

to a tight, coherent,  
summary,

in hopes/ that the reader/ may/  
himself/ be motivated/ to undertake  
wider study/ on the subject of/  
The Noble Eightfold path/  
based on his own volition.

So here we may begin to describe the process

Of the Noble Eightfold Path by starting with

The [First Path Factor]

## 1. Concerning Right View

From the very beginning,

we must understand/ that the way in  
which/ men commonly see-themselves  
and the things/ which they sense/ and experience-

[as being permanent/ and as being there/  
in the world/ for their own pleasure/]  
is a **Totally Wrong View:**

It is **Wrong View** because of a failure  
to see the nature of **impermanence**  
as it affects people's **personal views-**

towards things they want/ and/  
**their resultant false-expectations/**  
of the way they want/  
things to turn-out-to be  
**for themselves.**

**Ironically, Right Understanding** means  
that one is able to see-through

such a limited and worldly-based

wrong view/ and its dependency

on wrong understanding/ of  
the assumption of the world,

as being there  
for the sake of self-satisfaction.

Right View is sometimes translated  
as Right Perspective, which means that  
we must see the world from the perspective  
of The Four Noble Truths  
as explained by the Buddha,

In accordance with whom

Bhikkhu Bodhi writes:

“To follow the Noble Eightfold Path  
is a matter of practice rather  
than intellectual knowledge,

but to follow the path correctly,  
it has to be understood.”

So, Right Understanding itself becomes  
the primary basis for practicing the path.”

\*

In a short quote from the  
Preface to his book,  
Bhikkhu Bodhi states:

“The path claims primacy  
because it is precisely this  
that brings the teaching to life:

The path [gradually]  
translates the Dhamma  
from a collection of  
abstract formulas  
into a/  
continually-unfolding/  
disclosure of truth.”

In short, the path/ becomes/ a new way of life.

\*

Regarding the term ‘suffering’ or *dukkha*,  
Venerable Bodhi says:

“[Dukkha] refers to the basic

‘unsatisfactoriness’  
running  
through our lives,  
as the bane of existence.

which sometimes  
erupts as sorrow, grief,  
disappointment or despair”

but, more often, as something which:  
“hovers at the edge of our awareness  
as a vague, unlocalized  
sense that things are  
never quite perfect,  
never fully adequate  
to our expectations of  
what they should be.

“Even our pleasures, the Buddha says,  
are not immune from *dukkha*.

They give us happiness/ while they last/  
**but** they do not last forever;

eventually, they must pass away/ and,  
when they go/, the loss leaves us/ feeling deprived.

[and]

Our lives are, for the most part, strung-out  
between  
the thirst for pleasure and the fear of pain.

We pass our days running after pleasure  
and running away from pain,

seldom enjoying the peace of contentment.

[and]

real satisfaction seems always  
to be somehow out of reach.”

\*

The Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi  
echoes the same essential truths  
as Dr. Wijesekera and Francis Story,  
(in the foregoing series of lectures),  
because they are the same truths,  
expressed in the words of Buddha,

Because they are the truths being translated  
into what are gradually becoming  
more-and-more refined English renderings,  
under the hands of Sri Lankan Pali Scholars, Professors

and Noble Minded Monks like

- Venerable Nyanatiloka,
- Venerable Nyanaponika,
- Bhikkhu Nanamoli,
- Venerable Narada Thera
- Soma Thera,
- Bhikkhu Khantipalo,

- Venerable Piyadassi
- Venerable Bodhi

(and others) based upon  
the one and only/  
original Dhamma/, in the classic Pali texts.

It was Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi's teacher,  
the Venerable Nyanaponika Maha Thera,  
who visualized, the dissemination of the Dhamma  
as the mission of the Buddhist Publication Society,  
beginning in 1958,

following the inspiration of his own teacher,  
the Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha Thera,  
**who** was the first foreign monk ever ordained  
in the Pali Theravada Tradition, in Sri Lanka,  
in the early years of the twentieth century,

[and]

**who** fully-dedicated his whole monk's life  
to translating and explicating,  
the Buddha-Dhamma to the wider world,  
in English language renderings,  
based on the tradition of Theravada  
monastic and meditative practice,  
exactly as outlined in the Pali texts.

The essential thing for us, in terms of

“The Mind Watching the Mind”

is to see that no part of the

### **Noble Eightfold Path**

may be skipped-over or left out

on “The Path to Purification,” as

we shall see in the instructions

and guidelines which follow:

### Concerning the **Cause of Suffering**

Bhikkhu Bodhi rightly says that:

“If we want to put an end to suffering, we  
have to stop it where it begins, **with its cause.**”

And ‘How does this apply to **us?**’ [may we ask?]

And the answer is that

in order to understand and end our suffering,

we **each** need to seek-out and examine,

analyze and understand

the root causes of our individual suffering:

\*

What makes the Buddha’s approach unique  
is that it, gradually, reveals to us a process

which slowly trains/, enables/ and allows the mind  
to observe and analyze/, and eventually see, how

these root causes/ of our own sufferings arise,  
within our own minds—as bothersome, hungry,  
irritating, stress-causing, self-satisfying needs—

and how they can be eliminated if **we**,  
with mental detachment, consistently,

stand back and continue watching

the grasping-mind’s greedy mental habits,  
movements and actions, with detachment—

and with unrelenting objective energy  
and endurance, until we are able to isolate/

and then clearly see the burning, hungry  
sources and causes/ for the untrained mind’s  
grasping mental actions/, in the actual  
moment they are arising.

**If we can** allow the trained mind  
[The Mind Watching the Mind]  
to gradually work on extinguishing  
and eliminating the wildly, and  
untamed and untrained,  
grasping nature of the mind—

[which, still, greedily needs to  
continue nourishing and feeding-  
itself through contact to both,

external and internal, physical  
and mental mind objects]

—**If we can** concentrate, until  
the trained and watchful side  
of the mind, observing  
the grasping side of the mind,  
finally, clearly sees and is able to

relinquish the last latent-impulses  
of selfish-nourishment and, thereby,  
exhaust the last embers of the  
burning-energy of arising attachments  
to contacts and mental ‘needs to feed’-

—**If we can**, eliminate the  
last embers of consuming  
and consumed-nourishment,

at the end of the process,

the detached part of the mind

will become cool and calm—  
“like a cool, clear pool,”  
to quote an oft-cited image...

[**but**]

while this Process of Purification

sounds consistent and balanced,  
(**at least** in language and words)  
it is still not so easy to follow,  
and finally accomplish the end...

**at least** as long as we are still  
subjectively-willing-victims  
of  
the uncontrolled and wild sides  
of our own distracted-minds.

So how do we stop becoming our own willing-victims?

\*

The answer is that, once we have  
Right View [or Right Understanding],

we may have the good sense,  
(the good intention) to start

with Right View and, then, begin

to attempt to curb the distressing  
and harmful effects of the often  
self-destructive intentions of the  
untrained, wild side of the mind.

Which brings us to the

[Second Path Factor]

## 2. Concerning Right Intention

Based on Right View,  
with the **Right Attitude**,  
we must want to do  
the right thing  
for the right reason.

This means making a commitment  
to avoiding harmful actions  
for the purpose of/ self-training/  
[as a form/ of mind-development].

[and]

For the sake of such mind–development,

we begin by trying to exercise  
relinquishment towards the ‘pull’

of any **desire or force** that is  
arising in the mind which may  
draw us towards wholesome results.

And [we must note that]

this does not mean  
development of self-control

—by force—

[not forcing oneself]

But, rather, by slowly  
developing the wisdom to foresee  
the eventual effects of mental causes.

\*

Right Intention acts on the ability  
to see a cause-and-effect relationship,  
based on dependent origination—

which means [in other words]:

‘When this happens, that happens.’

It is conducive to harmlessness.

It means seeing that good-will  
leads to more good will than  
bad-will/ (or bad intention)/-  
which leads to more ill-will.

It means cultivating the development  
of loving-kindness and compassion/  
in the place of/ anger violence and cruelty.

Right Intention practiced, in itself,  
is a beginning, which, when continued,

consistently, and with mindfulness, can  
take us right through to the end of the path.

[and]

Since the path both begins and ends  
with Right View and Right Intention,  
we can, now, proceed to discuss  
the subsequent six factors, which arise  
out of these two primary definitions,-

knowing we will eventually  
need to twist these strands of  
Right View and Right Understanding

together with the other six threads  
of the cord, slowly but tightly,  
binding  
all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path  
strongly-together in our development on the path.

[and]

As our understanding becomes better  
in developing the gradual attainment  
of Right Wisdom through Right Insight,  
it becomes like a strong rope  
which cannot so-easily be broken.

\*\*\*

We must realize that

since, from the very beginning,  
everything depends on  
Right Mindfulness and morality,  
we then have to learn to

practice awareness-  
in our every thought, word and deed.

As thought precedes action,  
for example, we have to think  
about everything we say  
before we say it.

We have to be attentive  
even about the thoughts-  
which will lead to spoken-words

based on the Noble Intention that  
they may contain no potential  
harmfulness to others or ourselves.

And one of the best ways to maintain right  
practice within our daily routine is to  
be careful about practicing Right Speech.

The [Third Path Factor] is, thus,

### **3. Concerning Right Speech**

We have to be careful about what we say  
because words can break or save lives,  
make enemies or friends, and create war or peace.

To abstain from false speech,  
we should avoid deliberately telling lies.

We should avoid speaking deceitfully;

[we should]

Abstain from slanderous speech and not speak maliciously;

Abstain from harsh words that may harm or hurt others;

Abstain from all idle-chatter and gossip  
which is shallow and contains no depth;

[and]

In short, we should tell the truth,

[and]

speak kindly and thoughtfully to others;

[we should always]

speak softly and gently,

warmly and compassionately to others;

[and]

Remain silent when speech is not necessary.

[and]

Ideally, we should speak only about the Dhamma

[and]

we should speak only with like-minded individuals.

[and thus]

It follows that,

if we are paying close attention

[and]

being mindful of every arising thought  
before it turns/ into an action of speech,

then, we should be even-  
more careful/ about controlling  
the way/ thought may turn into action.

[Moreover]

the advantage for us is that  
the mind is quicker than the body,

so the person who develops mindfulness  
will develop the skill of catching the mind,-

when its arising inclinations or intentions  
are potentially harmful and dangerous

[and]

thus be capable of halting actual unskillful  
bodily actions before they can even occur.

[and]

This is called Right Action.

In the [Fourth Path Factor]

#### **4. Concerning Right Action**

we should avoid any and all bodily actions  
which are expressions of unwholesome or

harmful intentions, to ourselves or other persons  
or to any other form of living, being in the world.

Unwholesome actions lead to  
Clouded- or unsound-states of the mind,

**Whereas**, wholesome actions lead  
to clear and sound states of mind.

Right Action means:

Abstention from harming sentient beings,  
especially the taking-of-life in all its forms;

[It means]

Abstention from the intention of suicide;

Abstention from doing any intentional sort  
of harm or delinquency;

Abstention from taking what is not given,

including stealing, robbery, fraud,  
deceptiveness and dishonestly;

[and, finally,]

Abstention from sexual-misconduct.

In short,

we should always act  
kindly and compassionately  
respectfully and honestly  
towards others and their belongings,

always

being mindful that our relationships  
to ourselves and to others and to  
the world-at-large is harmless and wholesome.

[Right Action will be discussed again  
Later, in another talk, when we deal  
with the Five Moral Precepts.]

[but, here,]

The focal-point of Right Action is  
always to be mindful that there is no  
harmfulness intended in any of our actions,

and, thus, we should also earn our living  
and work in a livelihood doing no harm  
to others or to anything else in any way.

This is called Right Livelihood.

In the [Fifth Path Factor]

## **5. Concerning Right Livelihood**

Right Livelihood means that  
we should earn-our-living in a clean,  
moral, sound, open, innocent, guiltless,  
upright and virtuous (righteous) way.

We should earn our income legally and peacefully.

In earning our living, we should abstain  
from harming all others,  
in any way, whatsoever.

And in particular, we should abstain  
from dealing in arms and weapons.

We should abstain from dealing in living-beings,  
including human-beings for slavery or prostitution  
and from dealing in animals intended for slaughter.

We should abstain from producing  
and butchering and selling meat.

We should abstain from selling  
intoxicants and poisons such as alcohol  
and drugs and other harmful substances.

And lastly, but not least,

we should abstain from following  
any sort of occupation which would  
violate the principles of Right Speech  
and the principles of Right Action

in any way whatsoever.

This means that, if most of us looked at ourselves,  
[and closely examined the ways we earn our livings],  
we might possibly see ourselves as being somehow compromised in  
our occupations — in diverse ways.

And, if this is so, we should be asking ourselves  
about what we can do to remedy and change that.

Some, [like teachers and doctors and nurses, for example],  
would be in a good position to practice Right Livelihood,  
if they mindfully observed their actions  
in every detail of their daily practice.

[but] the problem is that

in all cases concerning Right Speech,

Right Action and Right Livelihood,  
there is only one person who can  
ever know if his actions are virtuous

and that will be you yourself—  
—you are ‘the one who knows’—  
and you, yourself, are the only one  
who can do anything about it.

The terrible thing about morality [in Pali (*sila*)]  
is that the responsibility falls solely upon you,  
including any sense of blame and shame you feel,

when you know, through the mind watching the mind,  
you are, even, actually, and secretly deceiving yourself.

\*

And there also arises a sense of **moral-dread**,  
which one feels resulting from wrong-doing,

which, then, motivates one/ to want/ to do/ what  
one has-to-do/ in order to ‘set things straight.’

—To set things morally right.

There are all too few of us who can say,  
*“I have done what needed to be done,  
And, by now, I have set things right.”*

The reason for this is that

it takes the greatest effort possible  
to overcome the inertia of just plain  
remaining in the worldly-world  
with the rest of the worldly-folks.

It takes the greatest effort to  
perform the almost impossible:  
**through making a ‘paradigm shift’  
and swimming against the current**

of the mundane and muddy,  
worldly, seedy, seamy,  
dreary stream of daily life,

with no other guarantee of success  
but your own ardent single-mindedness  
and confidence, which may or may not lead  
in our practice to a happy, supramundane state.

**The blessing is** that, once you have realized  
that you are in a state of mixed-consciousness,

[being pulled back-and-forth between two worlds],

**The blessing is** that for the one with Right View,  
there is no turning back— and so you continue to  
go forward.

Because of your innate sense of Right Intentions,  
You will never need to face the consequences  
of committing wrong or harmful actions.

Right Livelihood means overcoming  
the moral dilemma, and those who  
fall back, into unwholesome actions  
will, usually, also, inherently know,-

having a secret sense of fear in their hearts,  
that they are returning to yet another round  
of the kind of hell they have just come from  
and are presently creating and perpetuating.

So what do we do?

We strive to continue to do our best,  
without any particular expectation  
and without any particular end in view,  
we just strive to do the best we can do.

We continue to tidy-up  
the workshop of the mind  
and continually hone and sharpen  
the tools of mental comprehension,

in preparation for formulating  
right mental motives and Right Actions,  
leading to purer and clearer mental states,  
following what is called Right Effort.

and, here,

we shall pause before going on to the next section of our lecture

\*\*\*\*\*

[Open next audio file to continue.]

We shall continue by talking about the

[Sixth Path Factor]

## 6. Concerning Right Effort

What we must understand about Right Effort is that, in addition to developing wholesome inclinations towards Right Actions,-

we must, simultaneously, (at the same time),

remain capable/ of continually and persistently striving, with ardent-concentration/, to develop the skill of abstaining/ from unskillful tendencies towards/ potentially-arising/, unwholesome states.

\*

On the Noble Eightfold Path,

it is absolutely necessary to make  
an arduous, unrelenting effort-

to overcome the tendencies  
and inclinations which  
lead directly to **temptations**

**to indulge in wrong speech/  
wrong action/ and wrong livelihood.**

Moreover,

**—while it takes** determined focus and  
persistent unrelenting energy/ to swim/  
[with vitality]/, against the waves  
within the swirl / of worldly seas,-

[—while mindfully avoiding/  
being hooked by attachments—]

**[And]**

**—while it takes** determined-focus in  
scanning the stream of consciousness/  
to isolate, [with mental insight], potential  
arising dependencies/ to the external things/  
which craftily/ keep-creeping/ in from the world

**[And]**

—**while it takes** unrelenting energy,

—**the effort will finally be worth it**  
in terms of the calm and tranquility  
and peace-of-mind it eventually brings.

\*

[Unfortunately,]

for the slothful and lazy

—applying such a  
mental-energy process,  
with such intense-focus,  
will [in no way] be  
easy-to-accomplish,-

[because]

it goes against the gravity  
and mental-pull of the mind  
towards the mundane things  
towards which it is inclined.

\*

We must, thus, stress,  
for the sake of clarity:

[that]

while burning-away of such mental impurities  
seems to make sense, [causally and dependently],

a practitioner's  
actually becoming capable of  
accomplishing  
such attainment  
of peace of mind/ is not quite as/  
easy/ as one might/ at first/ presume:

[Indeed,]

it takes much more intense/  
concentration/and focus/  
than, one, might/ at first,  
ever/imagine/or realize/,-

[In order]

to be able to arouse  
the focus of  
burning energy/-

to strive to be capable  
of overcoming/ temptations/  
towards mundane unwholesome/  
tendencies and intentions-

not only from the worldly-world

[but]

which **also** arise out of/  
[as yet] hidden/and residual,

**[but possible], unskillful,  
evolving-thought-perceptions/-**

which are, [latently], inherently  
impacted within the networks  
of workings-of-the-mind-itself/

and/ which will forever/ and

constantly and continuously/ *covertly/  
slyly and wily/* be trying/ to get-control/  
of the mind/ and take it back-off-track.

\*

[Hence,]

in summary, we may stress that  
“The Mind Watching the Mind”

has to be very highly-skilled  
and/ ever-alert/ and energetic in  
resisting attacks/ which come/  
from both inside/ and outside.

To use an analogy, the mind needs  
to learn to continue to keep creating  
new mental security-systems to be  
capable of coping with potentially-  
arising risk-situations, to be able:

— to live in peace and harmony  
with itself and within the world—

—to live under myriad/ uncertain/  
and unsure/ conditions,  
and dependently-arising/  
relative factors/ and circumstances...

**[But]**

**if we persist, we progress.**

and as we proceed on the path  
(whether we notice any marked-progress or not)  
we will,  
through the gradual penetration of insight wisdom,

slowly begin to see [within the recesses of the mind]  
where the base-intentions cunningly hide themselves,-

just waiting for an opportune-moment  
[or chance]  
to emerge and appear/ out of the gloomy darkness/  
and attempt to overtake/ and overwhelm the mind: -

**[wherever and whenever they find an opening.]**

And, here, it must be very frankly-stressed  
That, without the basic essential pre-requisites,  
of Right Effort and Right Energy,  
it is frankly impossible to make further-progress on the path.

As we slowly realize this,  
we develop and gain  
the insight to see how-

flowing-mental-energy  
can either be-

controlled or uncontrolled,  
[focussed or unfocussed],  
within arising mind states.

\*

**We** also develop the insight to see  
how much mental energy is, actually,  
uselessly-wasted and dissipated  
in running-after unskillful states  
and unrealizable goals.

**We** come to gain the insight to see  
how most people waste most of  
their time and energy, in vain,  
and worldly pursuits which lead-

to little more than an unhappy-death in the end.

[Fortunately,]

there are some/, who can learn/  
how to cultivate and focus/  
and direct their energies/

away from undesirable/  
and unwholesome ends/

and, eventually/, learn how  
to turn/ and focus  
fixed-concentrated-energy/  
upon wholesome states/ which/,

[with time and perseverance],

will lead to harmonious/ and wholesome/ states in the end.

[Fortunately,]

The same energy/ that serves/ as fuel/ for desire,  
envy, hatred and aggression and violence  
can be turned-around and used as fuel to  
develop and sustain more **beneficial states**:

**of self-discipline, honesty,  
benevolence and kindness**

leading away from the

detrimental effects  
of wrong mindfulness—

and, focussing, instead,

on cultivating more-pure and wholesome states.

\*\*\*

Instead of being burned-up/ and wasted in/  
grasping-after/ and grappling-with/ useless-desires,-

the energy of Right Effort may be used/ to develop  
skills/ and powers/ of Right Mindfulness/ which has  
an enervating and radiant effect on our states of mind.

Right Effort should be seen  
as the right way of  
burning the energy of **your** life

**—on the one hand,**

to burn away, consume/  
and extinguish/ wrong intentions

[and]

**—on the other,**

to fuel Right Actions,

which lead to Right Mindfulness  
and Right Concentration on the path  
to what becomes Right Wisdom.

\*\*\*

Properly understood,

Right Effort becomes entirely wholesome,  
once one has reached the state in which  
one is able to subdue unwholesome states  
and mindfully pursue wholesome states.

[And further,]

Right Effort may be broken-down/  
into **four types** of endeavour/  
which rank/ in four levels  
of achievement/ of purity and perfection:

- (i) The first is to **prevent the arising of un-arisen, unwholesome states.**
- (ii) The second is to **abandon unwholesome states** which have already arisen.
- (iii) The third is to **arouse wholesome states** which have not yet arisen, and
- (iv) The fourth is to **maintain and protect wholesome states** already arisen.

[repeat]

This fourth and final  
factor of Right Effort—

to protect and maintain  
wholesome states already-arisen  
is essential for the proper  
cultivation of higher concentration.

And, here/, once more/, we repeat:

**You cannot succeed** in  
breathing or insight meditation

without first/, yourself/,  
being able to/  
cultivate mental-power/  
through Right Effort.

**Without Right Effort,**

the moment you begin to try to meditate,  
the untrained mind, [having superior and  
un-restrained power/, temporarily at least],

will be running-off in search of something-

*which it likes a whole-lot-better*

**[and]**

*which is a whole-lot-easier to get.*

\*

[Thus,]

if you want to develop/  
on the Noble Eightfold Path/  
you must be able to/

concentrate your mental effort/  
in a way which keeps the mind/  
one-pointed/ and controlled,

with firmly-determined,  
soundly-developed  
power-of-mind.

To reiterate, [using an analogy],

you must be able to develop  
the power-of-mind which  
can control the tendencies  
of potential-mind-energy

[and]

you must be able to  
recognize and stop  
the latent, 'impish-  
impulses' of the mind

even before the,

*covert and perverse*  
*imp-of-the-mind*  
is able to suddenly “*pop-up,*”

unexpectedly,  
from out of a dark corner,  
somewhere,

to take over control of your  
mental faculties and actions  
and, unexpectedly, vex, and  
cloud and blind your mind—

so that you do something foolish,  
which you’ll immediately regret.

\*\*\*\*\*

[Here, also,]

it is perhaps worthy of mention, [as an aside],  
that we should never make the mistake/  
which a lot of people make/,

of thinking...

that ‘Right Effort’ is a skill which can be learned  
from a book/, and,/ then,/ practiced a bit,  
[to fall back-upon, ]  
if we happen to need it—

[if and when]

we may go to a meditation session with our friends.

[Furthermore,]

we should never make the mistake

of thinking that someone can teach us  
how to switch on the skill of Right Effort,  
[like a light], so we can draw on its power,  
just in case we may need it sometime.

It takes continual effort all the time.  
All throughout one's life.  
All day, every day  
and  
there is no other way.

[Moreover,]

we cannot keep giving-in/ to the whims  
and impulses of the mind/, all the time;  
and, then, possibly/, **once a year**/  
go to a three-week/ meditation session/

and sit on a **cushion**/ and imagine/  
that doing intensive-breathing/  
meditation exercises/ [for a while]/

will help/ to clear and develop/  
and thereby empower the mind.

Periodic sessions, like this/,  
have only limited/,

periodic success/  
which lasts more-or-less/

for as long as the mind/  
is able to remain focused/  
and concentrated/

and has not yet become/  
drawn-into/ and distracted/  
by the stress/ and madness

of life/ back at work/  
or at home/ in the everyday world.

[So]

let us emphasize/ once again/  
that the only way/  
you can free your mind  
from strife in the mind/

is by constantly-watching it/  
all of the time/ and not allowing yourself/  
to be distracted [by one thing or another].

\*\*\*

**One with perfect equanimity will never be distracted.**

**[and]**

\*

how you arouse  
the effort  
depends upon you/,

[and]

whatever happens/  
there will surely be things/  
you will have to eliminate,  
let-go-of and relinquish,

but exactly what they might be  
only you yourself,

**[as the only one who knows],**

will be able to ultimately  
discern and distinguish.

**[In summary, concerning this point:]**

**on the level of morality,**

***sila* must co-exist and develop  
with meditation in everyday life,**

**if there is to be progress in the  
process of development of wisdom.**

And, actually, we end up  
practicing all of the factors  
of the path all at one time.

\*\*\*

More generally and widely speaking,

Luang Por Viriyang tells us in his  
*Instructions for Meditation Teachers*  
(ibid. I. pp.40-41) that meditation can  
benefit our lives in many ways:

“Meditation can fine-tune/  
the fundamentals of the mind/  
and strengthen its condition/,

[in order]

to promote happiness/  
and peacefulness:/  
-from a family unit/-  
-to community unit.-

Meditation is a path/  
to conscious everyday life/  
[and],

It need not only be specifically  
a path to the supramundane  
on other planes of life.”

[but he also goes on to say]

“Meditation is an achievement/  
for those who would like/  
to obtain the peace of mind/-

which promotes happiness/,  
[strength-for-perseverance/](#),

wisdom/, careful consideration/  
and problem-solving skills.”

[and]

In yet another place, putting  
it very crassly and specifically,  
Luang Por Viriyang says:

[“Meditation is a scavenger hunt of the mind.”](#)

This is a good sentence to remember,  
when our minds are running-after  
trashy or nasty thoughts and getting  
wholly off-the-track of wholesomeness.

Right Mindfulness also  
works as a garbage-collector,  
picking up useless scraps  
of thoughts and foul elements,-

along the way, and discarding  
and eliminating them, so they  
cannot mess-up your mind  
or leave a dirty-track behind.

\*\*\*

Right Speech, Right Action,  
Right Livelihood and Right Effort,  
properly practiced,

can purify our minds in the domain  
of morality,  
[which in Pali, is called ‘*sila*.’]

Without a firm foundation  
in ‘*sila*,’ (or morality),  
there can be little or no progress  
on the Noble Eightfold Path to Purity,

and those who make little or no progress  
in this domain are bound to remain lost  
[and ignorant] in the realm of delusion,

[and,]

[in contrast to the true practitioner],

they will, eventually, suffer the effects

of their bad actions, in this life and the next, in a form of suffering and torment-

which is equal to the intensity of the unwholesome/ and unsavory/ actions they have performed/ within this world.

\*

By contrast, the disciple who practices good thoughts/ and actions/, in this world/,

[avoiding the impulses of the senses/  
to rush blindly  
(right into the fiery pit)  
of rash and unskillful actions],

will develop the skill of  
avoiding immoral actions

and reap the benefit of the  
good and moral actions  
which his psychophysical  
mind/body performs in this life.

The Pali word for such action,  
[bad or good], is '*kamma*,' and,

thus, we are said to reap  
the fruit of our actions—

to reap the fruit of our *kamma*.

\*\*

Directing the mind solely towards  
wholesome, beneficial actions  
is called Right Concentration,

and, while the word ‘concentration’  
can be easily misapprehended,  
[because it has a wide range of meanings  
and connotations in conventional English],

what it means, here, is Right Mindfulness,  
leading into [fixed-concentration](#)  
[upon one meditative mind object](#).

\*\*\*\*

To continue,

while the initial steps  
of the Noble Eightfold Path:  
fall into the domain of morality  
-which in Pali is called ‘*sila*’-

the Noble Path does not stop there,

and the [subsequent two steps](#) in the list  
take place [solely within the mind](#),

as opposed to arising out of contacts  
to any external, outside, phenomena.

They concern the mind looking inward  
(—[the mind watching the mind]—)  
which falls into the realm of meditation,

which is broken-down and discussed  
under the headings of:

Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, and  
[signified, generally, by the Pali word, ‘*samathi.*’]

The [Seventh Path Factor] is

## 7. Concerning Right Mindfulness

And we may define Right Mindfulness as:

“The controlled and perfected quality of cognition.”

[which means]

it is the mental ability to see things clearly as  
they actually are, free of any mental distortion.

But, [as may be expected], **this is not so easy.**

Normally,

the cognitive process starts with contact  
to an impression or sensation  
and evolves into a perception  
(or an arising-thought-image in the mind)

which does not remain constant  
[as an abiding, arising mental sense-impression],

[but,]

instead, begins a process of  
further-arising and associating,

related-and-inter-connected  
memories and impressions

with other arising  
thoughts and conceptions

all developing together—

which grow/ into more numerous/  
and wider networks/ of impressions/  
and conceptualizations,-

scanning (as it were) through  
the whole range of previous  
experience and perceptions,  
fears and pains and related  
sets of expectations,-

and which will be different

in the development of every  
individual-entity/ and different  
in the expectations of  
every arising moment.

[Moreover,]

this process happens almost instantaneously,  
depending on the factors and faculties of each  
individual mind and on concomitant conditions-

so that every different person  
formulates and develops a  
different complex of associations  
related to any particular image

—to explain it quite simply—

—as a subjective picture in the mind—.

That's why they say  
no two people  
ever see the same thing  
wholly and objectively  
in the same way.

[And, further,]

because the process happens so quickly  
that we cannot consciously follow it,

we cannot normally know in what way  
our individual mode of perception  
colours and distorts the picture in  
its own 'peculiar' and 'particular' way,

although we know  
**the result will always  
contain some individual distortion.**

So the question, then, becomes, how do **we** get rid of such  
individual distortions, always arising within our **own** minds?

It sounds impossible, and we become perplexed.

\*

Conventionally, in worldly terms

**we believe that the human mind works  
according to certain sets of patterns  
which will be universally the same and  
based on normally-and-commonly-  
shared bodily and mental perceptions,**

**but this is not actually true.**

Human perceptions will always be  
individually different in some ways,  
depending on the individual and personal  
sets of systems and networks  
of the impressions and experiences

—which we have had in the past,

—which may have  
been good or bad [or mixed],  
depending on different sets of  
arising factors and conditions,

—as they mixed with arising impressions  
appearing in the mind/ in what can/  
only very instantaneously/  
ever be defined/ as

### **the ‘ever-changing present.’**

This sounds like a problem for psychologists,  
but the Buddha knew the truth of reality  
and he knew about  
such individual distortions of perceptions  
and  
he taught his disciples the way around this problem.

And what is this way?

The Buddha explained it in terms of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: in terms of

- (i) contemplation of the body,
- (ii) contemplation of feeling (as unpleasant, pleasant or neutral),
- (iii) contemplation of the state of mind, and
- (iv) contemplation of phenomena.

The Buddha taught how to be aware of the psychophysical process in a way in which we can actually observe and control the individual-direction in which our thoughts are going.

*[The Four Factors of Mindfulness are a topic worthy of further study, but to do that, here, in more detail,*

*would disturb the coherence of our outline on the topic of the Noble Eightfold Path, so, let's leave this for a later-lecture and, first, finish our comments on the Noble Path.]*

The next [and last factor] in The Noble Eightfold Path, following Right Mindfulness, in the factors, is Right Concentration:

And in the [Eighth Path Factor]—

## **8. Concerning Right Concentration**

we need be aware  
that it is a fact that,  
(even in an everyday  
mundane person's mind),-

the faculty of consciousness  
is always present, [although  
at such a very vague level,-

that common people are  
usually unaware of it  
in normal states of mind]  
in their everyday lives.

Because such vague awareness occurs  
in natural human consciousness at such  
a relatively low level of mental energy,  
it [normally] does not rise  
into **man's** conscious awareness.

'Concentration,' however,

[by contrast] on a more  
focussed and conscious level,  
may also be described as a  
capacity of mental force

which can be aroused and  
directed and sharpened and

developed to be focussed  
on one point or object only-

for the sake of analyzing  
perception and penetration,  
in the flow of experience,

[as has been described above  
within  
the process of cognition.]

So what we must know is that:

A human mind has the inherent capacity  
to develop and use this tool of focussing  
and pin-pointing concentration, even though

a ‘conventionally,’ common man, himself,  
may not consciously be aware of it due to *avijja*,  
[which means ‘the ignorance of not-knowing.’]

\*

So, in the cultivation of the mind  
for a practitioner who is trained in  
mental-awareness and focussed-attention,

this capacity gradually develops  
into a one-pointedness-of-mind—

in a state in which all  
the mental faculties can be  
unified and directed upon  
one particular mind object.

[Moreover]

In the development of the Noble Eightfold Path,  
one learns, [in particular], to direct this capacity  
for concentration on wholesome thoughts and  
actions, [as opposed to focus on their opposites].

When skillfully developed and refined,  
Right Concentration comes to mean the

capacity to discern and direct one's mind  
towards wholesome concentration objects  
rather than allowing it to dwell  
in states of unwholesome concentration.

This means developing  
the capacity of [discerning](#),  
between arising awareness  
of mental actions  
as bare perceptions,

before they are categorized by  
the mechanical functioning  
of the mind, as being good or  
bad or indifferent, and, then—

watching the process of the mind, to see

if it ‘picks-up’ on associations which it

‘likes or dislikes’;

‘desires or does not desire’

‘wants or/does not want;’

and

consequently chases unskillfully after.

Right Concentration means developing  
the capacity of the mind to [remain detached](#)  
and maintain objectivity and avoid the tendency  
to assign values to arising perceptions and,

[then, as we have said,]

blindly following such mental-trains of  
pleasing or displeasing or indifferent  
associations as they are appearing  
and, then, ignorantly attaching to them,

to use a more modern analogy:

*as though one were*

riding a one-tracked

train of mental illusion,

[powered by self-delusion]

in a ‘self-directed

(often self-destructive)  
home-made-movie in the mind,'  
which never will/ and never  
can/ have any concrete reality.

The development of this capacity  
to 'discern' between  
wholesome and unwholesome,  
[real and unreal] perceptions  
does not happen from  
one-moment-to-another,

but, rather

evolves during a process  
which can normally only be learned  
through the maturation and cultivation  
of meditation and insight practice

[which]

[as we have said],  
is usually only gradual  
and  
only develops, dependent  
on the result of determined  
and  
concentrated perseverance  
and unrelenting endurance.

Normally, it would be expected  
that one would achieve the skill  
to attain this state of concentration-

only after a long period of association  
with like-minded, highly-developed  
monks or like-minded meditators  
and friends in the Dhamma,

or, [in some cases], even alone, in  
solitude, [in isolation], eventually  
having wholly-freed the mind  
from unwholesome associations

to become  
firmly-established in states  
of wholesome, concentration.

\*

Right Concentration, so understood,

is “not for everyone,”  
[but according to the Buddha],  
**everyone** is equipped  
with the tools and equipment to try it.

As the saying goes,

“One only has to start and continue.”

And the place to start will be  
through concentration on one thing only.

And what should that one thing be?

Some may suggest that the best place to start  
is with the worst-thing that is wrong with you  
[and while this can be helpful advice in some cases],  
the worst-thing wrong with you will probably also be  
continually mentally distracting you,

so a wise teacher may know  
what form of practice might  
be best-suited for you  
and suggest which form  
of practice you might try-

to achieve the best results  
—or, once you are well-established on the path  
—you may just keep-on experimenting yourself-

until you find the form of  
one-pointed concentration

which is the most comfortable,  
and the most suitable, in the long term,  
and which is the most beneficial to you.

An obvious place to start is with the breath, which we will come back to and talk about another time in closer detail.

And here

we shall pause before going to the next section of our lecture.

\*\*\*\*\*

[Open next audio file to continue]

In continuing/ this third  
and final part of our talk on/  
the Noble Eightfold Path,

there are, yet,  
some other points

which we may make  
before bringing  
our lecture on the Noble Path to a close.

In the Noble Eightfold Path,  
we begin with the factor of  
Right View,

[which,  
(although very few  
people are aware of it),  
is an excellent place

for starting meditation, too].

[here, at this point,]

some textual evidence  
from the Pali Canon  
may be in order,

[so] that we can know  
the actual words of the texts  
as they are translated from the Pali (M.44),

in this case,

by Venerable Nyanatiloka,

The text  
begins with a question:

“What now is Right Concentration?”

the answer to which is:

“It is defined as/ having the mind/ fixed to a single object/  
(*cittekeggaataa*) /which is/ one-pointedness of mind.

“Right Concentration (*sammaa-samaadhi*), /  
in its widest sense/  
is the kind of mental concentration/  
which is present/ in every

wholesome state of consciousness/ (*kusala-citta*)/  
and/, hence/,  
is accompanied/ by at least/  
Right Thought, Right Effort/ and Right Mindfulness.

[by contrast]

“Wrong Concentration/ is present/

in unwholesome states of consciousness/  
and/ hence/ is possible only /  
in the sensuous realm/  
but not in a higher sphere.

“*Sammaadhi*, used alone,  
always stands in the sutta  
for *sammaa-samaadhi*  
or Right Concentration.”

[We shall not try to talk here/ about  
(the Four Absorptions or *Jhaana* states)  
as they can only be known/ through direct experience/  
and are outside the range/ of our present topic, today.]

\*\*\*

In actual practice on the Path,  
the first two factors,  
Right View and Right Intention

come both at the beginning and  
the end of the Noble Eightfold Path  
in a way which may be compared  
to sowing a small seed,

which one plants/  
on the path/  
in the practice/  
and which,

(as it develops and grows,)

[with all the other factors  
working simultaneously],

and finally develops into a giant tree—

a tree which may be comparable  
to a great oak tree/, with its roots  
planted so firmly/ and so deeply/  
into the ground that while—

the odd gale-force winds  
may shake it a bit,  
no storm could uproot it,

[even though it will

inevitably and eventually

die and disintegrate  
in the end,  
to become  
one with the dhamma again.

We must note that,

Right View (or understanding)  
and Right Intention (or thought)  
fall within the **domain of wisdom**,

[and,]

just as a tree grows from a sapling,  
so wisdom/, through proper practice/,  
may be said to grow/  
from the beginning to the end—

of a process of mind development/,  
through constant/ and ardent/ practice/,  
until the disciple/ has completed the process

[so that one ]

**—has done what has to be done—**  
according to the word of the Buddha

and finally reaching full-fruitation at  
the end of the Noble Eightfold path

\*

Full-fruitation/ is beyond comparison/  
on the conventional linguistic level/  
of men/ and trees/ and solid things/  
and forms/ like rocks and bricks,

Full-fruitation ends  
in what the texts/ call  
the supramundane realm/,  
beyond  
worldly perception or non-perception,

[which is yet another thing which  
we cannot stop to talk about, now,]

because that would become  
an even-wider and broader  
and different topic,  
from our focus at present,

which we may state, once again is

**the internal, detached view of**

**—‘the one who knows’—**

**[or]**

**[the mind watching the mind.]**

[and]

This is an appropriate juncture  
to include some  
textual quotations,  
from Bhikkhu Nanamoli

(BPS Wheel Series 431-432),  
on the subject of *Right View*,

[both]:

- (i) for the sake of pulling-together/ a summary of the factors/ of the Noble Eightfold path/, leading to the end,  
[and]
- (ii) for the sake of explaining/ the apparent paradox/ of why Right View/ is always seemingly paradoxically said to be/ both the beginning/ and end of the path.

[just like a seedling having grown into a tree]

\*

From the *Sammaditthi Sutta*, Right View,  
Bhikkhu Nanamoli translates:

“Bhikkhus, just as the dawn is the forerunner and first indication of the rising of the sun, so is right view the forerunner and first indication of wholesome states.

“For one of right view Bhikkhus, right intention springs up.

For one of right intention, right speech springs up.  
For one of right speech, right action springs up.  
For one of right action, right livelihood springs up.  
For one of right livelihood, right effort springs up.  
For one of right effort, right mindfulness springs up.  
For one of right mindfulness, right concentration springs up.  
For one of right concentration, right knowledge springs up.  
For one of right knowledge right deliverance springs up.” (Anguttara Nikaya 10:121)

[So]

in the end,  
one who has practiced  
the factors of the path  
according to the Buddha’s instructions,  
  
and through/ direct application/ and experience,  
  
with ardent diligence/ and Right Effort,  
proceeds to the point/  
of cultivating and developing  
  
Right Knowledge/ and the wisdom/  
which clears/ and opens  
the Path/ to Deliverance/ from suffering/ ... in the end.

These are the words of the Buddha,  
[the one who knows how to clear the path].

\*

The end of the process seems to be  
declared clearly in the above reading,

(at least in common language).

[and]

if we look more closely at the language  
of the first sentence,

on a second reading,

[looking back from a beginner's perspective]—

[we see]

—**how** in the beginning/, for the disciple/,  
who has just awakened/ to Right View,

—**how**/, “just as the dawn/ is the forerunner/  
and first indication/ of the rising sun,”

[we see]

—**how**/, from the beginning/  
of proper practice,  
in avoiding/

being captivated/  
and held by/  
the appearance  
of wrong view/  
and  
wrong intention/,

[we see]

—**how** we proceed  
through the subsequent steps  
through the forerunners  
of Right Mindfulness/ and Right Concentration

to the achievement of wisdom which leads  
to a Firm Foundation in Wholesome States

—**which, as beginners,**

**we had only perceived vaguely,  
in the dawn of our understanding/,**

[as]

the opposite of  
unwholesome states  
arising out of wrong view.

\*

Once more, following Bhikkhu Nanamoli's translation of the wording which the noble and venerable Sariputta, uses in the same sutta, on Right View,

we get a picture/ of what it means/  
to travel/ the figurative arc of the sun/  
in the simile/ from the first dawning

of awareness/ to a perception  
of fully-arisen awareness/  
with regard to nutriment  
in the process of liberation.

A bhikkhu asks the venerable Sariputta:

“But friend, might there be another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view ... and has arrived at this true Dhamma?”

And the answer is:

“There might be friends.”

“When friends/ the noble disciple/  
understands nutriment/  
the origin of nutriment/  
the cessation of nutriment/  
and  
the way leading to

the cessation of nutriment/  
in that way,  
he is one of right view/ ... and  
has arrived at this true Dhamma."

And the monks ask:

“And what is nutriment and  
what is the origin of nutriment?

“What is the cessation of nutriment?  
What is the way leading to  
the cessation of nutriment?

And venerable Sariputta answers:

“There are four kinds of nutriments  
for the maintenance of beings  
that have already come to be  
and for the support of those  
seeking a new existence.

“What four?

“They are:

- (i) physical foods as nutriment,  
gross or subtle;
- (ii) contact as the second;
- (iii) mental volition as the third;

(iv) and consciousness as the fourth.

With the arising of craving,  
there is the arising of nutriment.

“With the cessation of craving,  
there is  
the cessation of nutriment;

[and]

the way leading to the  
cessation of nutriment  
is just this Noble Eightfold Path:  
that is Right View,  
Right Intention,  
Right Speech,  
Right Action,  
Right Livelihood,  
Right Effort,  
Right Mindfulness,  
[and]  
Right Concentration.

“When a noble disciple  
has thus understood nutriment,  
the origin of nutriment,  
the cessation of nourishment,  
  
and the way leading to

the cessation of nourishment,  
he entirely abandons  
the underlying tendency to greed.

“He abolishes the underlying  
tendency to aversion; ...  
he extirpates the underlying  
tendency to the view and conceit, ... ‘I am’

[and]

by abandoning ignorance  
and arousing true knowledge,  
he, [ **(—here and now—)** ]  
makes an end of suffering.

**And venerable Sariputta sums-up:**

“In that way too/ a noble disciple/  
is one of right view/  
whose view is straight/  
who has perfect confidence in the Dhamma,  
and who has arrived at this true Dhamma.”

**This about sums it up and confirms  
everything we have said previously.**

The only thing that remains  
is to try and do it yourself

and develop knowledge  
based upon direct experience.

No one can do it for you,  
but,  
if you are one of the few  
who can make the effort,

**Though Twisting the Factors into a  
Firm Cord which Holds its Grip,**

**—You Yourself Can Do It—**

**You have the equipment  
you have the instructions**

**and you, yourself, can do it.**

\*\*\*

At this juncture,

[before concluding]

it will perhaps be apt  
to make a few more qualifying  
remarks on the subject of meditation:

Before we take our first breath  
in breathing meditation,

there are some things  
we should know which will help-

**to make us firm in the realm of morality,  
before proceeding to Right Concentration  
in the realm of wisdom, because,**

without a firm foundation in morality (*sila*),  
we will always fall victim to delusion  
in a way that will hinder our  
progress on the path-to-wisdom.

If the body and the mind/  
are not developed/ on the path-to-purity,  
it will be wholly impossible for us/

to advance to a level/ of pure wisdom,  
no matter/ how much/ sustained  
breathing meditation we may do.

\*

This is why the path  
is always very clearly  
divided, in the discourses,  
into three states which are

**'*sila*' (morality),  
'*sati*' (concentration) and  
'*panna*' (wisdom).**

[and]

as we have said earlier,

there are no shortcuts,  
no jumping-over stages or  
leaving out any of the steps  
that develop and intertwine—,

as when a strong rope or cord  
is in the process of being  
tightly-bound and twisted,

so that it will hold-firm and  
secure in-its-grip when it  
is severely tried-and-tested.

That is why a lot of people  
get confused about meditation,  
because they have heard about  
the destination but are not

ready to take the necessary steps  
on the path in the process  
which, if resolutely continued,  
gets them to the desired-end.

A lot of people also

get confused about meditation/  
because they often  
become impatient/ in the beginning/  
or before reaching the desired-end/,

[and,]

then, just give up in desperation/  
letting their minds/ unconsciously/  
run-back into the world and start  
chasing-after/ worldly-objects again.

This happens because of the emergence  
of personal wrong view and delusion  
which can be corrected  
by a compassionate teacher,

... if the meditator is able  
to turn his impatience into humility

and condescend to be so humble as  
to seek help and guidance for himself.

\*\*\*

Before we proceed, it must also be noted  
that breathing meditation, seen widely, is  
useful to many people for many things:-

from the warrior

who calms his mind before the kill,

to the **manager**

who is so-stressed that he cannot maintain  
equanimity in the face of fierce-competition,

or to a **solitary ascetic**

who meditates/ to reach highly-ecstatic heights  
through transcending the extreme and outmost,  
transcendental limits of the universe to vibrate  
**in harmony with the music of the spheres.**

**Some yogis may attempt to do this,  
but this is not Buddhist meditation.**

**[Indeed]**

There are many kinds of meditation used for many purposes.

Meditation, in fact, is not even unique to Buddhism.

It had existed in India in many  
extant religious practices even  
before the birth of the Buddha.

[Moreover,]

prior to his own Enlightenment/  
the Buddha had already become  
a very advanced yogi or meditator  
to the level of  
neither perception/ nor non-perception,

[but,]

he was still-not-satisfied  
that this was the ultimate end,

so he went off on his own,  
leaving his former teacher,

to continue [seeking the root of suffering](#)  
[following the [quest](#) he had not yet fulfilled],  
based on a [question](#) he could not yet answer,  
which was: ‘What is the cause of suffering?’

What makes Buddhist meditation **unique**/  
is that it shows us how/ to uncover/  
and eradicate/  
the source/  
of the root  
of suffering/ in the mind/,

[\[which no ascetic/ had yet uncovered/  
before the Buddha’s time.\]](#)

This special method of meditation

of which we are speaking is—

“the mind watching the mind,”  
in order to seek-out and eradicate  
the source of suffering, as it is  
momentarily arising in the mind.

[so]

[it would be a diversion which would take us off-topic,  
to talk about other forms and other kinds of meditation].

In the [specific method](#) of Buddhist  
meditation of which we are speaking,  
in connection with the Noble Eightfold Path,

there can be no enlightenment  
without perfect *silā* and perfect *sati*,  
working in balance and unity,  
towards wisdom and liberation.

[and to be perfectly truthful,  
such unity and balance can  
be achieved only by a few,

with

the most-ardent perseverance,  
in this mundane world,  
in which we live and breathe].

\*

Earlier, we compared  
the mind watching the mind  
to a scavenger hunt,  
quoting Luang Por Viriyang.

He has also said that the mind,  
so meditating, is also 'blessed'  
because every step it takes  
is a step in the right direction,

in which every attempt  
at discernment  
is an increment  
in developing the power of the mind.

\*

And, to quote,  
a further analogy  
from Luang Por Viriyang:

“Meditation is quite similar to walking.  
The one who walks may not be able  
to see his destination  
from the very beginning of his first step;

[however,]

he is getting closer  
to the destination  
with each step.

[and]

if he consistently walks,  
he will finally find his destination.”

*Meditation Instruction Course. I, (p.60)*

And, (if we may be allowed the liberty  
of combining the two above analogies),

—if, as we are walking,  
and we see and pick-up  
trash and unwholesome objects  
and discard them

as we proceed/ along the way/,  
no matter how unpleasant and painful  
this may seem to be at the time,

*[because we are recognizing and  
extracting and discarding the trash of  
unwholesome elements  
from within our own minds]—*

as we proceed along the way,  
the more we persevere,

the more we make the mind empty  
of impure mental objects,

and the more we are able  
to replace them with their opposites,

so that, through the intensity of the mind's  
determined application of mental energy,

the further and more-quickly  
we may proceed along the path.

\*

The irony of such practice  
is that you treat yourself  
both harshly and gently,  
in successive and alternating sequences,

and the good news is  
that the more progress you make,  
the less harsh you have to be on yourself,  
and the more gently you may treat yourself as/

with time/, there is less-and less/ there/ to blame  
and hinder you/ on the way to *anatta*/ (selflessness).

[or]

Putting it in another way,

first, you begin walking,  
and then you carry-on along the path,

increasing your focus and effort

enduring with mindfulness and energy,  
as you understand the beneficial effects,

[and]

you begin to see you are developing  
a mental culture as you travel the path  
which is more-pure and more-satisfying  
than that of this conventional world

and more-satisfying than being  
in any phase of the stages  
which you were practicing  
previously in the recent past.

**And so you keep striving with diligence.**

\*\*\*

**You begin in *sila*; you develop *sati*  
and keep detaching yourself  
from the mundane world/ and/**

**see how far you get towards the end,**

**of an exercise in which the mind is,  
gradually, being mentally-purified.**

\*\*\*\*\*

And as our lecture is slowly coming to and end,  
this might also be an appropriate time and place  
to cite from a Dhamma talk which was given by

Luang Por Sim Buddhacaro,

[who, like Luang Por Viriyang,  
was also a disciple of Ajahn Mun,]

and

[who [in an uplifting talk addressed to monks](#)],

[which is called, “Simply So”](#)

said the following about being firmly-founded  
within the stream of developing meditation:

On the one hand,

“Sitting here our bodies are in a tranquil posture.

“The knowing is abiding in the heart,  
and each one of us is aware.

“[This present knowing is our true mind.](#)”

[That is the mind watching the mind  
with equanimity in ‘present-knowing’  
of the bare awareness of the moment]

Whereas,

On the other hand

“The conditioned mind\*  
[the uncontrolled mind\*]  
of thought and proliferation  
is almost like a demon: —

[which chases after phenomena]

“Through its actions/ eternal phenomena/  
tend to become/ preoccupations/ that/  
then/, obstruct/ or destroy/ meditation.

“But if the meditator/  
grounds himself/  
in the present moment,  
then/, he is able/ to make use of/

**various meditation techniques:**

“He may develop [inner recitation](#),

for example,

or perhaps focus on  
[parts of the physical body](#)/  
such as head hair, body hair, nails,  
teeth, skin, and sinews and bones.

[or]

“When contemplation of the body ensues/  
in perception of its [unattractiveness\\*](#)/  
[the loathsomeness of the body\*]

[or]

of its [changing elements](#) of hardness,  
cohesion, temperature and vibration,  
[then, that is meditation.](#)

“When the mind is at peace  
in the recitation of “[Buddho](#),”  
then,  
that too is meditation.

“The mind itself has  
no colour shape or form  
but it has energy.

“It is our duty to let go of  
[and]  
abandon the conditioned,  
[and]

proliferating-mind.\*

[chasing after feeling and phenomena\*]

But the mind of present knowing/  
that which concentrates on the Buddha/  
listens to Dhamma/ and reflects on its meaning/  
having clearly observed/ that the true mind/

should be developed.”

“In this case/, ‘to develop/’  
means to give-care/ and attention to/  
establishing the mind/ in peaceful practice.

“Peace comes by/ countering\*/  
the outgoing stream of mentality/  
[not going outside bare awareness\*]  
and penetrating this present-knowing.

“The normal, unrestrained mind/  
is absorbed/  
by the thought- consciousness/  
seeking distraction\*.  
[in exterior phenomena\*]

“Go against the stream/  
by looking into  
the source of mental activity.

“It originates from this knowing/.

“The source of the mind lies within us.

“However, this knowing is nothing substantial.\*

“It has no colour, form or shape in  
the way that material objects do.

It is a formless element.

[There is no contact or reaction to any exterior phenomena].

[There is no feeling arising and reacting to the aggregates.\*]

“To speak in the terms of the five aggregates there is:

1. *rupa*—this body of ours
2. *vedana*—the experience of objects/ as pleasant or unpleasant/,  
comfortable or uncomfortable
3. *sanna*—discrimination/ based on memory/—this is a human  
being, this is an animal, this is red or this is black
4. *sankhaara*—conditioning mental activity
5. *vinnana*—cognition conditioned by mental activity

[and]

“The four formless aggregates of  
*vedana*, *sanna*, *sankhaara*, and  
*vinnana* arise within the knowing.

[catching the attention of perception]

[causing feelings to cause reactions.]

[but]

“The Buddha taught that/

during **sitting and walking** meditation/

we should make the knowing

converge-on-itself,

not allowing it to go outwards.

[Thus]

“Thoughts of good and bad are

all exterior matters and are endless.

“All movement/ proceeds/

from this present knowing/.

That, being the case/,

don't be deceived/

by such expressions of mind.\*

[i.e. aggregate-consciousness\*]

“They are merely shadows

flitting off into the past and future,

thinking about and elaborating

on the things that we like

and the things that we don't.

“This proliferation is what conditions\* the mind.

[making the mind dependent upon conditions\*]

“What is it that knows the true mind,  
and  
what is it that knows the conditioned mind?”

“It is just this one single knowing/  
the same thing that hears/  
the sound of the discourse/  
and meditates on “Buddho.”

“As there is just  
this single knowing/  
[so]  
muster your energies/ and vow to yourself:

‘I will not indulge the thinking-mind.  
I will gather the mind into itself.’

“Not allowing the mind to wander means  
that it stays with “Buddho” [in the present.]

“All you have to do/ then/ is maintain Buddho.”

What Luang Por Sim is saying here  
is the same as we have discussed above  
concerning cognition and one-pointedness,

[although he says it better.]

When he says “the knowing is abiding in the heart”

he means/ that the psychophysical organism/  
is not involved in the process/  
of cognition/ and thought proliferation

and the mind is turned inwards/  
cutting-off inter-relations to any  
outside contacts/ (i.e. the aggregates)/  
so the mind stays/ with the prescribed-

meditation topic whether it be on the body  
or “Buddho” or any another of the many  
meditation objects mentioned in the texts.

When he says,

“I will gather the mind into itself/,”  
he means focussing the mind/,  
abiding in a state of

meditative tranquillity/  
within oneself/,

[and]

remaining in a state of  
knowing the process of consciousness\*/  
[consciousness is the trouble-maker\*]

[and]

stopping it/ before it starts trouble/  
by abiding in a mind-body state/  
and detached with equanimity/,

perhaps using  
the qualities/  
of the Buddha/  
as the object of mind contemplation.

\*

Monks/ who can practice like this/  
do not feel the stress/  
of the outside world

[and]

they do not have mental health problems.

\*\*\*

However,

how to go from being a stressed-  
executive in the world  
to being such a calm and serene monk or nun

would seem almost impossible  
for the majority of people,  
fully-engaged in gaining their livelihood, or

caring for their families and other affairs.

so the question arises:

“What do we do to escape the stress  
which is affecting our mental health  
and will sooner or later ruin us  
mentally, financially/ or physically?”

Quitting your job and  
abandoning your responsibilities  
and ordaining as a monk or nun  
is not usually practical, especially

as you would be taking your internal-stress  
into the temple, with you,  
which could become  
a disturbing factor for the whole community.

So the answer is to make a paradigm shift/  
but, —[at least in the beginning]—,  
not to change your outward life/ too radically/,

[but]

just start slowly and keep ‘walking’ consistently/  
[to continue the figurative image,]

under the guidance of a good teacher/  
or by following the teachings/

now so widely-available/  
from reliable Buddhist sources/ such as the BPS.

Or, perhaps/ you will be fortunate enough

to find a good friend in the Dhamma  
who can carry on a dialogue with you,  
which may also aid and assist you  
to make a new start on the path.

The Buddha once said:  
“Just start and continue.”

[and]

This sounds so simple,  
yet in this world,  
it sometimes seems so hard.

So where do we start? Where do we begin?

One way

is by simply being mindful  
of the thoughts and intentions  
in our minds/ and to continue  
picking out the mental trash.

This is good advice for people  
who are not easily-distracted,

who are capable of moral discernment.

But there is an even better way  
which anybody can try to practice,  
[to see what benefits it may bring],  
which is by following the process

[as]

laid-down in the words of the Buddha  
[as retained in the Pali Texts]

in guidelines for  
lay practitioners and nuns and monks,

concerning practicing the instructions for  
development on the Noble Eightfold Path.

**[Thus ends this lecture]**

\* This is a section from *The Mind Watching the Mind* which has been somewhat edited for fluidity in oral presentation.