

Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta

The Discourse on the Great Forty

[Right view & how the noble eightfold path works]

(Majjhima Nikāya 117/3:71-78)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

1 Related suttas

There are two long suttas, both in the Majjhima Nikāya, dealing exclusively with the noble eightfold path (*ariy’atṭhaṅgika magga*). The first, **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141), analyses each of the eight factors using standard canonical definitions,¹ and these definitions recur in **the Mahā Sati’paṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22).² The second, **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117)³ deals with the path using the framework of “noble right concentration with its support and its requisites.”

A number of other suttas explore the individual factors of the path in greater detail, for example:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta | (M 9/1:46-55), | right view; |
| Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta | (M 10/1:56-63), | right mindfulness, |
| Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta | (M 19/1:114-118) | right intention. |

The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44) show how the eight factors can be incorporated into the three “aggregates” of training (*sikkhā*): right speech, right action and right livelihood comprising the aggregate of moral virtue (*sīla-k,khandha*), right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration comprising the aggregate of mental concentration (*samādhi-k,khandha*), and right view and right intention comprising the aggregate of wisdom (*paññā-k,khandha*).⁴ The traditional threefold division of the noble eightfold path into *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*,⁵ is as follows:

| Factor | (aṅga) | Training (sikkhā) | (khandha) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| (7) Right view | <i>sammā diṭṭhi</i> | } <u>Wisdom aggregate</u> (liberation-based mind) | <i>paññā khandha</i> |
| (8) Right intention | <i>sammā saṅkappa</i> | | |
| (1) Right action | <i>sammā kammanta</i> | } <u>Moral virtue aggregate</u> (the body and speech) | <i>sīla khandha</i> |
| (2) Right speech | <i>sammā vācā</i> | | |
| (3) Right livelihood | <i>sammā ājīva</i> | | |
| (4) Right effort | <i>sammā vāyāma</i> | } <u>Concentration aggregate</u> (the mind) | <i>samādhi khandha</i> |
| (5) Right mindfulness | <i>sammā sati</i> | | |
| (6) Right concentration | <i>sammā samādhi</i> | | |

(D 2:312; M 1:61, 3:251; Vbh 235)

Table 8.3 The noble eightfold path

¹ M 141/3:248-252 = SD 11.11.

² D 22.21/2:311-313 = SD 13.2

³ See M 117/ 3:71-78S = D 11.11.

⁴ M 44.11/1:299-305.

⁵ D 1:207, 3:220; A 1:229. For detailed studies on the noble eightfold path, see **Sammā,diṭṭhi S** (M 9) = SD 11.14; **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117) = SD 6.10; **Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (M 16) = SD 9 Intro (10d); see also **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.11/1:301) = SD 21.7.

2 Summary

If life is a journey, then the pilgrim's goal is the city of Nirvana. The way leading to nirvana is *the noble eightfold path*. The guide on this noble path is *right view*, and as long as he is ahead of others, the pilgrim is on the right track: this is clearly the theme of the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta. Conversely, we are easily lost when we are (mis)guided by wrong view. The recurring theme of this sutta is the primacy of **right view** with regard to “noble right concentration along with its support and requisite” (*ariyam... sammā, samādhiṃ... sa, upanisaṃ sa, parikkharam*) [§§2, 3] and that “in this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first” (*tatra sammā, diṭṭhi, pubbaṃ, gamā*) [§§4, 10, 16, 22, 28, 34 f].

This statement of the primacy of right view opens each of the first three main sections of the sutta. **The first section** explains that *right view comes first* because it knows wrong view and right view as they really are [§4]. In the same way, with right view, we know the other factors (*aṅgā*) as they really are, namely, as wrong intention and as right intention [§10], as wrong speech and as right speech [§16], as wrong action and as right action [§22], as wrong livelihood and as right livelihood [§28]. The wrong factors are rooted in the unwholesome. The right factors are of two kinds: the mundane (*lokiya*): they have influxes, partake of merit, and result in acquisitions (for the aggregates, ie continued existence). The right or “noble” factors are supramundane (*lok'uttara*): they are without influx, and are truly path factors, that is, they move us on to spiritual liberation.

Each of the five parts of the first section closes with the statement that when we make an effort to give up the wrong factor—of view [§9], thought [§15], speech [§21], action [§27], and livelihood [§33]—to cultivate right view—this is our right effort. Thus these three things run along with, turn around each of the right factors, that is to say, right view, right effort, right mindfulness.

The second section explains the way in which right view comes first by a causal pattern, beginning with right view, through the other seven factors and ending with right knowledge (*sammā ñāṇa*) and right liberation (*sammā vimutti*)—“Thus, bhikshus, the learner on the path is endowed with eight factors, the arhat with ten factors” [§34]. In this connection, we should also study **the Sekha Sutta** (M 53)⁶ and **the Indriya Bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152).⁷

In **the third section**, for one with the right factor, the opposing wrong factor will “wither away” (*nijjñā*) along with all their other unwholesome states. The various wholesome states will then reach fulfillment [§35].

The fourth and closing section lists the 20 wholesome factors [§34] and the 20 unwholesome factors [§35], totalling 40 factors [§36]. The 20 factors on the unwholesome side are the 10 wrong factors and the unwholesome states that originate from each. The 20 factors on the wholesome side are the 10 right factors and the wholesome states that originate from each [§34]. Hence the Buddha calls it the “the Dharma discourse on the great forty” (*mahā, cattārisaka dhamma, pariyāya*).

3 Analysis

Rupert Gethin, in his book, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, gives an insightful analysis of this sutta (2001:216-223) from which I here echo some key points. He highlights the great significance of the sutta's first section which distinguishes between two levels of right view [§6], intention [§12], speech [§18], action [§24] and livelihood [§30], namely, the worldly wholesome level partaking of merit, and the noble level of the supramundane path, or more technically, the right view of insight (*vipassanā sammā, - diṭṭhi*) and the right view of the path (*magga sammā, diṭṭhi*) (MA 3:131).⁸

The Majjhima Commentary here takes these two levels as distinguishing between right view that is concerned with ordinary *vipassanā* or “insight,” which investigates formations as impermanent, suffering and not-self [§§4, 10, 16, 22, 28], and right view that is concerned with the path, the supramundane (*lok'uttara*), which arises as a consequence of insight and uproots the defilements [§§34, 35]. (MA 4:131)

⁶ M 53/1:353-359 = SD 12.14.

⁷ M 152/3:298-302 = SD 17.13.

⁸ See Bodhi 2001:50 f; Fuller 2005: 69-73.

This indicates that there are two stages in the arising of the noble right concentration along with its support and requisite. First, there is the turning away from the wrong factors, followed by the turning towards right view, etc, that are of the worldly but wholesome variety. Secondly, there is the attainment of right view, etc, that are *noble, without influxes, supramundane, a path factor*. It is this, says Gethin, that should be understood as “the noble right concentration with its support and equipment” (2001:218).

It is however unclear here why the sutta *does not continue with right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration*. Gethin provides an explanation:

These are dealt with within the body of the *sutta* as a whole, so perhaps one should ask why *sammā-dīṭṭhi* is repeated here. The answer in this case would seem to be to do with the great emphasis on the priority of *sammā-dīṭṭhi* in the *sutta*. (Gethin 2001:218 n112)

At this second stage, right view again leads the way, but this is now the stage of “the learner on the path” (*sekho paṭipado*) who is endowed with eight factors, and with two more he becomes an arhat (*asekha* or non-learner, adept) who has ten factors (ie including right knowledge and right liberation) [§34].

The sutta shows that right view “comes first” not just in the preliminary stage of spiritual development, that is, as the preparation for the higher stage, but *it comes first at all its stages*.

The treatment of the factors as consecutive steps takes on the character not so much of a map showing the stages of spiritual practice, as of a working model illustrating the operation of spiritual practice at whatever stage...Just like the *Dhammasaṅgani*, the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* sees in the eight factors not the successive stages of the spiritual path, but rather the process that is active at all stages of the path. (Gethin 2001:218 f)

One last important point is that the actual contrast between the eight or ten factors in their wrong aspect, on the one hand, and in their right aspect, on the other hand. This very same contrast is repeatedly made in **the Magga Saṃyutta** (S 45/5:1-62) and many other places in the Nikāyas.⁹ Amongst the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi, pakkhiyā dhammā*),¹⁰ “this kind of contrast is peculiar to the noble eightfold path, and must be reckoned as one of the most distinctive and characteristic aspects of its treatment in early Buddhist literature” (Gethin 2001:219). This contrast is particularly striking and well developed in the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta—it is what actually gives the sutta its title.

My own understanding is that the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta is about building moral virtue (*adhisīla, sikkhā*) so that we go on to cultivate the mind (*adhisīla, sikkhā*), bringing it to a higher level of mindfulness leading to the noble path, that is, awakening (at least as a streamwinner). Notice that at the end of each of the sections on “View” [§4-9], “Intention” [§10-15], “Speech” [§16-21], “Action” [§22-27], and “Livelihood” [§28-33], there is the pericope: “Thus these three things run along with (right view, etc), turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.” In short, wholesome moral virtue should lead to right effort in proper mental cultivation, leading to liberation.

4 Observations

(A) RIGHT VIEW IS ABOUT WHOLESOME GROWTH. The emphasis of thought upon action is frequently discussed in the Nikāyas. In essence, it entails that right view comes first and foremost is very significant. It must be present in a wholesome action or state. Right view is not realized by adopting a view or opinion, but by acting in a certain appropriate way. It is the actions (thought, word and deed) that demonstrate the attainment of right view. Thus right view comes first.

⁹ M 1:42-45; S 2:168 f, 3:109, 5:1 f, 12-14, 15-20, 23; A 2:220-225, 5:211-249.

¹⁰ The 37 *bodhi, pakkhiyā dhammā* are: the 4 stations of mindfulness (*sati, paṭṭhāna*), 4 endeavours (*padhāna*), 4 paths to spiritual power (*iddhi, pāda*), 5 faculties (*indriya*), 5 powers (*bala*), 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅga*) and the noble eightfold path (*ariy’ aṭṭhaṅgika magga*). See **Mahā Sakuludāyī S** (M 77.15-21/2:11 f) = SD 6.18.

Right view is mainly *propositional* in an instructive sense, when it is taught to another (*parato,gho-sa*), hence has a *cognitive* function for the unawakened. However, for soteriological purposes (for the sake of awakening), we need to see and taste the *affective* dimension right view. Right view, in other words, is not so much about *knowing* something, as it is about *bringing about a wholesome change in ourselves*.

One way of putting this is that right view is the non-clinging or detached aspect of wisdom (*paññā*). According to the Abhidhamma, wrong view is always “rooted in greed” (*lobha,mūla*). Right view, as such, is free from attachment, so that understanding is enhanced.¹¹ Right view, as such, keeps the cognitive process detached, free from extremes and also unstuck in the middle, as noted by **Rupert Gethin**,

In the Theravāda understanding the tendency to fix opinions can only exist prior to stream-attainment. In stream –attainment, since the wisdom of stream-attainment is characterized as *sammā-dīṭṭhi*, a form of *paññā* that precisely turns away from the inclination to hold fixed opinions; once the four truths have been directly seen, the mind has no inclination to either eternalism [n]or annihilationism, the mind has no tendency to misinterpret Buddhist theory in terms of either annihilationism or eternalism. (Gethin 1997: 221)

(B) DHYANA AND THE LAITY. Bodhi, in his discussion on “The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple” (2001: 50 & n23), points out that the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta is “the most prominent” sutta foreshadowing the distinction between two types of path and dhyanas (*jhāna*), the mundane: the one “with influxes,¹² partaking of merit,¹³ ripening in acquisitions¹⁴ [of the aggregates]”¹⁵ (*s’āsavā puñña,bhāgiyā upadhi,vepakkā*) [7, 13 etc] and the other “without influx, supramundane, a path factor” (*ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā magg’-aṅgā*) [8, 14 etc]. In the Sutta, the Buddha declares.

Bhikshus, the noble right concentration with its support thus, with its requisite thus—this is called the seven-factored mental oneness with these seven factors [right view, right intention,¹⁶ right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness]. [3]

¹¹ Gethin 1997: 216.

¹² “With influxes,” *s’āsava* = *sa* + *āsava*, The term *āsava* (lit “inflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*dīṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsava* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

¹³ “Partaking of merit,” *puñña,bhāgiya*, lit “having a share of merit,” or “concerned with merit” (Gethin 2001: 216).

¹⁴ “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, lit “that on which something is laid or rests, basis, foundation, substratum.” Here, as defined in DP, the term means both “worldly possessions or belongings” as well as “attachment to such possessions (forming a basis for rebirth)”. Comys say there are 4 types of *upadhi* (SA 1:31=SnA 1:44 f): (1) the 5 cords of sense-pleasures (*kāma*) (MA 2:170; ItA 1:64); (2) the 5 aggregates (*pañcak,khandha*) (MA 3:171; ItA 1:89); (3) the defilements (*kilesa*) (MA 3:171; SnA 1:45 f; ItA 1:64; Nm 1:103); (4) volitional activities (*abhisankhāra*) (ItA 1:64; Nm 1:103). Often confounded with the near-synonym *upādi* (trace (of clinging), substrate): see **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 22.22/2:314) = SD 13.2. See foll n.

¹⁵ “With influxes,...in the form of acquisitions [of aggregates],” *s’āsavā puñña,bhāgiyā upadhi,vepakkā*. This is mundane right view, partaking of merit, and as such does not go beyond the worldly life-cycle. Comy glosses *upadhi,vepakka* as “giving results by way of the acquisitions” (MA 3:141), which Ṭikā explains as the continuity of the 5 aggregates (MṬ:Be 2:306).

¹⁶ “Right intention,” *sammā,sankappa*, also tr as “right thought.”

Bodhi concludes that

If the latter [“without influx...”] is understood to be supramundane *Jhāna*, then we might suppose the *Jhānas* usually described in the training of the disciple are “connected with taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the aggregates.” The texts never describe the *Jhānas* in quite these terms, but some *suttas* imply their attainment lead only to a higher rebirth without necessarily conducing to deliverance.¹⁷ (2001:50 n23)

(C) ABHIDHAMMA SOURCE. LS Cousins, in his article on “Vitakka/Vitarka and Vicāra: Stages of *samādhi* in Buddhism and Yoga,” says that the *sutta* is

an *abhidhamma*-style analysis of the Eightfold Path. In fact the *sutta* reads suspiciously as if it were itself based on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, but if so it is difficult to explain why no additional sources can be found for some of the terms. We must then assume that this *sutta* is the source of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* [mnemonic] register [for technical terms] and presumably much of the methodology of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*... (Indo-Iranian Journal 35 1992:138)

— — —

¹⁷ See The Layman and Dhyana = SD 8.5.

The Discourse on the Great Forty

(M 117/3:71-78)

[71]

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying at Anātha,piṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove near Sāvattḥī. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks:

"Bhikshus!"

"Venerable sir!" the monks replied.

The Blessed One said this:

Summary

2 "Bhikshus, I will teach you the noble right concentration¹⁸ with its supports and requisites.¹⁹ Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak."

"Yes, venerable sir!" the monks replied the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

3 "And what, bhikshus, is **the noble right concentration with its supports and requisites**, that is to say: right view, right intention,²⁰ right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness?

Bhikshus, the seven-factored mental oneness²¹ is that noble right concentration with its supports and requisites.

RIGHT VIEW COMES FIRST

(1) THE FACTORS AS THEY REALLY ARE

View

4 In this regard, bhikshus, **right view comes first**.²² And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?

One understands wrong view as wrong view, and right view as right view—this is one's right view.

5 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong view**?

(It is the view) that 'there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or evil actions. There is no this world, no next world,²³ there is no mother, no father, there are no beings that are reborn,²⁴ there are no [72] brahmins and recluses who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.'²⁵

¹⁸ "Noble right concentration," *ariyaṃ sammā, samādhin*.

¹⁹ "Requisites," *sa, parikkhāra*, alt tr "with its equipments" (Gethin 2001:216). Comy says that "noble" (*ariya*) here means "supramundane" (*lok'uttara*), that is, the concentration pertaining to the supramundane path. The "supports and requisites" refer to the other 7 right factors [3]. (MA 4:130 f)

²⁰ "Right intention," *sammā, saṅkappa*, also tr as "right thought."

²¹ "Mental oneness" (*cittassa ekaggatā*), ie the dhyanas.

²² "Right view comes first," *sammā, diṭṭhi pubb'aṅgamā*. *Pubba + aṅgamā*, lit "fore-goer" = *pure, cārika* (MA 4:131). Comy says that two kinds of right view are forerunners: the right view of insight (*vipassanā*), which investigates formations as impermanent, suffering and not-self [4, 10, 16, 22, 28], and the right view of the path [34, 35], which arises as a consequence of insight and uproots the defilements (MA 4:131). Cf Dhs 1366, Vbh 328, MA 5:10.

²³ "There is no this world, no next world," *n'atthi ayaṃ loko, n'atthi para, loko* (also at M 3.71), lit "this world does not exist, the next world does not exist." On the problem of associating these two differing views to Ajita Kesambala, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.22-24/1:55 f) = SD 8. See Jayatilleke 1963:79 f, 91 f).

²⁴ **Opapātika**, often said of a non-returner's rebirth, and also that of all divine and hell beings. In pericope on **wrong view**: **D** 1.2.27/1:27, 2.23/1:55, 6.13/1:156, 23.2-11/2:317-329, 14-20/2:332-339, 21/2:342, 33/2:356 f, 33.3.-2(4)/3:265, 34.2.1(7)/287; **M** 41.10/1:287, 60.5-6/1:401 f, 76.7/1:515, 110.11/3:22, 22/3:24, 114.10/3:52, 117.5/3:-72; **S** 24.5/3:206, 42.13(III)/4:348 f, (IV)/4:352, (V)/355 f; **A** 3.115.6/1:269, 8.29.3/4:226, 10.176.5/5:265, 10.200.-2/5:284 f; **Nm** 1:188. Here, foll Comy, I take it in a general sense of "rebirth." Comy: "There are no beings that are

6 And what, bhikshus, is **right view**?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right view, I say.

Bhikshus, there is the right view with influxes,²⁶ partaking of merit,²⁷ ripening in acquisitions²⁸ (of aggregates).²⁹

Bhikshus, there is the right view that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.³⁰

7 And what, bhikshus, is **the right view with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions?

It is the view that

‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed.

There is fruit and result of good or evil actions.

There is this world, the next world.

There is mother, there is father.

There are beings reborn.

There are brahmins and recluses who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them³¹—

this, bhikshus, is the right view with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.

8 And, bhikshus, what is **the right view that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

It is the wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the awakening-factor of dharma-discernment,³² the right view as a path factor, of one whose mind is noble, whose mind is without influxes, conversant with the noble path,³³ cultivating the noble path³⁴—this, bhikshus, is the right view that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

9 One who makes an effort to give up wrong view, to cultivate right view—this is one’s right effort.

reborn means to that beings after dying are not reborn” (*n’atthi sattā opapātikā ti cavitvā upapajjanakā sattā nāma n’atthi ti vadati*, DA 1:165). Cf A 4.191/2:186 f.

²⁵ Also occurs at **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.23/1:55) and **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.10/1:287). See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.5-12/1:401-404) where this wrong view is answered.

²⁶ “With influxes,” *s’āsava = sa + āsava*. See Intro (4) n above.

²⁷ “Partaking of merit,” *puñña, bhāgiya*, lit “having a share of merit,” or “concerned with merit” (Gethin 2001: 216).

²⁸ “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, lit “that on which something is laid or rests, basis, foundation, substratum.” See Intro (4) n above.

²⁹ “With influxes, ... in the form of acquisitions [of aggregates],” *s’āsavā puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, vepakkā*. See Intro (4) n above.

³⁰ “Of the noble ones, ... a path factor,” *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā magg’añgā*.

³¹ This para, on right view regarding karma, is also found in **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.14/1:288) & **Kusalākusala Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206.10/5:296). Cf Vbh 328, VbhA 415. See **Rebirth in Early Buddhism** = SD 57.1 (2).

³² “Dharma-discernment,” *dhamma, vicaya*, lit “taking apart of dharmas (mental and physical states),” also tr as “discrimination of dharmas.” Sometimes this is taken as “investigation of the Doctrine”, but the meaning here actually is “investigation of bodily and mental phenomena” (Walshe 1995n690). Both Edgerton (BHSD) & Gethin, however, call into question the tr of *vicaya* here as “investigation” (Gethin 2001:152 n38). Awakening does not comprise in the assemblage of then 7 factors, but just one, namely, *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* (Nm 456). This is the key awakening-factor, that is, “awakening” itself, while the others are the “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83). See Gethin 2001:147 f, 152-154, 185.

³³ “Conversant with the noble path,” *ariya, maggassa samaṅgī* (also M 3:73), lit “endowed with the noble path.” Here I follow I B Horner (M:H 3:115). CPD says this is wr. Variant reading at M 3:74, 75 is *ariya, magga, samaṅgino*. Cf Pug 10, 73: *magga, samaṅgino*.

³⁴ Supramundane right view here is taken as the wisdom that is a faculty, power, awakening-factor and path-factor. “This definition is formulated by way of the cognitive function rather than the objective content of right view” (M:ÑB 1327 n1103). Right view is usually def as the knowledge of the 4 noble truths (eg **Sacca, vibhaṅga S**, M 141.24/3:251). In other words, an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the noble truths is mundane right view, while the direct knowledge of the truth by realizing nirvana is supramundane right view.

One who is mindful gives up wrong view and dwells cultivating right view—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right view, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.³⁵

Intention

10 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?

One understands wrong intention as wrong intention, and right intention as right intention—this is one’s [73] right view.³⁶

11 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong intention**?

Intention of sensual lust, intention of ill will, intention of violence—this, bhikshus, is wrong intention.

12 And what, bhikshus, is **right intention**?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right intention, I say.

13 Bhikshus, there is the right intention with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions (of aggregates).³⁷

Bhikshus, there is the right intention that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.³⁸

And what, bhikshus, is **the right intention with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions?

Intention of renunciation,³⁹ intention of non-ill will, intention of non-violence⁴⁰—this, bhikshus, is right intention with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.

14 And, bhikshus, what is **the right intention that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

Thinking, thought, intention, attainment of dhyana and focus, directing of the mind, verbal formation⁴¹—this, bhikshus, is the right intention that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

15 One who makes an effort to give up wrong intention, to cultivate right intention—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong intention and dwells cultivating right intention—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right intention, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.⁴²

³⁵ Comy: The three accompany right view as co-existents (*saha,jātā*) and precursors (*pure,jātā*). Right effort and right mindfulness are co-existent with supramundane right view. The right view of insight is the precursor of supramundane right view. (MA 4:132)

³⁶ “This statement suggests that in order to acquire right view about the nature of reality, one must first be able to distinguish between right and wrong teachings on the nature of reality” (M:ÑB 1327 n1101). Comy says that this is the right view of insight that understands wrong view as an object by examining its characteristics of impermanence, etc, and that understands right view through the function of comprehension and by clearing away confusion (MA 4:131). “It seems, though, that a more elementary discrimination of the two kinds of intention is the issue.” (M:ÑB 1328 n1105).

³⁷ *Atthi bhikkhave sammā,saṅkappo s’āsavo puñña,bhāgiyo upadhi,vepakko.*

³⁸ *Atthi bhikkhave sammā,saṅkappo ariyo an’āsavo lok’uttaro magg’aṅgo.*

³⁹ “Intention of renunciation,” *nekkhamma saṅkappa*, also tr “intention of desirelessness.” Opp: *kāma saṅkappa*, “intention of lustfulness.” See Gethin 2001:190, 191 f.

⁴⁰ This is a stock def of right intention as a factor of the noble eightfold path, as at **Sacca,vibhaṅga S** (M 141.25/3:251).

⁴¹ Here the factor of intention (*saṅkappa*) is identified with applied thought (*vitakka*), that is instrumental in bringing about dhyana by fixing and directing the mind upon its object. For applied thought as “verbal formation” (*vacī,saṅkhāra*), see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.15/1:301).

⁴² Comy: This refers only to the factors co-existent with supramundane right intention. At the start of the practice, the three mundane right intentions arise separately, but at the moment of the supramundane path, a single right intention arises cutting off the threefold wrong intention. As such, the supramundane right intention may also be

Speech

16 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?
One understands wrong speech as wrong speech, and right speech as right speech—this is one’s right view.

17 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong speech**?

False speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, useless talk—this, bhikshus, is wrong speech.

18 And what, bhikshus, is **right speech**?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right speech, I say.

19 Bhikshus, there is the right speech with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions [of aggregates].

Bhikshus, there is [74] the right speech that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, a path factor.

And what, bhikshus, is **the right speech with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions?

Refraining from false speech, refraining from divisive speech, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from useless talk—this, bhikshus, is right speech with influxes, partaking of merit, acquisitions.

20 And what, bhikshus, is **the right speech that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

Non-delighting in the four wrong types of speech, the abstaining from them, the refraining from them, avoiding them,⁴³ in one whose mind, whose mind is without influx, who has traversed the noble path, who has cultivated the path⁴⁴—this, bhikshus, is the right speech that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

21 One who makes an effort to give up wrong speech, to cultivate right speech—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong speech and dwells cultivating right speech—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right speech, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.

Action

22 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?
One understands wrong action as wrong action, and right action as right action—this is one’s right view.

23 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong action**?

Harming living beings, taking the not-given, sexual misconduct—this, bhikshus, is wrong action.

24 And what, bhikshus, is **right action**?⁴⁵

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right action, I say.

25 Bhikshus, there is the right action with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions [of aggregates].

Bhikshus, there is the right action that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

And what, bhikshus, is **the right action with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions?

Refraining from harming living beings, refraining from taking the not-given, refraining from sexual misconduct—this, bhikshus, is right action [75] with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.

regarded as the intention of desirelessness, non-ill will and non-violence. The same method applies to right speech, etc. (MA 4:132)

⁴³ *Catūhi pi vacī,duccaritehi ārati virati paṭivirati veramaṇī*. On the mundane level, right speech is practised in 4 ways by refraining from the 4 wrong types of speech. On the supramundane level, the single factor of right speech exercises the fourfold function by cutting off the tendencies towards the 4 types of wrong speech. The same applies to right action.

⁴⁴ *Yā kho bhikkhave ariya,cittassa anāsava,cittassa ariya,magga,samaṅgino ariya,maggam bhāvayato*.

⁴⁵ “Right action,” *sammā,kammantā*.

26 And, bhikshus, what is **the right action that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

Non-delighting in the three wrong types of action, the abstaining from them, the refraining from them, avoiding them, in one whose mind, whose mind is without influx, who has traversed the noble path, who has cultivated the path⁴⁶—this, bhikshus, is the right action that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

27 One who makes an effort to give up wrong action, to cultivate right action—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong action and dwells cultivating right action—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right action, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.

Livelihood

28 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?

One understands wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood, and right livelihood as right livelihood—this is one’s right view.

29 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong livelihood**?

Deceitful pretensions (to attainments), flattery (for gain), subtle insinuation or hinting (for gain), pressuring (for offerings), and pursuing gain with gain, he abstains from such pretensions and flattery⁴⁷—this, bhikshus, is wrong livelihood.

30 And what, bhikshus, is **right livelihood**?⁴⁸

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right livelihood, I say.

31 Bhikshus, there is the right livelihood with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions (of aggregates).

Bhikshus, there is the right livelihood that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

And what, bhikshus, is **the right livelihood with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions?

Here, bhikshus, the noble disciples, having given up wrong livelihood, keeps to right livelihood—this, bhikshus, is right livelihood [75] with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.

32 And, bhikshus, what is **the right livelihood that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

Loathing wrong livelihood, restraining from it, abstaining from it, refraining from it, avoiding it⁴⁹—this, bhikshus, is the right livelihood that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

33 One who makes an effort to give up wrong livelihood, to cultivate right livelihood—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong livelihood and dwells cultivating right livelihood—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right livelihood, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.

⁴⁶ See prec n

⁴⁷ As in the Moralities (*sīla*) sections of the first Dīgha suttas, eg at **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1.1.20/1:8) = **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.55/1:67). This is only a token mention of wrong livelihood for monastics (MA 4:134). **The Vanijja S** lists 5 kinds of wrong livelihood for the laity: dealing in arms, in beings, in meat, in intoxicants and in poisons (A 5.177/3:208). For a detailed discussion, see Vism 1.61-82/23-30.

⁴⁸ “Right livelihood,” *sammā, ājīva*.

⁴⁹ This stock phrase occurs in connection with right speech at Dhs 299, Nc 462.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE FACTORS**(2) THE ARISING OF THE 10 RIGHTNESS**Dependent arising of the right factors

34 (1) In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And, bhikshus, **how does right view come first?** [76]

- (2) From right view comes right intention;⁵⁰
- (3) from right intention comes right speech;
- (4) from right speech comes right action;
- (5) from right action comes right livelihood;
- (6) from right livelihood comes effort;
- (7) from right effort comes right mindfulness;
- (8) from right mindfulness comes right concentration;
- (9) from right concentration comes right knowledge;
- (10) from right knowledge comes right liberation.

—Thus, bhikshus, the learner on the path is endowed with eight factors, but the arhat with ten factors.⁵¹

RIGHT VIEW COMES FIRST**(3) THE TRAINER**Destruction of the wrong factors

35 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And, bhikshus, **how does right view come first?**

(1) Bhikshus, for one with right view, there is the withering away⁵² of wrong view; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition, and the many wholesome states that arise with right view as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(2) Bhikshus, for one with right intention, there is the withering away of wrong intention; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition, and the many wholesome states that arise with right intention as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(3) Bhikshus, for one with right speech, there is the withering away of wrong speech; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition, and the many wholesome states that arise with right speech as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(4) Bhikshus, for one with right action, there is the withering away of wrong action; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition, and the many wholesome states that arise with right action as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(5) Bhikshus, for one with right livelihood, there is the withering away of wrong livelihood; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition, [77]

⁵⁰ Comy: For one with right view of the path (*magga*), the right intention of the path arises. Similarly, for one with the right view of the fruit (*phala*), the right intention of the fruit arises. The other factors (except the last two) applies in the same way as the supramundane path. (MA 4:134)

⁵¹ The additional two factors are those of the arhat. Right knowledge (*sammā ñāṇa*) is the review knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa*) that he has destroyed all defilements, and right liberation (*sammā vimutti*) is his experience of deliverance from defilements. (MA 4:135). This tenfold set is called “the 10 rightness” (*dasa sammatta*) (D 3:271, 292; M 1:42; A 5:212).

⁵² “Withering away,” *nijjīṇṇa*, lit “dying down, decaying (through age).”

and the many wholesome states that arise with right livelihood as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(6) Bhikshus, for one with right effort, there is the withering away of wrong effort; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition,

and the many wholesome states that arise with right effort as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(7) Bhikshus, for one with right mindfulness, there is the withering away of wrong mindfulness; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition,

and the many wholesome states that arise with right mindfulness as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(8) Bhikshus, for one with right concentration, there is the withering away of wrong concentration; and the many wholesome states that arise with right concentration as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(9) Bhikshus, for one with right knowledge, there is the withering away of wrong knowledge; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong view as condition,

and the many wholesome states that arise with right knowledge as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

(10) Bhikshus, for one with right liberation, there is the withering away of wrong liberation; and also the withering away of the many evil unwholesome states that arise with wrong liberation as condition,

and the many wholesome states that arise with right liberation as condition are fulfilled through cultivation.

THE SUMMARY

The great forty

36 Thus, bhikshus, there are twenty on the wholesome side, twenty on the unwholesome side.⁵³ The Dharma discourse on the great forty has been set in motion and cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world.

37 Bhikshus, if any recluse or brahmin should think of finding fault with this discourse on the great forty or of rejecting it, then there are ten just and good grounds for censuring him⁵⁴ right here and now.

If that worthy one finds fault with right view, then he is one who would honour and praise those recluses and brahmins of wrong view.

If that worthy one finds fault with right intention, [77]...

If that worthy one finds fault with right speech,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right action,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right livelihood,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right effort,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right mindfulness,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right concentration,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right knowledge,...

If that worthy one finds fault with right liberation, then he is one who would honour and praise those recluses and brahmins of wrong liberation.

If any recluse or brahmin should think of finding fault with this discourse on the great forty or of rejecting it, then there are these ten just and good grounds for faulting him right here and now.

⁵³ On the “great forty,” see Intro (1) & (2).

⁵⁴ *Dasa saha, dhammika vādānūvāda sahadhammikāvādānūvādā*: here referring to the 10 rightness. As such, this is not a fixed list, but refers to topics discussed. See **Deva, dāha S** (M 101.22/2:222), on the 10 regarding pleasure and pain are listed; **Mahā Cattarīsaka S** (M 117.37/3:76 f), on the 10 rightness; **Paribbājaka S** (A 4.30/2:30) where a list of 4 is applied; **Sikkhā S** (A 5.5/3:4), where a list of 5 applies.

38 Bhikshus, even Vassa and Bhañña, those teachers from Okkala,⁵⁵ those who held the doctrine of non-causality, of non-action, of annihilationism, would not think that this Dharma discourse on the great forty should be faulted or rejected.

What is the reason for this?

Out of the fear of blame, attack and reproach.⁵⁶

This is what the Blessed One said. The monks joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

- Bodhi, Bhikkhu
2001 “The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple.” In *Buddhist Studies in honour of Professor Lily de Silva*. Ed PD Premasiri. Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 2001.
- Cousins, L S
1992 “Vitakka/Vitarka and Vicāra: Stages of *samādhi* in Buddhism and Yoga.” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 1992:137-157.
- Fuller, Paul
2005 *The Notion of Ditṭhi in Theravāda Buddhism: The point of view*. London & NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.
- Gethin, Rupert
1997 “Wrong view and right view in the Theravāda Abhidhamma.” *Recent Researches in Buddhist Studies: Essays in honour of Professor Y Karunadasa*. Ed KL Dhammajoti et al. Colombo & Hong Kong, 1997:211-229.
2001 *The Path to Awakening*. [E J Brill 1992] Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2nd ed 2001: 216-223 (ch 6.7). [A study of the 37 *bodhi, pakkhiya, dhammā*.]
- Premasiri, PD (ed)
2001 *Buddhist Studies in honour of Professor Lily de Silva*. Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 2001.

0450221; rev 061018; 071117; 081228; 091118

⁵⁵ Comy only says that these two teachers lived in Okkala country without further comment (MA 4:138). They are again mentioned in identical words in **Nirutti, patha S** (S 22.62/3:73) and **Paribbājaka S** (A 2:31/2:31). Cf Kvu 141 (quoted S 22.63). This seems to be a stock passage on those who hold extreme views. CPD: Okkala (sv) refers to modern Orissa.

⁵⁶ “Reproach,” *upārambha, bhayā*, ie out of fear of a polemical reproach.