

Factors of the Eight-factored Path

Wisdom

(1) **Right view:**

i) At the 'ordinary' level: belief in the principles of karma and rebirth, making a person take full responsibility for his actions. It also includes intellectual and preliminary experiential understanding of the four True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled.

ii) At the Noble or 'transcendent' level, as right seeing: transformative direct insight into the True Realities and Conditioned Arising (*M.I.46–55*) in the form of the faculty of wisdom that sees the flux of conditioned reality and, beyond it, *Nirvana*.

(2) **Right resolve:** A '*sankappa*' is seen as springing from what one focuses perception on, and to potentially lead on to desire-to-do, yearning and seeking something out (*S.II.143*), reminiscent of the *samkalpa* or preparatory resolve that the Brahmins made before carrying out a sacrificial ritual. It concerns the emotions and aspirations and is:

i) At the 'ordinary' level, resolve for: a) *nekkhamma* (Skt *naikamyā*), peaceful 'renunciation' or 'non-sensuality', and away from sense-pleasures (*kamas*); b) non-ill-will, equivalent to loving-kindness, and away from ill-will; c) non-cruelty, equivalent to compassion, and away from cruelty.

ii) At the Noble level: focused mental application (*vitakka*, Skt *vitarka*) in accord with right seeing. It is seen to both spring from and aid right view, both being part of wisdom. It aids right view as it is a repeated application of the mind to an object of contemplation, so that this can be rightly seen and understood, in a deep and discerning way, to be impermanent, *dukkha*, non-Self.

Moral Virtue

Moral virtue: i) at the 'ordinary' level, these factors are well established; ii) at the Noble level, they are the natural virtue of one in a deep state of insight.

(3) **Right speech:** abstaining from false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, and frivolous speech.

(4) **Right action:** abstaining from onslaught on living beings, taking what is not given, and wrong conduct in regard to sensual pleasures.

(5) **Right livelihood**: making one's living in such a way as to avoid causing suffering to others (human or animal) through cheating them (M.III.75) or by physically harming or killing them: avoiding 'trade in weapons, living beings, meat, alcoholic drink, or poison' (A.III.208).

Meditation

Meditation: the level of practice shifts to the Noble level once Noble right seeing guides them.

(6) **Right effort**: a) avoiding the arising of unwholesome states (e.g. greed, hatred or delusion); b) undermining unwholesome states which have arisen; c) developing wholesome states, as in meditation; d) maintaining wholesome states which have arisen.

(7) **Right mindfulness**: practising the four applications of mindfulness (*satipatthana*, Skt *smṛty-upasthana*) – alert, mindful observation of the qualities and changing nature of: a) body (including breathing); b) feeling; c) states of mind; d) *dhammas*: basic patterns in the flow of experience, such as: the five *khandhas*, the five hindrances, the four True Realities, and the seven factors of awakening.

(8) **Right concentration/mental unification** (*samma-samadhi*, Skt *samyak-samadhi*): states of calm, peace, and mental clarity arising from intently focusing the mind on one or other meditation object. These are concentrated states, rather than the act of concentrating, which pertains more to right effort. They are states in which the mind's energies have been unified, in the form of the four *jhanas* (Skt *dhyana*), lucid meditative trances.

Source: Excerpted, with minor edits, from Harvey, P. (2013) *An introduction to Buddhism: teachings, history and practices*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Pages 83-84.) [The Pali and Sanskrit terms for each of the eight factors have been omitted from the original, except the last two.]