

Vibhaṅga Sutta

SN V 45.8 Explanation of the Path

Translated by Ānanda

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Once in Sāvātthi,

[The Buddha] “Wise is this Eight-spoked path monks,
That I will explain and break down to you.¹
Listen carefully and apply your mind to what I will say.”

[Monks] “Yes Bhante” replied the monks.

The Awakened One said this:

[The Buddha] “What is this Eight-Spoked Path of the Awakened?
It is here as follows:

Wise² Understanding
Wise Attitude
Wise Speech
Wise Behavior
Wise Living
Wise Practice
Wise Awareness
Wise Meditation.³

[1. Wise Understanding]

What is this wise understanding?

That is:

Knowing what is tension;
Knowing the cause of tension;
Knowing the release from tension;⁴
Knowing the way to release the tension.⁵

This is called wise understanding.

¹ Ariyaṃ vo, bhikkhave, aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ desessāmi vibhajissāmi.

² Sammā2 (indecl.) [Vedic samyac (=samyak) & samīś “connected, in one”; see under samī°] thoroughly, properly, rightly; in the right way, as it ought to be, best, perfectly (opp. micchā) (with the insertion of a sandhi — d —, cp. puna — deva), like samma-d-eva properly, in harmony or completeness.

³ Sammādiṭṭhi -saṅkappo -vācā -kammanto -ājīvo -vāyāmo -sati -samādhi.

⁴ ‘Yo tassāyeva taṅhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo.’ (DN 22)

‘It is the appeasement of that same tension, it’s release, giving it up, breaking free from it, freedom, unlatching.’

⁵ Dukkhe nāṇaṃ, dukkhasamudaye nāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhe nāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya nāṇaṃ

[2. Wise Attitude]

What is wise attitude?

That is,

*The attitude of Letting go.
The attitude of non-anger.
The attitude of harmlessness.⁶*

This is called wise attitude.

[3. Wise Speech]

And what is wise speech?

That is,

*Abstaining from false speech,
Abstaining from spiteful speech,
Abstaining from unkind speech,
Abstaining from senseless talk.⁷*

This is called wise speech.

[4. Wise Behavior]

And what is wise behavior?

That is,

*Abstaining from mistreating living beings,
Abstaining from taking what is not given
Abstaining from [Sexual misconduct].⁸*

This is called wise behavior.

[5. Wise Living]

What is wise living?

That is,

*A righteous meditator abandons wrong modes of living
And shapes a life by right modes of living.⁹*

⁶ *Nekkhammasaṅkappo, abyāpādasāṅkappo, avihiṃsāsaṅkappo. Nekkhamma: Can also mean contentment.*

⁷ *Musāvādā veramaṇī, piṣuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī, pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī, samphappalāpā veramaṇī*

⁸ *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī, adinnādānā veramaṇī, abrahmacariyā veramaṇī—This “celibacy” here is meant for the monks or advanced practitioners. In “regular” terms, this is abstaining from wrong sexual activity, meaning, activity that is proper and not causing harm to anyone.*

⁹ *Ariyasāvako micchāājīvaṃ pahāya sammāājīvena jīvitaṃ kappeti—*

This is called wise living.

[6. Wise Practice]

What is wise practice?

[1. Guarding¹⁰ from Unwholesome States]

- (1) *One develops the desire¹¹ not give rise
To unfavorable, unwholesome states of mind.¹²
One practices with determination,
Continually devoting one's mind to it.¹³*

[2. Abandoning Unwholesome States]

- (2) *One develops the desire to abandon,
Unfavorable, unwholesome states of mind.¹⁴
One practices with determination,
Continually devoting one's mind to it*

[3. Bringing up Wholesome States]

- (3) *One develops the desire to give rise,
To wholesome states of mind.¹⁵
One practices with determination,
Continually devoting one's mind to it.*

[4. Maintaining Wholesome States]

- (4) *One develops the desire to sustain
Already present wholesome states,*

¹⁰ *Guarding, protecting awareness.*

¹¹ *Chanda: Wholesome desire. A very essential part of the path to liberation. This tends to be quite misunderstood. Desire is needed to undertake anything. For example, desire for awakening is required to attain awakening! Very often, the Buddha's Teaching is understood as 'one should get rid of all desires.' In the ultimate sense, this is true, but it is a gradual path of training to get there and the wholesome desire to practice this path is essential. Taṇhā is the pāli words for 'craving' or unwholesome desire, which the Buddha says is mainly regarding sensory gratification. But wholesome desire or 'Chanda' is the fuel for the whole practice. The four steps of wise practice are where it is found. This is where 'desire' is to be found and developed in this practice. The desire to abandon unwholesome states of mind and the desire to cultivate wholesome ones.*

¹² *Anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti*

¹³ *Vāyamati vīriyaṃ ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati,*

¹⁴ *Uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya chandaṃ janeti*

¹⁵ *Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ uppādāya chandaṃ janeti*

*For their increase,
Growth,
Maturation,
Development
And culmination.¹⁶*

*One practices with determination,
Continually devoting one's mind to it.*

This is called wise practice.

[7. Wise Awareness]

What is wise awareness?

Here, one meditates;

*(1) Resting one's awareness on the body,
Knowing it as only body.
Intent, fully conscious and present
Letting go of tensions and distractions.¹⁷*

*(2) Resting one's awareness on sensations,
Knowing them as only sensations.
Intent, fully conscious and present,
Letting go of tensions and distractions.*

*(3) Resting one's awareness on mind,
Knowing it as only mind.
Intent, fully conscious and present,
Letting go of tensions and distractions.*

*(4) Resting one's awareness on mental states,
Knowing them as only mental states.
Intent, fully conscious and present,
Letting go of tensions and distractions.*

This is called wise awareness.

¹⁶ *Uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ t̥hitiyā asammōsāya bhīyyobhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripūriyā*

¹⁷ *Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ;*

[8. Wise Meditation]¹⁸

What is wise meditation?

- (1) *Disengaging oneself from the senses,
and letting go of unwholesome mental states,
Attended by thinking and imagination
With the joy and happiness born of letting go
One understands and abides in the first level of meditation.*¹⁹
- (2) *With the calming of thinking and imagining,
With inner tranquilization,
With the mind becoming unified,
Unattended by thinking and imagination
With joy and happiness born of mental collectedness,²⁰
One understands and dwells in the second level of meditation.*²¹
- (3) *By the calming of excited joy for steady awareness,
Present and fully comprehending,
Experiencing happiness²² within one's body
That which the awakened ones describe as:
"Steady presence of mind."
"This is a pleasant abiding"
One understands and abides in the third level of meditation.*²³

¹⁸ *Sammā Samādhi: Mental stillness, composure or collectedness.*

¹⁹ *vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Jhāna: Meditation or Level of understanding.*

²⁰ *Samādhijaṃ Pītisukhaṃ: The bliss of mental development, collected mental harmony.*

²¹ *Vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

²² *Ease with the body.*

²³ *Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti, yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti: 'upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī'ti tatiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

(4) *Leaving behind the notions of happiness and unhappiness.
With the earlier settling of mental gladness and affliction,
With neither distress nor excitement,
Purified by unmoving presence,
One understands and abides in the fourth level of meditation.*²⁴

This is called wise meditation.

²⁴ *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsatipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati—*

