

THE ILLUMINATED TENFOLD PATH

(a contemporary renewal of the Noble Eightfold Path)

Introduction to The Illuminated Tenfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path has served historical Buddhism as the 'way' — the path leading to the cessation of suffering — as the 'medicine' of the last of the Four Noble Truths. It has been the source of the awakened wisdom that eliminates the obstacles to realization of greed, anger, and delusion and gives insight into the true nature of phenomena. Reciprocally, the first of the eight is View, which leads back to the first of the Four Noble truths and their comprehension and application. The Eightfold Path has also been called *the Middle Way* and is represented by the Dharma Wheel with its eight spokes.

With all of its sanctity and the great devotion given for over 2000 years to the Eightfold Path, there comes a time for its re-examination, modernization — if appropriate and beneficial — and a new languaging that is engaging for its meaningfulness for our time. Within a framework of what is being called secular Buddhism — namely, that which is *a pragmatic path for this life* without the Absolutes of religious metaphysics, the elements in the Eightfold Path that are renunciative of this life and its difficulties — and its bliss and pleasure states as well — these are removed from the Illuminated version.

This revision, the Illuminated Tenfold Path, then is a here-and-now vehicle for transformation of the same obstacles, but without the influence of monasticism and with the stress on acceptance of the varieties of humans and sentient beings living together in the complexities of relationships and connection, in a world that is overpopulated and stressed by our human impact on the very nature of life. The Illuminated Tenfold Path is adapted to our time's focus on sexual/love relationships and our fundamental need to learn to share and nurture each other. The adjective 'Noble' has been supplanted with the less aristocratic, more to the point 'Illuminated' — as in light on the path of awakening — and other language has been substituted to make meanings clearer and more contemporary.

The Illuminated Tenfold Path is an offering for our times — a guide to our inner life and our connection with community and nature. It is to be further adapted by others like you and presented in the hope that it will serve you and yours.

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The Illuminated View

I choose to walk the path of this life dedicated to understanding and feeling my internal and external relationships as they really are, as much as I am capable of that at any time — stripped of prejudices, negative attitudes, trauma, cultural and personal psychology — eliminating all obstacles to accessing clarity and spaciousness with love and compassion for myself and all things.

* Pragmatic and proven to be true for humans by every imaginable means. Clarity and love trump confusion and hatred, spaciousness trumps obsession.

** Aggression is excluded, legitimate self-defense is included.

Illuminated Intention

My deliberate commitment is to ethical behavior for the sake of my own integrity and for the good of others; and to the moment-to-moment examination of my motivations and their impact on nature and humans.

* We live entirely in connections — internally with our own multi-cellular interrelations and externally to all things in one way or another. In our dependency and creativity, we are affected by and affect all else consciously and unconsciously. Illuminated Intention is about maximizing our awareness of our effects and connectedness.

Skillful Speech

My understanding is that slander, libel, gossip, harsh and aggressive speech, lying, and deceit cause damage to me and to others. Compromising my honesty tends to lead to more dishonesty. Telling the truth may be difficult for many reasons, but enables me to have clarity about consequences — intended and unintended. Skillful speech enables Awakened Action.

Awakened Action

In abstaining from harming other beings, I embrace the unique opportunity that humans have to create a peaceful existence. By not killing or having animal beings killed for my benefit, I reduce my exploitation of life on this endangered planet and I move my own existence to an equanimous sense of balance. By not taking what is not mine, by refraining from stealing, by not exploiting others to have more than them, by participating in giving and producing for the benefit of all, I embrace a life of emotional plenty. By being an activist for equality and social justice for all, I abstain from and oppose racism, sexism, and harmful prejudicial behavior of all kinds. By my commitment to explore conscious, consentful, and loving relationships, I avoid sexual exploitation and misconduct. By exploring mind thoughtfully and with great interest in my and others growth and development, I avoid addiction and harmful intoxication. May my actions benefit, bring joy and fun to others and myself!

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Awakened Livelihood

Buddhist tradition urges abstention from harming sentient beings: dealing in weapons, human beings (e.g., slavery and prostitution); animal production for consumption and butchery; dealing in intoxicants and poisons. To these, we add choices for livelihood that exploit the labor and property of others; livelihood that expropriates the commons — air, water, natural resources — the aspects of our environment that belong to all of us as our natural heritage; livelihood that is parasitic, and totally self-interested — that makes no true contribution to the well-being of all of us, such as finance capitalism; livelihood that is based on usury and exploitation of the neediness of others; livelihood that supports the machinery of war and conquest — that is aggressive in its intent.

May my livelihood choices bring me and my companions in life a prosperity that is in balance with the needs of others and contribute to the overall well-being of humans, sentient beings and nature. May I respect the needs of future generations for their good lives to come. May I and all others share in both the difficult and unpleasant work requirements for lives lived and in the creative, and uplifting possibilities for lives lived well.

Awakened Effort

I am committed to the effort to prevent the arising of unwholesome states of mind that may afflict me and be projected harmfully onto others. I am dedicated to the causal arising of wholesome states that will benefit me and others. Making the effort to live in integrity, balance, good community and in collaboration with others is my goal. I fully support this in myself and others.

Awakened Sharing

I am committed to the building of a world culture that equalizes access to the satisfaction of core human needs — food, clothing, shelter, decent health care, the rule of civilized law — and shares surplus — my and my larger entity's — to benefit those who do not have enough. I am pledged to a just and egalitarian world culture and will use the non-violent methods of dialogue, persuasion, and negotiation to achieve this. I am committed to sharing my surpluses of time, money, labor, skills, creativity, possessions, and spirit with others. I will maintain a close observation of my and my culture's relationship to the ecology of this planet and will seek a balanced use of resources and an awareness of my/our impact on nature.

Awakened Love

In the realm of Romantic love, I will act with consideration and respect for others, avoid exploitation and deceit, practice full disclosure, and will seek to treat the other with recognition of their Buddha nature. I will protect myself from exploitation and disrespect.

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Awakened Mindfulness

I am committed to the observation of what is happening within me and around me in this present moment. I will train my mind to remain in the present — open, quiet, alert, and contemplating the present event. I will commit myself to the examination and suspension of judgments and interpretations, or if they occur, to just register them and then let them go. I will direct my attention to the contemplation of body sensations, feelings of all kinds, my attitudes, and the contemplation of all types of phenomena — inner and outer — for the sake of eliminating greed, aversion and ignorance as they impact me and the world outside of me. I will cultivate insight, awakened passion, equanimity, kindness, empathy, intelligence, and harmoniousness — all the qualities of mindfulness.

Awakened Concentration

Through the practices of meditation in all of its possible formats, and the practices of introspection in all of its possible formats, and in the practices of mind exploration in all of its possible formats, and in the practices of living in balanced connections, and in the practice of all of the factors of the Illuminated Tenfold Path, I seek to dwell in mindfulness, equanimity and bliss and to further this in others. This I shall call freedom and liberation.