**Fulfilling the Satipatthana Path**

These notes refer to the final talk of 2021 on the Satipatthana Sutta. Here is a translation by Thanissaro of this section of the Sutta that describes the last stanzas of the discourse:

"Furthermore, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *four noble truths.* And how does he remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths? There is the case where he discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is stress.' He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is the origination of stress.' He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is the cessation of stress.' He discerns, as it has come to be, that 'This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths...

"Now, if anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for six years... five... four... three... two years... one year... seven months... six months... five... four... three... two months... one month... half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four frames of reference in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or — if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance — non-return.

"'This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

it is important to consider the context of this section in order to realize what the title of Analayo’s book suggests: “Satipatthana—The Direct Path To Realization”. This passage describes the fulfillment of this quest—*realization*, manifested in a radically different understanding of the Four Noble Truths. As a result of the diligent application of mindfulness as cultivated by the various contemplations in the four foundations, supported by the utmost development of the Seven Awakening Factors (A review of these qualities of attention is posted at orlandoinsightmeditation.org in the archives as “Review of the Seven Awakening Factors”, recorded November 3, 2021), one directly experiences the Four Noble Truths rather than as a concept.

The First Noble Truth, that is, the inevitable experiential awareness of dukkha, is experienced directly with a dispassionate and balanced awareness—this is observed with clear awareness of the transient subjective nature of the mind, and as a conditioned phenomenon, not a separate self.

The Second Noble Truth, the dynamic process of becoming identified with the fabricated self through craving and clinging, is investigated with the same dispassionate and balanced awareness—this is observed without impulsive emotional reactivity—there’s an awareness that the potential for the emergent grasping process to get traction is present, but there is no urgency regarding reacting to that phenomenon.

As a result of this direct and nonreactive attention, the Third Noble Truth manifests, but at the most subtle and fundamental level, that is, a direct realization of the dualistic result of craving and clinging in the creation of the delusion there is an enduring/autonomous self. This realization sets the conditions supportive of the experience of the non-dual nature of reality—a subject-object perspective is relinquished, and the unconditioned nature of reality becomes apparent and Nirvana is realized.

This is accomplished as the fulfillment of the potential views and skills within the Noble Eightfold Path are realized. The Path has, of course, eight elements, divided into three categories: Wisdom, Virtue, and Mental Training. When these practices are sufficiently mature, the category of Wisdom is “revisited”, that is, what was originally understood conceptually is directly realized. What is conceptually called Right Understanding is now termed “Right Knowledge”, that is, one understands completely that karma is real, and karmic conditioning operates only in a purified form—there is no separate, enduring self. What is conceptually called Right Intention is now called “Right Release”—total relinquishment of any need to defend or gratify any subjective experience as a self—along with this realization there is a bias towards greed or aversion, and this fulfills the characteristics of Virtue.

The characteristics of Virtue, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood become a fundamental behavioral mode as the potential of the Path is realized. The temptation to act on any urge to manifest unwholesome speech drops away as the felt need to defend or gratify a belief in an enduring/autonomous self dissolves with entry into the Unconditioned experience. Any impulse towards actions that are harmful to oneself, others and the environment are also diminished as there is a direct realization of the interdependent nature of the world. These two realizations automatically manifest as a lifestyle that is socially and environmentally harmonious, guided by the total realization of how choices can either promote harm or well-being; the direct experience of the Unconditioned brings a quality of consciousness that fosters wholesomeness the wells up from deep within rather than being informed by societal norms guided by greed, aversion or ignorance.

Here’s what Gil Fronsdal has to say about these realizations:

“…As a continuation of the Eightfold Path, Right Knowledge is knowing firsthand the benefits experienced through living the path and the suffering experienced when we don’t live the path. The benefits include greater peace, compassion, well-being, integrity, and spiritual freedom. The suffering includes agitation, fear, conceit, greed, and hostility. The more strongly we experience the benefits, the more clearly we see the differences between being attached and being free, having ill will and having goodwill, having ethical integrity and not having integrity. As we begin to make different choices, the contracted and agitated states of clinging begin to lose their appeal and power over us and we learn that they are neither hardwired nor necessary. As we see and experience healthy alternatives, these painful states begin to diminish in strength and frequency.

“…Right Knowledge also includes recognizing that letting go of clinging is reliable and trustworthy. It is not something we need to fear, even if what we are releasing is our most precious and tenacious attachments to self. Freedom from clinging doesn’t diminish us. Rather, it leads to some of the healthiest and most beneficial states of mind humans can experience.

Through the mindfulness and concentration factors of the Eightfold Path, Right Knowledge shows us how all our perceptions and conceptions are constantly in flux. With their fleeting appearance and disappearance, they are not stable and thus cannot provide the fullest experience of peace. They cannot be the basis for a liberated mind. Instead, the basis for liberation is release.

“…Right Knowledge sets the stage for Right Release by helping the mind relax and appreciate the process of letting go. Knowing the tangible suffering of clinging brings a disinclination to cling. Knowing the peace and well-being of non-clinging teaches that letting go of clinging is letting go into peace.

Right Release differs from ordinary letting go by being more impactful and lasting. It is a ceasing of clinging so clear that Right Knowledge then becomes a knowing that is always available to us. Just as one is no longer fooled by a magic trick after being shown how it is performed, so we begin to see through the tricks of the mind as we release ourselves from clinging.

For most people Right Release includes a gradual process of becoming free in more and more areas of their life. The Buddha described these areas in terms of beliefs, biological drives, and subtle mental tendencies.

Because freedom does not come from beliefs, Buddhism is particularly sensitive to the problems of holding on to beliefs, interpretations, and stories. An important part of living the Eightfold Path is loosening the grip on our views, including views about ourselves. A significant experience of release shows us that we don’t need to be defined by any self-concept or identity.

More tenacious than clinging to beliefs is the clinging that stems from the biological drives of sensual desire and hostility. Even when we know that such clinging causes suffering, it can be difficult to let go. Even the wisest people can easily succumb to it. This is where practicing the Eightfold Path is especially important. It provides a satisfying sense of well-being that is an effective alternative to desire or anger. Our strong biological drives can relax and fade away when we are experiencing something better…” Downloaded from: [*http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/from-the-eightfold-path-to-the-tenfold-path/*](http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/from-the-eightfold-path-to-the-tenfold-path/) *10/15/14*