

# 2020-11-09 Eightfold Path- Right Speech

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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So the topics of these days is right speech as the third factor of the eight factor path, the Eightfold Path that the Buddha taught. And one of the things that is nice about or nice to think about or be inspired by these four different aspects of right speech, these are speaking the truth, speaking in a way for concord, uniting people, developing connections with people that are healthy. And today the topic will be basically kind speech and also valued speech, purposeful speech. And part of this is that these qualities, these kinds of speech are an expression or manifestation of awakening, of being free, of the kind of freedom that Buddhism emphasizes. So if you ask what is an enlightened person like in Buddhism? One of the ways you can answer that you would say, Oh, they would speak the truth. They would speak for the purposes of uniting people and developing rich connections between people. They would speak for the purpose of they speak kindly. And they would speak for a good purpose. And so the whole factors of the Eightfold Path can all of them be seen as something that wells up or exists or is there for a person has some degree of spiritual freedom. And they're not so effortful in that way. Almost as they just arise out of that freedom, which is freedom from stress. Freedom from extra effort, the effort of the ego, of self centeredness, the effort of greed, or the effort of hate or fear, confusion. And it's really remarkable to feel something inside settle and become peaceful or still. And feel how our experience, how from that it's not a place of dullness, it's not a place of inactivity or inertia. But from that place there can be speech and actions and ways of looking and seeing in the world. And so these eightfold paths are, you know, all aspects of that. As well as practices we can take on so we can find that realization, so that we can get to the place of freedom. And so it's helpful to know that what we're looking for, as we practice the Eightfold Path on the way to realization, is we're looking for freedom from stress, freedom from clinging, freedom from a lot of extra effort, in the middle of the persistent effort to engage in the Eightfold Path.

So, four forms of right speech. And the third, we'll talk about the third and the fourth today. And the third, I'd like to read you the passage about the opposite of right speech and this third form. "One speaks harshly. One utters words that are rough, hard, hurtful to others, offensive to others, bordering on anger, un conducive to concentration." So, the second one was divisive speech, and that's one that will slant and divides people, like slander. Divides people and separates people. The third category has to do with speech that hurts the person we're talking to, it doesn't necessarily divide them with anybody else. But it hurts the person. So we speak harshly, but this word harsh encompasses also offensive and hurtful speech that is done. But it include just raising our voice in a particular way that is so assertive, aggressive and painful, that even the words might be kind, but the tone of voice is really hard to hear and implies there's anger or harshness or animosity in the words themselves.

And this description of these kinds of words ends with are not conducive to concentration. Concentration I think of, as I've talked about before, is unification, as being coming whole, or settled, or stable, grounded, composed in oneself. The word concentration, Samadhi, is a rich word in Buddhism, that the English word doesn't really capture the richness of it. And so there are ways of talking that take us away from that, agitate so much. And so to speak the opposite of this harsh speech, is also speech that allows us to settle, become whole, find that place of beautiful, vital, soft stillness inside and freedom inside. And Samadhi is pointing to.

So the opposite of this harsh speech is "abandoning harsh speech, one abstains from harsh speech, one speaks words that are gentle, pleasing to the ear, lovable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many, and agreeable to many." So here, there's a lot of care in how we speak. And so to speak in ways that then, it doesn't say here conducive to concentration but I think that's implied. And this is a very important quality, this idea that not conducive to concentration and conducive to concentration. Because there's something about the deep subtleness and stillness of concentration, which is a powerful reference point for finding our way. What is how to speak? Because one could try to speak these ways here. Try to speak gentle and pleasing and lovable and courteous, and desired to many. But there's so much effort and strain to do so.

I remember the very first, I think I mentioned this already, the first time I intentionally tried to be kind to someone, I was standing in the stairwell in the first year in college in the dormitory. And there was a woman, an other freshmen that I guess maybe I liked her or something, and I just kind of put on all the kindness I could. And it was so artificial. And so saccharin, I think, that didn't really work in the way that I hoped it would work. So it certainly took a lot of effort on my part. But this place where these kind speech can come from. And gentle, pleasing to the ear, lovable, and go to the heart.

So how do we take care of our speech? We really look at our speech and be with our speech. Take so much care, that it's really nice for the people to hear. It's pleasant and enjoyable. There's a little saying that people will spend more time choosing their clothes to wear than choosing what they say. And then

there's also saying that if you don't have something to contribute, maybe don't say it. So it has some care about what we speak.

And this is particularly applies also to the fourth of the right speech. Sometimes called no idle chatter, no idle speech. The meaning, it's actually two words in Pāli, that make up this expression. And both of them can be can mean foolish and nonsense. So don't speak nonsense. Don't have foolish speech. And what I think the heart of this means, don't speak words that have no purpose. Now idle speech sometimes and just talking about the weather, just chatting about things with people about simple things. And it can have a very important purpose of making connections and having a kind and supportive warmth between people. But don't speak nonsense. Don't speak about things that you don't know about and just make things up. Don't talk about things that have no valued, important purpose, except just to chatter foolishly about the things and all that.

And so here's the opposite of this. Well, here here's a full description of what this means about nonsense. "One speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is not fact. Speaks what is useless. Speaks contrary to the Dhamma. Are worthless. And at the wrong time, he speaks such words as are worthless, unreasonable, immoderate, and unbeneficial." Now the Right Speech one goes like this. "One speaks at the right time. Speaks what is fact Speaks what is good. Speaks on the Dhamma and the discipline. Speaks at the right time. Such words as are worth recording. Reasonable, moderate, and beneficial." So it could be that Right Speech here, instead of nonsense, it might be interesting to translate it as purposeful speech. Or beneficial speech. Speech that has a beneficial purpose. And even if it's idle chatter, it can still be beneficial for creating community. But I think this idea of living a purposeful life and have purposeful speech, really supports the movement to freedom and liberation, can be expression of our care and our love for the world. And why not? Provided that sense of purposefulness can also arise, with a place where it doesn't take a lot of energy, or stress, or strain. It comes from this place of subtleness, of composed, of stillness, that we can find. And then to live a purposeful life that supports that. That doesn't mess with that, or agitate that. To speak in a purposeful way for the benefit of ourselves and for the benefit of others. And if our speech doesn't benefit either self or others, ideally both, maybe there is a possibility that what's most valuable is silence. Silence in Buddhism, it gets a wonderful adjective when it's done really well and it's proper. It's called noble silence. And sometimes silence is how people can connect. In silence, there's a wonderful connection and truth telling and meeting, truth meeting.

So kind speech. Supportive speech, supports other people. And purposeful speech, that has the purpose of benefiting this world that we live in. These are, to do so, is definitely part of the path to liberation. And it is also an expression of liberation. So maybe you enjoy your speech, you're talking. May you thrive in talking when you want to talk. And may it be that you value how you speak. Because you speak in truthful ways, in concord, in ways that benefit and support people, and in ways that have a beneficial purpose.

So thank you so much for this. And then tomorrow we'll start the next factor the Eightfold Path, which is right action. And we'll see that we're getting into the movement of liberation, it spreads outwards now into how we act in the world. Thank you.