

THE PALIVERSE PROJECT

The Universe of Buddha's Wisdom

Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā)

- 3. The Canon of Higher Teaching - Commentaries
(3. Abhidhamma Piṭaka - Aṭṭhakathā)
- 2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis (2. Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā)
- 11. Analysis of Path Factors (11. Maggaṅgavibhaṅgo)



PaliVerse

2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis

11. Analysis of Path Factors

1. Commentary on the Suttanta Classification

486. Now, in the immediately following analysis of the path, everything beginning with "the noble eightfold path" should be understood in the same manner as stated in the exposition of the way leading to the cessation of suffering in the analysis of the truths. In the second method too, where it is shown individually by way of development, everything beginning with "one develops right view, dependent upon seclusion" should be understood in the same manner as stated in the analysis of the factors of enlightenment. Thus, this Suttanta classification has been expounded by way of both methods as a mixture of the mundane and the supramundane.

2. Commentary on the Abhidhamma Classification

490. In the Abhidhamma classification, without saying "noble," it is stated as "the eightfold path." Even though it is not stated thus, this is indeed noble. Just as a son born in the womb of a queen who has been anointed on the head, to a king who has been anointed on the head, is indeed a prince even without being called a prince, so too this should be understood as noble even without being called noble. The remainder here also should be understood in the same manner as stated in the Saccavibhaṅga.

493. Even in the fivefold section, although "eightfold" is not stated, it should be understood as eightfold indeed. For there is no supramundane path that is called fivefold. This is the agreed-upon commentary of the teachers on this matter. But a sophist says - "There is no supramundane path called eightfold; it is only fivefold." When told "Bring a sutta," he, certainly not seeing another, will bring this passage from the Mahāsaḷāyatana Sutta: "Whatever is the view of one in such a state, that is his right view. Whatever is the thought of one in such a state, the effort, the mindfulness, whatever is the concentration of one in such a state, that is his right concentration. But already beforehand his bodily action, verbal action and livelihood have been well purified."

Then he should be told: "Bring the sutta passage immediately following this." If he brings it, that is good; if he does not bring it, one should bring it oneself - "Thus this noble eightfold path goes to fulfilment through development" - and say: "By this teaching of the Teacher your argument is refuted; there is no supramundane path called fivefold; it is only eightfold."

These three factors, however, operate as already purified beforehand, and at the moment of the supramundane path they become even more purified. Then why was this taken as "the fivefold path"? For the purpose of showing the additional function. For at the time when one abandons wrong speech and fulfils right speech, at that time right action and right livelihood are not present. These five factors that cause

action are what abandon wrong speech; but right speech itself fulfils by way of abstinence. At the time when one abandons wrong action and fulfils right action, at that time right speech and right livelihood are not present. These five factors that cause action are what abandon wrong action; but right action itself fulfils by way of abstinence. At the time when one abandons wrong livelihood and fulfils right livelihood, at that time right speech and right action are not present. These five factors that cause action are what abandon wrong livelihood; but right livelihood itself fulfils by way of abstinence. To show this additional function of these five factors that cause action, it was taken as "the fivefold path." But the supramundane path is only eightfold; there is none called fivefold.

"If you say it is eightfold together with right speech and so on, how will you escape from this multiplicity of volitions - four volitions of right speech, three volitions of right action, seven volitions of right livelihood? Therefore the supramundane path is only fivefold." "We shall be freed from the multiplicity of volitions; and we shall maintain that the supramundane path is only eightfold." He should be asked: "Are you or are you not a reciter of the Mahācattārīsaka?" If he says "I am not," he should be told: "Because you are not a reciter, you do not know." If he says "I am a reciter," he should be told: "Bring a discourse." If he brings the sutta, that is good; if he does not bring it, one should bring it oneself from the Uparipaṇṇāsa -

"And what, monks, is right speech? I speak of right speech, monks, as twofold -there is, monks, right speech with mental corruptions, conducive to merit, resulting in clinging; there is, monks, right speech that is noble, without mental corruptions, supramundane, a path factor.

"And what, monks, is right speech that is with taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the substrata of existence? Abstention from lying, abstention from divisive speech, abstention from harsh speech, abstention from idle chatter - this, monks, is right speech with mental corruptions, conducive to merit, resulting in clinging.

"And what, monks, is right speech that is noble, without taints, supramundane, a path factor? Whatever abstinence, avoidance, complete abstinence, abstention from the four kinds of verbal misconduct of one with a noble mind, with a mind without mental corruptions, of one possessing the noble path, developing the noble path - this, monks, is right speech that is noble, without taints, supramundane, a path factor. Etc.

"And what, monks, is right action? I declare right action, monks, to be twofold. Etc. ripening in the substrata of existence.

"And what, monks, is right action that is noble, without taints, supramundane? Etc.

"And what, monks, is right livelihood? I declare right livelihood, monks, to be twofold. Etc. ripening in the substrata of existence.

"And what, monks, is right livelihood that is noble, without taints, supramundane, a path factor? Whatever abstinence, avoidance, complete abstinence, abstention from wrong livelihood of one with a noble mind, with a mind without mental corruptions, of one possessing the noble path, developing the noble path - this, monks, is right livelihood that is noble, without taints, supramundane, a path factor."

Thus here, abstinence from the four kinds of verbal misconduct, from the three kinds of bodily misconduct, and from wrong livelihood - each abstinence individually is stated to be noble, without taints, supramundane, a path factor. "Whence here is a multiplicity of volitions? Whence is a fivefold path? This sutta demonstrates to you, whether you wish it or not, that the supramundane path is eightfold." If he discerns through this much, that is wholesome; if he does not discern, he should be convinced by bringing forth other reasons as well. For this was said by the Blessed One -

"In whatever teaching and discipline, Subhadda, the noble eightfold path is not found, therein no ascetic is found. Etc. In this teaching and discipline, Subhadda, the noble eightfold path is found; here alone, Subhadda, is an ascetic. Etc. Void are the other doctrines of ascetics of other kinds."

In many other hundreds of suttas as well, only the eightfold path has been mentioned. In the Kathāvatthu treatise too it is stated -

"Of paths, the eightfold is foremost; of truths, the four terms;
Dispassion is the best of dhammas, and of bipeds, the one with vision."

"Is there indeed a suttanta?" "Yes." "Therefore the path is eightfold." If, however, even by this much he does not come to agreement, he should be dismissed with: "Go, enter the monastery and drink some gruel." That he will state a further reason - this is impossible. The remainder here is clear in meaning.

However, the methods herein should be counted. For in the eightfold path, when questioned collectively and answered collectively, four thousand methods are analysed across the four paths. In the fivefold path, when questioned collectively and answered collectively, four; when questioned individually and answered individually, four times four makes twenty across the five factors. Thus the former eight and these twenty - in the analysis of the path altogether twenty-eight thousand methods are analysed. And those are exclusively wholesome, having produced the supramundane. In the resultant, however, the methods should be made threefold compared to the wholesome.

Commentary on the Abhidhamma Classification.

3. Commentary on the Questions Section

504. In the question-asking section, the wholesome and other nature of the path factors should be understood following the text itself. In the object triads, however, all of these, since they occur with reference to the immeasurable nibbāna, are only of immeasurable object, not of path object. For neither the path nor the fruit makes the path its object. Here, however, by way of co-nascent condition, the wholesome ones are of path root; having made either energy or investigation predominant, at the time of path development, they are of path-predominance; in the case of path development where desire or mind is predominant, they should not be said to be of path-predominance; at the time of fruition also, they should not be so called.

In the past and so forth, they should not be called so even by way of having a single object; but since nibbāna is an external state, they are called of external object - thus in this question-asking section too, only the supramundane path factors that have

arisen are spoken of. For by the Perfectly Enlightened One, in the Suttanta classification itself, both mundane and supramundane path factors were spoken of; but in the Abhidhamma classification and in the question-asking section, only supramundane ones - thus this analysis of the path too has been shown by analysing it after extracting it from the three rounds.

In the Sammohavinodanī, the Commentary on the Vibhaṅga,

the Exposition of the Path Factor Analysis is concluded.



ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation is part of the PaliVerse Project - the first complete, unified English translation of the Pāli Canon together with its Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Tīkā), accompanied by interactive study tools. PaliVerse is an ongoing project. The AI translations are continuously improved through experts' revisions and feedback. This text is the latest translation as of the date of download.

PDF Creation Date: 14 September 2026

HOW TO CITE

PaliVerse (2026). Commentaries. 3. The Canon of Higher Teaching - Commentaries. 2. Commentary on the Book of Analysis. 11. Analysis of Path Factors Retrieved from paliverse.org

© 2026 The PaliVerse Project · All Rights Reserved
Centre for Study and Practice of Theravāda Buddhism
Civic Non-Profit Company registered in Greece
This PDF may be freely distributed for study and practice.

PaliVerse.org