If you compare the merit of just making a divine offerings such as clothes and food equal in number to that number of sand grains in the Ganges river to the numberless sentient beings to the merit of hearing a Buddha’s name just once, then the merit of hearing a Buddha’s name once surpasses the merit that is gained from that kind of giving. Then it goes without saying that if you recollect the Buddha’s holy body by thinking of the Buddha and visualizing the Buddha, the merit is even greater than hearing the Buddha’s name. When you recite the prayer *Praise to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha* and if you can visualize the Buddha and recite the praise from within the state of devotion and putting your palms together, then you only stand to profit.

The idea is that before you learn the dharma or before you hear the dharma, if you do it enthusiastically with joy and delight and with devotion then you stand to benefit. However, if you learn the dharma or listen to the dharma without much interest, without delight, has no enthusiasm and no faith, then it is difficult for the dharma to benefit your mind. So it is important to adjust the motivation at the beginning for learning the dharma or listening to the dharma. We should try to listen and learn the dharma with a good motivation.

When we recite the praises to Buddha, we can do it with a delight, joy, and faith. Since you are already here, might as well you accumulate some merit out of your presence here. Anyway, you got to recite the prayers. So if you can do that, then you get some merit. After the praise to the Buddha, there is a recitation of the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* which is like the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom. If you recite that well, you are able to accumulate the collections and purify the mind of obscuration and negativities.

If you remember the terminological division of the Perfection of Wisdom:

* there is the *natural Perfection of Wisdom* which is the object emptiness
* there is the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom* which is the scriptures or text that teach emptiness as its subject matter

When we recite the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, we can meditate at the same time. Since you already have some understanding of emptiness, and if you can reflect on the meaning of emptiness and thinking about the meaning of emptiness, then it is like the *path Perfection of Wisdom*.

For those who can do that will eventually achieve the *resultant Perfection of Wisdom*, which comes on a basis in dependence upon the *path Perfection of Wisdom*.

The generation of the *path Perfection of Wisdom* is dependent on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*. In order for the *path Perfection of Wisdom* to generate in your continuum, you have to depend on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*. Without depending on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*, there is no way to actualize the *path Perfection of Wisdom*. Without which, there is no *resultant Perfection of Wisdom*. In the absence of the *resultant Perfection of Wisdom*, that means one will not be able to do perfect work for all sentient beings. So in order to achieve the *resultant Perfection of Wisdom*, we need the *path Perfection of Wisdom*. For that reason, you need to depend on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*. But relying on *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom* does not mean merely reciting text or reading. It means that on the basis of learning and knowing the words of the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*, the main thing is to reflect and analyze about the meaning. That is what is meant by relying on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*. By relying well on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*, in the manner of reflecting and analyzing well with deep analysis, then you get some pretty good understanding by getting the object, emptiness, correctly. Then that is like a beginning or start to know what the tatagatha essence is, and what our buddha nature is. That is possible if we come to understand or know our own buddha nature, our own tatagatha essence through depending on the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*. That is possible because we possess the tatagatha essence in the first place and that is our deepest nature. We have been possessing it since time without beginning. Because it is there, and it has always been there, therefore, it is possible to realize it. Then it is possible for the mind to develop.

In dependence upon the *scriptural Perfection of Wisdom*, we can gain a correct understanding and some experience of the *natural Perfection of Wisdom* which basically is the object emptiness. In this case we come to get a correct idea of our buddha nature, the tatagatha essence. It is only when we get the correct idea and understanding of the tatagatha essence, then we come to understand the meaning of the statement “*the mind is clear light and the defilements are adventitious*”. It is only when we see emptiness and have good understanding and correct idea of it, then we see that it is true the nature of the mind is clear light and the defilements, although they are there, are really adventitious and can be removed. When one see the defilement can be removed, then that individual would really be very interested and working hard to actualize the *path Perfection of Wisdom*. Come the day when one has the *path Perfection of Wisdom*, then the *resultant Perfection of Wisdom* is only a matter of time.

With a good understanding and experience of the object, the emptiness of true existence, in particular the mind emptiness of true existence, which basically is the real tatagatha essence, then one comes to really understand how the mind is in the nature of clear light and the defilements are really adventitious. It is possible for the defilements to be separated from the mind. Due to one’s personal understanding that personal understanding can then be extended to other sentient beings. That individual who has that realization and understanding is able to extend the understanding to other sentient beings. They understand sentient beings also have the tatagatha essence and their defilements are adventitious. It is just that at the time being, sentient beings are under the control of their afflictions because they have not realized their tatagatha essence. This person understands that if the sentient beings are able to realize their own tatagatha essence, they will be able to free themselves from the defilements as well. This person who has an understanding of emptiness, their experience of compassion will be markedly different on how they view the sentient beings.

Based on the same reason, those individuals who have generated the mind of enlightenment are able to do that because they see that sentient beings can free themselves from defilements. The individual who has this understanding is also able to generate this thought of enlightenment because they see that something can be done. Therefore, they are also able to work for others as they see the possibility.

Those individuals who see that defilements are adventitious due to the nature of the mind is clear light, they are able to generate the whole hearted resolve - the step that comes before bodhicitta. Because they see the possibility, therefore, they take on the personal responsibility “I will do it myself alone”.

So when you get to recite the sutras such as the Perfection of Wisdom sutras like *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, and if you can meditate on the meaning as you go through the words, then it will be very good. Primarily the subject matter is emptiness and we take ourselves, the person, as the basis. So try to get a feel or understanding of the emptiness of I, the self, the person. If that can be done, and if you really can meditate, then you will have a lot of benefit.

You just have to try your individual best. As much as possible, you have to meditate. You really have to reflect on what you learn. Then that makes you want to learn and change will come. Otherwise, just learning the dharma and don’t meditate or reflect, then sometimes just learning the dharma will harden your mind. Then there is no benefit. From your side, you just have to try your individual best. You have to learn the dharma willingly, happily and with joy. You have to want it from your side. If you have that attitude, then when you learn, you will get the benefit. So you just have to try.

|  |
| --- |
| There are the 8 branches of the aryas path. So according to the *Compendium of Knowledge*, the eight branches of the arya’s path have the Four Noble Truths as its observed object.  The seven branches of enlightenment are posited on the Path of Seeing whereas the eight branches of a superior’s path are posited on the Path of Meditation. Through meditating on the seven branches of enlightenment, one achieves the eight branches of a superior’s path.  **Definition**: A branch of a superior’s path is an exalted knower in a superior’s continuum that is a cause of a superior’s path, its result.  **Boundary**: It exists from the path of meditation through to the buddha ground |

What is the manner of meditation? The manner of meditation is similar to what was explained during the earlier section on the seven branches of enlightenment. For example, by focusing on the true suffering and true origins, one comes to generate the wish to discard or abandon them. Through focusing on the true cessation and true path, one develops the wish to cultivate, to actualize them and to manifest them.

The purpose of meditating on the eight branches of an arya’s path is to abandon the Path of Meditation of abandonments. As we have seen, the Path of Meditation of abandonments is both of afflictive obscuration and knowledge obscuration.

If you are asked what exactly is a branch of an arya’s path? What is its entity? Basically it is that which is a cause of its result, an arya’s path.

The eight branches of the aryas path are as follows:  
1. Correct view  
2. Correct thought  
3. Correct speech  
4. Correct aims of actions  
5. Correct livelihood   
6. Correct assertions  
7. Correct mindfulness  
8. Correct meditative stabilization

By coming to class, the minimum is that you are able to say what these eight are. You have to put effort into that in order to be able to list out what the eight are.

Khen Rinpoche (In English): Can you make it? You must be able to list the 8 number.

These eight branches of the arya’s path can be condensed into the three higher trainings.

According to my text,

- Correct view, correct thought, correct exertion and correct mindfulness are condensed into the **higher training of wisdom**

- Correct speech, correct aims of actions and correct livelihood are condensed into the **higher training of ethic**s (ethical discipline).

- Correct meditative stabilization is condensed into the **higher training in concentration**.

Correct view and correct thought are quite straight forward to be condensed into the higher training in wisdom. But how correct mindfulness and correct exertion are condensed into the higher trainings in wisdom? That is the question.

Correct meditative stabilization is included into the higher training in concentration. That is straight forward. There is no quarrel about that. Likewise, one can see how correct speech, correct aims of action and correct livelihood are condensed into the higher trainings in ethics. There is no quarrel about that as well.

Earlier on when we look at the four close placements of mindfulness, those four close placements of mindfulness are classified as wisdom essentially. If that is the case, then to have correct mindfulness being condensed into the higher training in wisdom would then make some sense.

How to explain correct exertion is condensed into the higher training in wisdom? Maybe we can look at it this way. Exertion, when you put in effort, you are striving for something because you see the point. You must see the reason before you work hard. You see the point, the reason, the purpose, and what is in for you.

When we are talking about effort, we are not talking about blind faith i.e. just doing something because somebody says so and not really sure why need to do it. That is not real exertion and it is not effort. The correct exertion here is like faith that is engendered through knowledge and understanding. You generate belief therefore you work at it because you see the reason and the point. As such, it involves thinking. I guess how it is kind like wisdom. You need to think about it. Maybe we can explain it in this way to account for why correct exertion is condensed into the higher training in wisdom. Maybe there is another ways of condensing these eight branches of arya’s path into the three higher trainings. I have not been able to consult other texts.

Correct speech is speech of karma.

Correct aims of actions is bodily karma.

Correct livelihood is talking about behavior which I think is included under ethical discipline.

In the context of the three higher trainings, it is always explained that the former acts as the basis for the latter. In order for you to have any training of concentration, you first must have a strong foundation in ethical discipline. Therefore:

- the higher training in ethical discipline is the basis for the higher training in concentration.

- the higher training in concentration is the basis for the higher training in wisdom.

These eight branches of the arya’s path can also be subsumed under four branches.

Correct view, the first of the eight branches, is included in the **branch of affirmation.**

In general, correct view refers to the wisdom realizing emptiness. But in this context, it refers specifically to the *wisdom directly realizing emptiness*. There is the view that is sustained in meditative equipoise. When that individual arises from meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, in post-meditative equipoise that individual continues to analyze.

There are two mental factors of investigation and analysis. Of the two, analysis is basically thinking about something in a more refine way or checking things in more detail.

In the post-meditative equipoise, there is also continued detailed analysis of the view and sustaining the view that was realized in meditative equipoise. As such, this correct view is subsumed into the branch of affirmation. Here it is translated as affirmation but in Tibetan it sounds like the branch of thorough analysis. So literally it is the branch of thorough analysis, but it is translated as affirmation in the study manual.

Correct thought is included in the second branch which is called the **branch of engendering understanding** (or bringing about understanding).

We are talking about correct view. In post meditative equipoise, that bodhisattva also analyses in detail the truth, emptiness. He has a very good understanding and true experience of emptiness. Then he has that motivation to engender the same realization in others. He wants to cause others to come to the same understanding. That is why is correct thought. Thought here I think refers to the motivation that makes that bodhisattva wants to teach or share his realizations of the truth, emptiness, to others.

With correct view, then he is able to have correct thought. Based on that, then there is the **branch of engendering belief in others**. There are three out of the eight branches of the arya’s path subsumed under the branch of engendering belief in others. What are they? They are correct speech, correct aims of actions and correct livelihood.

Correct speech means referring to others. When people listen to this bodhisattva’s explanation of the truth, emptiness, they are able to belief that he is saying the right thing and what he is saying makes sense because he must know something as he has correct view and correct thought.

Correct aims of actions mean not doing things that are not to be done. There are many things that shouldn’t be done as it is not good. Correct aims of actions mean not doing that. Essentially it is referring to bodily karma; pure actions of body. This means having pure ethical discipline. Because of abandoning certain non-virtues, others can believe this person has ethical discipline and has correct aims of actions.

Correct speech can be understood to be the four virtues of speech which are the opposites of the four non-virtues of speech. Correct aims of actions are basically the virtues of the body which means having abandoned killing and so forth, i.e. having abandoned the three bodily non-virtues. If you analyze more, is correct speech speech or not?

Khen Rinpoche: You know why I ask that? What is the purpose behind this question “is correct speech speech or not”? Correct speech is speech? No? Somebody say correct speech is speech. No? How you explain correct speech? How you explain consciousness? How you explain?

The point is this: the eight branches of the arya’s path are all paths - are exalted knowers. If we say correct speech and correct aims of actions are physical action, then how do you explain correct speech and correct aims of actions to be exalted knowers (to be paths)?

The definition of a branch of arya’s path is an exalted knower in the arya’s continuum that is a cause of its result, an arya’s path. That is how it is posited. This means it is an exalted knower.

There is bodily karma and verbal karma. That is in the *Lamrim* in the section of the ten non-virtues. In the section of karma, they talk about bodily karma and verbal karma. Was there any mention of mental karma?

In the *Lamrim*, the ten non-virtues are:

* three bodily non-virtues,
* four verbal non-virtues
* three mental non-virtues

What did they say about the last three? The last three - covetousness, ill-will and wrong views - are not karma because they are afflictions.

Khen Rinpoche: You have completed *Lamrim* already.

Let’s say we have a thought of wanting to harm somebody. Is that thought an affliction or not?

Khen Rinpoche: Affliction or not? The thought to harm, harming thought, harm to other, is that affliction? Say something, then I will say something else, otherwise…

Student 1: Malicious thought is a thought to harm others.

Let’s say you have a motivation to harm somebody. Is that motivation an affliction or not?

Khen Rinpoche: What is affliction?

Student response inaudible.

I think maybe you should revisit the material that was covered. Maybe there will be some benefit. We have discussed it already in class. Basically it is based on what is said by Vasubandhu in his “*Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*” that:

* the first seven are both karma and paths of karma
* the last three are not karma but they are path of actions.

The first seven are:

* three bodily non-virtues and four verbal non-virtues. There are instances of those seven are karma and are path of action. And there are instances of them being path of action. It is not saying they definitely have to be. But there are instances where they are both - karma and path of action.

The last three - covetousness, ill-will and wrong views - are not karma. It is clear. They are path of action.

Correct livelihood means sustaining life or living life without involving wrong livelihood. Wrong livelihood can happen both with body and/or speech.

Correct livelihood means living life without wrong livelihoods of involving body and/or speech. So, correct livelihood is to guard one’s body and speech.

You have already known this but there is no harm to repeat this. These are listed in the *Lamrim*.

There are five wrong livelihoods.

1. Hypocrisy or pretension is a bodily thing basically pretending to be holy. You are not holy but motivated by desire to get something from the benefactor, and in front of that person you act holy. Basically it is pretension or hypocrisy by just showing an aspect of yourself which you are not really are.
2. Flattery is motivated by attachment, Because of wanting to get something then you just saying what are being politically correct or saying nice thing. Flattery which is a verbal non-virtue.
3. Hinting is verbal non-virtue driven by attachment - a thought wanting to possess something or wanting something then saying to potential benefactor or whoever “There is something very nice. Or this person has that something very nice. Or that person has that something very nice and it will be good if I can have it.”
4. Baiting - Driven by some afflictions such as attachment wanting to get something. You give a small gift to someone to make that person happy so that you can get something better or more in return. At the end of the day you want that person to give you something back more than what you have given. Another way of looking at baiting is that you have already gotten something for that person and you want more. You want the person to give you something similar or the same thing again, and then you tell the benefactor, “Remember you give this thing last time? It is very useful and is very good” with the motivation of expecting.
5. Pressuring which is just being very insistent saying over and over again doing this, doing that.

Essentially correct livelihood is to guard the body and speech from non-virtue.

[Extracted from *Path to Enlightenment* by Geshe Thubten Loden

The five wrong livelihoods are:

a *Hypocrisy* is, for example, acting as though you are a great and holy lama full of love, compassion and limitless insight in order to win the devotion and offerings of others.

b *Flattery* is praising others with the negative motivation of gaining something from them.

c *Hinting* is gaining something by asking for it indirectly. An example would be saying to your benefactor, ’Last year you gave me a thousand dollars which was a wonderful help in supporting my retreat to benefit all living beings. This year I am going to do a special retreat again’ Or, ’You are so incredibly successful and wealthy and have always been so kind and generous to me’

d *Artful acquisition* is gaining things by sneaky methods or pressuring others by, for example, insulting them about their miserliness and lack of caring for the desperate plight of such deserving individuals as your good self.

e. Seeking reward for favor is giving a small gift in the expectation that you will get something greater in return.]

So correct speech, correct aim of action and correct livelihood are subsumed under the *branch of engendering beliefs in others*.

The remaining three - correct effort, correct mindfulness and correct meditative stabilization - are included in the **branch of antidotes**.

In this context here correct effort (or correct exertion) maybe is better refers to the mind of no die attitude with regarding to abandoning the Path of Meditation abandonments. In order to abandon the Path of Meditation abandonments that not only involves just the afflictions but also the knowledge obscuration. The Path of Meditation abandonments are of two.

In order to abandon this starting from the Path of Meditation’s abandonments which are afflictions, a hell of long time is needed. So, this bodhisattva needs that exertion on that i.e. the spirit to work and abandoning them over a long time. He also has that spirit wanting to work hard and also to overcome the knowledge obscuration. In essence, correct exertion here refers to that exertion in cultivating the antidotes to the knowledge obscuration.

Next is correct mindfulness. When excitement arises or when one notice excitement has arisen or about to arise, then correct mindfulness here is not holding the mind or bringing the mind to the fault of cyclic existence, or bringing the mind to the fact of ugliness. All these are antidotes to counteract excitement. So in this context here mindfulness is not forgetting this.

If laxity is arising or has arisen, mindfulness is turning the mind to the benefit of having concentration and keeping the mind on that and not forgetting that. When the mind is not affected by excitement or laxity, correct mindfulness here mean not forgetting to keep the mind in its natural state and desisting from applying any antidote.

Correct meditative stabilization is for the purpose achieving qualities like clairvoyance and so forth but there are discordant factors to be overcome in the process of achieving clairvoyance. In order to achieve those qualities one has to rely on the antidotes to quell or to overcome the discordant factors.

This is how the eight branches of the arya’s path is subsumed under the four branches:

1. The branch of affirmation or branch of thorough analysis,
2. The branch of engendering understanding,
3. The branch of engendering belief in others
4. The branch of antidotes

This explanation is according to the higher *Abhidharma* (*The Compendium of Knowledge*).

The eight branches of arya’s path, in this context here specifically is talking about stuffs on the Path of Meditation. This is the real meaning of the branches of the arya’s path. We don’t have to limit our perspective of the eight branches of the arya’s path just to the Path of Meditation although it is. That is what it is.

If you think about it in the general way, perhaps we can regard correct view as not being restricted to emptiness but it could mean:

* having a correct understanding of impermanence
* having a correct understanding of the four noble truths
* can look at it in terms of conviction an understanding of karma and its effects.

The point here is that correct view refers to wisdom, the wisdom that is able to discriminate between things “what is this and what is that”, in particular to discriminate between what is true and false, what is correct and wrong. You can refer to just like the common kind of belief or understanding of:

- what is harmful and what is non-harmful

- what is harmful to oneself and what is harmful to others

- what is beneficial to oneself and what is beneficial to others.

People definitely have their own view as what is good and bad, what is harmful and beneficial, then it becomes very complicated. Wisdom is really being able to know what to do and what not to do, what is right and what is wrong. If you have wisdom then you will able to have correct motivation. So with wisdom, it is possible to have correct motivation. With correct motivation it is possible to have correct speech and correct aim of action; having pleasant or suitable or appropriate physical and verbal conduct.

With correct speech and correct aims of actions, you are able to guard your body and speech from non-virtue. Then you are able to live a correct life or a good life. Here it is the correct livelihood. With that you are able to strive appropriately or correctly in whatever you do.

If there is correct aims of actions, there is correct exertion then it is much easier to cultivate or maintain mindfulness. If you have some kinds of mindfulness then it is easier for your mind to be stable and is easier to focus our mind.

If there is correct or good meditative stabilization, they will help in gaining or developing wisdom that is much more powerful than ever - something different, something more special. In this context, culmination leads to the correct view which in this case is direct perception of emptiness.

Correct meditative stabilization in an ordinary sense will lead to the actual correct view – direct perception of emptiness. Those people who have reached that point in the path, when they come out from that correct view and because of that experience that either again affect their motivation it enhances their motivation. Then he will really have the correct thought and higher version of the correct thought. Then it affects their speech in much more positive way and so forth. So, the quality is ever increasing. We shouldn’t think of the eight branches of arya’s path is only in the context of the Path of Meditation. Yes, it is in this context but we shouldn’t regard these eight as something that has no bearing or influence on us. If we look at it in a generic way then we see some relevant to ourselves at our level.

We start with correct view, which is essentially wisdom. It is just that mind that has the ability just cognizing or knowing what is good and what is bad. When view in the positive way in terms of generating positive result, so basically just have that ability be able to cognize and know what is right and what is wrong. That is a wisdom that enable that individual to have better motivation and that will affect his speech in a positive way.

We can also look at it in terms of the absence, the consequences of not having wisdom; just not knowing how to think. If you don’t know how to think, if you don’t have that wisdom then it is difficult for you to have good motivation. Without good motivation, you will not have good speech. That means:

* you will have bad speech, non-virtue speech,
* you will have non-virtue action of body,
* you will likely have wrong livelihood
* you are not going to be exerting yourself,
* you are not going to be working hard
* you are not going to have any mindfulness
* you are not going to have concentration.

Then one goes on in samsara just over and over again.\

Extract from

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eight branches of a superior’s path** | |
| **Definition***:*  an exalted knower in a superior’s continuum that is a cause of a superior’s path, its result. | |
| Correct view | which thoroughly analyzes in subsequent attainment the reality (emptiness) that was realized in meditative equipoise |
| Correct thought | which motivates speech that teaches one’s own realizations to others |
| Correct speech | a completely pure action of speech that teaches one.s own  realizations to others |
| Correct aims of actions | a completely pure physical action, such as abandoning killing |
| Correct livelihood | a completely pure physical or verbal action that is separated from wrong livelihoods such as flattery. |
| Correct effort | the effort with regard to the antidotes that abandon the objects of abandonment |
| Correct mindfulness | which is retaining without forgetting, and thus, the  reason for calm abiding, heightened apprehension, and equanimity |
| Correct meditative stabilization | which is meditation on objects that are the special excellent qualities such as the clairvoyances |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The eight branches of the arya’s path can subsumed under four branches** | |
| branch that thoroughly analyzes | Correct view |
| branch that brings about understanding | Correct thought |
| branch that brings about trust in others | Correct speech, correct aims of actions and correct livelihood |
| branch that is an antidote to the discordant class | Correct effort, correct mindfulness, and correct meditative stabilization |

.





