

## ***The Eightfold Path***

From Rudolf Steiner ~ Compiled by John Davy

In describing the meditative life for the present day, Rudolf Steiner emphasized again and again the importance of two sets of exercises, which bring about a general ordering and strengthening of the life of the soul. One set – the *Eight Exercises* – is a modern version of the *Eightfold Path* described by the Gautama Buddha. These may be linked to the days of the week as described below. The second set – the *Six Accessory Exercises* – should be practiced at the same time, for example one per month. (But another rhythm may be adopted, as long as it is sustained regularly).

At the beginning, it is helpful to concentrate on one of the Eight Exercises for a longer period at first (e.g. for two weeks, and then, after working through the whole sequence once, working through it again with one week for each exercise, until ready to take one of the exercises each day).

The Eight Exercises are really seven plus one; similarly the six are really five plus one. The way to practice the Eight Exercises is to think intensely about the quality indicated, forming in the mind as clear a conception as possible, and holding it for five minutes. After each exercise, the eighth exercise should be taken for a further five minutes. The description of each exercise given below is based on those given by Rudolf Steiner in a number of places.

The method of practicing the six exercises is implicit in the description of them. Here, too, five minutes a day should be spent on one of these exercises.

Given below is a brief description of the exercises, followed by a suggested ‘work plan’ which may be found helpful for beginning this work.

### **The Eight Exercises**

|           |                   |                          |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Saturday  | Right Thinking    | Richtige Meinung         |
| Sunday    | Right Resolves    | Richtige Urteil          |
| Monday    | Right Speaking    | Rechtge Wort             |
| Tuesday   | Right Action      | Richtege Tat             |
| Wednesday | Right Way of Life | Richtege Standpunkt      |
| Thursday  | Right Endeavor    | Richtege Stregen         |
| Friday    | Right Remembrance | Richtige Gedachtnis      |
| Plus:     | Right Meditation  | Richtige Beschaulichkeit |

### **Right Thinking (Saturday)**

Admit only significant ideas and thoughts. Learn gradually to separate the important from the unimportant, the real from the unreal, the eternal from the ephemeral, the true from the false. Listen to what people say with inner quietness, refraining from approving or disapproving, judgment and criticism. In this way one arrives at the habit of forming opinions that are not influenced by sympathy or antipathy.

### **Right Resolves (Sunday)**

Cultivate steadfastness. Make resolutions only after full consideration of even the most insignificant points. Avoid thoughtless acts and meaningless ones. For every act have sufficient reasons. Do no needless thing. When convinced of the rightness of a resolve, abide by it unflinchingly.

### **Right Speaking (Monday)**

In speech with others, say only what has sense and meaning. Make your conversation thoughtful. Do not be afraid to be silent often. Try not to use too many or too few words. Never talk for the sake of talking, or merely to pass the time.

### **Right Action (Tuesday)**

Make your actions as far as possible harmonious with your surroundings. Weigh all actions carefully so that the eternal may speak through them, so that they may be good for the whole and for the lasting welfare of others.

### **Right Way of Life (Wednesday)**

In the management of life, seek to live in conformity with both nature and spirit. Be not over-hasty nor idle. Look upon life as an opportunity for work and development, and live accordingly.

### **Right Endeavor (Thursday)**

Do not attempt what is beyond your powers, but also omit nothing for which they seem adequate. Set before yourself ideals which coincide with the highest ideals of a human being; for example, the aim of practicing such exercises as these in order to be able better to help and advise one's fellow human beings, if not immediately, then later in life. One can also say that this exercise consists in making all these exercise into a habit of life.

### **Right Remembrance (Friday)**

Strive to learn as much as possible from life. All experiences have something to teach. When opportunity offers one should handle a situation more wisely than previously. Experience is a rich treasure, and one should consult it before doing anything. Watch the actions of others and compare them with the ideal – but lovingly, not critically. One can learn much from observing others – including children if one is attentive. Aim to remember all that one has learned in this way.

### **Right Meditation (to accompany each of the above exercises)**

Each day, at the same time if possible, turn inward and take stock, test one's way of life, run over one's store of knowledge, ponder one's duties, consider the aim and true purposes of life, reflect on one's own imperfections and mistakes. In short, distinguish what is significant and of lasting value, and renew one's resolves to take up worthwhile tasks.