

The Four Truths: The Essence of Buddha's Teachings - The Fourth Noble Truth

This is the last session looking at the Four Truths of the Noble Ones and the topic is the fourth truth: the truth of the path, which is to be relied upon.

Before hearing what Ringu Tulku Rinpoche has to say about what the path and its purpose is, briefly consider this question: What does it mean for you to follow a spiritual path?

PLAY: The truth of the path - what is the path?

(23 min)

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, Dzogchen Beara, 2 June 2002

Answer these questions as fully as you can:

- Why does Ringu Tulku Rinpoche say that the path is so important?
- Why is it necessary to make some effort on the path?
- Why is the path not the goal? What is the goal?
- How does Ringu Tulku Rinpoche explain the path in terms of wisdom and compassion?

Reflect on the following:

- How have I already started to cultivate wisdom and compassion in relation to myself, my habits and other people?

How the path is presented

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche described the path in terms of developing and strengthening our innate compassion and wisdom, reconnecting with our buddha nature and skilfully and patiently working on the mind poisons or negative emotions that cause our suffering. The path is also presented in different ways according to different traditions, all of which can support and nourish our own spiritual development.

In the next teaching, Andrew Warr describes some of these different approaches or frameworks for presenting the path.

PLAY: The Fourth Noble Truth: The Path Leading to Cessation

(24 min)

Andrew Warr, Dzogchen Beara, 2 December 2021

Answer the following questions:

- Can you remember the eight aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path?

—Can you explain the framework of the Path described in terms of View, Meditation and Action? What is its relationship to our fundamental nature?

—What is the reason given for cultivating love and compassion?

—Andrew explained how the path can be explained in terms of the three higher trainings: discipline or ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom.

a) Can you recall how Andrew described each of the higher trainings? How did he explain the way they support each other? Why are the three higher trainings sometimes described as ‘the Wheel of Constant Happiness’?

b) Can you see how you could apply the framework of the three higher trainings to support your own path? Have you experienced how the three trainings support each other—for example, that discipline leads to a simpler life?

Some notes on The Fourth Noble Truth

One common misunderstanding about the fourth noble truth is that following the path will lead to or produce something which was not there before. The path is actually an internal process of mind in which we are stripping away the delusion that hinders us from realizing our buddha nature. We are simply awakening to how things really are, rather than producing something new.

The Foundation or Common Vehicle describes the path as The Noble Eightfold Path. Its eight elements can be classified according to The Three Higher Trainings:

The Noble Eight Fold Path	The Three Higher Trainings
Correct View Correct Intention, or Thought	Wisdom
Correct Speech Correct Action Correct Livelihood	Discipline or ethics

Correct Effort	Meditation
Correct Mindfulness	
Correct Concentration	

It is useful to understand now that this framework is not a linear progression. All eight aspects are intended to be developed simultaneously, working together and nourishing each other. The term ‘correct’ is not intended to be moralistic or imply that other paths are ‘wrong’. In this context, *correct* means something ‘wholesome, balanced or beneficial’, either for oneself or others, that will help us transform into a ‘noble being’.

Analytical and Non-Analytical Cessation

You may remember the two types of cessation. In this teaching, Sogyal Rinpoche and Adam Pearcey go into some detail on this topic.

PLAY VIDEO: The path of cessation and cessation itself

(10 min)

Sogyal Rinpoche & Adam Pearcey, Haileybury, 11 April 2013

—What is meant by cessation.

—How do the two types of cessation relate to Buddha nature?