

DBC TENETS/DRUPTA 23.5.11 Geshe Jampa Tenzin

Questions from Geshela

Of the six causes how many were real causes?

Answer: Three were real and three were imputed causes.

Acting and simultaneous cause can't be causes because they exist in the same time as their effects, because cause and effect necessarily have sequential nature. The other three are real fully fledged causes.

What is an example of appropriating and cooperating causes? Seed is the appropriating/main cause and warmth manure etc are cooperating causes of a seedling. Appropriating cause is that which the continuum moves to an effect. Cooperative causes assist transfer of continuum of cause to effect.

The Four Noble Truths according to Sutra School

The Four Noble Truths is common to all four schools. But elements of emptiness and selflessness vary among the schools. Whether truth is used in relation to ultimate and conventional or interpretive and definitive or the four noble truths – all use same word 'truth'.

The four truths are put into two groups– subject and object. ????????

The truth of suffering and origin of suffering are domains of the ordinary being. The four truths as objects? or subjects? are understood through generic image. Although they do not empirically understand the four truths, ordinary beings have the four as their subjective domain. ???????? *Not sure which is subject and which is object here*

The four truths are called four truths of Arya beings in that Arya beings see the four truths in a fully fledged manner and they directly understand them. Also because suffering and origin and path and cessation are as Aryas see them. Their perception is grounded in reality. Ordinary beings do not see the four truths precisely. Ordinary beings see afflicted aggregates in the nature of pleasurable well being when actually they are in the nature of suffering. These are some reasons for calling the four, truths of Arya beings.

Truth of Suffering

Buddha taught that the *truth of suffering* is our afflicted aggregates. They are in nature of suffering as is seen directly by Arya beings.

This truth is characterized by four attributes: impermanent, suffering, empty, and selfless. Why teach the truth of suffering marked by four attributes – what role do they play? They are very important in getting rid of misconceptions of ordinary beings about the truth of suffering. Ordinary beings consider their truth of suffering as permanent, clean, pleasurable, self existent. These are four distortions imbedded in our minds about suffering. To overcome this, impermanence, suffering, emptiness and selflessness were taught by Buddha.

Pointing to these appropriated afflicted aggregates – Buddha said this truth of suffering is *impermanent*. This directly impacts the idea of permanence ordinary beings have in relation to the five aggregates.

We consider and believe our aggregates are clean. Buddha said they are not clean, but afflicted by *negative karma* and *delusions*. Whatever is born of negative karma and delusions can never be clean.

Thirdly we ordinary beings suffer from distortion that our aggregates are permanent, unitary and independent. To clear up this distortion Buddha said they are *empty* of such attributes.

We consider our aggregates to be substantially existent sufficiently existing entities. To show this mistake Buddha taught our aggregates are *without such a self*.

To understand truth of suffering well, we must first identify it in depth; how truth of suffering is marked by the four attributes and so nullify the distortions associated with it.

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Truth of origin of suffering

This also has four attributes: cause, source of all, strong production and conditionality are the four. This is taught to weed out what our mind mistakes as truth of suffering.

The first distortion we suffer from is that our sufferings are causeless. To show pertinent specific causes he said sufferings are rooted in *causes*. What could be an example of the many truths of the origin of suffering? The 8th and 9th links of the 12 links of dependent origination, craving and grasping, are potent causes of afflicted aggregates which are the future truth of suffering.

The second characteristic of being a *source of all*, was taught to get rid of the idea that sufferings arise from one cause. The mind mistakenly feels they arise from just one cause. The Buddha taught that sufferings are sourced frequently from multiple causes.

The third attribute, *strong production*, is taught to remove the idea that sufferings are caused by an external agent or an omnipotent force. Some non Buddhist schools think an outer permanent unitary agent causes our sufferings. The intense craving and grasping of desire (the 8 & 9 links of dependent origination) produce intense suffering. What is a strong cause will give rise to an effect that is strong and not different from its source of production.(?)

Conditionality is the fourth attribute of the truth of cause of suffering – taught for non Buddhist schools who feel sufferings are caused by thoughts that flash through the mind of Shiva. To show this is not a cause – rather that there are specific conditions by appropriate causes like craving and grasping, the fourth attribute is taught.

Do we have origin of suffering in us? Yes. Desire for example. It fulfills all four attributes – it is a cause because it gives rise to its effect – nothing but suffering- so desire is a cause of frequent multiple sufferings of different types. It is a strong production in that proportional suffering matches the intensity of desire. It has conditionality in that desirous actions leave predispositions on the mind which are the condition which will produce further suffering.

Truth of cessation (the mind of an Arya).

Four attributes of cessation are: *cessation, peace, consummate, and definite emergence*. They are taught to remove four distortions. *Cessation* removes the misgiving that some people have that liberation is impossible. Cessation removes such misgiving because when you achieve true cessation you reach a state of permanent separation from sufferings and their causes. So cessation points to liberation.

Peace is taught to remove the misgiving that some afflicted states – like a part of the fourth Samadhi in the form realm and Brahma abode are considered to be liberation. To show this mistake peace is taught as an attribute. Peace (shiwa) is a state where all delusions are permanently severed at the root never to arise again. Such is called peace. When mind is permanently freed, that is peace, not these other temporary peaceful afflicted states. You may be in peaceful blissful concentration, but absence of delusion is not the same as permanent ceasing of delusion. It is just dormancy.

Consummate is the third attribute because other non Buddhist schools of thought hold the belief that other states ‘of liberation’ are far superior to true cessation. The consummate attribute is used to insist there is no other state as sublimely beautiful as cessation.

Fourth attribute is *definite emergence/release* is taught to remove any misgiving you may fall back from the state of liberation. To show that it is permanently attained, the term “definite emergence from suffering” is used. To show once attained liberation is for good, without change, that is used.

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Truth of Path

This also has four attributes.

They are *path, suitability/ worthwhile, achievement/ accomplishment, that which gives definite release /deliverance.*

These four attributes are taught to remove distortions pertaining to them.

Path is for example, wisdom consciousness that directly understands emptiness of selflessness of person. That is true path. It is used to remove others misgiving that there is no true path to cessation. There is a true path – wisdom understanding selflessness of person.

Suitability is mentioned because some believe knowledge of emptiness of person is not the right path. To show it is a worthwhile or suitable path this is mentioned. How does suitability overcome the distortion? By giving knowledge of selflessness of person, counteracting directly the misconception that keeps beings in samsara, and since there is no other means- not even one – it is the sole path and so the suitable path.

Achievement is mentioned as the third because of distortions about selflessness of person being a wrong or confusing path. How does it remove this misgiving? It does so by severing the root of suffering and achieving true cessation or liberation. It does achieve this and so it must be right path and not the wrong path.

Definite deliverance is to quell the misconception that true path understanding selflessness of person is only a temporary relief, but ultimately lets us down. Once we have the mind that understands selflessness of person the origins of suffering which are delusions are cut off permanently. This definite deliverance from suffering is unchanging and does not let you down.

When considering the four attributes of the truth of suffering its most helpful to consider the four in relation to our five afflicted aggregates of body and mind. When we consider origins of suffering craving and grasping are causes and these bring about our afflicted aggregates. How do these play this role? When we are about to breathe our last and going to lose our body, we cling to life – this is craving. When we think there is no way out our mind turns to the future and grasps out to future life. The mind craves the current aggregates and grasps/ reaches out to the next life. As we crave, so we get.

Whilst there are many instances of path, the best example is the wisdom mind which directly understands emptiness of self of person. This is what really cuts through delusion and is true path.

It is good to know sixteen attributes of the four truths. Each has four and each overcomes distortions pertaining to the four truths.

His Holiness stresses repeatedly the need to understand the two truths and four truths, and how they are vital to distinguish Buddhism. They are how Buddhism leaves its mark.