Greetings again and today we're coming to the end of this series on the Four Noble Truths. And in this penultimate talk, we're talking about the fourth noble truth. And I want to now say what I've said repeatedly, that there are many interpretations of these four noble truths. And probably all of them exist because someone found it beneficial. And that different interpretations are beneficial in different contexts, in different situations of our life. And, to know different interpretations means we have a bigger toolbox by which to meet our life and respond to our life in hopefully in a wise way. And the most common interpretation of the Four Noble Truths goes something like this, that there is suffering in the world, not that life is suffering, but to the degree to which there is suffering. The suffering has a cause. And that cause is represented by the word craving. The clinging, the compulsive kind of wanting that exists for human beings may be a kind of addiction, sometimes attachment. And the cessation of that suffering is involves letting go, the abandonment, the putting down of that craving, that clinging, that attachment. However, it's not easy to do so. These attachments that we have can be very, very deeply rooted. They can be deeply even subconscious. We can't even see some other ways that we're attached and sometimes our suffering we know we're suffering, but it's just a big mass of suffering. We don't see any causes and conditions for it. It's just we're just feeling lousy and bad. So, because of the challenges of letting go deeply and experiencing this freedom from suffering, there is a path. There's a set of practices a person can do. That sets the conditions in place that begins clearing the field, helps us settle, helps us to seek deeply and clearly, helps the mind develop it's a capacity to see deeper and deeper into what's going on, that we can really come to the place of liberation. And that path is represented in the Four Noble Truths by the Eightfold Path. So the practice for the cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path or it's the path of the noble ones, is a path for those who become ennobled to the path towards freedom. And so it's a wonderful set of eight practices that are not beliefs that we have to believe but practices that we engage in, that begin changing how we are, change the conditions who we are, they allow us to live in a more contented way, more settled.
way. The middle parts of the Eightfold Path have to do with ethics, have to do with sila, with our behavior, not you know, to live by the precepts and speak properly and you know, speak without causing harm and have livelihood that doesn't cause harm. And if we could live a life of harmlessness it's easier to be relaxed about ourselves to feel good about ourselves and we don't have the agitation and the regrets and all the things that make it hard to settle. The way it's useful to go about the world with the right attitude, the right intention. And the head go around with the intentions of being hostile, or unfriendly, or being greedy for pleasures is not a very conducive way of living a life. If what a person wants is to really settle enough in the mind, quiet the mind, calm that mind, open oneself deeply so that we can really connect to what's going on in a much deeper way inside to find our freedom from suffering. So then, the second of the factor of the Eightfold Path is this right intention, right attitude, which is sometimes defined as attitude of compassion, or sometimes just an attitude of harmlessness or literally it's harmlessness and an attitude of non ill will, of goodwill, of kindness, friendliness. And those attitude. It's not like you should do this, like a requirement. It's more like if what you want is to create the conditions for a mind, a heart that's settled enough to really be present for experience. It helps if you live with these attitudes. Live with these approaches, intention. And then it helps also to cultivate mindfulness to really settled in practice a lot of mindfulness, the more we can practice, the more prepared we are for the difficulties of life. To finally start to be mindful when things are difficult might be too late. We don't have the inner strength to do so. And the same thing with concentration, that developing minds capacity to be really focused, calm, unified, present is one of the great pleasures of life and it also helps us again to encounter suffering, to encounter ourselves in a deep way, and an effective way. And then right effort you know that endeavor to live well. And then become some kind of going through them all quickly and out of order. But then the first one is right view. And right view has many interpretations or many explanations for what it is. And has again has to do with a context. The, the core understanding is that right view is seeing the world through the framework of the original idea of the Four Noble Truths. There is suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and this is the this seeing the rising and ceasing of suffering. This is the way forward. It's more of a meditative experience, it's really deep being with arising and passing experience. That's the classic idea of right view. The Buddha also gave other ideas of right view and some of them are more practical for everyday life. And one of the very important ones it has to do with causality or consequence. That what we do has consequences that we could not we don't do things and we're, you know, and there's no traces, nothing left over. That if we act with skillful intentions, skillful qualities will come somehow be supported and be developed. If we do things with unskillful things unskillfulness is developed and suffering occurs. So act with hate. And the results of hate are not pleasant. Act with love the results of love done wisely, have good results, generosity, wisdom, all these things, and that what we do and how we do things are not inconsequential. Even how we think and how we think about things is not inconsequential for the purposes of becoming free. If you're interested in the path of freedom, this is not a moral obligation or moral judgment on things. But rather, it's a very practical concern that if you're interested in that freedom from suffering, then you want to take into account a lot of care with how you behave and the conditions you set in place and, and being careful to put good consequences into place. Means so you'd be so simple as maybe if you drive to work, and you're always harried because you're always leaving in the last possible minute. The
consequences of that you get to work harried and you’re not particularly kind to people or happy when
you get there. So maybe you leave work five minutes or leave home five minutes early, so you can
drive in a relaxed way and drive much more calm. And that sets the conditions for a better
circumstance for continuing to be attentive in practice as we go through life. So the idea being that
there are these all these sets of practices that are actually very wise things to do, to learn those eight
sets of practices, have them under our belt understanding of them, and pick them up at different times
in different circumstances. And the and if there there can be good, really good for beginners in
Buddhism to do and they’re beget good for people been practicing for sometimes, and they’re good for
people who are quite experienced in Buddhism, that the Eightfold Path is always part of the path,
always part of the deal of Buddhism, it is kind of like defines the core practices of Buddhism, the
Eightfold Path. And so in this interpretation of giving today, this eightfold path is good for beginners.
Know you’re suffering. Know the cause whatever way you can, let go of that cause. And if you can’t let
go of it or going to go further on this cultivate the Eightfold Path. And what I said yesterday, the
Eightfold Path is also the, the disk. So it’s not it’s not so that that’s a prescription. The eightfold path is a
prescription of what to do. The eightfold path is also presented as it as a description of what liberated
people are like that once a person becomes really free of attachments and clinging, their life, how they
live their life, is in fact defined are described by the Eightfold Path, even without actively doing it,
because it’s the absence of clinging that leads us to the good things without clinging there’s no
unethical behavior is the Buddhist definition of it. So when you really let go of clinging, you will follow
the ethical pieces of the Eightfold Path and so forth. So this is very interesting that for beginners we
have the Eightfold Path for the, for the people who are really awakened there’s the Eightfold Path. And
so they kind of represent both the life of beginner and someone’s advanced. And so I like to think of
that, the practice that we do, the practice, any practice, we do practice the Eightfold Path, meditation,
and all that. It mirrors or contains elements of the goal of freedom itself. And one of the ways to
practice is to allow ourselves to practice so that the means contains part of the goal, that not consider
the goal and the means so separate from each other. But the to allow the goal to be inhabit or to the
embodied in the very means in how we practice and what this means is that whatever practice we’re
doing in Buddhism, that we’re being very careful that we’re not clinging as we do it. We’re not being
ambitious, or selfish or conceited, or you know, or hard on ourselves or disappointed or critical of
ourselves how we’re doing all that represents a kind of the going in the opposite direction of the
practice. Rather, to include the goal in the means, means that even for a beginner of practice, we take
on these practices kind of with an open hand with, with a kind of lightness or gentleness or, or a, you
know, just very radical simplicity, without needing to be a certain way or wanting it to be a certain way
or pushing or clinging or having it to be a certain way, but to enter into the practice. With a generosity
and an openness and a clarity or calmness, whatever degree of non attachment, non clinging we can
have, in particular, a kind of a gentleness and an openness and non clinging to our clinging that we
have. So we’re not using the as we do this practice, we learn to recognize and see much more clearly
what’s going on for us. It’s an introspective practice and we see our clinging and our hostility and our
greed and all the things that we have. And so rather than using that to suffer more, we try to meet it to
be touched by it. So we hold it gently and kindly, supportively, we don’t get involved with it. We don’t
condone it, but we’d also don’t criticize it or get contracted or get angry or mean about it. So the fact
that the Eightfold Path in different ways of seeing it is a beginner's practice, and advanced practitioners practice. It's the practice, it's the life of those who have let go of clinging. And it's the areas where we practice non clinging, right from the beginning of practice. Right from the start, we kind of okay let's do right view, right intention, right action, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This is what we do. But let's be careful how we do it. Let's do it with determination, with clarity, with dedication, with love, but also without further clinging, without further using it as material to be critical of ourselves because if Buddhism at the heart of it is the end of suffering, as a path to the end of suffering. Please don't use Buddhism and Buddhist practice as another reason to suffer. Because it doesn't make any sense, right? So please, as you engage in this Buddhist practice and the Buddha's teaching, be careful that you don't suffer because of it. Don't use it as something to be critical of yourself or critical of other people. They're not living up to a Buddhist standard. Always keep close by that as we walk this eightfold footpath, we walk the path of Buddhism, were doing it so we don't suffer. And so that the goal is found in the means. Maybe only a hint in the beginning, but that the goal grows and develops and expands as the means incorporates the goal. More more into it. So rather than a goal out there in the future, the goal is already here, and we're expanding it. We're developing it, growing it until it's fully mature in us. So eightfold path. So thank you very much for today and tomorrow will be the last talk of this series and the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths. And then at the end, I will tomorrow I'll take a little bit of time for if you want to stay and ask some questions in the chat. That would be wonderful. Thank you