



LORD BUDDHA said: "This is true suffering; this is true cause; this is true cessation; this is the true path." He also said: "Know the sufferings; give up their causes; attain the cessation of sufferings; follow the true paths." Again, he said: "Know the sufferings although there is nothing to know; relinquish the causes of misery although there is nothing to relinquish; be earnest in cessation although there is nothing to cease; practise the means of cessation although there is nothing to practice." These are three views of the intrinsic nature, action and ultimate result of the Four Noble Truths.

According to the Madhyamika theory (originally taught by Nagarjuna, a scholar of the third century of the Christian era), a theory which remains supreme among all the theories of different Buddhist schools, the explanation of these Truths is this: True suffering means Samsara (the entire round of existence, of birth and re-birth) arising from Karma (that is, action and reaction) and from delusion. True cause means Karma and delusion, which are the causes of true suffering. True cessation means the complete disappearance by degrees of the preceding two truths. The true path is the method by which we arrive at true cessation.

Thus the true cause of suffering leads to true suffering, but in following the true path, we arrive at the goal of true cessation. Although this is the natural sequence, Lord Buddha preached the Four Truths by placing the effects first and the causes after. The reason for this is that if the nature of suffering is determined, the cause of it may be deduced; and when this desire to eliminate the cause (of suffering) is strong, means will be found to abandon it.

*By H. H. the Dalai Lama of Tibet*