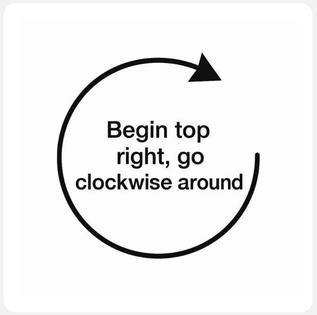
The Nature of the Three Trainings Chapter 24



The Three Trainings

1. The Three Trainings and Their Interconnection

- **Ethical Conduct (Śīla)**:
  foundation for taming body, speech, and mind
- **Concentration (Samādhi)**:
  stabilizes and focuses the mind for meditation
- **Wisdom (Prajñā)**:
  realizes reality and eliminates ignorance (root of samsara)
- **Interdependence:**
  ethics → supports concentration → enables wisdom → cuts the root

2. Ethical Conduct (Śīla)

Six branches of ethical discipline

- Refraining from the Ten Non-Virtues & practicing the Ten Virtuous Actions
- Taking Vows of Liberation (commitment to virtue)
- Rituals of confession & formal observances (restore and reinforce discipline)
- Maintaining a Pure Environment (avoid places/companions that provoke harm)
- Treating Small Infractions as Serious (prevent escalation)
- **Studying & Practicing Teachings on Ethics** (ongoing learning → stable conduct)

2.2 Rationale: **ethics is not optional** — The ground for all higher attainments

2.3 **Both lay and ordained:**
forms differ, indispensability does not

3. Concentration (Samādhi):

- **The Four Blissful Abodes** (dhyānas)
- **Progressive absorptions:**
  increasingly subtle bliss and tranquility
- **Function:**
  temporarily suppresses afflictions; produces pliancy and clarity
- **Necessity:**
  some degree of absorption is required for higher realizations

4. Wisdom (Prajñā):

The Four Noble Truths & Their Four Aspects

- **Truth of Suffering:**
  impermanent, suffering, empty, selfless
- **Truth of Origin:**
  cause, origin, arising, condition
- **Truth of Cessation:**
  cessation, pacification, excellence, freedom
- **Truth of Path:**
  path, correctness, achievement, deliverance

Function:
direct realization of these aspects cuts ignorance and ends samsara

5. The Importance of Ethical Conduct (why it's emphasized)

- **Metaphors:**
  foundation of virtues; bridge across samsara; shield against afflictions
- **Even minor breaches matter:**
  confession and purification repair damage
- **Ethical integrity**
  = reliable basis for concentration and wisdom

6. Combating the Afflictions (Inner Enemies)

- **The six primary afflictions:**
  attachment, hostility, ignorance, pride, doubt, wrong views
- **Continuous guards:** mindfulness & introspective alertness
- **Key antidotes:**
  meditations on impermanence, love, and emptiness

7. Ethical Conduct in Tantric Practice

- **Bedrock vows:**
  individual liberation & bodhisattva vows remain intact
- **Tantric vows:**
  stricter diligence; ethics undergirds attainments

8. Practical Advice and Inspiration (Kadampa emphasis)

- **Root of progress**:
  daily battle against afflictions through ethical discipline
- **Degenerate times:**
  maintaining discipline brings even greater merit
- **Steadfast vows**
  protect the path and lead to stable realization

9. Key Takeaways

- Three Trainings are indispensable and interdependent
- Ethical Conduct is the non-negotiable basis for higher practice
- Vigilance against afflictions preserves the integrity of practice
- Even in difficult times, ethical discipline yields profound spiritual benefit