

Noble Eightfold Path

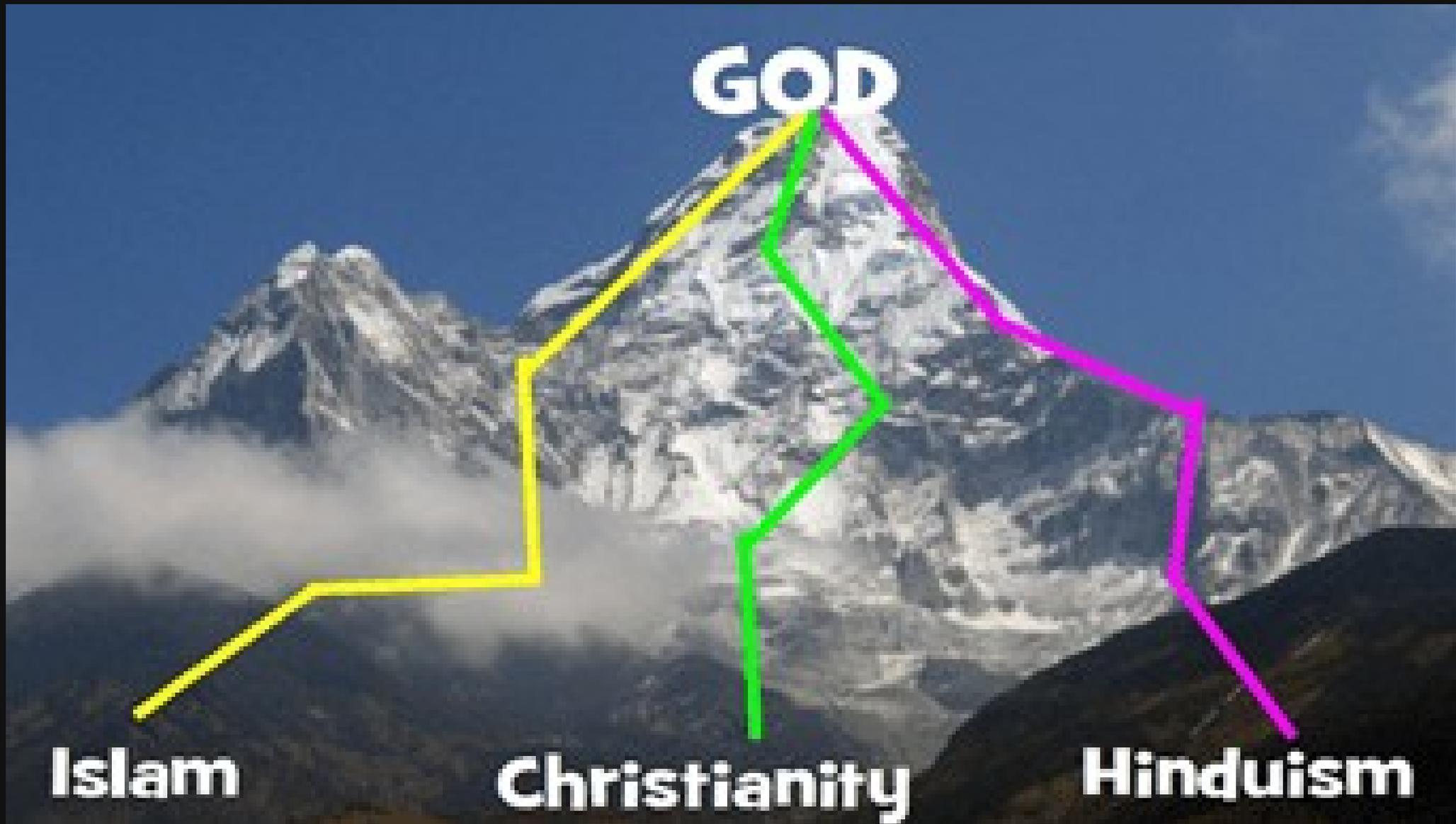
In

Early Buddhism

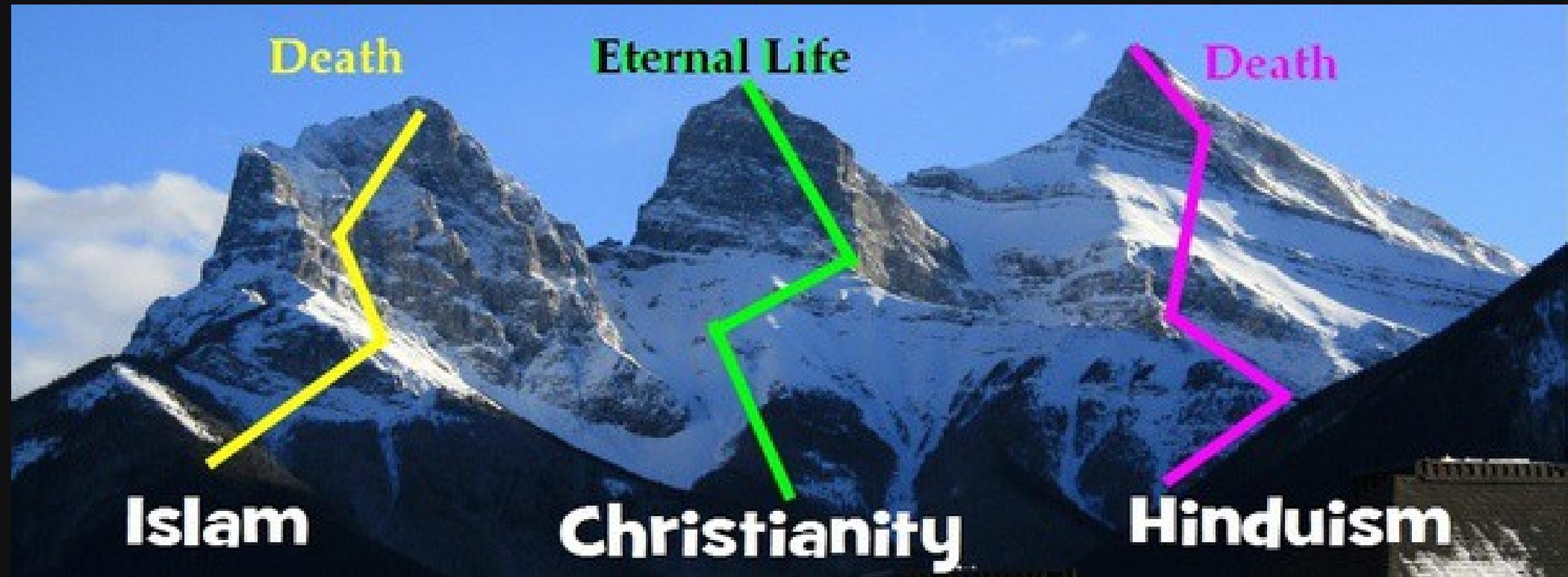
# Myth 1

All paths are  
different ways  
up the same  
mountain.

Many paths with same destination?



Or many paths with different destinations?



## Dhp. 273

“Just this is the path, there is no other,  
For the purification of insight.  
You should practice this path;  
This is the confounding of Māra.”

*Es'eva maggo natth'añño,  
Dassanassa visuddhiyā;  
Etañhi tumhe paṭipajjatha,  
Mārassetaṃ pamohanaṃ.*

# DN 16

“In whatever teaching and training the noble eightfold path is found, there the noble ones are found.”

*Yasmiñca kho, subhadda,  
dhammavinaye ariyo  
aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo upalabbhati,  
samaṇopi tattha upalabbhati.*

# Myth 2

The Bodhisatta path is an alternative to the N8P.

# *Bodhisattva* in the EBTs

*... pubbeva sambodhā  
anabhisambuddhassa  
bodhisattasseva sato ...*

*... pubbeva sambodhā  
anabhisambuddhassa  
bodhisattasseva sato ...*

## *Bodhisattva* in the EBTs

“Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta ...”

“Before my awakening, when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening ...”

## Bodhisatta path

In the Nikayas we often see monks approach the Buddha and ask for advice on how to attain arahantship.

So it seems reasonable to suppose that those who aspired to Buddhahood would have done the same and that the Buddha would have responded in a fitting way.

## Bodhisatta path

The question then arises why we don't find even a trace of teachings on the bodhisattva path in the archaic texts.

If there is a causal background to the realization of enlightenment as a buddha rather than as an arahant, why are the Nikayas silent about it?

Why don't they point to the possibility of buddhahood itself as an object of aspiration?

Why do they include no description of a bodhisattva career?

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## *Bodhisattva* in the EBTs

Just this is the path, there is no other,  
For the purification of insight.

*Es'eva maggo natth'añño,  
Dassanassa visuddhiyā. (Dhp.273)*

The Buddha never teaches anything  
apart from the N8P.

## *Bodhisattva* in the EBTs

“Mendicants, not understanding and not penetrating four noble truths, both you and I have wandered and transmigrated for such a very long time.” (DN 16)

The Buddha did not reach Awakening by practising a path.

The idea of a Bodhisattva path is a historical development.

# Myth 3

The N8P is  
only for *ariyas*,  
noble ones.

## Definition of right view (MN 141)

Knowing about suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice that leads to the cessation of suffering.

*Dukkhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ñāṇaṃ.*

## SN 4.4

“I have attained and realized supreme freedom through proper attention and proper effort.

You too should attain and realize supreme freedom through proper attention and proper effort.”

# Myth 4

The factors can  
be practised in  
any sequence.

# Conditioned nature of N8P

Right view >

Right intention >

Right speech >

Right action >

Right livelihood >

Right effort >

Right mindfulness >

Right stillness

The N8P starts with right view, which is needed to understand why this path should be followed.

It is a forerunner and guide for the rest of the path.