

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH = “There is suffering.” (Pali: *dukkha*)

This must be *understood* (intellectually, then directly experienced, then integrated into our lives).

A. Definition of suffering = unease, unsatisfactoriness, stress

Three kinds of suffering

1. ordinary suffering

including birth, death, sickness, old age, physical discomfort, separation from loved ones or pleasant conditions, disappointment, aversion, anxiety, etc.

2. suffering resulting from impermanence

the fact that everything changes

3. suffering resulting from unreliability

nothing has a permanent ‘self,’ ‘core,’ or essence that we can depend on.

every so called “being” a combination of “causes and conditions”

an essential characteristic of existence is *anatta*, or no-self.

Example: There is no “car” other than its components (motor, fenders, etc)

B. How to understand suffering

Directly experience causes and conditions as they arise and pass away

Go into the pain – physical or emotional – experience it, especially in the body

Deconstruct pain, observe it as types of energies, arising and passing

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a cause of suffering.” (Clinging)

This must be *abandoned*.

A. Definition of cause = craving, clinging, attachment

suffering not separate from its cause

abandoning attachment is abandoning suffering.

note: *Craving/Clinging is not the same as desire*

craving is loss of freedom

problem is clinging to desire

Craving often experienced as afflictive emotions (anger, greed, envy, etc.)

Other forms of attachment

1. the craving that things be other than they are.

2. attachment to the idea (delusion) of a permanent self

leads to need to defend and gratify it

causes us to identify and cling to things as “me” or “mine”

B. How to abandon clinging

1. Look for signs of clinging in the body, emotions, and mind

2. Ask yourself whether this clinging is suffering or not suffering

3. Notice that the awareness of clinging is separate from the actual clinging

4.. Invite the mind to let loose of clinging.

observe *without judging* – don’t cling to abandonment of clinging

imagining letting go as a physical act
imagining ease after letting go

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a cessation of suffering.”
This must be *realized*.

- A. Definition of cessation = liberation, *nibbana*, the end of suffering, undefinable
Peace, contentment not dependent on external circumstances.
No clinging arises
Nibbana (nirvana) – can’t be adequately expressed in words
“extinction of thirst,” “uncompounded,” “unconditioned,”
“unbinding” – refers to ancient belief that fire was its fuel
“unbinding” – happens when you run out of fuel.
fuel refers to craving and clinging
not a “state” that you “enter”
extinguished fire refers to causes and conditions of “me”
“I” am extinguished
differing opinions in Buddhist community as to the *nature* of nirvana
1. a mind no longer subject to any kind of reactivity, clinging
2. a complete cessation of mental activity, briefly or for several days
3. any experience of cessation of clinging, no matter how short
- B. How to realize (directly experience) cessation
1. let go of painful feelings – see “how to abandon clinging,” above
2. notice moments of awaking from our own story
see how story creates and supports an “I”
see how story is just thoughts and not some ultimate reality
3. focus awareness on moments of release and reflect on them

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a path to the cessation of suffering “
This must be *developed* (cultivated, brought into being).

- A. Definition of the way = the Eightfold Path
Practices of Wisdom, Morality, and Concentration
Steps of Path = Wise View, Wise Intention, Wise Speech, Wise Action, Wise Livelihood,
Wise Mindfulness, Wise Concentration

B. How to develop the Path – to be continued...