

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

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

Practice: The truth of suffering must be *understood* (intellectually, then directly experienced, then integrated into our lives).

A. Definition of suffering = unease, unsatisfactoriness, stress, reactivity, disappointment

Suffering is different from pain because of the nature of reality:

Everything is impermanent

Everything is always changing

Examples: death, boredom with a formerly pleasant phenomenon.

Nothing is reliable

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

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

This includes the human self: no separate, permanent self

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

C. How to practice the first Noble Truth

See B, above

Ask: “is this (experience) suffering or not suffering?”

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

Practice: The cause of suffering must be *abandoned* (let go of).

A. Definition of the cause of suffering = craving, clinging, attachment (Pali: *tanha*)

Suffering is not separate from its cause.

Abandoning clinging is abandoning suffering.

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

Craving is loss of freedom.

The problem is clinging, or attachment, to desire.

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

Other forms of clinging

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

2. Attachment to the idea (illusion) 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.

Note: Observe *without judging* – don't cling to the abandonment of clinging!

Imagine letting go as a physical act

Imagine ease after letting go. (But be careful of clinging.)

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a cessation of suffering.”

Practice: The cessation of suffering must be *realized*.

A. Definition of cessation = liberation, *nibbana*, the end of suffering, awakening
Peace and contentment are 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 – and be aware of this experience

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.

C. How to practice with the Third Noble Truth

Notice “this is not suffering.”

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a path to the cessation of suffering.”

Practice: The path to cessation must be *developed* (cultivated, brought into being).

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