



Complete Buddhist Path of Enlightenment
The Four Noble Truths



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Four Noble Truths - Introduction

1 Introduction



1. The Four Noble Truths are one of the central teachings of the [Buddhist](#) tradition.
2. [Buddha](#) first taught the four noble truths in the very first teaching he gave after he attained [enlightenment](#), as recorded in the discourse Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma ([Dharmacakra Pravartana Sūtra](#)).
3. The four noble truths are the most basic expression of the Buddha's teaching.

As Ven. Sariputta once said, they encompass the entire teaching, just as the footprint of an elephant can encompass the footprints of all other footed beings on earth.



2

What are the Four Noble Truths



2 Four Noble Truths

In Sutra of the First Wheel of Dharma, Buddha proclaimed that “The Four Noble Truths” are:-

- ❖ *True Sufferings (See 3)*
- ❖ *True Origins (See 4)*
- ❖ *True Cessations (See 5)*
- ❖ *True Paths (See 6)*

The Four Noble Truths

- 1 Ordinary Life brings about suffering.
- 2 The origin of suffering is attachment.
- 3 The cessation of suffering is attainable.
- 4 There is an eightfold path to the cessation of suffering.



3
The First Noble Truth:
You should know sufferings.

3 True Sufferings



Two types of true suffering:

Internal true sufferings

Within the continuum of body and mind of any being within Samsara (*e.g., headache, injury, terminal illness*)

External true sufferings

Various environments and enjoyments of beings within Samsara (*e.g., beings deprived of water in desert, drought, flood, typhoon*)



3.1 True Sufferings

Our controlled rebirths in Samsara, our impure environments we live in, our contaminated aggregates and, all our worldly pleasures and pains are true sufferings.

All these are the effects of contaminated throwing actions (Virtuous and Non-Virtuous)

What is Throwing action?

- ❖ *So called because it is the main course of a samsaric rebirth and so it is said to “throw” us into samsara.*
- ❖ *Some of virtuous actions are not throwing action such as visualizing Buddha and making offerings.....even without / with good motivation.*

3.2 True Sufferings



True Suffering can be explained via another perspective:-

- ❖ ***Suffering of suffering*** (See 3.2.1)
(Dukkha-dukkha)
- ❖ ***Suffering of change*** (See 3.2.2)
(Viparinama-dukkha)
- ❖ ***Suffering produced by conditioned states*** (See 3.2.2)
(Samkhara-dukkha)

3.2.1 Three type of Sufferings



Suffering of suffering

May be associated with physical **painful, diseases, and unpleasant experience** such as receiving a knock or having a sore tooth.

3.2.2 Three type of Sufferings



Suffering produced
by change

Can arise due to an **inflexible attitude to change**: just when you were settled, or had planned something, the 'unexpected' cropped up; or, the happiness you thought you had faded away.

Examine daily experience - moving house is said to be one of the most traumatic experiences people have; and consider, did the pleasure from that chocolate bar or holiday last forever?

3.2.3 Three type of Sufferings



Suffering produced
by conditioned
states

The most subtle, and perhaps most significant - is the **habitual states of existence** - The Five Aggregates are mental construction that make up what we perceive as "ourselves" (the ego).

It is the attachment to these that the Buddha actually identified as synonymous with suffering

More detailed explanation will be made later under "True Cessation"

3.3 Truth of Suffering is hidden



How the truth of suffering is hidden?

1. Seeing permanent as impermanent
2. Happiness in what is truly suffering
3. Selfhood in what is “Void of self”
4. Beautiful in the unbeautiful



4

The Second Noble Truth:

You should abandon origins of sufferings.

4 True Origins

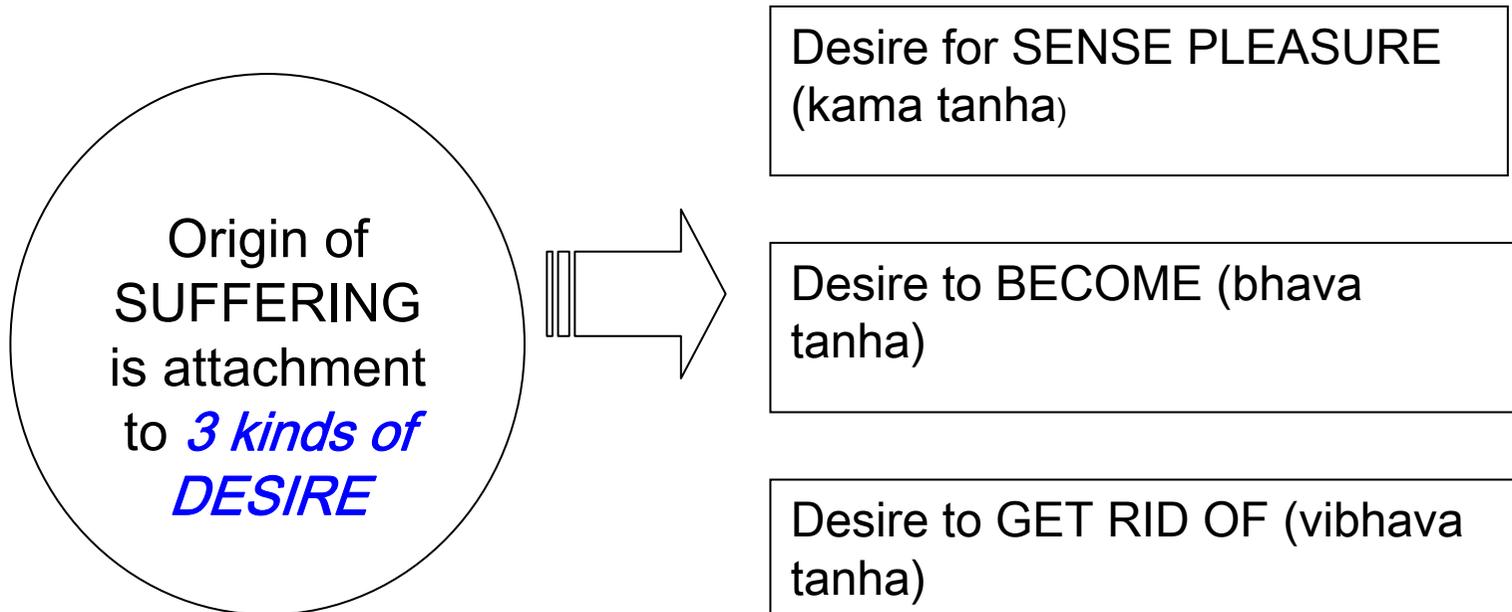


All powerful delusions and all throwing actions whether virtuous or non-virtuous that are **motivated by strong delusions** – their main causes – are true sufferings.

What is Throwing action?

- ❖ *So called because it is the main course of a samsaric rebirth and so it is said to “throw” us into samsara.*
- ❖ *Some of virtuous actions are not throwing action such as visualizing Buddha and making offerings.....even without / with good motivation.*

4.1 True Origins



Please refer to 4.1.1 for detail explanation.

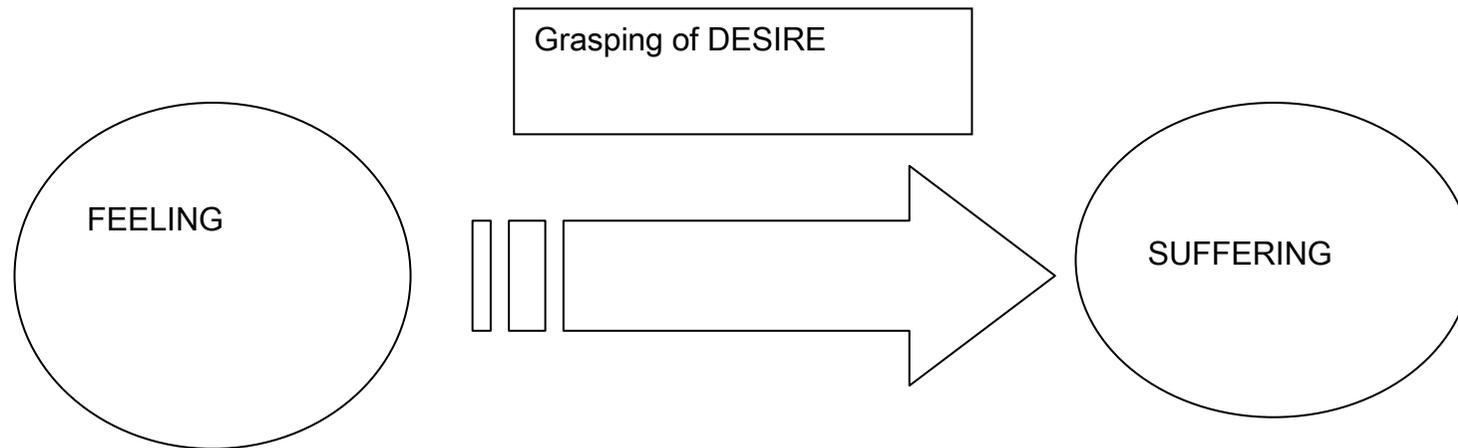
Note: This Desire (tanha - Virtuous and Non-Virtuous] is a “Throwing action” that propels you back into Samsara

4.1.1 True Origins



Kama tanha	This kind of desire is "wanting" sense pleasures through the body or other senses and always seeking things to excite or please your senses.
Bhava tanha	Feeling of wanting to become something. Examples: I want to practice meditation so I can be free from pain, I want to be enlightened, I want to be a millionaire, I want to be the CEO of the top 500 fortune companies etc.
Vibhava tanha	When we get disillusioned with trying to become something, then there is the desire to get rid of things. Examples: I want to get rid of my anger; I want to get rid of fear, pain, jealousy etc. This is merely contemplation within us the desire to get rid of things.

4.2 True Origins



Statement for reflection and contemplation in terms of your individual experience:

“Usually we equate suffering with “Feeling”, but feeling is not suffering. It is the grasping of desire that is suffering. Desire does not cause suffering; the cause of suffering is the grasping of desire. When you really see the origin of suffering, you realize that the problem is the grasping of desire, not the desire itself. Grasping means being deluded by it, thinking it’s really “me” and “mine”.

4.2.1 True Origins



Letting Go

If we contemplate desires and listen to them, we are actually no longer attaching to them; we are just allowing them to be the way they are. Then we come to the realization that the origin of suffering (DESIRE) can be laid aside and LET GO of.

How do you let go of things?

This means you leave them as they are; it does not mean you annihilate them or throw them away. It is more like setting them down and letting them be. Through practice of letting go, we realize that there is the origin of suffering, which is the attachment to desire, and we realize that we should let go of these 3 kinds desire. Then, we realize that we have let go of these desires; there is no longer any attachment to them.

4.2.1A True Origins



Note: You have to find this out through practice so that you will know for yourself how to let go of the origin of suffering. Can you let go desire by wanting to let go of it? What is it that is really letting go in a given moment? You have to contemplate the experience of letting go and really examine and investigate until the insight comes. This does not mean that you are going to let go of desire forever but at that one moment, you actually let go and you have done it in full consciousness awareness. This is what we call insight knowledge, nanadassana (profound understanding).

4.2.2 True Origins



ACCOMPLISHMENT (Desire has been let go of)

The more we contemplate and investigate grasping, the more the insight arises: “Desire should be let go of”. Then, through the actual practice and understanding of what letting go really is, we have the 3rd insight into the Second Noble Truth i.e., “Desire has been let go of”. We actually know letting go. It is not theoretical letting go, but a direct insight. You know letting go has been accomplished.

4.2.3 Effect of Non Virtuous Throwing Actions



1. Three types of effect of Non-Virtuous throwing actions:-
 - ✓ Ripened effect (born into any of the 6 realms of existence e.g. hungry ghosts and animals)
 - ✓ Effects similar to the cause
 - ☺ Tendencies similar to cause (killing instinct)
 - ☺ Experiences similar to cause (shortened lifespan)
 - ✓ Environment effect (Causing problem in Sangha – born in remote area without communication)

4.2.4 Effect of Virtuous Throwing Actions



Three types of effect of Virtuous throwing actions:-

- ✓ Ripened effect (contaminated aggregates of humans, demi-gods and gods)
- ✓ Effects similar to the cause (e.g., contaminated happiness of human, demi-gods and gods)
- ✓ Environment effect (e.g., abodes of human, demi-gods and gods)



5
The Third Noble Truth:
(General understanding).

5 True Cessations – Gen Understanding



- 1) The end of suffering is non-attachment, or letting go of desire or craving.
- 2) This is the state of Nibbana, where greed, hatred and delusion are extinct.
- 3) Freedom from attachments to the five aggregates is the end of suffering.



5.1

The Third Noble Truth:

Misconception of “Self” or “I” or “5
Aggregates”

5.1 Misconception of “Self” or “I” or “5 Aggregates”



- 1) The 5 Aggregates (Skandhas) do not have any problems. They are just natural processes / phenomena that just go on and on.
- 2) We subject to tremendous sufferings becos we “possessed by this idea” that the body belongs to me.
- 3) When the body / any of the 5 aggregates alters and changes, we become sorrowful, unhappy if these changes are not what we wanted or desired,

5.1A Misconception of “Self” or “I” or “5 Aggregates”



- 4) This factor of the mind that holds a wrong view of the self, a fabrication of the self, is what is meant in Buddhism by ignorance.

It is this ignorance that is the first of the twelve links of interdependent origination. On the foundation of this false concept of the self rest all the other delusions, such as attachment towards ourselves, our friends and possessions, and aversion for things and people foreign or alien to us.

5.1B Misconception of “Self” or “I” or “5 Aggregates”



- 5) The development of these attachments and aversions in turn causes us to accumulate a great number of unwholesome karmas. Unwholesome thoughts lead to unwholesome actions of body and speech ***[Geshe Rabten Rinpoche]***.



5.2

The Third Noble Truth:

How you should investigate on ultimate reality of these five aggregates

5.2 Reality of five aggregates



Only by completely investigating the ultimate reality of these five aggregates will we see that they are incapable of giving satisfaction and so not worth grasping at, that actually they are so unstable that holding onto them is impossible, and there is no one who can cling anyhow (as the 'self' arises and vanishes every moment and so cannot possibly continue to possess anything for any period of time).

So, in order to attain liberation, one must attain insight into these five aggregates so that the necessary dispassion arises, for "by not thoroughly knowing, by not understanding, by not being detached from, by not renouncing body (and the other Skandhas) one is unfit for the destruction of suffering... But, brethren, by thoroughly knowing (them)... one is fit for the destruction of suffering" (***K.S., III, p. 26***).



6
The Fourth Noble Truth:
You should meditate on paths.

6 True Paths



1. A true path is any spiritual path of a Superior being that is a method for attaining any true cessation
2. Without first attaining true paths there is no way to attain true cessations
3. Buddha taught true sufferings as the first of the four noble truths because first we need to meditate on them to realize that samsara has the nature of suffering and to develop a firm decision to find release from it.

6.1 True Paths



To understand the unconditioned, we need to see for ourselves that everything that has a nature to be born has a nature to die (i.e., whatever arises must cease): that every phenomenon that has a cause is impermanent.

By letting go of attachment to desire for conditioned phenomena, desire can come to an end and we can be liberated from suffering.

6.2 True Paths



THE WAY OUT OF SUFFERING

Through the elements of the Eightfold Path which are grouped into 3 sections:-

- 1) Higher Wisdom (Panna)
- 2) Higher Morality (Sila)
- 3) Higher Concentration (Samadhi)

The fact that we list them in order does not mean that they happen in a linear way, in sequence – they arise together.

6.2.1 Eightfold Path – Moral Discipline



MORAL DISCIPLINE (Sila Khandha)	Right Speech (Samma Vaca)	Refrain From:- a) Lying b) Divisive Speech c) Hurtful Speech d) Idle Chatter
	Right Action (Samma Kammanta)	Abstain From:- a) Killing b) Stealing c) Sexual Misconduct
	Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva)	Abstain From:- a) Arms b) Human beings (slavery, prostitution) c) Flesh (breeding animals for slaughter) d) Intoxicants e) Poison

6.2.2 Eightfold Path – Concentration



CONCENTRATION GROUP (Samadhikkhanda)	Right Effort (Sama Vayama)	
		a) To discard evil that has already arisen
		b) To prevent the arising of unarisen evils
		c) To develop unarisen good
		d) Promote the good that has already arisen
	Right Mindfulness (Samma Sati)	Mindfulness with regards to:-
		a) Body
		b) Feeling
		c) State of mind
d) Phenomenon / Mind objects		
Right Concentration (Samma Samadhi)	One-pointedness of mind	

6.2.3 Eightfold Path



WISDOM GROUP (Pannakkandha)	Right View (Samma ditthi)	Knowledge of the Four Noble Truths: a) The Noble Truth of Suffering b) The Noble Truth of Cause of Suffering c) The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering d) The Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering
	Right Intention (Samma sankappa)	Thoughts:- a) Free from attachment / Lust b) Free from ill-will c) Free from cruelty



7

The Fourth Noble Truth:

Detail explanation of the Eightfold Path

7.1 Right View

1. Beginning and the end of the path
2. Cognitive aspect of wisdom.
3. See things through, to grasp the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas, and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning.
4. Begins with the intuitive insight that all beings are subject to suffering and it ends with complete understanding of the true nature of all things.
5. Since our view of the world forms our thoughts and our actions, right view yields right thoughts and right actions.

7.2 Right Intention

1. Right intention refers to the volitional aspect.
2. Describe best as commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement.
3. Buddha distinguishes three types of right intentions:
 - 3.1 *Intention of renunciation, which means resistance to the pull of desire,*
 - 3.2. *Intention of good will, meaning resistance to feelings of anger and aversion, and*
 - 3.3. *Intention of harmlessness, meaning not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion*

7.3 Right Speech

1. First principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path.
2. Ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to moral discipline, which supports the other principles of the path.
3. Buddha explained right speech as follows:
 - 3.1. Abstain from false speech
 - 3.2, Abstain from slanderous speech / maliciously words
 - 3.3 Abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others,
 - 3.4 Abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth.

Positively phrased, this means to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.

7.4 Right Action

1. Right action, involves the body as natural means of expression, as it refers to deeds that involve bodily actions.
2. Unwholesome actions lead to unsound states of mind, while wholesome actions lead to sound states of mind.
3. Right action means to abstain from:-
 - 3.1 Harming sentient beings
 - 3.2. Taking what is not given,
 - 3.3. Sexual misconduct.

Positively formulated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships harmless to others.

7.5 Right Livelihood

1. Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully.

2. The Buddha mentions four specific activities one should avoid
 - 2.1 Dealing in weapons
 - 2.2 Dealing in living beings
(including raising animals for slaughter / slave trade / prostitution)
 - 2.3 Working in meat production and butchery
 - 2.4 Selling intoxicants and poisons
(alcohol / drugs).

Right Effort

1. Right effort can be seen as a prerequisite for the other principles of the path.
2. Without effort, nothing can be achieved, whereas misguided effort distracts the mind from its task, and confusion will be the consequence.
3. Right effort is detailed in four types of endeavours that rank in ascending order of perfection:
 - 3.1. To prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states
 - 3.2. To abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen,
 - 3.3. To arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen
 - 3.4. To maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

Right Mindfulness

1. Right mindfulness is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness.
2. In almost all cases, we ended up fabricating, scheming and misinterpretation of our initial thought.
3. Right mindfulness enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualization in a way that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go.
4. Buddha states four foundations of mindfulness:
 - 4.1 Contemplation of the body
 - 4.2 Contemplation of feeling
 - 4.3 Contemplation of the state of mind
 - 4.4 Contemplation of the phenomena

Right Concentration

1. Concentration in this context is described as one-pointedness of mind, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed onto one particular object.
2. Right concentration for the purpose of the eightfold path means wholesome concentration
3. The Buddhist method of choice to develop right concentration is through the practice of meditation.



8

The Fourth Noble Truth:

Parting Words of Wisdom

8 Parting Words



Parting words of
advice



**The actual method to
abandon samsara and to
attain liberation is to
practise...practise...practise**



**Go to Kadhampa Web
page (Contact us) and
email us if you need
further clarification or
explanation**