

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammâ Sambuddhassa!

Four Noble Truths

By Rasika Wijayaratne – Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rasikaw>

The essence of Buddhism is contained within the **Four Noble Truths**. The Lord Buddha declared these four truths in His **very first sermon** after Enlightenment to the five ascetics at Varanasi. The Lord Buddha taught the middle way of avoiding the extremes of sensual pleasure and self-torment that would lead to Nibbâna as the fourth Noble Truth, the way that is the Noble Eightfold Path. This article gives a brief overview of the Four Noble Truths.

The **First Noble Truth** describes the ever present *dukkha* in all life. Dukkha is usually translated as stress, suffering or unsatisfactoriness - how nothing in our lives is *ever* in a satisfactory state for too long.¹ The Lord Buddha stated the First Noble Truth thus: “Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the **five clinging-aggregates** are stressful.”²

The **Second Noble Truth** describes the cause and reason for this dukkha, which is craving (*tanhâ*). It is craving that causes us to be reborn again and again to experience this dukkha. The Lord Buddha stated the Second Noble Truth thus: “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there — i.e., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.”²

The **Third Noble Truth** states that dukkha can be ended by removing its cause, that is by ending craving. The Lord Buddha stated the Third Noble Truth thus: “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.”²

The **Fourth Noble Truth** outlines the method described by the Lord Buddha for ending dukkha, that is the Noble Eightfold Path. The Lord Buddha stated the Fourth Noble Truth thus: “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”² By treading the Noble Eightfold Path, which is composed of eight “steps”, we can reach Nibbâna the ending of all dukkha.

It is very important as young Buddhists to have an understanding of these very fundamental **Four Noble Truths**, as the *whole* of Buddhism is encompassed and included within these four truths. They describe the 1. reality of dukkha, 2. the cause of dukkha, 3. the cessation of dukkha and 4. the way leading to the cessation of dukkha, which is the middle way of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is even more important to start the journey on Noble Eightfold Path out of dukkha and towards the freedom of Nibbâna. May you attain Nibbâna!

Notes

1. *Dukkha* can be quite subtle & ever present.
2. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya* LVI.11. [<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>]

Related Suttas

1. SN 56.11, *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion*, Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>]

Other Resources

1. *The Four Noble Truths - A Study Guide* by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/truths.html>]
2. *Nibbana* by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/nibbana.html>]
3. *Five Piles of Bricks - The Khandhas as Burden & Path* by Thanissaro Bhikkhu
[<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/khandha.html>]