

Four Noble Truths (Cattari Ariyasaccani)

1. Dukkha
2. Dukkha Samudaya, the cause of dukkha
3. Dukkha Nirodha, the cessation of dukkha
4. Dukkha Nirodhagamini Patipada, the Path leading to the cessation of dukkha

* Given in brief in the first discourse “**Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta**” SN 56.11.

* The discourse reveals that the Four Noble Truths are three-circled and twelvefold. With regard to each truth, there is the knowledge that it is to be comprehended, and the knowledge of comprehension, thus making the knowledge twelvefold by three circles of each truth.

* The Four Noble Truths analyses causes and conditions of the present predicament of human existence and suggests remedial measures to be followed for the alleviation of it.

First Noble Truth: Dukkha Sacca

* The present predicament of man is analyzed in the First Noble Truth with its physical, psychological and doctrinal aspects and shows how those afflictions are woven into the fabric of our existence.

physical aspect:

psychological aspect:

doctrinal aspect:

Second Noble Truth: Samudaya Sacca

Desire stems from a feeling of incompleteness

a) Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

* It is this ‘thirst’/craving (tanha) which causes rebirth (ponobhavika), and which is bound up with passionate greed (nandiragasahagata), and which finds fresh delight in this or that (tatratatrabhinandini), namely (1) craving for sense-pleasures (kama-tanha), (2) craving for existence and becoming (bhava-tanha) and (3) craving for non-existence (self-annihilation, vibhava-tanha).

b) Sammaditthi Sutta MN 9

- * Venerable Sariputta: origin of suffering is threefold craving
- * Craving has as its centre the false idea of self arising out of ignorance.

The Threefold Craving

i) Kama-tanha

- * Craving for Sensual Pleasure is related to external objects of sense gratification.
- * It is not because of the evil inherent in those objects, but because of the wrong attitude adopted towards perception.

c) Potaliya Sutta MN 54: shows the futility of the fivefold sensuality. It draws the simile of a meatless bone given to a hungry dog waiting by a butcher's shop. The dog would not be able to appease its hunger by gnawing the meatless bone. Eventually it would reap weariness and disappointment.

ii) Bhava-tanha

- * Rooted in the belief of an immutable soul or sassatavada

iii) Vibhava-tanha

- * Rooted in the belief of ucchedavada, advocating pleasures of the flesh.

* Broadly speaking, both Craving for Sensual Pleasures and Craving for Non-Being are based on materialists' view of life.

* Craving includes not only desire for, and attachment to, sense-pleasures, wealth and power, but also desire for, and attachment to ideas, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs (dhamma-tanha).

d) Sakka-panha Sutta DN 21: According to the Buddha, all the troubles and strife in the world, from little personal quarrels in families to great wars arise out of this selfish craving.

* Here, the Buddha traces the causal genesis of conflicts to envy and avarice rooted in things dear and not dear, which in turn based on desire leading to initial application (vitakka) and proliferation of perception (papanca sanna sankha). By nature craving springs up and thrives, wherever it finds something delightful and pleasurable.

e) Ratthapala Sutta MN 82: 'The world lacks and hankers, and is enslaved to "thirst" (tanhadaso).'

Inter-relatedness of craving and suffering

***Dhp 336**

“Whosoever in the world overcomes this base unruly craving, from him sorrows fall away like water drops from a lotus leaf.”

Dhp 338

“Just as a tree with roots unharmed and firm, though hewn down, sprouts again, even so, while latent craving is not rooted out, this sorrow springs up again and again.”

* **Sunakkhatta Sutta MN 105:** craving has been compared to an arrow and ignorance to a poisonous humour. The Buddha says that that arrow has been removed and the poisonous humour cured by Him. Pursuing unsuitable sense objects enable lust to invade the mind. When the mind thus invaded by lust, suffering would follow.

* **Salayatana Sutta MN 149:** shows how craving contributes to bodily and mental suffering.

Quote: *“For him — infatuated, attached, confused, not remaining focused on their drawbacks — the five clinging-aggregates head toward future accumulation. The craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now this & now that — grows within him. His bodily disturbances & mental disturbances grow. His bodily torments & mental torments grow. His bodily distresses & mental distresses grow. He is sensitive both to bodily stress & mental stress.”*

* **Chachakka Sutta MN 148:** traces suffering to ignorance and craving

Quote: *“Bhikkhus, dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises; the meeting of the three is eye-contact; with eye-contact as condition there arises [an eye- feeling] felt as pleasant or painful or neither pleasant nor painful. When one is touched by a pleasant eye-feeling, if one delights in it, welcomes it, and remains holding to it, then the underlying tendency to lust lies within one. When one is touched by a painful eye-feeling, if one sorrows, grieves and laments, weeps beating one’s breast and becomes distraught, then the underlying tendency to aversion lies within one. When one is touched by neither pleasant nor painful eye-feeling, if one does not understand as it actually is the origination, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in regard to that eye-feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance lies within one. Bhikkhus, that one shall here and now make an*

end of suffering without abandoning the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant eye-feeling, without abolishing the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful eye-feeling, without extirpating the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither pleasant nor painful eye-feeling, without abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge - this is impossible.”(the sutta continues with other 5 senses)

Third Noble Truth: Nirodha Sacca

* There is emancipation, liberation, freedom from suffering, from the continuity of dukkha, which is Nibbana.

* Nibbana =

* Self – annihilation???

* Venerable Sariputta: ‘The abandoning and destruction of desire and craving for these Five Aggregates of Attachment; that is the cessation of dukkha.’

* Parable of tortoise and fish

* When wisdom is developed and cultivated according to the Fourth Noble Truth, it sees the secret of life, the reality of things as they are. When the secret is discovered, when the Truth is seen, all the forces which feverishly produce the continuity of samsara in illusion become calm and incapable of producing any more kamma-formations, because there is no more illusion, no more ‘thirst’ for continuity. It is like a mental disease which is cured when the cause or the secret of the malady is discovered and seen by the patient.

* Thus, Nibbana is the highest happiness (nibbanam paramam sukham). In contradiction to worldly happiness, it is permanent (nicca), eternal (dhuva), happy (sukha) and pleasant (subha) state experienced by destroying all defilements.

* The uniqueness of Buddhism lies in the fact that each individual can realize the transcendental truth with one’s own personal effort (paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi). As Buddhism does not maintain any kind of concept involving a theory of soul to be saved or almighty creator god who acts as saviour of suffering humanity, the cessation of suffering is to be achieved by practicing the path enunciated by the Buddha.

* In almost all religions the summum bonum can be attained only after death. But Nibbana can be realized in this very life; it is not necessary to wait till you die to ‘attain’ it.

* Itivuttaka: **Sopadisesa vs. Anupadisesa Nibbana**

Quote: "What, bhikkhus, is the Nibbana-element with residue left? Here a bhikkhu is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed, the holy life fulfilled, who has done what had to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, destroyed the fetters of being, completely released through final knowledge. However, his five sense faculties remain unimpaired, by which he still experiences what is agreeable and disagreeable and feels pleasure and pain. It is the extinction of attachment, hate, and delusion in him that is called the Nibbana-element with residue left."

"Now what, bhikkhus, is the Nibbana-element with no residue left? Here a bhikkhu is an arahant... completely released through final knowledge. For him, here in this very life, all that is experienced, not being delighted in, will be extinguished. That, bhikkhus, is called the Nibbana-element with no residue left."

* Cessation vs. annihilation

Fourth Noble Truth: Magga Sacca

* Way leading to the Cessation of Dukkha (Dukkhanirodhagaminipada-ariyasacca).

* It is known as the ‘Middle Path’ because it avoids the two extremes of kamasukhalikanuyoga and attakilamathanuyoga.

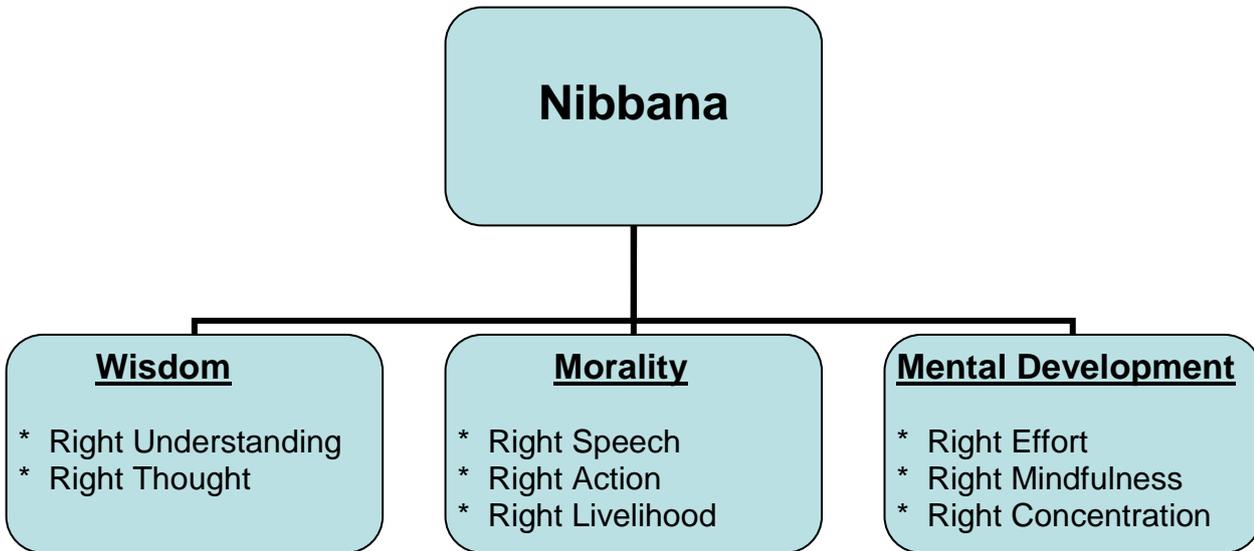
* This Middle Path is generally referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path.

Maha-cattarisaka Sutta MN 117

1. Right Understanding (Samma ditthi)
2. Right Thought (Samma sankappa)
3. Right Speech (Samma vaca)
4. Right Action (Samma kammanta)
5. Right Livelihood (Samma ajiva)
6. Right Effort (Samma vayama)
7. Right Mindfulness (Samma sati)
8. Right Concentration (Samma samadhi)

* The eight factors should be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together and each helps the cultivation of the others.

* These eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the threefold training of Sila, Samadhi and Panna.



Sila: Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood

Right Speech: Abstention

1. from telling lies (musavada).
2. from backbiting and slander and talk that may bring about hatred, enmity, disunity and disharmony among individuals or groups of people (pisunavaca).
3. from harsh, rude, impolite, malicious and abusive language.
4. from idle, useless and foolish babble and gossip.

Right Action:

1. practice moral, honourable and peaceful conduct.
2. abstinence of three kinds of bodily misconduct: taking life, theft and misappropriation and sexual misconduct.

~ The mundane right action produces wholesome worldly results whereas the practice of supramundane right action, avoiding those misbehaviours completely with pure mind intent upon the Path, is contributory to deliverance.

Right Livelihood:

1. abstain from profession that brings harm to others, such as trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, poisons, killing animals, cheating etc.
2. live by a profession which is honourable, blameless and innocent of harm to others.

Samadhi: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration

Right Effort:

1. prevent evil and unwholesome states of mind from arising.
2. get rid of such evil and unwholesome states that have already arisen.
3. produce, to cause to rise, good and wholesome states of mind not yet arisen.
4. develop and bring to perfection the good and wholesome states of mind already present in a man.

Right Mindfulness: aware, mindful and attentive with regard to

1. the activities of the body (kaya).
 2. sensations or feelings (vedana).
 3. activities of the mind (citta).
 4. ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things (dhamma)
- ~ Satipatthana Sutta

Right Concentration: To practice meditation to train the mind to be focused and disciplined in order to cultivate and acquire wisdom.

Panna: Right Thought and Right Understanding

Right Thought: mainly three constituents

1. thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment (nekkhamma-sankappa).
 2. thoughts of loving kindness and goodwill without any kind of anger and hatred (avyapada-sankappa).
 3. thoughts of non-violence (avihimsa-sankappa)
- which are extended to all beings.

Right Understanding: understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

Sammaditthi Sutta MN 9:

~ Primarily there are two, external and internal factors conducive to Right Understanding. They are:

1. Hearing from others (paratoghosa)
2. Thoughtful reflection (yonisomanasikara)

BPFE 102 – Emergence of Buddhism and Basic Buddhist Teachings

* The Noble Eightfold Path is a way of life to be followed, practiced and developed by each individual. It is self-discipline in body, word and mind, self-development and self-purification. It has nothing to do with belief, prayer, worship or ceremony.

* It is a Path leading to the realization of Ultimate Reality, to complete freedom, happiness and peace through moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection.

Four Functions:

1. Dukkha Sacca: the nature of life is suffering, its sorrows and joys is imperfect and unsatisfactory, impermanence and insubstantiality.

Our Function: understand it as a fact, clearly and completely. (parinneyya)

2. Samudaya Sacca: desire, 'thirst', accompanied by all other passions, defilements and impurities. A mere understanding of this fact is not sufficient.

Our Function: discard it, to eliminate, to destroy and eradicate it (pahatabba)

3. Nirodha Sacca: Nibbana, the absolute Truth, the Ultimate Reality.

Our Function: realize it (sacchikatabba)

4. Magga Sacca: Path leading to the realization of Nibbana. A mere knowledge of the Path, however complete, will not do.

Our Function: follow it and keep to it (bhavetabba)

Additional notes:

Micchatta Sutta AN 10.103

Bija Sutta AN 10.104

The Middle Path in Relation to Social Welfare

** Basically, right speech, right action and right livelihood have a direct influence on Society. These ethical practices bind individual and society together.*

** Society is benefited by one who practices good moral conduct.*

** For eg, by practicing right speech, one gives up back biting and abstains from back biting, one does not cause dissension among people. Thus he becomes either a conciliator of enemies or a supporter of the friendly.*

** Thus, by practicing the middle path, one's own welfare as well as the welfare of society is ensured.*

Reflection

*Sedaka Sutta SN 47.19

So then the bamboo acrobat said this to his assistant Medakathalika:
"You look after me, my dear Medakathalika, and I'll look after you.
Thus with us looking after one another, guarding one another,
we'll show off our craft, receive some payment,
and safely climb down the bamboo pole."

This being said, the assistant Medakathalika said this to the bamboo acrobat:

"That will not do at all, master!

You look after yourself, master, and I will look after myself.

Thus with each of us looking after ourselves, guarding ourselves,
we'll show off our craft, receive some payment,
and safely climb down from the bamboo pole.

That's the right way to do it!"

Who is right?