

What are the Four Noble Truths

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Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk. This month, our subject is **the Four Noble Truths**. What are **the Four Noble Truths**? **Truth** means non-inversion. **Noble Truth** means the absolute truth that known to the noble ones. The Four Noble Truth means four kinds of truth which are ***the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the cause of suffering, the noble truth of the end of suffering*** and ***the noble truth of the path that frees us from suffering***. After the Buddha was enlightened, he went to the deer park and turned the Dharma Wheel of the Four Noble Truths three times for his first five disciples. The Buddha said,

“Ajanata Kaundinya, do you know why we practice? It's to cast aside suffering. The world is full of suffering: natural disasters of wind, water, and earth, as well as all manner of dissatisfaction and unattainable goals that disturb our peace, in addition to aging, illness, and death which strike down the body and mind. Is this world not filled with suffering?”

“Know that ‘suffering’ is all caused by the self. Beings become attached to the idea of the self, and from the self arises greed, anger, and ignorance, this is the ‘accumulation’ of suffering. If you wish to be free of suffering, you must practice the ‘path’. Only by practicing can one know the ‘cessation’ of suffering, the state of tranquility.”

Upon hearing the Buddha teach the Dharma, the five men felt like they had never heard anything like it. They became convinced that the Buddha had realized the truth. The Buddha continued, “Ajanata Kaundinya, hear my words: there is suffering, which is oppressive; there is the cause of suffering, which beckons; there is the cessation of suffering, which is attainable; and there is the path, which can be practiced. Remember well: suffering should be understood, the cause of suffering should be ended, the cessation of suffering should be realized, and the path should be practiced. For I have understood suffering, I have ended the cause of suffering, I have realized the cessation of suffering, and I have practiced the path.”

“Suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering: these are the Four Noble Truths. If you do not fully understand these four truths then liberation is not possible. Do you understand my teaching?”

In the Mahasatipatthana Sutra, the Buddha explained the Four Dharma Truths down to the last detail and today we will recite this part.

Mahasatipatthana sutta

Section on Noble Truths

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the Four Noble Truths as just the Four Noble Truths (not mine, not I, not self, but just as phenomena). And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu dwell perceiving again and again the Four Noble Truths as just the Four Noble Truths? Here, (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows as it really is, "This is dukkha"; he knows as it really is, "This is the cause of dukkha"; he knows as it really is, "This is the cessation of dukkha"; he knows as it really is, "This is the path leading to the cessation of dukkha."

Section on the Noble Truth of Dukkha

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of dukkha? Birth is dukkha, ageing is also dukkha, death is also dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and anguish are also dukkha; to have to associate with those (persons or things) one dislikes is also dukkha; to be separated from those one loves or likes is also dukkha; wishing for what one cannot get is also dukkha; in short, the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha.

And what, bhikkhus, is birth (jati)? The birth, the being born, the origination, the conception, the springing into existence, the manifestation of the aggregates, and the acquisition of the sense-bases of beings in this or that class of beings - this, bhikkhus, is called birth.

And what, bhikkhus, is ageing (jara)? It is the ageing, the getting frail, the loss of teeth, the greying of hair, the wrinkling of skin; the failing of the vital force, the wearing out of the sense faculties of beings in this or that class of beings - this, bhikkhus, is called ageing.

And what, bhikkhus, is death (marana)? The departing and vanishing, the destruction, the disappearance, the death, the completion of the life span, the dissolution of the aggregates (khandha), the discarding of the body, and the destruction of the physical life-force of beings in this or that class of beings - this, bhikkhus, is called death.

And what, bhikkhus, is sorrow (soka)? The sorrow, the act of sorrowing, the sorrowful state of mind, the inward sorrow and the inward overpowering sorrow that arise because of this or that

loss (of relatives, or possessions) or this or that painful state that one experiences - this, bhikkhus, is called sorrow.

And what, bhikkhus is lamentation (parideva)? The crying and lamenting, the act of crying and lamenting, and the state of crying and lamentation that arises because of this or that loss (of relatives, or possessions) or this or that painful state that one experiences - this bhikkhus, is called lamentation.

And what, bhikkhus, is physical pain (dukkha)? The bodily pain and bodily unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by bodily contact - this, bhikkhus, is called physical pain.

And what, bhikkhus, is mental pain (domanassa)? The pain in the mind and the unpleasantness in the mind, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by mental contact - this, bhikkhus, is called mental pain.

And what, bhikkhus, is anguish (upayasa)? The distress and anguish and the state of distress and anguish that arises because of this or that loss (of relatives, or possessions) or this or that painful state that one experiences - this, bhikkhus, is called anguish.

And what, bhikkhus, is the dukkha of having to associate with those (persons or things) one dislikes (appiyehi sampayogo dukkho)?

Having to meet, remain with, be in close contact, or intermingle, with sights, sounds, odours, tastes, tactile objects, and dhammas in this world which are undesirable, unpleasant or unenjoyable, or with those who desire one's disadvantage, loss, discomfort, or association with danger - this, bhikkhus, is called the dukkha of having to associate with those (persons or things) one dislikes.

And, bhikkhus, what is the dukkha of being separated from those one loves or likes (piyehi vippayogo dukkho)? Not being able to meet, remain with, be in close contact, or intermingle, with sights, sounds, odours, tastes, tactile objects, and dhammas in this world which are desirable, pleasant or enjoyable, or with mother or father or brothers or sisters or friends or companions or maternal and paternal relatives who desire one's advantage, benefit, comfort or freedom from danger - this, bhikkhus, is called the dukkha of being separated from those one loves or likes.

And what, bhikkhus, is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get? Bhikkhus, in beings subject to birth and rebirth the wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to birth and rebirth! Oh that birth and rebirth would not happen to us!" But this cannot happen by merely wishing. This is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get. Bhikkhus, in beings subject to ageing the

wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to ageing! Oh that ageing would not happen to us! " But this cannot happen merely by wishing. This also is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get. Bhikkhus, in beings subject to illness the wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to illness! Oh that illness would not happen to us!" But this cannot happen merely by wishing. This also is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get. Bhikkhus, in beings subject to death the wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to death! Oh that death would not happen to us!", But this cannot happen merely by wishing. This also is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get. Bhikkhus, in beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and anguish the wish arises: "Oh that we were not subject to sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and anguish! Oh that sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and anguish would not happen to us!" But this cannot happen merely by wishing. This also is the dukkha of wishing for what one cannot get.

And what, bhikkhus, is (meant by) "In short, the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha"? They are the aggregate of corporeality, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of mental formations, and the aggregate of consciousness. These, bhikkhus, are what is meant by "In short, the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha."

Bhikkhus, this is called the Noble Truth of dukkha.

Section on the Noble Truth of the Cause of Dukkha

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cause of dukkha? It is that craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth; and which together with delight and clinging, (accepts, enjoys, and) finds great delight in this or that (existence or sense pleasure that happens to arise). Namely, craving for sense pleasures (kamatanha), craving for (better) existences (bhavatanha), and craving for non-existence (vibhavatanha).

When this craving arises, bhikkhus, where does it arise? When it establishes itself, where does it establish itself? When this craving arises and establishes itself, it does so in the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the world.

What are the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the world? In the world, the eye has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises, it arises there (i.e. in the eye); when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there. In the world, the ear.... In the world, the nose.... In the world, the tongue.... In the world, the body.... In the world, the mind has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, visible objects.... In the world, sounds.... In the world, odours.... In the world, tastes.... In the world, tactile objects.... In the world, dhammas have the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, eye-consciousness.... In the world, ear-consciousness.... In the world, nose-consciousness.... In the world, tongue-consciousness.... In the world, body-consciousness.... In the world, mind-consciousness has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, eye-contact.... In the world, ear-contact.... In the world, nose-contact.... In the world, tongue-contact.... In the world, body-contact.... In the world, mind-contact has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, the feeling born of eye-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of ear-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of nose-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of tongue-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of body-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of mind-contact has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, the perception of visible objects.... In the world, the perception of sounds.... In the world, the perception of odours.... In the world, the perception of tastes.... In the world, the perception of tactile objects.... In the world, the perception of dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. Then this craving arises it arises there, when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, the volition towards visible objects.... In the world, the volition towards sounds.... In the world, the volition towards odours.... In the world, the volition towards tastes.... In the world, the volition towards tactile objects.... In the world, the volition towards dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, the craving for visible objects.... In the world, the craving for sounds.... In the world, the craving for odours.... In the world, the craving for tastes.... In the world, the craving for tactile objects....

In the world, the craving for dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes

itself there.

In the world, the initial thinking about visible objects.... In the world, the initial thinking about sounds.... In the world, the initial thinking about odours.... In the world, the initial thinking about tastes.... In the world, the initial thinking about tactile objects.... In the world, the initial thinking about dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

In the world, the continued thinking about visible objects.... In the world, the continued thinking about sounds.... In the world, the continued thinking about odours.... In the world, the continued thinking about tastes.... In the world, the continued thinking about tactile objects.... In the world, the continued thinking about dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving arises it arises there; when it establishes itself, it establishes itself there.

This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the cause of dukkha.

Section on the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Dukkha

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of dukkha? It is the complete extinction and cessation of this very craving, its abandoning and discarding, the liberation and detachment from it. Bhikkhus, when this craving is abandoned, where is it abandoned? When it ceases, where does it cease? When this craving is abandoned or ceases it does so in the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the world.

What are the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the world? In the world, the eye has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there (i.e. in the eyes); when it ceases, it ceases there. In the world, the ear.... In the world, the nose.... In the world, the tongue.... In the world, the body.... In the world, the mind has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, visible objects.... In the world, sounds.... In the world, odours.... In the world, tastes.... In the world, tactile objects.... In the world, dhammas have the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, eye-consciousness.... In the world, ear-consciousness.... In the world, nose-consciousness.... In the world, tongue-consciousness.... In the world, body-consciousness.... In the world, mind-consciousness has the characteristic of being

delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, eye-contact.... In the world, ear-contact.... In the world, nose-contact.... In the world, tongue-contact.... In the world, body-contact.... In the world, mind-contact has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the feeling born of eye-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of ear-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of nose-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of tongue-contact.... In the world, the feeling born of mind-contact has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable.

When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the perception of visible objects.... In the world, the perception of sounds.... In the world, the perception of odours.... In the world, the perception of tastes.... In the world, the perception of tactile objects.... In the world, the perception of dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the volition towards visible objects.... In the world, the volition towards sounds.... In the world, the volition towards odours.... In the world, the volition towards tastes.... In the world, the volition towards tactile objects.... In the world, the volition towards dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the craving for visible objects.... In the world, the craving for sounds.... In the world, the craving for tastes.... In the world, the craving for tactile objects.... In the world, the craving for dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the initial thinking about visible objects.... In the world, the initial thinking about sounds.... In the world, the initial thinking about odours.... In the world, the initial thinking about tastes.... In the world, the initial thinking about tactile objects.... In the world, the initial thinking about dhammas has the characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

In the world, the continued thinking about visible objects.... In the world, the continued thinking about sounds.... In the world, the continued thinking about odours.... In the world, the continued thinking about tastes.... In the world, the continued thinking about dhammas has the

characteristic of being delightful and pleasurable. When this craving is abandoned, it is abandoned there; when it ceases, it ceases there.

This, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of dukkha.

Section on the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of Dukkha

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right View (Samma-ditthi), Right Thought (Samma-sankappa), Right Speech (Samma-vaca), Right Action (Samma-kammanta), Right Livelihood (Samma-ajiva), Right Effort (Samma-vayama), Right Mindfulness (Samma-sati), and Right Concentration (Samma-samadhi).

And what, bhikkhus, is Right View? The understanding of dukkha; the understanding of the cause of dukkha; the understanding of the cessation of dukkha; the understanding of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha. This, bhikkhus, is called Right View.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Thought? Thoughts directed to liberation from sensuality; thoughts free from ill-will; and thoughts free from cruelty. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Thought.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Speech? Abstaining from lying, from tale-bearing, from abusive speech, and from vain and unbeneficial talk. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Speech.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Action? Abstaining from killing living beings, from stealing and from wrongful indulgence in sense pleasures. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Action.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Livelihood? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, the noble disciple completely abstains from a wrong way of livelihood and makes his living by a right means of livelihood. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Livelihood.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Effort? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu generates an intention, makes effort, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to prevent the arising of evil, unwholesome states of mind that have not yet arisen. He generates an intention, makes effort, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to abandon evil, unwholesome states of mind that have arisen. He generates an intention, makes effort, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to attain wholesome states of mind that have not yet arisen. He generates an intention, makes effort, rouses energy, applies his mind, and strives ardently to maintain the wholesome states of mind that have arisen, to prevent their lapsing, to increase them, to cause them to grow, and to completely develop them. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Effort.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Mindfulness? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body with diligence, clear understanding, and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world; he dwells perceiving again and again feelings as just feelings with diligence, clear understanding and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world, he dwells perceiving again and again the mind as just the mind with diligence, clear understanding, and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world; he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas with diligence, clear understanding and mindfulness, thus keeping away covetousness and mental pain in the world. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Mindfulness.

And what, bhikkhus, is Right Concentration? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu being detached from sensual desire and unwholesome states attains and dwells in the first jhana which has vitakka and vicara; and rapture (piti) and sukha born of detachment (from the hindrances). With the subsiding of vitakka and vicara, a bhikkhu attains and dwells in the second jhana, with internal tranquility and one-pointedness of mind, without vitakka and vicara, but with rapture and sukha born of concentration. Being without rapture, a bhikkhu dwells in equanimity with mindfulness and clear understanding, and experiences sukha in mind and body. He attains and dwells in the third jhana; that which causes a person who attains it to be praised by the Noble Ones as one who has equanimity and mindfulness, one who abides in sukha. By becoming detached from both sukha and dukkha and by the previous cessation of gladness and mental pain, a bhikkhu attains and dwells in the fourth jhana, a state of pure mindfulness born of equanimity. This, bhikkhus, is called Right Concentration.

This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha.

Thus he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas (not mine, not I, not self, but just as phenomena) in himself; or he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas in others; or he dwells perceiving again and again dhammas as just dhammas in both himself and in others. He dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual appearing of dhammas; or he dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual dissolution of dhammas; or he dwells perceiving again and again both the actual appearing and dissolution of dhammas with their causes.

To summarize, he is firmly mindful of the fact that only dhammas exist (not a soul, a self or I). That mindfulness is just for gaining insight (vipassana) and mindfulness progressively. Being detached from craving and wrong views he dwells without clinging to anything in the world.

Thus, bhikkhus, in this way a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the Four Noble Truths as just the Four Noble Truths.

Indeed, bhikkhus, whosoever practices these four satipatthanas in this manner for seven years, one of two results is to be expected in him: Arahatsip in this very existence, or if there yet be any trace of clinging, the state of an Anagami.

Let alone seven years, bhikkhus, whosoever practices these four satipatthanas in this manner for six years, five years, four years, three years, two years, or one year.

Let alone one year, bhikkhus, whosoever practices these four satipatthanas in this manner for seven months, one of two results is to be expected in him: Arahatsip in this very existence, or if there yet be any trace of clinging, the state of an Anagami.

Let alone seven months, bhikkhus, whosoever practices these four satipatthanas in this manner for six months, five months, four months, three months, two months, one month, or half a month.

Let alone half a month, bhikkhus, whosoever practices these four satipatthanas in this manner for seven days, one of two results is to be expected in him: Arahatsip in this very existence or if there yet be any trace of clinging, the state of an Anagami.

This is what I meant when I said: "Bhikkhus, this is the one and the only way for the purification (of the minds) of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the cessation of physical and mental pain, for attainment of the Noble Paths, and for the realization of Nibbana. That only way is the four satipatthanas".

This is what the Bhagava said. Delighted, the bhikkhus rejoice at the Bhagava's words.
Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Amitabha! Now we have learned the Four Noble Truths. Wish everyone make good use of your time, contemplate on them diligently and observe yourself carefully in every moment. Know the sufferings, understand the sufferings, be dispassionate of sufferings and get out of the sufferings. Thank you! See you next week!