

The Four Noble Truths of the Buddha

The First Noble Truth: Truth of Suffering

“There is suffering.”

Suffering pervades our existence in cyclic existence (samsara). There are many ways to describe and subdivide types of suffering. One way is the three sufferings:

1. suffering of pain
2. suffering of change
3. pervasive compounded suffering

The Second Noble Truth: Truth of the Cause of Suffering

“There is a cause of suffering.”

All the various mental afflictions as well as the actions of body, speech, and mind arising from those mental afflictions (karma) are the causes of our suffering. It is said in the Buddha’s teachings that there are 84,000 afflictions, but we can summarize them in the six root afflictions:

1. ignorance
2. anger
3. attachment
4. pride
5. doubt
6. wrong view

The Third Noble Truth: Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

“There is a state of complete cessation of all suffering and its causes, which is nirvana.”

As the mental afflictions and the karmic imprints arising from negative actions are adventitious, rather than intrinsic to the pure nature of the mind, it is possible to completely purify the mind of these negative aspects and to develop the mind fully to its enlightened state.

The Fourth Noble Truth: Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering

“There is a path of practice that leads to great nirvana (enlightenment).”

This path can be described and discussed in various ways. One of these is by means of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment:

1. renunciation
2. bodhichitta
3. wisdom of emptiness