



## The Four Noble Truths

The Buddha speaks of the Way to his disciples at Deer Park in his first sermon.

“There are four truths:

- I) The existence of *Dukkha* (i.e. Suffering - Struggle - Sorrow)
- II) The cause of *Dukkha* (ignorance, attachment, repulsion)
- III) The Cessation of *Dukkha* (enlightenment, *Nirvana*, *Satori*)
- IV) The Path that leads to the cessation of *Dukkha*..

Disciples, I call these the Four Noble Truths. The first is the existence of suffering. Birth, old age, sickness, death are suffering. Sadness, anger, jealousy, worry, anxiety, fear, and despair are suffering. Separation from loved ones is suffering. Association with those you hate is suffering. Desire, attachment, and clinging to the five aggregates [matter, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness] are suffering.

Disciples, the second truth is the cause of suffering. Because of ignorance, people cannot see the truth about life [everything is in flux, nothing is fixed, the ocean of birth and death, the wheel of becoming, *samsara*], and they become caught in the flames of desire, anger, jealousy, grief, worry, fear, and despair.

Disciples, the third truth is the cessation of suffering. Understanding the truth of life [communion with Nature on all levels, i.e. enlightenment] brings about the cessation of every grief and sorrow and gives rise to peace and joy.

Disciples, the fourth truth is the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. It is the Noble Eight fold Path. There are two extremes that a person on the path should avoid. One is to plunge oneself into sensual pleasures of excess, and the other is to practice to excess austerities which deprive the body of its needs. Both of these extremes lead to failure. The path I have discovered is the Middle Way, which avoids both extremes and has the capacity to lead one to understanding liberation and peace. It is the Noble Eight fold Path of:

- 1) Right Understanding (see where you are, have a good map)
- 2) Right Thought (good attitude, purpose, aspiration to be whole)
- 3) Right Speech (telling the truth, no gossip or wasted words)
- 4) Right Action (compassion, passionately doing what needs doing)
- 5) Right Livelihood (serving others, forwarding community)
- 6) Right Effort (serenity vs. anxiety)
- 7) Right Mindfulness (awareness, clarity)
- 8) Right Contemplation (dedicated focused meditation)

Disciples, why do I call this path the Right Path? I call it the Right Path because it does not avoid or deny suffering but allows for a direct confrontation with suffering as the means to transform it. The Noble Eightfold Path is the path of living in awareness. Mindfulness is the foundation. By practicing mindfulness, you can develop skills of contemplation which enable you to attain Understanding. Thanks to right contemplation you realize right awareness, thoughts, speech, action, livelihood, and effort. The Understanding which develops through direct experience of Dharma [dynamic Truth] can liberate you from every shackle of suffering and give birth to true peace and joy. I will guide you along this path of realization.”