

The Basic Teachings of the Buddha

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Abstract : This article discusses the Four Noble Truths, the foundational teachings of Buddhism, and their significance to Buddhist philosophy. The Four Noble Truths 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 Leading to the End of Suffering. The first truth, the Noble Truth of Suffering, explains that suffering or dukkha is an inherent part of existence, including emotional, physical, and existential forms of suffering, including the Five Aggregates, which refer to the five components that make up a sentient being's experience of existence, as they are all conditioned, interdependent, subject to the Three Characteristics of Existence: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and emptiness. The second truth, the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering, states that craving or attachment to the sensory experiences of the Five Aggregates leads to suffering and identifies three types of craving: craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence. Through the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), the Buddha graphically shows how the entire process of suffering arises and ceases. The third truth, the Noble Truth of the End of Suffering, asserts that there is a way to end suffering and attain a state of liberation called Nibbāna that marks the end of the cycle of birth and death by removing that very craving towards the sensory experiences by cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path. The fourth truth, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the End of Suffering, describes the Noble Eightfold Path, a set of guidelines to develop insight and wisdom to overcome craving and attachment and attain liberation from suffering. The article emphasizes that the Four Noble Truths are universal, applicable to all people regardless of culture, background, or beliefs, and form the foundation of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Keywords : four noble truths, impermanence, suffering, not-self-ness, interconnectedness, emptiness, morality, concentration, wisdom, nirvana, happiness

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