

Nagarjuna. The four Noble Truths.

(Translated by Chr. Lindtner)

These are the four Noble Truths, O monks! What are the four? The Noble Truth of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Truth of the method leading to the cessation of suffering.

What is the **Noble Truth of suffering**? Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering. Separation from what is dear is suffering, contact with what is not dear is suffering, not to get whatever one wants is suffering. In short, suffering is these five skandhas (1) of appropriation. In order fully to understand this one must develop the noble Eightfold Path.

What is the **Noble Truth of the origin of suffering**? Desire leading to rebirth, accompanied by taking delight, passion, and indulging in pleasure here and there. In order to abandon it one must develop the noble Eightfold Path.

What is the **Noble Truth of the extinction of suffering**? It is the complete abandonment, relinquishing, ejection, destruction, indifference to, cessation, stopping, and extinction of this desire leading to rebirth, accompanied by taking delight and by passion, and by indulging in pleasure here and there. In order to realize this one must develop the noble Eightfold Path.

What is the **Noble Truth of the method leading to the cessation of suffering** ? The noble Eightfold Path: **right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.** This must also be developed.

Notes:

(1) Five skandhas or aggregates

The First Skandha: Form (*Rupa*)

Rupa is form or matter; something material that can be sensed. In early Buddhist literature, *rupa* includes the Four Great Elements (solidity, fluidity, heat, and motion) and their derivatives.

These derivatives are the first five faculties listed above (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) and the first five corresponding objects (visible form, sound, odor, taste, tangible things).

Another way to understand *rupa* is to think of it as something that resists the probing of the senses. For example, an object has form if it blocks your vision --

you can't see what's on the other side of it -- or if it blocks your hand from occupying its space.

The Second Skandha: Sensation (*Vedana*)

Vedana is a physical or mental sensation that we experience through contact of the six faculties with the external world. In other words, it is the sensation experienced through the contact of eye with visible form, ear with sound, nose with odor, tongue with taste, body with tangible things, [mind \(*manas*\) with ideas or thoughts](#).

It is particularly important to understand that *manas* -- mind or intellect -- is a sense organ or faculty, just like an eye or an ear. We tend to think that mind is something like a spirit or soul, but that concept is very out of place in Buddhism.

Because vedana is the experience of pleasure or pain, it conditions craving, either to acquire something pleasurable or avoid something painful.

The Third Skandha: Perception (*Samjna*, or in Pali, *Sanna*)

Samjna is the faculty that recognizes. Most of what we call thinking fits into the aggregate of samjna.

The word "samjna" means "knowledge that puts together." It is the capacity to conceptualize and recognize things by associating them with other things. For example, we recognize shoes as shoes because we associate them with our previous experience with shoes.

When we see something for the first time, we invariably flip through our mental index cards to find categories we can associate with the new object. It's a "some kind of tool with a red handle," for example, putting the new thing in the categories "tool" and "red."

Or, we might associate an object with its context. We recognize an apparatus as an exercise machine because we see it at the gym.

The Fourth Skandha: Mental Formation (*Samskara*, or in Pali, *Sankhara*)

All volitional actions, good and bad, are included in the aggregate of mental formations, or [samskara](#). How are actions "mental" formations?

Remember the first lines of the [Dhammapada \(Acharya Buddharakkhita translation\)](#):

Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.

The aggregate of mental formations is associated with [karma](#), because volitional acts create karma. Samskara also contains latent karma that conditions our attitudes and predilections. Biases and prejudices belong to this skandha, as do interests and attractions.

The Fifth Skandha: Consciousness (*Vijnana*, or in Pali, *Vinnana*)

[Vijnana is a reaction](#) that has one of the six faculties as its basis and one of the six corresponding phenomena as its object.

For example, aural consciousness -- hearing -- has the ear as its basis and a sound as its object. Mental consciousness has the mind (*manas*) as its basis and an idea or thought as its object.

It is important to understand that this awareness or consciousness depends on the other skandhas and does not exist independently from them. It is an awareness but not a recognition, as recognition is a function of the third skandha.

This awareness is not sensation, which is the second skandha.

For most of us, this is a different way to think about "consciousness."

Following is a translation into Vietnamese

Đây là bốn Chân lý cao quý. Nay chư tăng! Những gì là bốn? Các Chân lý cao quý về khổ, về nguồn gốc của khổ, về sự chấm dứt của khổ, và Chân lý cao quý về phương pháp dẫn đến sự chấm dứt của khổ. Chân lý cao quý về khổ là gì? Sinh là khổ, già là khổ, bệnh là khổ, chết là khổ. Sự cách biệt với cái gì yêu quý là khổ, sự tiếp xúc với cái gì không yêu quý là khổ, không có được bất kỳ cái gì cá nhân muốn là khổ. Nói vắn tắt, khổ là năm uẩn này chấp thủ thành sở hữu (upadanaskandhas dukkham; ngũ thủ uẩn khổ). Đề lý hội thông hiểu trọn vẹn điều này cá nhân phải tăng trưởng Con đường tám phương diện cao quý.

Chân lý cao quý về khổ là gì? Dục tham (trsnā; desire) dẫn đến tái sinh, nhận lấy hoan hỷ, phiền não đồng hành, và tỏ ra quá dễ dãi với lạc thú nơi đây, nơi kia. Để buông bỏ nó, cá nhân phải tăng trưởng Con đường tám phương diện cao quý.

Chân lý cao quý về sự biến mất hoàn toàn của khổ là gì? Nó là sự hoàn toàn buông bỏ, sự từ bỏ, sự đẩy lui, sự phá huỷ, sự lãnh đạm, sự chấm dứt, sự chặn đứng, sự biến mất hoàn toàn của dục tham này dẫn đến tái sinh, nhận lấy hoan hỷ, phiền não đồng hành, và bởi sự tỏ ra quá dễ dãi với lạc thú nơi đây, nơi kia. Để thật chứng điều này, cá nhân phải tăng trưởng Con đường tám phương diện cao quý.

Chân lý cao quý về phương pháp dẫn đến sự chấm dứt khổ là gì? Con đường tám phương diện cao quý: tri kiến chân chính, giải quyết chân chính, ngôn ngữ chân chính, hành xử chân chính, sinh sống chân chính, cố gắng chân chính, niệm niệm chân chính, thiền định chân chính. Điều này phải được tăng trưởng.