

## True suffering

### THE 1<sup>st</sup> TRUTH: SUFFERING FOR THE BUDDHA

As Buddhist teachers and practitioners, we are here to suffer for the 3 jewels, if it comes to that. It is painful to see others misunderstand, misuse or misquote the Dharma. It is painful to see how matured men using angry and unfriendly words on a global forum such as Facebook with those they have not even known or met. They have yet to mature. It is painful when we ourselves have so much to learn about ourselves in the suttas.

Yet, suffering is about learning and growing. Suffering means seeing that we are not yet perfect, or even good enough. But notice how the flimsy grass sprouts through hard concrete or tarmac. Ignorance is thick and dark, but with zeal and love we penetrate it. Our suffering in the Dharma is not a physical one, but more of a mental and spiritual agony.

We are chrysalids waiting to burst out of our cocoon of lust, hate and delusion. We have to be fully grown before we can break out into the light of true reality. If anyone tries to cut our cocoon or break it, then, we emerge deformed, unable to fly; we're not even a butterfly.

We can become diamonds formed by the pressure, fire and darkness that hold others captive. When we know what it is like to lose more than things: to lose our dignity, being violated and not even know it or to painfully feel it – we know how others suffer, too.

Suffering is our teacher, just as it is the Buddha's true teacher. Through our sufferings, we realize how much gratitude we owe the Buddha, and what immeasurable active kindness we owe others despite our weakness and ignorance. We just need to keep on learning and bearing it. We must suffer – shed our inhumanity – to reach buddhahood within us.

### THE 2<sup>nd</sup> TRUTH: CRAVING

We suffer because we have craving, our lust for the self and more. This is our desire to grow – but not knowing how. So, we look for answers outside of ourself – through our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Just as we look but see not our eyes, or listen but hear not the nature of sound, or smell but not know it is mind-made and impermanent – we feverishly try to collect what we see as pleasant and push away what we see as unpleasant.

We have 6 senses which have sensed (in the past), will sense (in the future) and is sensing (in the present). That's 18 things we have to deal with every moment. Then, we have various views about what we experience, and form grand theories, and want others to know about them. But we keep getting them wrong, and keep changing our minds ever since we learned to form ideas. Yet, we never notice this. Every time we defend our notions, we think we are right, and everyone else wrong. We are lost for our very words, unsound and furious.

### THE 3rd TRUTH: THE PATH

The Buddha, in his wisdom and compassion, has pointed the path out of suffering to us. Over time, people take this safe, straight path for granted. They did not keep it clear and clean. It became overgrown and hidden. Some of us, firm with faith, driven by diligence, can see the golden yellow cobbles of the path, as it were. We calmly and joyfully follow them through the jungle, where the path is narrow, just enough for one, the only way for us.

We try to tell others about the path, but they laugh at us, mock us as being “inferior” travelers. They have built beautiful new winding highways with high risers, great vehicles, large noisy parties of travelers, with always something fun and lucrative to do or sell along the way. It’s such fun, they are in no hurry.

In fact, more and more of them are camping themselves along their path, even on the path itself. In the end, they do not even see the path any more. The Path is the Journey, they proclaim Zen-like: Where we are There we are. So, there they remain, each a nail in samsara’s beautiful golden coffin, lined by coffers.

### THE 4<sup>th</sup> TRUTH: NIRVANA

As we move through the bushes and thickets, we are cut by brambles and knock into branches, fall over creepers and stumps. Insects sting us, vermin run over us, dangerous reptiles lurk nearby, and the weather often seems uncertain. Fortunately, there are beautiful trees with clearings nearby. There we take refuge, where the Buddha used to sit radiant in his awakening.

Even as we move on, we can feel the ground rising, and the air more fresh and cool, and the greenery and foliage opening up, letting in the warm bright sunlight into the cool forest. It’s such a joy to walk in the soft sun on the cool path. And in the distance, resting in the mountain fast, we catch a glimpse of the walls, turrets, roofs and trees of an ancient city of the ancients. We know we are on the right track. It’s just a matter of time before we’re home.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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