

### In Buddha's Footsteps

After his enlightenment, the Buddha travelled to Sarnath to find the five monks he had previously practised with. The Buddha's first sermon, known as the "Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion," was delivered at the Deer Park in Sarnath (near Varanasi, India) to the five ascetics. It established the core principles of Buddhism, focusing on the Middle Way, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path. He advised against the two extremes of self-indulgence (sense-pleasures) and self-mortification (strict asceticism), proposing the Middle Way.

The Four Noble Truths are the foundation of all Buddhist traditions, serving as the core diagnosis and cure for human suffering. "The Four Noble Truths are the foundational teachings of Buddhism, outlining the nature of suffering (Dukkha), its cause, its cessation, and the path to liberation. They present a medical model—diagnosing the human condition and providing a prescription for enlightenment—focused on escaping the cycle of dissatisfaction. The Four Noble Truths:

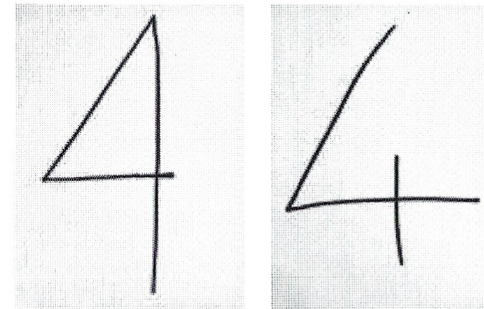
1. The Truth of Suffering (Dukkha): Life inherently involves suffering, dissatisfaction, or unease, including physical/mental pain, change, and general anxiety.
2. The Cause of Suffering (Samudāya): Suffering is rooted in craving, desire, or attachment, driven by ignorance and fundamental misunderstanding of reality.
3. The Cessation of Suffering (Nirodha): There is a cure for suffering; it is possible to end suffering by letting go of craving and attachment, achieving Nirvana.
4. The Path to the End of Suffering (Magga): The way to end suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which includes Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration."

In Buddhism, the five senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—along with the mind (often called the sixth sense), are considered the primary gateway to cravings and the resulting suffering. The "six gateways" or "six sense doors" are the channels through which we experience the world and, if unguarded, through which mental defilements like craving, anger, and delusion enter. So, to abandon the cause of suffering, all six gateways must be guarded; thus, this is the essence of a Buddhist practice. The cause of suffering is often described as ignorance. This refers to our ignorance of Buddha's teachings. In simple terms, I often replace the word "ignorance" with

"stupidity". We may desire not to be overweight but eat many cakes, or we may wish for stable finances yet lose our money through gambling. Suffering is not something that has been handed down to us as a punishment; it is merely the result of our past actions. Unless we let go of our stupidity, our actions (karma) will lead to our future suffering. Personally, I do not see suffering as a negative. Indeed, I rejoice in the fact that previous negative actions are now purified by the suffering.

While ultimately nirvana refers to a state of perfect peace and enlightenment, we can walk a path towards this by having a mind of inner peace. With such a mind, whether a happy or sad event happens to us, our mind remains the same. Although all the Four Noble Truths are of equal importance, I believe that the cessation of suffering – a mind of inner peace – is essential to understand the first two noble truths and to engage appropriately in "the path to the end of suffering".

It could be said that the first two Noble Truths are understanding the mind, while the last two Noble Truths are training of the mind. In 1987, I was invited to work on the decorating of a very nice property in Belgravia, London. As we required a van for the works, I drove down to London overnight from



Yorkshire. Filling up with petrol on the way, I paid with a cheque. I later learnt that as I had written the 40 pence part of the cheque with a closed top 4, 90 pence were deducted from my account. Such was the skill of my writing! After this, I focused on using the open top style 4 every time. After a while, the open top 4 was

natural to me without any thought. Although this was three years before I knew anything about Buddhism, I consider it to be my first "training of the mind".

Training your mind may even save you 50p!

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**The Water Buffalo**