1. Welcome to Red Clay Sangha
2. Introduce Matthew
3. Introduce Elizabeth and Gareth
4. Group Names
5. Agenda for Day
6. Bathrooms
7. Approach
   1. Readings with Matthew Commentary
   2. Volunteers or turns around room reading selections
   3. Open Discussion
8. Four Noble Truths
   1. Suffering
   2. Origin
   3. Cessation
   4. Path
9. Holding Ideas of Difference

**Red Clay Sangha Study Session**

**Four Noble Truths**

**July 27, 2019**

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| Agenda | |
| 10:00 AM | Introduction |
| 10:10 AM | Reading Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion Sutta |
| 10:25 AM | Meditation |
| 10:45 AM | Readings on the Name "Noble Truths" and Views (Ditthi) |
| 11:00 AM | Discussion |
| 11:15 AM | Break |
| 11:25 AM | Readings on First and Second Truths |
| 11:40 AM | Discussion |
| 12:10 PM | Readings on Third and Fourth Truths |
| 12:30 PM | Lunch |
| 1:00 PM | Meditation |
| 1:20 PM | Discussion |
| 1:50 PM | Closing |

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**Saṃyutta Nikāya 56**

*Reading 1*

**Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta:** **Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion**

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Baraṇasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus:

“Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathagata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

“And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision … which leads to Nibbāna? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view … right concentration.

“‘This is the noble truth of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood’: thus, …

“‘This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the origin of suffering is to be abandoned’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned’: thus, …

“‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is to be realized’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been realized’: thus, …

“‘This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed’: thus, …

“‘This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“So long, bhikkhus, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed existence.’”

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the bhikkhus of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One’s statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondañña the dust-free, stainless vision of the Dhamma: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

(Bodhi, Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma, 2019)

**Why Are They Called “Noble Truths?”**

*The four noble truths appear throughout the teachings of the Buddha in the Tripitaka, the Pali canon. Within the Mahayana traditions, the four noble truths are more typically taught through later canonical works, rather than from the Tripitaka sutta/sutras in various languages. Nevertheless, these four truths provide a common framework across most Buddhist traditions.*

*Within the Pali suttas and elsewhere, the four truths are referred to as the Four Noble Truths, because of the nature of their teachings and the results of practitioners who are able to fully penetrate them.*

The four noble truths are called noble truths because they are of Aryas or Superior Beings. This is because they are directly realized only by Aryas, that is, persons with superior attainments. (Gyatso, 1994)

*Reading 2*

The word "noble," or ariya, is used by the Buddha to designate a particular type of person, the type of person which it is the aim of his teaching to create. In the discourses the Buddha classifies human beings into two broad categories. On one side there are the puthujjanas, the worldlings, those belonging to the multitude, whose eyes are still covered with the dust of defilements and delusion. On the other side there are the ariyans, the noble ones, the spiritual elite, who obtain this status not from birth, social station or ecclesiastical authority but from their inward nobility of character. These two general types are not separated from each other by an impassable chasm, each confined to a tightly sealed compartment. A series of gradations can be discerned rising up from the darkest level of the blind worldling trapped in the dungeon of egotism and self-assertion, through the stage of the virtuous worldling in whom the seeds of wisdom are beginning to sprout, and further through the intermediate stages of noble disciples to the perfected individual at the apex of the entire scale of human development. This is the Arahant, the liberated one, who has absorbed the purifying vision of truth so deeply that all his defilements have been extinguished, and with them, all liability to suffering. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

*Reading 3*

*They are called “truths” because they describe inherent aspects of experienced reality.*

*Reading 4*

…firstly, what is the ‘meaning of truth’ (saccattha)? It is that which, for those who examine it with the eye of understanding, is not misleading like an illusion, deceptive like a mirage, or undiscoverable like the self of the sectarians, but is rather the domain of noble knowledge as the real unmisleading actual state with its aspects of affliction, production, quiet, and outlet. It is this real unmisleading actualness that should be understood as the “meaning of truth” just as [heat is] the characteristic of fire, and just as [it is] in the nature of the world [that things are subject to birth, ageing and death], according as it is said, “Bhikkhus, this suffering is real, not unreal, not otherwise” (S V 430), and so on, in detail. (Buddhaghosa, 1999, p. 502)

**The Four Noble Truths as Views**

*The four noble truths simultaneously operate in two important ways in the Pali literature. First, the four noble truths also function as a representation of the overall teachings of the Buddha. In other words, the four noble truths are treated as a symbol of the Dharma as a whole.*

When the four noble truths appear in the stories of the Buddha’s enlightenment they function differently that they do elsewhere in the canon. They serve both as a symbol of the Buddha’s awakening and as the means for followers of the Buddha to cultivate the same religious experience. To identify the symbolic function of the four noble truths in the canon is to elicit the range of associations that the Theravada canon establishes for the four noble truth; it is not to claim that the four noble truths are a symbol that evokes a dimension of human experience that can only be approached through symbols. The pattern and consistency of reference to the four noble truth in those stories display a rightly organized conception of how the Buddha reached enlightenment, how he taught, how his followers became enlightened, and how the path to that enlightenment was configured. This pattern establishes a set of associated events that are evoked by the four noble truths when they function as a symbol. (Anderson, 1999)

*Reading 5*

*Second, and most often, the four noble truths are a set of views. The Pali term for views,* ***Ditthi****, is sometimes left untranslated, because of the many aspects of the word that do not easily translate into a perfect English equivalent.*

*As views, the four noble truths serve on one level as propositions to be learned. However, understanding the four noble truths requires a deeper level of insight than a merely propositional or intellectual view. As this type of existential understanding grows deeper within a practitioner, the beneficial effects of the four noble truths are realized.*

*In the Pali canon, view (ditthi) includes this living enactment of a belief or understanding, meaning that the propositional and full, lived realization of the four noble truths are inseparable aspects and operate together to liberate the practitioner.*

There are consistent definitions of right view in the commentaries and in the canonical writings. First, it is right seeing – seeing “just as it is.” Second, right view is consistently defined in terms of insight and wisdom with other teachings of the Buddha, including the four noble truths. Here, right view involves different types of activities – giving, offerings, sacrifice, and the practice of wisdom and the attainment of release. Third, right view is linked explicitly to nibbana, the path, and to the entry of the path as a steam-winner [someone determined to be liberated]. Buddhaghosa’s explanation that the practice of wisdom and insight involve both bodily and mental effort also indicates that right view is not solely an intellectual exercise. His commentary that one should know both the meaning and action illustrates the point that right view involves more than the learning of propositions. (Anderson, 1999, pp. 43-44)

*Reading 6*

As propositions, the four noble truths must be learned as one learns other teachings of the Buddha. There is no immediate cultivation of the dhamma eye or instantaneous path entry [i.e. achievement of liberation] upon hearing the four noble truths. In all passages [in the abhidhamma], the point for the practitioner is to learn how the four noble truths intersect with other teachings…In contrast to the function of the four noble truths as a symbol of the Buddha’s enlightenment and the subsequent awakening of all sentient being, when the four noble truths are regarded as propositions, they are limited in their associations and in the way they are analyzed. In short, in the analytic networks of the Tipitika [Pali Buddhist scriptures], the four noble truths are no more or less important than any other relevant teaching of the Buddha. As propositions of doctrine, the four truths are learned with effort and labor, and the path is gained in various ways. (Anderson, 1999, pp. 127-128)

*Reading 7*

*Reading 8*

Right view is dynamic by its vary nature, and, above all, it is considered to be fundamentally true. One should not grasp or hold right view, the canon explains, but one should seek to understand it thoroughly. (Anderson, 1999, p. 4)

*As the truths are more deeply, then fully, understood, their liberating effect is experienced.*

*Reading 9*

[W]ith the penetration of the truths we leap across the gulf that separates us from the ranks of the noble ones. The eye of Dhamma has been opened, the vision of truth stands revealed, and though the decisive victory has not yet been won, the path to the final goal lies at our feet and the supreme security from bondage hovers on the horizon. One who has comprehended the truths has changed lineage, crossed over from the domain of the worldlings to the domain of the noble ones. Such a disciple is incapable of regression to the ranks of the worldling, incapable of losing the vision of truth that has flashed before his inner eye. Progress towards the final goal, the complete eradication of ignorance and craving, may be slow or rapid; it may occur easily or result from an uphill battle. But however long it may take, with whatever degree of facility one may advance, one thing is certain: such a disciple who has seen with immaculate clarity the Four Noble Truths can never slide backwards, can never lose the status of a noble one, and is bound to reach the final fruit of Arahantship in a maximum of seven lives. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

**The Truth of Suffering**

*The Mahasatipatthana Sutta provides one of the most robust expositions of the four noble truths in the Pali suttas, yet similar patterns and language appear in many suttas. It becomes a common refrain as the culmination of other teachings developed in other suttas.*

**Digha Nikaya 22**

*Reading 10*

**Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta: The Longer Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation (Selection)**

And what is the noble truth of suffering?

Rebirth is suffering; old age is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress are suffering; association with the disliked is suffering; separation from the liked is suffering; not getting what you wish for is suffering. In brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering.

And what is rebirth? The rebirth, inception, conception, reincarnation, manifestation of the sets of phenomena, and acquisition of the sense fields of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called rebirth.

And what is old age? The old age, decrepitude, broken teeth, grey hair, wrinkly skin, diminished vitality, and failing faculties of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called old age.

And what is death? The passing away, perishing, disintegration, demise, mortality, death, decease, breaking up of the aggregates, laying to rest of the corpse, and cutting off of the life faculty of the various sentient beings in the various orders of sentient beings. This is called death.

And what is sorrow? The sorrow, sorrowing, state of sorrow, inner sorrow, inner deep sorrow in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering. This is called sorrow.

And what is lamentation? The wail, lament, wailing, lamenting, state of wailing and lamentation in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering.This is called lamentation.

And what is pain? Physical pain, physical displeasure, the painful, unpleasant feeling that’s born from physical contact. This is called pain.

And what is sadness? Mental pain, mental displeasure, the painful, unpleasant feeling that’s born from mental contact. This is called sadness.

And what is distress? The stress, distress, state of stress and distress in someone who has undergone misfortune, who has experienced suffering. This is called distress.

And what is meant by ‘association with the disliked is suffering’? There are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts that are unlikable, undesirable, and disagreeable. And there are those who want to harm, injure, disturb, and threaten you. The coming together with these, the joining, inclusion, mixing with them: this is what is meant by ‘association with the disliked is suffering’.

And what is meant by ‘separation from the liked is suffering’? There are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts that are likable, desirable, and agreeable. And there are those who want to benefit, help, comfort, and protect you. The division from these, the disconnection, segregation, and parting from them: this is what is meant by ‘separation from the liked is suffering’.

And what is meant by ‘not getting what you wish for is suffering’? In sentient beings who are liable to be reborn, such a wish arises: ‘Oh, if only we were not liable to be reborn! If only rebirth would not come to us!’ But you can’t get that by wishing. This is what is meant by ‘not getting what you wish for is suffering.’ In sentient beings who are liable to grow old … fall ill … die … experience sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress, such a wish arises: ‘Oh, if only we were not liable to experience sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress! If only sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress would not come to us!’ But you can’t get that by wishing. This is what is meant by ‘not getting what you wish for is suffering.’

And what is meant by ‘in brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering’? They are the grasping aggregates that consist of form, feeling, perception, choices, and consciousness. This is what is meant by ‘in brief, the five grasping aggregates are suffering’.

(Sujato, 2019)

*The Buddha provides a list of sufferings to make the point of the universality and unavoidableness of suffering in existence.*

It is impossible to tell [all] without remainder, showing each kind of suffering, even [by going on doing so] for many aeons, so the Blessed One said “In short the five aggregates [as objects] of clinging are suffering” in order to show in short how all that suffering is present in any of the five aggregates [as objects] or clinging in the same way that the taste of the water in the whole ocean is to be found in a single drop of its water. (Buddhaghosa, 1999, p. 513)

*Reading 11*

The truth of suffering is given first since it is easy to understand because of its grossness and because it is common to all living beings…Or alternatively, he announced the truth of suffering first to instill a sense of urgency into living beings caught up in the enjoyment of the pleasure of becoming… (Buddhaghosa, 1999, pp. 503-504)

*Reading 12*

*Suffering is often categorized into levels, based on the immediate nature of the suffering.*

*Reading 13*

Suffering covers a vast spectrum of our experience, and the subtler it is, the harder it is to see it. In his teaching on the first noble truth, the Buddha taught three main levels of suffering that sentient being experience: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and pervasive suffering…

Even animals understand the suffering of suffering. It is unpleasant and explicitly undesireable…The physical and mental pain we experience on this first level of suffering is easy to recognize and relatively easy to find a solution for. We do not have to adopt a spiritual practice to be free from it; it can be avoided through mundane methods with mundane understanding.

The second level of suffering is the suffering of change. Because this level of suffering is much more subtle and not apparent without some analysis, it is more difficult to recognize. Without investigation, objects at this level actually appear to be causes of happiness, because they bring some temporary pleasure…However, when time passes and circumstances change, the same desireable, handsome, beautiful object turns into something undesirable.

The third level of suffering is pervasive suffering…This is the level of suffering that the Buddha is primarily referring to when he says that suffering should be understood. The Buddha concludes his description of the first noble truth with “The five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.” Since our existence is nothing more than these five aggregates – our body and mental states – this indicates how truly integrated suffering is with our very being. Pervasive means that this suffering pervades our entire existence. (Tsering, 2005, pp. 34-36)

*Ultimately, the first noble truth shows us the fundamental problem of suffering and asks us to fully understand the nature of that pervasive suffering.*

The first noble truth, the truth of suffering, is to be fully understood: the task it assigns us is that of full understanding. A hallmark of the noble ones is that they do not flow along thoughtlessly with the stream of life, but endeavor to comprehend existence from within, as honestly and thoroughly as possible. For us, too, it is necessary to reflect upon the nature of our life. We must attempt to fathom the deep significance of an existence bounded on one side by birth and on the other by death, and subject in between to all the types of suffering detailed by the Buddha in his discourses. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

*Reading 14*

**The Truth of the Origin of Suffering**

*Reading 15*

**Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Cont.)**

And what is the noble truth of the origin of suffering?

It’s the craving that leads to future rebirth, mixed up with relishing and greed, looking for enjoyment in various different realms. That is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for continued existence, and craving to end existence.

But where does that craving arise and where does it settle? Whatever in the world seems nice and pleasant, it is there that craving arises and settles.

And what in the world seems nice and pleasant? The eye in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles. The ear … nose … tongue … body …mind in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Sights … sounds … smells … tastes … touches … thoughts in the world seem nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Eye consciousness … ear consciousness … nose consciousness … tongue consciousness …body consciousness … mind consciousness in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Eye contact … ear contact … nose contact … tongue contact … body contact … mind contact in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Feeling born of eye contact …  ear contact …  nose contact … tongue contact …  body contact … feeling born of mind contact in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Perception of sights … sounds …  smells …  tastes … touches … perception of thoughts in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Intention regarding sights … sounds … smells …tastes … touches … intention regarding thoughts in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Craving for sights … sounds … smells … tastes … touches … craving for thoughts in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Thoughts about sights … sounds … smells … tastes … touches … thoughts about thoughts in the world seem nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

Considerations regarding sights … sounds … smells … tastes … touches …considerations regarding thoughts in the world seem nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving arises and settles.

This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering.

(Sujato, 2019)

*The second noble truth points towards the fundamental cause of all suffering, which is our craving and thus attachment. Beyond merely understanding the cause as craving, as a view (ditthi), the second noble truth requires that practitioners fully embrace the meaning and implications of what it means that our suffering ultimately stims from our own craving.*

*Reading 16*

The first two truths are quite obvious because they are always present in us. They are not very profound or obscure. However, it is extremely difficult to understand that they are simply distressing or unsatisfactory and that craving is their origin. This is not obvious at all. The difficulty in understanding obvious phenomena lies in the fact that we are not mindful of them or do not pay attention to them. As the Burmese saying goes: “We cannot see even a cave without attention.” So if we are mindful and pay attention to phenomena, we are bound to understand them as they really are through insight knowledge. Later at the peak of insight, with path knowledge, this understanding will become firm and irreversible. (Sayadaw, 2016, p. 238)

*To move past the mere intellectual understanding, we meditate on the impermanent nature of objects and all existence to fully appreciate the truth that craving causes suffering,*

Noting each mental and physical phenomenon that arises, one understands craving and desire when one is mindful of them. This is an empirical understanding of craving in the present moment. One cannot empirically know one’s past craving; one can only know it inferentially by comparing it to one’s present craving. The craving that one can empirically know in the present and past craving only differ in terms of being present or past, they do not differ in terms of their characteristic. One can even say that they are the same because they manifest in the continuum of the same individual. It is like saying that we see a mountain or the sea even though we actually only see a small part of either. If one is aware of one’s present craving, one can understand the truth of craving as the cause of suffering. In any event one can also be inferentially aware of past craving, beginning when one’s knowledge that discerns mental and physical phenomena matures…

*Reading 17*

Thus one uses analytical knowledge (cintāmaya) and theoretical knowledge (sutamaya) based on empirical knowledge (bhāvanāmaya) to realize that craving is the origin of this life. One realizes that—driven by craving and sense desire—one performed wholesome and unwholesome deeds in past lives, just as one does in the present life. That past kamma based on craving then generated this present life, as explained in the commentarial passage:

“It gives rise to this very suffering (mental and physical phenomena), and so ‘Craving in previous lives is the origin of this present suffering.’”

This is an inferential understanding of the origin of this present life’s suffering. Note that the long explanation given here is only for the sake of general knowledge. In practice, of course, it will not take a meditator very long to understand. (Sayadaw, 2016, pp. 237-238)

*Through a full understanding that craving causes suffering, we are led to abandon this craving attachment, since we see the ultimate harm it inflicts on us.*

The second noble truth, of the origin or cause of suffering, implies the task of abandonment. A noble one is such because he has initiated the process of eliminating the defilements at the root of suffering, and we too, if we aspire to reach the plane of the noble ones, must be prepared to withstand the seductive lure of the defilements. While the eradication of craving can come only with the supramundane realizations, even in the mundane course of our daily life we can learn to restrain the coarser manifestation of defilements, and by keen self-observation can gradually loosen their grip upon our hearts. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

*Reading 18*

**The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering**

*Reading 19*

**Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Cont.)**

And what is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering?

It’s the fading away and cessation of that very same craving with nothing left over; giving it away, letting it go, releasing it, and not adhering to it.

Whatever in the world seems nice and pleasant, it is there that craving is given up and ceases.

And what in the world seems nice and pleasant? The eye in the world seems nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving is given up and ceases. …

Considerations regarding thoughts in the world seem nice and pleasant, and it is there that craving is given up and ceases.

This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

(Sujato, 2019)

*The truth of cessation represents the alternative to the cycle of never-ending craving and suffering. The third truth shows that a true alternative to a life of craving does exist and can be pursued.*

The third noble truth, the cessation of suffering, implies the task of realization. Although Nibbana, the extinction of suffering, can only be personally realized by the noble ones, the confidence we place in the Dhamma as our guideline to life shows us what we should select as our final aspiration, as our ultimate ground of value. Once we have grasped the fact that all conditioned things in the world, being impermanent and insubstantial, can never give us total satisfaction, we can then lift our aim to the unconditioned element, Nibbana the Deathless, and make that aspiration the pole around which we order our everyday choices and concerns. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

*Reading 20*

The cessation of suffering comes about with the cessation of its origin. For it is with the cessation of its origin that suffering ceases, not otherwise… For the Perfect Ones behave like lions. When they make suffering cease and when they teach the cessation of suffering, they deal with the cause, not the fruit. (Buddhaghosa, 1999, p. 513)

*Reading 21*

It is the path that is called *fading away*; for “with the fading away [of greed] he is liberated” (M.i,139) is said. *Fading away* and *cessation* is cessation through fading away. *Remainerless fading away* *and* *cessation* is cessation through fading away that is remainderless because of eradication of inherent tendencies…But as to meaning, all of them are synonyms for nibbana. For in the ultimate sense it is nibbana that is called “the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.” But because craving fades away and ceases on coming to that, it is therefore called “fading way” and “cessation.” And because there come to be the giving up, etc., of that [craving] on coming to that [nibbana], and since there is not even one kind of reliance here [to be depended upon] from among the reliances consisting in the cords of sense desires, etc., it is therefore called *giving it up, relinquishing it, letting it go, not relying on it.* It has peace as it characteristic. (Buddhaghosa, 1999, p. 514)

*Reading 22*

*Unlike the first and second noble truths, suffering and its origin, we do not have our direct experience to fully illuminate this. As living beings, we have experienced both suffering and craving. However, unless we are fully liberated, we not seen a life free of craving and suffering (third truth), nor have mastered the method to achieve this liberation (fourth truth).*

*Reading 23*

As the commentary says, the last two truths, cessation and path, are extremely profound since they never happen to ordinary people—we cannot empirically understand and see them. As mentioned before, all that a beginning meditator needs to do with respect to these two truths is to incline the mind toward them, having heard that they are noble. It is not necessary to contemplate and think about them. However at the stage of insight knowledge of arising and passing away, a meditator may spontaneously start to reflect and understand that the five aggregates would not exist if there were no ignorance, craving, volition, nutriment, mental contact, or mental and physical phenomena. Beginning from the stage of insight knowledge of dissolution, a meditator may spontaneously start to reflect and understand that as long as mental and physical processes—such as seeing, hearing, touching, thinking, observing, and so on—exist, there will be no peace. Only when these processes no longer exist will there be peace. This is an intellectual understanding of cessation during insight practice. (Sayadaw, 2016, p. 239)

Among the Four Noble Truths, one should observe only the two in the round of existence (vaṭṭasacca)—suffering and the cause of suffering— for the development of insight. One can only intellectually appreciate and know the two truths beyond the round of existence (vivattasacca)— cessation of suffering and the path to cessation of suffering—so one must simply aspire to them. By doing so, awareness of these two truths is fulfilled. According to the commentary:

*Reading 24*

“Out of the four truths, the first two are in the round of existence (vaṭṭa), while the latter two are beyond the round of existence (vivaṭṭa). Among them, only the two truths in the round of existence become meditation subjects for a monk; he does not observe the two truths that are beyond the round of existence. Regarding the two truths in the round of existence, a monk should learn from a teacher, in brief, that the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering and that craving is its origin; or he should learn in detail that the five aggregates subject to clinging are such and such. A meditator does the work of insight by repeatedly reflecting on this.

“Regarding the other two truths, a monk simply hears or learns that the truth of the cessation of suffering is a dhamma to be wished for since it is a good dhamma; it is a dhamma to be liked because it is a noble dhamma; it is a dhamma that nurtures the heart and it is a dhamma to be cherished. The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering is a dhamma to be wished for, to be liked, and to be nurtured. Thusly he also does the work of insight. Then when he finally penetrates the Four Noble Truths at the moment of path knowledge, he thoroughly realizes them once and for all.

“One penetrates the truth of suffering by fully understanding it, penetrates the truth of the cause of suffering by abandoning it, penetrates the truth of the cessation of suffering by experiencing it, and penetrates the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering by developing it. One realizes the truth of suffering by fully understanding it, realizes the truth of the cause of suffering by abandoning it, realizes the truth of the cessation of suffering by experiencing it, and realizes the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering by developing it.

“Thus one initially understands the first two mundane truths by learning, listening, discussing, memorizing, and observing them. The truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering are only understood by hearing about them. Later, at the moment of path knowledge, one functionally accomplishes the three truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, and the path, and penetrates the truth of the cessation of suffering by taking it as one’s object.” (Sayadaw, 2016, pp. 232-233)

**Truth of the Path that Leads to the End of Suffering**

*The fourth noble truth encompasses the eightfold noble path, the overall method for liberation that the Buddha taught. In effect, the fourth truth answers HOW does someone fully realizes the other three truths as views (ditthi) in their life.*

To understand the Four Noble Truths means to fully understand suffering, to abandon craving, to experience cessation, and to develop the path. Thus one really only understands these truths when one abandons craving, experiences cessation, and develops the path. (Sayadaw, 2016, p. 240)

*Reading 25*

Finally, the fourth noble truth, the Noble Eightfold Path, assigns us the task of development. The noble ones have reached their status by developing the eightfold path, and while only the noble ones are assured of never deviating from the path, the Buddha's teaching gives us the meticulous instructions that we need to tread the path culminating in the plane of the noble ones. This is the path that gives birth to vision, that gives birth to knowledge, that leads to higher comprehension, enlightenment and Nibbana, the crowning attainment of nobility. (Bodhi, The Nobility of the Truths, 1992)

*Reading 26*

An ordinary person cannot definitively decide that all mental and physical phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self using scriptural knowledge or the power of reasoning. They can only accomplish this with wisdom developed through direct, personal experience. So ordinary people who rely on scriptural knowledge or the power of reasoning cannot overcome skeptical doubt. Often the more they analyze phenomena, the more confused they become. On the other hand noble ones who have attained full understanding by means of the path (maggapariñña) can definitively decide that all mental and physical phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. Unlike ordinary people they do not take mental and physical phenomena to be permanent, satisfactory, and personal, and so cannot become attached to these phenomena. The more they contemplate phenomena, the clearer their understanding of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self becomes (Sayadaw, 2016, p. 243)

*Reading 27*

*Full understanding of the four noble truths requires the overall lifestyle and practice that the noble eightfold path outlines. At a future study session, we will review the various components of the eightfold path and their meaning. For now, we will look at the structure. The parts, or factors, of the eightfold path are often grouped into three sections.*

*The noble eightfold path is broken up according to what the parts focus on.*

*Reading 28*

Important to both Mahayana and Theravada are the three trainings. They are:

* Ethics (Skt: shila)
* Concentration (Skt: samadhi)
* Wisdom (Skt: prajna)

Within these three divisions we can include the entire noble eightfold path:

* Ethics
  + Right speech
  + Right action
  + Right livelihood
* Concentration
  + Right effort
  + Right mindfulness
  + Right concentration
* Wisdom
  + Right view
  + Right thought

(Tsering, 2005)

The Buddha teaches that the defilements are stratified into three layers: the stage of latent tendency, the stage of manifestation, and the stage of transgression. The most deeply grounded is the level of latent tendency (anusaya), where a defilement merely lies dormant without displaying any activity. The second level is the stage of manifestation (pariyutthana), where a defilement, through the impact of some stimulus, surges up in the form of unwholesome thoughts, emotions, and volitions. Then, at the third level, the defilement passes beyond a purely mental manifestation to motivate some unwholesome action of body or speech. Hence this level is called the stage of transgression (vitikkama). The three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path provide the check against this threefold layering of the defilements. (Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering, 1998)

*Reading 29*

[The] three path factors — **right speech, right action, and right livelihood** — may be treated together, as collectively they make up the first of the three divisions of the path, the division of moral discipline *(silakkhandha).* Though the principles laid down in this section restrain immoral actions and promote good conduct, their ultimate purpose is not so much ethical as spiritual. They are not prescribed merely as guides to action, but primarily as aids to mental purification. As a necessary measure for human well-being, ethics has its own justification in the Buddha's teaching and its importance cannot be underrated. But in the special context of the Noble Eightfold Path ethical principles are subordinate to the path's governing goal, final deliverance from suffering. Thus for the moral training to become a proper part of the path, it has to be taken up under the tutelage of the first two factors, right view and right intention, and to lead beyond to the trainings in concentration and wisdom. (Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering, 1998)

*Reading 30*

The purification of conduct established by the prior three factors serves as the basis for the next division of the path, the division of concentration *(samadhikkhandha).* This present phase of practice, which advances from moral restraint to direct mental training, comprises the three factors of **right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration**. It gains its name from the goal to which it aspires, the power of sustained concentration, itself required as the support for insight-wisdom. Wisdom is the primary tool for deliverance, but the penetrating vision it yields can only open up when the mind has been composed and collected. Right concentration brings the requisite stillness to the mind by unifying it with undistracted focus on a suitable object. To do so, however, the factor of concentration needs the aid of effort and mindfulness. Right effort provides the energy demanded by the task, right mindfulness the steadying points for awareness. (Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering, 1998)

*Reading 31*

*The noble eightfold path is often portrayed in a circle or wheel, since the last sections return and reinforce the developing wisdom of the practitioner. Ultimately, the practitioner walks the path and is lead to full realization of the four noble truths and complete liberation.*

Though right concentration claims the last place among the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, concentration itself does not mark the path's culmination. The attainment of concentration makes the mind still and steady, unifies its concomitants, opens vast vistas of bliss, serenity, and power. But by itself it does not suffice to reach the highest accomplishment, release from the bonds of suffering. To reach the end of suffering demands that the Eightfold Path be turned into an instrument of discovery, that it be used to generate the insights unveiling the ultimate truth of things. This requires the combined contributions of all eight factors, and thus a new mobilization of right view and right intention. Up to the present point these first two path factors have performed only a preliminary function. Now they have to be taken up again and raised to a higher level. Right view is to become a direct seeing into the real nature of phenomena, previously grasped only conceptually; right intention, to become a true renunciation of defilements born out of deep understanding. (Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering, 1998)

*Reading 32*

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