

BUDDHISM

A ridiculously brief outline of philosophical and meditative Buddhism

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

- They identify the fundamental problem in life, its cause, the ideal, and the process of getting there.
- That Problem is our minds, our consciousness.
- Buddhism is spiritual psychotherapy.
- “Attachment” is recognized as a particular problem: we cling to what is valued, beautiful, loved.
- Also, we have fears and aversions—negative attachments.
- But a release is possible – a new type of consciousness (enlightenment, nirvana).

FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

- “All life is suffering.” *Dukkha*.
- We are always dissatisfied, anxious.
- Even when we think we are happy, underneath we “live lives of quiet desperation.”
- “Dis-ease.”

SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

- “Desires cause suffering.” *Trsna*.
- Not just nasty or selfish desires. Any desire to change the world. Even the desire to do well or help others or save the planet.
- This dominates our psyche: thirsting.
- Craving for things; aversion to things; attachment to what we have.

Why do we have desires?

- Usually translated as “*ignorance*” (especially concerning self and relation to world)
- Sometimes thought of as quality of reality: the illusory nature of reality, which became an important theme in Japanese literature.
- But primarily the cause of the problem a quality of consciousness: delusion.
- So it is up to us to get our minds right.

THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

- “Extinction”: the end to suffering and desires. Nirvana.
- Basic attitude: equanimity, tranquility & openness.
- Psychology/Ontology: unity with reality and all things interwoven.
- Consciousness: direct perception and oneness with object of perception.
- Action: not based on desires > spontaneity.
- Emotions: no emotions, or undisturbed free flow.

FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

- “The Eightfold Path.” Includes morality, wisdom, and meditation.
- Main technique: meditation. Break the control of our ADD mind so we can experience reality with undisturbed openness.

- Meditation can take many forms, including art.
- Often requires break from normal life: monasticism, wayfaring, or reclusion.

REALITY: INTERRELATEDNESS

- “Emptiness.” Not empty of reality, but empty of “thingness”: independence and permanence.
- All things are radically interrelated. Everything comes into being by mutual co-arising and exists in mutual conditioning.
- An unbroken field of being, with distinctness retained, like a gravitational field.
- We are fully a part of that field of being.
- Things don’t exist as discrete individuals: Reality is characterized by “Interbeing.”

REALITY: NONSELF

- We have desires (and thus suffering) because we are deluded about reality. We believe there is a “self” separate from the world-out-there.
- Because we are separate from the world, there are things to want and to fear.
- Enlightenment comes when we realize there is no self/other dichotomy, there is no gap between consciousness and reality.

REALITY: IMPERMANENCE

- Nothing is permanent.
- Two basic formulations:
 - Everything will pass away.
 - Everything is always in flux, moment to moment.
- Thus attachments and desires are deluded and lead to suffering.
- We can’t rely on anything. We live in an uncertain world.
- Attachments create suffering
- But at the same time this impermanence is part of nature’s beauty, and the transience of beauty heightens its value.

VALUE

- All of this phenomenal world is sacred, is ultimate reality.
- The value and ultimacy of reality is usually experienced most fully and purely in nature, away from the attachments and distractions of social life..
- But our response to the value of nature problematic.
- Nature can help lead us to enlightenment, or it can be a source of attachment.