



The Four Noble Truths

Dukkha arises: stress, dissatisfaction, discontent, suffering, struggle, sorrow, grief.

Samudaya: the cause of struggle is craving (aversion, delusion, jealousy, and pride).

Nirodha: the end of dukkha is possible, by letting go of its causes.

Magga: there is a path to the end of suffering: the eightfold path.

Study and reflect on dissatisfaction dukkha in your experience

☸ Notice when various forms of dukkha arise in your experience.

☸ Are there particular dissatisfactions that led you to the path of Dharma?

"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;
the five aggregates subject to clinging are
suffering."

(Turning the Wheel Sutta [SN 56.11](#))

"There are these three forms of
stressfulness, my friend:
the stressfulness of pain,
the stressfulness of fabrication,
the stressfulness of change.
These are the three forms of
stressfulness."

(Dukkha Sutta [SN 38.14](#))

The suffering of suffering. All kinds of physical and emotional pain.

The suffering of impermanence. Change is constantly taking place, so we are constantly stressed, for better and worse, by the slipping away of internal and external phenomenon.

The suffering of conditioned existence. Everything is dependent upon causes and conditions, *fabricated* of other things: houses, roles and relationships, health, everything. Even when things are well, there's an underlying doubt, a fear that things aren't stable. *And they aren't.*

Dukkha includes vulnerability, inability, inferiority, vacillation, and uncertainty;
Disturbance, irritation, dejection, worry, despair, fear, dread, anguish, anxiety, and grief;
Injury, illness, aging, decay of body and faculties, senility, and death.

Duhkha also arises as infinite variations of conflicting emotion, thought, and behavior: pain and pleasure, denial and indulgence, excitement and boredom, deprivation and excess, hopefulness and hopelessness, insufficiency and excess, submission and rebellion, impulse and indecision.

Study and reflect on the three motivations / capacities

Many lam-rim texts divide the stages in terms of three capacities:

1. *Least capacity*: the pursuit of personal happiness
2. *Middling capacity*: wishing to be free altogether from cycles of happiness & unhappiness
3. *Great capacity*: the aim of benefiting others as much as yourself

You will see that Taranatha's [Essence of Ambrosia](#) is organized in three parts. At least read translator Willa Baker's introduction.

Least capacity: striving for personal happiness. Generally self-protective; easily motivated by fear. Attracted to rest and relaxation. *Practices*: Four reminders: precious human life, impermanence, karma, suffering. Contemplating the suffering of others leads one to higher motivations and capacities.

Middling capacity: seeking to be free of samsara altogether. Turning away from immediate pleasures and negative actions. Abandoning laziness and making an effort to free oneself from the endless pursuit of happiness. *Practices*: suffering of the higher realms, and the suffering pervasive in all conditioned existence (none of the realms are without suffering). Understand the origin of conditioned existence (kleshas) and the origin of freedom.

Great capacity: seeking the freedom of all beings. Using one's own experience of suffering to identify with others' suffering, and being motivated to free them all from sufferings and its causes. *Practices*: relative bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. Impartial love and compassion (expanding to more and eventually all beings). Generosity and the other paramitas expands practice into action..

- ☸ Notice when each motive arises in you and moves you to act.
Open to the sensations, feelings, and thoughts of that motivation.
- ☸ How does each motivation affect your view of yourself? Your view of others?
- ☸ How does each affect your view of the world? Your activities in the world?
- ☸ Does it seem like you choose these motivations? Or does it seem like these motivations choose you, the way a mood or a thought seems to?
- ☸ What inspires you to engage in Dharma practice? What would you consider success?