

Wisdom

A short series of short pieces (with questions)

5. Four Noble Truths

A prince in Northern India in the 6th Century BC, was living in luxury, lacking nothing, until one day on his first expedition outside the palace he saw an old person, a man with a diseased body and a corpse. Carefully shielded previously, and confronted now for the first time with this undeniable evidence concerning life's reality and the apparently inevitable fate of mankind to suffer, he chose to leave his home, his lovely wife and young son in search of a solution, a way out of this pain-filled human predicament.

Six years later, it is told, at the age of 35, this prince of the Sakya people, Gautama, attained Enlightenment. He has been known ever since as Buddha, "The Enlightened One". Living until he was 80, he spent the remainder of his life travelling around teaching all who came to him to learn. His "Way" he preached as open to all men and women ready to understand and to follow it.

The heart of the Buddha's teaching lies in Four Noble Truths, expounded in his very first sermon.

The First Noble Truth is *dukkha* which may be translated as "suffering" but also as "imperfection", "impermanence" or "insubstantiality". *Dukkha* may be viewed from three aspects: ordinary suffering (such as old age, sickness, death; and to do with not having what one wants), suffering as a result of change (to do with losing what one has), and suffering as a *conditioned* state.

Of these conditioned states the Buddha taught, "Dukka is the five aggregates" (making up sentient beings, including man): the aggregates of matter, sensations, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.

Many are surprised at how comprehensive and, to the Western mind, insightful, is Buddhist psychology based on an understanding of these five aggregates and the interplay between them.

The Second Noble Truth is *samudaya*, the origin of *dukkha*. This is the thirst or craving which, it is said, produces re-existence and re-becoming, which is

bound up with passion and greed, which "finds fresh delight, now here and now there". The term includes not only attachment to (desire for) sense pleasures, wealth and power, but also attachment to ideas and ideals, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs.

The Third Noble Truth is *nirodha*, the cessation of *dukkha*. There is emancipation, freedom from the continuity of suffering. It is through the elimination of the thirst or craving of *samudaya* a modern commentator, Walpola Rahula, has said, "The one who has realised this Truth is the happiest being in the world, free from all the complexes and obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others. This person's mental health is perfect. There is no repenting the past or brooding over the future. This being lives fully in the present, appreciating and enjoying things in the purest sense."

The Fourth Noble Truth is *maggā*, "The Way Leading to the Cessation of *Dukkha*". It is known as "The Middle Way"; and also as, "The Noble Eightfold Path", because it is made up of the following eight categories: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Right speech, for example, means abstention from telling lies, from all negative comments, from backbiting and slander, from harsh or impolite language and from idle, useless chatter or gossip. It is based, we might say, on an unconditional positive regard for our environment and those in it.

The Buddha taught that the way of wisdom, the way of happiness, is also the way of virtue.

How can attachment, thirst and craving be eliminated?

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Miscellany

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

Dr Alisdair A. McKechnie has been appointed Vice-Chairman of the Mental Welfare Commission for

Scotland in place of Dr W. D. Boyd who has recently retired. Dr James A. T. Dyer, formerly a consultant psychiatrist at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital,

has been appointed a full-time member of the Commission.

Journals

Schizophrenia Monitor is a new current awareness journal which will list and comment on the latest international literature dealing with the understanding and management of schizophrenia. Issues will be published quarterly – the first in January 1991. The editors are Dr Thomas Fahy (Institute of Psychiatry) and Dr Anthony David (King's College Hospital). Copies are available free to all interested readers, courtesy of an educational grant from Sandoz Pharmaceuticals, from Current Medical Literature Ltd, 40–42 Osnaurgh Street, London NW1 3ND.

International Universities Press has now assumed the publication of *Integrative Psychiatry*, the official publication of *Academia Medicina Psychiatria*. It explores how psychiatry, medicine, and all the biological, behavioural and social sciences can be integrated for the advancement of knowledge, the stimulation of research, and mutual enrichment. Further information can be obtained from International Universities Press, Inc., 59 Boston Post Road, PO Box 1524, Madison, CT 06443–1524, USA.

New schizophrenia unit

The National Schizophrenia Unit at The Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital has recently been established, with 11 in-patient beds for diagnostic, management and treatment difficulties in schizophrenia sufferers from Britain and overseas. As well as a service to individual sufferers, it aims to provide a wider focus of expertise with medical, nursing and psychology staff available for advice and teaching to academic and lay organisations such as the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. The unit is also engaged in several research projects, mostly funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, USA, but also by the Medical Research Council.

Resource management training pack

A resource management training pack for nurses and other health care professionals has been developed by Mersey Regional Health Authority. Further information: Una McDonnell, Resource Management Nurse, Resource Management Department, Mersey Regional Health Authority, Hamilton House, 24 Pall Mall, Liverpool L3 6AL.

AUTP postgraduate training in behavioural psychotherapy 1991–1992

The Association of University Teachers of Psychiatry with the Institute of Psychiatry runs an annual course

in behavioural psychotherapy. The course will begin with a two-day workshop on 3 and 4 October 1991. This will include the following components: theoretical background, demonstration of treatments and participant practice. After the workshop participants will be asked to undertake behavioural treatment of their own patients in their own centres, and later also to supervise other trainees. Participants will be supervised in small groups at monthly intervals in half-day sessions over the following academic year. During the two-day workshop and throughout the course eminent guest speakers from around the UK will run seminars on behavioural treatment in acute and chronic disorders in adults, the elderly, children, mental handicap, and liaison psychiatry. A certificate will be awarded to those completing the course.

The course is organised on lines which qualify for local funding assistance under Study Leave Regulations of the BPMF. Cost of the combined workshop, monthly supervision and reading materials over the following academic year is £415. Applicants should write, stating their qualifications and current appointment, to Professor Isaac Marks at the Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF, where the course will be held.

Brunel Socio-legal Working Papers

The Law Department of Brunel University have recently published their third series of Socio-legal Working Papers. Each paper is based on original research and touches on several current social policy debates, such as no-fault medical negligence, homelessness and the treatment of mental patients. The authors and titles of the present series are:

H. Burke	<i>Voicing Concern: An Examination of Inquests into the Deaths of Mental Patients</i>
J. L. Davis	<i>Personality Disorders: A Suitable Case for Probation</i>
K. Greener	<i>Homeless Children</i>
S. Guild	<i>Counting the Cost of Medical Negligence: Brain Damage and the Tort system</i>

Anyone who would like to receive any of these papers should write to The Department Secretary, Law Department, Brunel University, Uxbridge UB8 3PH. The price of each Working Paper (including packaging and postage) is £5.95 and cheques should be made payable to Brunel University.