

Outline short notes for **Brother Teoh's Dharma Talk, "The 3 Turnings of the 4 Noble Truths as proclaimed by Lord Buddha"** at **Subang Jaya Buddhist Association (SJBA)** on 18 August 2019

Audio : <https://broteoh.com/wp-content/uploads/Teoh-SJBA-190818-The-3-Turnings-of-the-Four-Noble-Truths.mp3>

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Youtube : <https://youtu.be/cHd59b3UF3E>

1. The **3 Turnings of the 4 Noble Truths** was proclaimed by Lord Buddha when **he delivered his first sermon** the [Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#) to his 5 ascetics after his supreme Enlightenment. It is a **very important teaching** because this **4 Noble Truth** is the **essence** of the **Buddha's teaching** and according to him, he himself has to **fully understand** the **3 Turnings of the 4 Noble Truth (4NT)** in its **12 aspects** before He can proclaimed himself to be the **supremely enlightened** Samma Sambuddha. The 4NT must be **turned 3 times** (with understanding) for it to be understood perfectly.
2. The **3 turnings** can give rise to the **3 types of corresponding wisdom** namely; Suttamaya panna, Cintamaya panna and Bhavanamaya panna.
3. The **First Noble Truth** highlighted the **prevalence** of suffering in life (when we confront them **without the requisite wisdom**). This is different from the notion of "**life is suffering**" – which is a common **misconception** of Buddhism. The Buddha proclaimed that there are **8 life realities** where all of us **has to confront** if we **live long enough**. **Without** wisdom, one will suffer when confronted with these **8 realities of life and existence**.
4. Having **wisdom** is when **one perfectly understands** the **5 Universal Laws or Orders of Nature** that governs all of life and existence within our conditioned world. They are:
 - The physical law or order of **Utu niyama**;
 - The Biological order of **Bija niyama**;
 - The law of Karma or **Karma niyama**;
 - The law of Mind or **citta niyama** (law of Dependent origination) and
 - The law of Truth or **Dhamma niyama**.

(The first two are **scientific laws** of nature which the **scientists** have **developed good understanding recently** and that is the reason why our **present civilization progressed** so rapidly over the last 40 years. Whereas the **last 3** are **spiritual laws** of nature which the Buddha **had understood** them **perfectly** and that is the reason why he is **so wise and good** in the **spiritual field**. He is the **fully enlightened** one – **perfect in wisdom and virtue**).

5. The **first turning** of the 4 NT is the '**Proclamation of the 4NTruths as taught** by the Buddha' and this can give rise to **Suttamaya Panna** which is a type of **wisdom borne of hearing/reading** the *sutta* (*discourses* of the Buddha) or his **Dhamma**.

6. The human being consists of a **physical body** and a **mind**. The Buddha **sub-divided** the mind into **4 more aggregates of feeling, perception, mind activities (sankhara) and consciousness**. This body and the 4 aggregates of mind combined is the human being termed the **first aspect** of the **5 aggregates of form and mind**. The **second** aspect is the **mental 5 aggregates** of form and mind where the **mental form** enters the mind via the **perception** or **sanna** aggregates.
7. The **physical body** (form aggregate) is makeup of the **4 elements** and there is **no knowing** so it **cannot be us** because it goes the way of nature, tends towards suffering. The 4 aggregates of mind (feeling, perception, mental thinking & consciousness) **constantly arise** and **pass away** but **we didn't die** because we are **still around**. So **how can** the **4 aggregates** of mind **be us** because they are **impermanent, dependent originating** and are **causal phenomena**? Then who are we? What are we?
8. The 5 aggregates of form and mind is not permanent unchanging entity. There is no one inside. The 5 aggregates of form and mind are dependent originating and conditions arising phenomenon, therefore not me, non-self and empty.
9. The 5 aggregates of form and mind are just a **karmically conditioned vehicle** and **tool** for us to come into this existential world.
10. Due to human delusion, we grasp and cling to the 5 aggregates of form and mind. We **must realize** this Truth **to be free** from **suffering** because the **5 grasping aggregates** are the cause of suffering.
11. The Buddha advised us to avoid the **2 extremes** of *sensual indulgence* and *self mortification*.
12. Dhammapada **verse 23** on Heedfulness: **Heedfulness = Ever mindful + constantly meditative** [constantly cultivating the **Noble Eightfold Path (N8FP)**].
13. According to the **Second Noble Truth** the **cause behind all suffering** is **craving** borne of **self-delusion**.
14. The **Third Noble Truth** states that '**suffering need not be**'. Enlightenment in the here and now can be realized. Knowing this, is **most reassuring** and we **should go all out to cultivate** this rather unique teaching.
15. The **Fourth Noble Truth** reveal to us the way out of suffering. It states that if we **cultivate the N8FP** it will lead us to the **end of all suffering**.
16. The **second turning** is to **reflect, contemplate** and **inquire** into the Truth and Dhamma as proclaimed by the Buddha with a **creative** and **attentive mind**, after hearing the Dhamma. The **wisdom** that arise is termed **Cittamaya Panna** which is **wisdom borne** of *reflection, contemplation and inquiry into the Dhamma*.
17. After we have *inquired, reflected and contemplated*, the **understanding stabilized** and we can then **assimilate** this **understanding** into **our nature** to give rise to the **initial wisdom** termed **yoniso manasikara**. This yoniso manasikara can **prompt us** at the **moment of sense experience** for us to have the wisdom and understanding to **confront life's problem** with the **right understanding**.
18. Under the **second** turning, the Buddha said:
 - (a) This **First Noble Truth of dukkha** is to be **understood**.

(b) This **cause of suffering** which is **craving** is to be **severed/abandoned**.

(c) The **cessation of suffering** which is **Nibbana** is to be **realized**.

(d) The **N8FP** which is the **way out of suffering** is to be **cultivated**.

(To **inquire** why the Buddha said all the above? How can I develop the **above understanding** as advised by the Buddha? This is followed by **constant reflection and contemplation** on those dhamma stated by the Buddha to **develop the clear understanding**.)

19. Under the **third turning**, the Buddha said:

(a) This First Noble Truth of dukkha **has already** been **understood**.

(b) This cause of suffering which is craving **has already** been **severed/abandoned**.

(c) The cessation of suffering which is Nibbana **has already** been **realized**.

(d) The N8FP which is the way out of suffering **has already** been **cultivated**.

[This **3rd turning** of the 4 NT is all about the **penetrative** enlightenment borne of the **direct seeing** Bhavana (or the *meditative training*) leading to Bhavanamaya panna.]

20. Compare the above teaching with the **Avijja Sutta's** 10 steps cultivation. **Yoniso manasikara** is the **4th step**. This yoniso manasikara is a **natural consequence** of **step 2**, which is **constantly listening** to the true dhamma. This step 2 can give rise to the **1st and 2nd turnings wisdom** leading to the **initial wisdom** which is **step 4**. **Step 3** is faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. **Step 1** is having *dhamma friends*. **Step 5** is **sati sampajanna**. **Step 6** is sense restraint. **Step 7** is the 3 ways of right conducts. **Step 8** is cultivating the N8FP. **Step 9** is the arising of the seven factors of enlightenment. **Step 10** is enlightenment in the here and the now.

21. Meditative training does not mean **only formal sitting meditation**, it includes **daily mindfulness training**.

22. **Question 1:** So far we only have Dharma knowledge, how do we get realize a glimpse of this cessation?

Brother Teoh explained that wisdom is not rigid. Wisdom is an understanding. When we understand, we no longer follow **rigidly** to our **knowledge** which is **memory** and **thought based**. We no longer argue to defend what we understand.

To realize the **glimpse of cessation**, is **not difficult if you understand**. You only need to develop the **3 phases** of **Dhamma training**: namely **Pariyatti**, **Patipatti** and **Pativedha**. **Pariyatti** (the **1st phase** of dhamma) is the **learning of the teaching** (via mainly dhamma knowledge first) gain through **hearing** and **reading** the dhamma leading to **1st turning wisdom**, then you need to **stabilize this understanding** through **constant reflection, contemplation** and **inquiry**. When the teaching stands up to investigation, it is **no longer** knowledge. **Patipatti** (phase 2 of dhamma) is **putting the teaching into practice** through the **meditative training** via **contemplation** and **daily mindfulness** (with the silent mind). **Pativedha** is the **3rd phase** of dhamma which is the **fruition of your hard work** leading to **noble living**. That is, one get to **live** the **life** of an **enlightened being** where one is **always happy, peaceful, tranquil, and full of joy** and **understanding**. No more suffering or problem in life. Life is **meaningful** and **wonderful**. One gets to **experience** the **pristine beauty** and **wonders of life**. Live life to the fullest.

23. Question 2: How can we be true to ourselves with the presence of the ego?

Brother Teoh explained that when we **think**, we **exist** and we are **real**, the **ego** (or the **personality**) arises thereby creating the **evil roots** of selfishness, possessiveness, anger, hatred, violence and fear, etc. Therefore these thoughts that arise will be **wrong thoughts** borne of **self-delusion**.

Is there a thinker behind the thought? If we **meditate** with **awareness**, leading to the **stillness** and the **true silence within** we will come **to realize** that *thoughts are response to memory* because **when you are just born** there is **no thought**. In actual fact thoughts are just thoughts, there is no **thinker behind**. Thought is neither wholesome nor unwholesome, just like money. It depends on the **user** (of money and thought). If the **user is evil, thoughts become evil**. We need to walk the Path of dhamma till awakening to realize this.

(Above draft prepared by Sister Mun Yuen)