

Notes on the fourth of The Four Thoughts

26 July, 2011

Two ways the fourth thought can be expressed:

Everyone suffers

There is an unsatisfactory quality inherent in ordinary life

Two understandings related to the fourth thought:

1. **Suffering**

This fourth thought is a restatement of the First Noble Truth, that everyone suffers.

It also implies the Second Noble Truth on the causes of suffering. We suffer because of ignorance of the true nature of reality. This leads to self-clinging, which expresses itself in attachment and aversion. We all live out our attachment and aversion in the form of the eight worldly activities. This guarantees our suffering.

This meaning of the fourth thought also reflects first four of The Five Remembrances:

1. I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old.

2. I am of the nature to have ill health. There is no way to escape ill health.

3. I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death.

4. All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.

2. **Compassion**

As we come to comprehend the universality of suffering and the mistaken assumptions that cause suffering, compassion arises naturally...not only for the suffering itself but, more poignantly, because we see that out of ignorance we all cause our own suffering.

With this fourth thought the meaning of The Four Thoughts becomes evident:

- g I have a rare combination of circumstances that allows me to develop spiritually (1st thought)
- Because everything is impermanent, I realize this opportunity won't last long. (2nd thought)
- Since everything I do can cause benefit or harm, I must cultivate mindfulness. (3rd thought)
- Everyone suffers, and through a basic misunderstanding causes that suffering. (4th thought)

Understanding that all beings suffer, we naturally develop compassion, wanting them to be free of suffering and the causes of suffering. We understand that part of bringing this about requires carefully monitoring our actions and the motivation for them. We also realize that we must train our own minds....purifying our obscurations and refining our perceptions. We have the opportunity to do this now, but the opportunity won't last long. So from these four thoughts arises the **motivation to practice for the benefit of all beings.**

