

## **The problem of suffering**

The Buddha very plainly and straight-to-the-point saw suffering in itself as the primal problem that needed to be solved. He considered this problem very deeply, in its entirety, and found that the solution was there in front of him already, in the complete penetration of the problem itself – this gives us the First Noble Truth, or the Noble Truth of Suffering.

So what hope is there for us on the same path? It seems to me that very few people actually contemplate any problem for very long before they start looking for a way to get away from that problem, and even more so when it comes to the uncomfortable problem of suffering (this is surely forgivable.)

How are we then to overcome this barrier? Perhaps by gritting our teeth and enduring it all until we somehow get the message. Or perhaps we will need loads of therapy to cope with all the inevitable suffering of the world? Both of these methods are frequently taught, but not very appealing, and they represent a fundamental misunderstanding as to the whole nature of this enquiry into suffering: the assumption that we are to investigate the feeling of suffering rather than the perception 'suffering'.

But then, does this instead mean an intellectual exercise to prove that everything is suffering? Not very appealing either; in fact downright depressing. This is a second common misunderstanding. Yet if suffering is simply seen with a very peaceful and meditative mind, we will let go and the experience will be not one of sorrow but of blissful release. This is the way of the Buddha.

I offer this for your reflection.

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