WORKSHEET 2

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH "THERE IS A CAUSE OF SUFFERING"

Why do we suffer and are not permanently happy? Buddha explained that the cause is basic ignorance. Our experience is dualistic, characterized by the ego illusion, the idea of a permanent, independently existing "I." Although on close examination one finds only a stream of constantly changing thoughts, feelings and impressions, the notion of an "I" is the basis of experience, whereby the outer world (object) is colored by the inner world (subject).

The so-called "disturbing feelings" arise out of this two-part (dualistic) view. We experience "attachment" to pleasant things and want to get and keep what we like. We also experience "aversion" to unpleasant things and try to keep them away. If we cannot make up our minds and think egocentrically in circles, this is called "confusion."
Attachment in turn gives rise to "stinginess" because we can't let go, aversion gives rise to "jealousy" because we don't want others to be happier than we are, and confusion gives rise to exclusionary "pride" because we think we are better and don't grasp the connections.

Countless combinations of "disturbing feelings" shape our experience of the world. We take ourselves and our feelings seriously and hold on to them. Disturbing feelings are followed by negative actions. Thus, one constantly sows seeds both in the external world and in one's own mind. By the time the seeds ripen and one experiences the effects of the harmful actions, one has usually already forgotten that one had set the causes oneself. In response to the unpleasant experiences, disturbing feelings arise again, which in turn lead to suffering actions, which lead to further unpleasant experiences. This is called in Buddhism the "cycle of conditioned existence" (Sanskrit: Samsara).
If we are aware of these connections, the desire arises to break this cycle and to overcome the ego illusion with the associated "disturbing feelings".

EXERCISES

1. Complete the chart with the key terms used in the text.
2. With the help of the graphic, explain the Second Noble Truth: "Suffering has a cause."

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THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH "THERE IS A CAUSE OF SUFFERING"

THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING OR "THE CYCLE OF CONDITIONAL EXISTENCE"