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### THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

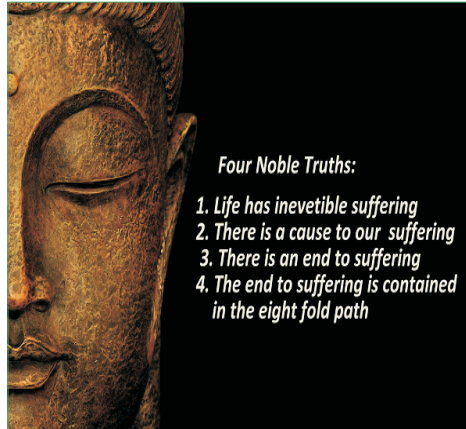
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#### ABSTRACT

**N**oble Truth" is the English translation of the Pāli term Ariya sacca. Ariya means "noble" and sacca "truth." There are four Noble Truths. They are called "Noble Truths" because they are perceived and penetrated by the noble ones. The fourth explanation is that



the truths themselves are noble and therefore, and be called noble truths. "Noble" here means real, neither erroneous nor deceptive.

#### The Four Noble Truths are:-

- 1.The Noble truth of Suffering.
- 2.The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.
- 3.The Noble Truth of the

Cessation of suffering, and

4.The Noble truth of the Path that leads to the cessation of Suffering.

**KEYWORDS** :Noble Truth, truths themselves, characteristic of suffering .

#### INTRODUCTION

There are Four Noble Truths and they are suffering, cause or origin of suffering, end of suffering, and path out of suffering which is the Eightfold Path Each of these Truths has three aspects so all together there are twelve insights. In the Theravāda schools, an arahanta, a perfected one, is one who has seen clearly the Four Noble Truths with their three aspects and twelve insights. 'Arahant' means a human being who understands the truth. It is applied mainly to the teaching of the For Noble Truths.

#### The Noble Truth of Suffering

The first Noble Truth is called *Dukkha in Pali* . The meaning of *Dukkha* here is "vile" (*du*) and

“empty” (*kha*). Anything disgusting and empty, anything impermanent, without happiness, and without substance is called *Dukkha*.

The characteristic of the First Noble truth, the Noble Truth of Suffering, is “affliction.” Suffering makes you miserable. It afflicts you, so the characteristic of suffering is affliction. Its function is to burn you, to make you miserable. It manifests as an occurrence, as a coming into being.

And what, *Bhikkhu*, is the noble truth of suffering? Birth is, again is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and excessive distress are suffering, association with the disliked is suffering, separation from the liked is suffering, not to get what one wishes, that also is suffering; in brief, the five aggregate of clinging are suffering.

### The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering

The Second Noble Truth is called *Samudaya*. *Aya* means “cause,” *udaya* means “arising,” and *Sam* means it is “combined with other conditions.” Craving, arising together with ignorance, clinging, *kamma*, and other factors supported by these other causes originate *Dukkha*. Therefore, it is called *Samudaya*, the “origin of *Dukkha*.”

It has the characteristic of “originating,” and its function is to prevent interruption. That means, it continues to cause indefinite origination and does not allow any interruption. The craving then manifests as an impediment. The Second Noble Truth was explained by the Buddha as follows:

And what, *Bhikkhus*, is the noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to new rebirths, and, bound up with pleasure and lust, finds ever new delight, now here, now there, to wit, the sensual craving, the craving for eternal existence, and the craving for non-existence.

### The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

The Third noble truth is called *Dukkha Nirodha*. The prefix *Ni* means “not” or “absence” and *Rodha* means “prison.” There is no prison of *Dukkha*, of the round of rebirths, in *Nibbana*, since it is free from all rebirths. *Nibbana* is called *Dukkha Nirodha*, because it is a condition for the cessation of suffering.

It has the characteristic of “peace” and “peacefulness.” Peacefulness means freedom from mental defilements- greed, hatred, delusion etc. Its function is neither to die nor to fade away. It manifests as being signless. Therefore, you cannot describe *Nibbana* either in terms of form or shape. *Nibbana* has no attributes.

Once, King *Milinda* asked the *Venerable Nagasena* whether it was possible to describe the shape or configuration or age or size of *Nibbana*, and the sage answered that it was not.

The Noble truth of the cessation of Suffering is popularly known as *Nibbana*. The *Buddha* described this Noble truth as follows:

It is the total extinction, by removing of, or forsaking of, or discarding of, or the freedom from, and the non-attachment to that same craving.

### The Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering

The fourth one is the Noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering, in *Pali Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Paṭipada*. *Paṭipada* means the “Path” “Way” or “practice”, *Gamini* “leads to,” *Dukkha Nirodha* the “cessation of suffering.” Actually, no phenomenon leads to any other place, it disappears wherever it arises. But this Noble truth takes *Nibbana* or cessation of suffering as its object of practice when it arises. Therefore it is the way that leads to the cessation of suffering.

The characteristic of this is offering “a means or a way to escape.” Its function is to abandon

defilements. In fact, this truth consists of eight factors present at the moment of path consciousness, so that the mental defilements are abandoned. It manifests to meditators as release from the round of rebirth.

And what, *Bhikkhus*, is the Noble truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is simply this noble Eightfold Path, namely,

Right Understanding- *Samma Diṭṭhi*, Right Thought- *Samma Saṅkapa*, Right Speech- *Samma Vaca*, Right bodily action- *Samma Kammanta*, Right Livelihood- *Samma Ājāna*, Right Effort- *Samma Vayama*, Right Mindfulness- *Samma Sati*, Right Concentration- *Samma Samadhi*.

The eight factors mentioned above are collectively called the Noble eightfold Path, the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. They are well-known as the Noble Eightfold Path or middle way- Majjhima Paṭipada.

### Right Understanding

And what, *Bhikkhus*, is Right Understanding? Understanding of suffering, understanding of the origin of suffering, understanding of the cessation of suffering, and understanding of the path leading to the cessation of suffering, At this point, Right understanding means direct knowledge of the Four Noble truths, gained through practice. This *Bhikkhus* is called right understanding.

### Right Thought

And what, *Bhikkhus*, is right thought? Thought associated with renunciation, thought associated with absence of ill-will, thought associated with absence of cruelty. This, *Bhikkhus*, is called right thought.

“Thought associated with renunciation” means thoughts of going forth, becoming a *Bhikkhus* or a recluse, practicing meditation for the attainment of *jhanas*, paths and fruition.

“Thought associated with absence of ill-will” means thoughts of loving-kindness. When you practice loving-kindness meditation, this kind of right thought will be predominant in our mind.

“Thought associated with absence of cruelty” means compassion. When you practice compassion “may beings be able to get out of distress and so on,” right thought will be predominant in your mind.

### Right Speech

#### Right speech means-

1. Abstaining from false speech. It means telling lies,
2. Abstaining from slanderous speech. It means saying one thing to one person and another to another person so that they become divided,
3. Abstaining from harsh speech. It means harsh or abusive language,
4. Abstaining from frivolous speech. It means talk that is not profitable or that is nonsense. Abstaining from these four unwholesome ways of speaking is called right speech. When you abstain from these four wrong ways of speech, this factor is present in your mind.

### Right Action

Right action aims at promoting moral, honorable and peaceful conduct. It admonishes us that we should abstain from destroying life, from stealing what is not given by the owner, from dishonest dealings, from illegitimate sexual intercourse, and that we should also help others to lead a peaceful and honorable life in the right way. This is right action in brief.

### Right Livelihood

This factor is right livelihood. It is described in the *Sutta* as follows;

Herein, *Bhikkhus*, a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, makes a living by mean of right livelihood. This, *Bhikkhus*, is called right livelihood.

There are five kinds of trade that are described by the Buddha as being wrong. They are dealing in weapons, human beings, meat, liquor, and poison. Avoiding these kinds of trade and making a living by blames trades is called right livelihood. A person who claims to be a disciple of the Buddha should avoid the above-mentioned trades.

### Right Effort

The next factor is right effort. It means making effort for the non-arising of unwholesome states that have not arisen, for the abandoning of unwholesome states that have arisen, for the arising of wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and for the development of wholesome states that have arisen. So, there are two kinds of effort with regard to wholesome states.

### Right Mindfulness

The next factor is right mindfulness. It is described as consisting of the four contemplation: contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*), of sensation (*vedananupassana*) and of mind (*cittanupassana*), and of mind objects (*dhammanupassana*). It is said in the *Mahsatipatt̃hana Sutta* “the disciple dwells in contemplation of the body, of sensation, of mind and mid object, ardent, clearly conscious mindfulness in four ways. The practice as given in the discourse leads to purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the correct path and the realization of *Nibbana*.”

### Right Concentration

The next factor is right concentration. In describing right concentration, the Buddha pointed to the four *jhanas* as examples for right concentration. The four *jhanas* actually belong to Samañtha meditation, but they can be the basis for *vipassana* meditation, too. For those who selected Samañtha as a vehicle for enlightenment or, in other words, who first attain *jhānas* and then turn to *vipassana* meditation, the *jhanas* can be made the object of *Vipassana* meditation and thus become the basis for *vipassana*.

But here you should understand that “momentary concentration-Khaṭṭika *Samadhi*” is also meant, because without it, there can be no *vipassana* and no enlightenment. This concentration has been gained when meditators can keep their mind on the meditation objects for some time, for ten or fifteen minutes, for half an hour, or longer. There may be very few distractions of the mind at that time and even when there is a distraction, you will be able to dismiss it immediately. In this *Mahsatipatt̃hana Sutta* and in many other *Suttas*, right concentration is described as consisting of the four stages of *jhana*.

Herein, *Bhikkhus*, a *Bhikkhu*, quite secluded from sense pleasures, quite secluded from unwholesome states, attains and dwells in the first *jhana*, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion.

Those who want to know more about the *jhanas* can find the information in the fourth chapter of the Visuddhimagga, the Path of Purification.

What is important to know, in general, about the *jhanas* is that sense pleasures and *jhanas* are incompatible. Sense pleasures are hindrances to *jhanas*. When you want to get *jhanas*, you have to get

away from sense pleasures and practice Samanatha meditation. Sense pleasures are said to be opposites of concentration. They are hindrances to vipassana meditation, too. You cannot mix vipassana meditation with sense pleasures. When you are practicing *vipassana* meditation, your practice has to be pure. It should not be mixed with anything that involves sense pleasures.

As you have seen, there are altogether eight factors in the fourth noble truth, the noble truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

## CONCLUSION

There are four functions connected with the four noble truths. At the moment of penetrating the truths, path knowledge is said to exercise four functions simultaneously. With regard to the first noble truth, its function is to understand it as a fact clearly and completely (*Pariññeyya*). The function of the second noble truth is to eliminate the cause of suffering (*Pahatabba*). The function of the Third noble truth is to realize *Nibbana* (*Sacchikatabba*). The function of the fourth noble truth is to develop and to practice the noble eightfold path (*Bhavetabba*).

Path knowledge exercises these four functions at a single moment. Just as a lamp performs four functions simultaneously – burning the wick, dispelling darkness, making light appear, and using oil – so path knowledge penetrates suffering with full understanding, the origin of suffering with abandoning, the path with developing, and the cessation of suffering with realizing.

Meditators who comprehend their own truths, the truths of others, and both their own and others' truth are said to contemplate on the truths internally, externally, and both internally and externally. Although it is suggested you contemplate on the four truths, you contemplate only on the first and the second truth. The third and the fourth truth cannot be contemplated because they are not the object of *vipassana* and are not seen or attained with regard to wordings (*putthujjana*).

According to above mention, meditators who comprehend the four noble truths in this way, will not be attached to anything by way of craving and wrong view and will not cling to anything in this world of aggregates. Thus meditators dwell contemplating the *Dhamma* in the four Noble Truths.

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