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PREFACE

Blind is the world, the Buddha taught. Many a man born in this sensuous world rarely sees Truth. In fact, the Truth is existing and prevailing all the time everywhere in the whole universe. Yet man, being ignorant, finds it very hard to see the truth due to the darkness of his ignorance and craving desire:

Having the brilliant light of the Noble Teaching and the true Dhamma in our present, we human beings are virtuously given the unique opportunity to know and understand the Noble truth of the Dhamma. (*Ariya Sacca*)

Man, as the supreme master of himself, has the potential to attain real Blissful Peace and Happiness of liberation. If man actually abides by the principles of the Buddha's teaching, he is ascertained to attain the Noble Path, Fruition and Nibbana found out and admonished by His fully Enlightenment.

May all be enlightened in the four Noble Truths!

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Mankind today, with the scientifically advanced mind, pondering and searching for a happier state and b

These queries and questions concerning man and the universe had been thought of and pondered over

The Four Noble Truths

Sunday, 15 March 2009 12:46

How fortunate mankind is (Arya Samaya) golden opportunity to know the philosophy of the Noble Truths

The Buddha was the real proof of Himself that before His final enlightenment, as a Bodhisatta (Buddha-

At that time, there were (Kammas/ Karmas) who were generally accepted as the

The other belief was that (Arahat) the supreme happiness could gain it only when the

The Bodhisatta as Prince (Siddhathartha) under the Middle Way called the Noble Path to the age of 29

When the Bodhisatta, seated under the Bodhi Tree and applied himself to inducing the first Jhana once

The technique of tranquility (Samatha) known as the precedent to the (Vipassana) insight meditation only

Thus it was by intuitive perception that the Bodhisatta attained the noble path of a Buddha who was full

"All have I overcome, all do I know,

From all am I detached, all have I renounced.

Wholly absorbed am I in the destruction of craving (Arahatship).

Having comprehended all by myself whom else shall I call my teacher?

The Four Noble Truths

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No teacher have I. An equal to me there is not,

In the world including gods there is no rival to me,

Indeed an Arahant (supremely Awakened One) am I in this world,

An unsurpassed teacher am I;

Alone am I the All-Perfectly Enlightened,

Cool and appeased am I."

These noble Truths are ever in existence whether the Buddhas appear or not, but it is only a Buddha who

The Truth He had realized was a fourfold division of insight knowledge. This was the Perfectly Enlightened One's

"And what are these Four Noble Truths? They are the Truth of Suffering, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering,

These Four Noble Truths constitute the uniqueness of Buddhism. They are the Buddha's insight, and not common

"O Bhikkhus, so long as the absolutely true knowledge and insight as regards these Four Truths was not

These Truths are termed *Ani Paccā* which are so called because they are discovered by the

The First Noble Truth - SUFFERING (*DUKKHA ARIYA SACCA*)

The Buddha formulated the first Truth in different discourses through the scriptures:

"What, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentations, pain, grief and despair are suffering. To be associated with dislike is suffering To be separated with like is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of grasping existence are all suffering."

The Pali term "Dukkha" which for need of a better English equivalent, is generally translated as suffering or sorrow. As a feeling, Dukkha means that which is difficult to endure (*du=difficult, kha=to endure*).

As a literal sense, the term "Dukkha" is a compound word consisting of

Du-(duvakham assati dukkham)

meaning loathsome or contemptible;

Kha

-meaning void or emptiness. The world rests on suffering, hence it is contemptible or loathsome. The world is devoid of any reality, hence it is empty or void. Dukkha therefore means contemptible void.

And "*Sacca*" (*satanam saccam*) meaning absolutely or immutably true. The word indicates that in the fullest sense of the term, it is absolutely true that every conditional phenomenon in all psychophysical existences is suffering. *Dukkha sacca* therefore means the absolute Truth of Real Suffering.

It is rather hard for average people to see things as they truly are since they are mostly superficial lookers. However, to an *Ariya* who has realized the Noble Truth and attained supreme wisdom, all life is suffering and therefore finds no real happiness in the world which deceives mankind with illusory pleasures. Material happiness is just a temporary feeling and merely the gratification of some desires. For no sooner is the desired thing gained that it begins to be scorned and grieved. As the Teaching says: "Insatiable are all desires."

All are subject to birth (*jati*), and consequently to decay (*jara*), to disease (*vyadhi*), and finally to death (*marana*). No one is exempt from these four inevitable causes of suffering.

All beings are born naturally amidst the threat of pain and suffering from the time of their pregnancy to the final end of death. But to them the world seems a happy place. They view this world as the abode of happiness and joy. So all beings pursue a life of joy and merriment, ignoring all pain and suffering. They think that such pain and misfortune would never fall upon them and thus they spend their life in the sensual pleasures under a self-delusion.

The world is indeed filled with pain, grief, sorrow, misery, anguish and lamentation. Birth, life and death - the whole process is in the nature of suffering and it has remained as unsolved riddles for every living being. Since the time when a being comes into existence, the child as well as the mother feels suffering all the time in one way or the other. Then the child is getting older and older decaying ceaselessly. Even during such a short moment, various kinds of diseases may affect one at any time. We don't want to get old, to have diseases, to face death, to associate with unloved ones, to separate from the loved ones, not to get our desires. But it is impossible to get whatever one desires in human life, since every one is governed by the law of nature of psycho-physical existence; i.e. the process of first coming into being (*jati*), secondly, appearance of being (*bhuta*), thirdly, conditioning (*sankhata*) and finally passing away (*palokadhamma*).

In short, to find for one's own eating, dressing and living and on the whole every conditioned activity of the grasping aggregate of the five Khandhas i.e. material form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness, are all suffering. Therefore Dukkha is meant in four categories, (1) in the sense of oppression (*pilanattho*), (2) of conditioning (*sankhattho*), (3) of distress (*santapattho*) and (4) of dissolving (*viparinamattho*).

There is no home where old age, disease and death have not come and no one can escape from all these three great fires of woes or miseries, distress, calamity and agony. Almost

everyone might have experienced the bitter grief and sorrow for the loss of lives and properties. In fact, all creatures are restlessly struggling under the stormy-waves of pain and sorrow.

Men are born into the world where pain and sorrow exist. This is a universal truth and it applies to all beings. It was the experience and awareness of this Universal Truth of pain and sorrow that made Prince Siddhattha leave his royal palace and his beloved ones. Therefore everyone should endeavour to realize the Noble Truth of pain and sorrow, which permanently exists in the world of beings. This is the true nature of the world of which everybody should be aware as it is. Most of the worldly people are rather hard to realize this pain and sorrow in its reality just like the blind man who cannot see the light of day.

A human body is like a hospital full of sick persons, for it contains millions of germs and bacteria hidden within it. So everybody is suffering one form or another now and again from so many kinds of diseases. Youth ends in old age; gladness ends in sorrow; health ends in disease; laughing ends in weeping; pleasure ends in misery and pain; birth ends in death; all beings traverse from birth to death and from death to birth again, cycling from life to life or from plane to plane in the process of Samsara. People may escape from all these woeful pain and sorrow only when they realize that they are carrying the great burden of a highly decomposed body and fling it away.

Unless one contemplates on the old age, disease and death, one may be proud of oneself that one is still young in age, healthy and lives long, and thus one cannot realize the true nature of life. By contemplating on the true nature of life, one would not presume that Buddhism is a pessimistic religion. In fact Buddhism is neither pessimism nor optimism, but realistic or may be both, for in Buddhism the follower must try to comprehensively understand the evil as evil, good as good, suffering as suffering, happiness as happiness and so on, in its ultimate sense of the term, whenever and whatever he may experience in life.

The Buddha not only emphasized the Existence as the Truth of Suffering, but also advocated a means to suffering and gain eternal happiness. He perceived the universality of pain and sorrow and prescribed a remedy for this universal sickness of humanity. The highest conceivable happiness, according to the Buddha, is Nibbana, which is the total extinction of all suffering of life.

In brief this composite body itself is the very cause of suffering. This First Truth of Suffering which depends on this so-called being and various aspects of life, is to be carefully analysed

and scrutinized. Such a scrutiny leads to a proper understanding of oneself as one really is.

The Second Noble Truth - THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING (*DUKKHA SAMUDAYA ARIYA SACCA*)

Having realized that the existence of mind-body aggregate is merely the embodiment of untold miseries whirling in the process of Samsara, the Lord Buddha probed into and discovered its root cause,

Samudaya , The present life what we experience here is due to the cause we did in previous lives. Buddhism therefore takes for granted a system of moral law which indicates a continuation of the life-process. It is a continuation by way of cause and effect, the cause being (*Kamma*) or volitional actions, and the effect (*vipaka*) or the pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experiences that follow from them.

The succession of lives which the term "rebirth" signifies, is not the reincarnation of a soul-entity. It is an individual current of relation ship in a cause-effect continuum, expressed as "that having been, this comes to be." Obviously we know that we are in existence today as we have been existed yesterday and also that we will be in existence tomorrow. Death is not the total end of life-energy which changes into another psycho-physical form owing to one's craving or clinging. The *Kammic* force or energy for what we did wholesome or unwholesome in past births has evolved as we are here in the present life. The phenomenal personality in which no single element of the five Aggregates survive, but all is incessantly renewed according to the universal rule that where a cause he existed a result must follow from it.

Samudaya

literally means that

"*Samma undeti phalam etenati samudayo*"

it consequently causes the result of suffering.

Therefore *Samudaya* is meant in four categories (1) in the sense of causing suffering (*Nidanattho*); (3)

joining with the process of Samsara

(*Samyogattho*);

and (4) Impediment of the Path and Fruition

(*Palibodhattho*).

The Buddha through His Supreme Enlightenment, discovered the origin of suffering not only in the current life but also in former states of being. It is nothing but the craving or attachment or thirst (*Tanha*) for sentient existence, which is the Second Noble Truth.

"What now is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering? Truly, it is that Craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth, and conjoined with pleasure and lust, finds gratification now here, now there, it is of three kinds: Sensual Craving (*Kamatanha*); Craving for Existence (*Bhavatanha*) and Craving for Self-annihilation (*Vibhavanha*)." [\(Vibhavanha,.\)"](#)

Craving is threefold, namely, craving for sensual pleasures (*Kamatanha*); craving for sensual pleasure associated with the view of eternalism

(*Bhavatanha*),

i.e. enjoying pleasures viewing that they are imperishable, and craving for sensual pleasures viewing that everything perishes after death. The last is the materialistic standpoint. In other words, craving for existence in the Sensual Spheres

(*Kamaloka*),

in Fine- material Spheres

(*rupaloka*)

and in the Formless Spheres

(*arupaloka*)

or mental plane. Usually the two terms,

(*bhavanaha*

and

(*vibhavanaha*)

are rendered by craving for existence and nonexistence

There are six kinds of craving corresponding to the six sense organs such as, eyes, nose, tongue, body and mind, and six sense objects such as, form, smell, sound, taste, touch, and mental objects They become twelve when they are treated as internal and external. They are reckoned as 36 when viewed as past, present and future. When multiplied by the foregoing three kinds of craving, they amount to 108 altogether.

It is natural for a worldling to develop a craving for the pleasures of senses. To overcome

sense-desires is extremely difficult. This craving is a powerful mental force latent in all, and is the chief cause of most of the ills of life. It is this craving, gross or subtle, that leads to repeated births in Samsara and makes one cling to all forms of life altogether.

The Buddha said in the Dhammapada

"From craving springs grief, from craving springs fear,

For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear "(V216)

The Buddha also said in the Anguttara and Digha Nikaya that the worldlings who are conjoined with attachment of craving have to go through the following process of dependent origination

"Dependent on craving, there arises search for what is wanted;

Dependent on search, there arises gain;

Dependent on gain, there arises decision;

Dependent on decision, there arises desirous passion;

Dependent on desirous passion, there arises grasping or firm hold as one's property;

Dependent on grasping, there arises keeping it up in safety;

Dependent on keeping it up in safety, there arises miserliness;

Dependent on miserliness, there arises watch and ward (over one's own);

Dependent on watch and ward, there arises many wicked and evil consequences, such as carrying sticks, weapons, quarreling, contradiction, resort, abuse, contradiction, resort, abuse, slandering, lies, etc.," (A-3, 201)(Di-2,50)

According to the sequence of the above process, one has invariably to encounter manifold sorrows and suffering as long as one is unable to dispel this very craving.

Ordinarily the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest or even the only happiness to an average person. There is no doubt a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and recollection of such fleeting material pleasures, but they are illusory and temporary. According to the Buddha, non-attachment or non-passion (*virage*) or transcending material pleasure is a greater bliss of happiness

Here the Buddha, the Enlightened One said: "[not getting what one desires is indeed suffering](#)" (*Dhammacakka sutta*)

Yet man does not understand what his suffering really is and from where it emerges. He is all the time craving for something more and more, never stopping his discontentment in enjoying sensual pleasures. Man's mind is thus never contented, at ease, and in peace, but flitting and fleeing from one object to another with more expectations for better ways of life. He always falls victim to the domain of sense desires. Thus his mind is most of the time full of attachments, clingings, anxieties, worries, sorrows, etc., since he is nearly always hankering after sensual pleasures.

The commentator of the Path of Purification (*Visuddhimagga*) mentioned in Pail.

"Ditthabandanabaddhante, tanhasotena vuyhare,

Tanhasotena vuyhanta, na te dukkha pamuccare. "

"The stream of craving bears them on,

Caught in the meshes of their views;

And as the stream thus bears them on,

They are not free from suffering.

The grossest forms of craving or sensuous desires are attenuated on attaining the first stage of the Stream-winner (*Sotapanna*) and more weakened at the second stage of Once-returner (Sakadagami and are completely eradicated on attaining the third stage of Non-returner (*Anagami*).

All the latent craving is utterly eliminated on attaining the fourth and final stage of Arahathood. (Sam-3,3 55). This is the one who has been completely released from the endless cycle of birth and death (

Samsara

) and has reached the Lasting Blissful Happiness of Nibbana for ever.

The Third Noble Truth - THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING (*DUKKHA NIRODHA ARIYA SACCA*)

The Buddha, having attained the Supreme Enlightenment, not only probed into the real Truth of Suffering and its root cause, but also its complete cessation and the Way how to attain it. The cessation is total exhaustion of rebirth, pain, sorrow and so on, i.e. Nibbana, the Supreme Blissful Peace. Nibbana is not an abode, nor a plane, but the accomplishment of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is the highest stage of purity of mind which can be obtained only by the highest degree of morality, concentration and insight wisdom. Hence, there is no attachment to life or existence, no selfhood, no desire for passion and lust. On the whole, not a single taint of craving

is found in Nibbana.

As the flame of a lamp is extinguished when the oil is dried up and the wick is burnt out, so it is with the nature of Nibbana, where greed, anger and ignorance are absolutely destroyed and uprooted, not only is the stratum of mind-body existence totally terminated, but also the Supreme Blissful Peace (*Santi sukha*) can be experienced by self-realization. The evolution of life-process comes to a final stop in Nibbana.

The Nibbanic state or nature, of transcendental Peace cannot be fully expressed in words, in thought, or in any form of similes in the worldly sense of the term. But in actuality, it is the most supreme state of peace where there is no rebirth and as a result all suffering, pain, sorrow grief, lamentation, etc. exist no more.

It is absolute peace, tranquillity and fulfillment: no anguish is there for him who has ended his journey and is free from all sorrow who is emancipated in every way and has destroyed all attachments.

There are no more wanderings in *Samsara* for such a one, who like the earth has no resentment, is firm in character like a city gate-post and as pure as a deep pool free from mud Calm is the mind, calm is the speech and calm are the actions of him who rightly understanding, is wholly liberated and at peace." (D

hammapada Arahanta-vagga)

The Pali term "*nirodha*" means "*Nirujhatia ettati nirodho*" that in Nibbana all sufferings ceases, *Anuppadoeva nirodho anuppada nirodho*"

means that in Nibbana, there is no state or nature of whirling in *Samsara*

, i.e., total void of all planes of existences for one who has attained.

Therefore "*nirodha*" is meant in four categories: (1) in the sense of release from *Samsara* (*nissaranattho*);

(2) tranquil peace

(*vivekatho*);

(3) unconditioned state

(*asankhatattho*)
and (4) deathlessness
(*amatattho*).

With reference to this truth the Buddha declared in the Dhammacakka Sutta:

"Thus, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering, the complete cessation, giving up, abandonment of that craving, complete release from that craving and complete detachment."

**The Fourth Noble Truth - THE PATH LEADING TO THE CESSATION OF
SUFFERING (DUKKHA NIRODHA
GAMINIPATIPADA ARIYA SACCA)**

We know that Nibbana which is free from all suffering is attainable in the present life by treading the Path shown by the Buddha. In the first discourse after His Enlightenment, the Buddha delivered to the five disciples that there are two extreme courses to be avoided, on the one hand, that of sensual indulgence, which is impure, low, vulgar, worldly, unworthy and unprofitable, and on the other, the practice of extreme physical asceticism, which is painful, vain and unprofitable. In contrast to these stands "The Middle Path" which the Enlightened One has discovered - the Path which enables one to see and to know which leads to peace, to discernment, to full knowledge of Nibbana. Free from pain and torture is this Path, free from lamentation and anguish, it is the perfect Path." (Samyutta, 56)

It is called the Path because it destroys defilements and goes to Nibbana (In Pali - *kilese marento nibbanam gacchatiti maggo*), and it also searches for Nibbana (in Pali - *nibbanam maggi gavesati maggo*).

The Path has its characteristics of release, the essence of dispelling defilements and also foundation for setting free from *Samsara*. Regarding the Path, there are four categories, namely, it is so called Path in the sense of release from *Samsara* (*nissaranattho*), the base for attaining Nibbana (*hetuttho*),

of seeing Nibbana
(*dassanatto*)
and of dominance in leading to the Path of Nibbana
(*adhipateyattho*).

The Noble Eightfold Path, therefore, is a way of life that begins with the mind and ends with the transcended. Its first requirement is Right Understanding, which means an intellectual grasp of the nature of existence. "What now is Right Understanding?" Truly, it is to understand suffering, the extinction of suffering and the Way to its extinction (D.N.22). Elsewhere it is explained that it also means the understanding of the law of moral causality, the roots of meritorious action. In Samyutta Nikaya it is also said that "When one understands that physical body, feeling, perception, the mental formation and consciousness are all Impermanent (and hence subject to suffering and devoid of selfhood), in that case also one possesses Right Understanding.

"What now is Right Intention?" Truly, it is intention that is free from greed and lust, free from ill-will, free from cruelty. It is of two kinds. Right Intention concerned with the things of this world, which expresses itself in good actions bringing good worldly results; and Right Intention directed towards the higher path of purification, which has Nibbana as its fruit."

"And what now is Right Speech? Truly, it is to avoid lying, and adhere to the Truth; to abstain from speaking ill of others and to promote harmony instead of dissension, to abstain from harsh language and cultivate gentle, courteous speech; and to avoid vain, irresponsible and foolish talk, speaking always in reasoned terms on subjects of value, such as the Dhamma of the Enlightened One."

"And what now is Right Action? Truly, it is to avoid the taking of life, to avoid theft and misappropriation, to avoid sexual intercourse with women under the protection of their father, mother, brother, sister or relatives, married women, and women under the ban of the king, engaged women and women who are the temporary wives of others. Now avoidance of killing, of theft and of sexual intercourse with the prohibited classes of women is called mundane Right Action: it results in good worldly fruits in this life or another. And the complete rejection of these actions with a pure mind intent upon the Path is deliverance - that is called transcendental Right Action and has its results in the Paths and Fruits of purification.

"And what now is Right Livelihood? Truly it is to reject wrong means of livelihood and to live by right means. A man of right livelihood therefore follows only harmless occupation without any

selfish motives. He never commits himself to deceit, trickery or fraud in his living but deals only with work which is fair, just, profitable and virtuous for himself as well as for others. In his earning of a living, he avoids trading in arms, poisons, flesh, intoxicating drinks and living beings."

By living up to the above three moral principles of body and speech, the average person or ignorant worldling becomes a good or virtuous worldling (*Sappurisa*), because he can keep the observance of the five Precepts, namely, abstaining from killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, telling lies and indulgence in intoxicating drinks. In this way, when a person abstains from bodily and verbal vice he becomes a perfect virtuous worldling (*kalyana*), who has attained the stage of Purification of Morality (*Sila Visuddhi*).

With regard to the mental training or the state of concentration (*Samadhi*), there are three factors, viz. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

"And what now is Right Effort? Truly, it is the Four Great Efforts (*Sammāpadhāna*). Right Effort here means endeavouring to live a moral and blameless life. Therefore one has to practise the four principles of Right Effort, namely, the effort to prevent evil thoughts that have not yet arisen, the effort to eliminate evil thoughts that have already arisen, the effort to cultivate and develop good and beneficial states of mind which have not yet arisen, and the effort to maintain and meditate the good and beneficial states of mind which have already arisen."

"And what now is Right Mindfulness? Truly, it is the contemplation of the Body, of Feeling, of Consciousness and of Mental-objects. There, the disciple dwells in contemplation of the four Fundamentals of Mindfulness, ardent, clearly conscious and attentive, putting away worldly greed and grief. It is the only way that leads to the attainment to purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief to the entering upon the right path and the realization of Nibbana "(*Mahāsatipatthāna suttā*)

"And what now is Right Concentration? Truly, it is the absorption of the mind, the fixing of the mind upon a single object: this is the Right Concentration." Being aware of mindfulness by concentrating on a single object of touch or body, sensation and consciousness, eventually the process of consciousness or mental states, so-called Mind which has been always flitting, shaking and moving about from object to object, from idea to idea, without any rest or pause,

now will slowly settle down into a calm and tranquil state called the Stage of Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*).

The Path is conveniently divided into three parts, namely Right Understanding and Right Intention belonging to (Panna), Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood to (Sila) morality, and Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration to (Samadhi) concentration. Though there are three stages of attainment towards the Path and Fruition, the way of practice is the only one. i.e. the practice of in-and-out breathing, or in other words, touch and awareness of the breath at the nostrils, For instance, just by concentrating on the object of in-and-out breathing, the three stages are simultaneously fulfilled resulting in bodily and mental purity together with insight knowledge.

So in order to realize the Four Noble Truths, an aspiring person must find them out within himself, i.e., one must meditate to fully understand the true nature of the aggregate of Mind and Matter within one self. On this point, the Buddha therefore states: "In this way one fathom long body with its perception and thoughts, do I proclaim the world (of Suffering), the Origin of the world (of Suffering), the Cessation of the world (of Suffering) and the Way to the cessation of the world of suffering.

This main and interesting passage refers to the essence of the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha Himself discovered by His own Enlightened Wisdom and proclaimed to the world of all beings to search like Himself for the realization of Truths within the inner realm of them selves as that they can be released from the whirl pool of Samsara and attain the Lasting Supreme Happiness of Nibbana.

May you all be able to realize the Four Noble Truths!