

Chapter 3

The Four Noble Truths¹

Topics

- The First Noble Truth: Dukkha sacca
- The Second Noble Truth: Samudaya sacca
- The Third Noble Truth: Nirodha sacca
- The Fourth Noble Truth: Magga sacca

These four Noble truths are fundamental teaching. The heart of Buddha teaching lies in the Four Noble Truths (Cattāri Ariyasaccāni) which he taught in his first sermon to his old companions, the five ascetics, at–Deer park (modern Sarnath) near Benares. In his sermon, as we have it in the original texts, these Four Noble Truths are given briefly. They are:

1. Dukkha sacca - the Truth of Suffering
2. Samudaya sacca - the Truth of the Cause Suffering
3. Nirodha sacca - the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
4. Magga sacca - the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering

But there is innumerable place in nearly Buddhist scriptures where they are explained again and again, which greater detail and in different ways.

¹ Phramaha Sukee Kantasilo and Piboonsak Muengkot

➤ **The First Noble Truth: Dukkha sacca**

The Buddha's discovery of the solution to problem of suffering began with the recognition that life is suffering. This is the first Four Noble Truths. If people examine their experiences or look at the world around them, they will see that life is full of suffering or unhappiness. Suffering may be physical or mental. The suffering is divided into three types namely: -

Physical suffering

Physical suffering takes many forms. People must have observed at one time or another, how their age relative suffer. Most of them suffer aches and pains in their joints and many find it hard to move about by themselves. With advancing age, the elderly find life difficult because they cannot see, hear or eat properly. The pain of disease, which strike and old alike, can be unbearable. The pain of death brings much suffering. Even the moment of birth gives pain, both to mother and child who is born. The truth is that the suffering of birth, old, age, sickness and death are unavoidable.

Some fortunate people may now be enjoying happy and carefree lives, but it is only a matter of time before they too will experience suffering. What is worse, nobody else can share this suffering with the one that suffers.

For example, a man may be very concerned that his mother is growing old. Yet he cannot take her place and suffer the pains of

aging on her behalf. Also, if a boy falls very ill, his mother cannot experience the comfort of his illness for him. Finally, neither mother nor son can help each other when the moment of death comes.

Mental suffering

Beside physical suffering, there are also various forms of mental suffering. People feel sad, lonely, or depressed when they lose someone they love through separation or death. They become irritated or uncomfortable when they are forced to be in company of those whom they dislike or those who are unpleasant. People also suffer when they are unable to satisfy their needs and want. Teenagers, for example, feel frustrated and angry if their parents refuse to let them go to a late-night party or spend large sum of money on expensive fashionable clothing or toys. Adults, on the other hand, may be unhappy if they are unable to gain wealth, power and fame.

Other types of suffering

Natural disasters, such as earthquake, flood or famine can cause a lot of suffering to people. People also have to face hardship caused by war and social injustice. Problems can happen in classroom. When you try to study, and yet the room is too noisy or your friends try to disturb you, you may feel unhappy or angry. Sometimes, problems may happen to you personally. When you do not pass an exam, this will make you feel unhappy and disappointed. These problems are

unwanted. People try their best to avoid them and to be free from them. The following is the example of one who suffer.

Reading comprehension on Kisā Gotamī's Grief

Kīsā Gotamī was a young beautiful woman from a rich family who was married to wealthy merchant. When her only son was about a year old, he suddenly fell ill and died. Overwhelm with grief, Kīsā Gotamī took her dead child in her arms and went from one house to another house for asking people if anyone knew medicine that could restore her child's life. Of course, no one was able to help her. Finally, she met a follower of Buddha, who advised her to see the Buddha. When she carried the dead child to the Buddha, and told him her sad story. He listened with patience and compassion. He said to her by these words:

“There only one way to solve your problem. Go and get me five mustards seeds from any family in which there has never been a dead.”

Kīsā Gotamī set off to look for such a household but without success. Every family she visited had experienced the dead of one person or another. At last, she understood what the Buddha had want her to found out for herself – that dead comes to all. Accepting the fact that death is inevitable, she no longer grieved. She took her child's away and later returned to the Buddha to become his followers.

“The Buddha taught us to recognize that the suffering is a fact of life and that no one can avoid it, as stated in the First Noble Truth”

➤ **The Second Noble Truth: Samudaya Sacca**

Meaning

The causes of suffering are three cravings: sensual craving, craving for existence, craving non-existence based on greed and selfishness. The Buddha saw that the cause of suffering which are selfishness, craving and greed. People want all kinds of things and want to keep them forever. However, greed is endless, like bottomless pit that can never be filled. The more you want, that more unhappy life is. Thus, our limitless want and desires are the cause of our suffering. Many children who have had a taste for chocolate will keep asking for more. When they do not get it, they will feel upset even angry. Although, they know that eating too much chocolate may cause them to have a stomachache and a toothache, they still want more. The thing we want most can cause us the most suffering. The following is the example of the cause of suffering.

Reading comprehension on the Monkey Trap

In China, monkeys are caught in a very special way. The trapper first takes a coconut. He then makes a hole in its side just big enough for a hand to go through when it is not clenched into a fist. He then

places some peanuts in a coconut and put it in spot where monkeys usually visit. Before leaving the coconut behind, he would scatter some peanut around coconut. Sooner or later, a curious monkey would come along. It would first eat the peanuts on the ground. Then, it would find the coconut and see that it is full of peanuts. When it puts its hand into the hole to help itself to the peanut, it would be unable to withdraw its hand, which is now fistful off peanuts. No matter how hard its struggles and pull, it would not get free. It would cry out loud and become anxious. Every monkey has to do is to let go of the peanuts to get free, but it would not want to do that. In this situation, the monkey is easily caught by the trapper.

“We are like the monkey. We want to be free from suffering, but we are not willing to let go of our desires, which so often get us into trouble. This is the Second Noble Truth.”

➤ **The Third Noble Truth: Nirodha sacca**

Meaning

The Nirodha cacca means having no craving cause suffering. In which, there three kinds of craving namely; sensual craving, craving for existence, and craving for non existence. If all of them are removed, that is called Nirodha sacca.

The end of suffering, craving must be removed. Just as a fire died when fuel is added, so unhappiness will end when the fuel of craving is removed. When the craving is completely removed, there

will be no more suffering. Our mind will be in a state of perfect peace. We shall always be happy. Buddhists call the state without suffering and having only peace with happiness called Nibbana (*Nivarana*). It an everlasting state of great joy and peace. It is the great happiness in life. The following is the example of cessation of suffering.

Reading comprehension on A Happy Monk's Exclamation

There was once a man of wealth and high position who realized that suffering was the same for rich and the poor. So, he became a monk to practice meditation in order to develop his mind. Soon, that old monks had 500 monks as follower. One of these monks was always in a good temper, unlike the others who usually look serious. The monk was the only one who knew his source of happiness, and this happy monk was soon appointed chief assistant. A year later, while they were spending the rainy season in a royal garden according to the king's invitation, the old monk was asked to stay at the residence in the palace. The happy monk become the new leader of the group.

One day, this happy monk went to pay respect to the old monk and visit at the palace. All would stay in the residence on seeing him mumbling as follow; ***Here what happiness! Here what happiness!***

The king, who happened to visit the old monk at that time, felt insulted when he was not greeted by this happy monk, who was not

even aware of the king's entrance. Seeing the king's displeasure, the old monk said to him: *“Have patience, my king, and I will tell you the source of this monk's happiness. Not many people know of it. He was once a king like you. But having given up his kingly life for that of a monk, he had found his present joy! Sitting alone in the forest, he had nothing to fear and no need for armed guards surround him. Free from the worry over wealth and power, his wisdom now protects himself and others. He has found such inner peace in meditation that he cannot help saying: “Here what happiness! Here what happiness!”* The king finally understood that what true happiness was. He honored the two monks before returning to his palace.

“Unattached to the wealth and power. Happiness in creases. This is the Third Noble Truth.”

➤ **The Fourth Noble truth: Magga Sacca**

Meaning

Magga sacca means the path leading to the end of suffering or the way cessation of suffering called “The Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle ways.”

- 1. Right Understanding** (Sammāditthi)
- 2. Right Thought** (Sammāsaṅkappa)
- 3. Right Speech** (Sammāvācā)
- 4. Right Action** (Sammākammaṇṭa)

5. **Right Livelihood** (Sammā-ājīva)
6. **Right Effort** (Sammāvāyāma)
7. **Right Mindfulness** (Sammāsati)
8. **Right Concentration** (Sammāsamādhi)

Reading comprehension on Comparison of Raft

A man who was escaping from a group of bandits came to a vast stretch of water that was in this way. He knew that this side of the shore was dangerous and the other side was safe. However, there was no boat going to the other shore, nor was there any bridge for crossing over. So, he quickly gathered wood, branches and leaves to make raft, with the help of the raft, he crossed over safely to the other side.

“The Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha is like the raft. It would take us from the suffering of this shore to other shore of no suffering.”

Conclusion

The fundamental of the Buddha’s teaching is “The Four Noble Truth.” They are:

Dukkha sacca: The Truth of suffering

Samudaya sacca: The Truth of the Cause of Suffering

Nirodha sacca: The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

Magga sacca: The Truth of the Path Leading the
Cessation of Suffering

1. The First Noble Truth (Dukkha sacca): The Truth of suffering is the nature of life, its suffering, its sorrows and joys, its imperfection and unsatisfactoriness, its impermanence and insubstantiality.

2. The Second Noble Truth (Samudaya sacca): The Truth of cause of suffering is the origin of Dukkha, which is desire accompanied by all other passions, defilement and impurity.

3. The Third Noble Truth (Nirodha sacca): The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is Nibbana-the absolute truth, the ultimate reality.

4. The Fourth Noble Truth (Magga sacca): The Truth of the Path Leading the Cessation of Suffering is the path leading to the realization of Nibbana.

Vocabulary

ภาษาอังกฤษ	คำแปล
The Four Noble Truth	อริยสัจสี่
The Cause of Suffering	เหตุแห่งทุกข์
The Cessation of Suffering	การดับทุกข์
Buddhist scripture	คัมภีร์พระพุทธศาสนา
recognition	การจำได้, การยอมรับ
mental	ทางตันจิตใจ
fortunate	โชคดี
discomfort	ไม่สะดวก

depress	กดดัน
irritate	ทำให้โกรธ
disaster	ความเสียหาย
famine	ขาดอาหาร
compassion	ความกรุณา, ความสงสาร
grief	ความโศกเศร้า
greed	ความโลภ
endless	ไม่สิ้นสุด
anxious	วิตก, กังวล
insult	ดูหมิ่น
meaningful life	ชีวิตมีความหมาย
gossip	นินทา
idle talk	พูดเพ้อเจ้อ
slaughter	การฆ่า(สัตว์)เป็นอาหาร
intoxicant	ของมึนเมา
sorrow	ความโศกเศร้า
joy	ปีติ
unsatisfactoriness	ความไม่พอใจ
The Noble Eightfold Path	มรรคมีองค์แปด
sermon	คำสอน, เทศนา
companion	มิตร, สหาย
ascetic	ฤาษี, นักพรต
suffering	ทุกข์
physical	ทางด้นร่างกาย

pains	ความเจ็บปวด
illness	ป่วย
carefree	ไม่มีความวิตกกังวล
separation	การพลัดพราก
frustrate	ทำให้รำคาญ
earthquake	แผ่นดินไหว
injustice	ไม่ยุติธรรม
patience	ความอดทน
desire	ค้นหา
selfishness	ความเห็นแก่ตัว
clench	ปิดสนิท
everlasting	ไม่เปลี่ยนแปลง
thought	ความคิด
backbite	กัดข้างหลัง
harsh word	พรูสวาจา
impurity	มลทิน
trading	การค้าขาย
bandit	โจร
absolute truth	ความจริงสูงสุด
imperfection	ข้อบกพร่อง
defilement	กิเลส
impermanence	อนิจจัง

Exercise

1. Chose the correct meaning from the column B and fill in the blanks in front of column A

Column A	Column B
_____ 1. noble truth	a. grief
_____ 2. sermon	b. bad deed
_____ 3. cessation	c. reality
_____ 4. truth	d. Sammāditthi
_____ 5. desire	e. Sammāvāyāma
_____ 6. unwholesome	f. unfulfilled
_____ 7. disappointed	g. ariyasacca
_____ 8. sorrow	h. opportunity
_____ 9. Right livelihood	i. Sammā-ājīva
_____ 10. Right mindfulness	j. Sammasati
_____ 11. Right concentration	k. not enough
_____ 12. Right effort	l. thirst, logging
_____ 13. Right Understanding	m. teaching
	n. extinction, to end
	o. Sammāsamādhi
	p. purification

Reference

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