



**AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS IN  
*THERAVĀDA* BUDDHISM**

**INDANYANI**

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for Degree of  
Master of Arts  
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

C.E. 2017



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The Graduate School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis entitled "An Analytical Study of the Four Noble Truths in Theravāda Buddhism" in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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**Abstract**

This qualitative research has been learned on the documentary based. There are three objectives, namely: (1) to study the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths, (2) to study the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths and (3) to analyze and apply the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism.

The findings show the Four Noble Truths are the most standard higher virtuous teachings of the Buddha which are conducive to attain *Nibbāna*. A practical method of the Four Noble Truths with appropriate method. It has also given of their individual context in order to know their distinctions and distinguished characters of the Four Noble Truths. In order to make an ideal humanity by the solution of the problems, the teaching, their idea characters from the well-known people and from the Buddha's teachings.

## **Acknowledgement**

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Indanyani

January 17, 2018

## **List of Abbreviations**

The abbreviations employed in these references are, primary, standard abbreviations which are the most recurrently used for references in my thesis are:

A.	AṅguttaraNikāya
D.	DīghaNikāya
DhA.	Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā
Dhp	Dhammapada (KhuddakaNikāya)
Dhs.	Dhammasaṅgaṇī (Abhidhamma)
DhsA	DhammasaṅgaṇīAṭṭhakathā (Aṭṭhasālinī)
It.	Itivuttaka (KhuddakaNikāya)
J.	Jātaka
M.	MajjhimaNikāya
S.	SamyuttaNikāya
Thīg.	Therīgāthā (KhuddakaNikāya)
Vin.	Vinaya Piṭaka
Vism	Visuddhimagga

### **Other Abbreviations**

p.	Page
pp.	Pages
tr.	translated

## **List of Charts**

Chart-1	Showing the Four Noble Truths as Ultimate level Of Truths and Conventional level of Truths	56
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*Sotāpattiphala Kondañña*



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# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and the Significance of the Problems

The Enlightened One was born in the sixth century B.C., at *Kapilavatthu*, as the son of the king who ruled the *Sakya* country, a principality situated in the border area of modern Nepal. His personal name was *Siddhattha*, and his clan name *Gotama*, who was destined to be the greatest religious teacher in the world.<sup>1</sup> The teaching of the Lord Buddha were not to escape from life, but to help us relate to ourselves and the world as thoroughly as possible. The core teachings of Lord Buddha are the Four Noble Truths, especially the fourth Noble Truth which is the path leading us to refraining from doing those things that cause us suffering. Thus, has it been said by the Buddha, the Enlightened One: “It is through not understanding, not realizing four things, that I, Disciples, as well as you, had to wander so long through this round of rebirths. And what are these four things?

They are: The Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*),<sup>2</sup> The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), and the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminipatipadā*).”<sup>3</sup>

At the outset, one may be tempted to ask why these Truths are called Noble the *Pāli* word is *ariya*,<sup>4</sup> and why they are only four in number, not less, not more. The well-known commentator Venerable *Buddhaghosa* in his *Visuddhimagga* has answered both these questions.

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<sup>1</sup>ÑānatilokaMahāthera: “**The Word of the Buddha**” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo), p.1

<sup>2</sup> D II,305-6

<sup>3</sup>DighaNikāya, Sutta p.16

<sup>4</sup>Vism, 659.

They are called “Noble” truths for three reasons- because they have been discovered by the Noble Ones such as the Buddhas, the *Pacceka* Buddhas and the Arahants, also because they are real and not unreal; they deal with reality. As regards the reason why there are only Four Truths, not less, not more, the explanation is that no other Truth can harmoniously exist side by side with these Four Truths, and not one of these Truths can be eliminated without loss of meaning.

If one of these Truths is eliminated, the sequence suffers, the chain of reasoning breaks and the meaning in its fullness is lost. If one more Truth is added, that Truth is bound to be of a different significance and different type covering a different field and will not fit in with the existing Truths. Hence it is not possible to conceive of either supplementing them or reducing their number. Dukkha, dukkha’s cause, dukkha’s cessation and the path leading to this cessation—so constitute a certain totality, a definite unity of logical considerations, that they must remain at four, not less, not more. Not only do these Four Truths form the heart and core of Buddhism, these Truths are also so far-reaching—touching life at every point, so encompassing, taking in every aspect of life, that no amount of thinking on them can ever be deemed sufficient or complete until such thinking reaches the level of a definite spiritual experience, as distinguished from a mere theoretical understanding of them. One has only to glance through the pages of the twelfth part of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* known as the *Sacca Saṃyutta* or Kindred Sayings about the Truths, to realize the importance of repeatedly pondering on these Truths. Here, these Four Noble Truths are regarded as the topic of all topics, the one topic which appertains to Reality and leads to awakening of the highest wisdom, the one topic for the complete realization of which “householders in the past have rightly gone forth from home to the homeless life.”<sup>5</sup>

This is the one line of thought worth cultivating, worth meditating on. “All other thoughts,” says the Buddha, “are not concerned with real profit; they are not the rudiments of the Holy life; they conduce not to

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<sup>5</sup>S.V. p. 352

revulsion, to cessation, to tranquility, to full understanding, to perfect wisdom. They conduce not to *Nibbāna*.”<sup>6</sup> How very vital these Four Truths are to man’s spiritual development can be gauged from this significant remark of the Buddha appearing in the *Sacca Saṃyutta*. If there are any for whom you have any fellow feeling, if there are any who may deem your worth listening to your friends and colleagues, your kinsmen and blood-relations, it is your duty to rouse them, admonish them, and establish them in the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths.”<sup>7</sup>

Hence, every occasion for hearing these Truths should be regarded as an additional aid, a further approach to the process of realizing the wisdom of these inestimable Truths. Those who have intently contemplated these Truths will tell you that a wonderful feature about these Truths is that each time you ponder deeply on them some new aspect of these Truths, some new feature, some new point of view will present itself before you. In short, you will know that you have learnt something new. This is so because it takes time to comprehend fully these Truths; they are so vast, so wide, so full and so profound, while man’s ability to comprehend them and realize them is so weak and so poor. It is said that nothing is more interesting to man than the study of man. Viewed in this light a study of the Four Noble Truths should be of the deepest interest to us since they are all about us, they concern us, and are dependent on us. These Truths involve a consideration, of not so much the external world as the internal world of mind. The external is a reflection of the internal. There is no external world to be viewed, if there is no internal world which can view it. The physical is always a manifestation of the mental. Hence it is that the Buddha in the *Rohitassa Sutta*<sup>8</sup> said, “In this one fathom long body along with its perceptions and thoughts do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid p. 354, p. 355, p. 378

<sup>7</sup> S. V. p. 368

<sup>8</sup>S. II.26

<sup>9</sup>S.I. p. 86

The word “world” here means the world of dukkha (suffering) and dukkha is an experience of the internal world of self. It should therefore be our aim, meditating on these Truths, to be able to see in ourselves, in the everyday affairs of our lives, in every event and circumstance connected with ourselves, an exemplification of these Four Noble Truths until they become a definite living experience—a spiritual experience which is quite different from a theoretical understanding of these Truths. Another feature about these Truths, which those who contemplate them intently will tell you, is that when the First Noble Truth is comprehended by anyone, the Second Noble Truth suggests itself to him, and when the Second Noble Truth is comprehended, the Third Noble Truth suggests itself, and similarly the Fourth. The Buddha is reported to have mentioned this, as stated by the Monk *Gavaṃpati* in the *Sacca Saṃyutta*.<sup>10</sup>

These Truths thus constitute a progressive series, each Truth leading up to the next and each throwing light on the next. It is the failure to understand these Truths that is responsible for the distressing position in which man finds himself, tossed about as he is in a state of conflicting emotions, passions and desires. In the *Koṭigāma Vagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* the Buddha has said: “O Monks, it is through not understanding, not penetrating these Four Noble Truths that we have run on, wandered on, this long, long road, both you and I.”<sup>11</sup> One feature about these Truths, which needs special mention and which for practical purposes is perhaps the most important, is the urgency of understanding and realizing them. Many are the illustrations employed by the Buddha to emphasize this urgency. I shall content myself with mentioning just one. It is recorded in the *Sacca Saṃyutta* that the Buddha on one occasion asked this question: when one’s turban is ablaze or one’s head is ablaze what should be done? The monks answered “The Buddha, when one’s turban is a based or head is ablaze, for the extinguishing thereof, one must put forth extra desire, extra effort, extra endeavor, extra impulse, extra attention.” Rejoined the Buddha, “It is just such an extra desire, effort,

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<sup>10</sup> Kindred Sayings, S. V. p. 369

<sup>11</sup> Kindred Sayings, S V. p. 565

endeavor, impulse, mindfulness and attention that one should put forth for the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths.”<sup>12</sup>

The Buddha discovered that profound the Four Noble Truth, so difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, tranquilizing and sublime, which is not to be gained by mere reasoning, and is visible only to the wise. “The world, however, is given to pleasure, delighted with pleasure, enchanted with pleasure. Truly, such beings will hardly understand the law of conditionality, the dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)<sup>13</sup> of everything; incomprehensible to them will also be the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving, detachment, extinction, *Nibbāna*.<sup>14</sup>

## **1.2 Objectives of the Research**

- 1.2.1 To study context and origin of the Four Noble Truths.
- 1.2.2 To study the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths.
- 1.2.3 To analyze and apply the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism to the Daily Life.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problems Desired to Know**

- 1.3.1 What is the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths?
- 1.3.2 What is the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths?
- 1.3.3 What is the analyze and apply of the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism to the Daily Life?

## **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The scope of the research is stipulated into the following dimensions:

### **1.4.1 Scope of Source of Data**

All of source of data are about the Four Noble Truths and how we develop the Four Noble Truths. The primary sources of *Tipiṭaka*, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries by using the *Pāli* text Society’s English translations series. As well as the secondary sources of Buddhist

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<sup>12</sup> Kindred Sayings, S.V. p. 372

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-250.

<sup>14</sup> DīghaNikāya, II.pp. 32,33

textbooks, and journals respectively, together with the later interpretation from modern scholars.

### 1.4.2 Scope of Content

This research will be conducted to carry out those retreat programs in real and analysis the results in order to summarize some important factors on developing the retreat programs of practicing the Four Noble Truths.

Scope of field will be used from the Tipitaka canonical texts and commentaries.

## 1.5 Definition of Terms Used in the Research

1.5.1 **The Four Noble Truths** in *Pālī* language is *Ariyasacca*. It includes of suffering (*Dukkha*); the cause of suffering (*Dukkha-Samudaya*); the cessation of suffering (*Dukkha-niroda*); the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*Dukkha-nirodagāminipaṭipadā*).

1.5.2 **Analyze** refers to analytical study on the general aspects and its application.

1.5.3 **Theravāda** means the doctrine of the Elders. It is the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Tipitaka, or *Pāli* canon, which scholars generally agree contains the earliest surviving record of the Buddha's teachings. For many countries, *Theravāda* has been the predominant religion of continental Southeast Asia (Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Sri Lanka).

1.5.4 **Noble Eightfold Path** - in *Pāli* language is *Ariyaatṭhaṅgikamagga*, means the factors or constituents of the path. It is the fourth of the Lord Buddha's Four Noble Truths and is also known as the Middle Path or Middle Way, consisting of eight factors: (1) *sammā-diṭṭhi*, (2) *sammāsaṅkappa*, (3) *sammāvācā*, (4) *sammākammanta*, (5) *sammāājīva*, (6) *sammāvāyāma*, (7) *sammā sati*, (8) *sammāsamādhi*.



## 1.6 Review of Related Literature and Research Works

The researcher has reviewed the literatures, information, together with research works which related to the study categorized them into Thai and English languages as follows:

1.6.1 *LediSayadaw*, “*SatusaccaDipani*,” “The manual of the Four Noble Truths”, (Burmese Script) Yangon: *Buddhasasanā* Society Press, 2004.<sup>15</sup>

This book is a work that has written about the Four Noble Truths. While it may well serve as a first introduction for the beginner. From the book it will be seen how the teachings of the Buddha all ultimately converge upon the one final goal: Deliverance from Suffering. This book is the useful book for my thematic paper. This book gives the knowledge to obedience practically the Noble Eightfold Path.

1.6.2 Bhikkhu, Bodhi, “The Noble Eightfold Path”, “The Way to the End of Suffering”, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1984).<sup>16</sup>

This book is a work that has written divided the meaning of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. This book consists of eight sections. Introduction explains the meaning of *Ariya-Aṭṭhaṅgika-Magga*, the Noble Eightfold Path, the background of *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. For my research, it is very useful to learn about the Noble Eightfold Path.

1.6.3 *NyānatilokaMahāthera*: “The Word of the Buddha” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>LediSayadaw, “*SatusaccaDipani*,” “**The manual of the Constituents of the Noble Path**”, (Burmese Script) Yangon: Buddhasasana Society Press, 2004. pp.388-404

<sup>16</sup>Bhikkhu, Bodhi, “**The Noble Eightfold Path**”, “**The Way to the End of Suffering**”, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1984) pp. 1-115

<sup>17</sup>NyānatilokaMahāthera: “**The Word of the Buddha**” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo) pp.5-75

In this book, introduces readers to understand the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path from the view of dukkha. Besides, it also divided the Noble Eightfold Path into the steps of wisdom (*Paññā*), morality (*Sila*), and mental development teaching and practices (*Sammādhī*). This book is the central book for my thematic paper.

1.6.4 The Venerable *LediSayādaw*: The Noble Eightfold Path and its Factors Explained (*Maggaṅga-dīpanī*) Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, (1977)<sup>18</sup>

This book is a work that has written separately the meaning of the Noble Eightfold Path. This book consists of introduction and eight sections. Each section expresses the meaning of each factor and the significance of them. For my research, it is very useful to learn about the Noble Eightfold Path.

1.6.5 Venerable *Mahāsi Sayādaw*: To Nibbāna Via the Noble Eightfold Path, (Republic of the Union of Burma 1980)<sup>19</sup>

The Noble Eightfold Path leading to *Nibbāna* was expounded by the Buddha, soon after his enlightenment as the *Dhammacakka Sutta* to the group of five monks. He continued preaching this doctrine for the remaining 45 years of his life. Even on the eve of his *Mahāparinibbāna* he explained it to *Subhadda*, the wandering ascetic, the last to become an Arahant in his life time, and in whose name the *Subhadda Sutta* was canonized.

1.6.6 Bhikkhu Ñānamoli “The Buddha’s Teaching in His Own Words” Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, (1999)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The Venerable LediSayādaw: **The Noble Eightfold Path and its Factors Explained** (Maggaṅga-dīpanī) Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, (1977) pp.6-42

<sup>19</sup>Venerable MahāsiSayādaw: **To Nibbāna Via the Noble Eightfold Path**, (Republic of the Union of Burma 1980) pp.1-11

<sup>20</sup>Bhikkhu Ñānamoli “**The Buddha’s Teaching in His Own Words**” Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1999, pp. 8-36

In this book introduces the core teachings of Buddhism and shows that the Lord Buddha's teachings were accessible and applicable to daily lives, covering such significant teachings as the Four Noble Truths.

1.6.7 Rāhula, Walpola, "What the Buddha Taught" one world Publication Oxford, 1959.<sup>21</sup>

This book explains the *Cattāri-Ariyasaccāni* that consist of four groups, namely the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering and the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. The Middle Path is referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya-AtṭhaṅgikaMagga*). The Noble Eightfold Path is composed of eight division: namely, Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

1.6.8 Daw Mya Tin. The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories, Editorial Committee, Burma Tipitaka Association, Yangon, Myanmar, 1986.<sup>22</sup>

This book is my favorite book because the Dhammapada text is the essential book for the author that writes the teaching of the Buddha. The Dhammapada consists of Twenty-Six sections (*vagga*) and four hundred Twenty-three verses.

## 1.7 Research Methodology

### 1.7.1 Research Design

This research work of this study is a kind of textual studies and documentary research methodology.

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<sup>21</sup>Rāhula, Walpola, "What the Buddha Taught" one world Publication Oxford, 1959, pp. 16-50

<sup>22</sup>Daw Mya Tin. **The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories**, Editorial Committee, Burma Tipitaka Association, Yangon, Myanmar, 1986. pp. 261-263.

### **1.7.2 Data Collection**

Collecting data from the primary sources of English translations of *Nikāya* and *Pāli* canon in order to explore the body of knowledge of the Four Noble Truths as well as secondary sources of commentaries, sub-commentaries, out of the books written and composed by famous Buddhist scholars.

### **1.7.3 Data Analysis**

Analyzing the raw data as well as systematizing the collected data in order to give a clear of the Four Noble Truths.

### **1.7.4 Outline Construction**

Constructing the entire outline of the work.

### **1.7.5 Problem Discussion**

Discussing the problems encountered according to the significant of the studies.

### **1.7.6 Conclusion and Suggestion**

Conclusion and Suggestion for further studies, observation and practice.

## **1.8 Excepted Advantage from this Research**

1.8.1 Having understood the teaching on the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths.

1.8.2 Having understood a comprehensive knowledge of the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths.

1.8.3 Having understood the teaching of the Four Noble Truths in the *Theravāda* Buddhism.

## Chapter: II

### The Context and Origin of the Four Noble Truths

In this chapter, investigator is going to the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha expounded sutta related with the Four Noble Truths. The very first discourse that the Buddha delivered after his enlightenment enunciates the concept of Four Noble Truths without knowing which liberation from suffering, from the cycle of birth and death, is not possible. It thus has rightly been termed as the most fundamental of his teachings; some commentators even suggest that all his subsequent discourses are essentially further elucidation of the seminal ideas contained in this teaching. This chapter sets out (1) context of the Four Noble Truths and (2) origin of the Four Noble Truths.

#### 2.1 Context of the Four Noble Truths

The Context of the four noble truths reform to the follows, three points, they are (a) The Four Noble Truths as the Wheel of Truth (b) The Four Noble Truths as the Middle Way and (c) The Four Noble Truths as Giving Rise to the First *Sotāpattiphala Kondañña*.

##### 2.1.1 The Four Noble Truths as the Wheel of Truth

*Dhammacakka*<sup>23</sup> is the name given to this first discourse of the Buddha. It is frequently represented as meaning the Kingdom of Truth. The Kingdom of Righteous-ness. The Wheel of Truth. According to the commentators Dhamma here means wisdom or knowledge, and *Cakka* means founding or establishment. *Dhammacakka* therefore means the founding or establishment of wisdom. *Dhammacakkappavattana* means

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<sup>23</sup>The 'Wheel (realm) of the Law', is a name for the doctrine 'set rolling'(established) by the Buddha, i.e. the Four Noble Truths (sacca,q.v). "The Perfect One, O monks, the Holy One, fully Enlightened One, in the Deer Park at near Benares, has set rolling (established) the unsurpassed Wheel (realm) of the Law" (M.141).C.f.cakka.

the exposition of the Establishment of Wisdom. Dhamma may also be interpreted as Truth, and *cakka*<sup>24</sup> as wheel. *Dhammacakkappavattana* would therefore mean the Turning or the Establishment of the Wheel of Truth.

### 2.1.2 The Four Noble Truths as the Middle Way

The Buddha was residing at the Deer Park,<sup>25</sup> in *Isipatana*,<sup>26</sup> near Benares.<sup>27</sup> Thereupon the Exalted One addressed the group of five Bhikkhus as follows: There are these two extremes (*antā*), which should be avoided by one who has renounced (*pabbajitena*) – (i) Indulgence in sensual pleasures<sup>28</sup> -this is base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble and profitless; and, (ii) Addiction to self-mortification<sup>29</sup> this is painful, ignoble and profitless. Abandoning both these extremes the *Tathāgata*<sup>30</sup> has comprehended the Middle Path (*MajjhimaPatipadā*)<sup>31</sup> which promotes sight (*cakkhu*)<sup>32</sup> and knowledge (*ñāna*), and which tends to peace

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<sup>24</sup> The distance the Buddha travels here should be noted: it is some 200 km from Gayā to Benares, and by road the distance is about 250-300 km, which will take some 10 days by foot (Nakamura, 2000:241). It would not be surprising if the Buddha has taught many others along the way, but what records we have of this must have been lost.

<sup>25</sup> Mahāvagga p. 10, S. V, p. 420.

<sup>26</sup> Modern Saranath where, in a former existence, the Master sacrificed His life to save a helpless doe and her unborn little one. The locality takes its modern name from the Bodhisatta who, in that ancient birth, was Sāraṅganātha, protector of the deer.

<sup>27</sup> The distance the Buddha travels here should be noted: it is some 200 km from Gayā to Benares, and by road the distance is about 250-300 km, which will take some 10 days by foot (Nakamura, 2000:241). It would not be surprising if the Buddha has taught many others along the way, but what records we have of this must have been lost.

<sup>28</sup> Kāmasukhallikānuyoga.

<sup>29</sup> Attakilamathānuyoga.

<sup>30</sup> M-a, I. p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> 'Middle Path', is the Noble Eightfold Path which, by avoiding the two extremes of sensual lust and self-torment, leads to enlightenment and deliverance from suffering

<sup>32</sup> D, III. p. 219.

(*vupasamāya*),<sup>33</sup> higher wisdom (*abhiññāya*),<sup>34</sup> enlightenment (*sambodhāya*),<sup>35</sup> and *Nibbāna*.

Moreover, the Buddha also mention the Path What is first truth of the world the Path are as follow that Middle Path the *Tathāgata* has comprehended which promotes sight and knowledge, and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and *Nibbāna*. The very Noble Eightfold Path – namely, Right Understanding,<sup>36</sup> Right Thought,<sup>37</sup> Right Speech, Right Action,<sup>38</sup> Right Livelihood, Right Effort,<sup>39</sup> Right Mindfulness,<sup>40</sup> and Right Concentration<sup>41</sup> – This is the Middle Path which the *Tathāgata* has comprehended. The Buddha continued that this is the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*). Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unpleasant is suffering, to be separated from the pleasant is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering. In brief the five aggregates of attachment are suffering.

The Buddha said that the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering (*dukkhasamudaya-ariyasacca*) is this craving which produces rebirth (*ponobhavikā*), accompanied by passionate clinging, welcoming this and that (life). It is the craving for sensual pleasures (*kāmatanhā*), craving for existence (*bhavatanhā*) and craving for non-existence (*vibhavatanhā*). He said that the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-ariyasacca*;) is the complete separation from, and destruction of, this very craving, its forsaking, renunciation, the liberation therefrom, and non-attachment thereto. This is the Noble Truth of the

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<sup>33</sup> Subjugation of passions.

<sup>34</sup> Realization of the Four Noble Truths.

<sup>35</sup> Attainment of the four Paths and four Fruits of Saint-ship.

<sup>36</sup> Right understanding can be translated as “right view” or “right perspective”.

<sup>37</sup> Right thought can also be known as “right aspiration”, “right intention” or “right conception”.

<sup>38</sup> Right action can also be translated as “right doing” or “right conduct”.

<sup>39</sup> Right effort can be translated as “right endeavor”, “right striving” or “right diligence”.

<sup>40</sup> Right Mindfulness can also be translated as “right awareness” or “right attention”.

<sup>41</sup> Right concentration is also regarded as “right meditation” or “right rapture”.

Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāmini-patipadā-ariya-sacca*). It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

This is the Noble Truth of Suffering. This Noble Truth of Suffering should be perceived (*pariññeyya*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of Suffering has been perceived (*pariññāta*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

This is the Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering. Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering should be eradicated (*pahātabba*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering has been eradicated (*pahīnam*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

This is the Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering. Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering should be realized (*sacchikātabba*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering has been realized (*sacchikatam*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.



This is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering should be developed (*bhāvetabbam*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light. This Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been developed (*bhāvitam*). Thus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

As long as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths under their three aspects<sup>42</sup> and twelve modes<sup>43</sup> was not perfectly clear to me, so long I did not acknowledge in this world inclusive of gods, *Māras* and Brahmas and amongst the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the Incomparable Supreme Enlightenment (*anuttaram-sammā-sambodhim*).

When, the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge in this world inclusive of gods, *Māras*,<sup>44</sup> Brahmas, amongst the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the Incomparable Supreme Enlightenment. And there arose in me the knowledge and insight (*ñāṇadassana*), Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>They are: (a) the knowledge of the Four Truths (*saccaññāna*); (b) the knowledge as regards the respective function of the Four Truths (*kiccaññāna*); and (c) the knowledge that the respective function of each Truth has been accomplished (*kataññāna*).

<sup>43</sup>Each Truth consists of three aspects. Thus, four Truths consist of twelve modes.

<sup>44</sup>Vism, 612.

<sup>45</sup>The reference is to the fruit of Arahant-ship (*Arahattaphala*)

### 2.1.3 The Four Noble Truths as Giving rise to the First *Sotāpattiphala Koṇḍañña*

The last birth, and now there is no existence again. Thus, the Buddha discoursed, and the delighted Bhikkhus applauded the words of the Buddha. When this doctrine was being expounded there arose in the Venerable *Koṇḍañña* the dustless, stainless, Truths seeing eye that is subject to cessation.”<sup>46</sup>

When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the *Dhamma-cakka*, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: This excellent *Dhamma-cakka* which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, *Māra* or Brahma in this world has been expounded by the Exalted One at the Deer Park, in *Isipatana*, near Benares.

Hearing this, the Devas<sup>47</sup> *Cātumahārājikā*, *Tāvātimsā*, *Yāmā*, *Tusitā*, *Nimmānaratī*, *Paranimmitavasavatī*, and the Brahmas of Brahma *Pārisajjā*, Brahma *Purohitā*, *MahāBrahmā*, *Parittābhā*, *Appamānābhā*, *Ābhassarā*, *Parittasubhā*, *Appamānasubhā*, *Subhakinnā*, *Vehapphalā*, *Avihā*, *Atappā*, *Sudassā*, *Sudassī*, and *Akanitthā*, also raised the same joyous cry. Thus, at that very moment, at that very instant, this cry extended as far as the Brahma realm. These ten thousand world systems quaked, tottered and trembled violently. A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world. Then the Buddha said that *Koṇḍañña* has indeed understood. *Koṇḍañña* has indeed understood.”<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, this Sutta the Buddha explain the four noble truths that the first noble truth as the noble truth of suffering, the second noble truth as the origin of suffering, the third noble truth as the cessation of suffering and the fourth noble truth as the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

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<sup>46</sup> Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation (Yaṅkiñcisamudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṅtaṅnirodha-dhammaṃ).

<sup>47</sup> Celestial beings of Deva and Brahma planes.

<sup>48</sup> Venerable NāradaMahāthera, “**The Buddha and His Teachings**” 2522–1980. Vajirārāma, Colombo 5. Sri Lanka.p.70.

## 2.2 Origin of the Four Noble Truths

Here when the Four Noble Truths are studied, the Teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Origin of the story of the Four Noble Truths should be study. The Origin of the Four Noble Truths as preached by the Buddha, the definition of the Four Noble Truths mentioned the Buddha taught in his first discourse are regarded as the essence and outline of all Buddhist teachings. The first two truths concern the origin and path of worldly existence, while the latter two truths concern the origin and path of liberation. The four noble truths are: the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of cessation, and the truth of the path. They are called noble truths because they are truths realized only by noble or superior persons. After identifying the four truths, the Buddha taught how to realize suffering, how to abandon the cause of suffering, how to achieve the cessation of suffering, and how to practice the path to cessation.

### 2.2.1 The Teaching of the Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths can be considered as the foundation of the Buddhist philosophy and thought. It was apparently the first teaching of the Buddha which appears in *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta*<sup>49</sup> in *Sutta Pitaka*. In the strict interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, there cannot be any doubt that the primary aim was to explain how to achieve Nibbana or individual emancipation. However, considering the way in which Buddhist teachings and philosophy have evolved, there is nothing wrong in interpreting the Four Noble Truths in the way they are interpreted here. The reasons are as follows: Buddhism is primarily a philosophy than a religion; As the Buddha was addressing many existential, social and environmental issues of the people, after the attainment of enlightenment or delivering the first teaching, it is possible to assume that he applied or used the same methodology to interpret other issues and problems; The way the Four Noble Truths are interpreted here does not diminish the value of Buddhism but enhances it.

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<sup>49</sup> S.V, 420.

In that sense and interpretation, the Four Noble Truths is primarily about ‘knowledge’ and ‘knowledge acquisition’. That is also the primary purpose of research. The translation records, “Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the *Tathāgatha* producing vision, producing knowledge – leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening and to unbinding.” It is important to emphasize the key phrases: ‘producing vision’, ‘producing knowledge’ and ‘direct knowledge’ if not ‘self-awakening’ or ‘unbinding’. Even one can argue that a kind of ‘middle path’ is crucially important for a present researcher when particularly researching on controversial political, economic, conflict or ethnic matters.

### 2.2.2 The Origin of the story of the Four Noble Truths

The story of Gautama Buddha’s first talk on dhamma after his enlightenment is well known throughout Buddhist literature, primarily from the “Talk on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel” in the Pali Buddhist canon: five companions of the buddha were gathered in Deer Park, outside of ancient *Bārāṇasī* (now Varanasi), and the buddha approached them to tell them of his awakening.<sup>50</sup> The buddha began his talk on dhamma (*dhammakathā*) by explaining that there are two extremes to be avoided: devotion to sensual pleasures and devotion to ascetic practices. Between these two poles, the buddha continues, lies the middle way, which consists of the noble eightfold path.

The buddha explains that this path leads to “insight, knowledge, calm, higher knowledge, enlightenment, and *Nibbāna*”—in short, the eightfold path leads to enlightenment. With the next sentence the Buddha begins explained to the first noble truth: “this is pain” (*idamdukkha*), and

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<sup>50</sup>In Pali, see “*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (Sutta on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel)*,” *Samyutta-nikāya* volume V, 420–423 (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1991). See the translation in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the SamyuttaNikaya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000); and *The Book of the Kindred Sayings* (by C. A. F. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward, 1917–1930). For online access, the [Access to Insight](#) website by John Bullit offers different translations by leading scholars of the *Talk on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel*.

continues with the second, third, and fourth truths. Each truth is laid out in three ways: the buddha states that he, first, came to know that he had to realize the truth that was the truth of pain (future). Secondly, he states that he realizes the truth that was the truth of pain (present), and, third, he declares that he had realized the truth that was the truth of pain (past). These three tenses are the three ways in which the Buddha understood the four noble truths, and when they are multiplied by the four truths, we see the twelvefold way in which the buddha realized the four noble truths.

The Buddha explains to his companions that once he realized and knew the fourth noble truths in the twelve ways, he realized that this life was his last rebirth and that he had no more births in the future. At that moment, inspired by this Dhamma Talk, one of his companions by the name of *Aññāsi Koṇḍañña* (i.e., “One among the *Koṇḍañña* clan who knows”) cultivated a knowledge of the four noble truths and thereby became an enterer into the stream, or the first of four stages on the path to full awakening. At the end of this Dhamma Talk, the gods in the heavens and all beings throughout the cosmos proclaim that the Wheel of Dhamma has turned and that no one may turn it back. With this setting for the four noble truths in the “Talk on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel,” we see how the Buddhist traditions remembered the integral relationship between the buddha’s own autobiographical experience of enlightenment and the act of teaching the four noble truths.

As soon as one of the buddha’s companions realized the truth of what the buddha had learned in his own enlightenment and taught in the “Talk on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel,” the Wheel of Dhamma was turned in the world and could not be turned back. Put differently, the Wheel of Dhamma was not turned when the buddha himself was enlightened: The Wheel of Dhamma was turned in the world only when *Koṇḍañña*,<sup>51</sup> the first awakened follower of the buddha, experienced enlightenment. At the moment when *Koṇḍañña* became a stream-enterer, the “Talk on the Turning of the Dhamma Wheel” declares that a cosmological “noise or sound” was let loose throughout the heavens and

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<sup>51</sup>S.V.420

echoed from one heaven to the next. This is how all Buddhist traditions remember that the Wheel of Dhamma was turned. Desse in points out that the version of this talk that appears in the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* does not refer to a wheel but does say “that when the World-honored One the Buddha cannot make someone else awaken for the four noble truths, he does not set the wheel of the doctrine in motion.”<sup>52</sup>The four noble truths are the most fundamental teaching of Buddhism because that teaching was the means by which *Koṇḍañña* realized the path and thus the way that the buddha set the Wheel of dhamma in motion for all humanity.

### 2.3 Concluding Remarks

The teaching of Four Noble Truths hints at many seminal insights not found in other spiritual traditions, notable among these being: (a) the root cause of suffering is ‘self-consciousness’ arising due to the attachment to the body-mind complex; (b) observation of phenomena as these happen, with wisdom is the key to liberation; (c) right mindfulness is the principle faculty which facilitates such observation. The detailed exposition of these insights is found in other discourses in the *Tipiṭaka*. The most radical of these insights, of course, is that 'self-consciousness' is based on the illusion of 'self'. If reflected on deeply, and put to practice systematically, this insight is sufficient to transform a world into a noble one.

This insight, if put to use in day to day life, can also greatly help in reducing tensions and increase efficacy of all actions; for most of the time the egoic demands of recognition, and resentment if 'someone else' gets more recognition than 'me', fritter away our energy. As one’s pre-occupation with self reduces, actions are motivated not by any personal axe to grind, but by loving kindness and compassion, the natural propensity of mind free from the stranglehold of ego. Imbibing the understanding of ‘no self’ does not kill the motivation to work, as may seem to a logical worldly mind, but only changes the motivation, and

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<sup>52</sup>Bart Dessein, “The First Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine: Sārvastivāda and Mahāsāṃghika Controversy,” in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. A. Heirman and S. P. Bumbacher, 15–48 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012)p. 17.

releases enormous energy which usually gets dissipated in attempts to preserve/ enhance 'self-image'.

The practice of mindfulness of whatever is happening inside is also enormously beneficial. It ensures that any deflections or falling back from our goal, due to casual whims, laziness, or any distracting temptations are brought to the fore at the earliest, not through any external policing – which might arouse indignation and other forms of self-defense but through inner self-awareness. This self-awareness of one's weaknesses naturally creates that inner motivation to arrest the frittering of energy in wasteful activities.

## Chapter: III

### The Meaning and Practice of the Four Noble Truths

The very first discourse that the Buddha delivered after his enlightenment enunciates the concept of Four Noble Truths without knowing which liberation from suffering, from the cycle of birth and death, is not possible. It thus has rightly been termed as the most fundamental of his teachings; some commentators even suggest that all his subsequent discourses are essentially further elucidation of the seminal ideas contained in this teaching. The Buddha himself greatly extols these in these words which are repeated after for each of these Truths. The very first concept that we need to understand is that of 'Noble' Truths.

The Buddha uses the word '*ariya*'<sup>53</sup> to refer to a noble person, an enlightened individual, who has entered the stream of liberation and is thus assured of release from the cycle of birth and death in a maximum of seven future lives. This is in contrast to an ordinary world who is still trapped in the quagmire of repeated becoming. These truths are termed as noble in that by comprehending and putting these into practice properly, an ordinary world can become an *ariya* the noble one. Since this is precisely the purpose of the Buddha's teachings, these 'ennobling Truths' can be expected to contain the quintessence of his teachings.

#### 3.1 Meaning of the Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths contain the essence of the Buddha's teachings. It was these four principles that the Buddha came to understand during his meditation under the bodhi tree. In this section, the meanings of the Four Noble Truths in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the *AbhidhammāPitaka (Vibhaṅga)* and the Dictionaries, Encyclopedias,

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<sup>53</sup> "Ariya" noble (puggala) Vism, p. 659.



Contemporary Scholars. These are the meanings of each noble truth respectively in the Four Noble Truths.

### 3.1.1 Meaning of the Four Noble Truths in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*

In *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*<sup>54</sup>, the heart of the Buddha's teaching lies in the Four Noble Truths which he expounded in his very first sermon<sup>55</sup> to his old colleagues, the five ascetics, at Isipatana near Benares. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Four Noble Truths are: The Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of Suffering.<sup>56</sup> These four are called "truths" because, for the Buddha, these are facts that are independent of personal belief systems, and they are "noble" because a deep insight into these four truths truly ennobles our being, leading us along the path to liberation. The Four Noble Truths form the basis for all the teachings and practices of Buddhism.

Truth (*Sacca*)<sup>57</sup> is that which is. Its equivalent is Satya which means an incontrovertible fact. According to Buddhism there are four such Truths pertaining to this so-called being. This interesting passage refers to the four Noble Truths which the Buddha Himself discovered by His own intuitive knowledge. Whether the Buddhas arise or not these Truths exist, and it is a Buddha that reveals them to the deluded world. They do not and cannot change with time because they are eternal Truths. The Buddha was not indebted to anyone for His realization of them. He Himself said: "They were unheard before."<sup>58</sup> These Truths are in *Pāli* termed

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<sup>54</sup> S. V. p. 420.

<sup>55</sup> *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth', Mhvg, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Rāhula, Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught* (1959), p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> M-a. I.138.

<sup>58</sup> Hence there is no justification for the statement that Buddhism is a natural outgrowth of Hinduism, although it has to be admitted that there exist some fundamental doctrines common to both and that is because those doctrines are in accordance with eternal truth or Dhamma.

*ariyasaccāni*. They are so called because they were discovered by the Greatest *Ariya*, the Buddha, who was far removed from passion.

The first Truth deals with *dukkha*,<sup>59</sup> which for need of a better English equivalent, is rendered by suffering or sorrow. As a feeling *dukkha* means that which is difficult to be endured (du – difficult, kha – to endure). As an abstract truth *dukkha* is used in the sense of “contemptible” (du) and “emptiness” (kha). The world rests on suffering hence it is contemptible. The world is devoid of any reality – hence it is empty or void suffering, therefore, means contemptible void. Average men are only surface-seers. An *Ariya* sees things as they truly are. To an *Ariya* all life is the suffering and he finds no real happiness in this world which deceives mankind with illusory pleasures. Material happiness is merely the gratification of some desire. “No sooner is the desired thing gained than it begins to be scorned.” Insatiate are all desires.

All are subject to birth (*jāti*),<sup>60</sup> and consequently to decay (*jarā*),<sup>61</sup> disease (*vyādhi*),<sup>62</sup> and finally to death (*maraṇa*)<sup>63</sup>. No one is exempt from these four inevitable causes of suffering. Impeded wish is also suffering. We do not wish to be associated with things or persons we detest, nor do we wish to be separated from things or persons we love. Our cherished desires are not, however, always gratified. What we least expect or what we least desire is often thrust on us. At times such unexpected unpleasant circumstances become so intolerable and painful that weak ignorant folk are compelled to commit suicide as if such an act would solve the problem. Real happiness is found within and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honors or conquests. If such worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are misdirected, or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors.<sup>64</sup> Ordinarily the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest

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<sup>59</sup> D.II, pp.305.6.

<sup>60</sup> D II, 305.

<sup>61</sup> DN. I. 3, p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> D, II. 245

<sup>63</sup> D II, 305.

<sup>64</sup> Venerable NaradaMahathera, **The Buddha and His Teachings**, (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1988), p. 242.

and 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.<sup>65</sup> According to the Buddha non-attachment (*virāgatā*)<sup>66</sup> or the transcending of material pleasures is a greater bliss. In brief, this composite body itself is a cause of suffering. This First Truth of suffering which depends on this so called being and various aspects of life, is to be carefully analysis and examined. This examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself as one really is.<sup>67</sup>

The cause of this suffering is craving or attachment (*tanhā*)<sup>68</sup> which is the Second Noble Truth. The grossest forms of craving are attenuated on attaining *Sakadāgāmi*,<sup>69</sup> the second stage of Sainthood, and are eradicated on attaining Anāgāmi, the third stage of Sainthood. The subtle forms of craving are eradicated on attaining Arahant-ship. Both suffering and craving can only be eradicated by following the Middle Way, enunciated by the Buddha Himself, and attaining the supreme Bliss of *Nibbāna*.

The Third Noble Truth is the complete cessation of suffering which is *Nibbāna*, the Ultimate Goal of Buddhists. It is achieved by the total eradication of all forms of craving. This *Nibbāna* is to be comprehended by the mental eye by renouncing all internal attachment to the external world.

This Truth has to be realized by developing the Noble Eightfold Path which is the Fourth Noble Truth. This unique path is the only straight route that leads to *Nibbāna*. It avoids the extreme of self-

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<sup>65</sup> Venerable NaradaMahathera, **The Buddha and His Teachings**, (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1988), p. 243.

<sup>66</sup>Vism. p. 290.

<sup>67</sup> Venerable NaradaMahathera, **The Buddha and His Teachings**, (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1988), p. 243.

<sup>68</sup> D II 308.

<sup>69</sup> The 'Once-returned': s. ariya-puggala, A.

mortification that weakens one's intellect and the extreme of self-indulgence that retards one's moral progress.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.1.2 Meaning of the Four Noble Truths in *Abhidhammā Piṭaka* (*Vibhaṅga*)

In the texts of the *Abhidhammāpiṭaka*, the Noble Truths do not play a major role. The Noble Truths are confined only to the *Saccavibhaṅga* of the *Vibhaṅga*,<sup>71</sup> the second book of the *Abhidhammāpiṭaka*, *Saccapaññatti* of the *Puggalapaññatti*,<sup>72</sup> the fourth book of the *Abhidhammāpiṭaka* and *Saccakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu*,<sup>73</sup> the fifth book of the *Abhidhammāpiṭaka*.

In the *Saccavibhaṅga*,<sup>74</sup> the Noble Truths are dealt with under three headings: Sutta explanation, *Abhidhammā* explanation and Catechetical explanation. The Sutta-explanation is nothing but a summary of the teachings found in the discourses. As *Ñyānatiloka* points out, the *Abhidhammā* explanation has two formal differences from the Sutta-explanation: (1) The Truths are called here throughout the Four Truths not "Noble Truths". (2) Their explanation starts with the second truth.<sup>75</sup>

The Catechetical explanation, among other things, states that Noble Truths can be divided into two as mundane and supramundane, truths of suffering and cause of suffering forming the mundane category and the remaining two truths the supramundane category. The *Saccavibhaṅga* deviates from the approach adopted in the discourses adding an ethical explanation to the truths. The *Saccapaññatti* of the *Puggalapaññatti* is confined to the mere mention of the Four Noble Truths. The *Saccakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu* has a short exposition on rejection the view that the

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<sup>70</sup> Venerable NaradaMahathera, **The Buddha and His Teachings**, (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1988), p. 244.

<sup>71</sup> Vibh, pp. 99-112

<sup>72</sup> Pugganapaññatti, 2

<sup>73</sup> Katha, p. 322

<sup>74</sup> M. III 248

<sup>75</sup> *Ñyānatiloka*, **Guide through the Abhidhammapiṭaka**, 3rd Edition, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1971, p. 30

*Pubbaseliyas* had to the effect that the Four Noble Truths are not conditioned.

The position assigned to the *Paṭṭhāna* and thereby to Dependent Origination among the *Theravāda* Canonical texts and the Buddhist teachings is well emphasized in the following account of the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgani*: “Not even on a single day during the interval of twenty-one days were rays emitted from the Buddha’s body. During the fourth week, he sat in a jewel house in the north-west direction. The jewel house here does not mean a house made of the seven jewels but the place where He contemplated the Seven Books. And while He contemplated the contents of *Dhammasaṅgani*, His body did not emit rays; and similarly, with the contemplation of the next five books. But when, coming to the great book, *Paṭṭhāna*, He began to contemplate the twenty-four universal causal relations of condition, of presentation, and so on, His omniscience certainly found its opportunity therein. For as the great fish finds room only in great ocean so, the Buddha’s omniscience truly finds room only in the *Paṭṭhāna*. Rays of six colors issued from the Buddha’s body, as He was contemplating the subtle and abstruse law by His omniscience which had found such opportunity”.<sup>76</sup>

It is therefore quite obvious that Dependent Origination overtook the Noble Truths in the *Abhidhammāpiṭaka*. This is, willingly or unwillingly, directly or indirectly, what has been accepted in the *Theravāda* tradition. The exalted position of the *Abhidhammā* in the *Theravāda* tradition seems to have raised Dependent Origination over the Noble Truths. *Abhidhammā* analysis in the *Vibhaṅga* breaks down the first three truths according to the impurities (*kilesā*),<sup>77</sup> states (dhamma),<sup>78</sup> roots (*mulāni*),<sup>79</sup> corruptions (*āsavā*),<sup>80</sup> and results (*vipākā*). Craving is also included as a definition. The fourth truth, however, is defined in

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<sup>76</sup> *Aṭṭhasālinī*, pp. 13-14

<sup>77</sup> *Vibh*, p. 385.

<sup>78</sup> *M-a*, I, p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> *Def*, *M-a*, I, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> *Vin*, III. p. 21.

terms of the *jhāna*<sup>81</sup> levels and the eight components of the path. A detailed answer is given for each of the four noble truths, and the above five analytical categories are used to explain the first two truths. The third truth is defined as abandoning craving. The fourth is explicated in terms of the eightfold path and the trance states of the *jhānas*.

### 3.1.3 Meaning of the Four Noble Truths in Contemporary Scholars

There are dictionaries books written about the meaning of the Four Noble Truths. The Four *ariya-saccāni* are the truth about *dukkha*, *dukkhasamudaya*, *dukkha-nirodha*, and *dukkha-nirodha-gāminipaṭipadā*.<sup>82</sup> The first Noble Truths *dukkha* means unpleasant, painful, causing misery. There is no word in English covering the same ground as *Dukkha* does in *Pali*. Our modern words are too specialized, too limited, and usually too strong. *Sukha*<sup>83</sup> and *dukkha* are ease and disease but we use disease in another sense; or wealth and illth from well and ill but we have now lost illth; or wellbeing and ill-ness but illness means something else in English. We are forced, therefore, in translation to use half synonyms, no one of which is exact.

*Dukkha* is equally mental and physical. Pain is too predominantly physical, sorrow too exclusively mental, but in connections they have to be used in default of any more exact rendering. Discomfort, suffering, ill, and trouble can occasionally be used in certain connections. Misery, distress, agony, affliction and woe are never right. They are all much too strong and are only mental<sup>84</sup> Main Points in the Use of the word the recognition of the fact of *Dukkha* stands out as essential in early Buddhism. In the very first discourse the four so-called Truths or Facts (*saccāni*) deal chiefly with *dukkha*.

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<sup>81</sup>Vism-a, p. 146.

<sup>82</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids, and William Stede Pd.D. (ed) **The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary**, London, 1952), p.741.

<sup>83</sup>T. W. Rhys Davids, and William Stede Pd.D. (ed) **The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary**, London, 1952), p.1616.

<sup>84</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids, and William Stede Pd.D. (ed) **The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary**, London, 1952), p.742.

The first of the four gives certain universally recognized cases of it, and then sums them up in short. The five groups of physical and mental qualities which make an individual) are accompanied by ill so far as those groups are fraught with *āsavas*<sup>85</sup> and grasping. (*Pañcupādānakkhandhāpi-dukkha*) The second *Sacca* gives the cause of this dukkha (*Taṇhā*). The third enjoins the removal of this *taṇhā*. And the fourth shows the way, or method, of doing so (*Magga*) as entrance to *Arahant-ship* is the final stage in the recognition of the truth of the causal chain, which realizes the origin of "ill," the possibility of its removal and the "way" to the removal.<sup>86</sup>

In Encyclopedias book, “A fundamental doctrine of Buddhism which clarifies the cause of suffering and the way to emancipation. Shakyamuni is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths in the Deer Park in during his first sermon after attaining Buddhahood.” “A basic Buddhist teaching, which explains the cause of suffering and the means of deliverance therefrom. This was one of the first doctrines taught by the Buddha after his enlightenment. The truths are that (1) all existence entails suffering; (2) suffering is caused by ignorance, which gives rise to desire and illusion; (3) there is an end to suffering, and this state of no suffering is so called Nirvana and (4) the way to end suffering is through the practice of the eightfold Noble Path.”

The first Truth is that the universal human experience of suffering, mental and emotional as well as physical, is the effect of past karma. The second is the perception that the cause of such suffering is craving or grasping for the wrong things, or for the right things in the wrong way. The basic human problem is a misplaced sense of values, assigning to things or persons in the world a value that they cannot sustain ... The

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<sup>85</sup> T. W. Rhys Dvids, and William Stede Pd.D. (ed) **The Pāli Text Society’s Pāli-English Dictionary**, London, 1952), p.279.

<sup>86</sup> T. W. Rhys Dvids, and William Stede Pd.D. (ed) **The Pāli Text Society’s Pāli-English Dictionary**, London, 1952), p.1616.

third is that it is possible for suffering to cease ... The fourth is the Noble Eightfold Path, the way to the solution.<sup>87</sup>

In Contemporary Scholars book “the manual of Buddhism”, the most venerable *Le Di Sayādaw* described that the topic of the Four Noble Truths. The first Noble Truth of suffering means the four inherent characteristics of *dukkha Saccā* are: (a) *Pīlanatṭho*; having the characteristics of oppression, (2) *Saṅkhātattṭho*; having the characteristics of production by a combination of causes, (3) *Santāpaṭṭho*; having the characteristics of continuously burning, heat, fire, (4) *Vipariṇāmatṭho*; having the characteristics of change. Thus, any dhamma that has the above four characteristics is called *dukkha Saccā*. It means that they are dangers much to be feared by the wise. As all causally-conditioned physical and mental phenomena have the above four characteristics, they are called *dukkha Saccā*.<sup>88</sup>

*Nyānatiloka Mahāthera* described that the first noble truth, the noble truth of suffering, refers to Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering, association with the undesirable and the unloved is suffering, separation from the desirable and the loved is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering.<sup>89</sup>

The second Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering that the four inherent characteristics of *samudaya-sacca* are: (a) *Ayuhanaṭṭho*; having the characteristic of accumulating what would cause suffering, (b) *Nidanaṭṭho*; having the characteristic of constantly supplying, or becoming a constant source of supplying of suffering, (c) *Samyogaṭṭho*; having the characteristic of causing union or association with suffering, (d) *Palibodhaṭṭho*; having the characteristic of obstructing, being an obstacle or impediment to freedom from suffering. Thus, any dhamma

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<sup>87</sup>The seeker’s glossary of Buddhism New York San Francisco Niagara Falls Toronto, 1998, p. 286.

<sup>88</sup>The most venerable Le Di Sayādaw: **The manual of Buddhism (SatusaccaDīpanī)** (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1977), p. 256.

<sup>89</sup>Nyānatiloka Mahāthera: “**The Word of the Buddha**” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo) p.7.



that has the above four characteristics is called *samudaya-sacca*. It means that this *samudaya-sacca* really helps the growth of all kinds of suffering. As *tanha* satisfies the above four characteristics, it is all *samudaya-sacca*.<sup>90</sup> The second Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering is craving, which gives rise to fresh rebirth, and bound up with pleasure and lust, now here, now there, finds ever fresh delight. There is the ‘sensual craving, the craving for existence, the craving for self-annihilation.’<sup>91</sup>

The third Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering that the four inherent characteristics of *nirodha-sacca* are: (a) *Nissaranattho*; having the characteristic of being an escape, liberation from suffering, (b) *Pavivekattho*; having the characteristic of being free from disturbance, (c) *Amataattho*; a state where there is no more death or dissolution, (d) *Asankhataattho*; having the characteristic of the unoriginated (Nibbana). Thus, any dhamma that has the above four characteristics is called *nirodha-sacca*. Nibbana alone has the above four characteristics, so it is all *nirodha-sacca*.<sup>92</sup> The third Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and abandonment, liberation and detachment from it.<sup>93</sup>

The fourth Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering that the four inherent characteristics of *magga-sacca* are: (a) *Niyyanattho*; having the characteristic of leading to release or deliverance, (b) *Hetuttho*; having the characteristic of being a cause for the attainment of arahant-ship, (c) *Dassanattho*; having the characteristic of realization of the Four Noble Truths, which is not even dreamt of in the rounds of samsara, (d) *Adhipateyyattho*; having the characteristic of overcoming three kinds of craving and attaining mastery over oneself.

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<sup>90</sup>The most venerable Le Di Sayādaw: **The manual of Buddhism (Satusacca Dīpanī)** (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1977), p. 256.

<sup>91</sup>Nyānatiloka Mahāthera: “**The Word of the Buddha**” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo) p. 19.

<sup>92</sup>The most venerable Le Di Sayādaw: **The manual of Buddhism (Satusacca Dīpanī)** (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1977), p. 257.

<sup>93</sup>Nyānatiloka Mahāthera: “**The Word of the Buddha**” (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo) p. 24.

Thus, any dhamma that has the above four characteristics is called *magga-sacca*. Only the Eightfold Noble Path has the above four characteristics. So, it is *magga-sacca*.<sup>94</sup> The fourth Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering is to give oneself up to indulgence in sensual pleasure, the base, common, vulgar, unholy, unprofitable; or to give oneself up to self-mortification, the painful, unholy, unprofitable: both these two extremes, the perfect one has avoided, and has found out the Middle Path, which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to *Nibbāna*.<sup>95</sup>

The Four Noble Truths appear many times, throughout the Pali Canon. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path were the heart of the Buddha's teaching. The Four Noble Truths were the Buddha's analysis of the cause of suffering. The Eightfold Path was the solution. Together they formed the Dharma, or the doctrines of Buddhism. The Four Noble Truths are:<sup>96</sup>

The Truth of Suffering: Suffering consists of disease, old age, and death; of separation from those we love; of craving what we cannot obtain; and of hating what we cannot avoid. In this world no one experiences total satisfaction. Nothing lasts. Even the happiest moments vanish. The Truth of Origin: All suffering is caused by desire and the attempt to satisfy our desires. People suffer because they want to keep things. They crave and grasp them and are never satisfied with them. They become greedy and self-centered. The Truth of Cessation: Therefore, suffering can be overcome by ceasing to desire. It is possible to see why people fight to keep things. Such feelings can be recognized and rooted out. The Truth of the Path: The way to end desire is to follow the Eightfold Path. This way of rooting out can be done by following new ways of thinking, speaking and acting. Whole attitudes to life can be

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<sup>94</sup>The most venerable Le Di Sayādaw: **The manual of Buddhism (Satusacca Dīpanī)** (Buddhist Publication Society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1977), p. 257.

<sup>95</sup>Nyānatiloka Mahāthera: "**The Word of the Buddha**" (The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo) p. 27.

<sup>96</sup>P.A. Payutto, **Buddhadhamma: An Expanded and revised** (Abridged version), tr., by Bruce Evans, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1996), p. 561.

changed and a new consciousness and outlook gained by following a simple and reasonable Eightfold Path.<sup>97</sup>

In conclusion, the researcher has mentioned the title of the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths. The meanings of the Four Noble Truths in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, in *Abhidhammā Piṭaka (Vibhaṅga)*, in dictionaries, encyclopedias and contemporary scholars.

### **3.2 Practice of the Four Noble Truths**

The main purpose of the Buddha while sharing his discovery of these Four Noble Truths was very practical, viz. cessation of suffering. Clearly mere theoretical understanding of these would not suffice and Buddha mentioned clearly how he himself used these Truths to attain enlightenment.

#### **3.2.1 Way of Practice based on the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Dukkha NirodhagāminīPatipada*)**

The most well know version of the Buddhist path to salvation from suffering is the noble eightfold path (*ariyaattangikamagga*). There are, however, a number of training schemes mentioned in the *Pali Canon* which either lead to enlightenment or contribute to it in some way. Many of these schemes contain practices found in others; so, they can be regarded as various ways of explaining the nature of the spiritual life according to Buddhism. Eventually, a list of 37 factors contributing to awakening (*bodhipakkhiyadhamma*)<sup>98</sup> was compiled. There are four references to this list in the *Sutta Pitaka*, though they are not called *bodhipakkhiyadhamma* in these places.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>P.A. Payutto, *Buddhadhamma: An Expanded and revised (Abridged version)*, tr., by Bruce Evans, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1996), p. 562.

<sup>98</sup> Iti.97.

<sup>99</sup> The Pali Text Society's *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. 2, p.128; vol. 3, pp.117-118; vol. 3, pp. 201-249; *Middle Length Sayings* vol. 3, p.31. These passages display considerable variation in their elaborateness. The simplest is found in the *Middle Length Sayings* version.

The situation in which this list is introduced is the announcement to the Buddha of Mahavira's death and a schism among his followers. The Buddha's response is to identify the items that are accepted by all his followers. In these accounts the thirty-seven items are arranged under seven headings:

The four foundations or applications of mindfulness (*cattarosatipatthana*): of body, of feelings, of thoughts, of phenomena. The four right endeavors or efforts (*cattarosammappadhana*): Avoid the arising of unwholesome states of mind; Overcome existing unwholesome states of mind; Develop wholesome states of mind; Maintain wholesome states of mind. The four steps to (mental) perfection or (mental) power (*cattaroiddhipada*): Concentration of intention; Concentration of energy; Concentration of thought; Concentration of investigation. The five faculties (*panca-indriyani*): Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Insight. The five powers (*panca-balani*): same as the five faculties. The seven factors or limbs of enlightenment (*sattabojjhanga*)<sup>100</sup>: Mindfulness, Investigation of phenomena, Energy, Rapture, Tranquility, Concentration, Equanimity. The noble eightfold path (*ariya-atthangika-magga*): Right view, Right intention, Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood, Right Effort, Right mindfulness, Right concentration.<sup>101</sup>

All of these items can be recognized as forms of yogic practice and many of those from the first six sections reappear in various parts of the eightfold path. I will thus confine my treatment of the path leading to the cessation of suffering to comments about the final section: the noble eightfold path. Many writers present the eightfold path as a relatively unproblematic scheme that will guide an aspirant to the goal of nibbana. My reading of the situation is somewhat different and I prefer to alert anyone who has an interest in Buddhist soteriology to the nature of the controversy, even though I do not have a definitive solution to offer, and then to pretend that the disagreements do not exist. That said, I do find

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<sup>100</sup> D.II.303; Ibid., pp. 336-337.

<sup>101</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhammā*, (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 2000), p.278.

some of the accounts more problematic than others. Of the four alternatives outlined below my preference is for the fourth, which, as it happens, is the most controversial and furthest away from standard accounts. It does, however, answer questions that to my mind the other accounts fail to resolve adequately. I will, therefore, devote more space to describing this account than the others.

It should not be thought that the eight categories or divisions of the path should be followed and practiced one after the other in the numerical order as given in the usual list ... they are to be developed more or less simultaneously. As far as possible, according to the capacity of each individual.<sup>102</sup> A commonly employed metaphor to convey this understanding of the path is an umbrella with eight spokes. One progresses from the outer rim down each of the spokes to the still center of nibbana.

A second interpretation, found in works such as *Sanghrakshita's Survey of Buddhism* and Ñānatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary*, is that initially right view means acceptance of the Buddha's teaching by faith. One's right intention should be based on this. Then follows the practice of the moral principles right speech, action and livelihood, which serve as a foundation for the meditational practice as found in the final three steps of right effort, mindfulness and concentration. Success in the last of these facilitates the experience of 'authentic' right view, right intention, etc. which eventually lead to right knowledge and right release steps nine and ten in some versions of the path. A similar view is found in Peter Harvey's recent introductory text on Buddhism, where he writes:

'The eight factors exist at two basic levels, the ordinary, and the transcendent or noble, so that there is both an ordinary and an Ennobling Eightfold Path ... Most Buddhists seek to practice the ordinary Path, which is perfected only in those who are approaching the lead-up to

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<sup>102</sup>Rāhula, Walpola. (1959) **What the Buddha Taught** (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Gordon Frazer, London, p.46.

stream-entry. At stream entry, a person fully enters the Ennobling Eightfold Path.<sup>103</sup>

A third interpretation is that one actually begins one's practice with right speech and follows the remaining steps until, on the basis of right concentration, one gains right view and right intention. This is a view often associated with the fifth century CE Theravadin scholar *Buddhaghosa* and his magnum opus, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. It is clearly quite close in character to the second interpretation mentioned above.

What all these views have in common is the idea that anyone can decide to follow the eightfold path and start practice right away. The fourth view denies that this is possible. It also denies the existence of two paths, an ordinary and an ennobling, and maintains that the path is to be understood as sequential – beginning with right view and ending with the tenth step of right release.<sup>104</sup> This view has been most eloquently articulated by Peter Masefield of the University of Sidney.<sup>105</sup> Right view, according to Masefield, '... is defined as understanding or possessing knowledge of the four truths; it is to see with right insight (panna) the uprising and cessation of the world as it really is, to have, without dependence on another, no doubt, no uncertainty that whatever up-rises is (dukkha) and that whatever ceases is dukkha... Right view is, in short, to see the Dhamma, to see Nibbana... Such a right view is, moreover, super-

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<sup>103</sup> Harvey, P. (2001) **Buddhism Continuum**, London, p.91.

<sup>104</sup> AnguttaraNikāya 5.244 (Gradual Sayings 5 pp.165-170); DighaNikāya 2.217, 122ff (Dialogues of the Buddha 2 pp.250-251, 130-131); MajjhimaNikāya 2.75f., 3.76 (Middle Length Sayings); SanyuttaNikāya 5.1f. (Kindred Sayings 5 p.3). Quoted in Masefield (1986) p.172.

<sup>105</sup> Masefield, P. (1986a) *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism* Allen and Unwin and Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, and (1986b) 'How "Noble" is the Ariyan Eightfold Path?' in Connolly P. (ed.) *Perspectives on Indian Religion: Papers in Honour of Karel Werner*, Sri Satguru, Delhi, see also Lamotte, E. 'The Buddha, His Teachings and His Sangha' in Bechert, H. and Gombrich, R. (eds) (1984) *The World of Buddhism* Thames and Hudson, London, pp.53-54.

mundane, without karmic consequence and noble and the means by which one comes to be born of the *ariyan* birth.<sup>106</sup>

In Masfield's account it is the acquisition of right view that makes one an *ariyan*, a noble one. *Ariyans*, in this sense, are those who see the four truths for themselves. Possessors of right view see the path to nirvana but have not yet achieved it. What enables them to follow the path, which would be almost impossible if not completely impossible for ordinary people, is that the acquisition of right view destroys the bulk of one's karmic burden. A passage in the *Samyutta Nikāya* describes it thus:

Even so, for the noble hearer who has attained Right View, for the person possessing panna [insight], this is quite the greater dukkha, this that has been destroyed, has been put to an end, whilst that which remains is infinitely small and does not amount to one hundredth, does not amount to one thousandth, does not amount to one hundredth thousandth, when set beside the former dukkha that has been destroyed, has been put to an end – that is at most a term of seven (births) – so great a good is (it to have) insight into Dhamma, so great a good is it to acquire the eye seeing the Dhamma.<sup>107</sup> Those who have acquired right view noble hearers are, according to the *Pāli* texts, of four types – type being determined by the number of hindrances destroyed and the number of rebirths that the person can expect to experience<sup>108</sup>

The first of these is the stream winner, who has destroyed the three fetters of personality belief, skeptical doubts, and faith in good works and religious rituals. The stream winner will be reborn no more than seven times. Second is the once-returner, who has destroyed the same fetters as the stream winner and weakened lust, ill will and dullness. The once-returner will return to the earthly realm for only one more birth. Third is the non-returner, who has destroyed the stream winner's three plus ill will

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<sup>106</sup> Masfield (1986) p.165.

<sup>107</sup> Op. Cit. p.167.

<sup>108</sup> **Dialogues of the Buddha**, vol. 1, pp.200-201.

and sensuous craving. Any future rebirth for the non-returner will be in a heavenly realm.<sup>109</sup>

Fourth is the worthy one, who has destroyed all the above five as well as the *āsavas*<sup>110</sup> of *kama* (lust)<sup>111</sup>, *bhava* (desire for existence) and *avijjā* (ignorance)<sup>112</sup>. Some lists add *ditṭhi* (views, i.e. wrong views/beliefs)<sup>113</sup> to these three. The destruction of the *asavas* is essentially synonymous with the attainment of nibbana, and the arahant is one who is liberated in life. There will be no more rebirth once the karmic energy supporting the present life is exhausted. If Masefield is correct, and the noble eightfold path really does begin with right view as described above, then a person cannot simply decide to begin following the noble path to the cessation of suffering. One has to find a way to obtain right view. It might, therefore, seem strange that the *Pāli* Canon does not provide guidelines on how to get it. This, according to Masefield, is because the discourses recorded in the Canon are mostly directed at those who already have it. What we do have, though, is descriptions of a number of instances where individuals acquire right view.

These descriptions have one thing in common: the individual is a recipient of an orally-delivered proclamation of the dhamma by either the Buddha or one of his *ariyasāvakas*. Interestingly, the state of mind that a recipient enters during such a proclamation is described in terms that are almost identical to those employed in descriptions of the fourth *jhāna*<sup>114</sup>: malleable, devoid of the hindrances, uplifted, devout,<sup>115</sup> which was the state in which the Buddha acquired his own liberating insight.

The message is clear: if you want right view, find someone who already has it (preferably an arahant) and request a teaching on dhamma.

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<sup>109</sup> Harvey (2001) p.251. **Middle Length Sayings** p.219.

<sup>110</sup> Vin, III. p. 21.

<sup>111</sup> Nidd. I. p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Dhs-a, p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> Dhs, pp. 20,381.

<sup>114</sup> Vism-a, p. 146.

<sup>115</sup> Masefield (1986a) p.166.



Whether such a person wears the robes of a monk or nun would seem to be far less important than whether he or she is an *ariyan*, i.e. a *sāvaka* who has gained right view. It is easy to understand why many Buddhists are not attracted to Masefield's analysis, because it tells them that unless they have experienced right view they cannot be following the noble eightfold path that leads to nibbana. Masefield pulls no punches in pointing out the implications of his research:

Whilst this [means of acquiring right view] was of obvious benefit to the fortunate individual who became a *sāvaka*, it had the sinister implication for the Buddhist world that until such a conversion were received, almost as an act of grace on the part of the Buddha, there could be no possibility of anyone, whether monk or layman, following the eightfold way to Nibbana nor of their becoming free of their past *kamma*.<sup>116</sup>

### 3.2.2 Way of Practice based on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (*Ekāyanomaggo*)

The *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* introduces the four *Satipaṭṭhānas* with the following: *Ekāyana*, is this path for the purification of beings, for passing beyond sorrow and grief, for the disappearance of pain and discontent, for the attainment of the right way, for the realization of *nibbāna* that is the four *Satipaṭṭhānas*.<sup>117</sup>

Two ideas are, then, coupled here. First, the path for the purification of beings, and so on, is termed *Ekāyana*; secondly, the path so termed is said to consist of the four *Satipaṭṭhānas*. The latter point is of some interest since it appears that in the four primary *Nikāyas* this formula is only applied to the *Satipaṭṭhānas*. This must be of some significance, since with many of the formulas used in the *Mahā-vagga* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, for example, the seven sets are interchangeable. Not so with the *ekāyana* formula. Interestingly though, the late canonical *Niddesa* does extend the application of the term *ekāyana-magga* to all

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<sup>116</sup> Masefield, P. 'The Savakasangha and the Sotapanna.' Unpublished paper.

<sup>117</sup> D. II. p. 290.

seven sets. The *Niddesa* comments that the Blessed One is *Eka* because he has travelled the *ekāyana* path (*bhagavaekāyana-maggamgatotieko*) and then goes on to explain the *ekāyana* path as 'the four establishing of mindfulness, the four right endeavors, the four bases of success, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven awakening-factors, the noble eightfold path'.<sup>118</sup>

The *Niddesa* then quotes the following verse: Seeing the end and destruction of birth, he knows the *ekāyana* path in friendliness and compassion; by this path they crossed the flood in the past, they will cross [it in the future] and they cross.<sup>119</sup>

So, it is say the *Niddesa*, that the Blessed One is *eka* because he has travelled the *ekāyana* path (*evambhagavāekāyana-maggamgatotieko*). At the same time as extending the term *ekāyana-magga* to all seven sets, the *Niddesa* also preserves a tradition of the term's special association with sati or 'mindfulness': 'that which is mindfulness, recollection the awakening factor of mindfulness, the *ekāyana* path this is called mindfulness.'<sup>120</sup>

The problem is simple: what does *ekāyanomaggo* actually mean, and what is the significance of the expression's special association with the *Satipaṭṭhānas* in the four primary *Nikāyas*? Translators of the *ekāyana* formula seem largely to have passed over the difficulties involved here and assumed that we can straightforwardly render *ekāyana* along the lines of 'the one (i.e. only) way'.<sup>121</sup>

The *Pāli* commentaries, in contrast, provide five basic ways of taking *ekāyana* in the present context:<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Nidd. I. 455-6.

<sup>119</sup> S V. p. 168.

<sup>120</sup> Nidd. I. 10, pp. 347, 506.

<sup>121</sup> Rhys Davids, D TrslIII. P. 327('The one and only path, Bhikkhus, leading to the purification of beings ... is that of the Fourfold Setting up of Mindfulness').

<sup>122</sup> S V. III. pp. 743-4.

(a) Ayana is simply one of the many words for *magga*; *ekāyanoayammaggo* means, then, that this path (the path for the purification of beings) is a single path, and not a forked path (*ekamaggoayambhikkhavemaggonadvedhā-patha-bhūtotievaṃatthodaṭṭhabbo*).

(b) A path that is *ekāyana* is one that is to be travelled alone (*ekenaayitabbo*); one who is 'alone' is one who has left behind the crowd and withdrawn with a mind secluded from the objects of the senses (*ekenātigaṇa-saṃgaṇ-ikaṃpahāyavūpakatṭhenapavivitta-cittena*).

(c) The *ekāyana* path is the path of 'the one' in the sense of 'the best', which means 'the best of all beings', namely the Buddha (*ekassaayanoekāyano; ekassātiṣeṭṭhassa; sabba-satta-ṣeṭṭhovabhagavā*).

(d) An *ekāyano* path is a path that occurs or is found in just one place (*ayatitivaayano; gacchatipavattatītiattho; ekasmiṃayanotiekāyano*); in the present context that is in the dhamma-vinaya of the Buddha (*imasmiṃyeva dhamma-vinayepavattatīnaaññathātivuttaṃhoti*). (e) Finally, a path that is *ekāyana* is one that goes to one place only (*ekamaṃyatīiekāyano*), namely *nibbānaekamaṃnibbānamevagacchatīivuttaṃhoti*.

Here, then, are five different grammatical resolutions of the compound *ekāyana*. Leaving this aside for the moment, what of the term *ekāyana* in other contexts both outside Buddhist literature and elsewhere in the *Nikayas*? In principle they correspond to the second and fifth explanations respectively of those offered in the *Pgli* commentaries. As a noun, *ekāyana* is first of all a lonely place—a place where only one person goes.<sup>123</sup> A second group of usages stems from the notion of 'going to one'. An *ekāyana* is a meeting place, a place where people or things become one; an assembly or gathering together as one. Finally, the word is understood to indicate some kind of spiritual unification—'going to the one'-or the practice that brings this about. It is perhaps worth quoting

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<sup>123</sup>MBh 3. p. 157

some examples of this second group of usages: As the ocean is the meeting place (*ekāyana*) of all waters, as the skin is the meeting place of all kinds of touch, as the nose is the meeting place of all smells ... as speech is the meeting place of all Vedas.<sup>124</sup>

Apart from the *ekāyana* formula lists only one other occurrence of the expression *ekāyanamaggo* in the four primary *Nikāyas*. This is the *Mahāsiha-nāda-sutta*, which uses a series of similes to depict the way in which someone comes to each of the five destinies (*gati*).<sup>125</sup> The passage dealing with the first of these, *niraya*, runs as follows:

Now I, *Sāriputta*, perceiving with my mind the mind of some person understood as follows: 'This person has set out thus (*tathā*), he goes along thus, and he has entered upon that path (*tañcamaggaṃ*). Accordingly (*yathā*) at the breaking up of the body, after death he will arise in a descent, an unhappy destiny, a place of ruin, *niraya*.' After some time, I see him, by means of the divine eye that is purified and superhuman, at the breaking up of the body ... arisen in *niraya*, experiencing feelings that are constantly painful, burning, acute. It is as if, *Sāriputta*, there were a pit of coals more than the height of a man in depth-full of coals without flames and without smoke. And a man might come along scorched by the hot weather, overcome by the hot weather, exhausted, parched, thirsty, heading for that pit of coals by a path that leads to that one place (*ekāyanenamaggenatam evaṅgāra-kāsumpanidhāya*). A man with sight-seeing him would say as follows: 'That good man has set out thus, he goes along thus and has entered upon that path; accordingly, he will come right to this pit of coals.' After a time, he would see him fallen into that pit of coals experiencing feelings that were constantly painful, burning, acute.<sup>126</sup>

Now one might translate *ekāyanenamaggena* in the above passage as 'by a narrow path', yet this would seem to me to lose the force of the image. Miss Horner translates the complete phrase: 'heading direct for

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<sup>124</sup>Brh-Up. pp. 2.4.11

<sup>125</sup>M I. p. 73

<sup>126</sup>M I. p.74

that pit of charcoal itself by the one sole way'.<sup>127</sup> This interpretation of *ekāyanenamaggena* seems again to be inappropriate in the present context. The point of the image seems to be that someone is seen to be following a particular path that leads to a particular place-and that place only. If one sets out along a particular road, one will inevitably arrive at the place at the end of that road.

According to the commentary, the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*'s account concerns the repeated practice of the *Satipaṭṭhānas* during the stages of ordinary (*lokiya*)<sup>128</sup> calm and insight meditation prior to the arising of the transcendent path (*lokuttara-magga*)<sup>129</sup>, which endures for only one moment before giving way to the transcendent 'fruit' consciousness (*phala-citta*).<sup>130</sup>

According to the former in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* only 'the path of prior stage *Satipaṭṭhāna*' the ordinary path prior to the arising of the transcendent path is indicated; according to the latter 'the mixed path' both ordinary and transcendent is indicated. *Cūlasumma* apparently then recited the sutta from the beginning. When he reached the part which states 'whoever, bhikkhus, develops these four *Satipaṭṭhānas* in this way for seven years... ' he realized, the story goes, that it could only be the path of the prior-stage that was intended, since 'the transcendent path having arisen certainly does not last for seven years'. Although I am unsure how this is to be reconciled with characterization of the sutta as the teaching that culminates in arahant-ship in twenty-one places, it is of some interest in the present context. I noted above the way in which the commentary sees *ekāyana* as indicating the clear decisiveness and directness of the 'single way' as opposed to the doubt and wavering of the 'forked path'. Appropriately enough, it would seem that the stages prior to the arising of the transcendent path are precisely the domain of doubt, this is where there is a question of doubt.<sup>131</sup> So for the commentaries at least,

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<sup>127</sup> M Trsl, I. p. 99.

<sup>128</sup> Vism, p. 588.

<sup>129</sup> D-a, p. 331.

<sup>130</sup> Vism. XXII. p. 15.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Ps IV. p. 39

the *Satipaṭṭhānas* are what especially make for the crossing over of doubt and proceeding directly to the conclusion of the path. For this reason, then, the four *Satipaṭṭhānas* embrace a conception of the essentials of Buddhist practice that is clear and direct. In this sense, more than any of the remaining sets, the four *satipaṭṭhānas* provide a description of the path right from basics direct to the final goal and are, it seems, deserving of the epithet *ekāyanomaggo*.

### 3.3 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the Four Noble Truths, the doctrine of truths, have been expounded to the world and it should now be clear that the Four Noble Truths are the central concept of Buddhism. What the Buddha taught during his ministry of forty-five years embraces these Truths, namely: Dukkha, suffering or un-satisfactoriness, its arising, its cessation and the way out of this unsatisfactory state. One who thinks deeply will interpret these Truths as man and his goal, his final deliverance; that is the sum total of the Four Truths. What we call man, in the ultimate sense, is a combination of mind and body, or the five aggregates of clinging. On the human plane dukkha does not and cannot exist independently of man, his mind and body.

It therefore becomes clear that dukkha is nothing else but man himself. As the Buddha himself said: ‘the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha.’ Then we know that the second truth is craving or ‘thirst’ which is the arising, of dukkha. Now where does this craving arise? Where the five aggregates of clinging are, there this craving arises. The third is the stilling, the cessation of this craving, Nirvana--the final deliverance. This, too, is not external to man. The last and the fourth Truth is the Way out of this unsatisfactory state, this repeated existence, samsara. The final goal of the practice is the attainment of perfect happiness, the breaking of the wheel of existences through the realization of *Nibbāna*.

## **Chapter: IV**

### **The Analysis and Apply on the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism to the Daily Life**

The researcher presented the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths, and the concept and practice of the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism in chapter II and chapter III. After we studied about them, the researcher continues to present this chapter together with two main views: (1) Analysis on the general aspects and (2) Application of the Four Noble Truths.

#### **4.1 Analysis on the General Aspects**

The Lord Buddha having attained Buddhahood, spending seven weeks thereafter, visited *Isipatana*, Benaras, by the invitation of the Brahma and preached the first sermon, the Four Noble Truths to the five ascetics including gods and Brahmas assembled there who descended from celestial abodes. It is reiterated that the only singular, sure way available to beings who wander in the cycle of existence is the comprehending appropriately the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are exclusively the teaching of the Buddhas. In this section, the researcher continues to present the Analysis on the general aspects of three sub-views: (1) the Four Noble Truths as Ultimate level of Truths, and Conventional level of Truths, and (2) the Four Noble Truths as Problems solution approach.

##### **4.1.1 The Four Noble Truths as Ultimate Level of Truths and Conventional Level of Truths**

Buddhism recognizes two kinds of Truth, the apparent conventional truth concerning mundane matters and the real or ultimate Truth concerning the supramundane. The ultimate Truth can be realized only by developing the mind through meditation, and not by theorizing or speculation. The Buddha's Teaching is about the Ultimate Truth regarding the world. The ultimate truth in Buddhism is how things really

are. The ultimate truth in Buddhism is how things really are and the conventional truth of things is how they appear.<sup>132</sup>

We may wonder if realizing the absolute or ultimate truth doesn't make everyday life and ordinary things meaningless. It does not because when we gain realization into the ultimate nature of phenomena, everyday life does not contradict this understanding, but is a part of it. This is called the realization of the two truths. This means that we study the ultimate level the way things really are and on the conventional level we study the way things occur according to the laws of interdependence. The conventional world has its relative truth and the ultimate also has its truth. If it weren't like that, ultimate truth would be called "the truth" and conventional truth would be called "lies." But it is called the ultimate truth and the conventional truth because it is understanding the true nature of phenomena when we look at the ultimate level or understanding the way phenomena manifest when we look at the conventional level.

When we realize both of these truths together, it helps us to live in the relative and it is of great practical use. For instance, if someone becomes angry and aggressive towards us, normally we become excited and flare up and fight back. If we realize that what is taking place is a relative and dependent situation, and we are aware of the two truths, then we don't need to strike back. Because we don't strike back, we don't harm ourselves by generating negative karma and we don't harm the other person. So, the two truths are useful. We can see the two things happening: the relative situation emerging and the value of the ground of ultimate truth.

It is the same with desire. Normally we are subject to desire and wanting things. If we can't get them, we become upset thinking, "I must have that. I can't carry on without it." or "I need it." And if we don't get it, our life becomes very miserable. Or if we have something like a precious statue or vase and one day it gets scratched or breaks, we

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<sup>132</sup>Tsering, GesheTashi. **Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth (The Foundation of Buddhist Thought)**, Volume 2, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008), p. 99.



become upset and feel, “Now it is ruined. I loved that thing.” However, when we understand relative and ultimate truth, we realize there is something useful to be learned if we get it or don’t get it.<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, we develop equanimity. We don’t build a situation of desire or become heart-broken if something gets scratched or spoiled. So, understanding the two truths enables us to live very skillfully and once we have that deep realization, then we still go on trying to make the relative world more beneficial. It all becomes like a play or a dream. We are still working to make a beneficial situation, but because there is no longer any grasping or attachment, we work in a more relaxed way.<sup>134</sup>

If the doctrine of dhammas led to its ancillary theory of *paññatti* as discussed above, both in turn led to another development, i.e., the distinction drawn between two kinds of truth as conventional truth and ultimate truth. Although this distinction is an innovation it is not completely dissociated from the early Buddhist teachings. For the antecedent trends that led to its formulation can be traced to the early Buddhist scriptures themselves. One such instance is the distinction drawn in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* between *nītattha* and *neyyattha*. The former refers to those statements which have their meaning “drawn out”, to be taken as they stand, as explicit and definitive statements. The latter refers to those statements which require their meaning “to be drawn out” (*neyyaattha*).<sup>135</sup>

The distinction alluded to here may be understood in a broad way to mean the difference between the direct and the indirect meaning, The distinction is so important that to overlook it is to misrepresent the teachings of the Buddha: “Whoever declares a discourse with a meaning already drawn out as a discourse with a meaning to be drawn out and conversely whoever declares a discourse with a meaning to be drawn out

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<sup>133</sup>Tsering, GesheTashi. **Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth (The Foundation of Buddhist Thought)**, Volume 2, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008), pp. 100-1.

<sup>134</sup>Tsering, GesheTashi. **Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth (The Foundation of Buddhist Thought)**, Volume 2, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008), p. 102.

<sup>135</sup> A. II, p. 60.

as a discourse with a meaning already drawn out, such a one makes a false statement with regard to the Blessed One.<sup>136</sup> What is most important to remember here is that this sutta passage makes no preferential value-judgement in respect of the two statements. One statement is not singled out as higher or lower than the other.

It seems very likely that this distinction between *nītattha* and *neyyattha* has provided a base for the emergence of the subsequent doctrine of double truth, not only in *Theravāda* but also in other Buddhist schools. In point of fact, the commentary to the *Aṅguttaranikāya* seeks to establish a correspondence between the original sutta passage and the Theravada version of the two truths.<sup>137</sup> It must also be noted here that in the schools of Sanskrit Buddhism *nītattha* is evaluated as higher than *neyyattha*. As he further observes, “In *Pāli* neither is factor preferred to the other; one errs only in interpreting one as if it were the other.”<sup>138</sup>

Another important link between the theory of double truth and early Buddhism is found in the *Saṅgīti Sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, where four kinds of knowledge are mentioned: (a) the direct knowledge of the doctrine, (b) the inductive knowledge of the doctrine, (c) knowledge of analysis, and (d) knowledge of (linguistic) conventions (*samuti-nāṇa*).<sup>139</sup>

That there is a close parallelism between the latter pair of knowledge referred to here and the *Theravāda* theory of the two truths as ultimate and conventional is fairly obvious. For what is called *paramattha* is obtained by analyzing what is am enable to analysis (*pariccheda*). So, knowledge of analysis (*paricchedaññāṇa*) could be understood to mean the ability to resolve what appears as substantial and compact into its basic constituents. This exactly is what the dhamma theory is. On the other hand, *samuti-nāṇa*, which is the knowledge of linguistic conventions, could be understood to mean the ability to know that what appears as substantial and compact, yet analyzable, is not

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, loc. Cit.

<sup>137</sup> AA. II, p.118.

<sup>138</sup> F. Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, see nītārtha.

<sup>139</sup> D. III, p. 226.

something ultimately real and therefore that it is a part of consensual reality as we shall see in the sequel, this exactly what *samuti* is all about. Thus, what the sutta passage refers to as the third and fourth kinds of knowledge anticipates not only the dhamma theory but also the theory of double truth, which is a logical extension of the dhamma theory. One interesting feature in the *Theravāda* version of the theory is the use of the term *samuti* for relative truth. For in all other schools of Buddhist thought the term used is *samvrti*. The difference between *samuti* and *samvrti* is not simply that between *Pāli* and Sanskrit, for the two terms differ both in etymology and meaning. According to the first, the Buddha himself proclaimed two kinds of truth as conventional and ultimate, and a third does not exist.<sup>140</sup>

This emphasis on two kinds of truth to the exclusion of a third reminds us of the School of Buddhism, which advocates a theory of triple truth. It also reminds us of a verse stressing the fact that besides the relative and the absolute a third truth is not to be found.<sup>141</sup> The second stanza sets out the validity of the two kinds of statement corresponding to *samuti* and *paramattha* as follows: Statements referring to convention based things are valid because they are based on common agreement; statements referring to ultimate categories are valid because they are based on the true nature of the real existents.<sup>142</sup> As shown here, the distinction between the two truths depends on the distinction between *saṅketa* and *paramattha*. Now, *saṅketa* includes things which depend for their being on mental interpretations superimposed on the category of the real. For instance, the validity of the term ‘table’ is based, not on an objective existent corresponding to the term, but on mental interpretation superimposed on a congeries of material dhammas organized in a particular manner.

Although a table is not a separate reality distinct from the material dhammas that enter into its composition, nevertheless the table is said to exist because in common parlance it is accepted as a separate reality. On

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<sup>140</sup> AA. I, p. 54; KvuA. p. 34; DA. I, pp. 251 -25; S A. II, p. 77.

<sup>141</sup> RCP. P. 171.

<sup>142</sup> AA. I, p. 54; KvuA. P. 34; D A. p. 251; S A. II, p. 77; SS. v. p. 3

the other hand, the term *paramattha* denotes the category of real existents (dhammas) which have their own objective nature. Their difference may be stated as follows: When a particular situation is explained on the basis of terms indicative of the real existents (dhammas), that explanation is *paramattha-sacca*. When the self-same situation is explained on the basis of terms indicative of things which have their being dependent on the mind's synthesizing function, that explanation is *samuti-sacca*. The validity of the former is based on its correspondence to the ultimate data of empirical reality. The validity of the latter is based on its correspondence to things established by conventions.

In the difference between relative and ultimate is explained in a similar manner. It is sought to be based on the principle of physical reducibility and mental analyzability. Thus, in the *Abhidhamma-kosa* we read: If the notion of a thing disappears when it is physically reduced into pieces, then that particular thing exists relatively.

The idea of a pitcher, for instance, disappears when it is reduced to pieces. Again, if the notion of a thing disappears when it is analyzed by mind, then that particular thing, too, is to be regarded as existing relatively. Water, for example: if the material dharmas such as color, which constitute what is called water, are separated mentally from one another, then the notion of water disappears. It is to be understood therefore that such things as pitcher, cloth, water, fire, etc., are called so according to conventional practice and from the point of view of relative truth. Hence from the point of view of relative truth if one says 'There is a pitcher', 'There is water', one speaks truthfully and not wrongly.<sup>143</sup>

The *Abhidhammākosā* observes that the two examples given here refer to two kinds of reducibility: the pitchers, etc., can be broken by means of a physical apparatus, whereas water, etc., can be analyzed by mind (buddhi). Stated otherwise: what exists relatively is of two kinds: (a) that which exists on the basis of another which is also relative, and (b) that which exists on the basis of something that is real. In the case of the former, it is physically breakable and mentally analyzable. Both

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<sup>143</sup> AKB. p. 335.

possibilities can be there at one and the same time. A pitcher, for example. It can not only be reduced to pieces by another physical object but can be analyzed by mind into its constituent atoms and elements. In the case of the atoms, they can be analyzed only by mind. An aggregate-atom (*samghāta-paramāṇu*), for example, can be analyzed only by mind into its constituent unitary atoms (*dravya-paramdnu*), and not physically.<sup>144</sup>

Although this explanation appears to be different from the ones we have already discussed, here, too, analyzability is taken as the criterion in distinguishing the two kinds of truth. One important question that concerns the two truths is the status of one truth in relation to the other. Are the two truths co-ordinate? Or, is one truth higher than the other in the sense that it is more valid? Obviously, the use of the term *paramattha* which means the ultimate, absolute, or the highest to describe one truth seems to show that what is so described represents a higher level of truth. This in fact seems to be the position taken up by almost all Buddhist schools. But not so is the case with *Theravāda*. As pointed out by K. N. Jayatilleke in his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, one misconception about the *Theravāda* version of double truth is that *paramattha-sacca* is superior to *samuti-sacca* and that “what is true in the one sense, is false in the other.”<sup>145</sup>

This observation that the distinction in question is not based on a theory of degrees of truth will become clear from the following free translation of the relevant passages contained in three *Pāli* commentaries. Herein references to living beings, gods, Brahma, etc., are *samuti-kathā*, whereas references to impermanence, suffering, egoless-ness, the aggregates of the empiric individuality, the bases and elements of sense-perception and mind-cognition, bases of mindfulness, right effort, etc., are *paramattha-kathā*. One who is capable of understanding and penetrating to the truth and hoisting the flag of *Arahantship* when the teaching is set out in terms of generally accepted conventions, to him the

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<sup>144</sup> AKvy. p. 524.

<sup>145</sup> K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p. 364.

Buddha preaches the doctrine based on *samuti-kathā*. One who is capable of understanding and penetrating to the truth and hoisting the flag of *Arahantship* when the teaching is set out in terms of ultimate categories, to him the Buddha preaches the doctrine based on *paramattha-kathā*. To one who is capable of awakening to the truth through *samuti-kathā*, the teaching is not presented on the basis of *paramattha-kathā*, and conversely, to one who is capable of awakening to the truth through *paramattha-kathā*, the teaching is not presented on the basis of *samuti-kathā*.

There is this simile on this matter: Just as a teacher of the three Vedas who is capable of explaining their meaning in different dialects might teach his pupils, adopting the particular dialect which each pupil understands, even so the Buddha preaches the doctrine adopting, according to the suitability of the occasion, either the *samuti* or the *paramattha-kathā*. It is by taking into consideration the ability of each individual to understand the Four Noble Truths that the Buddha presents his teaching either by way of *samuti* or by way of *paramattha* or by way of both (*vomissakavasena*). Whatever the method adopted the purpose is the same, to show the way to Immortality through the analysis of mental and physical phenomena.<sup>146</sup>

As seen from the above quotation, the penetration of the truth is possible by either teaching, the conventional or the ultimate, or by the combination of both. One method is not singled out as superior or inferior to the other. It is like using the dialect that a person readily understands, and there is no implication that one dialect is either superior or inferior to another. What is more, as the commentary to the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* states specifically, whether the Buddhas preach the doctrine according to *samuti* or *paramattha*, they teach only what is true, only what accords with actuality, without involving themselves in what is not true (*amusāva*).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> D A. I, pp. 251-252; S A. II. p. 77,

<sup>147</sup> D A. I, p. 251; S A. II, p. 72.

The statement: “the person exists” (*samuti-sacca*) is not erroneous, provided one does not imagine by the person a substance enduring in time. Convention requires the use of such terms, but as long as one does not imagine substantial entities corresponding to them, such statements are valid. On the other hand, as the commentators observe, if for the sake of conforming to the ultimate truth one would say, “The five aggregates eat”, “The five aggregates walk”, instead of saying: “A person eats”, “A person walks”, such a situation would result in what is called a breach of convention resulting in a breakdown in meaningful communication.<sup>148</sup>

Hence in presenting the teaching the Buddha does not exceed linguistic conventions (*Nahibhagavāsamannamatidhāvati*),<sup>149</sup> but uses such terms as “person” without being led astray by their superficial implications (*aparāmasamvoharati*).<sup>150</sup> Because the Buddha is able to employ such linguistic designations as “person” and “individual” without assuming corresponding substantial entities, he is called “skilled in expression” (*vohāra-kusala*)<sup>151</sup> The use of such terms does not in any way involve falsehood (*musāvādonajāyati*).<sup>152</sup> As one commentary says, “Whether the Buddhas speak according to conventional truth or whether the Buddhas speak according to absolute truth they speak what is only true and what is only actual”.<sup>153</sup> Skillfulness in the use of words is the ability to conform to conventions, common usages, designations, and turns of speech in common use in the world without being led astray by them.<sup>154</sup>

Hence in understanding the teaching of the Buddha one is advised not to adhere dogmatically to the mere superficial meanings of words (*navacanabhedamattamālambitabbaṇi*).<sup>155</sup> The foregoing observations should show that according to the *Theravāda* version of double truth, one

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<sup>148</sup> S A I, p. 51.

<sup>149</sup> KvuA. p. 103.

<sup>150</sup> Vsm T. p. 346; KvuA. P. 103: AA. 1, pp. 54-55:

<sup>151</sup> SA. I, p. 51.

<sup>152</sup> C f. M A. I, p. 125.

<sup>153</sup> D A. I, pp. 251 -252.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>155</sup> Abhvt. p. 826.

kind of truth is not held to be superior or inferior to the other. In this connection one important question arises. If no preferential evaluation is made in respect of the two truths, what is the justification for calling one the absolute or ultimate truth and the other the conventional truth? Here what should not be overlooked is that if one truth is called absolute or ultimate it is because this particular kind of truth has for its vocabulary the technical terms used to express what is ultimate, i.e., the dhammas into which the world of experience is ultimately resolved. Strictly speaking, the expression ultimate does not refer to the truth as such, but to the technical terms through which it is expressed. Thus *paramattha-sacca* really means the truth expressed by using the technical terms expressive of the ultimate factors of existence. In like manner, conventional truth means the truth expressed by using conventional or transactional terms in common parlance.

Another thing that needs mention here is the obvious fact that *samuti* is not the same as *samuti-sacca*. So is the relationship between *paramattha* and *paramattha-sacca*. *Samuti* is that which is based on general agreement or common consent, for example, 'table', 'chair', 'the sun', 'the moon', 'living being in the sense of a self-entity'. All these exist by way of being designated by words (*nāma-paññatti*). In other words all forms of 'samuti' or what is consensually real are different kinds of *attha-paññatti* (meaning-concepts).<sup>156</sup> They are all objects of conceptual thought.

On the other hand, *paramattha* means that which is ultimate, that which is not further resolvable or divisible. The reference is to the dhammas, the ultimate data of existence. Accordingly, *samuti* and *paramattha* are not on par. On the other hand, *samuti-sacca* and *paramattha-sacca* are on par. For as two ways of explaining what is true they are of equal status. One is not superior or inferior to the other. No preferential value-judgement is introduced here.

The position taken up by the *Theravādins* as to the relative position of the two truths is very faithful to the distinction drawn in the

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<sup>156</sup> SS. vv. p. 367 ff.; PV. vv. p. 1062 ff.; NRP, vv. p. 847 ff.



*Aṅguttaranikāya* between two ways of presenting the Dhamma, i.e., the distinction drawn between *nītattha* and *neyyattha*, to which we have already drawn attention. For, as we saw earlier, no preferential evaluation is made in respect of them. One statement is not considered higher or lower than the other. All that is emphasized is that they should not be confused. This precisely is the situation with the *Theravāda* version of double truth as well.

In point of fact, the *Ahhidhammāvātāra* says that if one were to understand the true implications of the two truths one should not make a confusion between the two (*asaṅkarato hātabbāni*).<sup>157</sup> What this really means is that we should “not interpret one truth as if it were the other”. They are two different but parallel contexts. This situation does also remind us of the particular context in which the Four Noble Truths should be understood. Although the Four Noble Truths represent four different facts, no preferential evaluation is introduced in respect of them. As four statements or propositions, they are all co-ordinate. One particular truth is not held out as superior or inferior to another.

That is precisely why they are all introduced as Noble Truths (*ariya-saccani*). All are equally noble (*ariya*)<sup>158</sup>, and all are equally true (*sacca*)<sup>159</sup>. But this does not mean that “suffering” and “cessation of suffering” in themselves are of equal status. It is only as two propositions or as two statements of truth that they are co-ordinate. Thus, there is one important feature common to the Four Noble Truths, the distinction between *nītattha* and *neyyattha*, and the *Theravāda* version of double truth. It is that in none of them we find a hierarchical presentation. This situation is very much in consonance with how early Buddhism presents various modes of analysis: The factors obtained through analysis, such as the five aggregates, the twelve sense-bases, and the eighteen elements of cognition are never presented in such a way as to show that one factor is higher or lower than another. The western countries and Eastern countries

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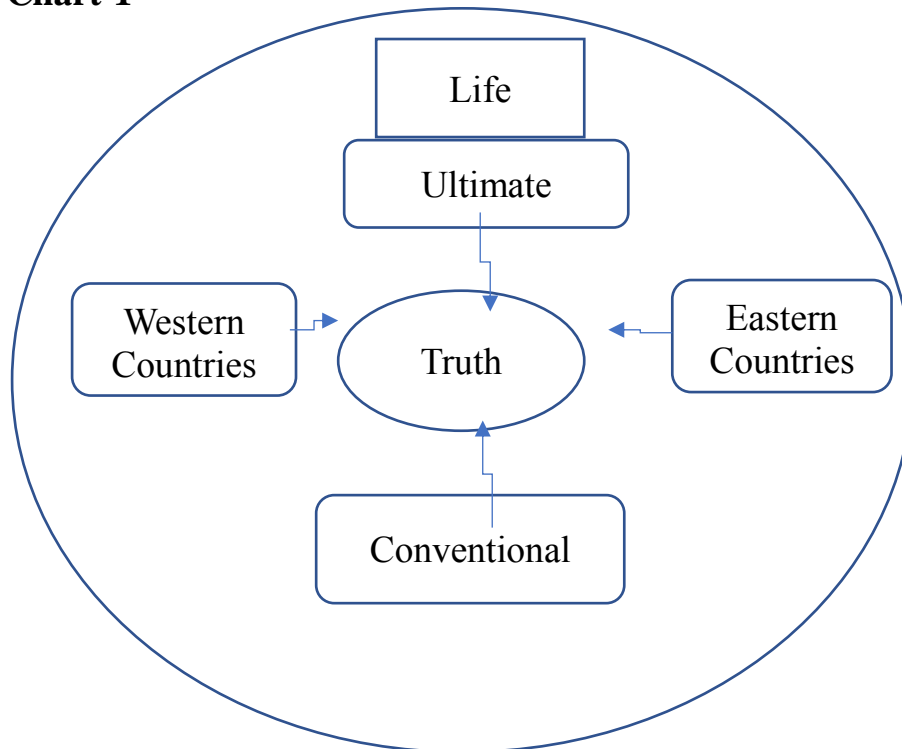
<sup>157</sup> Abhv. p. 88.

<sup>158</sup> Vism, 659.

<sup>159</sup> M-a I, 138.

not only countries in this world but also the whole unlimited universe share this concept truth.

**Chart-1**



#### **4.1.2 The Four Noble Truths as Problems-Solution Approach**

The Truth of Suffering, the First Noble Truth is generally get a meaning as "Life is suffering." Many people new to Buddhism tune out as soon as they hear this. But the *Pali* word *dukkha* also refers to anything that is temporary, conditional, or compounded of other things. Even though something precious and enjoyable is *dukkha*, because it will end. Related to the nature of life is the nature of self. We can understand that life is impermanent but are everybody of us is as the same. The Buddha taught that before we can understand life and death we must understand the self.

The Truth of the Cause of Suffering, the Second Noble Truth teaches that the cause of suffering is craving or thirst (*tanhā*)<sup>160</sup>. We continually search for something outside ourselves to make us happy. But no matter how successful we are, we never remain satisfied. Lord Buddha

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<sup>160</sup> D, II. 308.

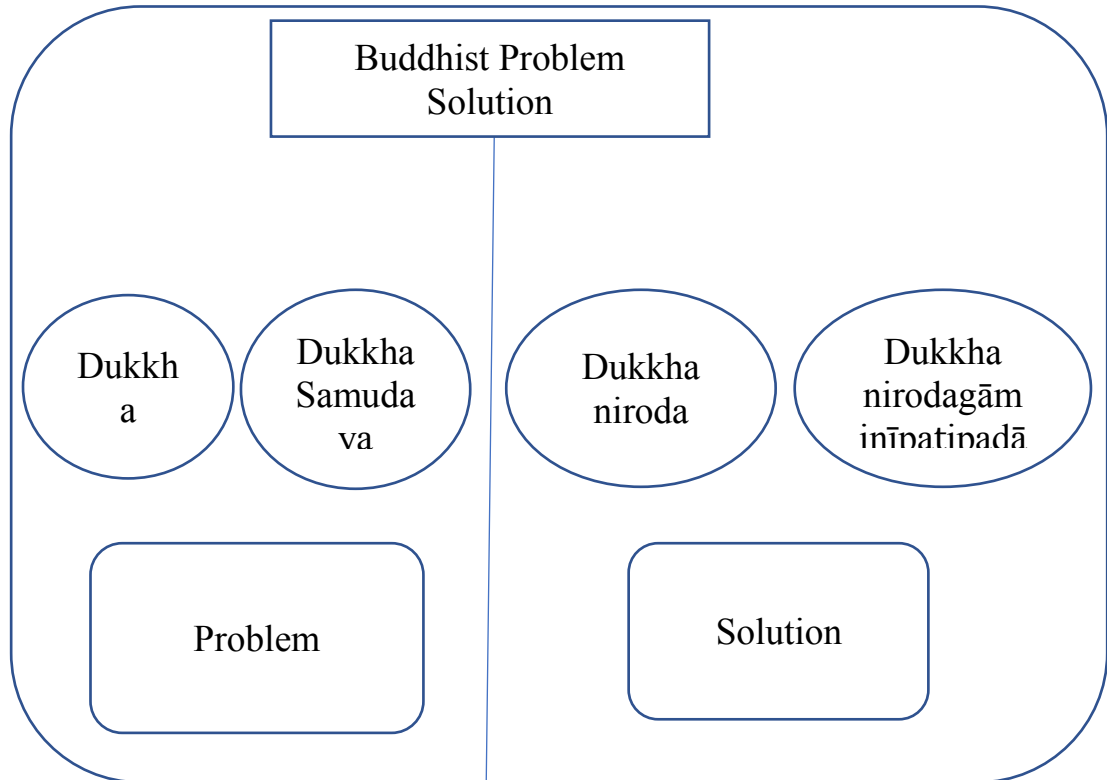
taught that this thirst grows from ignorance of the self. We go through life grabbing one thing after another to get a sense of security about ourselves. We attach not only to physical things, but also to ideas and opinions about ourselves and the world around us. Then we grow frustrated when the world doesn't behave the way we think it should and our lives don't conform to our expectations. The Buddha's teachings on karma and rebirth are closely related to the Second Noble Truth.

The Truth of the End of Suffering, the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths are sometimes compared to a physician diagnosing an illness and prescribing a treatment. The first truth tells us what the illness is, and the second truth tells us what causes the illness. The Third Noble Truth holds out hope for a cure. The Buddha taught that through diligent practice, we can put an end to craving. Ending the hamster-wheel chase after satisfaction is enlightenment (bodhi, "awakened"). The enlightened being exists in a state called Nirvana.

The Truth of the Path That Frees Us from Suffering, in the Fourth Noble Truth, the Buddha as physician prescribes the treatment for our illness namely "The Eightfold Path". Unlike in many other religions, in Buddhism there is no particular benefit to merely believing in a doctrine. Instead, the emphasis is on living the doctrine and walking the path.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Gyatso, GesheKelsang, **Introduction to Buddhism: (An Explanation of the Buddhist Way of Life**, Tharpa Publications,2008), p. 55.

**Chart-2**

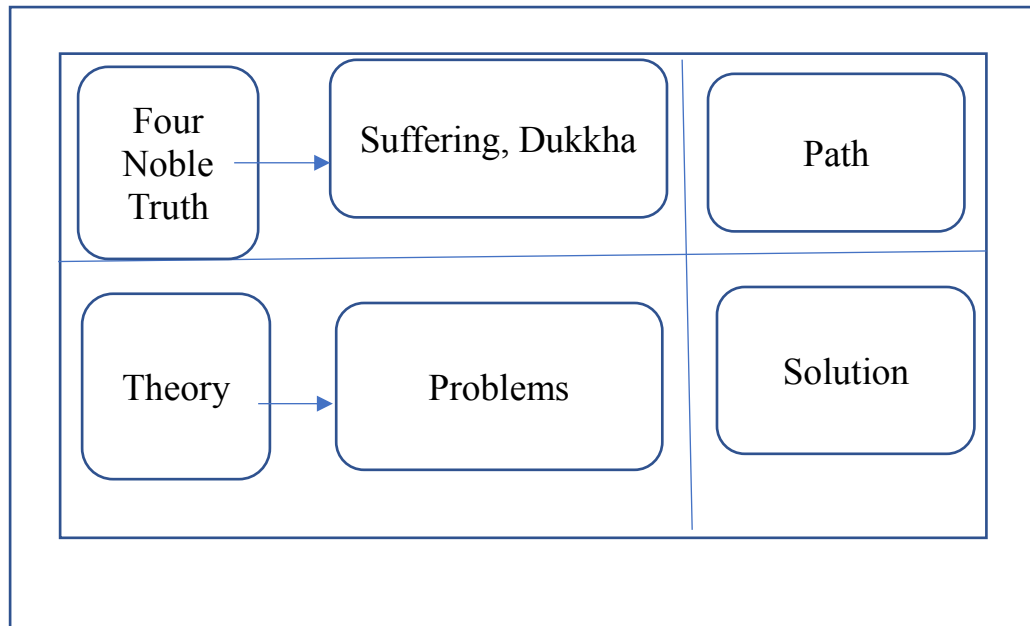
In conclusion this thesis examines the Buddha's limited fundamental teachings that contribute to peace building and peacekeeping in the world. A Buddhist worldview based on the principle of dependent origination thus, its analysis of the causes of conflicts and violence, and the open communication and participatory decision make procedures in social organizations, would inform and provide useful paths for theoretical approaches and research base applications in peace studies.

#### **4.2 Application of the Four Noble Truths**

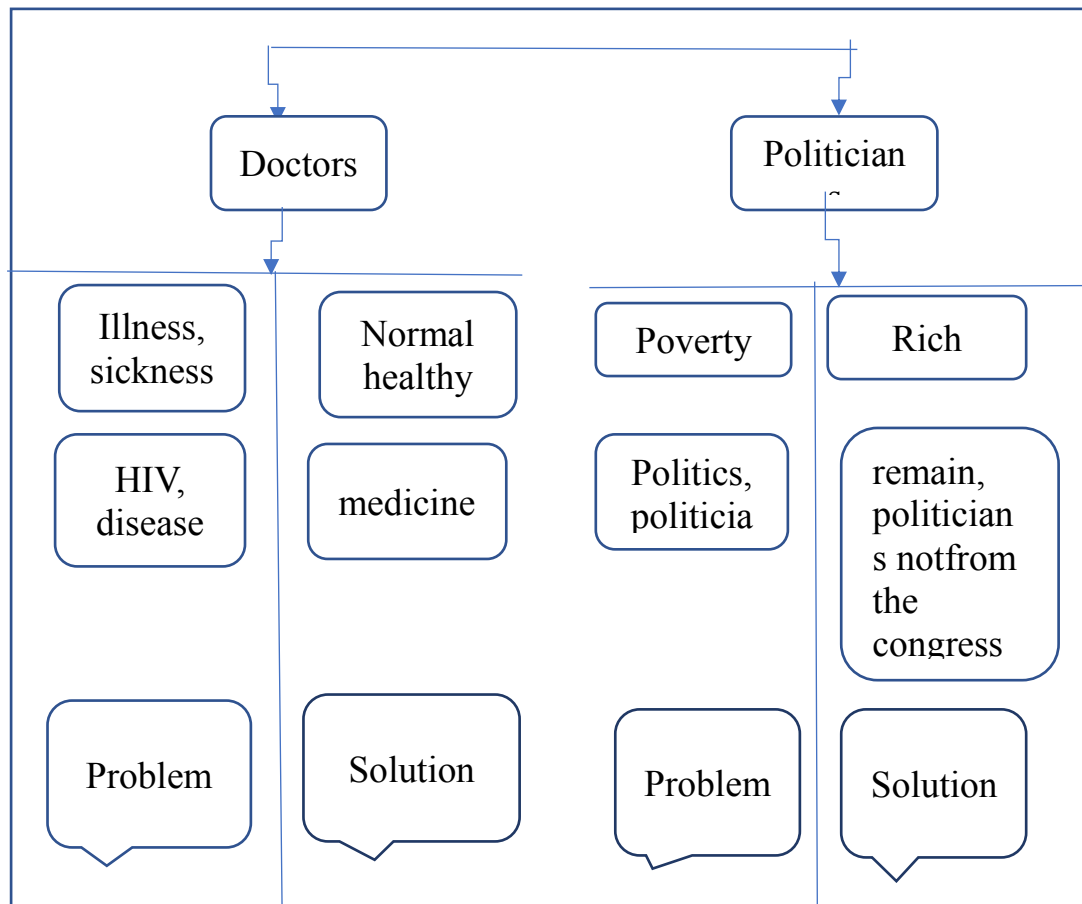
As mentioned above, the researcher has presented the four noble truths as ultimate level of truths and the four noble truths as problems solution approach under the title of analysis on the general aspects. When we have understood about the four noble truths clearly, we need to understand how we apply the four noble truths practically. So, the

researcher continues to present the application of the four noble truths together with the three sub-titles: (1) Application based on the following level of ultimately problem solving (2) Application based on the following level of worldly problem solving.

**Chart-3**



**Chart-4- Example of Using the Four Noble Truths as Problem Solution**



#### 4.2.1 Application Based on the Following Level of Ultimately Problem Solving

Application based on the following level of ultimately problem solving is the Venerable *Koṇḍañña*<sup>162</sup> could have developed the Eightfold Path and attained the Noble Eightfold Path (*AṭṭhaṅgikoMaggo*)<sup>163</sup> while the Buddha was describing the Eightfold Path. When the heard about the

<sup>162</sup> S V, p. 420

<sup>163</sup> D. II. 312; M. I. 61; M. III. 251.

Four Noble Truths,<sup>164</sup> too, he could have contemplated on them to know what should be known and thus attained the higher knowledge. It is very probably that he contemplated on the truth of suffering, five pleasures of senses (*pañcakāmaguṇa*), five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhā*),<sup>165</sup> and by developing the path of insight attained the higher knowledge. Similarly, *Vappa*, *Baddiya*, *mahānāma* and *Assaji*,<sup>166</sup> realized the final goal of liberation, because they listened to the teaching of the Buddha.

As a monk, sometime he can need something. When nobody offers what he need, he has to face some difficulties. As that time, he contemplates that the suffering (*dukkha*) means the not-receiving of what we need. This is called that he applies the truth of suffering in daily life. Similarly, he depresses because he wants to get something like iPhone, iPad. If he contemplates his greedy mind as the truth of the origin of suffering, it is called that he applies the *Samudaya* in daily life.

The Dhammapada commentary<sup>167</sup> *Paṭācārā* was the daughter of a rich man from *Sāvatti*. She was very beautiful and was guarded very strictly by her parents. But one day, she eloped with a young male attendant of the family and went to live in a village, as a poor man's wife. And then *Paṭācārā* lost her two sons as well as her husband and that both her parents together with her three brothers, had died, and had been cremated on one funeral pyre. On hearing this tragic news, she went stark mad. She did not ever notice that her clothes had fallen off from her and that she was half-naked. The Buddha saw *Paṭācārā* at a distance; so, he willed that she should come to the congregation. The Buddha explained to her that all beings were subject to death, therefore it was better to live realizing how the five *khandhās* came and went.

The Buddha said, all beings are moral. Five constituents are inevitably subject to growth and decay. It is better to live for a day, nay,

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<sup>164</sup> P.A. Payutto, *Buddhadhamma: An Expanded and revised* (Abridged version), tr., by Bruce Evans, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1996), pp. 561-62.

<sup>165</sup> S. III. 47

<sup>166</sup> S V, p. 420

<sup>167</sup> Dhp. Atth, Vol, II. p 49ff.

for a moment, seeing this inevitability than to live up-to hundred years without realizing this. The Buddha also said:<sup>168</sup> “*yocavassasataṃjīve, apassaṃudayabbayaṃ; ekāhaṃjīvitamseyyopassatoudayabbayaṃti.*”<sup>169</sup> At the end of the Buddha teaching, *Paṭācārā* realized the Four Noble Truths and attained perfection.<sup>170</sup>

As a nun, in this world when one fails to come into contact, meet, associate and mix with the desirable and loved, when one is separated from one’s parents, brothers, sisters, friends and relatives who wish one to gain benefits, to be prosperous, to be free from pain and danger, one encounters suffering. It is called that she applies the truth of suffering in daily. Similarly, she depresses because she wants to get something like computer and car. If she contemplates her greedy mind as the truth of the Origin of suffering, it is called that she applies the SamudayaSaccā in daily life.

#### 4.2.2 Application Based on the Following Level of Worldly Problem Solving.

The *Mahā Saḷāyatanika Sutta*<sup>171</sup> of the *Uparipañṇāsa* section of the *MajjimaNikāya* gives how the eight path factors are developed. This is a brief account in the Buddha’s words of how the Noble Eightfold Path is developed as the meditator discerns the true nature of eye, visual objects, eye consciousness, visual contact and feeling. In the similar manner, by taking note of the phenomena of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking, the five dhammas which become prominent at the respective moment of occurrence may be known and the Eightfold Path developed accordingly. Thus, the Path factors of morality are maintained purely at the moment of vipassana meditation.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>169</sup> Dhp, Atth, p. 96.

<sup>170</sup> Theri. Atth, p. 112.

<sup>171</sup> M, III. 287.

<sup>172</sup> Venerable MahāsiSayādaw, **The Great Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma** (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) translated by U Ko Lay, Bangkok, Thailand, 1997), pp. 182-184.



Some men or women of good family learn the law and examine the meaning with understanding, so that they acquire a liking for meditating on it, not learning it for the sake of carping and rebuttal of criticism. They appreciate the purpose for which the dhamma is taught, and they find that those teachings, being rightly grasped by them, for a long time conduce to their welfare and happiness.<sup>173</sup>

As men or women, to being subject to birth there comes the desire: ‘O, that we were not subject to birth! O, that no new birth was before us!’ Subject to decay, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the desire comes to them: ‘O, that these things were not before us!’ But this cannot be got by mere desiring; and not to get what one desires, is suffering (dukkha), it is called that they apply the suffering in daily life. Similarly, they depress because they want to get something like house. If they contemplate them greedy mind as the truth of the Origin of suffering, it is called that they apply the SamudayaSaccā in daily life.

### 4.3 Concluding Remarks

May all of you good people in this audience, by virtue of your respectful attention to this great discourse on the Four Noble Truths, avoid the extremely relaxed path of indulgence in sense pleasures and the extremely austere path of self-mortification, develop the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path, and become accomplished in fully and rightly comprehending the truth of suffering; in abandoning the origin of suffering, in realizing the cessation of suffering and in cultivating the Noble Path, and thereby quickly attain *Nibbāna*, the end of all suff

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<sup>173</sup> Bhikkhu YogācāraRāhulā, **The Way to Peace and Happiness**, Buddhist cultural center Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, 1996, p. 205.

## Chapter-V

### Conclusion and Suggestion for this Research

Now the researcher that the Four Noble Truths is presented carefully in this research. So, the researcher continues to present conclusion and suggestion for this research.

#### 5.1 Conclusion

The objective of this research is to study the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths, to study the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths and to analyze and apply the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism as the first chapter.

Therefore, the researcher has presented the Four Noble Truths as the Wheel of Truth, the Four Noble Truths as the Middle Way and the Four Noble Truths as Giving Rise to the First *Sotāpatti* *phala Kondaṇṇa*, as the context of the Four Noble Truths in the second chapter. Furthermore, as the origin of the Four Noble Truths, the teaching and origin of the story of the Four Noble Truths is presented in the second chapter.

In the third chapter, the researcher has mentioned the title of the meaning and practice of the Four Noble Truths. The meanings of the Four Noble Truths in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, in *Abhidhammā Piṭaka (Vibhaṅga)*, in dictionaries, encyclopedias and contemporary scholars. And then the practice of the Four Noble Truths as Way of Practice based on the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*Dukkha Nirodhagāmini Patipada*), Way of Practice based on *Mahā satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Ekāyanomaggo)* in the third chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the researcher has explained about the title of the analysis on the Four Noble Truths in *Theravāda* Buddhism. Analysis on the general aspects; The Four Noble Truths as Ultimate level of Truths and as Conventional level of Truths and the Four Noble Truths as Problems solution approach have been explained in the fourth chapter.

The last title of the fourth chapter is the application of the Four Noble Truths as application based on the following level of ultimately problem solving and as application based on the following level of worldly problem solving

The first objective is to understand the context and origin of the Four Noble Truths in all *suttas* that mentioned in the second chapter. The second objective of this research is to study the concept and practice of the Four Noble Truths. The third chapter has mentioned the concept of these *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, in *AbhidhammāPiṭaka (Vibhaṅga)*, in dictionaries, encyclopedias and contemporary scholars in order to the Four Noble Truths. The third objective is to analyze and apply the Four Noble Truths practically in our daily life.

## **5.2 Suggestion for this research**

My research work, which has been presented, is very small. It is books like a tiny spot compare with the wealth of knowledge found in the Buddhist canonical texts. As for suggestions further studies, I would like give recommendation about the Four Noble Truths.

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