

10th Dhamma Talk - Four Noble Truths for Daily Life

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

Dear Dhamma friends,

This evening, we reflect upon the **Ariya Saccāni**—the **Four Noble Truths** (චතුර් ආරිය සත්‍යය). These are the very core of the Buddha’s teaching. The Buddha himself declared in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (SN 56.11) that even if all the devas, Brahmās, Māra, samaṇas, brāhmaṇas, or anyone in this world tried, nobody could ever change these Four Noble Truths. Why? Because they are not a creation of the Buddha—they are natural laws of existence.

The Buddha gave a simile in the forest. He picked up a few leaves in his hand and asked the monks: “Which are more—the leaves in my hand, or all the leaves in the forest?” The monks replied, “Venerable Sir, the leaves in your hand are few, the leaves in the forest are many.” Then the Buddha said: “In the same way, what I know is vast, like the leaves in the forest, but what I teach is like the leaves in my hand—just the Four Noble Truths. Why? Because they are sufficient for liberation.”

This shows us that all of Buddhism comes back to the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha explained that each truth has three aspects:

1. **Pariyatti** – to learn and understand it.
2. **Paṭipatti** – to practice it.
3. **Paṭivedha** – to realize it directly.

And when he realized these truths on the night of enlightenment, he declared:

- **Cakkhum udapādi** – vision arose.
- **Ñāṇam udapādi** – knowledge arose.
- **Paññā udapādi** – wisdom arose.
- **Vijjā udapādi** – true knowing arose.
- **Āloko udapādi** – light arose.

This is the unfolding of awakening.

The First Noble Truth – Dukkha (දුක්ඛ සත්‍යය)

The first truth is that life, when clung to, is *dukkha*.

Now, *dukkha* is often translated as “suffering,” but the Buddha’s meaning is wider. It includes *imperfection*, *impermanence* (*anicca*), *emptiness* (*suññatā*), and *insubstantiality* (*anattā*). As the Buddha said: *yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ* – whatever is impermanent is dukkha.

The Buddha never denied happiness. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 4.62), he listed many forms of happiness: family happiness, happiness of renunciation, happiness of sense pleasures, happiness of detachment, physical happiness, mental happiness. But he still included all of these under dukkha because they do not last. Even the bliss of *jhāna*—pure meditative absorption—is still impermanent, still conditioned.

The Buddha explained dukkha in three aspects:

1. **Dukkha-dukkha** – ordinary suffering: birth, aging, sickness, death, grief, lamentation.
2. **Vipariṇāma-dukkha** – suffering caused by change: when pleasant things fade away.
3. **Saṅkhāra-dukkha** – the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned existence itself.

He summarized it in the *Samyutta Nikāya*: *Saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā* – in brief, the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha. Our body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are never the same for two moments.

A simple example: We enjoy the company of someone we love. That is pleasant. But if they leave us, or if circumstances change, the very source of joy becomes the source of sorrow. That is *vipariṇāma-dukkha*.

The Buddha advised us to see three things clearly in every pleasure:

1. **Assāda** – the attraction.
2. **Ādīnava** – the danger.
3. **Nissaraṇa** – the escape.

This is daily life practice. When we eat delicious food, when we meet someone attractive, when we gain wealth—we can see the enjoyment, but we must also reflect: “This too is impermanent. Depending on this brings danger. True freedom is detachment.”

The Second Noble Truth – Samudaya (සමුදය සත්‍යය)

The second truth is the arising of dukkha: craving (*taṇhā*).

The Buddha said in many places, including the *Samyutta Nikāya*:

Yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī... kāma-taṇhā, bhava-taṇhā, vibhava-taṇhā.

This means craving that leads to rebirth, bound up with delight and passion:

1. **Kāma-taṇhā** – craving for sense pleasures.
2. **Bhava-taṇhā** – craving for existence.
3. **Vibhava-taṇhā** – craving for non-existence.

This craving arises dependent on feeling (*vedanā*). Feeling arises from contact (*phassa*). This is explained in the teaching of *Paṭicca-samuppāda*—dependent origination.

A story from the *Saṅgārava Sutta* (MN 100) illustrates this. A farmer asked the Buddha to bless his field so no floods, pests, or disasters would harm it. The Buddha replied: “I cannot stop the nature of the world—the sun will shine, the rain will fall, pests may come. But I can teach you a way to protect your mind from sorrow.” That way is freedom from craving—the Noble Path.

This shows us: the world will always change, but our craving for it to be otherwise is what causes suffering.

The Third Noble Truth – Nirodha (නිරෝධ සත්‍යය)

The third truth is the cessation of dukkha. This is Nibbāna (නිව්වෘත්තිය).

The Buddha called it *taṇhakkhaya*—the extinction of craving.

But what is Nibbāna? It is beyond words. In the *Udāna* (Ud 8.3), the Buddha said:

“Atthi bhikkhave ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhaṭaṃ.”

“There is, monks, the unborn, the unbecome, the unmade, the unconditioned.”

If there were not this unconditioned, there would be no escape from the conditioned. But because there is, liberation is possible.

To explain, the Buddha gave similes. One is the story of the **tortoise and the fish**. The tortoise told the fish about walking on land. The fish insisted: “You mean swimming?” The tortoise said: “No, it is solid, you walk.” But the fish could not imagine it. In the same way, we cannot imagine Nibbāna with worldly concepts. But it can be realized when craving ends.

We can already taste small moments of Nibbāna: when anger fades, when greed dissolves, when delusion clears—there is peace.

The Fourth Noble Truth – Magga (මග්ග සත්‍යය)

Finally, the Fourth Truth is the path—the **Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga** (the Noble Eightfold Path).

This path can be grouped into three trainings:

- **Sīla** – morality.
- **Samādhi** – concentration.
- **Paññā** – wisdom.

It is the practical way to end dukkha. Just as a doctor diagnoses disease, finds the cause, assures there is a cure, and prescribes medicine, the Buddha showed us:

1. The illness – dukkha.

2. The cause – craving.
3. The cure – cessation.
4. The medicine – the path.

I will not go into detail about each factor of the path today, as that will be a separate talk. But it is enough to remember: this is the way to freedom.

Applying the Four Noble Truths in Daily Life

These truths are not abstract. They are practical.

When a problem arises in our life:

1. **Understand the problem** – This is the First Noble Truth. Accept: “This is dukkha.”
2. **Find the cause** – The Second Noble Truth. Ask: “What craving, what clinging caused this suffering?”
3. **See the possibility of ending it** – The Third Noble Truth. Let go of craving. Know that peace is possible.
4. **Walk the path** – The Fourth Noble Truth. Apply mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom to resolve it.

For example, if someone insults us, first we feel hurt—dukkha. Second, we see the cause—our attachment to self-image. Third, we see that if we let go, the pain ceases. Fourth, we walk the path—respond wisely with patience and compassion.

Closing Reflection

So, dear friends, the Four Noble Truths are not only the Buddha’s first teaching. They are a living teaching, a mirror for us every day. When we see them clearly, just as the Buddha did, then:

- **Cakkhum udapādi** – vision arises.
- **Ñāṇam udapādi** – knowledge arises.
- **Paññā udapādi** – wisdom arises.
- **Vijjā udapādi** – true knowledge arises.
- **Āloko udapādi** – light arises.

May we all see these truths, live by them, and realize the peace of Nibbāna.

Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā – සබ්බේ සත්තා භවතු සුඛිත්තතා – May all beings be well and happy.