

## "What Buddha Taught"

*By Dr. Rahul*

A man has a faith. If he says, "this is my faith," he maintains the truth. However, by that he cannot proceed to the absolute conclusion: "this alone is the Truth, and everything else is False."

The ideas produced here are a man's faith. Thinking about them and applying them to one's life, one may find the Truth and happiness.

In order to be happy in life one must understand the four noble truths:

1. Sorrow (Dukkha)
2. Origin of sorrow
3. Freedom from sorrow
4. The path to the freedom from sorrow

### THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH: SORROW (Dukkha)

Everybody's life is full of mishaps and falls short of expectations. This creates a feeling of sorrow and suffering in one's mind.

Being impatient or angry at suffering does not reduce or remove the suffering. On the contrary, it adds a little more to one's troubles and aggravates an already disagreeable situation.

What is necessary is not anger or impatience, but the understanding of the question of suffering, how it comes about, and how to get rid of it. Then work accordingly with patience, intelligence, determination, and energy.

### THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH: ORIGIN OF SORROW (DUKKHA)

The origin of sorrow is craving, thirst, desire, or greed, which manifests itself in various ways that gives rise of all forms of sorrow and suffering.

The term "thirst" includes not only desire for and attachment to sensory pleasures, wealth, and power, but also desire for and attachment to ideas, views, opinions, theories, and conceptions.

It is the craving that bounds up with passionate greed and which finds fresh delight everywhere, namely

1. craving for sensory pleasures
2. craving for existence and becoming
  - to become more
  - to grow more
  - to accumulate more

There are four nutriments for the existence and continuity of beings:

1. ordinary material food
2. contact of our sense-organs (including mind) with the external world
3. consciousness
4. mental volition or will

## **THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH: THE FREEDOM FROM SORROW (DUKKHA) or NIRVANA**

Nirvana is known as the extinction of thirst (craving), absence of desire, detachment, extinction of hatred and illusion, and freedom from conceit. Nirvana is the annihilation of the illusion, or of the false idea of self.

When a person does not cling to anything in the world; he will not be anxious, and he is completely calmed within. He knows at the time of his death, that he has lived a pure life, has done what should be done, and knows that nothing more is left to be done.

Now when he experiences a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensation, he knows that it is not permanent. It does not bind him with passion.

Without being bound to it, whatever the sensation, may be that he experiences, he knows that all those sensations will be pacified with the dissolution of the body. This is just as the flame of a lamp goes out when the oil or wick give out.

### **What is Absolute Truth?**

The Absolute Truth is that there is nothing absolute in the world. Everything is relative, conditioned, and impermanent. There is no unchanging, everlasting, absolute substance like "soul" or "atman". This is where Buddhism differs from Hinduism.

He who has realized the truth, is the happiest being in the world. He is free from all "complexes" and obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others.

He does not repent the past, nor does he brood over future. He lives fully in the present. Therefore he appreciates and enjoys things in the purest sense without self-projections.

He is joyful, free from anxiety, serene, and peaceful. As he is free from selfish desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, pride and all such "defilements", he is pure and gentle, full of universal love, compassion, kindness, sympathy, understanding, and tolerance.

His service to others is pure, for he has no thought of self. He gains nothing, accumulates nothing, not even anything spiritual, because he is free from illusion of self and the "thirst" for becoming.

He who understands these teachings should give up even good things as well as bad things.

## **THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH: THE PATH TO THE FREEDOM FROM SORROW (DUKKHA)**

This is known as the "middle path" because it avoids two extremes:

- The search for happiness through the pleasures of senses
- The search for happiness through self-mortification, which is painful

Even though this path is very difficult for an average person, one MUST try to achieve a goal as close to what is described below. One must not give up because it is hard to achieve Nirvana. One must try to get as close to Nirvana as possible.

The Middle Path is composed of eight categories:

1. Right speech
2. Right action
3. Right livelihood
4. Right effort
5. Right mindfulness
6. Right concentration
7. Right understanding
8. Right thought

Right speech, right action, and right livelihood constitute ethical conduct.

Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration are mental disciplines.

Right understanding and right thought constitute wisdom.

The above categories should be developed more or less simultaneously, rather than one at a time.

### **1. Right Speech:**

Right speech means abstention from:

- telling lies
- backstabbing, slander, and talk that may bring about hatred, enmity, disunity and disharmony among individuals or groups of people,
- harsh, rude, impolite, malicious, and abusive language
- idle, useless, and foolish babble or gossip

When one abstains from these forms of wrong and harmful speech, one naturally has to speak the truth, has to use words that are friendly, pleasant, gentle, meaningful, and useful.

If one cannot say something useful, one should keep "noble silence".

### **2. Right Action:**

Right action aims at promoting moral, honorable, and peaceful conduct. It admonishes us that we should abstain from destroying life, from stealing, and from dishonest dealings. We should also help others lead a peaceful and honorable life in the right way.

### **3. Right Livelihood:**

Right livelihood means that one should abstain from making one's living through a profession that brings harm to others.

### **4. Right Effort:**

Right effort is

- the energetic will to prevent evil and the unwholesome state of mind from arising
- to get rid of the evil and unwholesomeness that have already arisen within a person
- to produce and rise a good and wholesome state of mind.
- to develop and bring to perfection the good and wholesome state of mind already present in a person.

## **5. Right Mindfulness (attentiveness):**

Right mindfulness (attentiveness) is to be diligently aware, mindful, and attentive with regard to:

- activities of the body
- sensations or feelings
- activities of mind
- ideas, thoughts, and conceptions

## **6. Right Concentration:**

Right concentration leads to four stages of "trance":

During the first stage of trance, passionate desires, ill-will, worry, sensuous lust, restlessness, and skeptical doubts are discarded, and a feeling of joy and happiness are maintained.

During the second stage of trance, all intellectual activities are suppressed, tranquility and "one-pointedness" of mind developed, and feeling of joy and happiness are maintained.

In the third stage, the feeling of joy disappears while the disposition of happiness still remains.

In the fourth stage of trance, all sensations, happiness and unhappiness, of joy and sorrow disappear. Only pure equanimity and awareness remain.

## **7. Right Thought:**

Right thoughts denote the thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love, and thoughts of non-violence, which are extended to all beings.

## **8. Right Understanding:**

Right understanding is the understanding of things as they are, This understanding is the highest wisdom which sees the ultimate reality.

### **There are two sorts of understanding:**

What we generally call understanding is knowledge, an accumulated memory, and an intellectual grasping of a subject according to certain data. It is not very deep.

Real understanding is seeing a thing in its true nature, without name and label. This penetration is possible only when the mind is free from all impurities and is fully developed through meditation.

For a person to be "perfect" there are two qualities that should be developed equally:

- Compassion (karuna)
- Wisdom

Compassion represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance and such noble qualities of the heart. While wisdom stands for the quality of mind.

If one develops only emotionally while neglecting the intellectual, one may become a good-hearted fool. While developing intellectually, and neglecting, the emotional side may turn one into a hard hearted intellect without feelings for others.

From this brief account of the "PATH", one may see that it is a way of life to be followed, practiced and developed, by each individual.

It is self-discipline in body, word and mind, self-development, and self-purification. It has nothing to do with belief, prayer, worship or ceremony, which may popularly be called "religious".

## **Performance of Four Functions:**

With regard to the four noble Truths, we have four functions to perform.

The first noble truth is Dukkha (sorrow), the nature of life is suffering, its sorrows and joys, its imperfections and unsatisfactoriness, its impermanence and instability. With regard to this, our function is to understand sorrow as a fact, clearly and completely.

The second noble Truth is the origin of Dukkha, which is desire, thirst, accompanied by all other passions, defilement, and impurities. A mere understanding of this fact is not sufficient. Here our function is to discard, eliminate, destroy, and eradicate desire, thirst, and passions.

The third noble Truth is the cessation of Dukkha. Nirvana is the absolute truth, our function here is to realize it.

The fourth noble Truth is the PATH, leading to the realization of Niravana. A mere knowledge of the PATH, however complete, will not do. In this case, our function is to properly follow it.