

The Discourse of Clansman

Kulaputta Sutta

(Samyutta Nikaya-Sacca Samyutta)

Here, in the discourse of clansman, *Kulaputta Sutta*, The Buddha declares the importance of understanding the four noble truths. Whatever respectable people, clansmen—past, future, or present—rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness, all of them do so in order to truly comprehend the four noble truths.

What four? The noble truths of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. Whatever respectable people—past, future, or present—rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness, all of them do so in order to truly comprehend the four noble truths.

The Buddha clearly says that, in the past and the present he expresses only two things which are suffering and the cessation of suffering, with details the four noble truths. The central philosophy in Buddhism is the four noble truths.

The Four Noble Truths

(*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni* - චතුරාර්ය සත්‍යය)

The Four Noble Truths, the heart of Buddhism, includes all kinds of doctrines that the Buddha explained to deities and humans in his entire life of 45 years. His main effort was to point out the path of liberation from all kinds of sufferings. The Buddha said very clearly, that he preached in the past and present only two things which are suffering and the cessation of suffering. Also these four things are centered in one theme that is suffering or unsatisfactoriness. If someone can understand only suffering according to the Buddha's advice, he is qualified to realize all four things. As much as he can realize the unsatisfactoriness, he has overcome suffering at that level. They are:

1. The Noble Truth of unsatisfactoriness or Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca* - දුක්ඛ සත්‍යය)
2. The Noble Truth of The cause (origin) of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca* - සමුදය සත්‍යය)
3. The Noble Truth of The cessation of unsta-factoriness (*Nirodha Sacca* - නිරෝධ සත්‍යය)
4. The Noble Truth of the path that leads to get rid of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*- මග්ග සත්‍යය)

The main goal of every person is happiness. They do all things in their lives in the name of happiness. They learn, do jobs, raise children, earn money and wealth. Even though they do all of them for happiness, they only loose happiness. When they earn everything and grow up with wealth day by day, unfortunately their happiness goes away. The main reason for this situation is that they mostly trust in external things such as children, money, education, health, physical appearance and properties. When those things change and go out of control, they worry. They think that happiness

comes from outside. That is why they fully trust in sensual pleasures. In this situation, the Buddha has explained the nature of suffering and how to overcome it.

The Buddha pointed out if we suffer about something, the nearest reason is severe attachment, desire or craving. If we like something greedily, when it changes, when it is out of control, when someone steals it, we worry, we suffer, and we get angry. If we don't have severe attachments to anything, when they change or they are stolen, it is nothing to suffer or get angry. Further, the Buddha explained what the reason of severe attachment or craving is. It is ignorance or delusion. What is the nature of our experience? We receive all experiences in our life through our senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. When objects such as matter, sounds, smells, tastes, touching on senses and stimulate the mind, we have experience about the world. The nature of this experience arises and ceases suddenly. After the experience we only have the memory as we think about it. We think it is still happening even after the experience because of ignorance. When we think about our previous experiences, we suddenly run to the past. This misunderstanding brings us suffering. If we have real knowledge, mindfulness and wisdom to see this reality according to the Buddha's guidance, we are able to overcome suffering. The nearest cause of suffering is craving or desire, but the true reason is ignorance that inability to see the true nature of things. If we can live mindfully reflecting on impermanence every moment, as the result of understanding of this truth, we can reach the real happiness.

When the Buddha explained the four noble truths, he analyzed what we should do in every step. The very first thing that we should do is listening to this message with good attention, reflect on it wisely and practice it in our day to day life promptly. According to four steps of the truth, we have to do four things. First we have to understand what unsatisfactoriness is, then its cause and cessation. Finally, we practice the path that leads us to the cessation of suffering, the Noble Eight fold path. The very especial thing here is that we practice this path with clear understanding about every step.

1. The Noble Truth of unsatisfactoriness or Suffering (Dukkha Sacca - දුක්ඛ සත්‍යය)

The Buddha explains all kinds of sufferings in this first step. Birth (ජානිපි දුක්ඛං), aging (ජරාපි දුක්ඛං), sickness (ව්‍යාධිපි දුක්ඛං), death (මරණමපි දුක්ඛං), union with what is displeasing (අප්පිඨයේහි සම්පයෝගෝ දුක්ඛෝ), separation from what is pleasing (පිඨයේහි විප්පයෝගෝ දුක්ඛෝ) and not to get what one wants are sufferings (යම්පිච්ඡං න ලභති තම්පි දුක්ඛං). These are the negative things that we dislike in our life. When they come to our life, we suffer, worry, upset, lament or get angry. All of these sufferings depend on ignorance of five aggregates. Finally It is said as "In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering" (සංවිත්තේන පඤ්චුපාදානක්ඛන්ධා දුක්ඛං). First seven things are not difficult to understand as suffering. Anybody, who is wise, can understand as they are suffering. The especial reason of suffering, that is never understood without a Buddha's advice, is the five aggregates.

Five aggregates are;

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| i. Matter | (<i>Rupa</i> - රූප) |
| ii. Feelings | (<i>Vedanā</i> - වේදනා) |
| iii. Perception | (<i>Sañña</i> - සංකල්පය) |
| iv. Mental formations | (<i>Samkhāra</i> - සංඛාර) |
| v. Consciousness | (<i>Viññāna</i> - විඤ්ඤාණ) |

When we experience through our senses about the world, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising of these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but ceased also. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. Those experiences ceased instantly, we get pleasure or pain in sense of mind as a past experience. However, we think that we experience in the present because of ignorance. Then we find things and beings outside. That is why we suffer. Meeting things and beings outside is the nature of the noble truth of suffering. If we can wisely understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the conditions, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we don't find things and beings outside. There are no beings and things outside. We create them according to our present mental condition with ignorance. As soon as we experience something through our senses, if we are mindful and wise to reflect on it as it is, we always look inside. Then have nothing to desire or hate. It means we are on the path of cessation of suffering. As much as we have this understanding we have liberated from unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

2. The Noble Truth of the origin of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca* - සමුදය සත්‍යය)

The second step of the four noble truths is the cause of suffering. We mostly desire because of no understanding of the nature of the five aggregates. If we have a clear knowledge about five aggregates in our experience, we can get rid of desire and cravings which disturb our peace of mind. The Buddha pointed out that the closest reason of suffering is desire. Desire means attachment to our own self. The Noble truth of the cause of suffering that the Buddha realized is the attachment to one's self. If someone can overcome passionate delight to self, reflecting on impermanence, he is ready to overcome delusion which causes to desire and anger.

3. The Noble Truth of the cessation from unsatisfactoriness (Nirodha Sacca - නිරෝධ සත්‍යය)

We already know that the nearest cause of suffering is desire and the main course is ignorance. Though the nearest reason of suffering is desire or greed, we are unable to reduce desire suddenly. For the purification of mind from desire, we have to light the candle of wisdom. Then automatically desire and anger cease. The nature of reducing ignorance is to reduce desire and anger. Like someone lights a candle in a dark room, darkness goes away. If we can reflect on impermanence with this understanding, we are ready to overcome desire and realize liberation from unsatisfactoriness. Seeing liberation, we enter the path that leads to liberation in next step.

4. The Noble path that leads to getting rid of unsatisfactoriness (Magga Sacca-මග්ග/ මාර්ග සත්‍යය)

With the full understanding of the above three steps in suffering, the Buddha's disciple enters the real path to get rid of suffering. The Buddha emphasized the real path as the noble eight fold path with his experience. As the result of listening to the Buddha's message, our view becomes clear. It is said in Buddhism as 'Right Understanding'.

When we have 'Right Understanding', we don't stop since we have to practice other seven steps too. Then we meet a path to follow 'The Noble Eight Fold Path' –

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| 1. Right Understanding | (<i>Sammā Ditthi</i>) |
| 2. Right Intention/ Thoughts | (<i>Sammā Samkappa</i>) |
| 3. Right Speech | (<i>Sammā Vācā</i>) |
| 4. Right Action | (<i>Sammā kammantha</i>) |
| 5. Right Livelihood | (<i>Sammā Ājiva</i>) |
| 6. Right Effort | (<i>Sammā Vāyāma</i>) |
| 7. Right Mindfulness | (<i>Sammā Sathi</i>) |
| 8. Right Concentration | (<i>Sammā Samādhi</i>) |

Here the most important thing that we are compulsory to do is to develop mindfulness. At the very beginning of practicing mindfulness, we have to identify 'the sign of mindfulness' (*Sati Nimitta*). Not only breathing meditation by focusing our attention on the tip of our nose or upper lip, we try to do all our daily activities mindfully. Our success of meditation depends on how much we practice this sign of mindfulness. Every day we have to try to increase the time that we practice mindfulness. When we practice this, we can see the result that is happiness. The very important thing the practicing mindfulness is the visible results. Seeing the results we can go forward on the path getting rid of suffering towards the purification of mind in this short life itself. That is one of the qualities of the Dhamma which is with immediate results (*Akālika*). If we can put this knowledge into practice and get the results, we are the most fortunate people in the world. The reason is that this is the happiest thing among everything in our life such as money, relatives, education, properties, etc. For that we have to be diligent. We should dedicate our time for that than we do for other things.

At the beginning on this spiritual path, we have to be honest, intelligent and kind. Also, to achieve the final bliss of liberation or enlightenment, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge. Hence, here, the knowledge is very important. Buddhism compares knowledge as wealth (*Suta Dhanam*). To achieve all kinds of results such as intelligence that Buddhism teaches, knowledge plays a major role. It is not only enough knowledge but reflecting on it again and again is also very important. Furthermore, we have to practice it in our daily life as morality (*Seela*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*) to see the results in our life. Meditation is further divided into two as tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation. All doctrines that focus on liberation can be included in three steps those are discipline, tranquility and wisdom. Once the Buddha has included his entire message in mindfulness. That is why he says "**practicing mindfulness is the only way for purification of beings, practicing mindfulness is the only way to overcome sorrow and lamentation, mindfulness is the only way to getting rid of suffering, mindfulness is the only way to achieve wisdom, mindfulness is the only way to attain enlightenment.**" Thus, the Buddha has kindly pointed out the importance of practicing mindfulness again and again for the liberation of beings.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

(තෙරුවන් සරණයි!)

May All Beings be Well, Happy and Peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)