

The Four Noble Truths

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i>
Ai.Gr.	J. Wackernagel, <i>Altindische Grammatik</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philosophy</i>
AMg	Ardha-Māgadhī
AMg Dict.	Ratnachandraji, <i>An Illustrated AMg Dictionary</i>
AO	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
Apa.	Apabhraṃśa
AR	<i>Abhidhāna-rājendra</i> , Ratlam 1913-25
Aś.	Aśokan
Āv.	<i>Āvassaya-sutta</i>
Āyār.	<i>Āyāraṅga-sutta</i> (ed. H. Jacobi)
BCDRI	<i>Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute</i>
BD	<i>Book of the Discipline</i>
B <sup>e</sup>	Burmese (Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana) edition
Bhav.	<i>Bhavisatta Kaha</i> (ed. H. Jacobi, Munich 1918)
BHS	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit
BHSD	F. Edgerton, <i>BHS Dictionary</i>
BHSG	F. Edgerton, <i>BHS Grammar</i>
BKS	<i>Bṛhat-kalpa-sūtra</i> (ed. W. Schubring, Leipzig 1905)
Bloch	J. Bloch, <i>Les inscriptions d'Asoka</i> , Paris 1950
BSL	<i>Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris</i>
BSO(A)S	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies</i>
Burrow, Skt Lang.	T. Burrow, <i>Sanskrit Language</i> , London 1955
Burrow, Khar. Lang.	T. Burrow, <i>Language of the Kharoṣṭhi Documents</i> , Cambridge 1937
CDIAL	R.L. Turner, <i>Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages</i>
C <sup>e</sup>	Sinhalese edition
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i>
CPD	<i>Critical Pāli Dictionary</i>
cty/cties	commentary/commentaries
cū.	cūrṇi
DED(R)	<i>Davidian Etymological Dictionary</i> (revised edition)
DNM	<i>Deśināmamālā</i>

DPPN	<i>Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names</i>
E <sup>c</sup>	European edition
Ep. Ind.	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
Erz.	H. Jacobi, <i>Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāṣṭrī</i> , Leipzig 1886
EV I, II	K.R. Norman, <i>Elders' Verses I, II</i> , London 1969, 1971
EWA	M. Mayrhofer, <i>Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen</i> ,
Geiger	W. Geiger, <i>Pāli Literatur und Sprache</i> , Strassburg 1916
Gk.	Greek
GOS	Gaekwad's Oriental Series
Hultzsch	E. Hultzsch, <i>Inscriptions of Asoka</i> , Oxford 1925
IA	Indo-Aryan
IE	Indo-European
IHQ	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
II	Indo-Iranian
IJJ	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i>
IL	<i>Indian Linguistics</i>
Ind. Ant.	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
Isibh.	<i>Isibhāsiāṃ</i> (ed. W. Schubring)
IT	<i>Indologica Taurinensia</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAIH	<i>Journal of Ancient Indian History</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JASB	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
JAS Bombay	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay</i>
JIABS	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
JOI(B)	<i>Journal of the Oriental Institute (Baroda)</i>
JPTS	<i>Journal of the Pali Text Society</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
Kapp.	<i>The Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu</i> (ed. H. Jacobi, Leipzig 1879)
Kapp. Sām.	= part III of prec. (pp. 86-95)
Lüders, Beob.	H. Lüders, <i>Beobachtungen über die Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons</i> , Berlin 1954

Lüders, Phil. Ind.	H. Lüders, <i>Philologica Indica</i> , Göttingen 1940
MIA	Middle Indo-Aryan
MRE	Minor Rock Edict
MSL	<i>Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris</i>
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
MW	Sir Monier Monier-Williams, <i>Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i> , Oxford 1899
NAWG	Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen
Nāyā.	<i>Nāyādhammakahāo</i>
NIA	New Indo-Aryan
Nirayāv.	<i>Nirayāvaliyāo</i>
Nisīh.	<i>Nisīha-sutta</i>
OIA	Old Indo-Aryan
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
Ova.	<i>Ovavāiyya-sutta</i> (ed. E. Leumann, Leipzig 1883)
Pā.	Pāli
Paṇh.	<i>Paṇhāvāgaraṇāiṃ</i>
Paum.	<i>Pauma-cariu</i>
PE	Pillar Edict
PED	The PTS's <i>Pali-English Dictionary</i>
Pischel	R. Pischel, <i>Grammatik der Prākṛit-Sprachen</i> , Strassburg 1900
Pkt	Prakrit
PMWS	F.B.J. Kuiper, <i>Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit</i> , Amsterdam 1948
PSM	H.D.T. Sheth, <i>Pāiasaddamahaṇṇavo</i> , Calcutta 1928
PTC	<i>Pāli Tipiṭakam Concordance</i>
PTS	Pali Text Society
Ratnachandraji	see AMg Dict.
RE	Rock Edict
RV	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
SBB	Sacred Books of the Buddhists
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
SepE	Separate Edict
Sheth	see PSM

Sinh.	Sinhalese
Skt	Sanskrit
StII	<i>Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik</i>
Sutt.	<i>Suttāgame</i>
Sūyag.	<i>Sūyagaḍaṅga-sutta</i>
Ṭhāṇ.	<i>Ṭhāṇaṅga-sutta</i>
ṭī.	ṭīkā
TPS	<i>Transactions of the Philological Society</i>
Turner, CDIAL	R.L. Turner, <i>Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages</i>
Turner, Nep. Dict.	R.L. Turner, <i>Dictionary of the Nepali Language</i> , London 1931
Utt.	<i>Uttarajjhayaṇa-sutta</i> (ed. J. Charpentier, Uppsala 1922)
Uvās.	<i>Uvāsaga-dasāo</i> (ed. Hoernle)
Vivāg.	<i>Vivāga-sutta</i>
Whitney, Gram.	W.D. Whitney, <i>Sanskrit Grammar</i> , Cambridge (Mass.) 1889
Whitney, Roots	W.D. Whitney, <i>Roots and Verb-forms of the Sanskrit Language</i> , Leipzig 1885
WZKS(O)	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- (und Ost-)asiens</i>

## 49. The Four Noble Truths\*

### 1. The problem

<377> 1.1. I want in this paper, offered in honour of Professor J.W. de Jong, to examine the grammar and syntax of something which, although fundamental to Buddhist doctrine, has never been satisfactorily explained at the linguistic level. I refer to the statement, in Pāli, of the four Noble Truths (= NTs).

1.2. This statement occurs in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana-sutta* (Vin I 10 foll. = S V 420 foll.),<sup>1</sup> which is traditionally the first sermon preached by the Buddha after his enlightenment, in the following form: *idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkha-samudayaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkha-nirodhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā ariya-saccaṃ*. I shall refer to this as the ‘introduction’ set.<sup>2</sup>

1.3. It is clear that there is something strange about the grammar and syntax here. The most recent statement that I have seen made about this is that of Johansson, who says:

‘Syntactically, these expressions are somewhat loosely formulated and of different types. Note that *samudaya* and *nirodha* are masculine and therefore must be acc. sg., if the compounds are not of the possessive type and therefore adjectively adapted to *saccaṃ*; *paṭipadā* can only be nom. sg. ... Probably *dukkhaṃ* and *paṭipadā* should be understood as nom. and translated “truth (which is) pain” = “truth about pain”;<sup>3</sup> *dukkha-samudayaṃ* and *dukkha-nirodhaṃ* are probably possessive

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\* *Indological and Buddhist Studies* (Volume in honour of Professor J.W. de Jong), Canberra 1982, pp. 377–91.

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations of titles of texts are those of the *CPD*; in addition: *CPS* = *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*.

<sup>2</sup> The names ‘introduction’, etc., are given merely for convenience of reference, without prejudice as to the original form or function of the sets to which they refer.

<sup>3</sup> For consistency, I translate *dukkha/duḥkha* hereafter as ‘pain’, except when quoting other persons’ translations, without implying that this is necessarily the best translation.

compounds adjectively related to *saccaṃ* and therefore nom. sg. nt., literally “pain-originating truth”, i.e. “truth about the origin of pain”. “truth about the cessation of pain”. There are other possibilities: *dukkhaṃ* may also be adj., and so the same type of attribute as <378> *dukkha-samudayaṃ* taken as poss. compound; it may also be taken as acc. sg. of the noun, because acc. is sometimes used as a “case of reference”, although the loc. is more common in this function; *dukkha-samudayaṃ* and *dukkha-nirodhaṃ* could also be understood as acc. of reference. On the other hand, *paṭipadā* is certainly nom., if it should not simply be combined with *ariya-saccaṃ* to form one long compound.<sup>1</sup>

1.4. Johansson did not quote, and possibly was unaware of, Weller’s suggestion that the statement of the four NTs in Pāli is based upon an earlier version in an Eastern dialect, where the nom. sg. of both masc. and nt. nouns was in *-e*.<sup>2</sup> In that dialect, according to Weller, the 2nd and 3rd NTs would have had the form *dukkha-samudaye ariya-sacce* and *dukkha-nirodhe ariya-sacce*, and by a faulty piece of ‘translating’ on the part of the Pāli redactor, *-samudaye -sacce* and *-nirodhe -sacce* were changed to *-samudayaṃ -saccaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ -saccaṃ* instead of the correct *-samudayo -saccaṃ* and *-nirodho -saccaṃ*.

1.5. It seems that others, too, believed that the correct form of the statement should be *-samudayo -saccaṃ* and *-nirodho -saccaṃ*, for there is a v.l. *-samudayo* at D II 308,<sup>1</sup> and M III 250,<sup>32</sup> and a v.l. *-nirodho* at D II 310,<sup>4</sup> while Weller quotes the comment of the editors of the Siamese edition, who read *-samudayo -saccaṃ* and *-nirodho -saccaṃ*, against their manuscripts, on the grounds that *samudaya* and *nirodha* are masculine nouns.<sup>3</sup> The general tendency of the manuscripts, however, to read *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ* indicates that this is what the Pāli tradition felt was correct, and consequently refrained from ‘correcting’.

1.6. Neither Johansson’s nor Weller’s explanation is entirely satisfactory. As we shall see (§ 2.2), the four NTs also occur in Pāli in a set where *-samudayo* and *-nirodho* are found, and Weller’s suggestion does not explain why the two compounds should appear to have different genders in different contexts. Johansson’s explanation does not take

<sup>1</sup> Rune E.A. Johansson, *Pali Buddhist Texts*, Lund 1973, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> F. Weller, “Über die Formel der vier edlen Wahrheiten”, in *OLZ*, XLIII/3–4 (1949), pp. 73–79.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73, note 3.

account of the fact that we should expect the grammar and syntax of each of the four NTs to be the same, and therefore the explanation must be the same for all four.

1.7. It could also be suggested that in the statement of the four NTs the gender of *samudaya* and *nirodha* is genuinely neuter, but this does not meet the objection which has been levelled against Weller's solution, that in other sets the two words have the expected masculine gender. It would be possible <379> to suggest that *-samudayo* and *-nirodho* were changed to *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ* on the analogy of *dukkhaṃ* in the 1st NT, and then the expected form of the pronoun *ayaṃ* was changed to *idaṃ* to agree with *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ*. This does not, however, explain why we also have *idaṃ* in the 4th NT, although *paṭipadā* is feminine.

## 2. Other statements of the four Noble Truths in Pāli

2.1. Later in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana-sutta* we find the four NTs stated again in two sets (Vin I 11,1 foll. = S V 422,3 foll.): *idaṃ dukkhaṃ ariya-saccan ti me bhikkhave ... āloko udapādi. taṃ kho pan' idaṃ dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ pariññeyyaṃ ... pariññātaṃ ... idaṃ dukkha-samudayaṃ ariya-saccan ti me bhikkhave ... āloko udapādi. taṃ kho pan' idaṃ dukkha-samudayaṃ ariya-saccaṃ pahātabbaṃ ... pahīnaṃ ... idaṃ dukkha-nirodhaṃ ariya-saccan ti me bhikkhave ... āloko udapādi. taṃ kho pan' idaṃ dukkha-nirodhaṃ ariya-saccam sacchikātabbaṃ ... sacchikataṃ ... idaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā ariya-saccan ti me bhikkhave ... āloko udapādi. taṃ kho pan' idaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā ariya-saccaṃ bhāvetabbaṃ ... bhāvitaṃ. I shall call the set which is followed by *ti ... āloko udapādi* the 'enlightenment' set, and that followed by *pariññeyyaṃ*, etc., the 'gerundival' set.*

2.2. There are other statements of the four NTs in Pāli which differ from those in the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana-sutta*. One set occurs in an alternative version of the enlightenment story at M I 23,14-17,<sup>1</sup> where each item omits the word *ariya-saccaṃ* and is followed by *ti yathābhūtaṃ abhaññāsīm*. I shall call this the 'basic' set. It is noteworthy that in this set each item has the correct gender for the nouns

<sup>1</sup> I normally give a single reference for each Pāli quotation. Other references, if they exist, can be found in *PTC*.



(-*samudayo*, -*nirodho*) and for the pronouns (*idaṃ*, *ayaṃ*, *ayaṃ*, *ayaṃ*).

2.3. We also find in Pāli versions various shortened forms of the four NTs. I shall call these the ‘mnemonic’ sets, since they were probably intended to remind the hearer of the full form of the NTs. The shortest set of all is (a): *cattāri ariya-saccāni ... dukkhaṃ samudayo nirodho maggo* (Th 492).<sup>1</sup> This seems to be a ‘short-hand’ way of referring to the four NTs, for the 1st NT is not ‘Pain’, but the realisation of the fact that ‘This is pain’. Another set, without the word *ariya* is (b): *cattāri saccāni: dukkha-saccaṃ samudaya-saccaṃ nirodha-saccaṃ magga-saccaṃ* (Pp 2.1–3). A longer version, with *ariya*, is found in set (c): *cattāri ariya-saccāni: <3 8 0> dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, dukkha-samudayaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, dukkha-nirodhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ, dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā ariya-saccaṃ* (D III 277,8–11). The 4th NT also occurs in the form *dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā ariya-saccaṃ* (Vism 494.4), where -*gāminī*- probably represents an attempt to write the stem form of *gāminī* in a compound.

2.4. It would appear that in mnemonic set (c) the Pāli tradition takes *dukkhaṃ*, *dukkha-samudayaṃ*, etc., as being in apposition to *ariya-saccaṃ*, so that when the latter is in an oblique case, so too is the former, e.g. *dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ ... dukkha-samudayaṃ dukkha-nirodhaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadaṃ ariya-saccaṃ pucchanti* (M II 10,21 foll.); *dukkhassa ariya-saccassa ananubodhā ... dukkha-samudayassa ... ariya-saccassa ananubodhā ... dukkha-nirodhassa ... ariya-saccassa ananubodhā* (D II 90,12 foll.); *dukkhe ariya-sacce dukkha-samudaye ariya-sacce dukkha-nirodhe ariya-sacce dukkha-nirodha-gāminiyā paṭipadāya ariya-sacce* (M I 184,31 foll.).

2.5. It is interesting to note that in such contexts with an oblique case usage, the Pāli tradition was not always certain about the way in which to handle the 4th NT. Besides reading -*gāminī*-, which probably represents an attempt to write a stem form (as in § 2.3), we find the vv.ll. -*gāminī*- and -*gāminiṃ* at M II 10,25. Besides the reading -*gāminiyā* at D II 312.2 we find the vv.ll. -*gāminī*- and -*gāmini*-. Not only is there doubt about -*gāminiyāl-gāminī-l-gāmini*-, but there is evidence that there was doubt about the correct form of *paṭipadā* in such oblique usages. At Vin I 230,30 foll. we find the equivalent of D II 90,12 foll. (see § 2.4), with the 4th NT written as a compound: *dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā*-

<sup>1</sup> At Th 492 the order of the last two items is reversed for metrical reasons.

*ariya-saccassa ananubodhā*. An examination of more editions and manuscripts might help to settle the correct form of the 4th NT in oblique cases, but any conclusions reached are not likely to be totally persuasive, since the possibility of scribal error or emendation can never be completely eliminated.

2.6. Despite the problems which the grammar and syntax of the four NTs present, translators have shown little doubt about the way in which they should be translated. In the 'basic' set (§ 2.2), without *ariya-saccaṃ*, the interpretation is straightforward: 'I understood properly "This is pain, This is the origin of pain", etc.' We can translate the mnemonic set (a): 'The four NTs: pain, (its) origin, (its) cessation, the path'. Mnemonic set (b) is normally translated: 'The four truths: <381> the truth of pain, the truth of the origin, the truth of the cessation, the truth of the path', where *dukkha-saccaṃ*, etc., are translated as though they were dependent (*tatpuruṣa*) compounds. For mnemonic set (c) the same translation is given, with the addition of 'noble' to 'truth', as though the words in apparent apposition to *ariya-saccaṃ* were adjectives or adjectival compounds in agreement with *ariya-saccaṃ*: 'The four NTs: the NT of pain, the NT of the origin of pain, etc.'

2.7. A comparable translation is given for the 'introduction' set (§ 1.2), and the pronoun *idaṃ* which occurs in each NT is taken as agreeing with *-saccaṃ*, so that the translation is usually given in the form: 'This is the NT of pain, this is the NT of the origin of pain, etc.' No-one, to my knowledge, has commented upon the strangeness of the fact that, on the basis of the translation given for the 'basic' set (§ 2.6), we should expect the correct translation to be: 'The NT (that) "This is pain", the NT (that) "This is the origin of pain", etc.' I presume that the syntax has always dissuaded translators from giving the interpretation which reason told them was the correct one.

2.8. It is possible to translate the 1st NT in this set as 'This pain is a NT', and in the 4th NT we might translate 'This (thing, namely) the path ... is a NT', or 'This NT (is) the path', but such translations are not possible for the 2nd and 3rd NTs, since *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ* are not in the nom. case, unless we assume a change of gender, which is unlikely (§ 1.7). In the 'gerundival' set (§ 2.1), it would be possible to take the pronoun *taṃ*, which occurs in each NT, as agreeing with *ariya-saccaṃ*, and the pronoun which follows it as agreeing with *dukkhaṃ*, etc. This gives good sense for the 1st NT: 'That truth (that) "This is pain"', but it

is not satisfactory for the other NTs because, as noted above (§ 1.7), the pronoun has the form *idaṃ* which is not appropriate for the expected masculine forms *-samudayo* and *-nirodho*, nor for the feminine form *patipadā*.

### 3. The four NTs in other traditions

3.1. It might be thought that an investigation into the form which the four NTs take in BHS texts might produce a solution to this problem. In fact, such texts produce problems of their own. I quote from the Mvu,<sup>1</sup> the Lal,<sup>2</sup> and the CPS.<sup>3</sup>

<382> 3.2. Where the Pāli version of the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana-sutta* has the 'introduction' set (§ 1.2), Mvu and Lal have the 'mnemonic' set (c); CPS has neither the 'introduction' set nor the 'mnemonic' set, although it includes the 'mnemonic' set later (§ 3.4). The equivalent of the Pāli 'enlightenment' set (§ 2.1) occurs in the following versions: *idaṃ duḥkham iti bhikṣavaḥ ... ālokaṃ prādurabhūṣi; ayaṃ duḥkha-samudayo ti ... ālokaṃ prādurabhūṣi; ayaṃ duḥkha-nirodho ti ... āloko prādurabhūṣi; iyaṃ ca duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipadā iti ... āloko prādurabhūṣi* (Mvu III 332,13 foll.); *duḥkha-samudaya iti ... ālokaḥ prādurabhūtaḥ; ayaṃ duḥkha-nirodha iti ... ālokaḥ prādurabhūtaḥ; iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipadā iti ... ālokaḥ prādurabhūtaḥ* (Lal 417,15 foll.); *idaṃ duḥkha-samudayo 'yaṃ duḥkha-nirodha iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam iti ... buddhir udapādi* (CPS 12.2–3). For the omission of the word *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd NTs we can compare the similar omission in 'mnemonic' set (c) in the same text (§ 3.4).

3.3. The BHS versions of the 'gerundival' set are as follows: *taṃ khalu*

<sup>1</sup> É. Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, I–III, Paris 1882–97. According to the text itself (I 2.13–14), it is of the Vinaya-piṭaka according to the text (*pāṭhena*) of the Lokottaravādins of the noble Mahāsāṅghikas of the Middle Country.

<sup>2</sup> S. Lefmann, *Lalita Vistara*, Halle 1902. M. Winternitz, (*History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 248) quotes the Chinese tradition that this Mahāyāna text originally contained the life story of the Buddha for the Sarvāstivādins of the Hīnayāna.

<sup>3</sup> E. Waldschmidt, *Das Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*, ADAWB, 1960, 1, Berlin 1962. The CPS is a Sarvāstivādin text, but is identical with the Saṅghabhedavastu of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, from which the Introduction in Waldschmidt's edition of CPS was taken, if I understand the situation correctly.

*punar imaṃ duḥkhaṃ ārya-satyam pariññeyam ... tena khalu punar ayaṃ duḥkha-samudayo ārya-satyo prahātavyo ... atha khalu punar duḥkha-nirodho ārya-satyo sāksīkṛto ... sā khalu punar iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyā bhāvītā* (Mvu III 333,3 foll.); *yat khalv idaṃ duḥkhaṃ pariññeyam ... sa khalv ayaṃ duḥkha-samudayaḥ prahātavya(h) ... sa khalv ayaṃ duḥkha-nirodhaḥ sāksāt kartavya(h) ... sā khalv iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad bhāvayitavy(ā) ... tat khalv idaṃ duḥkhaṃ pariññātam ... sa khalv ayaṃ duḥkha-samudayaḥ prahīna(h) ... sa khalv ayaṃ duḥkha-nirodhaḥ sāksāt kṛta(h) ... sā khalv iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad bhāvīt(ā)* (Lal 418,1 foll.); *tat khalu duḥkham ārya-satyam ... pariññātavayam ... tat khalu duḥkha-samudayam ārya-satyam ... prahātavyam ... tat khalu duḥkha-nirodham ārya-satyam ... sāksīkartavyam ... tat khalu duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam ... bhāvayitavyā ... tat khalu duḥkham ārya-satyam ... pariññātam ... tat khalu duḥkha-samudayam ārya-satyam ... prahīnam ... tat khalu duḥkha-nirodham ārya-satyam ... sāksīkṛtam ... tat khalu duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam ... bhāvītam* (CPS 12.4–11). There is a version of the ‘basic’ set in the introduction to CPS: *idaṃ duḥkham ārya-satyam iti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti; ayaṃ duḥkha-samudayaḥ; ayaṃ duḥkha-nirodhaḥ; iyaṃ duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam iti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti* (CPS E.24). For the omission of the word *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd items we can compare the similar omission in ‘mnemonic’ set (c) in CPS (§ 3.4).

<383> 3.4. Versions of the ‘mnemonic’ set occur as follows: *catvāri ... ārya-satyāni seyyathīdaṃ duḥkham ārya-satyam, duḥkha-samudayo ārya-satyam, duḥkha-nirodho ārya-satyam, duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam* (Mvu III 331,17 foll.); *catvāri ... ārya-satyani — duḥkham duḥkha-samudayo duḥkha-nirodho duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad* (Lal 417,2 foll.); *catvāri ... ārya-satyāni — duḥkham ārya-satyam duḥkha-samudayo duḥkha-nirodho duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam* (CPS 14.2–3). The omission of the word *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd NTs in the CPS version has already been noted in the ‘enlightenment’ and ‘basic’ sets (§ 3.2–3). We find a different form of the 2nd and 3rd NTs at Mvu II 138,4 foll. : *duḥkha-samudayam ārya-satyam duḥkha-nirodham ārya-satyam*.

3.5. It would appear that in the ‘mnemonic’ set at Mvu III 331,17 foll. (§ 3.4) the words *duḥkham*, etc., are in apposition to *ārya-satyam*, although it would be possible to take the 4th NT as a compound, since

*pratipad* has the same form whether it is nom. sg. or the stem form. If it is a compound, however, we should have to regard *-gāminī-* as an irregularity, since it is the nom. sg. fem. form instead of the expected stem form. We have already seen (§ 2.5) that *-gāminī-* sometimes occurs in compounds in Pāli, and we find a comparable example in BHS at Mvu III 408,17 foll., where the four NTs occur as the objects of a group of verbs beginning with *ācikṣati* 'he teaches'. The statement includes *duḥkham*, *duḥkha-samudayaṃ* and *duḥkha-nirodhaṃ*, all of which could be taken as accusative in apposition to *ārya-satyam*. The 4th NT, however, is in the form *duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī-pratipad-ārya-satyam* (*ācikṣati*), which can only be a compound.

3.6. The problems which the syntax of the four NTs presents have led to some inconsistencies in their translation in BHS texts. Ria Kloppenburg, in her translation of CPS,<sup>1</sup> translates the 1st NT as 'This suffering is a noble truth' when it occurs in the 'basic' and 'enlightenment' sets,<sup>2</sup> as 'Suffering, that noble truth' in the 'gerundival',<sup>3</sup> and as 'The noble truth of suffering' in the 'mnemonic' set.<sup>4</sup> As we have noted (§ 2.8), it is possible to take the 1st NT in Pāli as 'This suffering is a noble truth', but it is not possible to follow her in taking the 2nd and 3rd NTs as 'This origin of suffering is a noble truth' and 'This cessation of suffering is a noble truth' because in the Pāli version *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ* cannot be nom. Nor can we translate the Pāli version of the 4th NT as 'This path leading to the cessation of suffering is a noble truth', because *idaṃ* cannot be taken as agreeing with *paṭipadā*.

<384> 3.7. Nor do the BHS versions of the 'gerundival' set help with the interpretation of the Pāli version of that set. In place of the pronoun *taṃ* which introduces each item in the Pāli version (§ 2.1), Mvu has *taṃ*, *tena*, *atha* and *sā*. The first three of these suggest that Pāli *taṃ* is the adverbial use of the pronoun in the sense of 'then, therefore', but *sā* in the 4th item goes against this, as do *yat/tat*, *sa*, *sa* and *sā* in the Lal version. The CPS version partly agrees with Pāli in having *tat* in each item, but it omits the pronouns *idaṃ*, *ayaṃ*, *ayaṃ* and *iyam*. These

<sup>1</sup> Ria Kloppenburg (tr.), *The Sūtra on the Foundation of the Buddhist Order*, Leiden 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

differences present too great a problem to be solved in this short paper.

#### 4. The problem reconsidered

4.1. If we consider the form of the 'enlightenment' set in Pāli (§ 2.1) and the other traditions (§ 3.2), we note that Pāli has *ariya-saccaṃ* in each item (with *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ* in the 2nd and 3rd NTs); Mvu and Lal omit *ārya-satyam* in all four items (with *-samudayo/ -nirodho* and *-samudaya(h)/-nirodha(h)* respectively); CPS omits *ārya-satyam* from the 2nd and 3rd items (with *-samudayo* and *-nirodha(h)*). In the 'gerundival' set the Pāli version (§ 2.1) has *ariya-saccaṃ* in each item (with *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ*); Mvu (§ 3.3) has *ārya-satya* in each item, but makes *-satya* agree with the gender of *duḥkham*, *-samudayo*, etc.; Lal omits *ārya-satyam* from each item; CPS has *ārya-satyam* in each item (with *-samudayam* and *-nirodham*). In the 'basic' set the Pāli version (§ 2.2) omits *ariya-saccaṃ* from each item; CPS omits *ārya-satyam* from the 2nd and 3rd items (with *-samudayaḥ* and *-nirodhaḥ*).

4.2. If we examine the form of 'mnemonic' set (c) in Pāli (§ 2.3) we find *ariya-saccaṃ* in each item (with *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ*); Mvu (§ 3.4) has *ārya-satyam* in each item (with *-samudayo* and *-nirodho* in one version, and *-samudayam* and *-nirodham* in the other); Lal omits *ārya-satyam* from all four items; CPS omits *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd items (with *-samudayo* and *-nirodho*).

4.3. Woodward made a very perspicacious remark about the Pāli version of the 'gerundival' set (§ 2.1). With reference to the statement that the second NT should be given up (*pahātabbaṃ*), he noted that the word *ariya-saccam* should be omitted, since what the Buddha meant was that the origin of pain should be given up, not the truth about it.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, in the Lal version (§ 3.3) the word *ārya-satyam* is <385> omitted from all four items, and consideration shows that this must be correct. What the Buddha said was that pain should be known, its origin given up, its cessation realised, and the path to its cessation practised. Woodward did not, therefore, go far enough. He should have suggested the removal of the word *ariya-saccaṃ* from all four items in the 'gerundival' set.

4.4. Further consideration shows that in other contexts, too, the word

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<sup>1</sup> F.L. Woodward, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part V, London 1930, p. 358, note 1.

*ariya-saccaṃ* should be omitted. Following the statement of the ‘basic’ set at D II 304,26 foll., there is a series of questions about them. e.g. *katamaṃ dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ*, etc. (D II 305,1 foll.). This is normally translated ‘What is the NT of pain?’, but since the answer is *jāti dukkhaṃ*, again without *ariya-saccaṃ*, it is clear that the original form of the question must have been *katamaṃ dukkhaṃ* — ‘What is pain?’ Mvu (III 332,1 foll.) and CPS (14.4–10) agree with the Pāli version in having *ārya-satyam* in each question, although in these two texts they come after a statement of ‘mnemonic’ set (c), which includes the word *ārya-satyam* in each item. The version in Lal (417.4 foll.) has *tatra katamad duḥkham*, etc., without *ārya-satyam*. A version of the questions without *ariya-saccaṃ* occurs in Pāli at M I 48,29 foll.

### 5. A proposed solution

5.1. I suggest that the original form of the ‘enlightenment’ set was the ‘basic’ set: *idaṃ dukkhaṃ*, *ayaṃ dukkha-samudayo*, *ayaṃ dukkha-nirodho*, *ayaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā* (to quote it in its Pāli version, without prejudice as to the actual dialect or language in which it was first uttered), as found at M I 23,14 foll. This is supported by the Mvu and Lal versions. The earliest form of the ‘mnemonic’ set was the four words *dukkhaṃ samudayo nirodho maggo*, without any reference to *sacca*, e.g. *yā buddhānaṃ ... dhamma-desanā taṃ pakāsesi dukkhaṃ samudayaṃ nirodhaṃ maggaṃ* (Vin I 16.3). When these items became known as ‘truths’, they were so designated: *cattāri ariya-saccāni* — *dukkhaṃ samudayo maggo nirodho* (Th 492).

5.2. Their designation as *saccāni* led to the introduction of the word *-sacca* into each item: *cattāri saccāni* — *dukkha-saccaṃ samudaya-saccaṃ nirodha-saccaṃ magga-saccaṃ* (Pp 2.1–3). Although these items are usually translated as though they were dependent <386> (*tatpuruṣa*) compounds (§ 2.6), they should rather be taken as descriptive (*karmadhāraya*) compounds: ‘The truth “pain”, etc.’, cf. *uposatha-saddo* ‘The word “uposatha”’. They might even be taken as abbreviated forms of syntactical compounds:<sup>1</sup> *\*idaṃdukkha-saccaṃ*, etc., ‘The truth (that) “This is pain”, etc.’, cf. *idaṃsaccābhinivesa* ‘The inclination (to say) “This is true”’, i.e. ‘The inclination to dogmatise’.

<sup>1</sup> For such compounds in Pāli see G.V. Davane, *Nominal Composition in Middle Indo-Aryan*, Poona 1956, pp. 135–39. For syntactical compounds in Sanskrit see

5.3. When the truths became known as *ariya-saccāni*, then this word was added to the ‘mnemonic’ sets. It was added to the simplest form in apposition to the four items: *yā sā buddhānāṃ ... dharma-deśanā tadyathā duḥkhaṃ samudayo nirodho mārgaś catvāry ārya-satyāni ... samprakāśayati* (CPS 16.13). The introduction of the word *ariya-* into ‘mnemonic’ set (b) gave a set: \**dukkha-ariya-saccaṃ*, etc. I suggest that the hiatus between *dukkha-*, etc., and *-ariya-saccaṃ* was avoided by the insertion of a sandhi *-m-*, producing *dukkha-m-ariya-saccaṃ*, etc. Wrong word division led to this being taken as *dukkham ariya-saccaṃ* ( S V 434.9–11), and then *dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ* ( D II 277.8–11), i.e. as two words in apposition. This was probably helped by the fact that *dukkhaṃ* could be taken as an adjective in agreement with *ariya-saccaṃ*. The same wrong division of *dukkha-samudaya-m-ariya-saccaṃ* and *dukkha-nirodha-m-ariya-saccaṃ* led to the appearance of *dukkha-samudayaṃ* and *dukkha-nirodhaṃ*. Despite the fact that these two words were felt to have an independent existence,<sup>1</sup> so that they could be declined in apposition to *ariya-sacca* (§ 2.4), nevertheless the Pāli tradition, with the few exceptions noted above (§ 1.5), recognised that these were the correct forms, and refrained from ‘correcting’ them.

5.4. In the 4th NT, the replacement of *magga* by *paṭipadā* produced a hiatus between *-ā-* and *-ariya-saccaṃ*, which was tolerated, and no sandhi *-m-* was inserted. Since the stem form was identical with the nom. sg. form, it was possible to take *paṭipadā* and *ariya-saccaṃ* as being in apposition. It was therefore possible to take *dukkha-nirodha-gāminī* as being a separate adjective in agreement with the nom. sg. form *paṭipadā*, although it is clear from the variety of forms we find (§ 2.3–5) that the tradition was not certain about this. It is, again, possible that we have examples of abbreviated forms of syntactical compounds here. If the original form was \**ayaṃ-dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā-ariya-saccaṃ*, then the compound forms we have noted (§ 2.5) are easily understood. To this extent, Johansson’s suggestion of a long compound (§ 1.3) is correct, although he did not realise that all four NTs can be

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Wackernagel, *Ai.Gr.*, II.1, §§ 121–24 and Whitney, *Gram.*, § 1314.

<sup>1</sup> In a version of the ‘mnemonic’ set found in an inscription in Brāhmī characters of the second or third centuries A.D. at Sarnath, we find the word *bhikkhave* inserted between *dukkhaṃ* and *ariya-saccaṃ* in the 1st NT. See Sten Konow, “Two Buddhist inscriptions from Sarnath” in *Ep. Ind.*, IX (1907–08), pp. 291–93.



taken as compounds.

<387> 5.5. Of the BHS versions of the ‘mnemonic’ set, that in Lal omits the word *ārya-satyam*, and so the problem of hiatus does not arise there. At Mvu II 138.4 (§ 3.4) we find *duḥkham ārya-satyam duḥkha-samudayam ārya-satyam duḥkha-nirodham ārya-satyam duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī pratipad ārya-satyam*, which in the light of the discussion in the previous paragraph can all be taken as compounds, with sandhi *-m-* in the first three items. In the 4th NT *pratipad*, which can be either nom. sg. or stem form, creates no hiatus. At Mvu III 331.17 foll., however, we find *duḥkha-samudayo ārya-satyam* and *duḥkha-nirodho ārya-satyam*. It would seem most likely that these forms represent late attempts to ‘correct’ what was thought to be faulty grammar when wrong word division led to the appearance of the anomalous forms *-samudayam* and *-nirodham*, just as we have seen occasionally in the Pāli tradition (§ 1.5). The CPS version omits *ārya-satyam* from the 2nd and 3rd items, where we find *-samudayo* and *-nirodho*.

5.6. As suggested above, the word *ariya-sacca* is not appropriate in the ‘enlightenment’ (§ 5.1) or the ‘gerundival’ (§ 4.3) sets, but its presence in the ‘mnemonic’ set doubtless led to its introduction there by analogy. Theoretically, its introduction should have led to syntactical compounds: *\*idaṃ-dukkha-m-ariya-saccaṃ*, *\*ayaṃ-dukkha-samudaya-m-ariya-saccaṃ*, *\*ayaṃ-dukkha-nirodha-m-ariya-saccaṃ*, *\*ayaṃ-dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-patipadā-ariya-saccaṃ*, but just as a misunderstanding of the structure of the compounds in the ‘mnemonic’ set led to a faulty word division, so another misunderstanding led to the separation of the pronouns from the beginning of the compound. Since in the first item in the Pāli version *idaṃ* seemed to agree with *saccaṃ*, the other three pronouns were changed to *idaṃ* to agree in the same way.

5.7. Lal does not include the word *ārya-satyam* in either the ‘enlightenment’ or the ‘gerundival’ set (§ 4.1). Mvu does not include the word in the ‘enlightenment’ set, and that it is an addition to the ‘gerundival’ set is clearly shown by the fact that the syntactical problem of fitting it into each item was solved by making *-satya* agree in gender with *duḥkham*, *-samudayo*, etc. The CPS version of the ‘enlightenment’ set omits *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd items, as it does in the ‘mnemonic’ set, and has *-samudayo* and *-nirodha(h)* as in the same set. The CPS version of the ‘gerundival’ set has *ārya-satyam* in each item, with *-samudayam* and *-nirodham* in the 2nd and 3rd items. It is not

obvious why CPS sometimes includes *ārya-satyam* in the 2nd and 3rd items, and sometimes omits the word. It is, however, clear that when *ārya-satyam* <388> is included we find *-samudayam* and *-nirodham*; when it is omitted we find *-samudayo (-aḥ)* and *-nirodho (-aḥ)*. We do not find *-samudayo ārya-satyam* or *-nirodho ārya-satyam*, which indicates that tradition felt that this combination of words was incorrect. In the CPS versions of the ‘enlightenment’ and the ‘basic’ sets we find *idaṃ-duḥkha-m-ārya-satyam* and *iyaṃ-duḥkha-nirodha-gāminī-pratipad-ārya-satyam* in the 1st and 4th items respectively, which are precisely the forms which are expected as syntactical compounds.

5.8. The ‘introduction’ set, found only in the Pāli version, resembles the Pāli form of the ‘enlightenment’ and ‘gerundival’ sets, with the words *kho pana bhikkhave* inserted between the pronoun and the noun. Its absence from the three BHS versions and the fact that it is replaced in the Mvu and Lal versions by the ‘mnemonic’ set suggests that it is not an original feature of the sutta. It is possible that in the earliest version there was no set of four NTs at the beginning of this portion of the narrative at all. When the idea of the NTs became more widespread, and the word *ariya-saccaṃ* was inserted into the ‘basic’ set which, as suggested above (§ 5.1), was the original form of the ‘enlightenment’ set, a statement of the four NTs was prefixed to the story as a heading or rubric, in some traditions. If this was so, then it is likely that the Mvu and Lal versions independently prefixed the ‘mnemonic’ set as being a very appropriate introduction to what was to follow.

## 6. Conclusions.

6.1. A number of problems remain. The precise relationship between the different versions is not clear. The reasons for the inconsistencies in some texts, e.g. in the form of the 2nd and 3rd NTs in the CPS, are unknown, but in some cases they may be due to a mixture of material from various sources. The relative chronology of the changes which must be assumed to have taken place in the form of the NTs is hazy. Nevertheless it seems possible to come to some conclusions.

6.2. The correct form of the NTs in Pāli is: *idaṃ dukkhaṃ, ayaṃ dukkha-samudayo, ayaṃ dukkha-nirodho, ayaṃ dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā* — ‘This is pain, this is the origin of pain, this is the cessation of pain, this is the path leading to the cessation of pain’. When the word *ariya-saccaṃ* is included in the statement, we should translate: ‘The NT

(that) “This is pain”, etc.’

<389> 6.3. The grammatical form of the four NTs when the word *ariya-saccaṃ* is included is a syntactical compound. This was not understood by the tradition, with the result that faulty division of the compounds led to the apparent production of nom. sg. forms *-samudayaṃ* and *-nirodhaṃ*. The belief that in the 1st NT *idaṃ* was an independent pronoun agreeing with *-saccaṃ* led to the pronouns in the other three NTs being changed to *idaṃ*.

6.4. The earliest forms of the ‘enlightenment’ and ‘gerundival’ sets did not include the word *ariya-saccaṃ*. Since the ‘introduction’ set is an addition to the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana-sutta*, we may conclude that the earliest form of this sutta did not include the word *ariya-saccaṃ*.

6.5. Nevertheless, as John Brough stated in his note on *pamādol* \**pāmado*,<sup>1</sup> these readings are so well entrenched in the Pāli tradition that, even if agreement could be reached upon the original form of the four NTs, no editor would think of inserting an emendation of them into his text.

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<sup>1</sup> John Brough. *The Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, London 1962, p. 194.