The Four Ariya-saccas as 'True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled'-the Painful, its Origin, its Cessation, and the Way Going to This—Rather than ‘Noble Truths’ Concerning These.

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Abstract

This paper critiques the standard translation of ariya-sacca as 'Noble Truth' and argues that the term refers to four saccas as 'true realities', rather than as verbalised 'truths' about these realities; the teachings about them are not, as such what the term ariya-sacca refers to. Moreover, only one of the ari saccas (the fourth) is itself ever described in the suttas as 'noble'. The four are 'true realities for the spiritually ennobled': the fundamental, basic, most significant genuine realities that the Buddha and other noble ones see in the flow of experience of themselves and/or others. The first of them is not best translated as 'suffering' but as 'pain' – in all its many senses – or indeed 'the painful': the upādāna-kkhandhas as 'bundles of grasping-fuel' which are described, adjectivally, as 'painful'. The paper includes a new translation of the Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta in line with this analysis.

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An ariya-sacca means “True realities for the spiritually ennobled” and that these realities are in fact dukkha. The first True Reality is the metaphorical ‘illness’ of dukkha (Vibh-a.88), (i) diagnose an illness, (ii) identify its cause, (iii) determine whether it is curable, and (iv) outline a course of treatment to cure it. The first sermon says that the first of the four is ‘to be fully understood’; the second is ‘to be abandoned’; the third is ‘to be personally experienced’; the fourth is ‘to be developed/cultivated’. The Four Noble Truths are: 1. Dukkha 2. Samudaya, the arising or origin of dukkha, 3. Nirodha, the cessation of dukkha, 4. Magga, the way leading to the cessation of dukkha. Why these things are called ariya Sacca (noble truth)? What is dukkha? Pain and its ending: The four noble truths in the Theravāda Buddhist Canon. Journal of Buddhist Ethics, 8, 36–41. de Jong, J. W. (1981). The Four Ariya-saccas as ‘true realities for the spiritually ennobled”—the painful, its origin, its cessation, and the way going to this—rather than ‘Noble Truths’ concerning these. Buddha Studies Review, 26(2), 197–227. Harvey, P. (2013). The Sāṅgha of Noble Sāvakas, with particular reference to their trainee member, the person ‘practising for the realization of the stream-entry-fruit’. Buddhist Studies Review, 30(1), 3–70.