Everybody in the world wants happiness and peace. That is the reason why people seek the true path which can lead them to the cessation of suffering. All religions in the world arise because of this search. One of the great religions in the world which leads to the cessation of suffering is Buddhism.

Buddha had pointed to suffering and he found the cause of this suffering and gave us hope by declaring that there is cessation of suffering. He also pointed out that there is a way, a method, a practice to eradicate suffering. The Buddha’s message with regard to the Noble Truth of Suffering is not pessimistic. Other three noble truths are also explained by the Buddha in the first sermon. Noble Eightfold Path is clearly revealed by the Buddha in the same sermon called Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta.

The Four Noble Truths are a very important aspect of the teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha has said that it is because we fail to understand the Four Noble Truths that we have continued to go round in the cycle of birth and death. In the very first sermon of the Buddha, which he gave to the five monks at the deer park in Sarnath was on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the Fourth Noble Truth which leads to Nibbāṇa. It is a way of life consisting of eight factors. By walking on this path, it will be possible for us to see an end to suffering. Because Buddhism is a logical and consistent
teaching embracing every aspect of life, this noble path also serves as the finest possible code for leading a happy life. Its practice brings benefits to oneself and others, and it is not a path to be practiced by those who call themselves Buddhists alone, but by each and every understanding person, irrespective of his religious beliefs.

An outstanding aspect of the Buddha’s teaching is the adoption of the Eightfold Path as a noble way of life. Another name for the Eightfold Path is the Middle Path (Majjhima Paṭipadā). The Buddha advised his followers to follow this path so as to avoid the extremes of sensual pleasures and self-mortification. The Middle Path is a righteous way of life which does not advocate the acceptance of decrees given by someone outside oneself. A person practices the Middle Path, the guide for moral conduct, not out of fear of any super-natural agency, but out of the intrinsic value in following such an action. He chooses this self-imposed discipline for a definite end in view: self-purification.

The Middle Path is a planned course of inward culture and progress. A person can make real progress in righteousness and insight by following this Path, and not by engaging in external worship and prayers. According to the Buddha, anyone who lives in accordance with the Dhamma will be guided and protected by that very law. When a person lives according to Dhamma, he will also be living in harmony with the universal law.
Every Buddhist is encouraged to mould his life according to the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. He who adjusts his life according to his noble way of living will be free from miseries and calamities both in this life-time and hereafter. He will also be able to develop his mind by restraining from evil and observing morality.

There were many Buddhas prior to Gautama, the Buddha and only at the time of Gautama, the Buddha these four noble truths were discovered and revealed to the world. With the passing away of the Buddha and his immediate disciples, his teachings gradually disappear and these four noble truths become hidden again.

Everybody who wants to liberate from Saṃsāra or all suffering needs to understand clearly the first sermon of the Buddha or well known as the ‘Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta’ which mentioned the four noble truths. By that dedication, I submitted this dissertation entitled ‘An Analytical Study on the First Sermon of the Buddha’ under the supervision of Dr. Shailajē Katre, Department of Sanskrit and Prakrit Languages, to the University of Pune for a degree of doctor of philosophy.

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