This ill-balanced world is not absolutely rosy nor is it totally thorny. To an optimist this world is absolutely rosy; to a pessimist this world is absolutely thorny. But to a realist this world is neither absolutely rosy nor absolutely thorny. It abounds with beautiful roses and prickly thorns as well.

A person who is not heedless or so enraptured by life and the world, is one who is mindful, who knows how to look and investigate, and knows the right attitude to adopt to the truths that exist inherently in life and this world as the natural course of things.

There are four desirable and undesirable conditions prevail in this world, which everyone, without exception must, perforce, face in the course of one’s lifetime:

**Desirable conditions (iţţhārammaņa) Undesirable conditions (aniţţhārammaņa)**

Gain (lābha) Loss (alābha)

Fame (yasa) Defame (ayasa)

Praise (pasaṁsā) Blame (nindā)

Happiness (sukha) Suffering (dukkha)

1. **Gain and Loss**

* It is quite natural to be complacent in obtaining a gain or a profit. In itself there is nothing wrong. Such righteous or unrighteous profits produce some pleasure which average men seek.
* The problem arises in case of loss. Profits one can bear smilingly but not so the losses. More often than not they lead to mental derangement and sometimes to suicide when the losses are unbearable.
* It is under such adverse circumstances that one should exhibit moral courage and maintain a balanced mind, and take it as an opportunity to practice sublime virtues. All have ups and downs while battling with life. One should always be prepared for the losses in particular. Then there will be less disappointment.
* Visākhā, the Buddha’s chief female lay disciple, used to frequent the monastery to attend to the needs of the Buddha and the Sangha, decked with a very valuable outer garment. On entering the monastery, she used to remove it and give it to the maid for safe custody. Once the maid inadvertently left it in the temple and returned home. Venerable Ânanda, noticing it, kept it in a safe place to be given to Visākhā on her next visit.

Visākhā, discovering the loss, advised the maid to look for it but not to take it back in case any bhikkhu had touched it. Knowing that Ânanda had kept it, Visākhā asked the Buddha what meritorious act she should perform with the money obtained by selling the costly garment.

The Buddha advised her to build a monastery for the benefit of the Sangha. As there was nobody to buy the costly garment, she bought it and built a monastery and offered to the Sangha.

Instead of grieving over the temporary loss and reprimanding the maid for her carelessness, she thanked her for granting an opportunity for service.

**2) Fame and Defame**

* Fame we welcome and it gladdens our mind, defame we dislike and it disheartens us.
* We need not hunt after fame. If we are worthy of fame, it will come to us unsought. Likewise, the bee will be attracted to the flower, laden with honey. The flower, however, does not invite the bee.
* True indeed, we feel naturally happy when our fame is spread far and wide. But we must realize that fame, honour and glory only lead to the grave. They varnish in thin air. Empty words are they, though pleasing to the ear.
* When you are misrepresented, deliberately or un-deliberately, it is wise to think or say *“O by his slight acquaintanceship and little knowledge of myself I am slightly criticized. But if I am known better, more serious and much greater would be the accusation against me.”*
* It is needless to waste time in correcting the false reports unless circumstances compel you to offer a clarification. The enemy is gratified when he sees that you are hurt. If you are indifferent, such misrepresentations will fall on deaf ears.
* In seeing the faults of others, we should behave like a blind person.

In hearing unjust criticism of others, we should behave like a deaf person.

In speaking ill of others, we should behave like a dump person.

* The world is full of thorns and pebbles. It is impossible to remove them. But if we have to walk in spite of such obstacles, instead of trying to remove them, which is impossible, it is advisable to wear a pair of slippers and walk harmlessly.
* The Dhamma teaches:

*“Be like a lion that trembles not at sounds.*

*Be like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net.*

*Be like a lotus that is not contaminated by the mud from which it springs up.*

*Wander alone like a rhinoceros.”*

* Great men are indifferent to fame or defame. They are not upset when they are criticized or maligned, for they work not for fame or name. They are indifferent whether others recognize their services or not. “*To work they have the right but not to the fruit thereof.”*

**3) Praise and Blame**

* It is natural to be elated when praised and to be depressed when blamed. Amidst praise and blame, the Buddha says, the wise do not exhibit either elation or depression. Like a solid rock that is not shaken by the wind they remain unmoved.
* Praise, if worthy, is pleasing to the ears; if unworthy, as in the case of flattery, though pleasing, it is deceptive. But they are all sounds which have no effect if they do not reach our ears.
* The cultured do not resort to flattery nor do they wish to be flattered by others. The praiseworthy they praise without any jealousy. The blameworthy they blame, not contemptuously but out of compassion, with the object of reforming them.
* The Buddha says: “*They who speak much are blamed. They who speak a little are blamed. They who are silent are also blamed. In this world there is none who is not blamed.”*
* None is one hundred percent good. Nobody is one hundred percent bad either. There is evil in the best of us. There is good in the worst of us. *“He who silence himself like a cracked gong when attacked, insulted and abused he, I say”* the Buddha exhorts*, “is in the presence of Nibbāna although he has not yet attained Nibbāna.”*
* One may work with the best of motives. But the outside world very often misconstrues him and will impute motives never even dream of.
* One may serve and help others to the best of one’s ability, sometimes by incurring debt or selling one’s articles or property to save a friend in trouble. But later, the deluded world is so constituted that those very persons whom one has helped will find fault with him, blackmail him, blemish his good character and will rejoice in his downfall.
* Devadatta, a pupil and cousin of the Buddha, who had developed psychic powers, not only tried to discredit the Buddha but also made an unsuccessful attempt to crush him to death by hurling a rock from above while he was pacing up and down below.
* In a public assembly a vile woman named Ciñcā feigning pregnancy maligned the Buddha. With a smiling face the Buddha patiently endured the insult and the Buddha’s innocence was proved.
* Insults are the common lot of humanity. The more you work and the greater you become, the more are you the subject to insult and humiliation.
* When insulted, we should think that we are given an opportunity to practice patience. Instead of being offended, we should be grateful to our adversaries.

**4)** **Happiness and Suffering**

* What can be endured with ease is happiness (sukha), what is difficult to bear is pain (dukkha). Ordinary happiness is the gratification of a desire. No sooner is the desired thing gained than we desire some other kind of happiness. So insatiate are our selfish desires. The enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest and only happiness to an average person.
* There is no doubt a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification and recollection of such material pleasures highly priced by the sensualist, but they are illusory and temporary.
* Real happiness is found within, and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours or conquests.
* The Buddha enumerates four kinds of happiness for a layman:

1) The happiness of possessions – health, wealth, beauty, joy, property, children, etc.

2) The happiness of enjoying such possessions.

3) Not falling into debt.

4) Leading a blameless life

* The enjoyment of wealth lies not only in using it for ourselves but also in giving it for the welfare of others. What we eat is only temporary. What we preserve we leave and go. What we give we take with us. We are remembered for ever by the good deeds we have done with our worldly possessions.
* If we are contended with what we have and if we are economical, we need not be in debt to anyone. Debtors live in mental agony and are under obligation to their creditors. Though poor, when debt free, you feel relieved and are mentally happy.
* A blameless person is a blessing to himself and to others. He is admired by all and feels happier, being affected by the peaceful vibration of others.
* Pain or suffering comes in different guises. We suffer when we are subject to old agewhich is natural. With equanimity we have to bear the sufferings of old age.
* Very often we are separated from our near and dear ones. Such separation causes great pain to the mind. We should understand that all association must end with separation. Here is a good opportunity to practice equanimity.
* More often than not we are compelled to be united with the unpleasant, that we detest. We should be able to bear them. Perhaps we are reaping the effects of our own kamma, past or present. We should try to accommodate ourselves to the new situation or try to overcome the obstacle by some means or other.
* Even the Buddha, a perfect being, who has destroyed all defilements, had to endure physical suffering caused by disease and accidents.
* The Buddha was constantly subject to headaches. His last illness caused him much physical suffering. As a result of Devadatta hurling a rock to kill him, his foot was wounded by a splinter. Sometimes he was compelled to starve. At times he had to be contented with horse-fodder. Amidst pain and happiness he lived with a balanced mind.

**Summary**

These eight worldly conditions, regardless of whether they are liked or not, can arise for everyone. The only difference lying in the way one responds to and acts on them:

* The unlearned, unenlightened beings do not know or understand the true nature of worldly conditions and so they mindlessly rejoice and lament over them – whenever they win they become indulgent and vainglorious, and whenever they lose they become sad and despondent, or even deranged. They let worldly conditions control their lives and overwhelm their minds, so that they are forever experiencing ups and downs and do not transcend sorrows.
* The learned disciples know how to reflect on worldly conditions and see their true nature – all things that arise, are without exception unstable, impermanent, imperfect and naturally subject to change. They abide with mindfulness and equilibrium, neither indulging in happiness nor being overwhelmed by suffering.
* The Buddha says –

“When touched by worldly conditions the mind of an Arahant never wavers.

Amidst gain and loss, fame and defame, praise and blame, happiness and pain, let us try to maintain a balanced mind.”

* As fruits fall from a tree- tender, ripe or old – even so we die in our infancy, prime of manhood, or even in old age.

The sun rises in the East only to set in the West

Flowers bloom in the morning to fade in the evening.

Inevitable death, which comes to all without exception, we have to face with perfect equanimity.

**References:-**

**(1) The Buddha and His Teachings by Narada Maha Thera**

**(2) A Constitution for Living by Venerable P.A. Payutto**