**THE FOUR SEALS OF BUDDHISM**

The four basic principles of Buddhism.

1. All conditioned phenomena are transient.
2. All polluted phenomena are dukkha—unsatisfactory or in the nature of suffering.
3. All phenomena are empty and selfless.
4. Nirvana is true peace.

One of the chief factors that cause us difficulty in our lives, and thus in cyclic existence, is that we and everything around us is transient. Whatever we cherish as bringing us happiness—our body, possessions, friends and relatives, reputation and social status, love, honor, and appreciation—all these things arise due to causes and conditions, and thus by their very nature, they change.

When we reflect deeply that by their very nature, things change and nothing can prevent this, we come to understand that whatever enjoyments, relationships, success, and facilities we have at our disposal in cyclic existence do not last long. Although we may have these things now, because they are impermanent by nature, they cannot be totally relied upon or trusted. They do not have the ability to give us long-lasting happiness or to bring real security. Such transient phenomena in cyclic existence are the objects in relation to which we experience suffering. Our suffering, however, is not due to the objects or people we encounter, but is rooted in ignorance, the chief affliction that causes cyclic existence.

**The Four Buddhist Seals**

Together with the Four Noble Truths, the second set of characteristics that defines Buddhism are known as **The Four Seals** describe reality, the way things are:

1. **All compounded things are impermanent**. – everything that is composed of elements or parts change continuously, is impermanent.
2. **All contaminated phenomena are, by nature, unsatisfactory or, is in the nature of suffering**. “Contamination” here refers to our body/mind being under the influence of our negative emotions, afflictions or delusions such as hatred, anger, jealousy and lust – by **understanding their faults**, how they upset and **disturb our minds**, our lives and those of others, we generate the wish of **definite emergence** as described above.
3. **All phenomena are without, lacking or empty of self, inherent existence**

because they depend on causes and conditions, are **interdependent**. If you try to find the “essence” of anything you can’t locate an essential “it”, or in the case of persons, an inherently existing self or “I”. *This doesn’t mean that things don’t exist.*

4*.*  **Nirvana is peace and happiness** – is the blissful, peaceful state of mind once karma and the afflictions have been completely removed