

## Lecture 2: The Four Noble Truths (part 1)

(Notes on Bhikkhu Bodhi's introductory lectures, "The Buddha's Teaching as It Is", <http://www.buddhanet.net/audio-lectures.htm>).

### Approaching the dhamma

- Doctrines/principles serve as a method to lead us to the same understanding as the Buddha - to be seen within our experience - not articles of faith to hold on to.
- The starting point is an observation about the basic problematic nature of human life.

### The 'Four Noble Truths' (*cattari ariya saccani*)

1. Dukkha, suffering
2. The origin of dukkha
3. Cessation of dukkha
4. The path leading to cessation of dukkha

'*sacca*', truth, reality. These are not 'truths' or axioms in the sense of propositions or statements of truth. Rather, the 'four noble truths' are four existing realities.

'*ariya*', noble.

- taught by the 'noble one' (the Buddha)
- transform us into 'noble ones'
- call for noble qualities

*(N.B. Alternative translation of 'ariya-sacca': "True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled" - Peter Harvey)*

Logical unity of the four truths: problem, cause, prognosis, cure.

*(N.B. Also, two sets of cause-effect: suffering and its cause; cessation and its cause)*

Understanding meaning of 'dukkha' is pivotal. Much deeper and more comprehensive than English word 'suffering'. Basic un-satisfactoriness pervading our whole existence.

### The Noble Truth of Suffering

Forms listed in first discourse

*"Birth is dukkha; aging is dukkha; disease is dukkha; death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are dukkha; union with what is unpleasant is dukkha; separation from what is pleasant is dukkha; not getting what one wants is dukkha; in brief, the five aggregates of clinging are dukkha"*

The five aggregates:

1. Form (*rūpa*)
2. Feeling (*vedanā*)

3. Perception (saṃjñā)
4. Mental formation (saṃskāra)
5. Consciousness (vijñāna)

The aggregates are transitory, *events* rather than any enduring core. The aggregates are the basis for all suffering.

### **Three levels of dukkha**

#### Suffering of pain (dukkha-dukkha)

Obvious suffering; physical and mental pain

#### Suffering of change (viparinama-dukkha)

Not simply that we suffer when they change. Their impermanence makes them dukkha even as we are enjoying them.

#### Suffering of 'conditioned formation' (sankhara-dukkha)

The aggregates, being a combination of conditioned phenomena and not fully under our control, are dukkha.