

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

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

### Why so much emphasis on the negative side of things (dukkha)?

Freedom is only possible by seeing how things are. The teaching on the truth of suffering cuts against a tendency to deny or hide the nature of suffering. The dharma 'goes against the stream'.

True happiness - untouched by dukkha - is possible according to Buddhism, but we have to *investigate* whether the things we ordinarily consider to be happiness really are completely satisfying or not.

- Sense pleasures – bound up with agitation, grasping at them, anxiety that they will be lost, or mixed with guilt. We get addicted and then upset when they end. Even when we are satiated with them there is a sense of discontent.
- Beautiful, healthy body – grows old, becomes sick
- Aesthetic, religious and spiritual feelings – all can be deeply fulfilling but don't endure
- Personal relationships – feelings can change, turn to conflict, and even if lasting it ends with death
- If we really confront the state of the world, we cannot really avoid the extent and pervasiveness of suffering – poverty, tyranny, illness, violence, natural disasters, 'lives of quiet desperation' (Thoreau), suffering of animals

### The origin of dukkha

Be like a lion, not a dog!

- If you throw a stone at a dog it runs after the stone, whereas a lion will just jump on you! Recognising dukkha, we have to go after the cause.

*"What now is the noble truth of the origin of dukkha? It is craving (tanha), which gives rise to repeated existence, which is bound up with pleasure and lust and finds ever fresh delight now here now there. It is of three kinds: sensual craving, craving for existence, and craving for annihilation." (From the Buddha's first discourse)*

Identifying craving, *tanha*:

- not 'desire' in general. Buddhism doesn't call for elimination of desire.
- desire grounded in delusion, seeking pleasure power and status for oneself
- not the sole cause of suffering, but the one that can be seen most clearly and has to be dealt with

Three types of craving:

1. Sensual craving (*kama-tanha*) for sense objects, ideas, images

2. Craving for existence (*bhava-tanha*) – continued existence, becoming prominent, famous, immortality
3. Craving for annihilation (*vibhava-tanha*) – wish to escape through annihilation, various forms of self-destruction

### How is craving the origin of suffering?

- Craving is accompanied by *dissatisfaction* and *pain of lacking, striving* then *safeguarding* and *loss*. If we examine it we find the gratification isn't very deep, and we always want more bringing an even stronger dissatisfaction.
- Craving fuels the round of compulsive rebirth, using body after body.

### Cessation (3<sup>rd</sup> noble truth)

- With craving cut off, the mind is released from sorrow and worries. Great peace (*mahashanti*), supreme happiness and complete joy. There is still sickness, aging and death but the mind is not disturbed by this.
- At death there is no further rebirth, but this is not annihilation but attainment of unconditioned nibbana (Skt. Nirvana), which is unmeasurable and beyond words and concepts.

*(N.B. Especially in Mahayana Buddhism, the emphasis on becoming a Buddha, who having attained enlightenment does continue to be reborn, but out of compassion rather than craving)*

### Path (4<sup>th</sup> noble truth)

The Path, the way to cessation. Not elaborated in this lecture.

#### Tasks in relation to four truths:

1. Dukkha – to be fully understood
2. Craving – to be abandoned
3. Cessation – to be realised
4. Path – to be cultivated