

Vipassana Discourse Day 5

The Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the eradication of suffering, the way to eradicate suffering--the chain of conditioned arising.

Five days are over; you have five more left to work. Make best use of the remaining days by working hard, with proper understanding of the technique.

From observing respiration within a limited area, you have proceeded to observing sensations throughout the body. When one begins this practice, it is very likely that one will first encounter gross, solidified, intensified, unpleasant sensations such as pain, pressure, etc. You had encountered such experiences in the past, but the habit pattern of your mind was to react to sensations, to roll in pleasure and reel in pain, remaining always agitated. Now you are learning how to observe without reacting, to examine the sensations objectively, without identifying with them.

Pain exists, misery exists. Crying will not free anyone of misery. How is one to come out of it? How is one to live with it?

A doctor treating a sick person must know what the sickness is, and what the fundamental cause of the sickness is. If there is a cause, then there must be a way out, by removing the cause. Once the cause is removed, the sickness will automatically be removed. Therefore, steps must be taken to eradicate the cause.

First one must accept the fact of suffering. Everywhere suffering exists; this is a universal truth. But it becomes a noble truth when

one starts observing it without reacting, because anyone who does so is bound to become a noble, saintly person.

When one starts observing the First Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, then very quickly the cause of suffering becomes clear, and one starts observing it also; this is the Second Noble Truth. If the cause is eradicated, then suffering is eradicated; this is the Third Noble Truth--the eradication of suffering. To achieve its eradication, one must take steps; this is the Fourth Noble Truth--the way to end suffering by eradicating its cause.

One begins by learning to observe without reacting. Examine the pain that you experience objectively, as if it is someone else's pain. Inspect it like a scientist who observes an experiment in his laboratory. When you fail, try again. Keep trying, and you will find that gradually you are coming out of suffering.

Every living being suffers. Life starts with crying; birth is a great suffering. And anyone who has been born is bound to encounter the sufferings of sickness and old age. But no matter how miserable one's life may be, nobody wants to die, because death is a great suffering.

Throughout life, one encounters things that one does not like, and is separated from things that one likes. Unwanted things happen, wanted things do not happen, and one feels miserable.

Simply understanding this reality at the intellectual level will not liberate anyone. It can only give inspiration to look within oneself, in order to experience truth and to find the way out of misery. This is what Siddhattha Gotama did to become a Buddha: he started observing reality within the framework of his body like a research

scientist, moving from gross, apparent truth to subtler truth, to the subtlest truth. He found that whenever one develops craving, whether to keep a pleasant sensation or to get rid of an unpleasant one, and that craving is not fulfilled, then one starts suffering. And going further, at the subtlest level, he found that when seen with a fully collected mind, it is clear that attachment to the five aggregates is suffering. Intellectually one may understand that the material aggregate, the body, is not "I", not "mine", but merely an impersonal, changing phenomenon which is beyond one's control; actually, however, one identifies with the body, and develops tremendous attachment to it. Similarly, one develops attachment to the four mental aggregates of consciousness, perception, sensation, reaction, and clings to them as "I", "mine" despite their constantly changing nature. For conventional purposes one must use the words "I" and "mine", but when one develops attachment to the five aggregates, one creates suffering for oneself. Wherever there is attachment, there is bound to be misery, and the greater the attachment, the greater the misery.

There are four types of attachment that one keeps developing in life. The first is attachment to one's desires, to the habit of craving. Whenever craving arises in the mind, it is accompanied by a physical sensation. Although at a deep level a storm of agitation has begun, at a superficial level one likes the sensation and wishes it to continue. This can be compared with scratching a sore: doing so will only aggravate it, and yet one enjoys the sensation of scratching. In the same way, as soon as a desire is fulfilled, the sensation that accompanied the desire is also gone, and so one generates a fresh desire in order that the sensation may continue. One becomes addicted to craving and multiplies one's misery.

Another attachment is the clinging to "I", "mine", without knowing what this 'I' really is. One cannot bear any criticism of one's "I" or any harm to it. And the attachment spreads to include whatever belongs to "I", whatever is "mine". This attachment would not bring misery if whatever is "mine" could continue eternally, and the "I" also could remain to enjoy it eternally, but the law of nature is that sooner or later one or the other must pass away. Attachment to what is impermanent is bound to bring misery.

Similarly, one develops attachment to one's views and beliefs, and cannot bear any criticism of them, or even accept that others may have differing views. One does not understand that everyone wears coloured glasses, a different colour for each person. By removing the glasses, one can see reality as it is, untinted, but instead one remains attached to the colour of one's glasses, to one's own preconceptions and beliefs.

Yet another attachment is the clinging to one's rites, rituals, and religious practices. One fails to understand that these are all merely outward shows, that they do not contain the essence of truth. If someone is shown the way to experience truth directly within himself but continues to cling to empty external forms, this attachment produces a tug-of-war in such a person, resulting in misery.

All the sufferings of life, if examined closely, will be seen to arise from one or another of these four attachments. In his search for truth, this is what Siddhattha Gotama found. Yet he continued investigating within himself to discover the deepest cause of suffering, to understand how the entire phenomenon works, to trace it to its source.

Obviously, the sufferings of life--disease, old age, death, physical and mental pain--are inevitable consequences of being born. Then what is the reason for birth? Of course, the immediate cause is the physical union of parents, but in a broader perspective, birth occurs because of the endless process of becoming in which the entire universe is involved. Even at the time of death the process does not stop: the body continues decaying, disintegrating, while the consciousness becomes connected with another material structure, and continues flowing, becoming. And why this process of becoming? It was clear to him that the cause is the attachment that one develops. Out of attachment one generates strong reactions, *saṅkhārā*, which make a deep impression on the mind. At the end of life, one of these will arise in the mind and will give a push to the flow of consciousness to continue.

Now what is the cause of this attachment? He found that it arises because of the momentary reactions of liking and disliking. Liking develops into great craving; disliking into great aversion, the mirror image of craving, and both turn into attachment. And why these momentary reactions of liking and disliking? Anyone who observes himself will find that they occur because of bodily sensations. Whenever a pleasant sensation arises, one likes it and wants to retain and multiply it. Whenever an unpleasant sensation arises, one dislikes it and wants to get rid of it. Then why these sensations? Clearly, they occur because of the contact between any of the senses and an object of that particular sense: contact of the eye with a vision, of the ear with a sound, of the nose with an odour, of the tongue with a taste, of the body with something tangible, of the mind with a thought or an imagination. As soon as there is a contact, a sensation is bound to arise, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

And what is the reason for contact? Obviously, the entire universe is full of sense objects. So long as the six senses--the five physical ones, together with the mind--are functioning, they are bound to encounter their respective objects. And why do these sense organs exist? It is clear that they are inseparable parts of the flow of mind and matter; they arise as soon as life begins. And why does the life flow, the flow of mind and matter, occur? Because of the flow of consciousness, from moment to moment, from one life to the next. And why this flow of consciousness? He found that it arises because of the *saṅkhāra*, the mental reactions. Every reaction gives a push to the flow of consciousness; the flow continues because of the impetus given to it by reactions. And why do reactions occur? He saw that they arise because of ignorance. One does not know what one is doing, does not know how one is reacting, and therefore one keeps generating *saṅkhāra*. So long as there is ignorance, suffering will remain.

The source of the process of suffering, the deepest cause, is ignorance. From ignorance starts the chain of events by which one generates mountains of misery for oneself. If ignorance can be eradicated, suffering will be eradicated.

How can one accomplish this? How can one break the chain? The flow of life, of mind and matter, has already begun. Committing suicide will not solve the problem; it will only create fresh misery. Nor can one destroy the senses without destroying oneself. So long as the senses exist, contact is bound to occur with their respective objects, and whenever there is a contact, a sensation is bound to arise within the body.

Now here, at the link of sensation, one can break the chain. Previously, every sensation gave rise to a reaction of liking or

disliking, which developed into great craving or aversion, great misery. But now, instead of reacting to sensation, you are learning just to observe equanimously, understanding, --"This will also change." In this way sensation gives rise only to wisdom, to the understanding of *aniccā*. One stops the turning of the wheel of suffering and starts rotating it in the opposite direction, towards liberation.

Any moment in which one does not generate a new *saṅkhāra*, one of the old ones will arise on the surface of the mind, and along with it a sensation will start within the body. If one remains equanimous, it passes away and another old reaction arises in its place. One continues to remain equanimous to physical sensations and the old *saṅkhāra* continue to arise and pass away, one after another. If out of ignorance one reacts to sensations, then one multiplies the *saṅkhārā*, multiplies one's misery. But if one develops wisdom and does not react to sensations, then one after another the *saṅkhārā* are eradicated, misery is eradicated.

The entire path is a way to come out of misery. By practicing, you will find that you stop tying new knots, and that the old ones are automatically untied. Gradually you will progress towards a stage in which all *saṅkhārā* leading to new birth, and therefore to new suffering, have been eradicated: the stage of total liberation, full enlightenment.

To start the work, it is not necessary that one should first believe in past lives and future lives. In practicing Vipassana, the present is most important. Here in the present life, one keeps generating *saṅkhārā*, keeps making oneself miserable. Here and now one must break this habit and start coming out of misery. If you practice, certainly a day will come when you will be able to say

that you have eradicated all the old *saṅkhārā* have stopped generating any new ones, and so have freed yourself from all suffering.

To achieve this goal, you have to work yourself. Therefore, work hard during the remaining five days, to come out of your misery, and to enjoy the happiness of liberation.

May all of you enjoy real happiness.

May all beings be happy!