

The Buddha's Awakening Becomes Universal

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 13:24

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa. Namō tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa. Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So we've now got to the end of this discourse, the Turning of the Wheel of the Law, and we've been through the opening where he's pointing out what the Middle Path is. It's not to do with indulging in the wonders of life, nor is it to do with some form of self-mortification. We went through the Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the reason for suffering, the cause of suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering which is *Nibbāna*, and the path.

So now he tells us what to do with each of these Noble Truths. The first one is, of course, just a basic statement. He then tells us what we have to do, and then he tells us that he's done it. So he says, this is the Noble Truth of suffering. The Noble Truth of suffering is to be fully understood.

Remember that the understanding is in three phases. It's both in the phase of something that you hear and understand. And then it's the phase of understanding it because you yourself have reflected on it, so it's become your own intellectual knowledge. And then it's understood at a deeper level by direct experience through *vipassanā*, through insight. So that's what he means when he says the Noble Truth of suffering is to be fully understood.

Then he says, the Noble Truth of suffering has been fully understood by him. Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard of before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, penetration and light.

Then he again states it: this is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering. You can translate it also as the cause of suffering. So this Noble Truth of the origin of suffering has to be abandoned. The cause of suffering is desire. Now remember, it's a desire which is based on seeking happiness in the wrong place, seeking happiness in the sensual world.

When the Buddha says the sensual world, he means anything to do with what we experience, because the senses, remember, are basically your five normal senses. It's also the mind. So when he talks about the sensual world, he's also talking about these absorptions. So it's anything in the phenomenal world that has to be abandoned. Remember, it's not that they're destroyed; it's just that it's the desire that has to be abandoned for them, arising from this wrong relationship.

And then he states quite clearly: the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned. He's done it.

Then he says: this is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. Now the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering is to be realized. In other words, this one is the realization of *Nirvāna*. It's an experience. It's an actual experience of something which just simply doesn't belong to this phenomenal world. It's something beyond it, and that's what *Nibbāna* is.

Nibbāna itself, remember, is a word which was used with fire, with heat. So he's talking about consciousness. He's talking about the way consciousness wraps itself around something, gets stuck on something. And when he talks about the light going out, the fire going out, the flame going out—*Nibbāna*—he's always talking about the release of consciousness.

Remember that in those days, the physics wasn't the same as ours. The idea was that you had a fuel and that when you did certain things to this fuel, it drew the fire element from the universe. So if you rub two sticks together, you're actually beckoning this fire element to congeal around the wood. And when of course the wood finished, what happened to the fire element? It didn't die out; it just went back into that state of potential.

So *Nibbāna* is that unbinding of consciousness. It's the unbinding of it, the release of it. And how does that tightness manifest? Desire, attachment. Simple, isn't it?

And then he says, of course, that this Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering has been realized. Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard of before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, penetration and light.

And then the fourth Noble Truth is a simple statement: this Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed. The Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed. So in other words, the process of moving from a state of unenlightenment, a state of unhappiness, to a state of happiness is to be developed. In other words, it's gradual, and he's very insistent that the process is gradual.

It's very rare for somebody just to make it just like that. Remember the story of Bāhiya of the bark cloth. Now Bāhiya, of course, was enlightened just upon hearing this immediate teaching that in the hearing there's only the hearing, in the seeing there's only the seeing, in the cognizing there's only the cognizing. But then you have to remember he'd been living with this bark cloth for years and being separated from the world, not indulging in Costa Coffee or anything like that.

And so then he says: this Noble Truth leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed. Thus, monks, in regard to things unheard of before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, penetration and light.

And then there's this lovely section: So long, monks, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths, as they really are, in the three phases and twelve aspects, was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world, with its *deva, m*

ara and *brahma*, in this population, with its ascetics and brahmins, its *devas* and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths, as they really are, in their three phases and twelve aspects, was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its *devas*, *mara* and *brahma*, in this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its *devas* and humans.

The knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed becoming. Unshakable is the liberation of my mind.

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the monks of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One's statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondañña the dust-free, stainless vision of the *Dhamma*: whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

So here while he's speaking, one of his old companions has an insight into this impermanence. And he sees that whatever arises passes away. And it's deep enough for him to have a change in the way that he relates to the world.

Now when the Wheel of the *Dhamma* had been set in motion by the Blessed One—this is the crescendo bit, you're waiting—and when the Wheel of the *Dhamma* had been set in motion by the Blessed One, the earth-dwelling *devas* raised a cry: At Baranasi, in the deer park of Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the *Dhamma* has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any ascetic, or brahmin, or *deva*, or *mara*, or *brahma*, or by anyone in this world.

And having heard the cry of the earth-dwelling *devas*, the *devas* of the realm of the four great kings raised the cry. And having raised the cry, the *devas* of the realm of the four great kings, the Tavatimsa *devas*, the Yama *devas*, the Tusita *devas*, the *devas* who delight in creating, the *devas* who wield power over others' creations, the *devas* of Brahma's company raised a cry: At Baranasi in the deer park at Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the *Dhamma* had been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any ascetic or brahmin or *deva* or *mara* or *brahma* or by anyone in this world.

Moving, isn't it?

Thus at that moment, at that instant, at that second, the cry spread as far as the Brahma world, and this ten-thousand-world system shook, quaked and trembled, and an immeasurable great radiance, surpassing the divine majesty of the *devas*, appeared in the world.

Then the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance: Kondañña has indeed understood, Kondañña knows. In this way, the Venerable Kondañña acquired the name Añña Kondañña—Kondañña, the one who knows.

Good stuff, eh?

Now, I think it's just good to reflect on that moment there when the Buddha realizes that Kondañña

actually understands. So remember, not so long before this, he's had this experience of liberation, complete liberation, and he wants to teach it and he has a doubt as to whether anybody can grasp the subtlety of this. So now here he is, he's met his companions and he's given them this teaching, and one person actually—he recognizes one person has actually had this insight into impermanence which he sees as liberating. He sees that actually Kondañña has made a glimpse into *Nibbāna*.

Now anybody who's done any teaching, even if it's just to your children or to somebody at work and you've been explaining something and they've had a bit of difficulty understanding and then suddenly they grasp it—doesn't joy arise in your heart? So one can only imagine the immeasurable reciprocal joy, the *mudita* that the Buddha must have felt when he realized that one of his old companions had actually made this insight. Because what had been a personal experience now becomes universal. If Kondañña can do it, so can everybody else.

So it's just that little bit of the ending contemplation of the great joy within the Buddha when he realizes that in fact other people can grasp it, other people can be liberated. So I can only hope that this has also been an inspiration for you and that our little exegesis concerning the first discourse of the Buddha will inspire you to further effort and that you will be liberated from all your suffering sooner rather than later.

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.

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