

The Two Darts

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 15:47

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma-sambuddhassa, Namō tassa bhagavato arahato samma-sambuddhassa, Namō tassa bhagavato arahato samma-sambuddhassa — homage to the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened one.

So we're following this compilation by Bhikkhu Bodhi and we've been through the heavy bit — sickness, aging and death. We're still unfortunately on the heaviness of life. The joys come at the end. Here the Buddha is now going into what you might call the basic psychology of how we create suffering for ourselves, and he uses the word "worldling" — an uninstructed worldling — as though looking at the world as if we were aliens. But he's just trying to translate a word which just means an ordinary person who doesn't know why they cause themselves suffering and doesn't come across the Buddha's teaching. That's the only word. I think you might wonder what he means by it.

So, monks — and remember that these discourses always begin with "monks," but it stands for anybody who's listening, really — when the uninstructed worldling experiences a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves and laments. He weeps, beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings, a bodily one and a mental one.

Now suppose they were to strike a man with a dart and then strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two darts. So too, when the uninstructed worldling experiences a painful feeling, he feels two feelings, a bodily one and a mental one. While experiencing that same painful feeling, she harbors aversion towards it. When she harbors aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling lies behind this.

And while experiencing painful feeling, she seeks delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the uninstructed worldling does not know of any escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. And when she seeks delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency of lust for pleasant feeling lies behind this.

She does not understand as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape in case of these feelings. When she does not understand these feelings, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither painful nor pleasant feeling lies behind this. If they feel a pleasant feeling, they feel it attached. And if they feel a painful feeling, they feel it attached. And if they feel a neither painful nor pleasant feeling, they feel it attached.

This is called an uninstructed worldling who is attached to birth, aging, and death, who is attached to

sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair, who is attached to suffering, I say.

There's a lot of meat in this. Books are written on this. I myself have a wonderful talk, which you can download from the website, on the gratification, the danger and the escape.

So what's the Buddha saying? He's saying, first of all, when we feel something harmful, when we feel something painful in the body — now remember there's two types of feelings in the body: those feelings that come from the body itself, such as painful knees when you're sitting, and those painful feelings that are in the body coming from the heart, our emotional states. That's bad enough to be able to sit with that. But then we have this second dart, as he calls it, which is the resistance, not wanting to go there. So we have both the painful feeling and now we've created an aversion to it. So now we're in turmoil.

Because we're in turmoil, we're now seeking an escape. And the escape is tea and biscuits — basically turn on the TV, phone up a friend, do anything apart from feel these feelings. That's the gratification. But unfortunately, if we go on, we don't see the danger of that. Because when we're gratified, when we're enjoying ourselves, it's okay. I mean, we're in heaven. What's the problem? We don't see the problems that arise after that, which is that we've suppressed these feelings and they're there within the system. We haven't actually dealt with them. And secondly, when that pleasant feeling disappears, we find that we become attached to it. Attached here means psychologically dependent on something for our happiness.

There's a lot of psychology here. If we go through it just bit by bit, then we'll see. So when an uninstructed worldling experiences a painful feeling, they immediately react to it. They sorrow about it, they grieve about it, they lament, they weep beating their breast, becoming distraught. Just think of the time when you've been even a little bit ill and it stops you going to work or it stops you doing something — a bad cold, a flu. There's that negativity. Now that's the second dart. What the Buddha is saying is that's not necessary. That's the second dart. And what he points out is that therefore, unless we are aware of that, then we'll keep making things worse for ourselves by this reaction.

So he harbors aversion towards the painful feeling. He harbors it. We develop that aversion towards painful feeling. That means there's a lot of fear there too. So whatever we feel, whatever we think there's going to be a bit of difficulty for us, a bit of painfulness for us, we tend to run from it. And the aversion that is manifesting is an underlying tendency to aversion, which means that we already have a conditioning within us to either resist or run from what we find unpleasant. Every time we react like that, we reinforce this tendency, this conditioning, this habit within us. So we're actually making things worse all the time for ourselves.

And because it gets so bad, while experiencing a painful feeling, they seek sensual pleasure. So that's what we do, isn't it? Things get a bit tough, so you get drunk. Anything not to feel those feelings, not to endure them. And because of that, we have this underlying tendency of seeking happiness in pleasure is reinforced. We keep thinking that the way to happiness is to keep reinforcing this pleasure that we get from worldly things. But there's the danger. The danger is that worldly things — they do not understand,

as it really is, the origin and passing away. In other words, anything you get attached to is going to let you down because it's going to change. It's going to pass away. Just when you thought you've got the right person, the right job, the right house, the right car, you drop dead. Or worse, it passes away.

So it's a case of recognizing that as soon as we hold on to something, it has a great potential of creating suffering for us. And that's the problem with gratifying ourselves in the world of pleasure. We don't see the danger. And when the danger comes, we're stuck with the suffering. They don't see the escape.

And then he says, when a pleasant feeling arises, they feel attached. This "attached" means attached to something — like for instance, I'm attached to my car. It's that use of the word. When you're attached to somebody, you are in some way psychologically connected with them, but often in a way which if they disappear or if the car breaks down, there's sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair.

So what the Buddha is saying is, it's not necessary for us to get rid of the joys of life, and it's not necessary for us to reject what is painful in life. Life is full of joy and woe. All we have to know is how to relate to this stuff. So when unpleasant things come, to actually just accept it, to bear with it, to endure it. And when pleasant stuff comes, to be careful that we don't form an attachment to it.

Now that's really difficult. It's one of my regular teachings here around food. The distinction between enjoying the food and indulging in it is a very fine one. But you've got to work at it, because when we indulge, the suffering comes. So you have to be very careful that we don't interpret the Buddha's teaching as life-negative. Far from it. Once he was fully liberated, he became one of the most sensual beings that there can be. Why? Because now he's completely open to the sensual world. He's not afraid of it and he's not indulging in it.

So now we have the other side of the equation. Monks, when the instructed noble disciple experiences a painful feeling, they do not sorrow, grieve or lament. They do not weep beating their breast and become distraught. They feel one feeling, a bodily one, not the mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, but they would not strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that man would feel a feeling caused by one dart only. So too, when the instructed disciple experiences a painful feeling, they feel one feeling, a bodily feeling, and not the mental one.

While experiencing the same feeling, they harbor no aversion towards it. And since they harbor no aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling does not lie behind this. So in other words, even the very conditioning within us that causes this resistance and this indulgence is beginning to fade away. And of course, the liberated person is one that simply can't react like that anymore because that habit has been completely wiped out.

While experiencing painful feeling, they do not seek delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the instructed noble disciple knows of an escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. And that's what the purpose of *vipassanā* is — it's to discover that escape. Since they do not seek delight in

sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency of lust for pleasant feelings does not lie behind this. So that indulgence is not there.

And they understand it as it really is: the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these feelings. And since they understand these things, the underlying tendency of ignorance towards neither painful nor pleasant feeling does not lie behind this. So remember, we tend to ignore those sensations that we do not see as either painful or pleasant. So when we come to the breath, generally speaking, we find it boring. And that shows us that we're constantly trying to seek excitement, whereas the spiritual life is drawing us towards silence, towards stillness.

If they feel a pleasant feeling, they feel it detached — they're not becoming psychologically dependent on it. And if they feel a painful feeling, they feel it detached. And if they feel a neither painful nor pleasant feeling, they feel it detached. This is called a noble disciple who is detached — who is not actually, the better phrase is non-attached. Because the word detached tends to give you the feeling of callousness almost, to be detached from people's suffering and all that. So it's non-attached from birth, aging and death, who is non-attached from sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection and despair, who is non-attached from suffering, I say.

This, monks, is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed worldling, which we are no longer.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance and that the Buddha's *Dhamma* is coming through loud and clear. May you, by your great efforts, overcome suffering and do not seek escape through indulgence in pleasure, sooner rather than later.

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