

The Four Nobel Truths of Vedana

Dr.Ch.Venkata Sivasai,
Assistant Professor, School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization, Gautam Buddha University, Greater
Noida, U.P.
EMAIL chintala@gbu.ac.in

Abstract: The core belief of Buddhism is represented by the Four Noble Truths. It serves as the cornerstone of the middle path. And while there is happiness in the world, of course, both are momentary because there is suffering or unhappiness in it. The four noble truths, which the Buddha taught, are significant in this regard. The four noble truths also show that the cycle of consciousness and suffering are impermanent. The first and second noble truths admonish us to consider carefully on ecological principles. The first noble truth states that the suffering that results from traditional lifestyles is permanent. According to the second noble truth, ignorance-based desire that's what causes suffering. The second noble truth, which emphasizes desire as the source of experiencing pain, serves as the cornerstone of a Buddhist environmental ethic. The third noble truth asserts that efforts can now be made to lessen or completely eradicate environmental issues. Because of their ignorance of nature, people must realize that they are a part of the natural world, just like all other living things. The fourth noble truth declares that it is our duty to come to an agreement on the fundamental duties to end suffering in the world.

The noble eightfold path includes cultivating a deep compassion for all other living things trapped in this web of dependent originations. This compassion or empathy is necessary for the Buddhist Road to freedom. The idea of dependent origination has several implications, one of which is that there is no anthropocentric bias favoring people over the natural world. Interestingly, the non-self-teaching takes on ontology in Buddhism and ultimately leads to the conclusion among Buddhists that there is a common boundary between cycle of rebirth and in another. All living things that are troubled and afflicted are the targets of compassion. On the emotional side, it stands for love, goodness, tolerance, and other great values.

Introduction

The four noble truths, which make up the very core of Buddhism, are the framework through which the Buddha's core teachings are conveyed. The *dhammacakkapavattana* sutta recounts that the Buddha first taught these four truths to five monastic monks in *fauna*, *isipatana*, and *Savannah* on the night of his enlightenment. This started the Buddha's 45-year, benevolent purpose of teaching to all social strata, so starting the Dhamma wheel to turn. The excerpt above demonstrates each of the four noble truths:

1. The righteous truth of dukkha,
2. The wonderful truth of dukkha's origin,
3. The astounding truth of the end of dukkha
4. The righteous reality of the path leading to relief from suffering.

It is clearly mentioned in *mahastipatthana sutta* that the experience of *vedana* has a very special

role in the understanding, realizing and practicing of the four noble truths.

This chapter will analyse the role of vedana in freedom in relation to the attainment of each of the four noble truths. Under each truth, a brief explanation will be provided preceding the analysis of *vedana*.

Vedana and the first noble truth

Despite being translated as "pain" or "suffering," the Pali word *dukkha* has much greater importance when applied to the First Noble Truth. As well as encompassing the ordinary meaning of suffering it also includes the idea of 'impermanence', 'emptiness', 'insubstantiality'. The section summarises the suttas' first noble truth of *dukkha*:

- Now, Bhikkhus, this is the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha*): birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering, union with what is unpleasant is suffering, separation from pleasant things is suffering, and not getting what one wants is suffering; or, in other words, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering. Thus, as seen from above, the term "*dukkha*" encompasses a variety of experiences, making it challenging to identify a single phrase that fully captures its meaning. Three perspectives can be taken while considering the concept of *dukkha*.
 1. *Dukkha*, as either inherent or common suffering (*Dukkha-dukkha*)
 2. *Dukkha* as it results from change (*Viparinama-dukkha*)
 3. *Dukkha* was formed states with conditions (*Sankhara-Dukkha*)

The three notions of *Dukkha* will be compared to *Vedana* in the paragraph that follows. **Vedana in the First Noble Truth**

The passage that follows exemplifies the role *Vedana* plays in comprehending the first noble truth of suffering:

The blessed one lives the holy life so that they may fully understand sorrow. The intellect and eye are suffering. Forms mental phenomena are suffering. Eye and mental consciousness are both in pain. Suffering is any emotion that has eye-contact-mind-contact as its condition, whether it is pleasant or painful, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, or neither. It is with the complete comprehension of this that the blessed one lives the holy life.

Vedana and the second noble truth

The continuation of beings and all types of *dukkha*, according to the second noble truth of *dukkha*, are brought on by this craving, which shows up in many different ways.

- It is yearning (*Tanha*), which is accompanied by delight and lust and drives one to seek pleasure wherever it may be, to bring about a fresh beginning. This is meant to imply

the desire for sensual delights (Kama-tanha), the thirst for life (Bhava-tanha), and the desire for annihilation (Vibhava-tanha).

The yearning based on the five aggregates affected by clinging is fundamentally what produces dukkha, as described in the following quotation: "The desire, indulgence, inclination, and holding based on these five aggregates affected by clinging is the origin of suffering".

According to the explanation given above, Tanha's essence might be seen as a desire to hold onto good things while letting go of unpleasant ones. Therefore, *Tanha* means both craving and aversion. All beings who are not free from *Tanha* continue in the cycle of repeated existence, as seen in this passage in the *Sutta-Nipata*:

A man accompanied by craving, journeying-on for a long-time to existence in this form or existence in that form, does not pass beyond journeying-on.

With the renewal of existence comes the pain of childbirth, old age, illness, and death.

Although this noble truth highlights craving as the source of *Dukkha*, it is argued that it should not be viewed as the first cause because everything is interdependent and there can be no first cause. The philosophy of *paticca-samuppada*, or "dependent origination," explains how the cause of the vast majority of *Dukkha* and the cycle of recurrent existence, or Samara, came into being. Everything is conditional, relative, and interconnected in accordance with this concept. Dependent origination is typically explained in a chain of twelve propositions (*Dvadasanga*), as given below.

1. *Avijjapaccaya Sankhara*: Dependent on ignorance (*Avijja*) there arises mental formations (*Sankhara*),
2. *Sankharapaccaya vinnanam*: Dependent of mental formations (*Sankhara*) there arises consciousness (*Vinnana*).
3. *Vinnanapaccaya nama-rupam*: Dependent on consciousness (*Vinnana*) there arises mentality-materiality (*Nama-rupa*).
4. *Nama-rupapaccaya salayatana*: Dependent on mentality materiality (*Nama-rupa*) there arises six sense doors (*Salayatana*).
5. *Salayanatanapaccaya phasso*: Dependent on six sense doors (*Salayatana*) there arises contact (*Phassa*).
6. *Phassapaccaya vedana*: Based on touch (*Phasa*), there develops Vedana.
7. *Vedanapaccaya tanha*: Vedana dependence leads to craving (*Tanha*).
8. *Tanhapaccaya upadanam*: Dependent on desire (*Tanha*), clinging develops (*Upadana*).
9. *Upadanapaccaya bhavo*: The emergence of becoming (*bhava*) is dependent on

clinging (Upadana).

10. *Bhavapaccaya jati*: Birth results from becoming (*Bhava*), a condition (*jati*).

11. *Jatipaccaya jaramaranam*: Birth-dependent (*jati*) emerges

12. Death, decay, lamentation, pain, grief and despair (*jaramaranam*).

As it can be seen from above, it is through ignorance, which is lack of knowledge of the four nobles that we continue this cycle of samsaric existence:

We have been tormented throughout the cycle of birth and death because we have not understood the noble truth of the agony we have endured, the noble truth of the source of our suffering, the cessation of our suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of our suffering. There is no longer any re-becoming because of the understanding of the same exquisite reality of pain, of its origin, its end, and the route leading to its end. As a result, the carving for becoming has been severed, the support for becoming has been destroyed, and there is no longer any re-becoming.

A cycle such as samsaric existence is dependent on the operation of these twelve-causal links, each being dependent upon the preceding one. As long as the cycle of becoming keeps turning, one is afflicted by the whole mass of *Dukkha*. This process of cause and effect is called *anumlapaticcasamuppada* (law of Dependent Origination in forward order).

Vedana in the Second Noble Truth

Vedana plays a significant part in the emergence of *Dukkha*, acting as the primary prerequisite for her emergence of carving, as is evident from the dependent origination formula. These following three links explain the process clearly:

1. *Salayatanapaccaya phasso*: Contact is dependent on the six senses.
2. *Phassapaccaya vedana*: subject to contact, *vedana* arises
3. *Vedanapaccaya tanha*: Dependent on *vedana*, carving arises

The emergence of contact coincides with the emergence of the six-fold base. Physical touch, mental contact, nose contact, tongue, ear contact, and eye contact are the six types of contact. Contact is the unit of measurement for the sense faculty, its target, and consciousness. Vedana begins to manifest with the emergence of touch.

All three varieties of vedana, Sukha, Dukkha, and Adukkhamasukha, are said to arise in dependence on contact in the Samyutta Nikaya

Bhikkhus Similar to how heat and fire are created by the conjunction and friction of two fire sticks, but the resulting heat quits and fades when the sticks are separated and set aside, these three sentiments are born of touch, rooted in contact, and serve contact as their source and condition. A comfortable feeling arises when contact is considered as nice; in contrast, a neither painful nor pleasant emotion arises when contact is perceived as neither painful nor nice. A pleasant sensation

arises when contact is perceived as pleasant; a painful sensation arises when contact is perceived as painful; and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant sensation arises when contact is perceived as neither painful nor pleasant. The similar emotion that had become dependent on that interaction disappears when it is no longer there.

Tanha arises along with the emergence of *vedana*, hence *vedana* functions as the condition for *tanha*:

Vedana (feeling) curbs appetite. ... If there was no vedana (feeling), would yearning appear if there was no longer any sensation? "No, Lord," was the reply. Feelings are born of touch with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Thus, Ananda, sensation is the sole cause of yearning and serves as its basis.

In conclusion, the Suttas show that Vedana is crucial to the idea of dependent origination for the emergence of craving that results in the majority of Dukkha. Here the other aggregates also play a crucial role, in particular, *Sanna*.

Vedana and the Third Noble Truth

The existence of emancipation—the release from Dukkha—is the third noble truth.

Bhikkhus, the noble fact that suffering has ended is the cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, the independence from it, and the lack of dependence on it.

To fully eradicate *Dukkha*, it is necessary to eradicate its primary cause, desire. In the Majjhima nikaya, the venerable Sariputta states that the end of dukkha is the elimination of desire and the abandonment of desire and lust for the five aggregates subject to clinging. As may be further seen in the poetry that follows, if one is free of lust, desire, attachment, thirst, passion, and yearning as they relate to the five aggregates, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair do not occur in one when the five aggregates vary and alternate.

Bhikkhu, the basis for the growth of consciousness is severed when a Bhikkhu gives up his or her enthusiasm for the form element. The ground for the establishment of consciousness is cut off if he has given up lust for the feeling element, the perception element, the volitional formations element, or the awareness element. That awareness is liberated when it is unestablished, not growing, and non-generative. Being liberated makes him steady, steady makes him content, and content makes him not disturbed. He personally attained Nibbana while calm. "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, there is no longer this condition of existence," he comprehends.

The process of *Dukkha* cessation can also be explained by the dependent origination doctrine. The total comprehension of the four noble truths and the eradication of ignorance. Craving and clinging stop causing rebirth as a result, and the cycle as a whole comes to an end, ending Dukkha. The term for this is *patiloma -paticcasamuppada* (the law of dependent origination in reverse order). Thus, deactivation of any of the twelve links eliminates links. It is here that *vedana* has a crucial role. If *Tanha* arises in response to *vedana*, then to eradicate *Tanha* it must include the understanding of *vedana*.

Vedana in the Third Noble Truth

The following text from the Majjhima Nikaya demonstrates how the Patiloma-paticcasamuppada process makes it obvious that vedana plays a critical part in the cessation of dukkha:

When someone uses their body to touch something, nose to smell it, taste it, ears to hear it, tongue to taste, they do not lust after it if it is agreeable and they do not detest it if it is disagreeable. The only way for these evil, unwholesome states to terminate is via the freedom of the mind and the liberation of wisdom, he keeps a constant awareness of his established body and unbounded mind. After giving up supporting and opposing, they no longer enjoy, welcome, or hold onto any feelings they have, regardless of whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neither nice nor painful. With the loss of their joy, attaching also ends, which results in the loss of being, in the loss of birth, in the loss of ageing and death, and in the loss of sorrow, lamentation, agony, grief, and despair.

Vedana and the Four Noble Truths

The fourth noble truth is the path leading to the cessation of suffering (Dukkha).

Bhikkhus, the noble truth is that the way leading to the cessation of suffering is the noble eightfold path, which requires having the right perspective. The proper attention.

Because it stays away from the two extremes, this is regarded as the "middle route" (*Majjhima Patipada*): 1. The indulgence in sensual pleasure and 2. Self mortification. The Buddha discovered "the intermediate road which leads to calm, higher wisdom" by staying away from these two extremes. Awakening and Nibbana. The noble eightfold route (*Ariyo atthangiko maggo*) is the name given to the middle path since it consists of eight components:

1. *Sammaditthi* (a right view)
2. *Sammasankappo* (right intention)
3. *Sammavaca* (correct speech)
4. *Sammakammanto* (right action)
5. *Sammaavijjo* (proper way of life)
6. *Sammavayamo* (proper effort)
7. *Sammasati* (adequate mindfulness)
8. *Sammasamadhi* (appropriate focus)

These eight factors are commonly divided into threefold divisions of training: 1) morality (*Sila*) - correct speech, acting properly, proper way of life; 2) concentration (*Samadhi*)- proper effort, adequate mindfulness, appropriate focus; and 3) wisdom (*Panna*)- a right view, accurate aspiration

The Eightfold Path Defined

A Right view: knowledge of dukkha, its causes, its resolution, and eradication of Dukkha.

Right intention: Goodwill, renunciation-intent, and harmlessness.

Correct speech: Avoiding lying, abusive speech and slandering.

Right action: Abstention from sexual misconduct, not taking what is not given, and endangering life

Proper way of life: After giving up a bad way to make a living, he now makes a living through a good way to make a living.

Proper effort: In order to prevent the emergence of wicked, unwholesome states, one makes an effort, mobilises their energy, puts their minds to work, and strives. One creates a desire to maintain existing wholesome states in order to prevent them from degenerating and to expand their satisfaction through development. Another creates a desire to relinquish previously existing good wholesome states.

Adequate mindfulness: Four foundation of mindfulness.

Appropriate focus: Attainment of the four *Jhanas*.

Sila (morality) and *Samadhi* (concentration) alone are not sufficient for liberation insight meditation (*Vipassana*) is necessary. *Vipassana* meditation aims to help people perceive things for what they truly are (*Yatha bhutam*). Consider it in terms of the three characteristics to recognise it for what it really is: Dukkha, Anicca, and Anatta. Insight into the three qualities of the five aggregates—Anicca, Dukkha, and Anatta—includes aversion, according to the suttas. According to the suttas, the understanding of the three properties of the five aggregates—Anicca, Dukkha, and Anatta—includes aversion (*Nibbida*), dispassion (*Viraga*), and release (*Vimutti*).

The development of the entire noble eightfold path can be observed via the practise of Satipatthana. This is explicitly implied when the eightfold route is described as "the road leading to the development of the establishing of awareness". The four Satipatthans also reach fulfilment through development when a person advances along the noble eightfold path. We'll now examine the role of vedana in the quest for freedom from pain.

In the Fourth Noble Truth, Vedana

The Buddha's teachings make it clear that a thorough comprehension of Vedana is essential to the path leading to the end of Dukkha. The following passage provides a detailed explanation of Vedana:

Bhikkhu, there are three different types of emotions: happy, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant. The emergence of feeling coincides with the emergence of contact. Craving is the path that leads to the creation of emotion. The loss of emotion occurs along with the end of contact. This magnificent eightfold path, or right view, proper focus is the route leading to the cessation of

sensation. The fulfilment in feeling is the pleasure and joy that result from feeling. The danger in feeling is that it is transient, painful, and prone to change. Escape from feelings is the withdrawal and abandoning of desire and thirst for feeling.

The Suttas assert that liberation results from complete comprehension of Vedana and its cessation. The Buddha claimed in the Brahmajala Sutta that Vedana was the key to his emancipation.

- The Tathagata is released without further delay having fully comprehended the emergence and fading of emotions, their allure and danger, and their deliverance.

In addition, according to the Suttas, the noble eightfold way is the path that ends Vedana and should be pursued in order to fully comprehend it:

There are these three emotions, *bhikkhus*. Exactly three? Feelings might be pleasant, unpleasant, or neither nice nor painful. The noble eightfold way must be created for direct knowledge of these three emotions, for understanding them completely, for completely destroying them, and for abandoning them.

Here it can be seen that the full understanding of Vedana, understanding its gratification, danger and escaper, understanding that it is impermanent, is the way to the cessation of vedana and subsequent the cessation of Dukkha.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper has indicated that *Vedana* has a very special role in the realization in the four nobles and hence liberation. *The method through which we can put the four noble truths into practise is Vedana*. It is evident that Vedana satisfies the twelve modes and the twelve aspects that the Suttas state are required to achieve ultimate enlightenment.

It is clear from the current studies that Vedana is capable of comprehending the noble reality of suffering. *Vedana* has the power to obliterate the sublime reality of desire's origin. Vedana, the sublime truth of the path leading to the end of suffering, is capable of realizing it. When correctly practiced, Satipatthana can promote the noble truth of the path leading to the extinction of Dukkha

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