

The Problem The Cause The Goal The Solution

“ I will put these teachings
into actual practice ,for what’s
the point of just reciting words?
How will those who are sick
benefit by just studying medical
books? ”

Class One: The Problem

A. Buddhist

1. From the *Turning of the Wheel of Dharma Sutta*
(*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*)

इदं खो पन भिक्खवे दुक्खं अरियसच्चं जातिपि दुक्खा जरापि दुक्खं व्याधिपि दुक्खो

मरणम्पि दुक्खं अप्पियेहि सम्पयोगो दुक्खो पियेहि विप्पयोगो दुक्खो यम्पिच्चं न

लभति तम्पि दुक्खं संखित्तेन पञ्चुपादानक्खन्धा दुक्खा

idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkham ariyasaccaṃ jātipi dukkhā jarāpi
dukkha byādhipi dukkho maraṇampi dukkham appiyehi sampayogo
dukkho piyehi vippayogo dukkho yampiccaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ
saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā

Now this the worthy truth about distress, o monks. Birth is stressful, old age is stressful, sickness is stressful, and death is stressful. When confronted with what is disagreeable, it's stressful; it's stressful to be separated from what is agreeable; and when we don't get what we want, it's stressful. In short, grasping to the five groups (of mental and physical things that make up a person) is stressful.

2. From the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*)

आरोग्यं दिवसं चेदं सभक्तं निरुपद्रवम् ।

आयुःक्षणं विसंवादि कायोपाचितकोपमः ॥

ārogyaṃ divasaṃ cedaṃ sabhaktaṃ nirupadravam ।
āyuhkṣaṇaṃ visamvādi kāyopācitakopamaḥ । ।

Today there may be health, enjoyment, and no problems, but life is fleeting and deceptive and the body is just on loan. (4.16)

कथंचिल्लभ्यते सौख्यं दुःखं स्थितमयत्नतः ।

दुःखेनैव च निःसारः चेतस्तस्माद्दृढी भव ॥

kathamcillabhyate saukhyam duḥkham sthitamayatnataḥ ।
duḥkhenaiva ca niḥsāraḥ cetastasmād dṛḍhībhava । ।

Happiness is obtained only occasionally and with difficulty, while suffering occurs regularly and without effort. But it's only because of suffering that there is renunciation. So be strong-minded! (6.12)

लब्धापि च बहूलाभान् चिरं भुक्त्वा सुखान्यपि ।

रिक्तहस्तश्च नग्नश्च यास्यामि मुषितो यथा ॥

labdhāpi ca bahūlābhān ciraṁ bhuktvā sukhānyapi ।
riktahastaśca nagnaśca yāsyāmi muṣito yathā । ।

While I might obtain many things and enjoy happiness for a long time, when I leave this life it will be empty-handed and naked, as if stripped bare. (6.59)

B. Christian (from the *New Testament*)

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . . No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:19-21; 24)

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?' (Mark 8:34-36)

Exercise for Class One

Use the space below to make a list of the things in your life that cause you stress and anxiety. Include the obvious ones (e.g., difficulties at work, with personal relationships, self-esteem problems, money issues) but also the anxieties that revolve around fears of loss - losing the things and people you value, your health, youth, looks, security, etc.

Class Two: The Cause

- A. Buddhist (from the *Turning of the Wheel of Dharma Sutta*,
Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta)

इदम् खो पन भिक्खवे दुक्खसमुदयो अरियसच्चम्
यायम् तण्हा पोन्नोभविका नन्दिरागसहगता तत्राभिनन्दिनी
स्य्यथीदम् कामतण्हा भवतण्हा विभवतण्हा

idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhasamudayo ariyasaccaṃ
yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobbhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī
seyyathidaṃ kāmataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā

Now this, o monks, is the worthy truth of how distress arises. It is this craving which brings about repeated rebirth accompanied by desire for sensual pleasure – seeking pleasures here and there. In sum, it is craving for the objects of sensual desire, craving for continuation, and craving for termination.

- B. Hindu

1. From the *Bhāgavad Gītā*

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

dhyāyato viṣayānpuṃsaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate |
saṅgāt saṅjāyate kāmāḥ kāmātkrodho'bhijāyate ||

Attachment to the objects of the senses arises in one who is always thinking about them. From attachment comes desire, and from desire anger arises. (2.62)

2. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā*

हेयोपादेयता तावत्संसारविटपाङ्कुरः ।

स्पृहा जीवति यावद् वै निर्विचारदशास्पदम् ॥

heyopādeyatā tāvatsaṁsāraṇapaṅkuraḥ ।
sprhā jīvati yāvad vai nirvicāradaśāspadam ॥

As long as desire, the seat of the inability to discriminate, is alive there will be avoidance and attraction, which are the root and branch of this cycle of suffering. (16.7)

C. Judaism and Christianity (from the Bible):

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden”?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.”’ But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

(Genesis 3:1-7)

Exercise for Class Two

Think about the place of craving and desire in your own life. What do you think you don't have already that if you had it would make you happy? And what do you think you have now that if you got rid of it would bring more happiness to your life?

Class Three: The Goal

A. Christian (from the *New Testament*)

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.' (Luke 17:20-21)

B. "Gnostic" (from the *Gospel of Thomas*):

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you.

Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty." (3)

C. Buddhist

1. From the *Turning of the Wheel of Dharma Sutta*
(*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*)

इदं खो पन भिक्खवे दुक्खनिरोधं अरियसच्चं यो तस्सायेव तण्हाय

असेसविरागनिरोधो चागो पटिनिस्सग्गो मुत्ति अनालया

idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhanirodham ariyasaccaṃ yo tassāyeva
taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo

Now this, o monks, is the worthy truth of the stopping of distress. It is the complete detachment from and stopping of this very craving – renouncing it, abandoning it, getting free of it, undermining it.

2. From the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)*

भवधुःखशतानि तर्तुकामैरपि सत्त्वव्यसनानि हरुकामैह ।

बहुसौख्यशतानि भोक्तुकामैर्न विमोच्यं हि सदैव बोधिचित्तम् ॥

bhavaduḥkhaśatāni tartukāmairapi sattvavyasanāni hartukāmaiḥ ।
bahusaukhyāśatāni bhoktukāmairna vimocyam hi sadaiva bodhicittam । ।

The Wish to Awaken should never be relinquished by those who wish to overcome the hundreds of sufferings of this world, by those who wish to relieve living beings of their distress, and by those who wish to enjoy hundreds of pleasures. (1.8)

भवचारकबन्धनो वराकः सुगतानां सुत उच्यते क्षणेन ।

सनरामरलोकवन्दनीयो भवति स्मोदित एव बोधिचित्ते ॥

bhavaçārakabandhano varākaḥ sugatānām suta ucyate kṣaṇena ।
sanarāmaralokavandanīyo bhavati smodita eva bodhicitte । ।

When the Wish to Awaken has arisen, instantly a wretch who has been bound in the prison of this world is called a child of Those Gone to Bliss, and becomes worthy of the respect of all those in the worlds of gods and humans. (1.9)

Exercise for Class Three

Reflect on those areas of your life and yourself with which you are perfectly content. Recall also those times in your life when you were happiest and most at peace and reflect on the relationship between true happiness and contentment. In order to invoke and increase this feeling, make a list of all the things in your life for which you are grateful and resolve to think about them at the beginning and end of each day.

Class Four: The Solution

A. Christian (from the *New Testament*)

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (*Matthew 5:43-48*)

B. Buddhist

1. From the *Turning of the Wheel of Dharma Sutta* (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*)

इदं खो पन भिक्खवे दुक्खनिरोधगामिनी पटिपदा अरियसच्चं अयमेव अरियो अट्ठंगिको मग्गो

सेय्यथिदं सम्मादिट्ठि सम्मासंकप्पो सम्मावाचा सम्माकम्मन्तो सम्माजीवो सम्मावायामो

सम्मासति सम्मासमाधि

idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccam ayameva ariyo
aṭṭaṅgiko maggo seyyathidaṃ sammādiṭṭi sammāsaṅkappo sammāvācā
sammākammanto sammājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati sammāsamādhī

Now this, o monks, is the worthy truth about the method leading to the end of distress. It is a worthy path consisting of the following eight parts: proper outlook, proper intention, proper speech, proper action, proper livelihood, proper exertion, proper mindfulness, and proper integration.

2. From the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)*

कायेनैव पठिष्यामि वाक्पाठेन तु किम् भवेत् ।

चिकित्सापाठमात्रेण रोगिनः किम् भविष्यति ॥

kāyenaiva paṭhiṣyāmi vākpāṭhena tu kiṃ bhavet ।
cikitsāpāṭhamātreṇa rogiṇaḥ kiṃ bhaviṣyati ।।

I will put these teachings into actual practice, for what's the point of just reciting words? How will those who are sick benefit by just studying medical books? (5.109)

अत्र ग्रही भविष्यामि बद्धवैरश्च विग्रही ।

अन्यत्र तद्विधात्क्लेशघातानुबन्धिनः ॥

atra grahī bhaviṣyāmi baddhavairascha vighrahī ।
anyatra tadvidhātkleśātkleśaghātānubandhinaḥ ।।

I will be tenacious and, intent on revenge, I will wage war against my mental afflictions – except for the kind that are designed to obliterate mental afflictions. (4.43)

न किञ्चिदसति तद्वस्तु यदभ्यासस्य दुष्करम् ।

तस्मान्मृदुव्यथाभ्यासात् सोढव्यापि महाव्यथा ॥

na kiñcidasti tadvastu yadabhyāsasya duṣkaram ।
tasmānmṛduvyathābhyāsāt soḍhavyāpi mahāvyathā ।।

There is nothing whatsoever that remains difficult if one practices discipline. So through practicing with small difficulties, even great ones become endurable. (6.14)

यद्यस्त्येव प्रतीकारो दौर्मन्स्येन तत्र किम् ।

अथ नास्ति प्रतीकारो दौर्मन्स्येन तत्र किम् ॥

yadyastyeva pratikāro daurmanasyena tatra kim ।
atha nāsti pratikāro daurmanasyena tatra kim ।।

If there is something you can do about it, why be unhappy?
And if there is nothing you can do about it, why be unhappy? (6.10)

Exercise for Class Four

Identify below your worst “mental affliction” (anger, greed, pride, jealousy or envy, debilitating depression and low self-esteem, a tendency to think the worst of others – whatever it may be), and also pinpoint the “antidote” or opposing virtue (e.g., patience for anger, generosity for greed, humility for pride, etc.). Resolve to practice some form of this virtue every day; write down your plan on how you intend to do so.