

The 2nd Noble Truth – Cause of suffering (samudaya)

The principle cause of suffering is the attachment to "desire" or "craving", *tanha*. Both desire to have (wanting) and desire not to have (aversion).

1. desire for sense-pleasures--*kama-tanha*,
2. desire to become--*bhava-tanha*,
3. desire to get rid of--*vibhava-tanha*.

The desire for sense pleasures manifests itself as wanting to have pleasant experiences: the taste of good food, pleasant sexual experiences, delightful music.

The desire to become is the ambition that comes with wanting attainments or recognition or fame. It is the craving to "be a somebody".

The desire to get rid of the unpleasant experiences in life: unpleasant sensations, anger, fear, jealousy. The clinging to desire comes from our experience that short-term satisfaction comes from following desire. We ignore the fact that satisfying our desires doesn't bring an end to them.

the causes of suffering are craving /desire, and ignorance.

Craving ... anything that stimulates our senses or our feelings can lead to craving.

None of the pleasures we crave for ever give us lasting happiness or satisfaction. This is why people can crave to repeat these experiences again and again, and become unhappy and dissatisfied until they can satisfy their craving. The trouble is, even if these pleasures are repeated again and again, we can still feel unhappy.

Ignorance - Craving is like a great tree with many branches. There are branches of greed, bad thoughts and of anger. The fruit of the tree of craving is suffering but how does the tree of craving grow? ... the tree of craving has its roots in ignorance. It grows out of ignorance, and its seeds fall and flourish whenever they find ignorance.

What is ignorance? Real ignorance is not just being uneducated, or not knowing many things. ... ignorance as the inability to see the truth about things, to see things as they really are. This ability to see the truth is not a question of either eyesight or education. there are many truths about the world that people are ignorant of, because of the limits of their understanding.

History can easily show us many examples of how misunderstanding and limited information cause ignorance...as long as people remain ignorant of things about the world, they will suffer from all kinds of misunderstandings and delusions.

≡ Tricycle Magazine

All of us are slaves of craving. It is ignoble, but it is true. Desire is insatiable. As soon as we get something, we find it is not as satisfying as we thought it would be, and we try something else. It is the nature of life, like trying to scoop up water in a butterfly net. Beings cannot become contented by following the dictates of desire, chasing after objects. Desire can never satisfy desire. If we understand this truth correctly, we will not seek satisfaction in this self-defeating way. This is why the Buddha said that contentment is the greatest wealth.

≡ Sayadaw U Pandita

When desire is scrutinized closely, we find that it is constantly shadowed by dukkha. Sometimes dukkha appears as pain or irritation; often it lies low as a constant strain of discontent. But the two — desire and dukkha — are inseparable concomitants. We can confirm this for ourselves by considering the whole cycle of desire. At the moment desire springs up it creates in us a sense of lack, the pain of want. To end this pain we struggle to fulfill the desire. If our effort fails, we experience frustration,

disappointment, sometimes despair. But even the pleasure of success is not unqualified. We worry that we might lose the ground we have gained. We feel driven to secure our position, to safeguard our territory, to gain more, to rise higher, to establish tighter controls. The demands of desire seem endless, and each desire demands the eternal: it wants the things we get to last forever. But all the objects of desire are impermanent. Whether it be wealth, power, position, or other persons, separation is inevitable, and the pain that accompanies separation is proportional to the force of attachment: strong attachment brings much suffering; little attachment brings little suffering; no attachment brings no suffering.

≡ Bhikkhu Bodhi

Vedana, or feelings, have great power over our actions. In fact, the whole world is under the command of these vedana. For example, tanha (craving) can control the mind. Craving itself is first conditioned by feeling. Thus, the vedana have the strongest and most powerful influence over our entire mind. Thus, it is especially important to understand the secrets of the vedana. [...] In some Pali texts the vedana are described as "conditioners of the mind". Mind, in this instance, arises from our thoughts, desires, and needs. We cannot endure the influence of the vedana. We are not free within ourselves; we think and act under the power of vedana. Feelings condition the mind and force us to act. If we master the vedana, we will master the world.

-Ajahn Buddhadasa

So the key origin or cause of dukkha is tanha. This literally means 'thirst', and clearly refers to demanding, clinging desires which are ever on the lookout for gratification, 'now here, now there'. It contains an element of psychological compulsion, a driven restlessness ever on the lookout for new objects to focus on: I want, I want more, I want different. This propels people into situation after situation which are open to pain, disquiet and upset. So tanha is not just any 'desire' — for desire can be wholesome and for good things. Chanda, or desire-to-act, can be either unwholesome, like tanha, or wholesome, ...

The first sermon identifies three types of craving: craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-existence. The second type refers to the drive for ego enhancement based on a certain identity, and for some kind of eternal life after death as me. The third is the drive to get rid of unpleasant situations, things and people.

≡ Peter Harvey

We have to look more closely at how suffering arises—or, in other words, how khandhas [5 aggregates of form, feeling, perception, fabrication, consciousness] become clinging-khandhas. When khandhas are experienced, the process of fabrication normally doesn't simply stop there. If attention focuses on the khandhas' attractive features—beautiful forms, pleasant feelings, etc.—it can give rise to passion and delight. This passion and delight can take many forms, but the most tenacious is the habitual act of fabricating a sense of me or mine, identifying with a particular khanda (or set of khandhas) or claiming possession of it. [...] Whatever shape it takes it's always unstable and insecure, for the khandas providing its food are simply activities and functions, inconstant and insubstantial. In the words of the canon, the khandhas are like foam, like a mirage, like the bubbles formed when rain falls on water. They're heavy only because the iron grip of trying to cling to them is burdensome. As long as we're addicted to the passion and delight for these activities—as long as we cling to them—we're bound to suffer.

≡ Thanissaro Bhikkhu