

## The Four Noble Truths, Part 4 of 7

### NOBLE TRUTH OF DUKKHA'S ORIGIN

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A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 9 January 1989

*In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:*

[www.suanmokkh.org](http://www.suanmokkh.org),

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

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Today we will speak about the Second Noble Truth – the one that is called the ‘*samudaya sacca*’ or ‘the truth of the origin of *dukkha*.’ For the sake of ease in understanding our subject we would like to take a bird’s-eye view of all the *ariya-sacca* together.

If we look at these logically, we’ll see that the First Noble Truth asks the question, “What is it?” The Second Noble Truth concerns the question, “From what does it come or from what does it arise?” The third question then is, “For what purpose – what is the purpose of this?” The fourth question is, “By what means or method is that purpose realized?” If we look at the Noble Truths together and see all of these four happening together, then we will have a very clear understanding of what the Noble Truths are about: asking what is it, from what, for what, and by what means or by what method?

At the Ajanta Caves in India, there are relief sculptures carved into the rock and one of them portrays four deer sharing the same head. There are four bodies but one head is shared between all four of the deer, and our understanding is that this surely must be meant to represent the Four Noble Truths. We’ve got a few copies of this around Suan Mokkh, especially up at the art workshop in the woods. If one reflects upon this picture, then one will have a clear and easy understanding of the structure or the outline of the *ariya-sacca*. Each of the four deer performs a different function or activity, but they all share the same head. This is how it works with the four *ariya-sacca*.

The first one answers the question, “What is *dukkha*?” The second one answers the question, “Where does it come from, where does *dukkha* come from?” The Third Noble Truth answers the question, “For what purpose, what is the benefit and purpose of *dukkha*?” The answer is in order to quench it, in order to extinguish it. The fourth Noble Truth answers the question,

“How?” The answer is by the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the outline, the framework of the Four Noble Truths.

The Second Noble Truth in Pāli is called '*samudaya ariya-sacca.*' The meanings of these things must be attended to carefully. We must understand these words correctly, both in sufficient detail and in a refined enough way. We must be careful about understanding them thoroughly and also in a deep enough way. Especially with the word '*samudaya,*' we must be careful to understand what is meant by this, because words can be confusing. Words can take on different meanings and connotations, and this can confuse us. So it's important that we have a correct understanding of the word '*samudaya.*'

The word '*samudaya*' is very similar or almost identical in meaning to the words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya.*' We should try to find individual words that can translate all of them. Our understanding is that we can translate these three words in the following way: *samudaya* as 'origin,' *hetu* as 'cause' – especially the primary cause of something – and *paccaya* as 'condition' which is often secondary or supportive to the primary cause, the *hetu*. So we can translate them as 'origin,' 'cause,' and 'condition.' This is our understanding.

All three of these words pretty much have the meaning of 'cause,' but causes can take on different forms as we've mentioned. There can be the primary causes and the secondary causes. There can be indirect as well as direct causes and so we prefer to use the word '*hetu*' for the primary, the most direct cause. Especially when there is a single cause, we use the word '*hetu.*' When there are many conditions and none of them is really primary, we use the word '*paccaya*' or 'condition.' We'll spend a little bit of time discussing these three terms, because if we understand them correctly and clearly it will be beneficial.

When a potter makes a pot, we can see all three of these. The primary cause, the *hetu* of the pot, is the desire or the need of the potter that motivates the whole activity. The *paccaya*, the support conditions, are things like collecting the clay, bringing the water, having the potter's wheel, and all the other things necessary to make the pot. When the cause and conditions are brought together that is called '*samudaya,*' the origination of the pot. All three of these can be found in the simple activity of making a pot. We ought to understand the difference between each of these three terms.

In the Pāli, this is called '*dukkha samudaya,*' and this term is almost always translated 'the cause of suffering.' We've already discussed how the word 'suffering' isn't such a great translation of *dukkha*. Here one of the synonyms for *samudaya* is used, so it's called 'the cause of suffering.' One of the synonyms of *samudaya* is used instead of the direct translation of *samudaya*. This easy translation is now common and used all over the place. We've tried to explain things in a way that will help you to understand these words correctly – the Pāli *dukkha samudaya* or even the rather vague English translation, 'cause of suffering.'

In the Pāli we pretty much only find the words '*dukkha samudaya.*' We almost never find the words '*dukkha hetu,*' the cause of *dukkha*, or '*dukkha paccaya,*' the conditions of *dukkha*. These appear very rarely. It's almost always '*dukkha samudaya,*' which has the broadest meaning of the three possibilities. We should understand the correct meaning in this case and at least use it ourselves even if everybody else has a different understanding.

We'd like to look at the words '*hetu*' and '*paccaya.*' In the Pāli there is some overlap between these words. But for the most part *hetu* means 'cause' in the sense of the direct cause

and also with the implication of being single, the single direct cause. Whereas *paccaya* has the meaning of being 'indirect' and there are generally many of them. So *hetu* refers to a direct and single cause and *paccaya* to various indirect causes. Even so, sometimes in the Pāli these words are used to mean the same thing – *hetu* and *paccaya* are sometimes used as synonyms. This makes it difficult for some people to sort out the meanings. It makes our study at times a bit troublesome because sometimes in the Pāli these two words are just used to explain each other. This is one of the difficulties we must always deal with when we use the Pāli as a basis of our study.

So let's look at the word '*samudaya*' again. *Samudaya* can be broken into two parts: *sang* and *uddhaya*. *Sang* means 'to be complete with nothing lacking' – 'full and complete.' *Uddhaya* means 'to arise,' 'to occur.' So *samudaya* is a complete arising – something that arises complete, whole, with nothing lacking. *Dukkha samudaya* means 'the arising of many things together' – the word '*sang*' can also mean 'together,' the arising together of many, many things until they come together completely and there is *dukkha*, complete *dukkha*. So that's enough about the literal meaning of the word '*samudaya*.' If we spend too much time on this then it will turn into a Pāli class rather than a Dhamma talk.

Next we'd like to look at *dukkha samudaya* in terms of its practical meaning, and especially according to the principle we find in the scriptures that everything arises from a *hetu* or cause, then must proceed or exist according to the power and influence of that *hetu*. When we say that all things arise from a cause, we're speaking specifically about all the things which are caused, which are conditioned. We are not speaking about the thing which doesn't have any cause, which has no conditions, which is completely independent. We're saying that all conditioned things, all impermanent things, arise from a cause. We can say that all phenomena arise from a cause, but that which is the opposite of phenomena – the noumenon that has no cause – of course is different. All phenomena are merely the appearance or the manifestation of a cause, and then must exist, must occur, proceed, according to the power of that cause.

If we're speaking about Buddhism, we can never avoid the fundamental principle that all things arise from a cause and exist according to the power of that cause. If we're talking about the things that don't have causes, that are free of causes, then we're talking about some other creed or sect or some philosophical school that existed in India before, during, and after the Buddha's time. There have been philosophies that have tried to assert that things don't have causes, but that's outside of Buddhism.

In Buddhism, all things except the noumenon – the unconditioned – all things arise from a cause and exist according to that cause. When we say in Buddhism that all things come from causes, we're pointing to the basic scientific character of Buddhism. The understanding that all things come from causes is the basic principle of science. So Buddhism isn't any kind of a philosophy that relies on assumptions, that relies on speculation, on basically guess work. Buddhism deals only with causes and the effects of causes, and tries to understand this. This is scientific. We should never confuse Buddhism with philosophy, with rational and all other kind of speculation based on various assumptions.

When we ask what is the cause of something, of some phenomenon, if we answered the cause is God, can you accept that? Can you accept that the cause of each phenomenon is God? Can you accept that as scientific? Is that a scientific answer?

In Buddhism we would respond in line with the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination), that the cause of each phenomenon is that cause which is directly associated, which is stuck together directly and straight forwardly with the phenomenon. We don't take the cause to be God or gods or angels or any powers which we can't see for ourselves. We take the direct immediate cause that we can see. This cause, this phenomenon, are closely associated, are stuck right together.

In the old scriptures, we can find descriptions of the kind of situations which were happening at the Buddha's time. There are descriptions of some of the beliefs people held. When it came to the understanding of the cause of *dukkha* – and we're talking about those who were not following Buddhism – there were some who believed that *dukkha* and *sukkhā* (or we can say 'pain' and 'happiness') were the result of actions that the individual committed in a past life, that all the *dukkha* or *sukkhā* this life are the result of things I did in a past life or in past lives. This is one belief.

Another group believed that all pleasure and pain in this life arise because God has ordained so – that's the way God wants it. In Pāli, the word used was '*issara*,' or the Sanskrit equivalent is '*Ishvara*,' which is a proper noun meaning 'God.' So other groups held that all pleasure and pain, all happiness and *dukkha*, gladness and sadness, occur because of God. That's the way God makes things.

There was a third group that said that *dukkha* and *sukkhā* have no cause. *Dukkha* and *sukkhā* are just kind of floating there, hanging there. Nothing causes them, they just kind of come and go without any rhyme or reason. These are three basic understandings about the cause of *dukkha*, and all of them are outside the Buddha's teaching.

The Buddha, when he arose in the world, said that it doesn't work like that, those three beliefs don't really fit with the facts. He said whether there is *dukkha* or *sukkhā* depends completely on a direct cause, and that direct immediate cause of *dukkha* and *sukkhā* is whether or not one is correct in accordance with the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. If the way we are living at this moment is proper and in harmony in accordance with the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda* there's no *dukkha*. But if our way of living, our way of being at this moment, is opposed to, in conflict with the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, then there will be *dukkha*.

The Buddha said there aren't these distant causes outside of ourselves. The cause of *dukkha* is right here, it's right there in a close association with the phenomenon, the result of *dukkha*. Regarding *dukkha samudaya*, there are those who say that *dukkha* originates because of old *karma*. *Karma* just means 'action,' so old *karma* means actions in previous lives. But Buddhism says 'No,' that's not how it is. There are others who say that *dukkha* originates through the power of God – God creates *dukkha* for us. Buddhism says 'No,' that's not in line with the facts. There are some that say there's no origin of *dukkha* – *dukkha* has no cause or origin, it just happens and they don't say how. Buddhism also says that that's not correct. None of these three ideas is how it actually happens.

Buddhism, instead of speculating philosophically about how it might be, just tries to examine and find out what is actually going on. What is the direct and immediate cause or origin of *dukkha*? What are the things right here that are immediately related to *dukkha*, where we can see them together happening right here? What is the cause that we see existing right here, existing in relationship in immediate association with *dukkha*? We can say that the origin of

*dukkha* happens through the *kilesa* (defilements) or it happens through *taṇhā* (craving) and through *avijja* (ignorance) as has been explained when we discussed *paṭiccasamuppāda* earlier.

There is something very strange about *dukkha samuddaya*. In Thailand, as well as in Burma and Sri Lanka, there are Buddhists who believe very strongly – have a very deeply ingrained belief – that *dukkha* arises because of old *karma*. So when *dukkha* happens to them, which is how they see it, they just sit and cry and moan and wail about the old *karma* and don't see anything to do about it. It's strange that there are so many Buddhists who are holding a belief which is directly opposed to what the Buddha actually taught. But in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka we can find this kind of belief all over the place. People don't seem to pay attention – at least to this teaching of the Buddha – that *dukkha* has a direct cause right here. The origin of *dukkha* is in ignorance, craving, and defilement right here. The Buddha never said anything about old *karma* in past lives as being the origin of *dukkha*. So there is this strange situation where these Buddhists are holding a belief which isn't even Buddhist. Although they may say they are Buddhists, please don't mistake this belief to be a Buddhist belief. We must realize that there are many Buddhists holding ideas which are not really Buddhism.

If we don't understand this point we'll be very confused by all the conflicting beliefs which people are holding. The Buddha taught simply that *dukkha* has a direct and immediate cause which we can verify right here. We don't have to believe anything outside ourselves like past lives and all that. Please be careful to realize that there are a lot of things going under the name 'Buddhism' which are not really Buddhism. They're not the Buddha's teaching, they're not in line with the facts.

In spite of what we've said, we should understand that the belief that *dukkha* arises from old *karma* has great value and importance in terms of morality. By morality we mean living lives in a good, wholesome, peaceful way. Many people, when *dukkha* happens, because they attribute it to previous actions whether earlier in this life or in a past life, this belief will have great value in explaining to these people the necessity to stop doing foolish evil things and do good. So there's great value on the morality level in this belief. It is beneficial in terms of morality, but it is not necessarily beneficial in terms of absolute truth or *paramattha-sacca*.

When a Christian suffers pain or *dukkha* and attributes it to God, and then prays to God to take the pain away, there's no need to try and prove whether this is a correct or incorrect understanding. But we can observe easily that this belief that God is the creator of *dukkha* and can take it away, leads to morality – to people leading good, decent, peaceful lives – if they actually act upon the belief. These kinds of belief are of great value, however they are not absolute truth. They're a kind of relative truth, a relative truth that brings relative benefits, the benefits of morality.

Many people are unable to understand absolute truth and so we must maintain these teachings of relative truth for the sake of those who cannot understand absolute truth. However we should never confuse the fact that these relative teachings are relative truth and not absolute truth or *paramattha-sacca*. When we speak of the *ariya-sacca*, we're talking exclusively about ultimate truth, absolute truth, *paramattha-sacca*. In terms of the Noble Truths it's no longer relative. When we talk about *dukkha samudaya*, we're speaking now in absolute terms, terms of what's directly observable, what's direct fact. It has nothing to do with speculation or philosophy. When we speak about the origin of *dukkha* in this way, we can

give a variety of responses. You've already heard some of them. In the explanation of the Four Noble Truths, the origin of *dukkha* is specifically given as being *taṇhā* (craving). When the Buddha first taught – and in all subsequent places when the Buddha or anyone else taught the Four Noble Truths – the Second Noble Truth was always given as being craving, the origin of *dukkha* is craving. This is of course absolutely true.

But as we understand from studying *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the dependent origination of *dukkha* has at its cause *avijjā* (ignorance), not knowing things as they truly are. So this cause of *dukkha* is ignorance. But as we've mentioned in the last couple days, in short, *upādāna* in the five aggregates is *dukkha*. This means when we speak in the most direct and immediate terms, the most direct cause of *dukkha* is *upādāna* (attachment) – that grasping and clinging at things as 'I' and 'mine.'

Further we can also say that *dukkha* arises because of the concocting of *saṅkhāra*. Because of the cooking up of the mind by *saṅkhāra* there arises *dukkha*. The Buddha has said that *saṅkhāra* is the supreme *dukkha*. In talking about *dukkha samudaya* we can give four responses, but in fact it's all the same thing. All these four responses differ in literal meaning but are talking about the same fact.

The origin of *dukkha* happens through all of these things, all of them together. It just depends on exactly which angle we look at things, or if we take the most immediate cause or causes which are a little bit preceding. We can say the cause of *dukkha* is ignorance. The cause of *dukkha* is the concocting of *saṅkhāra*. We can say the cause of *dukkha* is craving, or the cause of *dukkha* is attachment. The most immediate is attachment and a little before that is craving. The most original, originating cause of *dukkha* is ignorance. We're talking about one thing – it's all the same process. Please don't think that there's any contradiction or conflict between these various responses.

In talking about the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha himself said specifically that *taṇhā* is the origin of *dukkha*. The direct cause of *dukkha* is *taṇhā* (craving, thirst). But then if we ask, "Where does craving come from?" We answer, "Ignorance." Craving comes from ignorance, from not knowing things according to truth. We can just say that *dukkha* comes from ignorance. Or we ask, "In what way does *dukkha* result from craving?" We must say, "That through craving there is *upādāna* and then there is *dukkha*." There must be *upādāna* coming out of that craving in order for there to be *dukkha*. If there's no ignorance, there's no *dukkha*. If there's no *upādāna*, there's no *dukkha*. All this activity of ignorance, of craving, of *upādāna*, all this activity is called '*saṅkhāra*.' This complete concocting, this busy concocting, is called '*saṅkhāra*.' It's just as correct to say that *dukkha* comes from *saṅkhāra*. *Dukkha* arises out of *saṅkhāra*. We can use these different responses but there's no contradiction, it's all talking about the same thing.

In fact there are more than just these four words. There are quite a few other things that are involved that we could say are the origin of *dukkha*, the cause of *dukkha*. But these four words are enough because all the other things are directly related, are implied, are included within these four. If we'd like in fact to just gather it all together into one word, it all comes down to that *dukkha* originates from *taṇhā*. The origin of *dukkha* is *taṇhā*. If we want to just bring it down to one word, we use the word '*taṇhā*' (craving). Craving simply means 'desire through the power of ignorance.' When there is desire because of, through, with ignorance, this is *taṇhā*. To put it more bluntly, stupid desire, foolish want – this is the origin of *dukkha*. There are many other words we could use but in the end it all comes down to just this one

thing. This word *taṇhā* or foolish want is broad. If we use it in terms of God, we can say that there is the *taṇhā* that God will help us. Even if God doesn't help us, we still want God to help us – there is still this *taṇhā* that God will help us. So we can use this word *taṇhā* or craving even in this way.

The reason we want God to help us is because we've got this craving over here someplace. There's something we desire and crave and so we also desire that God will help us to get that thing that we crave. This desire that God will help us is coming from craving, from this *taṇhā* that we have. If there isn't any belief, any sense, any grasping at 'I' and 'mine,' then there's no *taṇhā*, there's no craving. There's still craving arising because we're still clinging and grasping at things as 'I' and 'mine.' Because there is still *upādāna* there is still arising *taṇhā*, and because there's all this *upādāna* and *taṇhā*, we stay ignorant and there is still *avijja* (incorrect knowing).

Next we'll look at the characteristics of *taṇhā* according to the way the Buddha described them. In the Pāli, when the Buddha was describing the Noble Truths, he described *taṇhā* in the following way: The first is *ponobbhavikā*, leading to a new existence. 'Existence' here doesn't mean something physical. We're not talking about the existence of benches or even of physical bodies. We're not talking about that after this body dies another body will exist. We're talking about the existence that arises from craving. Every time there's craving there is a new existence. If there's craving in this minute then there is a certain existence. Later in another minute, another hour, if there is craving there is another existence. We're talking about the existence (*bhava*) that arises every time there is craving. We're not talking about a physical existence.

In some minutes we want to be millionaires with piles of money. If there is the craving, the *taṇhā* to be a millionaire, in that minute there is existence as a millionaire. In other minutes there may be the craving to be a politician with lots of power. In that minute there is existence as a politician. Sometimes we crave to be businessmen and then there is existence as a businessman. Or we crave to be monks and nuns, then there is existence as a monk or a nun. This is why *taṇhā* is described as *ponobbhavikā*, meaning that every time there is craving, it leads to some existence immediately. Immediately upon craving there is an existence in some form or another. Sometimes a woman has wants and desires like a woman, but sometimes a woman has wants and desires like a man, and so exists as a man. It can go to this point where sometimes a woman exists as a man and sometimes as a woman.

This is why *taṇhā* is talked about as *ponobbhavikā* leading to new *bhava*, *bhavikā* leading to new *bhava* or new existence. One can go through all kinds of different existences in a single day through the power of craving. Even throughout a single hour, there can be a tremendous crowd of existences, and then in an entire life it's just full of all kinds of different existences.

*Nandirāgasahagatā* means 'being associated with' or 'tied up' with *nandi rāga*. *Rāga* means 'lust' or 'passion.' *Nandi* means 'pleasure' or 'satisfaction.' What this means is a lustful satisfaction or a passion for pleasure, a passion for satisfaction. *Taṇhā* is associated with, composed of, bound up with this having a passionate interest in, a longing for, a lust for satisfaction, for liking, for pleasure. This word *raga* (lust) in Pāli means for the mind to get so thoroughly caught up in something, so thoroughly imbued with it that it's as if the mind is dyed by that thing.

The word *rāga* can also be used for a dye, to dye a cloth with some color. When the mind is so tied up with something, so caught up in it that it becomes dyed or imbued with that thing, this is the meaning of '*rāga*.' *Nandi* is a sense of pleased satisfaction, a sense of satisfaction, of liking. So *Nandi rāga* is when the mind has imbued itself, dyed itself with pleasure and satisfaction. And so now our mind, our heart, has been dyed by whatever it is that satisfies us, pleases us, by whatever it is we like. This is our problem.

The third characteristic of *taṇhā* is *tatrābhinandini*, which means 'wandering around,' 'liking this, liking that.' 'Liking this, liking that' means just wandering all over the place liking things, getting infatuated by things without any limit, basically being pulled all over the place by our likes and preferences. *Tatrā* has the meaning of 'this and that,' or 'this or that' or 'this thing or that thing.' *Taṇhā* has this characteristic of being led all over, wandering all over out of pleasure and satisfaction and liking for this and that, and this thing and that thing, over here over there, endlessly, without any limit – wandering all over the place. All phenomena can be the object of craving. Even negative things: Both negative and positive phenomena can be taken as the object of *taṇhā*. This is what is meant in '*tatrā*,' this thing or that thing – meaning even completely opposed things, meaning positive and negative. So the word '*tatrā*,' '*tatrābhinandini*' means to be completely infatuated with, completely engrossed with this and that, this and that, endlessly.

Let's take a look at this. The first one is *taṇhā* creates new existences, and then second *taṇhā* dyes the mind with satisfaction in whatever it is that satisfies the mind. Then the third, falling into liking and disliking of all kinds of things, of this and of that. What we've just mentioned are three characteristics of *taṇhā* but they're not different kinds of *taṇhā*. However *taṇhā* itself which has these three characteristics can take three different forms. The first is *kāma taṇhā*, which is craving for sensuality, for sensual pleasures, to get – basically craving to get. The second is *bhava taṇhā*, craving to be, craving to exist or to become. The third is *vibhava taṇhā*, craving to not exist, craving to not be. So there are the three kinds or forms that *taṇhā* takes: wanting to get, wanting to be, and wanting to not be. It's easy to remember – wanting to get, wanting to be, wanting to not be. These are the three forms of *taṇhā*. What's really interesting is this third one – wanting to not be. This is another kind of *bhava*, another existence. Wanting to 'not be' is another kind of being. If you get lost in logic you may not figure it out, but when we want to not be, say, "I want to not live, I want to be dead" – that's an existence. 'Wanting to not be' is to exist in a certain way. All three kinds of these *taṇhā* are leading to a new existence in various ways. We challenge you to find a kind of *taṇhā* outside of these three. Of all the cravings and desires that you have – we challenge you to find one that is different than these three. We don't think you'll be at all successful but we challenge you nonetheless.

Even somebody who wants to kill himself, this is a kind of craving. In fact, it's a very, very powerful craving, the craving to be dead. Wanting to be a dead person is a tremendously strong kind of craving. All kinds of craving whether in a positive way or a negative way – with a positive or a negative object – all of these still just come down to craving, even if it's the craving to get rid of something, the craving to not be something. Good people have *taṇhā*, lunatics have *taṇhā*, the animals have craving. Even the trees and plants have a kind of craving, but it's so subtle and refined that we don't even see it. Even the angels and celestial beings, if there are such things, have *taṇhā*, and the gods who are more powerful than the angels, they've got an even better or higher form, more refined kind of *taṇhā*. All life is being sustained or is being nurtured on *taṇhā*, on craving. All these existences, all these different ways of being, are nurtured by craving. If the craving is very confused and overpowering

then that person goes crazy. Existence – the states of being – come from *taṇhā* in this way. There is satisfaction, there is a pleasure in existing in that way, in that state of being.

The first form of *taṇhā*, *kama taṇhā*, is related to sensual or basically sexual needs. *Kama* means basically ‘sexuality,’ so sexual desires are the core ingredient of this first kind of *taṇhā*. Everybody – all ordinary people – have sexual desires and they express themselves directly and indirectly in all kinds of ways. This is the first kind of *taṇhā*, the most basic *taṇhā* we find in our lives. We have desires for all kinds of attractive pleasing things – things that are attractive to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. All of this, all this desire for these attractive delicious things is called ‘*kama taṇhā*,’ sensual sexual desire.

We’re full of all kind of ideas about what to be – I want to be this, I want to be that, I want to be all these many things. This wanting to be something, this is *bhava taṇhā* – craving for existence, craving to exist in some way or many different ways, depending on the circumstances. Just the thought of ‘I am,’ ‘I exist’ – this is the result of wanting to exist, of craving for existence. Once one sees that being like this, being like that, existing in this or that way – that it’s all full of problems, hassles, troubles, and difficulties – that all that existing in being is just a bunch of struggle.

Then one says, “Oh I don’t want any of that. I don’t wanna be like this, I don’t wanna be like that, I don’t wanna to exist, I don’t wanna...” and then there is all of this craving to not be, craving for non-existence. Like ten years or so ago, there was the pseudo-Christian sect led by Jim Jones and they all drank poison in order to kill themselves. This is some kind of form of *vibhava taṇhā*, craving for non-existence. This is just another kind of deception, of losing one’s way, and you see it in many people. They get a little frustrated or disappointed and then they say, “Oh, I wanna die, I wanna die, I’m sick of this, I don’t wanna put up with this anymore.” This is happening all the time – we meet with a little disappointment or difficulty or frustration, we get depressed, and then we don’t want to exist, we want to die. In some people this craving for non-existence can be so strong that they actually go and kill themselves.

When our mindfulness and wisdom faculty loses its way, then *taṇhā* arises. When our sense, our understanding of what is correct and incorrect, of what is our proper duty and what isn’t, when this loses its way, wanders off the path, then *taṇhā* arises. Whenever wisdom cannot discern, is unable to see what is correct, then there will be *taṇhā* coming up. *Taṇhā* is when life has gotten got off track, it’s heading in the wrong direction. This helps us see how *taṇhā* comes from ignorance. When there’s ignorance, when there’s incorrect understanding, then life gets off track. The wisdom faculty gets derailed and then *taṇhā* arises. All craving – all forms of craving – arise from ignorance, from a lack of proper understanding, from not knowing things according to truth, so then we lose the way and *taṇhā* occurs.

Every arising of *taṇhā* is always *dukkha*. Every occurrence of *taṇhā* is always *dukkha*. No matter how *taṇhā* arises – where, when, under what circumstances – every instance, every occurrence of *taṇhā*, is always *dukkha*. If the want in the desire doesn’t come from ignorance, then we don’t call it ‘*taṇhā*.’ If the want in the desire is wise, then we don’t call it ‘*taṇhā*.’ For example, if you come to Suan Mokkh with mindfulness and wisdom, with correct knowledge and understanding, you’ve come here in order to study Dhamma and develop the mind in order to extinguish *dukkha*, if we’ve come in this way, then that would not be called ‘craving,’ that’s not *taṇhā*. But then there are some who come looking for superstitious

powers and that's full of *taṇhā* and it will probably make them crazy too. So please be careful to discriminate well between wanting with ignorance and wanting without ignorance.

If our desire comes from a misunderstanding of truth, then it's called '*taṇhā*' because it comes from *avijā*. But if the desire, the want, is coming from a correct understanding of the way things are, if it's coming from wisdom, then we don't call it 'craving.' There's the saying "Don't live through *taṇhā*, don't live by craving." You ought to live with mindfulness and wisdom. You ought to live according to mindfulness and wisdom. We shouldn't have lives that are run by, led by *taṇhā*, because it will keep dragging us into *dukkha*. Instead we should live, we should go through life living under the direction of mindfulness and wisdom.

In Pāli there is a neutral word for desire, *sankappa*. It just means a neutral kind of 'want' or 'desire.' Usually there is added either the word '*micchā*' (wrong) or '*samma*' (correct, proper, right). There can be right desire, wise desire as well as wrong desire or foolish desire. So there's a kind of want or desire which is correct and proper and another kind of want or desire which is foolish, dangerous, and wrong. We should be very careful about these kinds of words because tremendous confusion is brought about because we don't distinguish carefully. *Taṇhā* always means 'ignorant' – it's always blind and stupid – blind want, stupid want, ignorant want, or whatever. So we need to find an English word that includes within it this sense of ignorance, blindness, stupidity. The word '*sankappa*,' however, has no sense of being stupid or incorrect; it's completely neutral. We have to find one word for *taṇhā* which clearly implies stupidity and incorrectness. For *sankappa*, we must find another word that has no connotation of this being incorrect or foolish. Sometimes for *sankappa* the word used is 'aim.' Please think about this for yourselves in English as well as other languages. Don't use the cheap and easy definitions or translations. Help us to find the words that have the proper connotations.

A word that's relevant here is 'hope.' This seems to be a word that Westerners are quite attached to, but in Thailand it never has had very much importance or meaning, but it seems Westerners often like to live by their hopes and their wishes. They've even come to Thailand to teach Thai children to have a life that's based on hope. So the question, is all this hope a wise hope or stupid hope? Are they hopes which are under the power of ignorance or hopes and wishes which are under the power of wisdom? We ought to be very, very careful about this word 'hope,' because it could be a kind of hope which is just another form of *taṇhā*. But then again hope might be, or at least sometimes, might have nothing to do with *taṇhā*.

So in summary *taṇhā* is to desire, to want under the power of ignorance, desiring through the power of ignorance. This is the meaning of *taṇhā* and this is the *dukkha samudaya*, the origin of *dukkha*. This is the source and cause of *dukkha* – this *taṇhā* or craving through the power of ignorance and foolishness. This is the Second Noble Truth, the *dukkha samudaya ariya-sacca*, the Noble Truth of the origin of *dukkha*.

So the subject of the origin of *dukkha* has come to a close at the same moment that we've run out of time. So we've finished both of them together and will end today's meeting at this auspicious moment. Please help us figure out which of the following words are completely neutral: desire, want, aim, aspiration, or any other words. Do we have any of these which are completely neutral, that don't have to be stupid? For example desire – does it tend to be on the wrong side or not? Please help us. Figure it out for yourself first and then help the world to understand. Thank you.

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