

# Anusaya - Latent Tendencies

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 8:42

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*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa. Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa. Namō Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.* Homage to the Buddha, the Blessed, Noble and Fully Self-Enlightened.

So the word tonight is *Anusaya*, A-N-U-S-A-Y-A. And the translation in the Pali text dictionary is a bent, a proclivity, latent tendency and predisposition. And the one that really interests me is this translation of latent tendency. But we'll come to that in a minute.

In the early scriptures, the Buddha only talks about *anusaya*. He doesn't actually say what they are. It's just latent tendencies. We've all got latent tendencies. But later on, in the scriptures, a different level of the scriptures, perhaps as his teaching matures, things are added to this latent tendency. Pride, doubt, ignorance, lust, and so on. And in the end, in the Abhidhamma, they list it as seven.

So the first one, well, the way they list it is sensual lust. I think it's probably better, even though it says *kāmarāga*, it does mean body lust, but anyway. Attachment to existence, aversion, conceit, wrong views, doubt, and ignorance. So none of them have come as a big surprise, eh?

Now, to try and make sense of this list... It seems to me that you've got to just turn the order around a bit for some reason. If we take ignorance as a basic platform, as a latent tendency in the sense of not knowing, then you immediately enter into the delusion on the one side of wrong views and on the other side of self, which expresses itself as conceit. So it's, I have this view, I'm right and everybody else is wrong. That's your basic position.

And from there, you fork into three, which relates to the way that the self relates to the world. Sensual pleasure and becoming. So that's to do with greed and acquisitiveness. Then you've got the aversion, so that's the negative side, not wanting. And then the doubt, which is the befuddlement that comes because of this basic ignorance. So that's your sort of latent dispositions.

Now, these latent dispositions, what... It can't be the fact that, at least as I understand it, the Buddha didn't teach that we had some sort of store memory that you pick books off, like a library or something. It's more like, and that's why I like this word, latent tendency, some sort of predisposition, but it doesn't actually have any actuality.

And I think one of the best analogies is of a computer really because if you take metaphor to a logical end it's normally a sign of madness so it only works at certain levels so when we shut the computer down and unplug it and all that it's dead it's not but we know it's got this tremendous latent ability and then when

you plug it in You can connect to the whole worldwide web, for heaven's sake. I mean, that's the potential of it. But when it's unplugged, it remains there just as purely latent.

So all these conditionings, see the other word it uses, predisposition, and that links us with these *saṅkhāra*s, these volitional conditionings. So they're lying there in wait, you might say, but in this sort of non-existent form. But it's there within the psychic system, you could say. So something happens and they're there to be pulled out.

And that I think connects rather nicely with our modern psychology about subliminal stuff and subconscious stuff. Although you do get the feeling from Freudian stuff and all that, that's already there as it were. It's in a sort of stored memory. But I think this is slightly more subtle in the sense that every moment comes to an end completely. It's a radical impermanence. So you can't hold anything, and yet there's the potential. So it's one of these little mysteries, really.

So really, without going into all these different things more deeply, those are your seven latent tendencies. Ignorance, the not knowing, which forks into this I am conceit with wrong view. And that again forks into these three avenues, the sensual pleasure, the becoming...

There's always that. There's the *bhavataṇhā*. When he describes *dukkha* as such, it's attachment to pleasure, the desire to keep becoming, becoming a self, in other words, keep being reborn as me. And the opposite is *vibhava*, which is the desire to put an end to that. And that comes into the other fork, the aversion, not wanting. It comes in obvious forms of not wanting something and not wanting to live. And the third one is this doubt which comes from befuddlement, which comes from confusion that arises out of this self.

So those are your seven *anusaya*. And in a sense, if you think about it, that is the platform out of which we then create the world. We create these *saṅkhāras*, create these volitional conditionings.

So underneath it, there is that not knowing. It's creating a certain disposition, which then manifests a disposition of I am with a view, then manifests as this more obvious psychological thing of wanting, not wanting, being confused. And then as something happens to us in daily life, It picks up on one of these and then you suddenly find yourself being greedy or being hateful or being confused. And that's basically, I think, how it is.

So these *anusaya*, you could look at them as the potential which has been created from past actions that we call these *saṅkhāras*, volitional conditioning. So these volitional conditionings become, sink, as it were, into this level of sheer potential. And I think that's what the Buddha is saying.

And the final thing is that until these *anusaya* are actually eradicated from the system, there's no way our unwholesome actions can stop. And the only way you can undermine them is through insight, which breaks the delusion. That's why in dependent origination the real break is at that point of ignorance.

So that brings to an end my little homily on the Anusaya. I can only hope it has been of some benefit. May you be liberated from all your Anusaya sooner rather than later.

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