

# Detailed Sequence Leading to Conflict

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 14:18

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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa* (three times). Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-enlightened.

So Bhikkhu Bodhi keeps choosing some nice juicy passages for us. This one here is taken from actually one of the main discourses on dependency, the wheel of dependent origination, which is the Buddhist psychology as to how we cause problems in ourselves. So I'll read it through first and then we'll take it from there. It's called "The Dark Chain of Causation."

Thus Ānanda, in dependence upon feeling there is craving. In dependence upon craving there is pursuit. In dependence upon pursuit there is gain. In dependence upon gain there is decision making. And in dependence upon decision making there is desire and lust. In dependence on desire and lust there is attachment. In dependence upon attachment there is possessiveness. In dependence upon possessiveness there is niggardliness. And in dependence upon niggardliness there is defensiveness. And because of defensiveness various evil, unwholesome things originate: the taking up of clubs and weapons, conflicts, quarrels and disputes, insults, slander and falsehood. What a miserable outcome!

So if we go through this, you see, what he's doing is he's showing us the round of how things create this cycle, this vicious circle, and just things get worse unless we see where we have to pop it, where we have to actually break that cycle.

So feeling—feeling here always arises with perception. So feelings are either pleasant or unpleasant and we tend to rate our happiness according to our feeling. I mean we say "I feel happy," so that's one of the big mistakes, but I won't go into that. So we have a feeling of happiness and because of this, craving arises. Craving here means—it's a strong word really, for a specific word *taṇhā*, which means desiring something which is not wholesome for us, which is not skilful for us. We don't really have that word in English. The word "desire" doesn't give us that meaning, so they tend to translate it with this "craving," but of course that's a bit strong. Although it can be a craving, obviously—it can be an addiction.

So, dependent upon this craving, there's pursuit, which means we go and get it. So let's take a very simple thing: ice cream. So, as you're walking down the street on a hot day, which happens occasionally in this country once a year, you might see a sign for an ice cream. So the seeing of it, the perception of it brings a memory and it brings a feeling tone to that memory. And you say to yourself, "Oh, I'd like an ice cream." So that business of "I'd like an ice cream" is the craving, is wanting it.

Now once you've done that, of course, you go and buy it. You're on the path into the shop to get yourself an

ice cream. That's the pursuit. In dependence upon the pursuit, there's gain. So you get in the shop, you buy it, and there you've got it. You've got your ice cream.

In dependence upon gain, there is decision making. So now you happen to be with a friend. You want the ice cream, right? And you've bought—you're about to buy the ice cream, and you're going to decide whether you should offer your friend, whether you should offer to buy an ice cream for your friend or not. This is a big problem. Whether it's their turn to offer you the ice cream. So there's all these little machinations going on in the mind. So then there's decision making.

And upon this decision making, there is desire and lust. Now what does he mean by that? It means that when we're going into a shop to buy this ice cream with a friend, we're buying it for ourselves. And we may feel reluctant to have to buy one for our friend. So it creates a disturbance within us.

In dependence upon that desire, dependence upon that becomes an attachment. So now the attachment is basically saying that it's pointing out this psychological dependency on ice cream. So because ice cream brings us this happy feeling and that's how we define our happiness—"I feel happy"—then we become dependent on it and that's what attachment means.

In dependence upon attachment, there's possessiveness. That's pretty straightforward. It's mine, right? You hold on to it, you get fist cramp. And then in dependence upon possessiveness, there is niggardliness. You're not going to give somebody else a lick of your ice cream. It's for me.

And then in dependence upon niggardliness, there's defensiveness. So now your friend says, "Go on, give us a lick." "No, get off!" See? And then they say, "Well, I gave you one when I had an ice cream." And then there's a big fight. And before you know it: clubs, weapons, conflicts, insults, slander and falsehoods. Good God, there's no end to misery.

So now, then you have to take this back again because this whole process has reinforced the original feeling. See? So now the next time you see ice cream, there's an even greater desire for it because there's an even greater psychological dependency on it for happiness. See? So there you've got your rounds, and this is the vicious circle.

So all he's saying is if you look at, if you are aware of this process within ourselves and actually that is causing us problems, then you have to go to where you're going to cut the circle. And you cut the circle right at the beginning with the craving. So when you see ice cream and you get this addiction for it, this almost overwhelming desire to get it, you see, then you have to just stay still. See? And just allow it to pass. Keep walking, keep walking past the shop. See? Just keep going, just keep going.

And when the craving goes, some of that attachment's gone. When some of that attachment's gone, some of the possessiveness has gone. When some of the possessiveness has gone, some of the niggardliness has gone. When some of the niggardliness has gone, then the defensiveness has gone. When the defensiveness has gone, there is no more taking up of clubs and weapons, conflicts, quarrels and disputes, insults,

slander and falsehoods. Get it?

So this is the Buddha trying to explain in detail how we create problems within ourselves. I can only hope my words have been of some assistance. May, through your lack of niggardliness, come to achieve the great end of niggling—no, come to complete end of niggardliness, which is of course nibbanic bliss, sooner rather than later. Any questions around niggardliness?

The main thing is to see that the processes in the mind that we call thinking and imagining are actually what's causing the problems, and as soon as you can stop that—you have to be careful, remember that's not suppressing anything. When you see some thought going on and on, you see, and you stop it, you see.

If it's stopped with aversion—"I don't want it"—or if it's stopped with fear, then that's suppressing. In other words, you've got this underlying, unexpressed attitude, and it keeps coming up into the mind as a constant thought, thought pattern, obsessive thought pattern, and you push it down. You push it down with aversion or fear. So that's suppression. And that, of course, is negative mental energy on top of mental negativity.

But if you note the thought, you see, and you accept the thought for what it is—so that's the noting—so "this is niggardliness," and you just turn away back into the heart, you see, you've not suppressed anything because the problem is here in the feeling. And if you open up to that and let it express itself as pure feeling, then that is the process of therapy. That's the heart healing itself. It's just letting go of this turbulence. See?

Once you've understood that, you see, then you get in the habit of doing it. And of course, everything cools down. See? But it's the habit, you see. So, for instance, you might have, I don't know, this business of when somebody says something that's upset you. And you've just battered it—"That's the way they are." And then tea break. And then lunchtime. See? And then by evening you're stabbing them and clubs and all that. And it's just built up through the mind. So even though they've only insulted you once, you've had them insult you a hundred thousand times. No wonder you want to kill them.

So it's actually getting right there with the thought, knowing the thought for what it is, staying with the heart for a little while, and then putting the attention elsewhere. And that's the process. Unfortunately, if we're not diligent—so that's the Buddha's favourite, one of his favourite words, *appamādo*, right?—we're not diligent, and before you know it, it starts off again. You've worked hard to get rid of all this anguish and hatred and fear and then one moment it's all fired up again through the mind. So it's just that constant effort, constant effort.

"It's not easy to always nip it in the bud when the craving starts. Perhaps it would be anywhere in the cycle."

Well, once it's gone off—well, I think once it's shot off and you're right there holding your club, then you've got to stop. Well, then you've got to stop, you see, and catch the heaviness of the mood in the heart,

you see. So if you're driving, you see, and you're getting cheesed off with this guy going so slow in front of you. See, so if you don't watch it, you're trying to overtake them all the time. You're shooting ahead.

It was funny, a few weeks ago, I went to see the treasurer, Rob, who lives in Shrewsbury, and for some reason, he plied me with two very strong coffees. Okay, so I've got this energy. And I end up at Morrison's for a cup of tea. And I walk in, and I'm stuck in this queue, and they are all old—well, they're all octogenarians. They're all these old people. And they're in front of me, and there's these two women, and they're taking hours over deciding what to have, you see. So I can feel this energy. And I try to go past them. "Do you mind? Moving the queue." And I start off—I know, I know, this is it! You see, one has to always be alert to one's...

I blame the coffee, of course. It was amusing. Well, this is why—yes, I stay here. I surround myself with people who don't push me. Exactly, yeah. Yeah, I get first in the queue here. It was amusing, actually. Yeah, it was funny. Very good.

So should we have some tea?

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