

Perpetually Re-Creating Suffering

Our habitual pattern is that whenever we encounter anything undesirable and unappealing, we try little ways within ourselves to avoid it. We could watch ourselves doing that. The little things we do, the little areas in which we try to entertain ourselves—that process which takes place all the time—is both the product of suffering and the producer of suffering. It is the origin that perpetually re-creates suffering, as well as what we are constantly going through as the result of suffering.

THE ORIGIN of suffering, *künjung*, is based on the belief in eternity. That belief in eternity marks the difference between theism and nontheism. Out of the belief in eternity comes the hope of maintaining oneself, of continuing to be, and the search for longevity of the self, or ego. Along with that comes a fear of death. We look for all sorts of alternatives, for some way to occupy ourselves. We keep groping around in order to survive. That groping process is connected with the development of the *kleshas*. We begin to look outward from ourselves to others, out into the world, and grasp at the world as a way of maintaining ourselves. We use the world as a crutch. That process leads to suffering as a result, because the various ways we try to maintain ourselves do not actually help to maintain us—in fact, they hinder us—so our scheme begins to break down. The more it breaks down, the more we have to rebuild; and as that rebuilding takes place, the suffering returns, so again and again we go back to rebuilding. It is a vicious cycle. The process of *samsara* goes on and on. We have to understand its workings, for once we know how

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samsara operates, we will know how to work with it. We will know what to overcome and what to cultivate.

The path or journey becomes important because it breaks down fixation—holding on to oneself and holding on to others—which could be said to be the origin of suffering. There are two types of *künjung*: the *künjung* of *kleshas* and the *künjung* of *karma*. The *kleshas* are one's state of being, one's state of mind. *Kleshas* such as passion, aggression, arrogance, and ignorance are all internal situations; they are purely mental events. The *künjung* of *karma* is acting upon others as a result of such *kleshas*. Both types of *künjung* could be considered karmic; however, the second type of *künjung* is much more karmic because it involves making decisions, dealing with others, and actually doing something with the phenomenal world. The *künjung* of *kleshas* could be said to be an embryonic expression of the *künjung* of *karma*. As an example, if something pops into your mind as you are meditating and you recognize it immediately, it does not have the same karmic weight as if you had acted upon it. Once you see through it, it is just a game rather than a serious plan that you have; whereas if you write it down in your little notebook so you can remember to call your friend and tell her about it, you have already planted a karmic seed. Simply perceiving it through your mind and seeing the futility of it, realizing it is just a game, is the saving grace. That seems to be the point of the practice of meditation.

THE SIX ROOT KLESHAS: CONFLICTING EMOTIONS THAT LEAD TO SUFFERING

Kleshas are defilements or conflicting emotions. There are six root *kleshas* and twenty secondary *kleshas*.^{*} *Kleshas* are minute at the beginning, but their consequences are large and disastrous. The origin of conflicting emotions is that you are jumpy and always looking for entertainment. *Kleshas* seem magically to manifest out of the blue and come to your attention,

^{*} According to Yeshe Gyaltzen's *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*, trans. Herbert Guenther and Leslie Kawamura (Emeryville, Calif.: Dharma Publishing, 1975), the twenty secondary *kleshas* are indignation, resentment, slyness-concealment, spite, jealousy, avarice, deceit, dishonesty, mental inflation, malice, shamelessness, lack of sense of propriety, gloominess, ebullience, lack of trust, laziness, unconcern, forgetfulness, inattentiveness, and desultoriness.

but they do so because you are ready for them. Having already created an object and directed your attention to it, you develop further confusion, in which desirable things are seen as undesirable, and undesirable things are seen as desirable. That little perversion takes place; the process is slightly twisted. You do not know who you are or what are your actual desires. There are all kinds of possibilities, but with all of them, there is a slight twist, which could be described as mistaken perception. Out of this basic mental setup, passion, aggression, ignorance, and all kinds of subsidiary emotions begin to arise.

Traditional texts describe the nature of emotions as disturbance and chaos. Conflicting emotions are the ups and downs and irregularities that take place in your mind. There are supposedly six root-emotions: desire, anger, pride, ignorance, doubt, and opinion.* Those six kleshas are known as "that which disturbs tranquillity," as if there were any tranquillity at all when you are bogged down in the samsaric world. Generally, we have a very hard time finding any little space in which to have the experience of tranquillity, or peace. Tranquillity is simply a temporary relief from indulging in one of those six states of being. The six root kleshas arise in succession out of basic stupidity or bewilderment. That is, from the bewilderment of not knowing what to do comes a sudden flickering of thoughts. That begins to make you very passionate and lustful.

Desire

So the first klesha is desire. Actually, it is more like lust than desire. You become horny about yourself and your state of bewilderment.

Anger

Then, since you are unable to experience the proper fulfillment of that horniness, you experience anger.

Pride

Out of that anger and inability to fulfill yourself comes pride or arrogance, as a kind of self-preservation, or self-maintenance.

* See the footnote on page 260.

Ignorance

After that comes carelessness, uncertainty, or ignorance. This ignorance is a different sort of ignorance than the initial triggering process. It is not basic bewilderment, but rather simply boycotting situations, ignoring things, refusing to see things in an intelligent way. So passion leads to aggression, which leads to pride, which leads to a stupidified sort of noncaring. Those are the first four kleshas.

Doubt

Ignoring then develops into the fifth klesha, which is known as doubt. You do not trust any possible alternatives and you do not want advice or any way out. You doubt the teachings, the teacher, and the buddhadharma. You even doubt the simple, sensible norms of everyday existence.

View

From that comes the sixth klesha, which is known as view, or opinion. You form a certain opinion, which you use to solidify your trip. You say, "This is it. I've got it. I know it, and I refuse to believe anything else. This is my view; this is my idea; this is what I have come to believe is the right thing to do."

In terms of the künjung of kleshas, it has been said that ignorance is the source of suffering; it has also been said that passion is the origin of suffering, but there is no particular conflict between those two views. Passion refers to the confusion of always wanting to grasp the next possible situation. By continuously clinging to situations, we perpetually give birth to desire. So passion is a driving, impulsive force; but underlying that is uncertainty, bewilderment, and ignorance. So the origin of suffering could also be said to be fundamental ignorance. The term *fundamental* refers to the ground in which we find ourselves suffering. Basic bewilderment and suffering are existence. They *are*. They don't have any partnership, they just *are*. You are your own suffering, your own ignorance. The klesha of ignorance (Skt.: moha; Tib.: timuk) is just superficial bewilderment. In contrast, fundamental ignorance (Skt.: avidya; Tib.: marikpa) is the refusal to relate at all with the totality of suffering. You want to boycott the whole situation.