

## Topic-The Nature of Craving (Greedy/*Tanha*)

Dhamma Speaker-**Bhante Pannasara**

**Theme:** “*Taṇhāya jāyati soko, Taṇhāya jāyati bhayaṃ, Taṇhāya vipṇamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ*”

(From craving arises sorrow, from craving arises fear; for one free from craving, there is no sorrow—so whence fear?)

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### 1. Opening

*Homage*

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa... (×3)

Dear friends in the Dhamma,

Today we gather to reflect on one of the deepest truths taught by the Buddha – the nature of **Taṇhā**, craving or attachment. The Buddha pointed out that craving is the very root of suffering.

He summarized this truth beautifully in a single verse:

**“Taṇhāya jāyati soko, taṇhāya jāyati bhayaṃ;  
Taṇhāya vipṇamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ.”**

“From craving arises sorrow, from craving arises fear; for one who is free from craving, there is no sorrow – so whence could fear arise?”

This will be our guiding theme for today.

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### 2. Understanding Taṇhā

The word *Taṇhā* literally means “thirst.” It is the restless longing that pushes us from one thing to another – never fully satisfied.

The Buddha explained three main kinds:

1. **Kāma-taṇhā** – craving for sensual pleasures: food, wealth, pleasures of the senses.
2. **Bhava-taṇhā** – craving for existence, for becoming something: status, identity, even rebirth.
3. **Vibhava-taṇhā** – craving for non-existence, escape, annihilation.

Every form of craving ties us down to the cycle of **dukkha**.

Let us explore this through a famous story from the *Dhammapada Commentary*.

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### 3. Story of Mattakundali

Once in the city of Sāvatti, there lived a very wealthy Brahmin. Though rich, he was miserly, attached to his gold and possessions. His only son was named **Mattakundali**.

One day, Mattakundali fell seriously ill. Out of extreme stinginess, the father refused to spend money on proper doctors or medicines. He thought: *“If I spend my wealth, it will be wasted. Let me keep my gold safe.”*

As the boy grew weaker and weaker, the father even feared that visitors might see his wealth. Finally, when the son was near death, he carried him outside the house and laid him on the verandah – not out of compassion, but so that when the boy died, the corpse could be easily removed without polluting the house.

At that moment, the Buddha, out of great compassion, happened to pass by on alms round. Though very weak, Mattakundali saw the radiant figure of the Buddha, full of compassion and serenity.

A spark of devotion arose in his heart. With his last breath, he directed his mind towards the Blessed One. In that moment of faith, he passed away – and was immediately reborn in the **Tāvātimsa heaven**.

But what of his father? He sat grieving and lamenting, “My only son has died! My wealth cannot bring him back!” His mind was filled with sorrow – the direct fruit of craving and attachment.

Seeing his father’s grief, Mattakundali, now a deva, appeared before him in radiant form and said:

“Father, wealth cannot save us from death. All your gold could not protect me. But a single moment of faith in the Buddha has brought me heavenly happiness. Better than clinging to possessions is the mind free from craving.”

Hearing this, the Brahmin realized his mistake. His attachment had brought him sorrow, but his son’s freedom from clinging had brought him peace. He later went to the Buddha and took refuge in the Dhamma.

#### **Reflection:**

This story beautifully illustrates our verse. From craving – for wealth, for permanence – arises sorrow. But from letting go arises freedom.

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## 4. The Ten Cravings – Taṇhādasaka Sutta

Here's the list of the ten types of craving (Taṇhādasaka Sutta, AN 10.62–63) with both Pāli + English:

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1. **Rūpa-taṇhā** – Craving for forms (visual objects)
2. **Sadda-taṇhā** – Craving for sounds
3. **Gandha-taṇhā** – Craving for smells
4. **Rasa-taṇhā** – Craving for tastes
5. **Phoṭṭhabba-taṇhā** – Craving for touches
6. **Dhamma-taṇhā** – Craving for ideas and thoughts (mental objects)
7. **Rūpabhava-taṇhā** – Craving for existence in the form world (fine-material realms)
8. **Arūpabhava-taṇhā** – Craving for existence in the formless world (immaterial realms)
9. **Vibhava-taṇhā** – Craving for non-becoming, destruction, annihilation
10. **Bhavataṇhā anāgatam** (sometimes simply **Bhavataṇhā**) – Craving for future becoming (desire for future existence/rebirth)

When we look closely, we see: these ten cravings cover everything in life. All our running, grasping, and anxieties come from these.

Mattakundali's father was caught in craving for possessions. Kisa Gotami, whom I will speak of shortly, was caught in craving for permanence of loved ones. Each of us can find our own examples.

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## 5. Zen Stories of Letting Go

### The Two Monks and the Woman

Two monks were walking on pilgrimage. They came to a muddy road, where a young woman could not cross. One monk carried her across. Hours later, the other monk scolded him: "We monks should not touch women!"

The first replied calmly: "*I set her down hours ago. Are you still carrying her?*"

Lesson: sometimes our taṇhā is not for objects, but for rules, judgments, opinions. We carry them for hours, days, years.

### The Broken Teacup

A Zen master had a beautiful teacup. He loved it, but each day he reminded himself: "*This cup is already broken.*" When one day it fell and shattered, he was not disturbed. He had already let go in his heart.

Lesson: everything is impermanent. If we see this truth, taṇhā loses its grip.

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## 6. Why Craving Brings Sorrow and Fear

- **Sorrow (soka):** When what we crave changes, we weep. When loved ones die, when wealth is lost, when health fades – sorrow arises from clinging.
- **Fear (bhaya):** Fear of losing what we love, fear of death, fear of change – all rooted in craving.
- Freedom from craving means freedom from sorrow and fear.

### Story of Kisa Gotami and the Mustard Seed

Kisa Gotami lost her only child. Out of attachment, she carried the dead child seeking medicine. The Buddha asked her to bring mustard seeds from a house untouched by death. She could not find one. She realized: death comes to all, and her clinging brought her sorrow. She let go, and found wisdom.

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## 7. Practical Application

How do we work with craving in our daily lives?

- **Mindfulness:** Notice when the mind says “I want, I must have.” Just recognize craving.
- **Generosity (dāna):** Giving weakens clinging. Each act of sharing loosens taṇhā.
- **Reflection on impermanence (anicca):** Everything changes. See this truth in people, possessions, even in our own body.
- **Meditation:** Sit quietly, observe craving arise and pass away. It is not permanent; it is not self.

### Short Practice Reflection

Let us take a moment now. Close your eyes.

Think of one craving that troubles you. See how it rises in the mind, how it tightens the heart. Now imagine it dissolving like a cloud in the sky. Notice the peace that comes with letting go.

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## 8. Conclusion

Dear friends, we have reflected today on the Buddha's deep teaching:

**“Taṇhāya jāyati soko, taṇhāya jāyati bhayaṃ;  
Taṇhāya vippamuttassa, natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ.”**

From craving arises sorrow, from craving arises fear. For one free from craving, there is no sorrow, no fear.

We saw this in the story of **Mattakundali**, who rose to heaven through one moment of faith, while his father suffered through attachment. We saw it in **Kisa Gotami**, who discovered wisdom through the loss of her child. And we saw it in the Zen stories, reminding us to put down the burdens we carry.

The message is clear: freedom lies not in holding on, but in letting go.

May we practice daily – with generosity, mindfulness, and wisdom – so that little by little, craving loosens its hold. Then we too will taste the peace that is beyond sorrow and fear.

Let us end with sharing of merits:

*Idaṃ me ñātīnaṃ hotu, sukhitā hontu ñātayo...*