

Craving (*Tanha*)

Today we are discussing the eighth way, the ‘the Craving link’ (*tanha varaya*) in the discourse of Right View (*Samma ditthi*) expounded by the Most Venerable Sariputta.

He addressed the disciples thus:“ Friends, if the Noble disciple understands Craving, its origin, cessation and the way leading to its cessation (*Yatho kho avuso ariya savako tanhamca pajanati, tanha samudayanca pajanati, tanha nirodhanca pajanati, tanha nirodagamini patipadanca pajanati*), just by this he is considered to be endowed with Right understanding (*Samma ditthi*). His view has become untwisted, flawless and straight. He is one who appreciates the Dhamma, the significance and the quality of the Dhamma. He can also be called a person who has arrived in the field of the Dhamma and the Noble Ones. A person with Right Vision and View”.

If we analyse the constituents of Craving, its origin and its cessation accordingly: the Most Venerable Arahant Sariputta explained, “Friends, what is Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*)? What are the conditions for the arising of Craving (*tanha samudayanca pajanati*)? What dhammas will lead to its cessation (*tanha nirodhanca pajanati*)? What is the way leading to its cessation (*tanha nirodagamini patipadanca pajanati*)?”

He himself replied thus: “Craving is of six classes (*cime avuso, thanhakaya*). Craving for forms (*rupa tanha*), sounds (*sadda tanha*), odours (*gandha tanha*), taste (*rasa tanha*), touch (*potthabba tanha*) and mental formations (*dhamma tanha*).”

The Most Venerable Thero further explained, “Feeling (*vedana*) is the condition for the origin of Craving (*vedanasamudaya tanha samudhaya*); the cessation of Feeling leads to the cessation of Craving (*vedananirodha tanhanirodha*). The Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of Craving (*ayameva ariyo atthanghikomaggo tanhanirodhagamini patipada*).”

How do we identify Craving? How do we recognise it? We may think Craving is a mere feeling in our mind that we have towards various objects. It is certainly that; but much more. Craving has many facets but there are two main categories. Behavioural Craving (*Samudacara tanha*) and Existential Root Craving (*Vattamulika tanha*).

Behavioural Craving is that which is linked with the sense bases. This was termed as the six classes of Craving earlier; craving for forms, sounds, odours, taste, touch and mental formations. This Behavioural Craving leads to Existential Root Craving. That is the Craving that leads to rebirth, the continuation of the many rounds of samsara.

There are three types of Existential Root Craving; craving for sense pleasures (*kama tanha*), craving for existence (*bhava tanha*) and craving for non-existence (*vibhava tanha*).

One should clearly see the constituents of Craving as detailed above: one side linked to the sense bases and the other leading to existence.

This is one way to understand Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

Craving also conditions Clinging (*upadana*). Clinging conditions Sense of existence (*bhava*). Sense of existence conditions Birth (*jati*). Birth is followed by old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair (*jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, upayasa*). We can say that if one understands that Craving is a precondition for old age, death and sorrow, then that person has comprehended something about Craving. Thus Craving should be looked upon as the factor that leads to and the reason for suffering.

This is another way to understand Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

We also need to understand the characteristics of Craving. Craving is a defilement (*keles*); ignorance (*avijja*), kamma, craving, clinging etc are all defilements.

Defilements do not show themselves up per se in our lives. We see them in our deeds. Each particular defilement can be recognised by the actions that are lead by that defilement. Our understanding of the defilement of Craving should not be limited to the perception that ‘we like something’. It's hold is far more extensive and far reaching. Spreading throughout our lives, we are sunk and completely immersed in it as if we have fallen into a deep vat of water. It is a phenomenon that can be seen in all our activities and achievement goals. Hence if we wish to see Craving at work, we must look at our deeds with wisdom and understanding.

This is yet another way to understand Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

Another characteristic of Craving is that it cannot exist by itself; it has to hold onto and cling to something. This Clinging (*upadana*) is what reveals Craving. Thus if one sees Clinging arising, one knows that Craving is present.

Here we can take the scenario of a military camp. One of the main concerns of the soldiers will be to protect it from enemy attack. They will build a perimeter wall to fortify the barracks, construct security huts and post sentries to look out for suspicious activities on the outside. One can see that in order to protect the camp inside, security must be provided on the outside. Thus the soldiers must constantly be vigilant to matters outside. It is not because they are particularly interested in the areas outside or for its welfare but because their inner security depends on keeping matters under control on the outside.

Similarly this Craving of ours continuously pulls us outside, to keep in check the conditions outside, so that we can keep things safe inside; the way ‘we like’. As Craving is conditioned by Feeling (*vedana paccaya tanha*) we are always keen to banish unpleasant feelings and to acquire pleasant ones. We find that this wish does not get fulfilled from within. So in order to achieve this according to our Craving, we find that we need to protect things outside of ourselves, like the soldiers who have to secure the outside of their barracks.

Why do you think we build houses, acquire other property like land and vehicles? Why do we need to have children? Not because we love them. We do not build houses to help others. We may think we are doing all these things for the benefit of others; build houses, bring children into the world, look after grand children and provide services to fellow men, but know this clearly for yourself, you are only bolstering up the outside in order to remain secure inside. In other words you do these tasks to fulfil your own internal wish to continue with your pleasant feelings. It is like the soldier who lives inside; he has to be ever watchful of the threats from outside. Similarly in order to satisfy our Craving inside, we have gone outside.

To explain further, if we wish to see a pleasant scene, we have developed a Craving for Form. If this form is only available on TV, not only do we have to buy a TV but we need look after it, keep it clean etc. This goes for radios, fridges, freezers and so on. Why do we need all these gadgets at home? It is due to Craving. If we have a TV we can satisfy our Craving for Form. Why do we have an MP3 player or a radio? It is because we can listen to its sounds and have pleasant feelings. So what we really want is to satisfy our Craving for sounds and feel good. In order to make that happen we need that radio and we need to protect it too.

Sometimes we need to give something pleasant and cooling to the tongue; then the need for a fridge and its upkeep. We believe we need to give our minds something pleasant: children, grand children, houses etc. are acquired. If we look carefully, we do these things so that we feel pleasant feelings within ourselves. What we do to get these pleasant feelings should be seen as the work of Craving.

This is also another way to understand Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

The entire world is a slave to Craving. If we develop a full understanding of this fact we become disenchanted with the way we live our life and with our character.

It is like this; Suppose someone went to work for a householder. The moment he arrives the master gives him an order, “go to the market.” The youth obeys. Immediately the master says, “sweep the courtyard.” The lad does that. Next, “hand-wash these clothes.” As soon as he finishes that, “mow the lawn.” Soon the young man will get tired and unhappy; he may even lose his temper with his boss.

“This man does not know how to treat a person”, he will be extremely disappointed with his employer. He may even leave his job; if he does stay on it will not be for more than a few days. Very soon he will have had enough of this shoddy treatment. It is impossible to remain in the employment of such a taskmaster.

With the case above, we totally agree that we cannot expect anyone to work like that. It is a wholly unacceptable situation and the worker is certainly within his rights to feel disgusted and upset with the person in charge. There will come a stage when the lad would feel that he can no longer stay in that job. Such a worker may even complain using harsh language saying he has no peace in this job and run away.

You must see that we are similarly working as a slave to satisfy our own Craving. If a person is working like a slave to some outside boss, we agree that he will be frustrated and annoyed with that person. Internal Craving is working us in exactly the same way as the selfish employer above. We have never seen its faults. We have never been disappointed with it. The day that we do, is the day that we become free from its hold over us, this slavery. Until then we are Craving’s obedient servants.

For example your mind says, ‘I can’t stay here, I am bored, I must go to this town/country’. You obey and it may take you several days to organise such a trip but the moment you get there your mind says, ‘Oh no, I can’t stay here, I must get back’. And you go back. Immediately your mind wants to see a pleasant form. You provide that. Next is to hear a favourite song. While listening to it, another order comes through; ‘must have a tasty meal now’. Food is being enjoyed and the next demand is for pleasant tactile feelings. It is provided. Then it is the thought, ‘it would be nice to go and have a chat with that person’. That is also done. All throughout our lives this is what we do, kowtowing to our mind and never questioning it.

If an outsider ordered us like that we will be most unhappy and soon stop associating with that person. Not so with this Master Craving who is our constant companion. We work to please him like slaves but no one appreciates that fact. It says to ‘look after the children’, ‘take them to school’, ‘repair the house’, ‘tidy up the garden’, ‘wash and paint the front wall’, ‘provide drinking water’; everything is done obligingly and without question. Never have we been disgusted with this Master. Have we ever seen him? No. He sits inside and orders us about. He roams in all the sense bases where feelings can be generated. While craving for pleasant feelings, we are squeezed dry and dragged everywhere. Unfortunately we do not know that we are working for such a cruel master. That is why the Supreme Buddha said, ‘the entire world is a servant for Craving.’

When you say, ‘*tanham ca pajanati*’, I understand Craving: I recognise that I am not my own master, I am a slave to Craving. You are not a free-being. You have to wise up to the fact that the way you act and live are controlled by Craving. All activities, big and small are governed by this master. You have been an obedient slave, revering him, not going against him at anytime and always executing his wishes to the letter. There are so many daily activities that we do in order to please him; going to work in the morning, coming back home, spending much, spending less, saving, all done according to the orders given by Craving.

So this is also a way to see Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

The next point is, like the soldiers who need to remain vigilant on matters outside of the barracks, master Craving also makes us work on the outside. The ‘outside’ being our children, homes, vehicles, land, money etc. These are acquired in the hope that they will remove conditions that bring us unhappiness and provide us happiness. You can now see that anything you collect and hoard is due to Craving and it is also the reason for our keenness to remove things that bring us unpleasant feelings. As long as Craving is present, we will not stop collecting things that are impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), changeable (*viparinama*) and have causal conditions (*sankata*). We will not stop searching for different ways to acquire them either. Therefore dear devotees, Craving should be identified in the concept of this Master-slave relationship.

We should also be able to appreciate that as the slave, we cannot ever completely satisfy our master Craving. So far we have not really comprehended how much of a disappointment it has been to work

for this Master. If you think carefully you will also be disappointed with yourself too for not seeing him for what he is. The day you realise this will be the day that you can say that you have understood Craving to a certain extent (*tanhamca pajanati*).

We also have craving for sounds, odours, touch and so on and these are some of the other ways in which Craving works. To satiate our Craving we collect objects; TVs, fridges, houses, land, vehicles, money. This is the character of Craving. Looking around your home, you should be able to see why these things have been amassed. You can only spot Craving through these things. Do you believe an arahant, a person who has eradicated all Craving, would collect such things? No. Why do we collect them? Feeling conditions Craving (*vedana paccaya tanha*). If certain ways of behaviour bring on pleasant feelings, Craving for things that generate such feelings is developed. In turn, protection and security has to be provided for the items that bring us pleasure. This is the reason why Craving should not be seen as a mere feeling in the mind. Belongings in your home reflect your level of Craving. The items with which you surround yourself - houses, cars, land, money - do not look at them and think, 'this is my wealth'; nor look at your children and grand children as precious acquisitions. They are the expression of the various dimensions of your Craving. Understand that Craving has engulfed you in these multitude of ways. See how master Craving has ordered you to 'gather' and you have done so. We are in this samsara propelled by Craving and the objects that we have collected reveal our character.

Therefore when one understands Craving in the correct way, all that we have accumulated must be seen as the workings of Craving. The TV was bought to watch pleasurable forms. This was prompted by the craving for pleasant forms. Therefore if you have a TV at home you have bought it to appease master Craving. Similarly craving for sounds, odours, tastes etc follow the same pattern. So Craving can be identified by our possessions that we have around us.

This is another way to understand Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

Sometimes we cannot make a decision on what to do. We begin something, then feel we cannot continue. We stop and start again and again. We may go somewhere and return disappointed. Then after awhile, we want to go to the same place again. This is another characteristic of Craving; this is its nature. You can identify Craving in this way too. If you look carefully in which direction has master Craving taken you? Towards clinging to dhammas that have the nature to generate Clinging. Have you not collected forms (*rupa*), feelings (*vedana*), perceptions (*sanna*), mental formations (*sankhara*) and consciousness (*vinna*)? Craving towards the five aggregates itself should be seen as Clinging.

Once Venerable Punnama asked the Supreme Buddha, "Venerable Sir, are the aggregates of Clinging (*upadana skandha*) one thing and Clinging (*upadana*) another or are they the same?" The Blessed One replied, "Punnama, they are not the same, they are two different things. However, it is the craving towards the aggregates of clinging (*upadana skandha*) that is Clinging (*upadana*)." Therefore this tendency to collect and accumulate should be seen as Dukkha. The aggregates of clinging (*upadana skandha*) do not lead to happiness. It leads to birth, ageing, death, lamentation, sorrow, despair and so on. Therefore if one is accumulating items that are by their nature subject to death and decay, see that as the working of Craving.

This should also be included as a part of our understanding of Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

That is not all. It is this Craving that makes us hold onto all the dhammas in the sense sphere (*kamavacara*), fine-material (*rupavacara*) and immaterial sphere (*arupavacara*) consciousness. It is its function to hold onto sights, sounds, odours, tastes etc. Master Craving manipulates us to remember sights, go in search for them for another look, enjoy seeing them again and re-establish the conviction in our mind of their existence.

When Craving is present we grab hold of what was seen. We become convinced that the form was absolutely present in the way that we saw. Once we come to that stage, 'Craving for form' has already conditioned 'Clinging to form.' Clinging to form conditions Sense of existence. That is, the conviction that the form previously seen is still present. Becoming conditions Birth (*jati*). One goes in search of the form seen earlier. That 'movement' of today is the same as the one that

propels rebirth-linking consciousness (*pratisandhi*) at the moment of death. Then the cycle of ageing and death follow.

Therefore when one understands Craving, the meaning should encompass all of its characteristics. It brings many life-cycles of sickness, ageing and death. Entwined with the five aggregates of clinging, which is Dukkha, Craving is inevitably followed by sadness and sorrow. You must see the effects of this slavish behaviour - not just in theory- but as a perilous state that does not allow you to be free from unending cycles of sickness, decay and death.

Craving will never encourage you to listen to a sermon or allow you to meditate in peace. It will actively work against you and discourage you. If you wish to observe the precepts in a retreat centre how many obstacles will pop up? 'What about minding the child, the job, the repairs to the house, the gardening?' It is extremely difficult to ignore such seemingly reasonable requests but if you observe carefully these demand are only different facets of your own Craving. What is the outcome? Dukkha. Craving is the origin of Suffering.

So if one continues to work obediently for Craving and follow the wishes of your mind, suffering will follow. Before now, we lived our lives doing all the things that we thought would bring us happiness. Things that we accumulated throughout our life were collected according to the orders given by Craving. It deceived us with the promise that, that is the way to end suffering. Look carefully, who has become more powerful, stronger and secure? Is it not Craving? If we can see that Craving has brought us nothing but unhappiness, how can we assume that by doing the same things again and again will lead us out of misery?

What we need to do is to see the dhamma without holding onto personality-views. We must become confident enough to know that by listening and obeying orders to do this, that and the other will not eradicate suffering. On the contrary, Craving will lead us further into suffering. We should be wise enough to know that our present life has the characteristic of one that is destined to inherit suffering. If we see all of the above in that context, you can say you have understood Craving to some extent.

There is much more to understand. One must also understand that **there is no being, only the Master is present. Only non-self (*anatta*) dhammas are present. Although we think, I, person, being etc, in reality it is only the aggregates (*skandha*) and the defilements (*keles*) that are present.** That is why the Blessed One has frequently asked, 'What is meant by living by oneself? Living without Craving'. Craving is seen as the constant companion of beings. Craving is always present and no one moves without him.

That is another fact to comprehend about Craving (*tanhamca pajanati*).

The Most Venerable Sariputta Maha Arahant said, "Feelings condition Craving (*Vedana paccaya tanha*)."

So this Craving is focused on Feelings. Craving is making us collect goods and run errands hoping to generate some pleasurable feelings. It also makes us remove items and avoid places that generate miserable feelings.

So if we have many possessions you can be sure that Craving has worked you hard. Sometimes you may be very pleased with yourself for possessing so much, but in reality it is not something to be proud of. It shows that one has worked in a slavish way according to the whims and fancies of Craving.

Remember we are not talking about a person here. This is only to look at oneself, to generate disgust at the way one has lived. It is not to look at others and think, 'my neighbour has a lot of stuff, he must have a lot of Craving.' If you do that, personality view is present in both places. That is also another way your master Craving continues to get his work done.

So you see clearly, Feelings condition Craving – this is the origin of Craving (*tanha samudayanca pajanati*).

By the cessation of Feelings, comes the cessation of Craving (*vedana nirodho tanha nirodha*)

If at some point you sense that you are losing that pleasant (*sukha vedana*) feeling, know that you will never be able to go in search for that identical feeling; it was conditioned by Contact (*phassa*) where there was previously none and it ceased to exist the moment the conditions changed, leaving no trace of it behind. If you see Feelings like that you will not generate Craving towards them. When that happens Craving will not find a foothold in you to go chasing after this or that Feeling.

You will further see that not only the pleasant Feelings but the unpleasant ones (*dukkha vedana*) are also conditioned by Contact (*phassa*) and when that contact ceases so do the unpleasant Feelings. Similarly the neutral Feelings (*upekha vedana*). When you become attuned to the arising and cessation of Feelings like that, you will not find yourself ‘congregating (*upacaya*)’ around Feelings. It will not be possible to become ‘glued’ and attached to Feelings anymore.

You will come to appreciate that all Feelings are transient. Then even when an unpleasant feeling arises you will find that there is no aversion towards it or a need to get rid of it. There is no need to take action to remove the unpleasant and acquire the pleasant. The pleasant feelings will be seen as an impermanent state and you appreciate the fleeting nature of it. Same with the unpleasant feelings. Eventually you will stop reacting to both. That is when Craving will disappear. The cessation of the drama of Craving. Therefore if one succeeds in bringing about the cessation of Feeling, Craving ceases by itself.

This way you understand how the cessation of Craving is brought about (*tanha nirodhanca pajanati*).

The Blessed One has said, “The Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of Craving.” This is Right View (*samma ditthi*). It is the only way to eradicate Craving.

Feelings are conditioned by Contact. When the eye cognises a pleasant form, Contact arises and conditions a pleasant Feeling. An unpleasant form will generate unpleasant Feelings and similarly a neutral form will generate neutral Feelings. If you can observe the transient nature of all types of Feelings, this is termed Right View. The other sense bases also generate the three types of Feelings (as above).

If a person can clearly see the fleeting nature of all Feelings and the conditioned nature (*paticcasamuppanna*) of the process - that conditioned by Contact, Feelings arose; when Contact ceased so did Feelings; This is Right View. The day that a person sees clearly this phenomenon, is the day that Right View becomes a way of his life.

There is a big difference between knowledge and seeing clearly. Knowledge by itself may not be accompanied by mindfulness and such knowledge will not lead to disenchantment. Seeing clearly will do that.

For example, if you see dog-waste on the road, there is very little chance that you will absent-mindedly pick it up and put it in your pocket. You do not even have to stop and think, 'Oh, how disgusting, how unpleasant' - the moment you see the waste, the rest of your actions will flow in a way that you will remove yourself from the scene. You will not even be able to force yourself to think that it is an acceptable sight. Both mind and body will work in unison to avoid the situation, so even if you want to stand and contemplate over the mess, both mind and body will recoil and pull you away as quickly as possible.

Similarly one day when you have clearly seen for yourself that all Feelings are impermanent, from that point onwards you will stop chasing after pleasant Feelings and be averse towards the unpleasant. Whether you react or not, you know for yourself that Feelings are impermanent.

There is more to explain. It is enough for now to know the conditioned nature of the above dhammas. All contemplations must lead to the development of Right View (*Samma ditthi*), the first factor in the Noble Eightfold Path which is comprised of morality (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*panna*). I will explain these in depth later but for now, understand that our character has been fashioned by master Craving and what he wants is pleasurable Feelings and thus his demands.

If Feeling ceases to exist so does Craving. It brings peace, no more demands and no more suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path is to be regarded as the Path to eradicate Feelings and Craving. When one develops in morality, concentration and wisdom one arrives at one place. You have arrived at that one place when you have understood that all Feelings are impermanent. You have seen that Craving conditions Clinging. You have also come to realise that in order to tame Craving, its conditioning factor, Feeling has to be contemplated as a transient dhamma. All this knowledge leads to one point but each has to be seen in its individual context too. So when you see that 'all Feelings are transient', Craving stops and so do ageing and death. That is Right View. (එතකොට ඔබලා 'හැම වේදනාවක් ම අනිත්‍යයි' කියලා දකින මට්ටමට පැමිණි විට මෙන්ම මේ තණ්හාව නැති වෙලා ජරා මරණ ටික නැති වෙනවා. ඒ දකින මට්ටමට තමයි මේ සම්මා දිට්ඨිය කීවේ.)

The Most Venerable Arahant Sariputta explained, "*Yato kho avuso, ariyasavako evam tanhanca pajanati, evam tanhasamudayanca pajanati, evam tanhanirodhanca pajanati, evam tanhanirodhagamini patipadanca pajanati, so sabbaso raganusayam pahanaya patighanusayum pativinodetva, asamiti ditthimananusayam samuhanitva, avijjam pahaya vijjam uppajethva ditthevadhamme dukkhassanthakaro hoti.*"

"If a person knows Craving, its origin, cessation and the Path leading to cessation, he is able to completely eradicate the cankers or the latent tendency of sense pleasure (*raganusayam pahanaya*), the latent tendency of aversion (*patighanusayum pativinodetva*) conceit and ignorance and gain wisdom (*avijjam pahaya vijjam uppajethva*). He can in this very life eradicate suffering (*ditthevadhamme dukkhassanthakaro hoti*)."

So identify who is Master, be disobedient to him, he does not want you to practice Dhamma, tread the Path of morality, concentration and wisdom, which leads to his destruction. The end of suffering.