

8. *Mūlasarvāstivādaikaśatakarman*, (translated and annotated by I-tsing) note in Vol. V.
9. Tao-hsuan (of the Tang dynasty); *The Record of the Country of Sākyamuni*, Vols. I & II.
10. Tsan-ning (of the Sung dynasty); *The Biography of Eminent Monks Compiled During the Sung Dynasty*, Vol. I.
11. Yuan-chao (of the T'ang dynasty); *A New Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures of the Chên-yuan Period*, Vol. XIII.

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TANHĀ, “craving”, (Skt. *tṛṣṇā*), is according to the early Buddhist analysis of existence the very root cause of the *saṃsāric* predicament. Due to its pivotal role as the chief cause for bondage, *taṇhā* occurs in numerous passages and contexts in the early discourses, and forms the topic of an entire chapter in the *Dhammapada* (*Dhp.* 334-359). Most prominent among these occurrences is perhaps its role as the main factor responsible for the arising of *dukkha*, highlighted in the second noble truth.

In order to give an overview of *taṇhā* and its implications, the scheme embodied in the four noble truths could be applied to *taṇhā* itself. Adopting this approach, the present article will first of all attempt to define *taṇhā* (1), followed by examining its arising (2) and the implications of its cessation (3), and finally turn to the steps to be undertaken in order to arrive at freedom from *taṇhā* (4).

### (1) The nature of *taṇhā*

The term *taṇhā* literally stands for “thirst”, a meaning echoed also in its near synonym *tasiṇā*. *Taṇhā* - as a figurative type of thirst that demands the satisfaction of desires - manifests as a sense of lack or want, and has its root in dissatisfaction. Such thirst, longing, wanting and craving can arise in relation to a range of objects, hence *taṇhā* can manifest in various ways.

A prominent listing of such manifestations occurs in the standard exposition of the second noble truth, which differentiates between sensual craving, *kāma-taṇhā*, craving for existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, and craving for non-existence, *vibhava-taṇhā* (e.g. *S. V*, 421, See

also VIBHAVATANHĀ). The first of these, sensual craving, could manifest in relation to any of the six senses, resulting in altogether six modes of craving according to each sense-object. These are the six *taṇhākāya*, which comprise *rūpa-taṇhā*, *sadda-taṇhā*, *gandha-taṇhā*, *rasa-taṇhā*, *phoṭṭhabba-taṇhā*, and *dhamma-taṇhā* (e.g. *D. III*, 244). Craving for existence could be for material or immaterial forms of existence, resulting in *rūpa-taṇhā* and *arūpa-taṇhā*, which the *Saṅgīti Sutta* (*D. III*, 216) lists together with *nirodha-taṇhā*, craving for cessation.

The *Saṅgīti Sutta* also presents a set of four types of craving more specifically related to the life of a monk or a nun, the *cattāro taṇhuppādā*, which comprise craving related to robes, to food, to lodging and to forms of existence (*D. III*, 228). In addition, craving could also be for views, *diṭṭhi-taṇhā* (*A. II*, 12), for the four nutriments (*S. II*, 101), for wealth (*Dhp.* 355), or for appropriating in general, *ādāna-taṇhā* (*Sn.* 1103).

A presentation that covers altogether one-hundred-and-eight manifestations of what appear to be forms of craving for existence can be found in a discourse in the *Āṅuttara Nikāya* (*A. II*, 211-213). This discourse begins by distinguishing eighteen forms of internal craving and eighteen forms of external craving. The internal manifestations of craving are various modes of imagination that begin with the basic notion “I am”, which then leads to imaginations of the type “I am like this”, “should I be otherwise?”, “may I become like this”, etc. Their external counterparts come into being when this same notion “I am” is related to the external world, such as “by this I am” etc. Adding these two modes together, and relating them to the past, the present and the future, results in altogether one-hundred-and-eight ways of bondage, explained in this discourse to result in being enmeshed by craving, *taṇhā-jālinā*.

With the imagery of being enmeshed by craving, of being caught in the net of craving, this discourse provides a lead over from the more analytical presentations, by way of listing various manifestations of craving, to other passages that bring out the nature of *taṇhā* with the help of various similes and images. The relation provided in this *Āṅuttara Nikāya* discourse between the net of craving and the issue of views recurs in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhya Sutta*. This

discourse points out that the monk Sāti, who tenaciously held on to the wrong view that the same consciousness transmigrates in *saṃsāra*, was caught in the great net of craving, *mahātaphā-jāla* (*M. I*, 271). The relation between craving and views recurs also in an exposition by Sāriputta, according to which speculative views about the future destiny of a *Tathāgata* after death are but the product of delighting in craving, *taphā-rāma*, of enjoying and rejoicing in craving, *taphā-rata taphā-samudita* (*S. IV*, 390).

The net imagery recurs in relation to craving in general in a verse in the *Theragāthā*, which compares the condition of one who has destroyed the net of craving, *taphā-jāla*, to the stainless moon on a clear night (*Thag.* 306). The *Dhammapada* also employs this imagery, when it contrasts the net-like nature of craving to the freedom attained by the Buddha who, in contrast to such forms of entrapment, has a quite literally limitless range, *ananta-gocara* (*Dhp.* 180).

The nuance of craving as a form of bondage, *bandhana* (*S. I*, 8), which underlies the net imagery, recurs also in other similes. Overcome by craving, *tasiṇā*, beings run around in circles comparable to a rabbit caught in a snare (*Dhp.* 342). Covered by craving's cloak, *taphā-chadana-chāditā*, one is in bondage like a fish in a trap (*Ud.* 76). The idea of bondage or binding together also underlies a simile that presents craving as a seamstress, *taphā sibbanī*. This seamstress sews together contact, its arising and cessation; or else it sews together past, future and present; or else pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain; or else name, form and consciousness; or else sense-organs, sense-objects and consciousness; or else personality, its arising and its cessation (*A. III* 399-402).<sup>2</sup> Whichever of these complementary perspectives is taken on the seamstress of craving, the result is the continuity of becoming, *bhava*, and hence the continuity of *dukkha*.

This sticky craving, *taphā visattikā* (*Dhp.* 335), forms a yoke that binds beings to existence, *taphā-yoga* (*It.* 50). It causes beings to take up the burden of the five aggregates, *taphā vuccati bhārādānaṃ* (*S. III*, 26), in fact it is responsible for the very arising and existence of a being, *satta* (*S. III*, 190), and after death such a being will be carried on to its next rebirth based on craving, *taphupādāna*, like a flame carried on by the wind (*S. IV*, 400). That is, from the perspective of

faring on in *saṃsāra*, craving is the fetter par excellence, *taphā-saṃyojana* (*It.* 8).

Another set of images revolve around the theme of growth in nature, alerting us to the danger of allowing craving to follow its natural course and thereby become stronger and stronger. This nuance can be seen in a *Dhammapada* verse that compares the fertility of the underlying tendency to craving, *taphānusaya*, to a tree that grows again after being cut down, as long as its roots are left intact (*Dhp.* 338). Hence craving together with its root need to be removed (*S. I*, 16). The idea of growth recurs also in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, according to which craving is the moisture, *taphā sineho*, due to which the seed of consciousness grows on the field of karma (*A. I*, 223). Craving is like a creeper, *taphā-latā* (*Thag.* 1094), that needs to be cut in order to reach liberation. A verse in the *Dhammapada* takes up the same imagery, pointing out that in the case of those who are heedless craving will grow like a creeper, *māluvāvīya* (*Dhp.* 334). As a result, the same verse explains, beings proceed from one life to another, comparable to a monkey that leaps from tree to tree in search of fruit.

The simile of the monkey that leaps from tree to tree brings out a nuance of faring on endlessly, a nuance that comes to the fore in another set of images that relate craving to a stream. There is no stream like craving, *n' atthi taphāsamā nadī*, a verse in the *Dhammapada* warns (*Dhp.* 251), and another passage points out that those who are under the power of craving are carried along by the stream, *taphāhipannā anusota-gāmino* (*A. II*, 6). Hence the task is to completely cut off craving just like drying up a fast flowing river (*Sn.* 3). By thorough comprehension of craving the flood will be crossed (*Sn.* 1082), and one who has completely eradicated craving, an *arahant*, deserves to be reckoned as one who has cut the stream, *chinna-soto* (*S. IV*, 292).

A more detailed treatment of the stream imagery can be found in a discourse in the *Itivuttaka* (*It.* 113-115). This discourse describes a man who allows himself to be carried along by a pleasant stream. An onlooker from the bank of that river warns the man that soon this river will lead to a pool with whirlpools and dangerous beings, so that the man carried along by the river will incur death or suffering similar to death. This imagery draws out the treacherous nature of the

stream of craving and sounds a stern warning against succumbing to its all too powerful pull. The whole world, in fact, is being led and dragged here and there by this powerful pull of craving, *taphāya nīyati loko* (S. I, 39). The helpless predicament that results from falling prey to craving is described again in another simile, which compares beings under the influence of craving for existence, *taphā-gataṃ bhavesu*, to fish wriggling in water that is about to dry up (Sn. 776-777).

The danger inherent in succumbing to craving, to which this simile alerts, becomes even more conspicuous in another set of similes that compare craving to a dart or an arrow. The world is afflicted by this dart of craving, *taphā-sallena otiṇṇo* (S. I, 40), as it is always burning with desires. The same imagery also recurs in several verses in the *Theragāthā*, which report monks formulating the strong determination not to take food or leave their hut (*Thag.* 223 and 313), or even sit down at all (*Thag.* 514), until the dart of craving has finally been removed.

The *Sunakkhatta Sutta* provides additional background to the dart imagery (M. II. 260), explaining that the dart of craving is smeared with the poison of ignorance and has smitten the wound of the six internal sense-bases. The surgeon who pulls out the dart of craving from this wound is the *Tathāgata*, and to remove this dart requires mindfulness as the probe and noble wisdom as the knife. Hence the Buddha as the good physician who teaches the path to freedom from craving is also called the destroyer of the dart of craving, *taphā-sallassa hantāra* (S. I, 192). A complementary to this imagery, similarly taken from the realm of physical affliction, presents craving as the tumour's root, *gaṇḍa-mūla* (S. IV, 83), that needs to be removed in order to arrive at a state of mental health.

A monk who has not succeeded in removing craving can not really be reckoned as one who is solitary, even if he should be living in remote places, far removed from contact with others. The reason is that he has craving as his second (S. IV, 36), whether it be craving for sights, sounds, or any other agreeable sense-object. This discourse introduces yet another imagery related to craving, that of one's second, one's ever-present companion, *taphā dutiyo puriso* (Sn. 740). This imagery brings out the ever present deep seated feeling of

dissatisfaction engendered by craving, a wanting so ingrained in one's habitual experience of the world that it is almost taken for granted. In fact, according to another passage *taphā* can be appropriated as a self, '*taphā attā*' *ti* (M. III, 284). That is, craving is so well entrenched in experience that it has become part of one's sense of identity. This makes the removal of craving all the more difficult, since the goal of freedom from craving not only requires the insight that craving is inexorably bound up with dissatisfaction and frustration, but also requires giving up part of what is experienced as "I" and "mine".

This ever present second companion is quite powerful and often enough takes on the leading role, so much so that, with craving as one's second, one easily becomes a slave to craving, *taphā-dāsa*. The implications of being a slave to craving are drawn out in the *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta* (M. II, 71). According to this discourse, King Koravya had been puzzled by the fact that the young and healthy Raṭṭhapāla, son of the most wealthy house in town, had decided to leave all possessions and relatives behind in order to go forth as a Buddhist monk. In his explanations to the king about what had motivated him, Raṭṭhapāla employed the imagery of being a slave to craving, *taphā-dāso*. To explain this imagery, Raṭṭhapāla asked the king what he would do if he heard that among the neighbouring territories to the east a land could be found full of riches and easy to conquer. The king replied that he would certainly conquer it. Raṭṭhapāla continued to ask the same question for territories found in any other direction, including territories found far beyond the sea. In each case the king had to admit that he would wish to conquer them. In this way, Raṭṭhapāla was able to bring home to the king the insatiability of the thirst for power, a mode of craving suitably drawn from the king's own field of experience. Paradoxically enough, the very craving for more power turns the king into a slave, a slave of craving.

As the example provided in the *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta* shows, the arising of craving can take place quite independent of any real need, since even the king of the country, in spite of being more powerful than anyone else in his kingdom, will never be satisfied with his dominion, but always be ready to exert himself in order to further extend his domain. The example provided by Raṭṭhapāla thus leads us over to the second

theme to be discussed in relation to craving: the causes of its arising.

## (2) The arising of *taṇhā*

Factors that contribute to the arising of craving are mentioned in the second noble truth, according to which the arising of *dukkha* is directly related to craving that is accompanied by delight and lust, *nandī-rāga-sahagatā*, delighting here and there, *tatra tatrābhinandinī* (S. V, 421). This reference to the tendency of delighting here and there, in this or that, reveals that once one perceives something as delightful, as gratifying (*assāda*), craving arises.

To highlight the dynamics that result from perceiving things as gratifying, the discourses employ several imageries. Just like a great fire, to which ever more fuel is added, will keep on burning for a long time, so for those who perceive things that can be clung to as gratifying, *upādānīyesu dhammesu assādānupassino*, craving will increase (S. II, 85). A similar imagery recurs in another simile that illustrates the situation of those who perceive things that can fetter as gratifying, *saññojaniyesu dhammesu assādānupassino*. For them, craving will increase just like an oil lamp will keep burning as long as oil is being added and the wick is adjusted (S. II, 86). The seeing of things that can be clung to, or that can fetter, as gratifying receives an additional treatment in two similes taken from the growth of trees. These similes describe how perception of gratification fosters the growth of craving with the example of a great tree that is well nourished through its roots (S. II, 87), and with the example of a sapling that is well cared for and watered (S. II, 89).

Another discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* takes up the same theme in more detail, explaining that craving arises and becomes established in regard to whatever in this world is pleasant and agreeable, mistaking it to be lasting, to provide real happiness and satisfaction, and finally appropriating it (S. II, 109). This discourse compares giving in to such craving to a thirsty man who partakes of a drink that is of exquisite taste, even though he knows it to contain poison.

These various presentations illustrate from complementary perspectives the indication given in

the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, according to which the arising of *taṇhā* takes place in dependence on feeling, *vedanā-paccaya* (S. II, 1). Hence it is with the arising and manifestation of feelings that *taṇhā* needs to be kept in check.

The indication that the condition for the arising of craving is to be found in feeling also has another dimension, which comes to the fore in a discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. According to this discourse, a monk had asked the Buddha: "Who craves?" (S. II, 13). Such a question is not appropriate, the Buddha pointed out, since an inquiry into the nature of craving should rather be worded in terms of: "what is the condition for craving?"

In addition to pointing out the role of feeling as the condition for craving, the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising also highlights that *taṇhā* in turn is responsible for the arising of *upādāna*, clinging or attachment, and ultimately in the arising of *dukkha*. The unwholesome consequences that arise due to *taṇhā* are treated in more detail in the *Dasuttara Sutta* (D. III, 289), which enumerates altogether nine states that are rooted in craving, *taṇhā-mūlaka*. These begin with the quest for the desired object, *pariyesanā*, which, when successful, in turn leads to gain, *lābha*. Having obtained gain requires the making of decisions about what should be done with such gains, *vinicchaya*, due to which arise lust and desire, *chanda-rāga*. These lead via attachment to appropriation, *ajjhosāna* and *pariggaha*, out of which avarice and hoarding result, *macchariya* and *āraṅkha*. The end result of all this, according to the *Dasuttara Sutta*, is the taking up of sticks and swords, quarrel, slander and falsehood etc.

Notably, these dire consequences await those whose pursuit of the objects of craving has been successful. In the case of those who have not been able to satisfy the demands of their inner thirst, unwholesome states and reactions will arise all the more quickly.

The *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta* describes how the perception of sensual pleasures as gratifying leads to a quest for obtaining them through earning a livelihood, a quest that in itself is often enough beset with much suffering, pain and at times even danger

(M. I 86). When in spite of all effort this quest has not been successful, the poor victim sorrows and grieves, laments and weeps, beating his breast, crying in distraught 'my work is in vain, my effort is fruitless'. Should his efforts succeed, however, the gains will have to be protected against avaricious kings and cunning thieves, as well as against natural calamities. Having depicted in detail the dangers that lurk at each of these successive steps needed to secure the objects of craving, the *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta* also treats the taking up of sticks and swords as the final result of the quest for craving satisfaction, describing in gruesome detail the suffering and evils of quarrel, warfare and crime in ancient India.

In addition to being directed to sensual pleasures, craving may also manifest in relation to various forms of existence. A discourse in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* points out that a first beginning of such craving for existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, cannot be predicated (A. V, 116). That is, craving for existence has been one's companion since times immemorial. Nevertheless, according to the same discourse a condition for craving for existence can be pointed out right in the present, which is none other than ignorance, *avijjā*.

In short, for the ignorant ones who allow themselves to succumb to the arising of craving sorrows grow, just like grass grows after rain (*Dhp.* 335). In contrast, from those who overcome craving sorrow falls off, like water from a lotus flower (*Dhp.* 336). The imagery of the lotus untouched by water leads us to the next aspect to be explored in relation to *taṇhā*, to the cessation of craving.

### (3) The cessation of *taṇhā*

The eradication of craving equals *Nibbāna*, *taṇhāya vipphānena*, '*nibbānam*' *iti vuccati* (S. I, 39), hence the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya*, stands on a par with various other epithets used for *Nibbāna* (S. IV, 371). Such destruction of craving is part of a standard description of *Nibbāna* as the stilling of all formations, *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*, the relinquishment of all substrata, *sabbūpadhi-paṇinissagga*, the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya*, dispassion, *virāga*, and cessation, *nirodha* (M. I, 436). The same formula recurs also in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, where it forms part of the Buddha's reflection that *taṇhakkhaya* as a goal is not easily appreciated

by those who are under the influence of delight and passion (M. I, 167).

The complete and remainderless cessation of craving, *taṇhāya asesavirāga-nirodho*, its giving up and relinquishment, *cāgo paṇinissaggo*, is the theme of the third noble truth, which points out that with the cessation of craving the cessation of *dukkha* is reached. The accomplished ones, who have become free from craving, *vītatāṇhā*, have plucked out the darts of existence, *bhava-sallāni* (*Dhp.* 351). Those who in regard to any of the five aggregates are devoid of craving, *vigatataṇhā*, are beyond any form of agitation when any of these aggregates changes and becomes otherwise (S. III, 8). At the same time, they are also beyond any speculative views on the destiny of a *Tathāgata* after death (S. IV, 387). In fact, for those who are freed through the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-vimuttino*, any standpoint for views has been uprooted, *ditṭhiṭṭhānā samūhatā* (*It.* 48); and those without craving for existence or non-existence are free from underlying perceptions, *bhavābhavavītatāṇhaṃ saññā nānuseṇti* (M. I, 108).

The liberation attained through the destruction of craving also implies the highest degree of ethical perfection in early Buddhism. Thus an *arahant*, one who has completely eradicated all forms of craving, is incapable of consciously killing a living being, of taking what has not been given, of engaging in sex, of knowingly speaking falsehood, and of enjoying sensual pleasures by hoarding them in the way this is done usually in lay households (M. I, 523).

One who has thus been freed through the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya vimutta*, is reckoned by the wise as a sage (*Sn.* 211), and such a sage rid of craving, *nittataṇhā* has gone beyond the vision of the world with its gods (*Ud.* 77). Having abandoned craving, *taṇhaṃ pahatvāna*, such a one deserves to be reckoned a Brahmin in the true sense of the term (*Dhp.* 416).

For such a one, who has eradicated craving, there is no more questing or searching, just as there is no need to search for a well when water is available all around (*Ud.* 79). The absence of any further questing or searching, depicted in this imagery, is perhaps not surprising, as the freedom that results from the

destruction of craving yields supreme happiness. According to a verse in the *Udāna*, be it the sensual happiness of the world or divine happiness in heaven, none of them is worth even the sixteenth part of the happiness of the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-sukha* (*Ud.* 11). Since it is reasonable to give up a smaller happiness, if in this way a greater and superior happiness can be gained (*Dhp.* 290), a true disciple of the Buddha does not delight even in divine pleasures, but delights in the destruction of craving, *taṇhakkhaya-rato hoti* (*Dhp.* 187). This leads us on to the last aspect of *taṇhā* to be discussed in the present article, the path that leads to the happiness of freedom from craving.

#### (4) The path to freedom from *taṇhā*

The path to freedom from craving is the same as the path to freedom from *dukkha*, namely the noble eightfold path (*S.* IV, 371). More specifically, the path to the destruction of craving can be found in the development of the seven awakening factors, *bojjhaṅga* (*S.* V, 86), and in the development of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* (*S.* V, 300).

Since craving arises and grows due to perceiving something as gratifying (*assāda*), perceiving things as unsatisfactory - in the sense of directing attention to their inherent disadvantage and danger (*ādīnava*) - leads to diminishing and eventually to eradicating craving. In the case of sensual craving, a particularly strong mode of this form of craving grows ever more as long as particular aspects of the body are seen as beautiful, *subhānupassino bhīyyo taṇhāpavaḍḍhati* (*Dhp.* 349). Counter-methods for such craving would therefore be the contemplation of the aspects of the body that are not beautiful, *asubha*, by directing mindfulness to the anatomical parts of the body as described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (*M.* I, 57).

The unsatisfactory nature of sensual pleasures in particular is the theme of a series of similes delivered in the *Potaliya Sutta* (*M.* I, 364-366). According to this discourse, to search for satisfaction through sensuality is comparable to a hungry dog that gnaws a meatless bone, or to a bird that has gotten hold of a piece of food but is being attacked by other birds and therefore has to let go of the food again in order to avoid injury. Thirst for sensuality burns, just like a

blazing torch held against the wind, or like falling into a burning charcoal pit. Sensual pleasures are illusory like a dream, or like parading with things that are owned by others. To pursue sensual pleasures is dangerous, like having climbed up a tree in search for fruit, only to find that the tree is being cut down by another person. Another simile in the *Māgandiya Sutta* compares the unsatisfactory nature of sensual pleasures to the situation of a leper, indicating that to indulge in sensual pleasures is like a leper who cauterises his wounds over a fire and scratches them, experiencing momentary relief by an act that aggravates his condition. (*M.* I, 507). The purpose behind these various similes is to aid in the development of wisdom that sees craving for sensual satisfaction as futile and meaningless.

To eradicate the mode of craving that is directed to forms of existence, *bhava-taṇhā*, requires the development of deeper insight, *abhiññā* (*M.* III, 289). Such deeper insight for the purpose of destroying craving for existence would in particular require insight into the illusory nature of the notion "I am", which is the very basis for such craving for existence. To overcome craving for existence, what has come into being should be seen simply as something that has come into being, *bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ disvā* (*It.* 44), i.e. as the product of a conditioned process and without imposing any "I" notions on it, followed by developing detachment and disenchantment. This points to a sober appreciation of the true nature of one's own existence, and therewith of the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of all forms of existence.

According to an instruction delivered by Ānanda, it is based on *taṇhā* that *taṇhā* should be overcome, *taṇhaṃ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā* (*A.* II, 145, See also CRAVING). As the same discourse explains, it is based on craving for liberation that other forms of craving can be overcome. The tantalizing use of *taṇhā* in an evidently positive sense in this passage, namely as a term that represents the highest of aspirations, the wish to reach full liberation, is significant.<sup>3</sup> Ānanda's indication that *taṇhā* can become the very means to overcome *taṇhā* points to a gradual procedure which replaces unwholesome forms of craving and desire with more wholesome counterparts.

The central point behind this presentation is to bring out the need for a gradual approach when trying

to overcome craving, and the need to develop wisdom. Wisdom in the sense that to overcome *taphā* through *taphā* requires a clear understanding of what are wholesome objects of desire, and what are their unwholesome counterparts, such as sensual objects or modes of existence. Such wisdom is based on the clear ethical distinguishing between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and is coupled with the insight that the objects of unwholesome cravings are of such nature that they will never yield any lasting or true satisfaction.

The gradual approach that underlies the presentation according to which *taphā* should be overcome through *taphā* enjoins a gradual shift of the basic mode of craving and desire from unwholesome to wholesome objects. A first stage in such a gradual approach is reflected in a discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. According to this discourse, those who have full faith in the impermanent nature of craving and its objects, or who fully accept such teachings after reflection, can already be reckoned as faith-followers (*saddhānusārī*) or Dhamma-followers (*dhammānusārī*), and are thus well on the path to stream-entry, since they are unable to perform deeds that lead to a lower rebirth (*S. III, 227*).

The difficulties involved in attempting to overcome craving, which make it pertinent that a gradual approach is employed, could be illustrated with the help of the *Cūlataphāsāṅkhaya Sutta*. This discourse reports how Sakka, the king of gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, approached the Buddha with the question how one becomes liberated through the destruction of craving, *taphā-sāṅkhaya-vimutta* (*M. I, 251*). The Buddha's poignant reply was that one needs to know that all things are not worth adhering to, *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*.

Yet, for Sakka to be able to put this penetrative maxim into practice was apparently not easy. In fact, after receiving this instruction, Sakka returned to heaven and continued disporting himself with his heavenly maiden in a pleasure pond. It needed the timely intervention of Mahāmoggallāna, who through a feat of supernatural power caused the beautiful palace of Sakka to shake and tremble, to bring the king of gods to his senses. In this way, this tale allegorically highlights the difficulties of putting the path to freedom

from craving into practice, as this demands moving right against the current of the satisfaction of desire, and requires sustained practice undertaken beyond a mere superficial intellectual appreciation. Every single step that moves against this current, and thereby withstands the attraction of Māra's daughter Tanhā (*S. I, 124*), is an all-important step in the direction of the true happiness of freedom from craving.

Anālaya

### References

- 1 Cf. also *Sn. 339*, which mentions only the first three of these four.
- 2 These different perspectives are given as comments on the verse spoken in *Sn. 1042*.
- 3 That there can be wholesome forms of craving is also recognized in *Nett. 87: taphāduvidhā, kusalā pi akusalā pi*.

**T'AN LUAN.** T'an-luan (476-542) was an eminent monk of Northern Wei, a promoter of the Pure Land doctrine during the period of Southern and Northern Dynasties. He was a native of modern Yen-mên of the Ta-t'ung district, Shan-si. (*The Treatise on the Pure Land* written by Chia-ts'ai of T'ang records him as a native of Wên-shui of Ping-chou). His home being in the neighbourhood of the sacred Wu-t'ai Mountain, he became familiar from childhood with the legends about the miraculous manifestations of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Shortly after he grew up to his early teens, he went up the mountain to seek for the Truth. Deeply impressed by the holy sites that he saw, he offered himself to be a monk. He read extensively, including religious and non-religious literature, and made remarkable attainment in the study of the four *sāstras* of Nāgārjuna's system (i.e. the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, the *Madhyamika-śāstra*, the *Dvādaśasānikāya-śāstra* and the *Śata-śāstra* and the theory of the Buddha-nature.

Later he studied the *Mahāsaṃnipāta-sūtra*. Feeling that the recondite meaning therein were rather too difficult to understand, he betook himself to the compilation of an exegetic work on it. Barely had he

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