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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## A DERIVATION ABOUT CRAVING FROM THE AGGAÑÑA SUTTA

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### ABSTRACT

The Buddha's Teaching about craving leads us to understand the causality of natural disasters, environmental change, climatic change, and even religious beliefs, which are a great challenge in finding the method of solving. However, it is an ongoing process, as solving this great challenge requires immediate intervention to reduce and prevent further environmental damage is another factor in the problem-solving process. According to the Buddhist perspective, the craving (*taṇhā*) of people is the leading cause of this problem. Understanding the craving can bring us the right way, balanced between living and non-living systems, a good quality of life, and a longer life. The *Aggañña Sutta*, taught by the Buddha, provides a myth of ideological cosmology and the root cause of the craving. We also know that ideological cosmology was mentioned in Vedic texts before the appearance of Buddha's time. The Buddha described the lawful nature of things and how the world and beings have appeared. In the social evolution of humankind, someone suffers from bad conceptions, and the cause of suffering is craving. Thus, the craving can pollute the mind and also pollute the environment. However, we can solve the suffering of craving with Meditation. This practice will help people to realize the final goal in their present life. While I examine the craving in the *Aggañña Sutta*, I also use the articles reported on the Global Crisis to clarify my suggestion.

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## INTRODUCTION

We face many global challenges, such as climatic change, natural disasters, pandemics, environmental issues, and economic crises. They are familiar problems which were addressed in the conferences and meetings of world leaders over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Science and technology are rapidly developing that meet human's multi-dimensional needs and greed regardless of the destruction of the earth and over-consuming money for them.<sup>2</sup> Even the world's leaders have been spending a large amount of expense on searching for the cause of the challenge, but it has not been unsolved and even gets worse every day. From the Buddhist perspective, we will realise the cause of today's global warming, which is rooted in

people's cravings. In the *Aggañña Sutta*, the Buddha described how craving affects people and stops their cravings from the cosmological perspective.<sup>3</sup>

### Buddhist cosmology in *Aggañña Sutta*

Cosmology is the most exciting field for the discovery of the sciences and technology at present. Scientists study on cosmos to discover the origin of the planet and beings and whether there are one or many planets like our earth in this universe. They also do not believe the myth stories that describe cosmology in religious texts and provide some theories of the original planet and beings. The scientists give the theories of the original planet and beings to answer a big question: where do people come from? or where do people go after this life?

In the *Cūḷamālukya Sutta*, the Buddha did not answer the unseen questions of *Mālunkyaṅputta*, which relate the soul to the body and the universe, because those questions waste our time and do not bring benefit for the ascetics life.<sup>4</sup> The unseen questions of *Mālunkyaṅputta*,

<sup>1</sup>On 31 October – 12 November in Glasgow-London, the Conference of the Parties (COP26) will debate global issues with 20,000 government leaders worldwide. The New York Times journalist, Catrin Einhorn has said that the meeting will be less attended to the biodiversity crisis and will wake up too late with the environmental and economic problems. At the same time, they put aside Biodiversity in this conference of the United Nations. In the New York Times (The New York Times), they are accessed 20 October 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/by/catrin-einhorn>.

<sup>2</sup>Antonio Guterres - the Secretary-General 76th of the United Nations, pointed out all the issues in the world on 21 September 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 410-415.

<sup>4</sup>Bodhi and Ñānamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya: Translation from the Pāli* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 533.

indicatethat the concept of the cosmological myth arose before Buddhism. In the Early Vedic period, described in the Rg Veda verses. In the Hymn of the Cosmic Man of Rg Veda (X, 90, verse. 12), it is mentioned that “the *Brahmaṇa* was born from the mouth, *Kṣatriya* from the arms, *Vaiśya* from the thighs and *Śūdra* from the feet of the Cosmic Man.”<sup>5</sup>

However, the Buddha gave his knowledge about the contraction and expansion of this world to his disciple - *Vāseṭṭha*, in the *Aggāṇṇa Sutta* as below:

There comes a time, *Vāseṭṭha*, when, sooner or later, after a long period, this world contracts. At a time of contraction, beings are mostly born in the *Ābhassara Brahmā* world. And there they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they stay like that for a very long time. But sooner or later, after a very long period, this world begins to expand again. At a time of expansion, the beings from the *Ābhassara Brahmā* world, having passed away from there, are mostly reborn in this world (earth). Here they dwell, mind-made, feeding on delight, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious – and they stay like that for a very long time.<sup>6</sup>

This passage gives the idea of the cycle of rebirth, known as ‘*Samsāra*,’ and also implies a concept of cosmology. It is worldwide to examine the rebirth cycle through the Buddha's teaching. The views of the cycle of rebirths of Peter Harvey and Rupert Gethin are connected to Buddhist cosmology about the development of the stages of *Jhānas* (meditation)<sup>7</sup>. But Rupert Gethin pointed out the problems of the cycle of rebirths by connecting *Nikāya* texts to *Abhidharma*.<sup>8</sup> There are thirty-one realms of the levels of rebirth, which are divided into three types as follows: The world of the five senses, which is known as the Sense-sphere Mind includes eleven realms such as Hell Beings; Animals; Hungry Ghosts; Jealous Gods; Human Beings; The gods of the Four Kings; The Thirty-Three gods; The Yama gods; The Contented; Those who Delight in Creation; The Masters of the Creations of Others. The world of the pure form is known as Form-sphere Mind. It includes sixteen realms related to four *Jhānas*, from the Brahmā's Retinue realm to The Supreme realm. The formless world is known as the Formless-sphere Mind, which includes four realms: Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Nothingness, and Neither Consciousness nor Unconsciousness.<sup>9</sup> The *Aggāṇṇa Sutta* also mentions how beings existed in this world as it describes that “after a very long time, ‘savoury earth’ spread out of the waters and its skin looks like hot milk as it cools. It was endowed with colour like fine ghee and smell and state which were very sweet, like pure wild honey. Then, some beings with greedy nature to state the ‘savoury earth’ and craves it. As a result of eating, those beings lose their self-luminosity, become more solid and develop into two sexes – male and female.”<sup>10</sup> This passage describes beings that arose from the craving of which the unwholesome *Dhamma* occurred.

**The Craving:** Craving has come from the Sanskrit term ‘*trṣṇā*’ and the Pāli term ‘*taṇhā*.’ Sometimes, the craving is understood in literature with the near-synonym ‘thirst’ or ‘greed.’ It is defined as the desire is not separated from feelings of pleasure, the desire is separated from feelings of pain, and the desire feelings of neutrality

are not diminishing.<sup>11</sup> According to the early Buddhist analysis of existence, the craving is the root cause of the *samsāric* predicament and perhaps its role as the main factor responsible for the arising of suffering in the second noble truth.<sup>12</sup> However, craving can be divided into three types: craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence. The desire for sensual pleasures could manifest in the relation between the six senses and the six modes of craving for each object and could list together with the craving for non-existence.<sup>13</sup> For an explanation of craving for existence, one may crave to become some kind of another person. And craving for non-existence, one can believe that I will have an immortal soul and exist after the death of this body. According to Buddhist thought, all these feelings, desires, and beliefs are the products of the working of craving.<sup>14</sup> In the *Aggāṇṇa Sutta*, the Buddha teaches about moral virtue when the unwholesome *Dhamma* arises among the beings. The unwholesome *Dhamma* is a cravingly nature of being, which is the cause of *dukkha*, and being should control one's craving through action, speech, and thought.

Likewise, a *Khattiya* who has led a bad life in body, speech and thought, and who has wrong view will, in consequence of such wrong views and deeds, at the breaking up of the body after death, be reborn in a state of loss, an ill fate, the downfall, the state-hell. So too will a Brahmin, a *Vessa* or a *Sudda*. Likewise, a *Khattiya* who has led a good life in body, speech and thought, and who has the right view will, in consequence of such right views and deeds, at the breaking up of the body after death, be reborn in a good destiny, in a heaven-state. So too will a Brahmin, a *Vessa* or a *Sudda*.<sup>15</sup>

From those passages, they indicate one who will be get suffering and bad state with his/her bad deeds in the body, speech, and thought. On the other hand, the Buddha also describes a moral life in that one takes a thing that is not given, sexual misconduct, tells lies, indulges in slander, and harsh speech or idle chatter, then he/she will be blamed by wise people.<sup>16</sup> Those precepts are the basis of moral life for everyone in society.

António Guterres (the United Nations secretary-general) addresses his opinions about moral life in the debate of the United Nations General Assembly's 76<sup>th</sup> session:

We passed the science test. But we are getting an F in Ethics. Excellencies, the climate alarm bells are also ringing at a fever pitch. The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was a code red for humanity. We see the warning signs in every continent and region. Scorching temperature. Shocking biodiversity loss. Polluted air, water and natural space. And Climate-related disasters at every turn. As we recently saw, not even this city – the world's financial capital – is immune. Climate scientists tell us it's not too late to keep the 1.5-degree goal of the Paris Climate Agreement alive.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the craving is a cause of suffering and influences the moral virtue of our life. If we are unaware of the rising craving, it will collapse a basic virtue of being. As a result, we destroy our lives or society and spoil our planet's environment. There is a way to control our cravings by practicing meditation.

<sup>5</sup>Wendy Doniger, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology: One Hundred and Eight Hymns, Selected, Translated and Annotated* (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 31.

<sup>6</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 409-10.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32.

<sup>8</sup>Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 116-17.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 35-6.

<sup>10</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 410.

<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 2262.

<sup>12</sup><https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/encyclopedia-entries/tanha.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63.

<sup>14</sup>Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 70.

<sup>15</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 414-15.

<sup>16</sup>Maurice Walshe, 408.

<sup>17</sup>"Secretary-General's Address to the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly Secretary-General," United Nations (United Nations), accessed 14 October 2021, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/259283>.

**The Meditation:** In the *Aggañña Sutta*, the Buddha says: “A *Khattiya* who is restrained in body, speech, and thought, and who has developed the seven requisites of enlightenment (mindfulness, discrimination of states, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity), will attain to *Parinibbāna* in this very life. So too will a Brahmin, a *Vessa* or a *Sudda*.”<sup>18</sup> There are two ways of practising meditation in the meditative system: ‘calm’ (*Samatha*) and ‘insight’ (*Vipassana*). Meditation includes Mindfulness and Concentration, which help one attain *Arahant* for one who practices meditation. During practicing meditation, the meditator should be conscious and aware of the function internally of the body.

The practising of calm meditation is a process of counteracting the mind to seek out the senses’ objects restlessly. This technique is accomplished by the rest of the mind on the object of perception and is termed ‘concentration’ (*samādhi*), which is understood of all thought. In the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, the Buddha taught how to concentrate on Breathing as:

Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in long, he understands: ‘I breathe in long;’ or breathing out long, he understands: ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, he understands: ‘I breathe in short;’ or breathing out short, he understands: ‘I breathe out short.’<sup>19</sup>

When continuously practising and developing meditation, this state of mind will bring the mind into the condition of stillness and quite different states of consciousness known as the ‘*Samādhi*’ or the ‘*Jhanās*’.<sup>20</sup> In the discourse between the Buddha with *Venāgapura*, the Buddha described the four *jhanā* follow:

- Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I enter and dwell in the first *jhanā*, which consists of rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by thought and examination.
- With the subsiding of thought and examination, I enter and dwell in the second *jhanā*, which has internal placidity and unification of mind and consists of rapture and pleasure born of concentration, without thought and examination.
- With the fading away as well of rapture, I dwell equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, I experience pleasure with the body; I enter and dwell in the third *jhanā* of which the noble one declares: ‘He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.’
- With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and dejection, I enter and dwell in the four *jhanā*, neither painful nor pleasant, which has purification of mindfulness by equanimity.<sup>21</sup>

The description above indicates that *jhanā* is for the development of concentration and calming the mind by suppressing hindrances. However, it does not eradicate the fetters, not help one to be free from defilement and liberation. It is the foundation for stepping into the wisdom development that is the *Vipassana* meditation. After the mind is completed by attaining the fourth *jhanā*, one practising meditation can fully on the development of insight meditation and the wisdom or the knowledge of the truths. The insight meditation goals try to understand the three aspects of natural things like impermanent (*anicca*), non-self (*anatta*), and unpleasure or suffering (*dukkha*). The culmination of calm meditation is a state of mind with completerest

and ease. The culmination of insight meditation is also like a state of calm meditation, but the difference between them is the final stage of insight meditation which settles the mind in the direct seeing of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.<sup>22</sup> However, in the *Vipassana* meditation, the Seven Enlightenment factors in the *Anāpāna Sati Sutta* explain how to play a part in the Four Foundation of Mindfulness.<sup>23</sup> Both *Buddhaghosa* and Rupert Gethin explained the insight meditation with two kinds such as the seven stages of Purification and ten insight knowledge:

Purification	Knowledge
1. Of conduct	1. Of seeing the rise and fall
2. Of consciousness	2. Of contemplating breaking up
3. Of view	3. In the presence of danger
4. By crossing over doubt	4. Of contemplating distress
5. By knowing and seeing what path is and not path	5. Of contemplating disenchantment
6. By knowing and seeing the way	6. Of desire for release
7. By knowing and seeing	7. Of contemplating with discernment
	8. Of equanimity about Formations
	9. Of the lineage conforming
	10. Of the path and fruit of stream attainment <sup>24</sup>

Thus, meditation is a way of applying the *Dhamma* in practice; only then can one eliminate the suffering through the control of craving. The *Dhamma* is the best thing for human beings who want to understand the true nature of *dukkha* – ‘craving completely’. The *Dhamma* also leads humans to attain the *Nibbāna* and become *Arahant*.<sup>25</sup> When one practises meditation, some questions will occur in his/her mind. For example, when one learns Buddhist teachings and understands the concept of impermanence (*anicca*), one would not overuse the material comforts that burden. One also inquires self whether the efficient way of using material rather than overusing the material is according to the demand of a luxurious lifestyle. The questioning allows one to reflect on his/her state of mind as a craving so that it can be controlled. Therefore, Buddha encourages that mendicant should have a simple life: “Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or the root of a tree or an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.”<sup>26</sup> This indicates that a simple life can yield benefits to one’s state of mind as he/she can be mindful and reflect on his/her state of mind and the body’s condition through breathing in and out.

## CONCLUSION

We have not only heard the environmental situations of this world getting worse but also suffered from global warming leading to natural disasters, environmental change, and climatic change. Besides that crisis, we have faced a serious collapse in moral virtue because the over-exploitation of raw material has thrown off the previously delicate balance between all living systems. Since Buddhism implies human craving is one of the major roots causing global warming, those individuals who understand Buddhist teachings should hold their own’s responsibility for reconstructing the human’s global home by less exploiting the environment by reducing the use of raw materials and natural resources to satisfy one’s luxurious lifestyle. This idea will protect our environment from further damage by

<sup>22</sup>Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 188.

<sup>23</sup>Bodhi and Nānamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya: Translation from the Pāli* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 941-48.

<sup>24</sup>Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 193.

<sup>25</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 415.

<sup>26</sup>Bodhi and Nānamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya: Translation from the Pāli* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 948.

<sup>18</sup>Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 415.

<sup>19</sup>Bodhi and Nānamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya: Translation from the Pāli* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 145-46.

<sup>20</sup>Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 176.

<sup>21</sup>Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 274.

environmentallyfriendly practices such as mindfulness on recycling products rather than the malpractice of littering and sharing transportation so less exhaustion is excreted into the environment.

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