# SN 12.66 — SN 12:66 Scrutiny | Sammasa Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

## Text

Scrutiny

Sammasa Sutta (SN 12:66)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in the Kuru country. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks.”

“Lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, have you conducted an inner scrutiny?”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, "I, lord, have conducted an inner scrutiny."

"And how have you conducted an inner scrutiny, monk?"

Then the monk answered, but the way he answered didn't satisfy the Blessed One.

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "Now is the time, Blessed One! Now is the time, One Well-Gone, for the Blessed One to describe inner scrutiny. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it."

"In that case, Ānanda, listen & pay careful attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: " There is the case, monks, where a monk, when scrutinizing, conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: 'The many-faceted, multifarious stress of aging-&-death that arises in the world has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play?' As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: 'This many-faceted, multifarious stress of aging-&-death that arises in the world has acquisition as its cause, acquisition as its origination, acquisition as its source, acquisition as that which brings it into play. When acquisition exists, aging-&-death exists. When acquisition doesn't exist, aging-&-death doesn't exist.' He discerns aging-&-death, he discerns the origination of aging-&-death, he discerns the cessation of aging-&-death, he discerns the path of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of aging-&-death, and he is one who practices in accordance with it. This, monks, is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of stress, for the cessation of aging-&-death.

"Further, when scrutinizing, he conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: 'The many-faceted, multifarious stress of acquisition that arises in the world has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play?' As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: 'This many-faceted, multifarious stress of acquisition that arises in the world has craving as its cause, craving as its origination, craving as its source, craving as that which brings it into play. When craving exists, acquisition exists. When craving doesn't exist, acquisition doesn't exist.' He discerns acquisition, he discerns the origination of acquisition, he discerns the cessation of acquisition, he discerns the way of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of acquisition, and he is one who practices in accordance with it. This, monks, is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of stress, for the cessation of acquisition.

"Further, when scrutinizing, he conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: 'And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when settling, does it settle?' As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: 'Whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world: It's here where this craving, when arising, arises. It's here where, when settling, it settles.'1

“‘And what seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world. It’s here where this craving, when arising, arises. It’s here where, when settling, it settles.

“‘The ear…. The nose…. The tongue…. The body….

“‘The intellect seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world. It’s here where this craving, when arising, arises. It’s here where, when settling, it settles.

“Monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past who saw whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They made craving grow. Those who made craving grow made acquisition grow. Those who made acquisition grow made stress grow. Those who made stress grow were not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They were not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the future who will see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They will make craving grow. Those who will make craving grow will make acquisition grow. Those who will make acquisition grow will make stress grow. Those who will make stress grow will not be released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They will not be released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They make craving grow. Those who make craving grow make acquisition grow. Those who make acquisition grow make stress grow. Those who make stress grow are not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Suppose, monks, that there were a beverage in a bronze cup—consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison—and a man were to come along: scorched from the heat, oppressed by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. They would say to him, ‘Here, my good man, is a beverage for you in a bronze cup: consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison. Drink it, if you want. Having been drunk, it will please you with its color, smell, & flavor. But having drunk it, you will—from that cause—meet with death or death-like suffering.’ He would drink it quickly without reflection—he wouldn’t reject it—and from that cause he would meet with death or death-like suffering.

“In the same way, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past… future… present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety, make craving grow. Those who make craving grow make acquisition grow. Those who make acquisition grow make stress grow. Those who make stress grow are not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I tell you, from

suffering & stress.

“But, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past who saw whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandoned craving. Those who abandoned craving abandoned acquisition. Those who abandoned acquisition abandoned stress. Those who abandoned stress were released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They were released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the future who will see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They will abandon craving. Those who will abandon craving will abandon acquisition. Those who will abandon acquisition will abandon stress. Those who will abandon stress will be released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They will be released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandon craving. Those who abandon craving abandon acquisition. Those who abandon acquisition abandon stress. Those who abandon stress are released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Suppose, monks, that there were a beverage in a bronze cup—consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison—and a man were to come along: scorched from the heat, oppressed by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. They would say to him, ‘Here, my good man, is a beverage for you in a bronze cup: consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison. Drink it, if you want. Having been drunk, it will please you with its color, smell, & flavor. But having drunk it, you will—from that cause—meet with death or death-like suffering.’ The thought would occur to that man, ‘It’s possible to subdue this thirst of mine with water, with whey, with salted porridge, or with bean-broth. I certainly shouldn’t drink that which would be for my long-term harm & suffering.’ Having reflected on that beverage in the bronze cup, he wouldn’t drink it. He would reject it. And so from that cause he would not meet with death or death-like suffering.

“In the same way, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past… future… present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandon craving. Those who abandon craving abandon acquisition. Those who abandon acquisition abandon stress. Those who abandon stress are released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

Note

1. The wording of this passage follows the wording of the discussion of craving found under the heading of the four noble truths in DN 22. The verb “settles” here (nivīsati) can also be translated as “gets entrenched.”

It’s interesting to note that this sutta uses a vocabulary that is uncommon in its saṁyutta. To begin with, it provides an abbreviated version of dependent co-arising: the six sense media, craving, acquisition, aging-&-death. This skips over the steps of contact and feeling, which are usually listed between the six sense media and craving, and conflates the steps normally listed between craving and aging-&-death—clinging, becoming, and birth—into one: acquisition.

Secondly, it refers to the fourth noble truth not with its common name—the path of practice leading to the cessation of x (x-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā)—but as the path of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of x (x-nirodha-sāruppa-gāminī paṭipadā).

Finally, the use of the terms related to “acquisition” (upadi) and “entrenchment” (nivesana) is more typical of the Sutta Nipāta than of the Saṁyutta Nikāya. Whether this is a sign of the relatively early or late date of this sutta, or simply a sign that the Buddha was somewhat flexible in his vocabulary depending on his audience, no one knows.

The connection between acquisition and stress is also highlighted in MN 105, which in addition contains another variation of the simile of the poisoned beverage.

## Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 22; MN 105