14

(Kamma) Nidāna Sutta
The Discourse on the Causes (of Karma) | A 3.33/1:134-136
Theme: The seed-like nature of karma
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 The three roots
As unawakened beings, all our actions are motivated by psychological “roots” (mulā). In the most systematized Abhidhamma, they are also called “causes” (hetu), or conditions, or more specifically, root condition (hetu paccayā). They are the conditions whose presence determine the actual moral quality of a volitional state (cetanā), and the consciousness (citta) and associated mental factors (cetasika). In short, the roots decide the moral quality of karma.

The roots are traditionally given as two triads, one wholesome or good (kusala) and one unwholesome or bad (akusala). They are listed as follows:

<table>
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<th>Unwholesome roots (akusala,mula)</th>
<th>Wholesome roots (kusala,mula)</th>
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<td>(1) greed (lobha)</td>
<td>(4) non-greed (alobha) = charity</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) hate (dosa)</td>
<td>(5) non-hate (adosa) = lovingkindness</td>
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<td>(3) delusion (moha)</td>
<td>(6) non-delusion (amoha) = wisdom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

According to the Aṇṇa,titthiyā Sutta (A 3.68), the three unwholesome roots arise and are reinforced by unwise attention (ayoniso manasikāra), that is, not seeing the true nature of reality (especially not seeing impermanence), thus:

Greed arises and proliferates through unwise attention to “a beautiful sign” (subha,nimitta). Hate arises and proliferates through unwise attention to “a repulsive sign” (patigha,nimitta). Delusion arises and proliferates through unwise attention (ayoniso manasikāra). Thus, greed (lobha or rāga) comprises all degrees of attractedness towards an object from the faintest trace of a longing thought up to grossest egoism, whilst hatred (dosa) comprises all degree of “repulsion” from the faintest trace of ill-humour up to the highest pitch of hate and wrath.

(Buddhist Dictionary: mulā)

According to the (Akusala) Kamma Nidāna Sutta (A 10.174), the ten unwholesome course of action—taking of life, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech, covetousness, ill will and wrong view—are all caused by greed, or by hate, or by delusion, and as such are sources of the karmic chain (kamma,nidāna,sambhava). Only when they are destroyed will the karmic process end or suffering ends.

1 “The 3 wholesome (kusala) roots, greedlessness etc, though expressed in negative terms, nevertheless possess a distinctly positive character, just as is also often the case with negative terms in other languages: eg the negative term ‘immortality,’ which has a decidedly positive character.” (BDict: mulā). For a good introduction on this teaching, see Nyanaponika 1978.
2 Incl renunciation (nekhamma) and detachment (anālaya).
3 A 3.68.2/1:200 = SD 16.4.
4 On “signs” (nimitta), see Nivaraṇa Pahāna Vagga (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 (5).
5 On “unwise attention” (ayoniso manasikāra), see Nivaraṇa Pahāna Vagga (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 (6).
6 Clearly here egotism is meant. The Oxford University regards this as a “classic error”: “egotism and egotism: it is egotism, not egotism, that means ‘excessive conceit or self-absorption’; egotism is a less common and more technical word, for an ethical theory that treats self-interest as the foundation of morality”; http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/classicerrors/confused/. Some dictionary of modern English usage (eg the New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary), however, nowadays accept either as giving the sense of egotism.
7 (Akusala) Kamma Nidāna S (A 10.174/5/261 f) = SD 18.8; also SD 15.11(1). For a more detailed exposition, see Mūla S (A 3.69/1:201-205) = SD18.2.
In the Channa Paribbājaka Sutta (A 3.71), Ānanda admonishes the wanderer Channa how, under the power of the three unwholesome roots:

one thinks of harming oneself, of harming others, and of harming both;

one misconducts oneself through the body, through speech, and through the mind;

one does not understand what is beneficial or purposeful for oneself, for others, or for both—indeed, the three unwholesome roots “blinds one, makes one sightless, makes one ignorant, destroys wisdom, invites trouble, does not bring about nirvana.”

The Nivaraṇa Pahāna Sutta (A 1.2) goes on to mention greed and hate—as sense-desire (kāmacchanda) and ill will (uyāpāda) respectively—to be the first two mental hindrances to mental focus and clarity—the key mental hindrances. When these two hindrances are overcome, the rest are easily overcome.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), the presence or absence of the three unwholesome roots forms a part of the contemplation of mind (cittānupassanā).

The very succinct Ti, dhamma Pahanīya Sutta (A 6.107) summarizes how the three unwholesome roots are to be overcome, thus:

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SD 4.14(1)  

Ti, dhamma Pahanīya Sutta  
The Discourse on the Three Things to be Abandoned | A 6.107/3:445 f  
Theme: The three unwholesome roots are to be abandoned

1 Bhikshus, there are these three things (dhammā). What are the three?
2 Lust (rāga), hate (dosa), delusion (moha). These are the three things.

Bhikshus, for the abandoning of these three things, three things should be cultivated. What are the three.
3 For the abandoning of lust, the foul [the impure] (asubha) should be cultivated.

For the abandoning of hate, lovingkindness (mettā) should be cultivated.
For the abandoning of delusion, wisdom (paññā) should be cultivated.

Bhikshus, for the abandoning of these three things, these three things should be cultivated.

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2 The (Kamma) Nidāna Sutta

The (Kamma) Nidāna Sutta may be very short but is nonetheless very profound and important as it gives one of the most fundamental teachings on karma. There are three unwholesome roots of karma (greed, hate and delusion) and three wholesome roots (non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion). In positive terms, the three wholesome roots are renunciation (cāga = nekkhamma), lovingkindness (mettā) and wisdom (paññā) (D 3:275).

However, as technical terms, non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion should be understood not as ordinary wholesome roots of action, but in connection with karma “that is neither black nor white, with

9 See Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas = SD 13.1(5D.2), and also Nivaraṇa Pahāna Vagga (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 (4).
10 See Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas = SD 13.1(4.2).
11 See Satipaṭṭhāna S (M 10.34/1:59) = SD 13.3.
12 See Satipaṭṭhāna S (M 10.10/1:57) = SD 13.3(4).
neither black or white results, which leads to the destruction of karma” ((Vitthāra) Kamma Sutta, A 4.232), that is, the volition in the cultivation of the noble eightfold path.\(^\text{13}\)

Mundane actions arising from the three wholesome roots (renunciation, lovingkindness, wisdom), although regarded as “white karma with white results” (id) are still subject to arising again in the future, that is, they bring pleasurable fruits and good rebirths, and as such ties one down to the cycle of life and death.

The (Kamma) Nidāna Sutta contains the well-known simile of the seeds, that is, karma are like seeds that sprout or do not sprout when the conditions are right.\(^\text{14}\) The Aṅguttara Commentary explains the second simile (of the destroyed seeds) by saying that the seeds here represent the wholesome karma and unwholesome karma. The man who burns the seeds is the meditator and the fire is the knowledge of the noble path. The burning of the seeds is like the destruction of the defilements on attaining path-knowledge. The reduction of the seeds to ashes is like when the five aggregates are cut off at the root (as in the arhat who is no longer motivated by craving). When the ashes are winnowed away in the wind or carried away by the stream, it is like when the five aggregates utterly cease (with the arhat’s parinirvana), never again to arise in the cycle of life. (AA 2.223)

The closing stanza summarizes the profound teachings of the prose text. The essence of this teaching is that one who understands the true nature of karma and acts accordingly would at worst only face their results in this life without bringing them over into the next life.\(^\text{15}\) In the Brahma, vihāra Sutta, the liberation of mind (ceto, vimutti)\(^\text{16}\) leads the noble disciple to understand that

> Whatever evil deed I did before with this physical body, their result will be experienced here and they will not follow me.\(^\text{17}\) (A 10.208.2/5:299)

This is referred to as “limited karma” (pamāña, katan kammān)\(^\text{18}\) in the Tevijja Sutta (D 13.77/1:251) and the Saṅkhā (dhamma) Sutta (S 42.8/4:322), which is also mentioned in the Brahma, vihāra Sutta (A 10.208):

> (Having reached dhyana,) he knows, ‘Formerly my mind was limited and undeveloped, but now my mind is boundless and well developed. Any limited karma that was done neither remains nor persists there.’ (A 10.208.1/5:299)


\(^{14}\) For a comparison of consciousness to seeds, see Bija S (S 22.54/3:54 f). For a poetic version of the vegetation simile, see Sela S (S 5.9/1:134c = v550). For a comparison of consciousness to a seed, see Bhava S (A 3.76/1:223 f). For similar parables (fields and seeds), see Kūta, danta S (D 5/1:127-149) = SD 22.8 Intro (3.2).

\(^{15}\) See a related and important discussion in Saṅcetanika S (A 10.206/5:292) = SD 3.9.

\(^{16}\) “Liberation of mind” is so called because the mind is liberated, by way of concentration, from lust. Liberation by wisdom is so called because the mind is liberated, normally through insight, from ignorance. When they are coupled and described as canker-free (anāsava), they jointly result from the destruction of the mental influxes by the supramundane path of arhathood.

\(^{17}\) Comy says “It will be a karma ripening in this existence (dīthya, dhamma, vedanīya, kamma). They will not follow one to the next existence because the ripening in the next existence (upapajjā, vedanīya) has been cut off through the practice of lovingkindness. This passage should be understood as a reflection made by a streamwinner or a once-returner.”

\(^{18}\) “Limited karma,” pamāña, katan kammān, as in Tevijja S (D 13.77/1:251), Saṅkhā (dhamma) S (S 42.8/4:322) & Brahma, vihāra S (A 10.108.3c/5:299). Comys say that “limited karma” refers to sense-sphere karma (kāma-vacara, kamma), and “unlimited karma” (appamāña, katan kammān) refers to form-sphere karma. It is called ‘limited’ because it is done by transcending the limit; for, it is developed by way of specified, unspecified and directional pervasion” (DA 2:406; MA 3:450; SA 3:106; AA 5:77; ItA 1:92). SA on Saṅkhā (dhamma) S explains that “In the case of (simple) lovingkindness, this can be interpreted either as access concentration or as dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘liberation of mind’ (ceto, vimutti) it definitely means dhyana (jhāma)” (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the “liberation of mind by lovingkindness” at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm. See Vism 9.49-58/309-311 (S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73).
3 Karma as seeds and fruits

Some of our karma ripen in this life, some in a future life. As such, it is often compared to seeds, which, given the right conditions, would fruit, that is, take effect, which in turn become causal conditions for new karma, and so on. In the case of bad karma, these “right conditions” are of course greed (and delusion), hate (and delusion), or delusion itself. It should be noted here that both greed and hate are always tainted by some level of delusion, for which reason they are “bad.”

Karma works exponentially (it can multiply in leaps and bounds), fuelled by habitual tendencies. It is not like if you kill ten cockroaches you will be reborn ten times as a cockroach. Rather, each time you commit an unwholesome act (such as consciously killing), the likelihood for you to kill again (or be violent in some way) is reinforced. This sort of explanation is useful in that one does not need to speculate about future lives, but to work at spiritually elevating the present one.

According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, the seeds here represent the wholesome and the unwholesome karma. The person who burns them with fire (agginā dahana, puriso) represents the meditator (yog-āvacara). The fire represents the knowledge of the noble path. The time when the person burns up the seeds is like when the meditator burns up the defilements with path-knowledge. The time when the seeds have been reduced to ashes is like the time when the five aggregates remains, but are cut off at the root (that is, during the arhat’s life, when they are no longer fed by craving). The time when the ashes have been winnowed in the wind or washed away by a stream, and can no longer grow, is like the time when the five aggregates utterly cease (with the arhat’s parinirvana) and never again become manifest in samsara. (AA 2:223)

In Buddhism, the result of karmic acts are called phala (“fruit”) or vipāka (“result”). Although in modern Buddhism, the two terms are generally used as if synonymously, they have important and interesting differences in the early texts. The more general term is phala which has the following senses:

1. (lit) fruit (of trees, etc);21 the verb here is phalati, “it splits, bursts open” (intransitive) (A 1:77); the same verb phalati also means “it ripens” (V 2:108; J 3:251; PvA 185).

2. (fig) fruit, fruition, result; as a technical term this refers to the “path” (maggā) and the progressive attainments (“fruition”), that is, the paths and fruitions, respectively of streamwinning, of once-return, of non-return and of arhathood; these attainers are commonly called “the eight noble individuals” (atthāriya purisa,puggalā)22; in fact, in the Commentaries, these states are called ariya,phala (“the noble fruit”).23 The Buddhist Dictionary defines this term (following the Abhidhamma tradition) as:

   “it denotes those moments of supramundane consciousness which flash forth immediately after the moment of path-consciousness [sv ariya,puggala] and which, till the attainment of the next higher path, may during the practice of insight [sv vipassana] still recur innumerable times. If thus repeated, they are called the ‘attainment of fruition’ (phala,saṁ-patti), which is explained in detail in Vism ch 23.” (BDict: phala)

3. (fig) fruit, fruition, result, consequence, that is, karmic result (in general).

4. (fig) blessing, benefit, as in the Sāmañña,phala Sutta, “the Discourse on the Fruits of Reclusship.”

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19 It is important to understand here “seeds” is just an imagery, an idea, or model, used to help visualize or internalize the potential nature of karma to become bigger than what it originally is. Karma may also be compared to energy, but unlike energy, karma cannot be measured. See Gethin 1998:222 f.

20 On why it is advantageous to believe in karma and rebirth, see Kesa,puttiya S (A 3.65.15b-16/1:192) = SD 35.4a.

21 D 1:101; Sn 239; J 3:40; Tha 490.

22 M 7.7/1:37; A 6.10/3:286; cf Sn 227ab.

23 DhA 1:230, 3:159; Vism 669, 702.
4 Karma: two kinds or three kinds?

In §1b of the (Kamma) Nidāna Sutta (A 3.33), we see the phrase diṭṭh’ eva dhamme uppajjān vā appear vā pariyaṭṭye referring to the kinds of karma in temporal terms of resulting (vipāka) or fruiting (phala). Buddhaghosa, in his Visuddhi,magga and Commentaries, apparently “corrects” uppajjām or uppajjām to uppajje as a tatpurusha (“that which arises in a rebirth”). Consequently, he comes up with a threefold division of karma according to the time of their ripening or fruiting, namely:

(1) karma experienced in the present life (diṭṭha,dhamma,vedaniya);
(2) karma experienced in the following life (upapaṭṭha,vadaniya); and
(3) karma experienced in a subsequent life (apara,pariyāya,vadaniya).\(^{25}\) (AA 2:210, 222)

Scholars like the German Buddhologist Oskar von Hinüber (1971) have noted that the threefold categorization of karma found in some Theravāda texts is due to the misunderstanding of the absolutive upapajja or upapajjam [1b]. The British philologist KR Norman summarizes this interesting problem, giving us this important and helpful explanation:

Sometimes the commentary explanation has had an insidious effect upon the canonical text, i.e. what was originally written in the commentary was sometimes included in the text (as “glosses”), or had an effect upon the words in the text, in that the text was changed to fit their meaning given by the commentary. It has been pointed out [Hinüber 1971: 241-249] that the threefold categorization of kamma (karma), which is found in some Theravāda canonical texts, is due to the misunderstanding of the absolutive upapajja or upapajjam.\(^{26}\) This was thought to be incorrect, and was consequently “corrected” to the “locative” upapajje. As a result of this, what had originally been a two-fold classification, i.e. “one who feels the result [of a bad deed] in the here and now or, having been reborn, in some future period” became “…in the here and now, or in (a future) rebirth, or in some future period.” This misinterpretation seems to have come into existence in a 15th century tikā on the Nettipakaraṇa, from which it was introduced into manuscripts of the Nettī itself, and then into manuscripts of the Majjhima-nikāya and the Aṅguttara-nikāya, on which the Nettī passage was based.

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Such a hermeneutical development is understandable and common in all living religions. There is always a need to systematize and explain the teachings. In fact, the Visuddhi,magga further adds a fourth category, “lapsed karma” (ahosi,kamma), quoting Paṭisambhidā,magga, “There has been (ahosi) karma, there has been no karma-result, there will be no karma-result” (Pm 2:78; Vism 19.14/601). This refers to non-existent karma, that is, those that no more bear fruit (as when one attains arhathood).\(^{27}\)

However useful such an idea may be, it should be noted that it is not attested in the early Canon. The Suttas, such as the Deva,daha Sutta (M 101), simply speaks only of two kinds of karma in terms of time of ripening or fruiting, that is,

(1) a karma “to be experienced here and now” (diṭṭha,dhamma,vedaniya) and
(2) a karma “to be experienced in another life” (samparāya,vadaniya).\(^{28}\)

\(^{24}\) A 1:134,23,28 = 135,2; 5:292,4 = 294,28 = 297,10 = 298,17 = anantare atta,bhāve, AA 5:76; Vism 19.14/601; cf upapajja,vadaniya kammā (Kvu 611,23). See also A 10.206+207 = SD 3.9.

\(^{25}\) Often apaṇa,pariyāya is confused with apaṇāpariya (from apaṇāparāṁ, “another and another, various, ever following”), which then means “a series (of rebirths)”; the locative form, apaṇāpariya, “at some later time” (KhpA 143,15) (diṭṭha,dhamma...samparāya...~). See CPD: apaṇāpariya. See also Saṃcetanika S (A 10.206) = SD 3.9 Intro (1.1.2).

\(^{26}\) The extension of an absolutive by a nasal can be found elsewhere in Pali: see Geiger 1994 §214; 2000: §215.

\(^{27}\) See Deva,daha S (M 101.20/2:221) = SD 18.4.

\(^{28}\) M 101.20/2:221 = SD 18.4.
As such, I have here, while aware of the commentarial hermeneutics, preferred the reading upapajjāṁ or uppajjāṁ (rather than vl uppajje) and rendered the passage in keeping with the Sutta tradition [1b].

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The Discourse on the Causes (of Karma)
A 3.33/1:134-136

The three unwholesome roots

[134]

1a Bhikshus, there are these three causes for the arising of karma.
What are the three?29

- **Greed (lobha)** is a cause for the arising of karma.
- **Hate (dosa)** is a cause for the arising of karma.
- **Delusion (moha)** is a cause for the arising of karma.

The 2 kinds of unwholesome karma

1b Bhikshus, an action [karma] done in greed, born in greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, ripens wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, there the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life or, having been reborn, in some future life.30

Bhikshus, an action [karma] done in hate, born in hate, caused by hate, arisen from hate, will ripen wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, there the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life or, having been reborn, in some future life.

Bhikshus, an action [karma] done in delusion, born in delusion, caused by delusion, arisen from delusion, will ripen wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, there [135] the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life or, having been reborn, in some future life.

Karma are like seeds

1c Bhikshus, just as seeds that are undamaged, not rotten, unspoiled by wind and sun, viable,31 well planted in a good field, sown in well-prepared soil—if the rainfall is right,32 bhikshus, these seeds will be able to grow, sprout and flourish.33

Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in greed, born in greed, caused by greed, arisen from greed, it will ripen wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, there the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life, or in the next life, or in a subsequent life.

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29 These three—greed (lobha), hate (dosa) and delusion (moha)—are generally called “the roots of the unwholesome” (ākusala,ālīka); see above: (1) The three roots.
30 Diṭṭh'eva dhamme upapajjāṁ vā apare vā pariyyāye. Foll the reading upapajjāṁ or uppajjāṁ (rather than vl uppajje) & Norman 1997: 166, I have here tr in keeping with the Sutta tradition. Buddhaghosa “corrects’ upapajjāṁ here and elsewhere to be a tatpurusha, as upapajje or uppajje (A 1:134,23,28 = 135,2; 5:292,4 = 294,28 = 297,10 = 298,17 = anantare atta,bhāve, AA 5:76; Vism 19.14/601); cf upapajja,vedaṇīyaṁ kammam (Kvu 611,23). Comy explains this sentence (wherever it occurs) as relating “three kinds of karma” (tīṇi kammāni, according to the time of their ripening (vipāka) or fruiting (phala) (AA 2:210, 222): see above: (4) Karma: 2 kinds or 3 kinds?
32 “Proper and timely rain,” devo ca sammā dhāraṁ, lit “right and seasonable rain.”
33 Seyyathāpi bhikkhave bījāni akhaṇḍāni apiṭūṇi avātātapa,hatāni sārādāni sukha,sayitāni sukhetve supari,kamma,kaṭāya bhūmiyā nikkhittāni, devo ca sammā dhāraṁ anuppaveccheyya, evassu tāni bhikkhave bījāni vuddhiṁ virūḷhiṁ veppulāṁ ṛpaṇeyyun. Stock: Pāyāsi S (D 23.31/2:353 f :: DA 813,21) = Bijā S (S 22.54/3:54) = Sarakāni S 2 (S 55.25/5:380) = (Kamma) Nidāna S (A 3.33/1:135).
Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in hate, born in hate, caused by hate, arisen from hate, it will ripen wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, there the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life, or in the next life, or in a subsequent life.

Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in delusion, born in delusion, caused by delusion, arisen from delusion, will ripen wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever the karma ripens, [135] there the individual feels the fruit of that karma, be it in this life, or in the next life, or in a subsequent life.

These, bhikshus, are three causes for the arising of karma.

The three wholesome roots

2a Bhikshus, there are three causes for the arising of karma.

What are the three?

- Non-greed is a cause for the arising of karma.
- Non-hate is a cause for the arising of karma.
- Non-delusion is a cause for the arising of karma.

The 3 wholesome karmas

2b Bhikshus, in the case of an action [karma] done in non-greed, born in non-greed, caused by non-greed, arisen from non-greed—once greed is gone, that karma is thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more. [34]

Bhikshus, in the case of an action [karma] done in non-hate, born in non-hate, caused by non-hate, arisen from non-hate—once hate is gone, that karma is thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

Bhikshus, in the case of an action [karma] done in non-delusion, born in non-delusion, caused by non-delusion—once delusion is gone, that karma is thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

Total destruction of karma

2c Bhikshus, just as seeds that are undamaged, not rotten, unspoiled by wind and sun, [136] viable, well planted in a good field, sown in well-prepared soil—if a person were to burn them in a fire, the fire were to reduce them to ashes, the ashes then winnowed in a strong wind, or let them be carried away by swift currents in a stream, [36] then, bhikshus, these seeds—cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to grow any more—will not be able to arise, not sprout and not flourish. [37]

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34 “Bhikshus…is gone,” yaṁ bhikkhave alobha,pakatoṁ kammaṁ alobhajaṁ amoha,nidānaṁ amoha,samudayaṁ lobhe vigate.

35 Uccinna,mūlaṁ tālā,vattu,katariṁ anabhāva,katariṁ āyatīṁ anuppāda,dhammai. The positive aspects of these 3 wholesome roots are non-greed (renunciation), non-hate (lovingkindness) and non-delusion (wisdom). On the nature of these wholesome karmic types, see above: (1) The three roots.

36 “If a person were to burn them…swift currents in a stream,” tāni puriso agginā daheyya, agginā dahitvā masiṁ kareyya, masiṁ karitvā mahāvāte v opuṇeyya, nadiyā v sīgha,sotāya pavāheyya. As in Mahā Rukkha S (S 12.-56.4/2:88).

37 In positive terms, non-greed is charity, renunciation, detachment, non-hate is lovingkindness, and non-delusion is wisdom. Here, the phrase, “will not be able to arise again, etc,” should be carefully noted: the action arisen from non-greed, non-hate, and non-delusion here should be understood, not as an ordinary wholesome action, but as “karma that is neither black nor white, with neither black nor white results, that leads to the destruction of karma,” i.e. the mind set on cultivating the noble eightfold path. The worldly karma arising from the three wholesome roots, on the other hand, brings about “white karma with white result,” bringing wholesome fruits resulting in a happy rebirth. See (Vitthāra) Kamma S (A 4.232/2:230-232) = SD 18.10.
Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in non-greed, born in non-greed, caused by non-greed, arisen from non-greed—once greed is gone, that karma is thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in non-hate, born in non-hate, caused by non-hate, arisen from non-hate—once hate has ceased, that karma is thus abandoned, like an uprooted palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in non-delusion, born in no-delusion, caused by non-delusion, arisen from non-delusion—once delusion has ceased, that karma is thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like a palm-tree stump, destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

These, bhikshus, are three causes for the arising of karma.

Not knowing the lust-born and the hate-born and delusion-born, Whatever karma that has been done, small or great Is felt right here: no other ground is found. Therefore, having known the lust-born and the hate-born and delusion-born, The monk in whom this wisdom (vijjā) has arisen abandons all suffering states.

— evam —

Bibliography


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38 According to Comy, “right here” (idh’eva) means within the stream of one’s individuality or personality (atta, bhāva), ie, one’s own cycle of rebirth. “No other ground is found” (vatthu aṇānaṁ na vijjati) means that the karmic fruit not experienced by any other person’s chain of rebirth. (AA 2:224)

39 On this teaching is referred to as pamāṇa, kataṁ kammaṁ, see Intro (2) n on “limited karma."

40 Lobhajaṃ dosajaṃ c’eva mohajaṃ cāpi viddasu | yam tena pakataṁ kammaṁ appaṁ vā yadi vā bahuṁ | idh’eva tam vedanīyaṁ vatthuṁ aṇānaṁ na vijjati | tasmā lobhañ ca dosañ ca mohañ cāpi viddasu | vijjāṁ uppādayaṁ bhikkhu sabbā duggati yo jahe ti.

41 Comy: This verse refers to the attainment of arhathood, and that an arhat, on reaching nirvana, abandons (jahe) not only bad rebirth, but also good ones (AA 2:224). Curiously, without any basis, Thanissaro, in his Access to Insight tr, renders jahe as “sheds,” noting that “The word ‘sheds’ acts as a ‘lamp’ in this verse…”: accessed 25 Dec 2006: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.033.than.html.