

## (Akusala,mūla) Añña,titthiyā Sutta

### The Discourse on Followers of Other Sects

[The nature of the 3 unwholesome roots]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.68/1:199-201)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2005

#### 1 The nature of the unwholesome roots

**1.1 BLAMEWORTHINESS.** The Añña,titthiyā Sutta (A 3.68) is closely related to the Nīvaraṇa,-pahāna Vagga (A 1.2).<sup>1</sup> While the former deals with the three unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūlā*), the latter deals with the five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇā*). The Añña,titthiyā Sutta is taught to the monks so that they are able to answer questions asked by the sectarian followers<sup>2</sup> outside the teaching. While this sutta describes the nature of the three unwholesome roots—lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)—the Nīvaraṇa,pahāna Vagga shows how the five hindrances (factors that weaken wisdom and mental focus)—sense-desire (*kāma-c,chanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*)—arise and how to abandon them. The Añña,titthiyā Sutta further describes the nature of the three unwholesome roots as follows:

Lust:	little blame,	hard to remove;
Hate:	much blame,	easy to remove;
Delusion:	much blame,	hard to remove.

The Aṅguttara Commentary to the Añña,titthiyā Sutta explains that “has little blame” (*appa,sāvajja*) means “both by way of worldly blame and by way of its (karmic) results” (*loka,vajj,vasena pi vipāka,-vajja,vasena pi*), that is, both in the worldly and the spiritual senses. It goes on to show that **lust** (*lobha*) “has little blame” (*appa,sāvajja*) by the fact that there is no social stigma to marriage, although it is rooted in sexual desire (that is, if lust remains within the moral limits) (AA 2:324). Such lust would not in itself lead to a painful rebirth in lower states. As such, it is less blameworthy in regard to karmic consequences. Lust, however, is “hard to remove” (*dandha,virāgī*) as it has deep roots in human nature, and is “as hard to remove as oily soot, and a particular attachment might follow a person even through two or three lives”<sup>3</sup> (AA 2:235).

The Aṅguttara Commentary similarly says that “much blame” (*mahā,sāvajja*) means “both by way of worldly blame and by way of its (karmic) results,” that is, both in the worldly and the spiritual senses. Both **hate** and **delusion** are regarded as blameworthy in society and have negative karmic results, as both may lead one to rebirth in painful states. **Hate**, however, is an unpleasant state of mind, and as beings naturally desire happiness, they will generally wish to abandon it. Moreover, by asking for forgiveness from those one has wronged through anger, it is easier to nullify the negative effects of anger in oneself and in others. **Delusion**, however, is usually deeply rooted in craving, wrong view and conceit, and as such will be as hard to remove as lust. (AA 2:317)

#### **1.2 THE 5 DEFILEMENTS & 12 UNWHOLESOME CONSCIOUSNESSES.**

**1.2.1 The 5 defilements.** The Piṇḍapāta Pārisuddhi Sutta (M 151) and the Vīna Sutta (S 35.246) mention the same list of five defilements, that is, desire (*chanda*), lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), and aversion (*paṭigha*).<sup>4</sup> The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that desire (*chanda*) is newly arisen weak craving (*taṇhā*) so that we are unable to deliight in it; lust (*rāga*) is strong craving arising again and again, so that we delight in it. Similarly, hate (*dosa*) is newly arisen weak anger (*kodha*) which is

<sup>1</sup> A 1.2/1:3-5 = SD 16.3.

<sup>2</sup> Añña,titthiyā; Skt *anya,tīrthikā* or *anya,tīrthyā*. The best known of these are the wanderers (*Ipāribbājakā*): see **Susīma S** (S 12.70) = SD 16.6 Intro (2).

<sup>3</sup> *Tela,masi,rāgo viya ciraṃ anubandhati, dve tīṇi bhav'antarāni gantvā pi nāpagacchatī ti dandha,virāgī.*

<sup>4</sup> M 151.8/3:294 f & S 35.246.3/4:195 respectively.

incapable of violence, etc.; aversion (*paṭigha*) is recurring strong anger that leads to violence. Delusion (*moha*) arises on account of confusion (*sammohana*). (SA 3:63)

**1.2.2 The 12 unwholesome consciousnesses.** These five defilements comprise the three unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*), and when these are included, all the subsidiary defilements are included. The five terms also imply the twelve unwholesome consciousnesses (*akusala,citta*) (id), as stated in **the Abhidhamm’attha Saṅgaha** (Abhs 1.47), namely:<sup>5</sup>

**Kāmāvacara lobha,mūla,citta**

(1) <i>Somanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,sampayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(2) <i>Somanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,sampayutta</i>	<i>sasaṅkhārika</i>
(3) <i>Somanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigatavippayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(4) <i>Somanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigatavippayutta</i>	<i>sasaṅkhārika</i>
(5) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,sampayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(6) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,sampayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(7) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,vippayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(8) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>diṭṭhigata,vippayutta</i>	<i>sasaṅkhārika</i>

**Kāmāvacara dosa,mūla,citta**

(9) <i>Domanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>paṭigha,sampayutta</i>	<i>asaṅkhārika</i>
(10) <i>Domanassa,sahagata</i>	<i>paṭigha,sampayutta</i>	<i>sasaṅkhārika</i>

**Kāmāvacara moha,mūla,citta**

(11) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>vicikicchā,sampayutta</i>
(12) <i>Upekkhā,sahagata</i>	<i>uddhacca,sampayutta</i>

English translation:

**Sense-sphere consciousnesses rooted in greed**

(1) Accompanied by joy,	associated with wrong view,	unprompted.
(2) Accompanied by joy,	associated with wrong view,	prompted.
(3) Accompanied by joy,	dissociated from wrong view,	unprompted.
(4) Accompanied by joy ,	dissociated from wrong view,	prompted.
(5) Accompanied with equanimity,	associated with wrong view,	unprompted.
(6) Accompanied with equanimity,	associated with wrong view,	unprompted.
(7) Accompanied with equanimity,	dissociated from wrong view,	unprompted.
(8) Accompanied with equanimity,	dissociated from wrong view,	prompted.

**Sense-sphere consciousnesses rooted in hate**

(9) Accompanied by displeasure,	associated with aversion,	unprompted.
(10) Accompanied by displeasure,	associated with aversion,	prompted.

**Sense-sphere consciousnesses rooted in delusion**

(11) Accompanied with equanimity,	associated with doubt.
(12) Accompanied with equanimity,	associated with restlessness.

While in the Suttas, *citta* usually means “mind,”<sup>6</sup> in the Abhidhamma, it specifically means “consciousness,” and in the countable sense. Often to avoid confusion, scholars and teachers use the anglicized

<sup>5</sup> The 12 cittas are an Abhidhamma set: see Abhidhamm’attha Saṅgaha (Abhs:SR 82 f = Abhs:WG 11-18 = Abhs:BRS 1:4-7).

<sup>6</sup> See eg, **Meditation & Consciousness** = SD 17.8c (esp 7) & **Self & Selves** = SD 26.9 (1.5.2).

term “citta” and “cittas.” In terms of its nature, the Abhidhamma classifies consciousness (*citta*), or *cittas*, into four classes: unwholesome (*akusala*), wholesome (*kusala*), resultant (*vipāka*), and functional (*kiriya*), but here we shall only look at the first, the unwholesome *cittas* of the sense-world.<sup>7</sup>

Unwholesome consciousness (*akusala citta*) is consciousness accompanied by one or another of the three unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hate and delusion. By “unwholesome” (*akusala*) here is meant “mentally unhealthy, morally blameworthy, with painful results.” “Wholesome” (*kusala*) consciousness, on the other hand, is consciousness accompanied by the wholesome roots, that is, non-greed or charity, non-hate or lovingkindness, and non-delusion or wisdom. Such a consciousness is mentally healthy, morally blameless, with pleasant results.

Both wholesome and unwholesome consciousnesses constitute *karma* or volitional action. *Cittas* or consciousnesses that arise through the ripening of karma are called “resultants” (*vipāka*). They comprise both the results of wholesome karma and of unwholesome karma. Both karma and its results are purely mental, but they can motivate and affect any of the three types of actions, mental, verbal and physical. Karma is volitional activity associated with whole or unwholesome *cittas*; its results are other *cittas* that experience the ripening of karma.

The fourth class of consciousness, according to the Abhidhamma, is called “functional” (*kiriya*; Skt *kriyā*). Such a *citta* is neither karma nor karma resultant. It is activity, but not karmically determinate, and as such is incapable of karmic results.

Resultant consciousness and functional consciousness are neither wholesome nor unwholesome. They are classified as “indeterminate” (*abyākata*), that is, in Abhidhamma terms, consciousness that cannot be determined in terms of either wholesome or unwholesome. This term is often used to describe the actions of an arhat, which are karmically indeterminate, that is, they are karmically potent and do not produce any karmic result.

## 2 Hierarchy of the unwholesome roots

Nyanaponika, in his booklet, *The Worn-out Skin*,<sup>8</sup> a commentary on the **Uraga Sutta** (Sn 1.1), says this concerning lust (*rāga*) in connection with stanza 2 of the sutta, thus:

He who cuts off entire his lust  
as entering a pond one uproots lotus plants  
—such monk gives up the Here and the Beyond,  
just as a serpent sheds it worn-out skin. (Sn 2)

Sensual lust is here compared to the lotus flower as a symbol of beauty. Over its loveliness one too easily forgets that the enchanting blossoms of sense enjoyment will soon wilt and lose their beauty and attraction. But the mere awareness of that impermanence is not enough, for it may even add to the enchantment and whet the desire to pluck the flowers of lust again and again as long as strength lasts. But desire lasts often longer than the strength to seek or obtain its fulfillment—and this is just one of the ways in which lust brings suffering and frustration.

In a single moment the roots of lust can sink deeply into man’s heart; its fine hair roots of subtle attachments are as difficult to remove as the great passions, or even more so. Therefore it was said that “greed is hard to overcome” [A 3.68.1] But the same text also says that greed “is a lesser evil” (or, literally rendered, “less blameworthy”). This statement may appear strange in view of the fact that greed (*lobha*) is one of the roots of the unwholesome or evil (*akusala-mūla*) and that it also falls under the wider-ranging term of Craving (*taṇhā*), the fundamental cause of suffering. Yet greed is “less blameworthy” than hate in all those instances where the gratification of lust does not violate basic morality and is not harmful to others, as, for instance, the enjoyment of delicious food, sex gratification within the bounds of the Third Precept, and so forth.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed study on the Abhidhamma conception of *cittas*, see *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* [Abidhamm’attha Saṅgha rev tr Bodhi] 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 1999: 23-75.

<sup>8</sup> Nyanaponika, *The Worn-out Skin*,

Nevertheless, *all* forms of lust, be they inside or outside the moral norms, are still *unwholesome* (*akusala*), as they chain man to kammic bondage and necessarily result in suffering. Therefore, for one who aspires after perfect purity and final liberation, all forms of lust, coarse or refined, are obstructions. (Nyanaponika, op cit, 1977:28 f)

Hate (*dosa*) is more blameworthy than lust and delusions because the results of a hateful act are often immediate apparently, widespread and protracted. Hate is almost always behind killing, acts of violence and life-threatening deeds. As such, hate is greatly blameworthy. However, people often quickly forget such violent acts when they are distracted by other pursuits, especially those concerning living needs, comfort and pleasure: in other words, they are more easily distracted by the drive of lust.

Delusion (*moha*) is both greatly blameworthy and hard to abandon. It is always at the root of the motivation in the breaking of the precepts, indeed in any evil unskillful act. **The Vibhaṅga Commentary**, discussing the five precepts or training rules, states:

“As to root,” killing of living beings has hate and delusion as root. Taking of the not-given sometimes has greed [lust] and delusion as root, and sometimes has hate and delusion as root. Wrong misconduct (*micchācāra*) [ie sexual misconduct] has greed and delusion as root. False speech sometimes has greed and delusion as root, and sometimes has hate and delusion as root. The drinking of strong drinks (*surā,pāna*) [ie the taking of intoxicants] has greed and delusion as root. (VbhA 382)

It is significant to note here that delusion underlies the breach of all the precepts. As long as one is still unawakened, as a rule, one’s deeds, no matter how well intended (much more so, if they are ill intended), are somehow rooted in delusion. However, the exception may be when one practises mindfulness by way of present-moment awareness. So long as one is aware of the breath during meditation, for example, to that one suppresses delusion, because one’s mind is then anchored in the reality of the moment. However, this can only be a temporary experience in the unawakened mind, since it is not always mindful and focussed.

### 3 The unwholesome roots and the mental hindrances

Lust (*rāga*) is often used as a synonym of sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*). However, **lust** here has the technical sense of a latent tendency, a dark force that lurks in the mind ready to show itself when the conditions are right. Sense-desire, as the term suggests, is the on-going habit of the individual senses to seek for their respective objects of pleasure and to reject those that are unpleasant.

Hate (*dosa*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*) are often synonyms, but hate has a broader sense as a negative rejecting force, especially towards objects that do not bring one pleasure or satisfaction. While hate can be shown towards both animate (people, animals, etc) and inanimate objects (situations, places, etc), ill will (like anger) is usually shown towards living beings.

One of the results of delusion (*moha*) is doubt (*vicikicchā*). In other words, doubt is rooted in delusion, which is itself the darkest expression of ignorance (*avijjā*). While delusion motivates one to act foolishly and rashly, doubt often prevents one from taking any wholesome action. Hence, one remains in a state of delusion. In other words, doubt in turn feeds delusion.

On the dangers of the three unwholesome roots and the need to overcome them, see **the Channa Paribbājaka Sutta** (A 3.71).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A 3.71/1:215-217 = SD 18.10;

## The Discourse on Followers of Other Sects (A 3.68/1:199-201)

### The nature of the three unwholesome roots

**1a** “Bhikshus, if followers of other sects [non-Buddhist sectarians] were to ask you thus:

‘Friends, there are these three things. What are the three?’

Lust, hate and delusion.<sup>10</sup>

These, friends, are the three things.

**1b** Friends, what is the distinction amongst these three things, what is their special feature, what is their difference?<sup>11</sup>

When asked thus, bhikshus, by the followers of other sects, how should you answer them?”

**1c** “Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning. Having heard the Blessed One, the monks would remember it.”<sup>12</sup>

“In that case, bhikshus, listen, pay careful attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante,” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

**1d** The Blessed One said this:

“If, bhikshus, followers of other sects were to ask you thus:

‘Friends, there are these three things. What are the three?’

Lust, hate and delusion.

These, friends, are the three things.

Friends, **[200]** what is the distinction amongst these three things, what is their special feature, what is their difference?

**1e** When asked thus, bhikshus, by the followers of other sects, you should answer them thus:<sup>13</sup>

**‘Lust is a small fault but slow to fade away;**

**hate is a great fault but quick to fade away;**

**delusion is a great fault and slow to fade away.’**

*rāgo kho āvuso appa,sāvajjo dandha,virāgī*

*doso mahā,sāvajjo khippa,virāgī*

*moho mahā,sāvajjo dandha,virāgī*

<sup>10</sup> These are *dosa, lobha, moha*, respectively, and are the 3 unwholesome roots (*akusala,mūla*) (D 2:275; It 45). See Introd.

<sup>11</sup> *Imesaṃ āvuso tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ ko viśeso ko adhippāyāso kiṃ nānā,karaṇaṃ ti*. Here *adhippāyāso* has vll *adhippāyoso*: see CPD: *adhippāya* (2).

<sup>12</sup> *Bhagavaṃ,mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavaṃ nettikā, bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhū vata bhante bhagavatañ-ñ’eva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitaṃ attho.Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī ti*. This is stock: **Mahā Dhamma,samādāna S** (M 46.2/1:309 f), **Vīmaṃsaka S** (M 47.3/1:317), **Naḷakapāna S** (M 68.8/1:465), **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122.19/3:115) = SD 11.4; **Bālena Paṇḍita S** (S 2:24) = SD 21.1, **Parivīmaṃsanā S** (S 12.51/2:81) = SD 11.5, **Candūpama S** (S 16.3/2:199), **Sammāsambuddha S** (S 22.58/3:66), **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:208) = SD 5.5, **Ānanda S 2** (S 36.16/4:221); A 3.68/1:199, A 8.6/4:158, A 8.83/4:338, A 9.1/4:351, A 10.58/5:106, A 11.20/5:355.

<sup>13</sup> Paraphrase: Lust is less blamable but difficult to remove; hate is more blamable but easy to remove; delusion is both more blamable and hard to remove.

### The arising of the three unwholesome roots<sup>14</sup>

2 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

(1) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **lust**<sup>15</sup> arises, and arisen lust comes to grow in abundance?’

You should reply: ‘A beautiful sign,<sup>16</sup>

Through giving unwise attention to that beautiful sign, unarisen lust arises, and arisen lust comes to grow in abundance.

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen lust arises, and arisen lust comes to grow in abundance.’

3 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

(2) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **hate**<sup>17</sup> arises, and arisen hate comes to grow in abundance?’

You should reply: ‘A repulsive sign.<sup>18</sup>

Through giving unwise attention to a repulsive sign, unarisen hate arises, and arisen hate comes to grow in abundance.

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen hate arises, and arisen hate comes to grow in abundance.’

4 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

(3) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **delusion**<sup>19</sup> arises, and arisen delusion comes to grow in abundance?’

You should reply: ‘Unwise attention.<sup>20</sup>

Through unwise attention, unarisen delusion arises, and arisen delusion comes to grow in abundance.

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen delusion arises, and arisen delusion comes to grow in abundance.’

### The abandoning of the three unwholesome roots

5 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

(1) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **lust** does not arise, and arisen lust is abandoned?’

You should reply: ‘A foul [unattractive] sign.

Through giving wise attention to that foul sign, unarisen lust does not arise, [201] and arisen lust is abandoned.

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen lust does not arise, and arisen lust is abandoned.’

6 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

<sup>14</sup> This section and the next (ie the rest of the sutta) is almost identical to **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna S** (A 1.2.1) = SD 16.3, which reads “sense-desire” (*kāma-c, chanda*) for “lust” (*rāga*) here, “ill will” (*vyāpāda*) for “hate” (*dosa*) here, and “doubt” (*vicikicchā*) for “delusion” (*moha*) here. See Intro (2).

<sup>15</sup> *Rāgo*. This statement is also found in **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna S** (A 1.2.1), where instead of *rāga*, we have *kāma-c, chanda* (sense-desire). The latter is a synonym of *rāga*.

<sup>16</sup> *Subha, nimitta*, a “**beautiful sign**” or “sign of beauty,” which refers to a sensually enticing sense-object, especially one that arouses sexual desire. See **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna Vagga** (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 Intro (5).

<sup>17</sup> *Doso*. This statement is also found in **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna S** (A 1.2.2), where instead of *dosa*, we have *vyāpāda* (ill will). The latter is a synonym of *dosa*.

<sup>18</sup> *Paṭigha, nimitta* a “repulsive sign,” which refers to unwisely attending to an unattractive aspect of a mental object. This unwise attention leads to ill will and other negative emotions. See **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna Vagga** (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 Intro (5).

<sup>19</sup> *Moha*. This statement is also found in **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna S** (A 1.2.3 = SD 16.3), where instead of *moha*, we have *vicikicchā* (doubt). The latter has its roots in *moha*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ayoniso manasikāro*, “unwise attention,” ie failure to see impermanence in an object, regarding it as being impermanent, pleasurable and having an abiding entity. See **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna Vagga** (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 Intro (6).

(2) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **hate** does not arise, and arisen hate is abandoned?’

You should reply: ‘The liberation of mind through lovingkindness.<sup>21</sup>

Through the liberation of mind through lovingkindness, unarisen ill does not arise, and arisen ill will is abandoned.

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen hate does not arise, and arisen hate is abandoned.’

7 [Now, bhikshus, if they then were to ask you thus:]

(3) ‘But, friends, what is the reason, what is the condition, that unarisen **delusion** arises, and arisen delusion is abandoned?’

You should reply: ‘Wise attention.<sup>22</sup>

Through wise attention, unarisen delusion does not arise, and arisen delusion is abandoned.’

This, friends, is the reason, the condition, that unarisen delusion does not arise, and arisen delusion is abandoned.’”

— evari —

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<sup>21</sup> *Mettā ceto, vimuttiṃ.*

<sup>22</sup> *Yoniso manasikāro*, “wise attention,” seeing the impermanent as impermanent, what is suffering as suffering, what is not self as not self, and what is foul [unattractive] as foul. See **Nivarāṇa Pahāna Vagga** (A 1.2) = SD 16.3 Intro (6).