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(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” (*mūla*). In the most systematized Abhidhamma, they are also called “causes” (*hetu*), or conditions, or more specifically, root condition (*hetu paccaya*). 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:

<u>Unwholesome roots (<i>akusala, mūla</i>)</u>		<u>Wholesome roots (<i>kusala, mūla</i>)¹</u>	
(1) greed	(<i>lobha</i>)	(4) non-greed	(<i>alobha</i>) = charity ²
(2) hate	(<i>dosa</i>)	(5) non-hate	(<i>adosa</i>) = lovingkindness
(3) delusion	(<i>moha</i>)	(6) non-delusion	(<i>amoha</i>) = wisdom

According to **the Añña,tiṭṭhiyā Sutta** (A 3.68),³ 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 unwisely attending to “a beautiful sign” (*subha, nimitta*).⁴

Hate arises and proliferates through unwisely attending to “a repulsive sign” (*paṭigha, nimitta*).

Delusion arises and proliferates through unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*).⁵

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,⁶ 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: *mūla*)

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.⁷

¹ “The 3 wholesome (*kusala*) roots, greedlessness etc, though expressed in negative terms, nevertheless possess a distinctively 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: *mūla*). For a good introduction on this teaching, see Nyanaponika 1978.

² Incl renunciation (*nekkhamma*) 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”: “**egoism** and **egotism**: it is **egotism**, not **egoism**, that means ‘excessive conceit or self-absorption’; **egoism** 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.”⁸

The **Nīvaraṇa Pahāna Sutta** (A 1.2) goes on to mention greed and hate—as sense-desire (*kāma-c, chanda*) and ill will (*vyāpāda*) respectively—to be *the first two mental hindrances* to mental focus and clarity—the key mental hindrances.⁹ When these two hindrances are overcome, the rest are easily overcome.¹⁰ In the **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), the presence or absence of the three unwholesome roots forms a part of the contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*).¹¹

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 cultivated¹².

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.

— evaṃ —

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

⁸ **Channa Paribbājaka S** (A 3.71/1:215-217) = SD 18.10.

⁹ See **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** = SD 13.1(5D.2), and also **Nīvaraṇa 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.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.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.¹⁵ In **the Brahma, vihāra Sutta**, the liberation of mind (*ceto, vimutti*)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.¹⁷ (A 10.208.2/5:299)

This is referred to as “limited karma” (*pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*)¹⁸ in **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13.77/1:251) and **the Saṅkha(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)

¹³ (Vitthāra) Kamma S (A 4.232/2:230-232) = SD 4.13.

¹⁴ For a comparison of consciousness to seeds, see **Bīja S** (S 22.54/3:54 f). For a poetic version of the vegetation simile, see **Selā 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 **Kūṭa, danta S** (D 5/1:127-149) = SD 22.8 Intro (3.2).

¹⁵ See a related and important discussion in **Sañcetanika 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 (*diṭṭha, dhamma, vedanīya, kamma*). They will not follow one to the next existence because the ripening in the next existence (*upapajja, 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,” *pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*, as in **Tevijja S** (D 13.77/1:251), **Saṅkha(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 (*kāmāvacara, kamma*),” and “unlimited karma” (*appamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*) refers to form-sphere karma. It is called ‘unlimited’ 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 Saṅkha(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 (*jhāna*)” (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,¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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 (*yogāvacara*). 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” (*magga*) 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” (*aṭṭhāriya 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 supermundane 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 *vipassanā*] still recur innumerable times. If thus repeated, they are called the ‘attainment of fruition’ (*phala, samāpatti*), 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 Recluse-ship.”

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 uppajjam vā apare vā pariyāye* referring to the kinds of karma in temporal terms of resulting (*vipāka*) or fruiting (*phala*). Buddhaghosa, in his *Visuddhi,magga* and Commentaries, apparently “corrects” *uppajjam* or *uppajjam* to *uppajje* as a *tatpurusha* (“that which arises in a rebirth”).²⁴ Consequently, he comes up with a threefold division of karma according to the time of their ripening or fruiting, namely:

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|---|---|
| (1) karma experienced in the present life | (<i>diṭṭha,dhamma,vedanīya</i>); |
| (2) karma experienced in the following life | (<i>upapajja,vedanīya</i>); and |
| (3) karma experienced in a subsequent life | (<i>apara,pariyāya,vedanīya</i>). 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, ie 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 Theravādin 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, ie “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 *ṭīkā* on the *Nettipakarāṇa*, from which it was introduced into manuscripts of the *Netti* itself, and then into manuscripts of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, on which the *Netti* passage was based. (Norman 1997: 166; emphases added)

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,

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| (1) a karma “to be experienced here and now” (<i>diṭṭha.dhamma,vedanīya</i>) and |
| (2) a karma “to be experienced in another life” (<i>samparāya,vedanīya</i>). 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,vedanīyam kammaṃ* (Kvu 611,23). See also A 10.206+207 = SD 3.9.

²⁵ Often *apara,pariyāya* is confused with *aparāpariya* (from *aparāparam*, “another and another, various, ever following”), which then means “a series (of rebirths)”; the locative form, *aparāpariye*, “at some later time” (KhpA 143,15) (*diṭṭha,dhamme...samparāye...~*). See CPD: *aparāpariyāya*. See also **Sañcetanika 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 *upapajjam* or *uppajjam* (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.

²⁹ These three—greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)—are generally called “the roots of the unwholesome” (*akusala,mūla*): see above: (1) The three roots.

³⁰ *Diṭṭh’eva dhamme uppajjam vā apare vā pariyāye*. Foll the reading *upapajjam* or *uppajjam* (rather than vl *uppajje*) & Norman 1997: 166, I have here tr in keeping with the Sutta tradition. Buddhaghosa “corrects” *upapajjam* 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,vedanīyam kammaṃ* (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?

³¹ “Viable,” *sārādāni*, (of seeds) “fresh” (D 3:354 = A3:404); fr *sārada*, “autumn.” Also fr *sāra*, “essence.”

³² “Proper and timely rain,” *devo ca sammā dhāraṃ*, lit “right and seasonable rain.”

³³ *Seyyathāpi bhikkhave bījāni akhaṇḍāni apūṭīni avātātapa,hatāni sārādāni sukha,sayitāni sukhetta supari,kamma,katāya bhūmiyā nikkhattāni, devo ca sammā dhāraṃ anuppaveccheyya, evassu tāni bhikkhave bījāni vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullāṃ āpajjeyyūṃ*. Stock: **Pāyāsi S** (D 23.31/2:353 f:: DA 813,21) = **Bīja 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*,³⁴ 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.³⁵

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, arisen from 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 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

³⁴ “Bhikshus...is gone,” *yam bhikkhave alobha, pakatam kammaṃ alobhajam amoha, nidānam amoha, samudayam lobhe vigate.*

³⁵ *Ucchinna, mūlam tālā, vatthu, katam anabhāva, katam āyatim anuppāda, dhammam.* 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 masiṃ kareyya, masiṃ karitvā mahāvāte vā opuṇeyya, nadiyā vā 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-hatred, 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,” ie 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, made destroyed so that it is unable to arise any more.

Even so, bhikshus, wherever an action is done in non-delusion, born in non-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:³⁸ no other ground is found.³⁹

Therefore, having known the lust-born and the hate-born and delusion-born,

⁴⁰The monk in whom this wisdom (*vijjā*) has arisen abandons⁴¹ all suffering states.

— evaṃ —

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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**” (*vatthum aññam 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, kataṃ kammaṃ*, see Intro (2) n on “limited karma.”

⁴⁰ *Lobhaṃ dosaṃ c’eva mohajam cāpi viddasu | yaṃ tena pakataṃ kammaṃ appaṃ vā yadi vā bahum | idh’eva taṃ vedanīyaṃ vatthum aññam na vijjati | tasmā lobhañ ca dosañ ca mohañ cāpi viddasu | vijjāṃ uppādayaṃ bhikkhu sabbā duggatiyo 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>.