AN 3.69 — Akusalamūla Sutta (Damaging & Harmful Roots)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

69. Akusalamūla Sutta (Damaging & Harmful Roots) Bhikkhus, these are the three damaging and harmful roots. What three?

Greed is a damaging and harmful root; hatred is a damaging and harmful root; delusion is a damaging and harmful root.

a. Bhikkhus, whenever one has greed, it is a damaging and a harmful state. This because, with greed as their root, one becomes cruel, and whatever that person does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it becomes damaging and harmful, producing much detrimental consequences. And when a person is overcome by greed, the mind becomes obsessed and exhausted, as he covertly seeks to inflict suffering and discontent upon others, by imprisoning, humiliating, banishing, and killing them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.” Hence, all this is truly damaging and harmful, while also producing much demerit.

Thus, born from greed, originating from greed, because of greed, damaging and harmful thoughts and their evil qualities arise and accrue in the person.

b. When one is inflamed by hatred, it is a damaging and a harmful state. This because, with hatred as their root, one becomes cruel, and whatever that person does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it becomes damaging and harmful, producing much detrimental consequences. And when a person is overcome by hatred, the mind becomes obsessed and exhausted, as he covertly seeks to inflict suffering and discontent upon others, by imprisoning, humiliating, banishing, and killing them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.” Hence, all this is truly damaging and harmful, while also producing much demerit.

Thus, born from hatred, originating from hatred, because of hatred, damaging and harmful thoughts and their evil qualities arise and accrue in the person.

c. When one is deluded through willful ignorance, it is a damaging and a harmful state. This because, with delusion as their root, one becomes cruel, and whatever that person

does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it becomes damaging and harmful, producing much detrimental consequences. And when a person is overcome by delusion, the mind becomes obsessed and exhausted, as he covertly seeks to inflict suffering and discontent upon others, by imprisoning, humiliating, banishing, and killing them, thinking: "I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself." Hence, all this is damaging and harmful, while also producing much demerit.

Thus, born from delusion, originating from delusion, because of delusion, damaging and harmful thoughts and their evil qualities arise and accrue in the person.

Bhikkhus, this kind of person is known as one who does not speak at the proper time, does not tell the truth, does not speak what is essential or beneficial, as he does not talk according to either The Dhamma or The Discipline.

And Bhikkhus, why is it that this kind of person is known as one who does not speak at the proper time, does not tell the truth, does not speak what is essential and beneficial, as he does not talk according to either The Dhamma or The Discipline?

It is because, Bhikkhus, this person covertly seeks to inflict suffering and discontent upon others, by imprisoning, humiliating, banishing, and killing them, thinking: "I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself."

And when confronted as to the true nature of his hidden evil intentions and actions, this person despises the one reproaching him and calling him out, instead of acknowledging the truth about his own evil behavior.

Thus, he does not come forward to tell the truth, nor arouses the intention or thought to get rid of that stain in his heart, while denying the validity of the reproach and accusation addressed to him, claiming them to be untrue.

Therefore, this kind of person is known as one who does not speak at the proper time, does not tell the truth, does not speak what is essential or beneficial, as he does not talk according either to The Dhamma or The Discipline.

To this end, Bhikkhus, a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of greed, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles, and fears throughout his life, and with the breakup of the body after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

Similarly, Bhikkhus, such a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of anger or hatred, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles, and fears throughout his life, and with the breakup of the body after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

And similarly, Bhikkhus, such a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of delusion, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles, and

fears throughout his life, and with the breakup of the body after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to a bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

Bhikkhus, just like a Sāla or a Dhava tree or an aspen that finds itself strangled and encroached upon by three Māluvā creepers that cause its certain destruction, in the same manner, a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of greed, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles, and fears throughout his life. And with the breakup of the body

after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to a bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

Similarly, Bhikkhus, such a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of anger or hatred, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles, and fears throughout his life, and with the breakup of the body after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to a bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

And similarly, Bhikkhus, such a person with a mind obsessed with damaging and harmful thoughts born of delusion, here and now abides in suffering, with worries, troubles and fears throughout his life, and with the breakup of the body after death, he will not be heading anywhere else other than to a bad state of rebirth, in the hell realms.

Therefore, Bhikkhus, these are the three damaging and harmful roots.

However, Bhikkhus, there are also these three beneficial and helpful roots. What three?

Non-greed is a beneficial and helpful root; non-hatred is a beneficial and helpful root; and non-delusion is a beneficial and helpful root.

a. Bhikkhus, whenever one does not have greed, it is a beneficial and a helpful state. With non-greed as their root, whatever that person does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it becomes beneficial and helpful, producing much good and favorable consequences. And when a person is thus not overcome by greed, not obsessed with greed, the mind becomes light as he lives honestly and does not seek to covertly inflict suffering and discontent upon others, nor attempts to imprison, humiliate, banish, harm or kill them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.” All this is wholesome, producing much good and favorable results.

Thus, born from non-greed, originating from non-greed, because of non-greed, many a beneficial and helpful thoughts and their lovely qualities arise and accrue in the person.

b. Bhikkhus, whenever one does not have hatred, it is a beneficial and a helpful state. With non-hatred as their root, whatever that person does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it becomes beneficial and helpful, producing much good and favorable consequences. And when a person is thus not overcome by hatred, not obsessed with hatred, the mind becomes light, as he lives honestly and does not seek to covertly inflict

suffering and discontent upon others, nor attempts to imprison, humiliate, banish, harm or kill them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.” All this is beneficial and helpful, producing much good and favorable results.

Thus, born from non-hatred, originating from non-hatred, because of non-hatred, many a beneficial and helpful thoughts and their lovely qualities arise and accrue in the person.

c. Bhikkhus, whenever one does not have delusion, it is a beneficial and a helpful state. With non-delusion as their root, whatever that person does, whether through body, speech, or mind, it

becomes beneficial and helpful, producing much good and favorable consequences. And when a person is thus not overcome by delusion, not obsessed with delusion, the mind becomes light, as he lives honestly and does not seek to covertly inflict suffering and discontent upon others, nor attempts to imprison, humiliate, banish, harm or kill them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.” All this is beneficial and helpful, producing much good and favorable results.

Thus, born from non-delusion, originating from non-delusion, because of non-delusion, many a beneficial and helpful thoughts and their lovely qualities arise and accrue in the person.

Bhikkhus, this kind of person is known as one who speaks at the proper time, tells the truth, speaks what is essential and beneficial, as he does talk according to The Dhamma and The Discipline.

And why is it, Bhikkhus, that this kind of person is known as one who speaks at the proper time, tells the truth, speaks what is essential and beneficial, as he does talk according to The Dhamma and The Discipline?

It is because he lives honestly and not seeking to covertly inflict suffering and discontent upon others, nor attempts to imprison, humiliate, banish, harm or kill them, thinking: “I am powerful, and I want to add more power to myself.”

And when confronted as to the true nature of his acts, this person does not despise the one reproaching him and thereby acknowledges his own mistakes. Thus, he comes forward to tell the truth, arousing the thought to get rid of the blemish, welcoming the reproach and accusation, while making the effort to reveal what is to be revealed.

Therefore, this kind of person is known as one who speaks at the proper time, tells the truth, speaks what is essential and beneficial, as he talks according to The Dhamma and The Discipline.

Bhikkhus, with a mind thus immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-greed, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of greed, making it like a palm

stump, destroying the need for any future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Bhikkhus, with a mind thus immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-hatred, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of hatred, making it like a palm stump, destroying the need for any future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Bhikkhus, with a mind thus immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-delusion, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of delusion, making it like a palm stump, destroying the need for future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Bhikkhus, imagine a Sāla or a Dhava tree or an aspen that was being suffocated and encroached upon by three Māluvā creepers causing its destruction, where a man comes along with a hoe and a basket and cuts the roots of the Māluvā creepers, digging them up from their roots, even down to their finest rootlets, and then uses an ax to cut them into finer and finer pieces, and later dries them up in the open air, then burns and turns them into ashes that get blown into the wind or thrown into a fast-flowing river.

In the same way, Bhikkhus, with a mind immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-greed, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of greed, making it like a palm stump, destroying the need for any future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Bhikkhus, with a mind thus immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-hatred, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of hatred, making it like a palm stump, destroying the need for any future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Similarly, Bhikkhus, with a mind thus immersed in beneficial and helpful thoughts born of non-delusion, such a person, here and now, abides free of worries, troubles, or fears throughout his life, dwelling happily, for he has cut the root of delusion, making it like a palm stump, destroying the need for future re-becoming, whereby in this very life, he attains Nibbāna.

Bhikkhus, these are the three beneficial and helpful roots.