

Title	THE ROOT CAUSES OF ACTION ( <i>KAMMA</i> )
All Authors	Phyu Phyu Thein
Publication Type	
Publisher (Journal name, issue no., page no etc.)	Universities Research Journal 2011, Vol. 4. No.7
Abstract	<p>In human society the good and the bad traits of character are always present in pairs. In the present day, the bad persons are found to be more numerous than the good ones. This presentation is compiled for the good temperament from the individual persons to each of human society. Attempt has been made to solve the problem of bad persons outnumbering the good persons. The reason why the bad persons are more numerous than the good persons is the inability of the persons to control <i>lobha</i> (greed), <i>dosa</i> (hatred) and <i>moha</i> (delusion) that arise in their continuity of consciousness. In this presentation, the arising of <i>lobha</i>, <i>dosa</i> and <i>moha</i> and elimination of <i>lobha</i>, <i>dosa</i> and <i>moha</i> are presented after extracting from the <i>Piṭaka</i> literature. They can be used as beneficial means for mental reformation and for the development of various sectors of politics, economy and social relation.</p>
Keywords	root, causes, loba, dosa, moha, aloba, adosa, amoha
Citation	
Issue Date	2011

## THE ROOT CAUSES OF ACTION (KAMMA)

### Abstract

In human society the good and the bad traits of character are always present in pairs. In the present day, the bad persons are found to be more numerous than the good ones. This presentation is compiled for the good temperament from the individual persons to each of human society. Attempt has been made to solve the problem of bad persons outnumbering the good persons. The reason why the bad persons are more numerous than the good persons is the inability of the persons to control *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion) that arise in their continuity of consciousness. In this presentation, the arising of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* and elimination of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* are presented after extracting from the *Piṭaka* literature. They can be used as beneficial means for mental reformation and for the development of various sectors of politics, economy and social relation.

Key words – root, causes, loba, dosa, moha, aloba, adosa, amoha

### Introduction

Buddhists believe in *kamma* (action) and the result of one's action. *Kaṃ* is a Myanmar word which is derived from the Pāṇī word “*काम्मा*”. *Kaṃ* is translated as action, deed, volitional action. *Kaṃ* is of three kinds, namely *kāyakamma* (bodily action), *vacīkamma* (verbal action), and *manokamma* (mental action). The evil actions performed by three kinds of action are unwholesome actions and good actions performed by three kinds of action are wholesome actions. One's wholesome actions produce peace to one and one's environment. One's unwholesome actions produce unhappiness to one and one's environment. For the peacefulness of one and one's environment one must restrain one's *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion) that are conducive to unwholesome actions and one must cultivate *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-hatred) and *amoha* (non-delusion) that are conducive to wholesome actions.

There are the two most important environments for human beings. They are the natural environment and human environment. The natural environment includes water, earth, forests, mountains, etc. The human environment is more important than the natural environment. Human is a creature that cannot be free from his environment. Starting from the time of conception, a living being experiences different environments such as parent environment in childhood, teacher environment in the time of schooling, social environment in the time of earning one's livelihood. In passing through many human environments, it is important to be free from *lobha*, *dosa* and

*moha* in social relation. Otherwise, if one conducts social relation in the human environment with *moha* which cannot see truth, *lobha* which wants to get, and *dosa* which occurs when one does not get as much as one wants, people will be devoid of sympathetic consideration and there will occur many kinds of vice in the human environment. Then the world will not be peaceful. Therefore this presentation is studied to comprehend and follow the nature of the three *dhammas* which are conducive to the arising of wholesome actions and the three *dhammas* which are conducive to the arising of unwholesome actions so that wholesome actions are cultivated and unwholesome actions are avoided.

### ***Dhamma* Causing Demeritorious Deeds**

There can be no resultant effect without a cause. Resultant effect cannot take place without a cause. Demeritorious roots are *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*.

#### **1.1 Demeritorious Root (*Lobha*)**

The nature of wanting, the nature of craving is called *lobha*.<sup>1</sup> When *lobha* meets with the six sense objects, the function of *lobha* is being firmly attached to the sense object for some gratification.<sup>2</sup> In saying attachment, it means, *lobha* cannot release its hold of the sense object concerned.

There are three kinds of greed. They are (1) *Atricchatā-lobha*, (2) *Mahicchatā-lobha* and (3) *Pāpicchatā-lobha*.<sup>3</sup> Without being contented with the property one has acquired, the intense desire for other's possessions is *Atricchatā-lobha*. Although one possesses many properties, one is unsatisfied and wants more wealth. There is no limit to their want. This kind of desire to possess wealth is called *mahicchatā-lobha*. Acquisition of wealth by unfair is called *Pāpicchatā-lobha*. A person who is possessed of such kind of *lobha* tends to make others to think highly of him, to make others to be devoted to him and to win affection of others by employing immoral means. Such kind of *lobha* is very dangerous for it causes others to have false impression and it also destroys oneself.

##### **1.1.1 The Evil Effects of *lobha***

*Lobha* is an unwholesome mental factor. When *lobha* dwells in the continuum of a person, he is unable to think what is right and what is wrong. He is unable to distinguish between good and bad. *Lobha* tends to destroy oneself and the others. When the purified mind is invaded

---

<sup>1</sup> PMA, 835.

<sup>2</sup> Dhs.A.I, 291.

<sup>3</sup> Dhs.A.II, 445.

by *lobha*, a person tends to act recklessly.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha preached the evil effects of *lobha* to Kings of *Kālāma* as "One who is with *lobha* tends to kill life, tends to steal, tends to commit adultery and tends to tell lies. Therefore the path of a greedy person to the nether worlds is engulfed in darkness." Therefore *lobha* (greed) is creating sufferings for living beings.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.2 Ways of Elimination of *Lobha*

For living beings *lobha* is an inner enemy. *Lobha* tends to make the eye of wisdom blind. *Lobha* gives trouble to the living beings. Therefore that *lobha* has to be eliminated by exercising wisdom. After eliminating of *lobha*, *lobha* must be classified into three categories. They are

1. Strong *lobha*,
2. Moderate *lobha* and

3. Weak *lobha*. When the *lobha* is strong, the *lobha* cannot be contained in mind. It manifests in bodily, verbal and mental actions. This *lobha* must be eliminated with morality. Such elimination can be done in an instant because, while one is observing the precepts, the *lobha* is extinguished. When the precepts are not observed, *lobha* can appear again. The one who observes precepts may desire other's possession but he does not reach to the state of committing physically. Similarly, sexual misconduct or telling lies or taking intoxicants does not reach to the state of physical action. Such elimination of *lobha* is called temporary abandonment of *lobha* through undertaking moral precepts (*Tadaṅgappāhana*).

The moderate *lobha* is the greed that happens only in mind. This kind of *lobha* can be eliminated with the practice of concentration (*samādhi*). *Jhāna* concentration is more powerful than *sīlakusala*. *Samādhikusala* is powerful enough to keep it for some time. This way of elimination of *lobha* is called abandonment of moral defilements by *jhāna* (*Vikkhambhanappahāna*).

Weak *lobha* is the kind of *lobha* which appears under favourable condition. Such kind of *lobha* is like the taproot of a tree. When the tap roots is cut off, the branches and leaves of a tree will be destroyed. Similarly, when the weak *lobha* which arises under favourable condition is eliminated, the strong *lobha* and moderate *lobha* will be eliminated entirely. Thus one must strive to be able to eliminate the weak *lobha*. The weak *lobha* will not be eliminated with *sīla* and *samādhi*. This weak *lobha* can only be eliminated with the four *magga-ñāṇas*. The elimination of *lobha* in this way is called permanent abandonment of moral defilements (*samucchedappahāna*).

## 1.2 Demeritorious Root (*Dosa*)

---

<sup>1</sup> It,252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibit*.

The *Pāli* term *dosa* means anger.<sup>1</sup> *Dosa* tends to destroy one's mind and body as well as the mind and body of the other.<sup>2</sup> *Dosa* destroys oneself first before destroying others. *Dosa* changes the physical appearance of oneself. The skin becomes red and the hands and the body are trembling. Physical and verbal behavior become wild.<sup>3</sup> Therefore *dosa* has the nature of burning and destroying the person in which it dwells. Sometimes a person can be angry with living and non-living things such as tripping over an impediment, excessive raining, drought, intense heat of the sun intense cold, windiness, over calmness of wind. This kind of anger is called getting angry where it is improper (*Aṭṭhānakopa*).<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2.1 Evil Consequences of *Dosa*

One in great anger has no sense of shame, no sense of fear and no sense of fright. He has the nature of neglecting admonition. A man in anger may try to commit suicide with weapons such as sword, lance, fire-arm or by taking poison or by hanging from a rope or by jumping from a high place as described in *Āṅguttara Nikāya Pāli*.<sup>5</sup> If one dies with anger he will be reborn in hell after death as shown in *Dukanipāta* in *Āṅguttara Nikāya*.<sup>6</sup> The evil results of *dosa*, the Buddha preached in *Dukanipāta* in *Āṅguttara Nikāya* are –

1. Ugly physical appearance,
2. Being unable to sleep soundly,
3. Loss of one's property,
4. Inability to live in prosperity and peace,
5. Inferior reputation,
6. Shunning by good friend, and
7. Being destined to hell or world of animal or world of *Petas* or world of *Asūras* after passing away from human world.<sup>7</sup>

When living beings are overwhelmed by *dosa*, people are subject to the danger of arms and fire.

### 1.2.2 Ways of Elimination of *Dosa*

As the saying goes, "If the disease is known there is a remedy", there will be a result if there is a cause and there will be "good" if there is "bad". If there is a destructive element of *dosa*,

---

<sup>1</sup> PMA, 488.

<sup>2</sup> Dhs.A.I, 298.

<sup>3</sup> M.Ṭ.I, 121.

<sup>4</sup> Dhs.A.I, 399.

<sup>5</sup> A.I, 471-2.

<sup>6</sup> A.I, 95-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibit.*

there must be an antidote for it or there must be *dhamma* that can allay *dosa*. Anger is not a mental condition that cannot be got rid of or that cannot be prevented. Therefore good ways of getting rid of *dosa* are shown in Scriptures. The ways of getting rid of *dosa* are as follows:-

1. cultivate *mettā* or loving-kindness,
2. one who bears anger should be welcomed with cultivation of *mettā* without bearing anger;<sup>1</sup>
3. one who bears anger must be contemplated as a person who is unable to distinguish between cause and effect and the good and the bad.<sup>2</sup>
4. one who bears anger is unable to know the well-being of oneself and the other;<sup>3</sup>
5. one must contemplate that a person who is capable of cutting off anger will be able to sleep well;<sup>4</sup>
6. one must contemplate that a person with great anger ages easily;<sup>5</sup> and
7. one must contemplate that one with anger is destined to hell.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 Demeritorious Root (*Moha*)

*Moha* means delusion, ignorance, dullness.<sup>7</sup> *Moha* has the nature of concealing the true nature of the sense objects.<sup>8</sup> On account of concealing nature of *moha*, the bad nature of *ducaritas*, the good nature of *Sucaritas*, the true nature of *dukkhasaccā*, the existence of the past existence and future existence, the principles of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* are veiled preventing the living beings from seeing the true nature of things. There are two kinds of *moha*. They are *anusaya-moha* and *pariyuṭṭhāna-moha*. *Anusaya-moha* means the delusion lying latent in the mind of living beings. *Pariyuṭṭhāna-moha* means the delusion that occasionally arises together with the consciousness.

#### 1.3.1 Evil Benefits of *Moha*

A person with *moha* will be reborn in the world of animals. As the one with *moha* is unable to distinguish between cause and effect, beneficial and unbeneficial, blamable and unblamable, he tends to earn living by immoral means and so he lives a short life.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, *moha* is the cause of unwholesome *kamma* that fetches one a destination to *duggati*, the abode of

---

<sup>1</sup> Dhṃ, *gāthā*, 223.

<sup>2</sup> MA II.308.

<sup>3</sup> DA I.52.

<sup>4</sup> Dhṃ 52.

<sup>5</sup> S I.39.

<sup>6</sup> VinA I.154.

<sup>7</sup> PMA, 790.

<sup>8</sup> Saṅg.bhā.Ṭ, 121.

<sup>9</sup> Dhṃ.A.II, 172.

suffering and misery. Being engulfed in *moha* or ignorance, those who are deluded or have no eyes of wisdom are unable to distinguish between the proper and improper deeds. Accordingly they tend to commit unwholesome deeds such as killing. Therefore they are bound to reach the abodes of suffering which are the abodes of sinners.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.3.2 Ways of Elimination of *Moha***

When *moha* arises in one's continuum, there are ways to eliminate that *moha*. The ways of elimination of *moha* are (1) Living relying on one's teacher, (2) Learning, (3) Repeated asking and discussion of the learning one has acquired, (4) Contemplation of *Dhamma* under favourable condition and (5) Ability to differentiate right and wrong. These are the five factors that can eliminate *moha*.<sup>2</sup> One who has a teacher cannot be forgetful and deluded because he respects and fears his teacher. In the same way, one who is learning cannot have delusion because he is always heedful because he is afraid of the teacher's punishment. One who asks questions and discusses with a learned person understands his learning without doubt. Therefore he cannot have delusion. Because one has to make effort to be able to make resolutions skillfully one will not have delusion. Therefore the five factors mentioned above will prevent one from having delusion.

### ***Dhamma* Causing Meritorious Deeds**

The meritorious roots are mental factors called *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha*. For a tree to be thriving in growth and staying firm, the root is the most important. Similarly the three meritorious roots – *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha* are of primary importance for the arising of meritorious deeds.

#### **1.1 Meritorious Root (*Alobha*)**

*Alobha* means non-attachment, not wanting, not craving.<sup>3</sup> *Alobha* is the nature of non-attachment, not wanting and displeasure of sense objects. It is the opposite of the factor of craving and attachment. Therefore *lobha* is a cause of a destination to *duggatis* (four netherworlds) and *alobha* is a cause of destination to *sugatis* (human world and six celestial abodes).

##### **1.1.1 *Lobha* and *Alobha***

To enable to understand the nature of *alobha*, the opposite *lobha* will be comparatively studied. *Lobha* and *alobha* are contrasting just as black and white colours. *Lobha* does not merely take in the sense object. It takes in the sense object intensely as "This is mine. It is mine." The mental factor, *alobha*, has

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibit*, 126.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.I, 392.

<sup>3</sup> PMA. 129.

the nature of non-wanting, and non-attachment to the sense object. One who is possessed of disposition of *alobha* has the propensity to do many acts of charity. The person with the disposition of *lobha* earns property fairly or unfairly. But he has no inclination to give away what he earns. If he dies, he will reach the abode of *Petas*.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, *lobha* is a cause of a destination to *duggati* (for netherworlds) and *alobha* is a cause of destination to *sugatis* (human world and six celestial abodes).

## 1.2 Meritorious Root (*Adosa*)

In accord with “*na dussatīti adosa*”, non-destructiveness is called *adosa*.<sup>2</sup> Like a friend who yields to one’s wish *adosa* is free from the nature of harshness. When *adosa* is taking in being as an object peacefully, *adosa* becomes *mettā* which is included as one of the four *Brahmavihāra dhammas*.<sup>3</sup> *Adosa* is called *mettā* because it is the power of wishing for other’s welfare. In performing meritorious deeds such as worshipping, listening to *dhamma*, etc. if it is performed without taking in being as an object, it is not *mettā* but it is *adosa*.

### 1.2.1 *Dosa* and *Adosa*

*Dosa* is the root of demeritorious deeds and *adosa* is the root of meritorious deeds. *Dosa* has the characteristic of harshness and *adosa* has the characteristic of gentleness. *Dosa* is as hot as the sun. *Adosa* (*khanti*) is as cool as the moon or the water. *Dosa* promotes enmity whereas *adosa* promotes pacification. *Dosa* produces misery in the present life as well as in the life after death. *Adosa* produces much happiness in the present life as well as in the life after death. Thus *dosa* and *adosa* are quite different in behaviour trait and character as contrasting as white and black.

## 1.3 Meritorious Roots (*Amoha*)

Wisdom which is the cause of non-delusion is called *amoha*. *Amoha* is the diametric opposite of *moha*. As all that is concealed by *moha* is uncovered and exposed by *amoha*, truth can be seen. As *amoha* is a *paññindriya cetasika* (mental factor of wisdom), it is called wisdom.

### 1.3.1 *Moha* and *Amoha*

In this world there are pairs of opposite *dhammas* such as light and dark, up and down, east and west, south and north, love and hate. Similarly, according to the doctrine, there are opposite *dhamma* such as wholesome deed and unwholesome deed. The opposite *dhamma* such as *moha* and *amoha* are included among the meritorious and demeritorious *dhamma*. The meaning of *Moha* is delusion. The meaning of *Amoha* is non-delusion. *Amoha* is the diametric opposite of *moha*. One can understand what is *kusala* and *akusala* because of the non-ignorance nature of *amoha*. One cannot understand what is *kusala* and *akusala* because of the ignorance

---

<sup>1</sup> Dhs.A.I, 172.

<sup>2</sup> saṅg.bhā.Ṭ 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Mettā* – loving kindness, *Garunā* – compassion, *muditā* – altruistic joy, *upekkhā* – equanimity, supreme unconcern.

nature of *moha*. Those with *moha* are reborn in the world animals. Those who are possessed of *amoha* which is the extreme opposite of *moha* are not reborn in the world of animals.

#### **2.4 Benefits of the Three Meritorious Roots**

One who is not attached does not seek improper food, weather, etc. Therefore *alobha* is the causes of freedom from diseases and being in good health. One who is not wrathful looks young in age because he is not subject to the fire of anger which promotes wrinkling of skin and graying of hair. Therefore *adosa* is the cause of looking young for one's age. He who is without delusion knows to distinguish what is beneficial and what is not beneficial and seeks only what is beneficial. Thus *amoha* is the cause for longevity.

### **Conclusion**

The nature of the *dhammas*, *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*, consequences of these *dhammas* and how these *dhammas* are eliminated are already presented. The nature of the *dhammas* which are the opposites of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* and their benefits are already presented. As the mind of the worldlings tends to be delighted in evil deeds, when *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* increase, the whole human environment will be overwhelmed with vices. The world will not be peaceful as long as the world is overwhelmed by vices. One and one's environment will not be peaceful. Intending for the peace of the world, the Buddha preached *dhammas* which are the opposite of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. The world will be peaceful only when people strive to make the *dhammas*, *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha* thrive. Therefore only when individual person, the individual human society cultivate *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha* *dhammas* that the Buddha preached, observation of moral principles will be much improved in economy, social relation and politics, and standard of living will be high. In anticipation of these good results every worldling must strive to attain peace and liberation from life for one's environment and one's country by adhering to the Buddha's *dhammas* – *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-hatred) and *amoha* (non-delusion). This is a paper that can be studied how to conduct one's life in accord with virtues.