Buddhist Learning 4 All

The Three Poisons

Akusala-Mūla: Understanding Greed, Hatred, and Delusion as the Root Causes of All Suffering



THE FRAMEWORK

The Roots of Unwholesome Action

- **Akusala-mūla:** The unskillful roots driving karma.
- **Psychological Mechanisms:** Distorting perception and reality.
- **Not Moral Sins:** Diseases/Illness of the mind requiring medicine.

The Foundation of Suffering

These poisons alter how we perceive reality. Like drops of dye in water, they color every thought, word, and physical action.

The Hub of the Wheel of Life



The Rooster

Represents Greed (Lobha).



The Snake

Represents Hatred (Dosa).



The Pig

Represents Delusion (Moha).

MENTAL REACTIVITY

The Mind's Basic Reactions

I Want

Grasping tightly at pleasant experiences.

I Hate

Pushing away unpleasant experiences violently.

I Ignore

Spacing out during neutral experiences.

THE FIRST POISON

1. Greed (Lobha / Rāga)

The Pull of Craving

The pull toward pleasant experience. It encompasses lust, avarice, possessiveness, and clinging.

The Thirst (Taṇhā)

Greed is unstable. Because satisfaction vanishes quickly, the mind must constantly hunt for new objects to consume.

DAILY LIFE

Manifestations of Greed

Possessiveness

Clinging to material objects.

Approval

Desiring social validation.

Perfectionism

Demanding ideal outcomes.

Sensuality

Chasing physical pleasure.

THE SECOND POISON

2. Hatred (Dosa / Dvesha)

The Push of Aversion

The push away from unpleasant experience. The violent rejection of reality exactly as it is.

The Fastest Harm

Aversion acts with speed. It destroys relationships, distorts logic, and produces immediate visible suffering for self and others.

DAILY LIFE

Manifestations of Aversion

Rage

Explosive aggressive action.

Resentment

Holding onto past grudges.

Irritation

Friction with present moments.

Self-Criticism

Directing violence inward.

THE THIRD POISON

3. Delusion (Moha / Avijjā)

The Blindness of Ignorance

The fundamental confusion misreading experience entirely. Assuming the self is permanent and absolute.

The Source Condition

Delusion is the foundation for both Greed and Hatred. Without misunderstanding reality, craving and aversion cannot take root.

DAILY LIFE

Manifestations of Ignorance

Denial

Refusing to see facts.

Permanence

Assuming things will last.

Selfhood

Believing in a solid ego.

Distraction

Numbing the conscious mind.

INTERCONNECTION

The Synergy of Suffering

The Cycle

Delusion projects a false, permanent self. That self demands pleasure (Greed) and rejects pain (Hatred).

Mutual Reinforcement

Giving into Greed or Hatred strengthens Delusion. The wheel spins endlessly until intervention occurs.

ACTION & RESULT

The Seeds of Kamma

Unwholesome Action

Any physical, verbal, or mental action rooted in greed, hatred, or delusion is classified as unskillful (*akusala*).

Karmic Result

Actions poisoned by these roots guarantee future suffering. They deepen habitual reactivity and bind consciousness to Samsara.

ADVANCED INSIGHT

The Poisons in Disguise

Spiritual Greed

Craving deep meditative states. Treating enlightenment as a personal achievement to acquire.

Righteous Anger

Aversion disguised as moral justice. Harboring deep hostility toward perceived wrongdoers.

THE MEDICINE

The Wholesome Roots (Kusala-Mūla)

Insight Transformation

Replacing poisons with their direct opposites. Cultivating wholesome roots purifies intentional action.

Foundation of Liberation

Generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom form the bedrock of the Noble Eightfold Path.

ANTIDOTE 1

1. Non-Greed (Alobha)

Generosity (Dāna)

Releasing the clenched fist physically and mentally.

Renunciation (Nekkhamma)

Finding supreme joy in harmless simplicity.

ANTIDOTE 2

2. Non-Hatred (Adosa)

Loving-kindness (Mettā)

Radiating boundless goodwill toward all living beings.

Compassion (Karuṇā)

Trembling actively at the suffering of others.

ANTIDOTE 3

3. Non-Delusion (Amoha)

Wisdom (Paññā)

Direct perception of impermanence and non-self.

Clarity (Sampajañña)

Unclouded situational awareness across all actions.

THE PRACTICE

Seeing Over Suppressing

The Trap

Fighting the poisons aggressively creates more aversion. Hating your own hatred is still hatred.

The Intervention

Mindful recognition is the antidote. The simple act of seeing the poison disarms its power.

VIPASSANA APPLICATION

Naming the Poison

Mind with greed is present.

Mind with aversion is present.

Mind with delusion is present.

REAL-LIFE INSIGHT

Deconstructing a Trigger

The Event Arrives

An unfair criticism is directed toward you. The ego immediately reacts with defensive storytelling.

The Mindfulness Shift

Notice the heat of Dosa arising. Feel the unpleasant sensation. Watch the aversion fade away naturally.

SUMMARY MATRIX

The Three Poisons Framework

Greed	**Motion:** Pulling toward.	**Symbol:** Rooster.	**Antidote:** Generosity.
Hatred	**Motion:** Pushing away.	**Symbol:** Snake.	**Antidote:** Loving-kindness.
Delusion	**Motion:** Ignoring reality.	**Symbol:** Pig.	**Antidote:** Wisdom.

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Extinguishing the Three Fires

Nibbāna literally translates to "blowing out." It is the profound, unshakeable peace that remains when the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion are completely extinguished.

