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Believers, Contemplatives, and the Future of Human Civilization, Part 2

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II. Presentation

Excerpt from the *Kālāma Sutta* ([*Kesamuttiyasutta*](#)) (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 3.63), trans. by Bhikkhu Bodhi:¹

(1) “What do you think, Kālāmas? When lobha arises in a person, is it for his welfare or for his harm?”

“For his harm, Bhante.”

“Kālāmas, a greedy person, overcome by greed, with mind obsessed by it, destroys life, takes what is not given, transgresses with another’s wife, and speaks falsehood; and he encourages others to do likewise. Will that lead to his harm and suffering for a long time?”

“Yes, Bhante...”

(1) “What do you think, Kālāmas? When non-lobha arises in a person, is it for his welfare or for his harm?”

“For his welfare, Bhante.”

“Kālāmas, a person without greed, not overcome by greed, his mind not obsessed by it, does not destroy life, take what is not given, transgress with another’s wife, or speak falsehood; nor does he encourage others to do likewise. Will that lead to his welfare and happiness for a long time?”

“Yes, Bhante.”

Adapted from *A Compendium of Key Points on the Modes of Cognition and An Advanced Text on the Modes of Cognition: A Very Clear Presentation of Cognition According to the Madhyamaka Prāsaṅgika, Free of the Two Extremes*, by the Learned Master Gen Lobsang Gyatso (trans. by Eva Natanya):

- The poison of attachment (Pāli *lobha*, Skt. *lobha*, Tib. *chags pa*) leads to the root mental affliction of attachment (Skt. *tr̥ṣṇā*, *rāga*, Tib. *'dod chags*), which by its own essential nature, has the function of causing a striving for, or intense longing for, a contaminated phenomenon which is its object and on which an aspect of attractiveness has been superimposed. It functions to cause a stream of undesirable experience in the mind, even as that mind—as though sick with craving—yearns for the desired object. It has three divisions, in terms of attachment as subsumed by each of the three realms, respectively.
- The poison of hatred (Pāli *dosa*, Skt. *dveṣa*, Tib. *zhe sdang*) leads to the root mental affliction of anger (Skt. *pratigha*, Tib. *khong khro*), which, by its own essential nature, has the function of stirring up the mind and making it bear malevolence when focusing upon an object with any one of the three poisons (i.e., attachment, hatred, and ignorance). It functions to stir up the mind and make it harsh.
- The poison of delusion (Pāli *moha*, Skt. *moha*, Tib. *gti mug* or *rmongs pa*), is a mental

¹ <https://suttacentral.net/an3.65/en/bodhi?lang=en&reference=none&highlight=false>

process with an unclear mode of apprehension, as though darkness had descended—and from that comes the mental affliction of ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*, Tib. *ma rig pa*, unknowing or non-awareness) that causes one to engage with the object in a way that is completely wrong. The former is a mode of cognition that does not realize something, whereas the latter is a mode of cognition that “realizes wrongly.” Furthermore, the latter is twofold: (a) ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence and (b) the other types of ignorance. The first consists of the two types of connate grasping: connate grasping at a personal identity and connate grasping at phenomenal identity, which cling to a person or to phenomena, respectively, that could exist through characteristics of their own. The other types of ignorance include the learned, fabricated types of grasping at those two (i.e., person and phenomena), such as grasping at a self-sufficient identity and grasping at a permanent identity, and so on. Again there is a twofold division into ignorance which is in a state of confusion with respect to ultimate reality and ignorance which is in a state of confusion with respect to karmic cause and effect. The function of ignorance is that it serves as the root or basis for all entirely afflicted states resulting from mental afflictions, from birth, and from karma.

- Non-attachment, by its own essential nature, has the function of being a direct antidote to attachment for the goods of the world upon which it focuses, and of bringing about detachment from them, that is to say, a state of not wanting to have them and of not being attached to them. The negative particles used to describe this mental process, variously called “non-attachment,” or “without craving” mean that it is an “antidote to.” (The same applies to the next two mental processes, non-hatred and non-delusion.) The function of non-attachment serves as a basis for blocking attachment and for increasing the spirit of emergence.
- Non-hatred, by its own essential nature, has the function of being the loving-kindness that directly prevents anger no matter which of three things is in view. The “three things” here are harmful living beings, actual pain, and the bases of the arising of pain such as poison, weapons, thorns, and so forth—in a word, these three: those who do harm, the phenomenon of being harmed, and the causes of harm. The functioning of non-hatred serves as a basis for blocking hostility and as the cause for increasing loving-kindness and compassion, and especially as the basis for producing the strength of forbearance.
- Non-delusion, by its own essential nature, has the function of discerning the fine details of phenomena, which is an antidote for delusion. It may be connate or can be brought about by hearing, reflection, and meditation. Its functioning blocks delusion, increases intelligence, and gains mastery over the dharmas leading to liberation and enlightenment. There is a division into four: connate non-delusion, and non-delusion arisen from hearing, reflection, and meditation, respectively. In short, it can be encompassed within non-delusion that investigates how phenomena actually exist and non-delusion that investigates the full range of phenomena. It is not redundant to the intelligence listed among the five object-ascertaining factors because that is intelligence in general, while this is a particular kind of intelligence that investigates whether its object is something to be embraced or rejected, and it is a particular kind of intelligence aided by faith, enthusiastic perseverance, and exceptional samādhi. These three absences (i.e., antidotes) of the three poisons, which are the three roots of virtue, are the essence, or life force, of all the teachings of the jinas, because they are the foundation for embracing all roots of virtue that lead to liberation and enlightenment.

The Three Poisons

	Lobha	Dosa	Moha
Duḥka	Pleasure → Duḥkha of change	Displeasure → Duḥka of suffering	Indifference → Pervasive duḥka of conditioned existence
Śamatha	Dissolve into bliss	Dissolve into luminosity	Dissolve into nonconceptuality
Śrāvakayāna	Counteract with non-lobha	Counteract with non-dosa	Counteract with non- moha
Bodhisattvayāna	Transform with offering	Transform with ferocious determination to overcome mental afflictions	Transform with pride of confidence to achieve enlightenment
Vajrayāna (Nyingma tantras, specifically Dzogchen)	Unveil as discerning primordial consciousness	Unveil as mirror-like primordial consciousness	Unveil as primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena