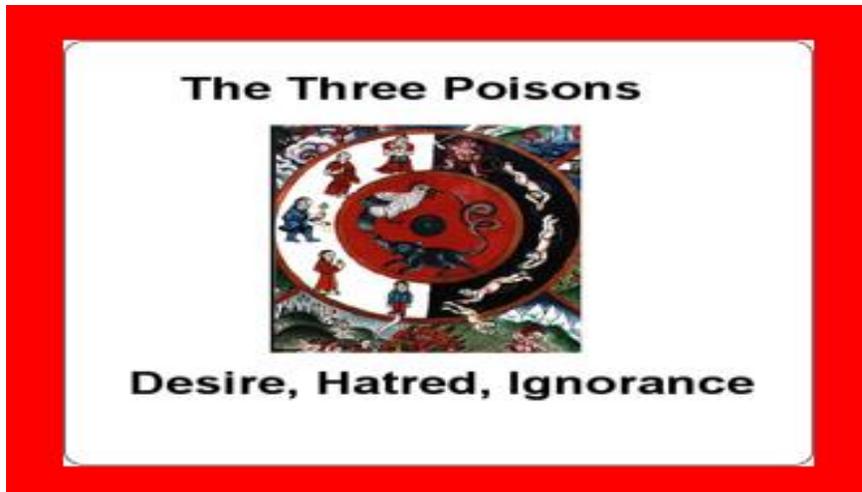


# The Three Poisons

仇 貪心 妄想



The cause of human suffering, as explained in Buddhist terms, is greed, anger and ignorance. These negative traits and fundamental evils are called the Three Poisons, because they are dangerous toxins in our lives. Not only are they the source of our unquenchable thirst for possessions, and the root cause of all of our harmful illusions, but they are painful pollutants, which bring sickness, both physical and mental.

Greed's companions are desire and lust, and these passions and attachments cause us to want to "get hold of" things, and to have more and more of them. Anger's friends are hatred, animosity and aversion, which cause us to reject what displeases us or infringes upon our ego. Ignorance, which is "not knowing," especially not knowing our true nature, paves the way for delusion or in our believing something that is false.

These poisons fill our lives with suffering, unhappiness and no satisfactoriness. They cause us to make unskillful decisions, which affect our future. They cause us to have self-serving and dishonest intentions, which in turn cause us to act unethically and immorally. They are the roots of not only our own pain and misery, but those of our loved ones' and of society's. Fortunately, there is a way to eradicate this trio of contaminants. The practice of loving kindness and compassion is the medicine and enlightenment is the antidote.

Many of us are apt to be dominated by one of the poisons. Even when one dominates the other two are always lying dormant, like dry seeds that can sprout whenever nourished. If one is dominated by anger, one tends to be depressed or obsessed over political views, real or imagined enemies, or any of life's negative realities. If the dominating poison is greed, then it can be manifested by stinginess, lack of compassion, hoarding or self-indulgence. One tends to be attached to material things, thinking that more is better and that getting things will bring happiness. When we are ignorant, we are not realizing our potential for true happiness, which is our true nature, our Buddha nature. Ignorance causes insecurity and a feeling of weakness, powerlessness and apathy.

Buddhist teachings tell us that because of our connectedness, these personal poisons are reflected in our society. Greed, for example, is reflected in the destruction of the environment. Such reflections, however, are impermanent, changeable and transitory. They can be transformed for good. Anger, for instance, can cause us to rally against intolerance, injustice and immorality.

If we are aware of the Three Poisons, their causes and their cures, we can bring about a wonderful metamorphosis. Through the practice of loving kindness and compassion, these bitter poisons can be changed

into sweet nectars, from which will evolve true happiness, replacing the fakes and counterfeits we have become used to. When we realize our interdependence, our connectedness and oneness, we rid ourselves of the poisons that keep making us sick.