

3 Poisons – G.A.S.
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February 2016

As I thought about this dharma message, I thought about this past month. As many of you know I see dharma messages in everything everywhere and this month has been no exception. Actually, this month has been an extraordinary month for possible dharma messages. Think about it There was Super Bowl (yea Broncos!), Super Bowl had so many lessons, including trusting and never giving up, in realizing with winning and losing, there is a very classy way to do both and there are immature, whiny ways to do it. Some examples are to be emulated while others provide examples of behaviors to avoid.

Other events in February have been: terrorism and fear in the US and around the world; shootings & bombings, the weather, including snow, tornadoes, cold temperatures, high winds, the tragic cyclone in Fiji; Legislative Assembly on Oahu; Living Treasures Luncheon and the varied stories of the honorees; Valentine's Day; presidential candidates and their campaigns of anger, name calling and bigotry; the Grammys, with music I'm not sure I always understand; the QuickSilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau Big Wave Surf Meet which didn't go the first time around; Flint Michigan and their lead-laced water supply and on and on. So many possible talks and they can't all happen, unless I want a very disconnected and exceedingly long talk.

In thinking about all of these possible topics, I realized that many of the topics have something to do with the 3 Poisons that Buddha shared with the world. I remember them by what I was told in Denver G. A. S. Greed, Anger, Stupidity (or ignorance or confusion). The 3 Poisons bring us suffering but Buddha also taught us that we can help reduce our suffering by helping to take care of ourselves. We all probably know what Anger looks like. I think we probably know what Ignorance looks like, at least in others. The one I want to talk about today is Greed. One definition of greed is: "A strong desire for more; an overwhelming desire to have more of something, such as money, than is actually needed." Thinking that we need to have EVERYTHING, and then life will be ok. Rather like the song "We All Want What We Aint' Got" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGQmKA15Vck>

I thought I knew what greed was all about. After all, greed involves money, right? Greed is like Ebenezer Scrooge in "The Christmas Carol", always thinking about money and grasping at more money. At least, that is what I thought but I discovered that I was only partly right. Greed comes in many forms, some I had never really thought of before. Think about these other forms of greed: attention, control & power, winning, being right, affection, respect, words, intellectual greed and greed for just "stuff."

When I think about greed, I see it as reaching for, gathering in all we see or want and never really feeling that we have enough. I have felt that way in my life and maybe many of you have too. Greed is also not wanting to share what we have with others. After all, we think that if we share, we won't have it all. It's like saying "I have mine, go find your own." Doesn't seem like a very kind and gentle way of approaching people or

the world in general. That thinking tends to make us feel separated from ourselves and from those around us. If we keep grasping, we are not allowing room for others. Grasping and greed pushes people away, whether we realize it or not.

How many of us see ourselves in these types of greed? Or do we only see others? Our self-awareness is important in Buddhism to help us reduce our suffering and have more joy in our lives. Let's ask ourselves these questions. Notice how they overlap and they contain very little joy. But the "**antidote**" can bring joy.

- **Attention:** Am I always trying to be the center of attention and not wanting to share the spotlight? Is it all about me? **It's actually more fun to share.**
- **Control / Power:** Do I want to be in charge of everything and everybody and not allow others to help make decisions? After all, no one else knows as much as I do, right? Really? **There is so much to learn from others.**
- **Winning:** Am I so competitive that I will do anything to be sure I win, no matter what? Am I competitive about everything, not just games, but arguments, children, jobs or ideas? Being too competitive can make us become a "poor loser". Sounds a little like Cam Newton after the Super Bowl, doesn't it? **We need to play well with others, win or lose.**
- **Being Right:** Am I the person who knows everything and will dig in my heels to prove it, even if someone shows me the correct answer? **I'm human, of course I'll make mistakes. What's wrong with that???**
- **Affection:** Do I withhold affection from someone in order to maintain control? Do I give someone the silent treatment, walking by them, deliberately ignoring them? What am I saving my affection for? **Science has proven that hugs are good for your health.**
- **Respect:** Do I demand respect from others instead of earning it? If so, then I have to make sure that I show no respect to another person, because there's only so much to go around. **Oh, that's so not true. There is always enough to share.**
- **Words:** Do I refuse to say simple words of gratitude or apology? Do I refuse to acknowledge being wrong so I will never have to apologize? This is not the same as saying "I'm sorry" when you bump into someone. **When you are wrong, just say "I'm sorry" and say remember to say "thank you" to someone today, even if what they are doing is expected.**
- **Intellectual:** Do I have important knowledge that I keep to myself without sharing? This doesn't include rumors and gossip, by the way. Knowing information that people need and not sharing it is another way to grasp at power and control. Think about it . . . if we can't share our knowledge with others, what good is it? If we don't share, the knowledge dies with us. **Sharing makes us stronger not weaker.**

If we can remember our Buddhist concepts (gratitude, compassion, kindness and interdependence) when the feelings of greed sneak up on us, and they will, we can help to reduce our suffering and increase our joy. Let's not stay stuck in the suffering. There

is too much joy to be lived. Continue to find joy in the ordinary, it is all around us, we just have to notice it. Remember to find joy every day, no matter how small.