



RANDOM THOUGHTS ON HIROSHIMA

The Historical Buddha's primary concern was the problem of suffering and how to end it, or at least minimize it. In a nutshell he tells us that suffering arises from our being attached to a false sense of reality. This attachment arises from and is propelled by the Three Poisons of Ignorance, Greed, and Anger. We ignore the fact that the self is not substantially real – but only in relationship to everything else. The imagined separate self thus becomes involved with money, power, and self-aggrandizement, an insatiable greed that knows no end. And unable to get what it wants, anger arises. Ignorance, greed, and anger make the world go round.

Japanese-Americans have a double responsibility. Reminding the world of the consequences of war as a means of settling differences. Whether in the form of dropping Atomic bombs on human beings or imprisoning an entire group of people by reason of race. It is encouraging to note that in the first weeks of 9/11, it was the Japanese-Americans who called in messages of support of the Muslim communities.

In a time when corporate, political, and media powers act in collusion, the Three Poisons have never been more rampant among the powers that be. We have virtually

no access to news, rendering Americans some of the most ignorant people on the planet. Our so-called news programs are limited to the weather, traffic, and appalling Hollywood shenanigans. When is the last time you heard anything about Asia other than disasters and war. Do we know anything about Europe, not to mention Africa and South and Central America? Do we even know where these places are? Corporate and political greed seem to be the norm, and anything that stands in its way must be abolished. They have denied us the very freedoms that make America worth defending. When happiness is defined as having things, when shopping at the Mall or high-end boutiques is the main means of finding comfort and meaning in life – the Three Poisons are in full play. 'When the Three Poisons are functioning, the whole world of suffering and sorrow, grief and pain is activated; whether by a single individual, a group of people, or nations. When one group is right and the other less right – the stance is already adversarial and a source of friction. This might be forgivable if we were just dumbbells in a small country. But we are a world power bristling with nuclear armaments – which makes us a dangerous country indeed, especially given our love of war.

The Buddhist Three Poisons are a straightforward explanation of how conflict comes into being and how it feeds on itself. When D. T. Suzuki was asked if he thought there would ever be a prolonged period of peace, he replied that he didn't think so. The degree to which we experience that no man is an island, that we are all intimately interconnected, is the degree to which greed is reduced – and with it, a reduction in anger. All this the Buddhas already knew.

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