

## THREE POISONS

Have you seen “American Idol”? I have not watched it for several years, but do hear about it in the news. I believe they are down to the last two contestants for this season. When do you think the viewership is up these past few seasons? During the beginning, watching contestants audition is pretty funny, a train wreck at times but some people can sing. The sad part to me, though probably the most entertaining is when the contestant is rejected and lash out at the judges, screaming to the cameras saying how good they are and that the judges do not know anything, etc. etc. These people are consumed in what we Mahayana Buddhists refer to as the Three Poisons.

Many times we talk about the evil mind. In Buddhism there are three evils, sometimes call the three poisons. They are craving, hatred and delusion. The three are sources of sorrow to all who allow such poisons to come into their minds.

Craving is a form of slavery. It is like being a chained prisoner. When Buddhists speak of this evil, they always mean a desire that makes us attached to a certain idea or object. Things such as seeking glory, power and fame are cravings. If you say “I want, I want, I want” then this is craving. We normally do not consider desire for water when we are thirsty or desire for sleep when we are tired craving. Remember that desires are fleeting and will all disappear some day.

For the “American Idol” rejected contestant, their craving is the desire to be famous. I want to be on TV, I want to be rich and famous. They see that music is an easy way for almost semi-talented people to become famous. Others have done it so can they. What many of these folks do not understand is that it takes hard work, dedication and lots of luck to be found and elevated to stardom. Karma could have a factor in the selection

process, but for most people we will never be famous nor should we. Well, be famous for the right things such as helping others instead of being famous for oneself.

The second poison is hatred and it is a very dangerous poison indeed. In fact, extreme anger actually causes real poisons to leach into our bloodstreams. Such poisons make us sick in both body and mind. Anger and hatred are closely akin and frequently found together.

The venom spewed by some of the contestants is sad. Being rejected, means that their desire to be famous has been blocked and will not materialize. Acceptance of failure cannot be dealt with so it is easier to lash out in anger and blame others for their shortcomings. The threats of “Simon doesn’t know anything. Just watch, I’ll show him” meaning that they will become famous through other channels to spite Simon.

Unfortunately their “15 minutes” is up. (For those of you who do not know, there was a famous painter/hippie/beatnik in the 60’s, Andy Warhol who proclaimed that everyone will have 15 minutes of fame). When the show airs, those rejected may be laughed at for their silly reaction and again they will get angry. It sucks to lose, but does need to rise to the anger level. Anger and hatred blinds us from seeing the truth. Next time you are really angry step back and observe your reaction. I bet you are narrowly focused with the utmost awful thoughts in your head.

The third poison is delusion. There are very many ways to describe delusion. Wrong ideas and confusion are good examples. Delusion is always mistaking the false for the real, seeing “fool’s gold” for the real gold. Even wearing “rose colored glasses” can be considered delusion. We do not see the true color of the outside world.

Most contestants show up just to get on TV and look silly, hoping that they make the editing. Others are serious about their singing and believe that they are the next rising star. Motivation could come from their parents who are living vicariously through their children or have been singing in the church choir since seven years old so they can sing or singing is easy, they do it all the time, why not try out. Each of these people cannot see that they have no talent. Most people cannot tell if they are off key. Only a special few know and can hear exact pitch and tone and can recreate it. After playing clarinet and piano for many years, music is difficult, even singing. Anyone can sing, but not pleasantly. This lack of understanding undermines their entire being. They are steadfast in clinging on to their false beliefs that they cannot elevate themselves out of the realm of animals and hungry spirits and will remain circling there and will not be able to reach the Buddha realm.

The Buddha told us that we must see clearly and think clearly. We must see things as they are and not as we imagine them to be, or wish them to be. As long as we are prisoners of the three poisons we cannot see the truth of the dharma. As humans, we will always have these three poisons within us. We must first realize the truth about ourselves and each aspect of the three poisons within our lives. We need to catch ourselves when saying “I want, I want” instead say “thank you, thank you for what I have”. When we get angry, we have to realize that we are and defuse the emotion. In order to be delusional, we must look at everything from many directions to obtain all the facts. By studying the Lotus Sutra and chanting “Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo” we slowly realize the true nature of things and that there is no need for cravings and hatred. We are at peace and as being peaceful we can show others to see the truth, which is the Buddha Dharma.

So the rejected contestants show what not to do and how not to behave. Sometimes it is difficult to look at ourselves or how we are acting. Others tell us how we are acting but we do not believe or will not listen. It is only when we can step back and observe ourselves that we can see our true nature. Looking deeply in a mirror may be difficult but seeing how others are, we can see what they are doing and adapt or change that portion of them in us. This understanding brings us closer in attaining enlightenment.