

THE THREE POISONS AND MEDITATION

Meditation removes greed, hate, and delusion. afflictive emotions of greed, hate, and delusion are essentially synonymous with the three poisons of desire, aversion, and ignorance. Thus, they are easily treated by the antidote of a regular practice of shamatha meditation.

The first two poisons are really just a result of the third. When we hold in our minds the ignorant and false view that there exists a duality that separates ourselves from all other beings, we are caught in the flawed mindset of "I" and "other." Due to our own ignorant belief in the apparent, relative reality of samsara, we get caught up in our egotistical notion of self. The ego tells us that we must protect the existence of this self, and we start to pursue the objects of our desires, our wants and needs as individuals. This inevitably leads to varying degrees of greed, as we almost always place our own desires before those of others. Our own wants and needs always seem more important than the wants and needs of others.

Even if we do manage to cultivate some small amount of altruism, we tend to work to benefit others, to help them realize some of their desires, only after our own desires have first been met. The same ignorant notion of self is the source of hatred, or aversion, because anything that this flawed notion of self identifies as unpleasant we will work to avoid. Also, any other being that gets in the way of our accumulation of the objects of our desire will be identified as someone deserving of our hatred, to lesser or greater degree. When we engage in a consistent practice of shamatha meditation we begin to break down our own ignorance. When we search for this self that is separate from all other beings, we are unable to find proof of the inherent existence of this "I" that is so much more important than "others." Through meditation practice we eventually gain some degree of realization of the emptiness of self.

Then, we begin to see the inseparability between ourselves and all other beings. When we develop confidence in this realization, it becomes impossible to continue thinking and acting in ways that are selfish or self-centered. We naturally and spontaneously experience an increase in our loving-kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings. This eliminates our own tendencies toward desire and greed.

This experience of the breakdown of duality and the realization of the false separation of "I" and "other" leads us to a realization of oneness with all beings that completely precludes any possibility of aversion or hatred. Using shamatha meditation practice as the antidote, we are eventually able to completely counteract the three poisons of desire, aversion, and ignorance. We can eliminate our greed, hatred, and delusion, thereby digging out the very root of cyclic existence.

Lama Dudjom Dorjee. *Stillness, Insight and Emptiness: Buddhist Meditation from the Ground Up*. Boston and London: Snow Lion, 2013, 67–68.