

THE OTHER SIDE OF TRYING  
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Tibetan Buddhism is energy efficient to an extreme degree, aerodynamically designed to fly even in the worst psychological weather.

When we run out of good things to do, we can start looking at and absorbing all the so-called bad things, one by one. They contain their own demise, and more important, they contain the energy needed to fuel us on to greater awareness. If you read even a little in the Buddhist literature you will come across the Three Poisons or the Five Poisons

The three basic poisons are ignorance, attachment, and aversion. These are often expanded into the Five poisons by adding pride and jealousy to the three above, so we have ignorance, attachment, aversion, pride, and jealousy. In other words, our likes, dislikes, and all that we just ignore.

The Buddhists are very list oriented. Everything is always listed out, the eight this, the five that, and so on. These lists are very helpful, but only if you grasp the thread that binds them together. Lists seem invariably more advanced than I am. They are like a crib sheet and not a tutorial. Lists just kind of put me to sleep at first sight. I don't want to discuss lists here.

My only point in bringing them up is that a list like the Five Poisons is always accompanied by their inverse, the Five Wisdoms. In other words, the Five Poisons somehow contain the Five Wisdoms within them. How is that? And this is something worth considering, and not just idle talk, not just a "list" for lists sake. It is key information laid right out in the open and even pointed at. Nothing secret here, yet in the confusion of our day-to-day mind and busyness, it is hard to grasp what it means, so it might as well be secret.

The dharma is so cool. It never stops. Indeed it is the gift that keeps on giving. The farther I get into it, the more fluid and spontaneous I find the dharma is. I don't want to be particularly poetical here, but indeed, the dharma is the thread on which the beads of my life are strung. It has turned out that way.

And what is more amazing than to find that in the secret heart of all that ails us, deep in our vices (the Five Poisons) is just the energy we need to enlighten ourselves, and it is always there for when we need it. These poisons appear to be everything that holds us back from just becoming more aware, yet they contain the means for greater awareness. They are key. And we will never wake up or become aware by just crossing our fingers at these poisons and avoiding them.

The Five Poisons are like little time-capsules of energy embedded in our mindstream, waiting to be discovered, booster rockets that will take us where we most want to go, which is to greater awareness.

This secret stash of energy cannot be tapped by running away or denying the five poisons. That is what has us bound to them now, our attachment (via aversion) to them. I am not saying here to run out and strengthen the five poisons in your life. That would be a big mis-take of what I am pointing at here.

It is not the content of the five poisons that we should follow, but rather learning to know the true nature of the five poisons for ourselves is what is on our "to do" lists sometime in the future. How do we do that?

There is no better place to start that I know of than to begin to monitor our reactions as we react. It takes a little bit of practice, but not really all that much. And we can do it all day long, as they come up. We don't have to set a special time aside to work on becoming aware of our reactions.

All we have to do is live our regular day-by-day life with a little more awareness than perhaps we have been. We can log lots of practice time on this without scheduling it. It just happens and all we have to do is to become aware of it as it happens, rather than just simply react and get flung around.

Sure, in the beginning we will do more reacting than catching ourselves reacting, but what's new? Even a little awareness of our reactions pays big dividends, as you will see. We not only catch ourselves before we react big-time in some horrible little drama, and don't have to go there, but more important we begin to see into the center of what these reactions are all about. That is the point.

We learn to look into the three main poisons, our attachment to things, our aversion to things, and our tendency to ignore things (even though we know better) until they are out of hand. This amounts to what we like, what we don't like, and what we choose to ignore. There is nothing unknown or strange about these three. We all know them by heart, at least as experiences. We don't and have never known their true nature.

What we may not know is what makes them tick, and what we certainly do not know is their secret heart, the wisdom they contain and the energy that is released as we learn to know that wisdom.

We may search through life for the keys to our release, clinging to what we like and avoiding as much as possible what we don't care for, which is much like trying to ride a beach ball in the middle of a deep swimming pool. Good luck!

Meanwhile, if we will learn to look at the nature of these three poisons, our likes, dislikes, and that which we ignore, they contain not only everything we have always searched for, but also the energy we need to convert them into the awareness we require to become more enlightened.

I am not trying to preach here. I am just saying...



[Photo taken a day or so ago.]