

# 2018-09-30 Uprooting Greed Hatred And Delusion

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## SPEAKERS

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Today I want to talk about a topic that when I was practicing in Thailand and Burma was a frequent subject of the Dharma teaching. So frequent that after a while, I just kind of would tune out when these words were said, it was just, and now as in recent years, I have the impression that I am starting to mention these concepts more and more frequently. And I wonder whether, as I mentioned them, whether I'm kind of even talking about them kind of just kind of like, you know, glossing over them. But even more so I'm more concerned that you all listening to me, might be like how I was in Thailand and hear these and say, Oh, here we go, you know, you know, you know, whatever. And, but these are very important central teachings in the teachings of the Buddha and things that I do more. The reason I teach them more and more is the more I value. You have them as being really profound, more profound than I think you'll understand if you just hear what they are. So these are three words, three concepts, three movements of our minds that are called, usually referred to in English as greed, hatred and delusion. And they've been known to show up occasionally, occasionally, I'm sure all of us, you know, have been visiting a little bit and, and they're best considered to be umbrella terms, kind of categories, under which all kinds of other related mental movements are occurring. So greed is like a pretty big word, but you know, includes the mildest kind of movement of desire in some kind of unhealthy way. So a very minor it's also you know, something as strong as addiction. and other things like that. And so I want to talk about these three a bit today.

But first, I would like to tell two stories. First a story or a tale that the Buddha taught, and then an account from a conversation that is recording the suttas about these. So, the story has to do with a creature called a yaksha, yakkha and Pali and I, sometimes people refer to it's kind of a tree spirit. But in my telling of the story, I like to call this creature and ugly little runt of a troll. Since I'm Norwegian I'm allowed to and so This ugly little runt of a troll ends up going up to one of the heaven heavy, high heaven realms where the great Lord of the heavens named Brahma has a palace and a throne. But Brahma is away that day. So this little troll does something very disrespectful. And that is jumps up on Brahma's throne and sits there while the other gods in heaven up there, get kind of upset, because that's throne is reserved for a bomb drama. So they get a little bit angry, and they say you have to get off there that's only for a Brahma and as they get angry and express their anger, this troll gets bigger. And so the you know, the solution then is to get more angry. And so as they get more angry and more vehement about all this, this little What was an ugly little runt of a troll gets bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger and more beautiful, but stays on the throne. So after a while, the gods get kind of perplexed and decided to go find Brahma and ask, what are we going to you know, you know, tell them what's happening back home and they tell them the story, and Brahma says, oh, okay, I know what this

is about. So he goes back to his palace and walks up to the throne where this troll is sitting. And he says, He says, you know, greetings, there troll bows to him. I'm happy to see you, how's it going? And he's very kind and supportive, friendly to the troll. And as he does that, the troll starts to shrink and get smaller and smaller and smaller, and he just keeps being kind to him. And eventually a troll just kind of dissolved poof and vanishes in the air. So then Rama gets up on his throne.

And he says, to explain step one, that was an anger eating troll. And the more that you're angry, the bigger it gets. And so if you don't want it to be doing what it's doing, you have to stop feeding it. And being kind is one way and then it'll dissolve and go away. Very nice, right? And so it says something about how we relate to forces like greed, hate and delusion, have a lot to do with, you know, how they continue or how they don't continue. There are ways of feeding them. That will just make them bigger and bigger and kind of get caught in a spiral loop of just kind of self reinforcement. And there's ways of relating to them, where they begin to unwind, settle down, weaken and disappear and Knowing that difference has a lot to do with how the Dharma is understood. In fact, the Dharma is often sometimes said, to be seen for oneself in seeing that movement, freeing oneself from these forces of greed, hatred and delusion. There's a wonderful little passage where there's a wonderful kind of little little juicers liturgy nowadays, in books by monastics and describing what the Buddhist teachings are kind of, and they go something like this. The teachings visible are visible here now, of immediate result, inviting everyone to come and see onward leading and to be directly experienced by the wise. Then someone comes to the Buddha and said, are they anybody says, and how does this work this way? How are these teachings is Dharma Immediate visible here now. And he's the Buddha says, a person who is greedy, hating and diluted, overpowered by greed, hatred and delusion aims at one's own harm at the harm of others, at the harm of both, and that person suffers pain and grief in the mind. That person also leads a wicked way of life in actions, words and thoughts, and one does not no one's own true benefit, that of others and the benefit of both. Then he goes on. But when greed hatred and delusion are given up, when will not aim at one's own harm at the harm of others, or the harm of both. And one will not suffer pain and grief in one's mind. One will not lead in a week wicked life And one will understand one's own true benefit that of others in the benefit of both. In that sense is the teaching visible here now, of the immediate result, inviting, inviting one to come and see onward leading to be directly experienced by the wise. So it's, you know, it's pretty psych basic psychological, to talk about that the whole teachings can be seen with the presence and in the absence of greed, hate and delusion. It's, for some people, it's not very inspiring. It's possible to think of much more lofty and inspiring teachings. In fact, not a few Buddhists will prefer wonderful teachings of emptiness, non duality, great states of consciousness and jhanas and, and so forth. And it kind of really look at these exalted mind states as being kind of dead. is where it's really at. That's okay. But this is a powerful statement about the value of these ordinary states of mind, which are so ordinary in every day. So pedestrian, because they're so common, that maybe it's easy to overlook them as having great value. So the second story I want to tell has to do with someone who comes. And I don't think it's to the Buddha. I think it's let's see. Yeah. Yeah, it's a disciple of the Buddha named Ananda. So, someone from another Buddhist, another religious sect of the time comes to the Buddhist disciple and under.

And I, some people who read the story that is a little bit challenging and under and is using Buddhist terminology, to kind of somehow challenge him. And so he comes to Ananda and said, whose teaching is well proclaimed? Who is practicing? Well? And who are the fortunate people? Now, if this is a kind of a religious debate, you know, it has little bit to do with who are the who has the real who's the, what's the really true teachings whose teachings are really good, you know, the most ultimate then, you know, maybe he was ready for debate. And, and, and, and who are the people who are really practicing seriously and well, and what basically what practices are important, and who are the people who are really realized who really are, you know, have it some ultimate attainment? So, Ananda says in reply,

first I say what he doesn't say he doesn't say the boot a Buddhist teaching is well proclaimed. The Buddhists are the ones who practice well. And the Buddhists who have attained enlightenment are the fortunate ones. He's not that he's not going to reply by championing his religion, which I think is a very significant kind of thing that may be somewhat unusual for some people who are involved in the religion to want to think that there's this important than the best. So then he replies. I shall ask you a question in return. And you can answer any way you see fit. What do you think, as to those who teach a doctrine for the abandoning of greed, hatred and delusion? Is their doctrine well proclaimed or not? Or what do you think about this? And so he answers Well, I think their doctrine as well There's doctrine as well as proclaimed, Reverend sir. So it could be a little bit of a rhetorical trick. Because it could be that he thinks that there are more lofty teachings. But you can't say that ending greed, hate and delusion is something that's poorly proclaimed. Yeah, that's pretty good. That's maybe you know, and, and then he goes on and under says, Then what do you think? Those whose practice is directed to the abandoning of greed, hatred and delusion? Do they live a well practice life in this world or not? And the interlocutor says, I think they are in a practice living a life well practiced. And further, what do you think? Those who have greed, hatred and delusion or abandoned, cut off at the root made better Like a palm stump stump stump, brought to non existence, no longer liable to arise in the future again, are they the fortunate ones in the world or not? Yes, I do think, Reverend sir, that those are the fortunate ones in the world. And, and so, this is an example of a strategy that was used in ancient India and by the Buddha and others in inter religious dialogues, where people came to challenge them about their teachings are asked about the teachings. And sometimes, the Buddha would seldom champion himself, but rather would say what what do you what do you think about this or point to a principle, like the principle you know, someone from Glasgow who are the people who are enlightened Bruce Well, that's not really the question I want to answer. But, but there are people who are freed of greed, hatred and delusion. That is what I'm interested in. So this is so it doesn't kind of maybe satisfy every religious interest. And maybe there are more lofty states and experiences to be had. But maybe at least this should be the minimum.

At least this, don't overlook overcoming greed, hatred and delusion, on the way to something more lofty. And in fact, I've known people who've done that. And I've known people who've ended up causing tremendous harm in the world, because of going and emphasizing exalted states of meditation and different things. And then not really taking care of these forests of greed, hate and delusion, not knowing them, does, knowing how to practice with them, recognizing them, not having uprooted them and then causing harm. And then people are confused how could someone who is considered so enlightened do these things. And it's partly because of, you know, association of enlightenment to exalted states, rather than this ethical purification that the Buddha was interested in. So, one of the very interesting things about these greed, hatred and delusion is that the Buddha called them the three routes. And, and they're the three routes for all unwholesome or unskillful activities, speech and action and thought. And so, one of the metaphor of roots has association that you can if you take off pluck off the leaves of a weed, chances that weed will keep growing at me so if that's all you do, you know, it's not going to help much. Some plants if you cut off the cut them off at the at the soil level, the roots will re sprout and know where we are dealing with poison oak at our retreat center. And it doesn't work to just take off the leaves, it doesn't work to chop them off at the ground level. If you really want to be free of poison oak and not using best called herbicide you have to dig dig up the roots and pull them out by the roots. So the same thing with these things of greed, hate and delusion. If you take off the outermost expressions of them, restrain yourself from acting externally in these ways, but don't really go deep inside address the roots. Those roots sooner or later can sprout like poison oak and And they met at the Association of poison oak is used partly because the Buddha called greed, hate and delusion, poisons. And they are forces within us that harm that people who have them. You have people who have them and act on them are burning themselves his language he used to harming themselves. So

the idea in practice is to get down deeper than what's even commonly visible, certainly what's deeper than what's visible to other people, and what would you say and what you do, but also sometimes visible in the ordinary mind that we have are busy and running around. And that's one of the reasons we've met practice meditation is to be able to calm and center the mind enough to really be able to look deep down and the under story the underground to the roots so we can pull up the roots. Now one of the things about the routes is that this idea of routes That's fascinating, I think is that in the Buddhist analysis, whenever someone does deliberate deliberately does something that could be considered unethical, deliberately an expression of greed, unethical or unwholesome unskillful, something that deliberately causes harm in the world. It's always based on one of these three forces, greed, hatred and delusion. And, and the Buddhists say that, if it's greed and hatred, that's the root. It always comes along with delusion. delusions, always there with greed and hatred. I suppose the illusion can be there without, without greed and hatred and greed, greed and hatred but not the other way. And so, Part of the value of mindfulness is to begin being to bring bring the focus of attention to how these work in us. And rather than thinking of this as being bad news and depressing, this is the way of becoming free of them.

This is the way to learn how not to feed these things. Because the unexamined mind, when the mind is left alone, and without any attention, will all too easily feed the troll that we have. It's all too easy to get caught up in these very impulsive and powerful, authoritative forces within us of greed and all its various varieties of hatred and all its variety, some quite mild and in delusion in all its ways. So what As to do with mindfulness practice is not just see it kind of in the abstract, but to really feel how these work. And I put a lot of a lot of value on this idea of feeling, which means to really experience it somatically not just abstractly or ideas. But so how does it feel in your body? When you're caught in the grips of a very, very compulsive desire, something you strongly want? What does it feel somatically when you're caught in ill will towards anyone. What does it feel somatically to be caught in delusion. And it's possible over time to get more and more familiar with what this feels like. It can feel the physical feeling of being impelled or feeling of compulsion that some of them come with. It's possible to feel the fire of them, the agitation that they bring. And it's possible to feel especially with delusion, the ways in which they cloud the mind, or a cloud our sight, how we seeing the world through the filter of ideas, rather than seeing it directly. And many people wonder how am I going to know what delusion is so hard and diluted? So how could I know? I think again, this some almost semantic way of really understanding how perception works. You can feel the diff the distance that delusion brings between you and what you're perceiving what you're relating to. There's no direct contact, no direct Seeing no direct kind of sensing and experiencing the thing, but we actually can feel how we're seeing through a veil of ideas of concepts. And surprisingly enough, even non diluted ideas. Because some of us are very wise, even wise ideas can create distance because we're living in the concepts rather than seeing directly. And a huge part of mindfulness is learning to know what it's like to perceive to experience in a very direct, immediate way, without the filter of concepts. As we learn somatically what that feels like. Then we can feel and see the arising of a concept in the mind and see if it creates distance, or helps us be more connected to the experience. As vegans we feel somatically more then things like greed, hatred and delusion are felt to be a drag. The way that they drain us, the way that which they create stress and agitation, the way that we become so clear that after a while if any of you are economically Find that cost benefit analysis is not in their favor. That the benefits that you get that you're trying to get, most people are trying to get some benefit when they're acting out of greed, hate and delusion, that that benefit is not worth it. It causes more problems in the short term, and more problems in the long term, then really makes sense to live with and be with. And then to semantically have the experience of what the opposite of greed, hate and delusion are like to feel what it's like to have non greed, non hatred and non delusion. And appreciate that value that non greed is a again, it's a category word for a whole bunch of positive mental states that a person can have. Most commonly it's kind of in shorthand or you know, first

mentioned often generosity, non hatred, what's mentioned first is usually love or kindness or compassion, non delusion, its wisdom.

And these also can appear kind of abstract. And if you if we use those who mentioned these concepts too often people like you know, fall asleep and, and, and don't understand on appreciate how valuable they are how important they are. But if we have a somatic reference point for them and feel the goodness of them or the, or the warmth than the freedom that delight the ease that they come with, then it's kind of almost like a natural thing to move in those directions. When we do the cost benefit analysis, it's clear that living a life they started forces like generosity and kindness and wisdom. Just bring so much better, more benefit. to ourselves and others, it's really worth it. Even at times maybe when the short term, it seems like it's just too, you know, it takes too much work or, you know, it's easier just to snap at someone and get them to go away. So to be mindful, then, of the ways that these strange words, greed, hatred and delusion work for you. And you might have to choose different words, because some of us don't think of ourselves that way. But there might be other ways that kind of kind of synonyms or words in that in their family that work better for you. And so you might you're welcome to, you know, figure out different words to for it. And whatever seems helpful for you. Let me see if I there's the ancient texts in Buddhism come up with all these kind of synonyms or related words, if I can find it quickly, I'll read it. And here we go.

So you know, you're not gonna agree with all these words, but, but as you listen to them, just think of them when they operate in you, in ways that make you tight or caught up in them, or compulsive or operating you in such ways that they're easily like with different words for desire, greed. What happens to you when you're frustrated in your desires, it might be your desire is reasonable. But when you get when you're not fulfilled, that's often a cause for hatred for ill will so how do these work in you? As these unwholesome roots, so greed, liking, wishing, longing, fondness, affection, attachment, lust, cupidity, craving, passion. I'm only halfway through Should I stop? Self indulgence, possessiveness, avarice, desire for the five sense objects desire for wealth, offsprings fame, etc. Hatred, dislike, disgust, revulsion, resentment, grudge, Ill humor, vexation, irritability, antagonism, aversion, anger, wrath, and vengefulness. delusion stupidity, dullness, confusion, ignorance of what is essential, for example, the Four Noble Truths, prejudice, ideological dogmatism fanaticism, wrong views and conceit. And then to end on a positive note, I thought we would do then the commentarial list for that, what's called the wholesome, rich the good roots. So non greed, unselfishness, liberality, generosity, thoughts and actions of this here it says sacrifice and sharing renunciation and dispassion, non hatred, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, friendliness, forgiveness and forbearance and non delusion with insight, knowledge, understanding, intelligence, sagacity, discrimination, impartiality, impartiality and equanimity. So, my hoping giving this talk was to highlight the value of these pedestrian states and, and how profound they are for the teachings of the Buddha. Because I don't know anything that's more profound in terms of a spiritual life or wise life, then understanding and eradicating the roots of the ways that we cause harm to ourselves and to others. And I know nothing more profound than knowing how to act from the roots from the force inside of us that operate for the benefit ourselves in the benefit for others. This is a beautiful thing to consider and be part of. And I hope that as a community here, that we can live together in ways that benefit each other. And that for those of you who stay for the potluck, and I hope all of you stay, that you think of the food that's been offered by people who offered some food as coming from their generosity, and their non greed and for non hatred, and that, that food metaphorically is nourishing the forces inside of you of non hatred, non greed and non delusion. So, thank you