
While prejudice afflicts the mind.

As the text explains in these two lines, one will never know peace while prejudice afflicts the mind. One can relate the peace referred to here as the general peace of mind, or the peace of nirvana, the state of liberation. However it can also apply to the understanding of emptiness, as naturally abiding nirvana or peace is said to be emptiness. Therefore what is being implied here is that for as long as one holds prejudice in one's mind the realisation of emptiness cannot be obtained. Thus one must free one's mind from prejudice in order to gain the profound understanding of emptiness. Furthermore, whatever teaching one listens to has to serve the purpose of combating and overcoming the delusions in one's mind.

As the great masters have mentioned over and over again, when a teaching serves to subdue the mind by serving as an opponent to the delusions in one's mind, then the teachings have worked for oneself.

As the commentary says:

If one is not unprejudiced one will fail to understand a good explanation [so one must have an unprejudiced mind] because of thinking it is someone else's.

If one is prejudiced towards the teacher then that element of prejudice comes with the delusion of aversion. If one has an aversion towards a teacher then one will never be able to really gain knowledge from them, because there will always be the blockage of not being open to receiving the qualities of the teaching. Thus by being prejudiced, which results in aversion towards the expounder of the teaching, one will not derive the benefits of their knowledge.

2. *Intelligence*: Furthermore one has to have a keen interest, and intelligence.

One must have the intelligence to distinguish between good and bad explanations, otherwise one may reject correct explanations and adopt incorrect ones.

This is in line with what I mentioned earlier about the personal advice I give to people who want to go and listen to other teachers. As I mentioned there, it is fine to go off and listen to different teachers, but one has to have a good foundation within oneself, otherwise the fault mentioned here would arise.

3. *Having interest*: As the commentary explains:

A keen interest in good explanations is needed, for without that one will make no effort and simply be like the lifeless picture of a human being.

A portrait of a person will always remain a portrait, and if one does not have a keen interest in good explanations, or go out of one's way to gain any qualities or so forth one would be like a lifeless picture of a person.

4 and 5. *Being appreciative and attentive to the teacher and the teaching*: As the text says:

One should appreciate and be attentive to the teaching and the teacher.

In the Tibetan word for 'appreciate' there is an element of respect. So appreciation can also refer to respect.

A listener with these five qualities is said to be a vessel for the teaching. Someone with all these attributes will recognize the teacher's good qualities and fully understand the clarity and orderliness of the teaching, as well as the good intentions of other listeners. The teacher's lack of self-interest and the like will not be seen as faults and other than as they are, but only as virtues. Nor will the good qualities of the listeners be construed as faults.

When a listener has these five qualities then they will be able to anticipate the good qualities of the teacher and thus be fully able to understand the clarity, the orderliness, and the sequence of the teachings. Thus they will be able to relate to the teaching in a clear way. Without the five qualities one would not be able to derive the essence of the teaching from the teacher. If the teacher has the right qualities, but the listeners lack the five qualities then even the teacher's good qualities will be seen as faults, rather than as being able to benefit others. Whereas if the listener has these five qualities then even what are seeming faults can be seen as qualities. Thus there would only be of benefit for the listeners.

At this point one can also relate these five qualities of the listener to the qualities of the disciple that are mentioned in the Lam Rim teachings, such being free from the three faults and acquiring the six mental intentions. As mentioned earlier with other topics what is explained here in the *Four Hundred Verses* is related to the Lam Rim topics. It is very useful if we can see that relationship and then try to practice them hand in hand.

1.1.1.2. DISADVANTAGES OF NOT POSSESSING THE PREREQUISITE QUALITIES

Although the teacher may be perfect, if the listeners lack the prerequisite qualities, they will not recognize their own faults but will consider faults as virtues and virtues as faults.

He explained existence and its causes, 277
The means to peace and peace itself.
What people do not understand
Is seen as the Subduer's [fault].

The specific explanation of the faults, of the listeners not possessing the prerequisite qualities are explained in this section. For example, if I were to explain the faults of attachment and desire it would be hard for some to accept, and they wouldn't be really happy about it. But if they were to hear about the qualities of desire and attachment then that's something that would be very interesting, and they would be really happy to take that as being good advice.

The Subduer taught about worldly existence in the form of the five contaminated and suffering aggregates and about true sources, the cause of worldly existence.

This quote from the text relates to the first line of the verse. For us human beings worldly existence is the five contaminated and suffering aggregates, and the true sources are the causes for those who dwell in the worldly existence. Thus this first line covers the first two of the four noble truths, true suffering and true origination. True suffering in relation to living beings is the suffering that is experienced in relation to the contaminated

aggregates, which are in the nature of suffering and are thus called true suffering. The causes for the contaminated aggregates are delusions and karma, which are true originations.

He taught about true paths, the means to peace, such as the eightfold path of the Exalted, and also about peace liberation and nirvana.

The list of the eightfold path of the Exalted is 1) correct view, 2) correct thought, 3) correct speech, 4) correct action, 5) correct livelihood, 6) correct effort, 7) correct mindfulness and 8) correct meditative stabilisation. The noble eightfold path includes the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. The causes for peace or liberation, and the path leading to that is, as explained here, the eightfold path and so forth.

The main cause to achieve liberation is the three trainings, which are, as mentioned earlier, the training of morality, the training of meditative concentration and the training of wisdom. It is very important that we relate to these to our practice. In thinking about morality, one needs to find out what it is. How can one practise morality? What is meditative concentration? In this way we try to understand morality, meditative concentration and wisdom, and try to apply the understanding to our practice. It is said that wisdom leads us to gaining liberation. Contemplating how to obtain wisdom is crucial for our practice, for without wisdom it would be very hard for us to gain the further qualities and intelligence that are the causes for obtaining liberation.

Just by simply focusing on an object like the breath and being in a quiet meditative state, cannot in itself increase qualities in the mind. The three trainings refer particularly to the three higher trainings, or the three extra trainings. The higher training of wisdom relates to the wisdom of gaining special insight, the higher training of concentration relates to obtaining calm abiding and the higher training of morality refers to taking vows such as the self liberation vows and other vows based on that. Thus engaging in these three trainings becomes the ultimate means for obtaining the highest goals of liberation and enlightenment.

All three higher trainings are dependent on each other, and the later trainings are all related to the earlier trainings. In order to obtain special insight in relation to selflessness or emptiness one must first obtain the state of calm abiding, because without attaining calm abiding there is no possibility of attaining special insight. In order to achieve calm abiding one must first train in meditative concentration, so as to be able to concentrate, and thus further develop meditative concentration. To obtain calm abiding, one must first train in morality because without a moral basis one cannot attain calm abiding.

With a lack of morality a person is completely distracted and immersed in indulging themselves in the sensual pleasures. When one is completely immersed in the sensual pleasures, the mind is constantly busy with excitement. Thus, without morality there is no possibility for the mind to withdraw and concentrate, because it is always influenced by the excitement of sensual pleasures. To be able to sit and meditate one needs a solid foundation on which to be able to concentrate; one must

refrain from the very gross levels of sensual pleasures that distract the mind, and this is done by observing certain vows, and abiding by ethical codes. When we refrain from actively indulging physically, then we are mentally withdrawing from those pleasures, and thus the mind is able to concentrate.

When one engages in concentration, one must first of all deal with the gross level of excitement within meditative concentration. Being able to distinguish and overcome the gross levels of distraction can be done by developing calm abiding. Single-pointed concentration is being able to focus on an object single-pointedly for as long as one wishes. However there are still very subtle levels of distraction or excitement within oneself which can be overcome only by obtaining special insight. These subtle distractions are basically the two types of grasping, which are grasping at the self and grasping at phenomena. These two graspings are only overcome by acquiring special insight. That is how the three higher trainings subdue the mind so that one can achieve liberation.

He taught the four noble truths for those who seek liberation, but ordinary people who make no effort to hear, think and meditate are unaware that they do not possess all the qualities of a suitable vessel. Whatever they fail to understand correctly, they see as the Subduer's fault, saying he did not explain it in sufficient detail.

One must really pay attention to this, and reflect and see how a lack of understanding of the teaching is not the Buddha's fault. This does not relate solely to the time of the Buddha. When we look into our present day situation we hear many people making critical comments about a teacher. These people may go to a teaching given by scholarly geshe who have studied a lot, and who really know their subject. When they listen to the teacher these people complain that the teacher does not know how to teach, implying that the teacher lacks knowledge of the subject. One must understand that those who make these comments and complaints about real scholars are actually showing that what is really lacking is the ability from the listener's side to clearly understand what is being taught. Because they don't see that as a fault the blame goes to the teacher who, they say, doesn't have the skill or the knowledge to teach.

However, merely that does not mean the Teacher is to blame. A blind person's inability to see is not the sun's fault.

Explicitly, the Teacher being referred to here is the Buddha, and as he has an omniscient mind, he has the capacity, the skilful means, and the knowledge to propound the teaching exactly in accordance with the listener's capacity. Thus the Teacher, the Subduer, or the Buddha has full knowledge and understanding. However listeners who have not even the slightest qualities to reflect upon and grasp the teaching, might see it as the Subduer or the Buddha lacking the knowledge or skill of teaching.

As the analogy clearly illustrates, a blind person's inability to see is not the sun's fault. If a blind person cannot see in broad daylight they cannot say that there is not enough light to see. The fault lies in the blind person

not being able to see and not the fault of the sun not shining forth with enough light. The analogy is to be understood thus: those who are blind with ignorance lack the wisdom, and their lack of understanding is not the fault of the teacher who has the full qualities.

1.1.1.3. ELIMINATING ARGUMENTS

This is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.3.1. Proving the Subduer's omniscience

1.1.1.3.2. Showing that others' teachers are not authentic

1.1.1.3.1. PROVING THE SUBDUER'S OMNISCIENCE

This heading has three subdivisions

1.1.1.3.1.1. Appropriateness of being glad about the teaching of emptiness which annihilates suffering and its sources

1.1.1.3.1.2. Why there is no liberation in any teaching other than the Teacher's

1.1.1.3.1.3. Means to gain certainty regarding extremely hidden matters taught by the Teacher

1.1.1.3.1.1. Appropriateness of being glad about the teaching of emptiness which annihilates suffering and its sources

Even from the outline one can derive the meaning that the teaching of emptiness relates to gaining an understanding of the wisdom of emptiness. Once gained, this understanding annihilates suffering and its sources, and that relates to the first two noble truths.

Assertion: Although the Subduer's discussion of high rebirth is extremely clear, we do not understand or approve of his discussion of definite goodness, since the teaching that everything is without inherent existence refutes the very nature of things.

Answer:

*These strange people all agree that by
Giving up everything one attains nirvana.
For what reason do they dislike
That which puts an end to all?* 278

The assertion is from the non-Buddhist schools who appreciate one part of the Buddha's teachings. However when it comes to the explanation of emptiness, and how things lack inherent existence, they are not able to understand that.

It is of course is extremely clear that even the non-Buddhist schools assert higher rebirth in god realms and so forth, and that they also have a particular means to achieve these higher rebirths. However even though they talk about liberation, the non-Buddhist schools do not present a clear method that leads to liberation. Also the liberation that they actually talk about does not even approach the liberation that is explained in the Buddhist teachings.

The Buddha explains clearly the method for obtaining liberation, which is gaining the realisation of emptiness. Through gaining the realisation of emptiness then the main cause of samsara, which is samsara itself as well as the causes for samsara, (which are the first two noble truths, the true sufferings and true originations) is overcome. True origination, in particular, is completely annihilated by the wisdom realising emptiness, and without the wisdom realising emptiness there is no possibility of removing true originations.

These strange Samkhyas, Vaisesikas and the like, who believe in liberation, all agree that one attains nirvana by giving up attachment to everything associated with disturbing emotions, such as pleasure, pain and so forth.

The non-Buddhist schools such as the Samkhyas and the Vaisesikas do believe in liberation and they also believe that one must give up attachment and all the disturbing emotions in order to attain liberation. So, they agree with us as far as accepting liberation, and that one must overcome disturbing emotions to obtain liberation, are concerned. Where we differ is explained in the following.

The second part of the explanation given in the text points out the absurdity of not liking the explanation of emptiness:

Why do they dislike it when the person and aggregates are said to be empty of existence by way of their own entities? The understanding of this destroys all that is associated with disturbing emotions. Therefore they should be glad.

This is pointing out the absurdity of, on the one hand, accepting liberation and that one must overcome all the disturbing emotions to achieve liberation, but not accepting a specific method of overcoming or annihilating the disturbing emotions or delusions. What they don't accept is the lack of inherent existence in relation to persons and phenomena. For as long as the grasping at the self of person and phenomena remain the delusions that are the obstacle to obtaining liberation will remain in the mental continuum. Thus liberation cannot be obtained.

What is being pointed out here is that if one wishes to achieve liberation then why wouldn't one naturally want to adopt the ultimate method for gaining liberation, which is the ultimate method for eliminating the disturbing emotions and delusions within one's mind? As the teachings explain, grasping at the inherent existence of a person is grasping at the self, and grasping at the inherent existence of phenomena, such as the aggregates and so forth, is grasping at phenomena. For as long as that grasping is there the delusions will remain in the mind. And in order to overcome that one must gain an understanding of the lack of inherent existence in relation to both the person and phenomena. That understanding of the lack of inherent existence then becomes the wisdom, the knowledge that is the direct antidote for overcoming the subtle obscurations in the mind and thus obtaining liberation.

As the commentary quotes from the sutra;

Sutra says:

In nirvana there are no phenomena.

Whatever does not exist then never existed.

The suffering of those with ideas of existence and non-existence

Who act accordingly will not be pacified.

Since only the Buddha's words contain undistorted statements about suchness, and Samkhyas and so forth do not make even the slightest mention of it, one should recognize it [the Buddhas words] as a unique teaching.

1.1.1.3.1.2. Why there is no liberation in any teaching other than the Teacher's

Question: If these strange people all agree that one attains nirvana by giving up everything, what difference is there between you and the Followers?

Answer: They are different in that they merely have the wish to give everything up but do not know how to do so.

*How will one who does not know
The means to give it up, do so?* 279
*Certainly, therefore, the Subduer said
There is no peace in any other [teaching].*

How can those belonging to other systems give up cyclic existence while they cling to the wrong methods? They do not know that the means to give it up is to understand that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. Therefore certainly with this in mind the Subduer said, "The first practitioner of virtue has come about thus. The second and third have come about thus. The fourth has come about thus. Others' doctrines lack such practitioners of virtue." On account of this he said, "There is no peace in any teaching other than this."

This is referring to the stages of realising emptiness that are gained along the path. In essence, what is being explained here is how the Buddha's teaching clearly explains the method of gaining the realisation of emptiness. His clear explanation of how things are empty of inherent existence is the ultimate method for attaining liberation. This, in summary, is what is being explained here. As the great master Nagarjuna explained, without gaining the realisation of emptiness there is no possibility of gaining liberation.

Because the non-Buddhist schools do not have any explanations of emptiness there could not be any realisations gained from an understanding of emptiness, and thus liberation cannot be obtained. The uniqueness of the Buddha's teaching is in the explanation of voidness or emptiness, which is the ultimate means for gaining liberation, and the only way to gain liberation is explained clearly in the Buddha's teachings.

To understand further of how the realisation of emptiness serves as the ultimate technique for attaining liberation: the main obstacle to attaining liberation is the subtle delusion of grasping at a self. For as long as there is a grasping at the self all the faults of samsara of cyclic existence will ensue from that grasping at the self. Thus in order to overcome the grasping at the self one must develop the wisdom that completely contradicts the wrong view of the grasping at the self. The only thing that can completely annihilate grasping at the self is that which completely contradicts that view of grasping at a self. Without overcoming the wrong conception of grasping at the self one cannot overcome the actual grasping at the self itself. Thus to completely overcome the grasping at the self one must have an understanding of selflessness, which is the direct opponent of the wrong view. Thus gaining that realisation of selflessness becomes the ultimate means and technique for completely eradicating the delusions of grasping at a self at the very subtlest level. That then becomes a cause to attain liberation.

1.1.1.3.1.3. Means to gain certainty regarding extremely hidden matters taught by the Teacher

*Whoever doubts what the Buddha said
About that which is hidden
Should rely on emptiness
And gain conviction in him alone.* 280

Phenomena can be categorised into three types: obvious phenomena, which can be perceived directly, slightly hidden phenomena, and hidden phenomena.

An example of obvious phenomena is a vase, which is called an obvious phenomena because one does not have to rely on any inference or reasoning in order to perceive it. One basically perceives a vase with the direct perception of the eye-consciousness, and one does not need more than this direct perception to prove the existence of a vase.

However the nature of the vase such as its impermanence or its empty nature cannot be perceived directly with the eye-sense perceptions, or any other direct perceptions. These aspects of the vase are not obvious phenomena, as they can be only perceived through inference or reasoning. Thus they are called slightly hidden phenomena.

The subtleties of karma, which is the subtleties of the cause and effect sequence that takes over many lifetimes is said to be very hidden phenomena. We cannot perceive them through general inference, reasoning or logic. Rather one must refer to the Buddha's teachings and accept the Buddha as an omniscient mind. We can then gauge the authenticity of the Buddha's teachings and accept the workings of the subtleties of karma on that basis.

I will leave the explanation of this for our next session. I covered this particular topic when I taught the tenets.¹ From my side I felt that I gave quite a good explanation, and soon after that His Holiness visited and he referred exactly to the points that we had covered earlier in our sessions. It would be good if you could refer to this section of the tenets notes and then maybe in the next session when we come to the explanation of the points it will be easier.

The three types of phenomena, how one perceives these different levels of phenomena, how they relate to the citations of the Buddha's teachings, how it is free from the three types of reasonings and the three types of investigations are actually very important points which come up in many other parts of the teachings. So it is very useful and important that we can have a good understanding of this.

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¹ On 19 June 2001.