
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
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འགྲུབ་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་སྟེ།

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Reinforce your motivation by thinking "I shall attain the state of Buddhahood, free of all faults and possessing all excellent qualities in order to benefit other beings, and for this reason I listen to this profound teaching on the stages of the path to enlightenment".

The Attainment Of The State Of Liberation

Last week we discussed the literal meanings of nirvana or liberation, and samsara or cyclic existence, also the way sentient beings are bound to this cyclic existence.

The meaning of achieving the state of liberation is the ending of the continuation of the cycle of taking birth through the force or influence of contaminated karma and delusions. The attainment of the state of liberation is when this continuation of the birth process by force of karma and delusions ceases to exist.

Delusions And Karma Driving Our Daily Actions

What does it mean when it says "under the force or grip of karma and delusions"? This is very clear if we examine our experiences and activities throughout the day. We can clearly see how we are under the force or grip of karma and delusions because there is no real personal independence or true freedom. Rather it appears that there is some kind of force which continually influences us to undertake an endless variety of activities. If we examine our activities we see the force or motivation behind all our actions is mental delusions which are in the form of afflictive emotions such as desire, anger, and so on. Each one of these forms of delusions has the capacity to dominate our thinking to the extent that our mind becomes fixated on an object, causing us to lose sight of the truth (not knowing what is skilful or unskilful; good or bad) which takes away any moment of calmness and happiness in the mind.

Generally speaking karmic actions are the inevitable result of delusions, and in this way many karmic actions we create due to the motivation of mental delusions can serve as cause for future rebirth. Therefore it is said unless we can overcome delusions and karmic actions, we cannot stop the cycle of existence. It is very important, therefore, to see how mental delusions and karmic actions are not only source of future suffering, but also the source of immediate suffering, destroying mental peace and happiness.

If we always remind ourselves that delusions and the karma that we create are the main things we need to overcome, then any meditational or other spiritual practice can be very effective in terms of enhancing calmness and happiness in the mind.

Three Poisonous Minds As The Root Of All Suffering In Life

More than external or outer conditions, it is the internal conditions that are important in determining whether we experience happiness or suffering in life. As mentioned before, all misery arises from the conditions in the mind, which is within oneself. The inner conditions are the three types of delusions known as the three poisonous minds. They are called the three poisonous minds, because they are just like a poison. If we consumed a physical poison our life would be finished. Similarly if we have these three poisonous minds residing in our continuum, there is no real inner moment of peace and happiness. These three poisonous minds kill inner peace and happiness.

In this way we can see that we have a choice. If we think very clearly, we can understand that rather than being at the mercy of those three poisonous minds, we can take control by overpowering them. If we wish to have happiness and calmness in the mind there is really no other option. We have to challenge those three poisonous minds and win over them. Allowing them to control our minds is like losing our rights or freedom.

Therefore it is important to be fully aware of our state of mind or thought. Just knowing that our own thought or state of mind can be an immediate cause of suffering and restlessness, enables us to realise that we also possess the best tools or equipment to find lasting peace and happiness within. If one develops this self-knowledge it is even possible to see the source of lasting peace and happiness within the mind almost as clearly as an outer form can be seen with our eyes.

The Wish For Liberation Arises From Seeing The Faults Of Samsara

Making the effort to reach liberation, depends upon developing the wish to attain the liberation. To clearly understand this think of a prisoner to wishing to escape from prison. Before the prisoner begins to look for a way

to escape he has to have the wish to be free from prison. Without this desire to be free from prison, there is no reason to make an attempt to escape. To have a desire to be free from prison, he must have some reason, and must see some disadvantages of remaining in prison.

Therefore unless one truly sees the faults or defects of cyclic existence or samsara, one will not have a true, genuine wish to be free of cyclic existence. Without such a wish for liberation, there will be no effort to find the path which is the means to attain liberation or to free oneself from cyclic existence.

Upper And Lower Rebirth Are Equally A Source Of Suffering

It is said that a wise person regards both higher and lower rebirth with the same amount of fear. In order to generate a true wish to attain liberation from cyclic existence, all realms must be seen as part of cyclic existence, and therefore the same as the source or cause of suffering.

Contemplating The Faults Of Cyclic Existence

As to this contemplation of the faults of cyclic existence there are two main subjects

1. Four noble truths
2. Twelve dependent arisings

The Four Noble Truths

Regarding the four noble truths, the original source of this is first wheel of the dharma which Guru Shakyamuni Buddha turned in Varanasi to his five main disciples.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said:¹

This is noble truth of suffering.

This is noble truth of its origin.

This is noble truth of its cessation.

This is noble truth of the path to cessation.

Etymology Of Noble Truths

¹The Tibetan translation from Trijang Rinpoche of this famous verse is:

དག་སྒོར་དག།

འདི་ནི་སྣུག་བསྐྱེད་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།

འདི་ནི་ཀུན་འབྱུང་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།

འདི་ནི་འགོག་པ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།

འདི་ནི་ལམ་འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པའོ།

They are called the four noble truths because they are realised by the noble or arya beings as being the actual truth. Therefore these four are known as four noble truths.

Etymology Of Arya Or Superior Being

Arya beings are literally known as superior beings. The qualities that distinguish a superior being is that they have a direct realisation of four noble truths, whereas ordinary or common beings do not have such a direct perception. So one reason why an arya is called a "superior being" is because they are superior to ordinary being in terms of their direct perception of the four noble truths.

Another reason is that as a result of this direct perception of the four noble truths and the ultimate truth of selflessness, they have freed themselves from the control of self grasping which is the misapprehension of ultimate reality.

We should remember by heart the names of the four noble truths.

Geshe-la wants to thank everyone for doing the written test. It seems that everyone has done very well.

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