

Study Group - "Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by generating the thought of seeking the highest enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Along with this bodhicitta mind generate the motivation of putting the profound teachings we are studying into practice, in order to achieve the goal of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

How to Develop Space Like Meditative Equipose On Emptiness

We have now basically finished the four essential points of Ascertaining the Object of Negation, the Pervasion, the Lack of Truly One, and the Lack of Truly Many. When engaging in these four points of analysis the object of negation has to be clearly identified and kept in mind, in order to investigate whether or not it is possible for it to exist. If it does exist then the only possibility is for it to exist as either one with the aggregates, or different from the aggregates. There is absolutely no third possibility.

One must be very certain that these two ways of existing cover all possibilities. For instance if a cow is lost, it is not good enough to conclude that it cannot be found because somebody said so. One must actually go and look for the cow in all the possible places where it could be. Let us say there are only two possible directions where the cow can be found, and one has gone to both, and is still unable find the cow. One can then be certain that the cow cannot be found.

Similarly, by depending on the reasoning of whether the object exists either as one or as many, when it is found that neither are possible then one has gained the definite knowledge that the object cannot exist. The conclusion that one draws is that the inherently existing 'I', which until now has existed so concretely and rigidly that one can almost touch it, does not in fact really exist.

With regard to the initial experience of gaining the realisation of the lack of an inherently existent self, it is said that for someone with a sharp mind, the experience is like finding a treasure. For someone with a dull mind, the experience is like losing a treasure. There is nothing wrong with that. If this feeling of loss is accompanied by some sense of fright or fear there is nothing wrong with that either.

The Lam Rim commentaries mention that when the high Lama Sherab Sengye realised this

ultimate view, he experienced fear and held onto the collar of his monk's shirt. Lama Tsong Khapa, who foresaw this, said that Sherab Sengye was holding on to the conventional truth of his shirt collar out of the fear he experienced on realising emptiness.

When experiencing realisation of the view, the thing to be prevented is allowing any thought that one has gained true realisation of the view, or that this is the final realisation, to arise. Thoughts such as these should not be cultivated.

During the course of meditating on emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence, it is important that one's apprehension of the lack of inherent existence is very strong and very tight. At the same time the appearance to one's mind is just a mere absence of inherent existence. This mere absence is an emptiness, like a vacuum. With that tight mode of apprehension on the emptiness of inherent existence, and the appearance in one's mind of the emptiness of inherence existence, one tries to maintain continuity of one's meditation. In this manner one engages in the space-like meditative equipose on emptiness.

While meditating, all practitioners have to be alert for any sign of the mode of apprehension becoming weaker, or the clarity in the mode of apprehending emptiness fading. If this occurs one has to arise from the meditation, and again apply the four essential points, trying to re-establish the view of emptiness in one's mind as before. Through this one again engages in meditative equipose on emptiness, which consists of two qualities, the mode of apprehension, and the appearance in one's mind. The mode of apprehension with respect to emptiness has to be tight, and the appearance in one's mind is just a sense of a vacuum, empty, a mere absence of true existence.

When one gains the realisation of emptiness in meditative equipose, it is said the type of emptiness that one experiences is space-like. This is because the experience of emptiness in meditative equipose is like space. What one experiences is just like an empty space, a voidness which is just the non-affirming negative phenomena emptiness of true existence. Apart from that emptiness there is nothing else. There is no appearance of any other thing in one's mind. Realising

that is experiencing space-like emptiness. As one is experiencing only emptiness, there is no experience of even nominal or conventional phenomena, not even of one's conventional self or 'I'. In the meditative equipoise on emptiness there is only one experience, emptiness, in the sense of the negation of all true existence. One just experiences that and no other phenomena. However, this does not mean that one has fallen into the extreme view of nihilism in the sense of negating the conventional truth. There should be no doubts about having fallen into the extreme of nihilism.

As much as possible one should try to close the gap between the mind and the object. When meditating on emptiness, one tries to focus the mind on emptiness, so that the mind is merged with, or dissolved into emptiness, and the mind and the object become one. Generally speaking, the subject and the object are two separate objects. However when engaging in space-like meditative equipoise on emptiness it is most important that one's mind is fully absorbed into, and becomes one with, emptiness, rather than the mind being here and the emptiness being there. In this meditation the only thing that appears in the mind is an emptiness just like an empty space; there is no appearance of any relative or conventional object.

In fact, in most meditation practices one's mind has to be single-pointedly fixed on the object. There are some meditations, which are an exception to this rule, where we do not merge our mind with an object - for example when we generate compassion.

With this we finish the teachings on how to meditate on the space-like emptiness

422.331.221.2 When Not In Meditation How To See Things As Illusory

We shall now discuss how to engage in the magician's illusion-like emptiness during the post-meditation period.

On arising from meditative equipoise, having realised mere emptiness, one checks what in fact can exist. In other words, in the meditative equipoise on emptiness, one has negated the object of negation, and through this realised the negation of that which exists truly or inherently.

Having negated all this, in the subsequent period when one checks what remains, what one sees is just a mere 'I', a mere self. Saying 'mere' indicates that it does not exist from the side of the basis of designation. In other words, it is the merely designated 'I' that exists. Even though this 'I' may still appear to one's mind as inherently existent, one knows it **cannot** be inherently existent. Therefore, in the period subsequent to the meditation all things appear to the mind as being like a magician's illusions. They may appear to be inherently existent, but in reality they lack that inherent existence.

When a magician manifests various objects, such as cows and horses, he knows that

they are not true and just illusory, yet he still 'sees' them. Even though they are false appearances, they still look like a real horse, or cow, which is capable of movement. In the same way, in the post-meditation period everything appears like a magician's illusion, in the sense that although they lack true inherent existence, they appear to the mind as being inherently existent.

Just as the magician's illusory objects can move and function like real things, this merely designated 'I' is also created as a nominally existent 'I' which can create virtuous and non-virtuous actions, and which can also experience the result of these virtuous and non-virtuous actions. In short, in the post-meditation period although all the objects one experiences are empty, just like a magician's illusions they appear to exist.

The analogy of the magician's illusions is commonly used to explain the stages of emptiness. There are some similarities between the magician's illusions and the experience of realising of emptiness. For instance, if the magician's illusion is created through the use of a substance which affects the eyesight of the spectators, in terms of their perception, there are three categories of people:

1. Spectators whose eyes are affected. For these people the illusions appear real, and they may also believe that the illusions are real.
2. The magician himself. Even though he may see the illusion, he will not think it is real.
3. Outsiders for whom there is neither the appearance, nor the thought of believing it is there.

Likewise with the realisation of emptiness, there are three categories of people.

1. Ordinary sentient beings, who have not gained the realisation of emptiness, to whom the objects appear as inherently existent, and who apprehend these things as being inherently existent.
2. Ordinary sentient beings who have gained the realisation of emptiness would see the objects as being apparently inherently existent, but they do not believe or apprehend them to be inherently existent.
3. Superior beings, such as beings in meditative equipoise on emptiness with a direct realisation of emptiness. For these beings there is no appearance of things as being inherently existent, nor is there any apprehension of holding things as inherently existent.

This analogy of the magician's illusions is a very good example to help understand the meaning of emptiness. If we consider an analogy of where the magician uses a substance which affects the perception of the spectators, or which can affect the object the magician uses such as a pebble or a piece of wood. Once the magician uses his power on that object, the spectator automatically sees what the magician wants

them to see.

Likewise, ordinary beings always see things as being inherently existent. The cause of that is in their mind, which is affected by the latency of ignorance. For that reason the appearance of inherent existence cannot just cease. In the analogy, as soon as the magician stops using his power on the object, one sees only the object and not the illusion of a horse or cow. Likewise, for a superior being engaged in the meditative equipoise of emptiness, there is no appearance of the inherent existence of things.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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