
Thus, even though the practices explained here are based on the same practices prescribed explicitly for medium scope beings, because the intention here is to lead the practitioner to the practices of the great scope, these practices are referred to as being in common with medium scope beings and not practices explicitly for medium scope beings.

Having explained the difference between practices explicitly for medium scope beings and those practices held in common with medium scope beings, the actual attitude for the practitioner would also be different. One who is training explicitly in the medium scope path would have an attitude of practising as described in the Four Noble Truths and so forth, which are the means to overcome the delusions. The motivation of those practising to achieve that goal would be that of achieving liberation, a state where all the delusions within one's mind are extinguished, resulting in one's own salvation or liberation.

On the other hand, the attitude of beings undertaking medium scope practices shared with the great scope – such as understanding the Four Noble Truths – would be to overcome the delusions for the purpose of achieving enlightenment so that one can benefit all sentient beings. The goal they seek is different, so the motivation for seeking that goal is also different.

With this explanation, one can also come to understand the difference between the lower vehicle and the greater vehicle.

The training of the mind in the stages of the path held in common with the beings of the medium scope is further divided into four main outlines. The first is the actual training in the reflections, the second is the measure of having produced that mind, the third is dispelling misconceptions about the mind striving for liberation, and the fourth is resolving the nature of the path that leads to liberation.

The first subdivision – the actual training and the reflections – is further subdivided into two: the identification of the mind that strives for liberation, and the methods for developing that mind. It is good to gain an understanding from the outline itself.

The identification of the mind that strives for liberation refers to beings who are practising medium scope with the goal is to achieve liberation. Under this subdivision, the text is further divided into two sub-headings: identification of the meaning of liberation, and how one strives for that. Under this first sub-heading, the text explains that liberation means freedom from bondage, freedom from what binds us to cyclic existence, which is karma and delusions. Under the power or influence of the aggregates, the physical body and the mind are reborn in any of the three realms. Cyclic existence is categorised into three realms, or the six types of rebirths. In terms of manner of how one is reborn into the six types of rebirths, there are four means of taking rebirth or being born.

What we must understand here is that what binds us to cyclic existence are the contaminated aggregates – they bind us to this cycle of being reborn again and again, in any of the six types of rebirths.

When we examine how a single being is bound into cyclic existence, we can understand it more vividly. If one takes oneself as an example, the contaminated aggregates – physical and mental contaminated aggregates – would be what we refer to as cyclic existence itself; the one that is bound to the physical and mental aggregates is ourselves as a being; and what binds us to the contaminated aggregates is the delusions and karma within oneself. So under the influence of the delusions and karma, one is bound to the contaminated aggregates, which serve as a basis for us to experience all the various types of suffering.

We can use the analogy of someone tied by a rope to a tree. The tree represents cyclic existence, or samsara – our contaminated aggregates. The person tied to the tree represents the person bound to cyclic existence, and the rope binding them to the tree represents the delusions and karma. If a person bound to a tree wishes to be free, the chains or rope have to be severed. Once that occurs, the person will be free from the bondage of being bound to the tree.

Similarly, for one who wishes to be free of cyclic existence – of being bound to the sufferings experience in relation to the contaminated aggregates – one must sever the bonds of delusions and karma. Once the bonds of delusions and karma are severed, one obtains what is called liberation.

As we can see from our own situation, for as long as we are under the influence of delusions and karma, we have no real freedom from sickness, ageing, death and so forth. We are completely bound by the sufferings that come with the contaminated aggregates. This situation will continue for as long as we possess the contaminated aggregates, which are bound by delusions and karma. We have no real freedom. If we want to be free, we need to overcome the situation, which means severing the binding factors of delusions and karma. As the text explains, freedom from rebirth impelled by karma and the delusions is liberation. And the desire to obtain that freedom is the mind intent on liberation.

The details of the various types of suffering experienced in the cyclic existence will be spelled out in more detail later in the text. However, we can reflect on the very nature of our own existence right now. First of all, as explained in the teachings, we came to our existence as a human in this world now through the delusions and karma of the past. From the moment we were conceived in our mother's womb, we naturally possessed the physical and contaminated aggregates, which started to mature. From the moment of conception, to our birth, and now, we have progressively developed the contaminated aggregates. Through our contaminated physical aggregates in this life, we have experienced many discomforts, difficulties and problems, such as being sick. For as long as we possess the contaminated aggregates, the same types of suffering that we have experienced will continue.

When we contemplate the disadvantages that we have experienced through the contaminated aggregates and that we would continue to experience, we would come to a point of naturally wishing to be free of such

conditioning. If it is possible to be free of such conditioning, by all means, anyone in a right state of mind would want to be free. This is the intention of wanting to be free of this conditioning and the thought seeking freedom will arise in the mind. In other words, with a sound understanding, one can develop the intention of wishing to achieve liberation.

It is good to also understand from the explanation how there's a difference between uncontrolled rebirth in cyclic existence under the influence of delusions and karma, and conscious reincarnation in cyclic existence. There are noble beings who come into cyclic existence willingly to benefit others. Those who come intentionally into cyclic existence to benefit others are able to be free from suffering and are able to help other beings, whereas for those who are uncontrollably under the influence of delusions and karma, there's no real freedom. It is for those who take uncontrolled birth under the influence of delusions and karma that the thought or the intention to seek freedom should arise.

Having identified the meaning of liberation, the next sub-heading in the text is identification of what it means to strive for that. We have covered this second subdivision as well. Now we come to the second of the earlier subdivisions – the methods for developing that (liberation).

This section on the methods for developing liberation is subdivided into two: the link and the actual. The text uses the analogy of desire to relieve the suffering of thirst. If someone is experiencing the suffering of thirst, which they do not wish to experience, by realising that the suffering of thirst is undesirable, the wish to be free from that arises spontaneously within them. Until someone develops a wish to be released from the suffering of thirst, they will not do anything to overcome the thirst. It is only when they experience the suffering that they develop the wish to do something to quench the thirst.

Likewise, the desire to attain liberation is based upon seeing that the contaminated aggregates are flawed and have suffering as their nature. Until one sees the limitations of samsara and how the contaminated aggregates are the basis of one's suffering, the wish to be free from the bondage of the aggregates will not arise. So to develop that intention, one has to develop the strong determination to overcome the bondage of the contaminated aggregates.

As explained further in the text, unless you developed a determination to reject cyclic existence through meditating on its faults, you will not seek relief from the sufferings of the aggregates. We must develop the determination to overcome cyclic existence through meditating on its faults. The text then quotes from another text, *The Four Hundred Stanzas* by Aryadeva. The quote here is 'how can one who is not disenchanted with this world, appreciate peace?' The meaning of 'this world' in the verse quoted from *The Four Hundred Stanzas* refers to the cyclic existence; for someone who cannot see the faults of cyclic existence and how cyclic existence is in the nature of suffering, the peace of liberation cannot be appreciated – one cannot develop the determination to

achieve that peace of liberation if one does not become disenchanted with the suffering of cyclic existence.

Another analogy used to illustrate this point is that of someone imprisoned in a jail. Until they see the disadvantages of being in jail, a prisoner may not develop the wish to be free from jail. It is only when they come to a point of feeling disgust about being in jail and a strong wish to be free that they will develop the wish to be free from jail. Similarly, this is the case for us in cyclic existence.

Another analogy given in other text is that of someone who is very attached to their home. It will be very difficult for them to develop a wish to travel or move somewhere else because of their strong attachment to their home. Similarly, it would be difficult for those who are attached to the pleasures of cyclic existence to develop a strong determination to be free from cyclic existence. This is a vivid illustration. If you were to suggest to someone who is very attached to their home that they should travel or even move somewhere else, they will have a strong reluctance to do that because they really like their home and don't want to leave it; they are really attached to it. That is the case also for beings in cyclic existence who are attached to its pleasures.

As described in the teachings, attachment seems to be one of the strongest binding factors keeping us in cyclic existence. Even in our normal life, wherever there is strong attachment to something, it is hard to separate from the object of attachment. When separation does occur, there is a lot of suffering experienced in relation to that separation because of the strong attachment. Our life seems to be governed by attachment to objects, ideas and so forth.

Actually attachment is deceptive because it arises in the guise of a friend. When attachment arises in our mind, it appears as if it is going to help us, it is going to bring us things that we desire. If we did not have attachment to something, we would not even develop a mind of wanting it. So attachment appears as an aid to us, to achieve what we want. This is deceptive, because in pursuing the very object that we desire, in the long run, we actually experience much more suffering. Attachment arises initially in a kind, nice manner, and seems to help and benefit us, but in the long run, it brings us much suffering. Because of the very cunning way in which attachment deceives us, it is hard to see its faults.

Conversely, when anger arises, we can see the disadvantages quite clearly, because as anger arises, it brings about an immediate effect of disturbing our mind. As soon as anger arises, we feel quite exhausted and unhappy that we got angry, and we can feel the ill effects immediately. So it is relatively easier for us to see the faults and disadvantages of anger in comparison to attachment.

However, if we train our mind to see the faults of the objects of our attachment, then slowly detachment from the objects can arise. We can slowly develop detachment. We can see, even from worldly examples, that after obtaining an object we have desired for a long time, we begin to see that it is not as attractive as we thought it was; it does not have the qualities we thought it had. Slowly, after having initially strong desire for that object,

we will start to loosen our attachment. Similarly, it is said that if we begin to see the faults of cyclic existence and the general attachment we have to the sensual pleasures and so forth, then slowly our attachment to those objects and will diminish. That is possible; we can develop that.

Training the mind to see the faults of attachment to sensual objects and of desires to worldly pleasures and so forth is not something we can attain right away. Even though it is achievable, we should train in this attitude gradually. If we gradually train our mind, we can definitely achieve this. The process occurs by slowly contemplating, taking time and thinking about what is happening in our mind when attachment arises. What is our attitude towards the object of our desire? When we develop desire towards an object, is there a belief that the object will make us happy? That is why we initially develop desire towards an object. Similarly, we develop aversion towards an object because we believe the object is harming us.

Because we naturally wish to be happy and do not wish any harm, we are constantly engaged in the process of desiring objects that we believe will make us happy and avoiding objects with anger that we believe will harm us. Wishing to be happy and not wishing to be harmed is fine, but the method we use to achieve this is based on a faulty perception. This is where we make the mistakes.

When we investigate the object that we desire, although it initially appears to us as something that will make us happy and satisfy us, when we actually possess the object, we find that it does not seem to completely satisfy us. An object of desire can also become an object of aversion. When we investigate, we can see that as long as the object of our desire is a contaminated object, it will not give us complete satisfaction or happiness; there are no lasting qualities in that object. Thus we will come to see that how our mind of desire is a faulty state of mind, how it exaggerates the qualities of the object. Similarly, when one sees faults in an object, it will be an exaggerated view of its faults. The reality is that there is no contaminated object that is entirely attractive or entirely repulsive.

However, we seem to constantly engage objects with those attitudes, sometimes being attached to them and sometimes having aversion towards them – even the same objects to which we were attached. This explains the ‘love-hate’ relationships we have in our lives; towards the same object, we sometimes feel attachment and sometimes aversion. When we see the attractiveness of that object, we develop attachment, and when we see the repulsiveness, we develop aversion towards it.

Thus we can see the absurdity of our faulty state of mind, how we either develop strong attachment towards an object and, for that very same object in which we have seen good qualities, later on we will attribute faults to it and develop aversion towards it. When we think about how this is based on our faulty state of mind, we can strive to overcome this.

We will conclude here for this evening, but before we conclude the session, we can spend some time in meditation again. This time we will focus on the recitation of Buddha Shakyamuni’s mantra. Distancing

our mind from the distractions, we keep our mind focused on the mantra to be recited.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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