

The way to gain inner wisdom is through the practice of meditation, which is why meditation practice is extremely valuable in our everyday life. Through meditation practice we need to contemplate how to achieve the different states of happiness. In relation to the three goals that are presented in the teachings, we are responsible for creating the causes for happiness in our future life. Likewise, creating the causes for the happiness of liberation, for being free from samsara, is our responsibility. Finally, we are also responsible for achieving the everlasting state of ultimate peace and happiness, which is enlightenment.

In light of this the Buddha emphasised, 'I cannot bestow my realisations upon others; nor can I alleviate their sufferings like plucking out a thorn. The only way to help others is by showing them the truth of the path'. The Buddha was indicating that having received the methods and heard the teachings, we need to take personal responsibility for creating the causes for our own liberation and happiness. That is something that we really need to keep in mind

In one of my teachings late last year, I mentioned the recent comment that Geshe Pema Tsering made to me in Adelaide. He said, 'It seems we may never again have that the sense of joy and happiness that we had when we were living and studying in the camp at Buxador in northern India'. He was referring to the fact that even though our conditions with respect to food and clothing were very poor at that time and the external conditions were very harsh, we nevertheless had a true sense of brotherhood and a very happy state mind. The main point here is that it is clear that happiness does not depend on external conditions, but rather on our own state of mind.

Since we have gathered here to study the teachings, we all have our responsibilities. I take responsibility for explaining the text to the best of my knowledge and you, who have come to listen, have the responsibility of really adopting those explanations and putting them into practice. In this way, we can definitely create the causes to achieve something meaningful together.

However, we have to be realistic. We cannot assume that we will be able to free ourselves from samsara, or achieve enlightenment in this very life time. However, while creating the causes for liberation and enlightenment, we definitely have the ability to secure a good rebirth in our next life. Right now, with this precious human rebirth, we are enjoying the results of the merit that we have created in the past. So we need to take responsibility for creating more merit so as to secure a precious human life for our next life. Then we can continue to create the causes for liberation and enlightenment.

The practical way to begin to practice is by observing ethics and morality to the best of our ability. When we make a decision to actively practise morality in our life, then that serves as the basis on which we can overcome a very agitated mind. When that agitated mind is settled down through the active practise of morality, then that becomes a very conducive condition for us to practise meditation, and develop concentration. By practising *morality* we are able to overcome the **discursive conceptual thoughts** in our mind. Then by engaging in the practice of *meditation* and developing concentration, one overcomes the **gross levels of excitement and laxity**. Finally by engaging in the practice of *wisdom*, we overcome the **very subtle level of excitement and laxity**, which is the wrong view of grasping at truly or inherently existent phenomena.

As I have previously explained, through the process of adopting the practice of the three trainings (morality, concentration and wisdom) one first overcomes the discursive thoughts; followed by the gross levels of laxity and excitement; up to overcoming the very subtle levels of the misconceptions of grasping at true existence. If we engage in practice in this practical way then we will definitely reap the positive result of our practice. Now, of course, in explaining this I am encouraging you to practise in that way. Whether or not I am able to do this profoundly myself is questionable, however there is no harm in encouraging you to engage in the practice like this.

It is important to engage in practice, otherwise we could end up like the Tibetan saying, which goes, 'Even a fisherman can give an elegant Dharma talk'. This of course would be a case of hypocrisy. It is not sufficient to utter pious words if one is not practising oneself. This is a really important point.

Having read some material and listened to others, it is possible to give a reasonably good talk about it. However the difficulty is in actually practising the material oneself. We all find it difficult to put the good advice into practice. Nevertheless putting Dharma advice into practice is what we really need to be doing.

In summary, we can all manage, at the very least, to refrain from intentionally harming others. In addition we can be good moral person; meaning that we do not intentionally deceive or harm others, and that we cultivate genuine kindness, and help others by cultivating love and compassion within our hearts. Those are practices that we can all manage to do.

When those qualities of being courteous to others, saying nice words, using pleasant gestures and so forth, come about as a result of one's practice of Dharma, then that is appreciated by others. As I have mentioned previously, if you are living with a partner who may have not initially shared the same interest as you have in meditation, they will start to encourage you to meditate and practice when you begin to show positive qualities.

The main point is to really contemplate putting the most essential point of developing loving kindness into practice. Also to remind oneself not to fall into the category of that saying, 'Even a fisherman can give an elegant Dharma talk'.

3.1.1.1. REFUTING REAL FEELINGS OF PLEASURE

3.1.1.1.3. Extensive explanation

3.1.1.1.3.1. Refuting proofs of real pleasure

3.1.1.1.3.1.1. Refuting proofs for real mental pleasure

3.1.1.1.3.1.2. Refuting proofs for real physical pleasure

This has two subdivisions.

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.1. Refuting an aggregation of the five objects as a proof for real physical pleasure

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.2. Refuting individual objects as proof of real physical pleasure

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.1. Refuting an aggregation of the five objects as a proof for real physical pleasure

The five objects are the objects of the five senses, namely form, sound, smell, taste and the tactile sense.

This heading is refuting the proposition that there is real or autonomous physical pleasure, by showing that the physical pleasures from the five objects cannot be experienced simultaneously. We derive a certain amount of pleasure from seeing beautiful objects, hearing beautiful sounds,

smelling nice scents, when eating or drinking tasty food or beverages, or feeling pleasant tactile sensations. However, these pleasurable feelings are not experienced simultaneously, i.e. the pleasure is only experienced with respect to one individual sense at any one time. If we were actually able to experience feeling from all senses simultaneously, then that could form a basis for saying that there is real physical pleasure. But, as will be explained, that is not the case.

The previous two verses, verses 349 and 350, refuted real mental pleasure. This was the first part of the section called Refuting Proofs of Real Pleasure. It is really important to contemplate the absence of real mental pleasure, in addition to this section on the absence of real physical pleasure. These points are part of the broader topic of Refuting Proofs of Real Pleasure.

The main point here is that the pleasures from the objects of the five senses are not autonomous pleasures. The method for refuting the existence of autonomous pleasures is to show that they are interdependent, which refutes the assertion that they are autonomous real pleasures. The first verse related to this is heading is:

*351. When [all] five senses, eye and so forth,
[Simultaneously] apprehend their objects,
A thought [of pleasure] does not refer [to all of
them],
Therefore at that time they do not [all] give
pleasure.*

In explaining the meaning of this verse Gyaltsab Je's commentary first states the opponent's position:

If someone says: the pleasure of the five objects are experienced simultaneously because the five senses can experience the form of an actor, the sound of a flute, the smell of *agaru*, the taste of honey and the tactile of a cloth.

The statement of the opponent having been presented, the objection (or refutation) follows:

Objection: That is not possible, because *when all five senses, eye and so forth, apprehend their objects, a simultaneous thought of pleasure does not occur to all of them. Therefore at that time they do not all give pleasure.* For without it being apprehended by a conceptual thought a pleasure cannot be known and the five objects and five sense pleasures cannot be apprehended by a conceptual thought simultaneously.

This is quite a profound explanation. If we carefully pay attention to it, we might actually be able see this fact for ourselves. It is not really the senses themselves that experiences pleasure but rather the subsequent conceptual thought that thinks, 'This is pleasurable'. For example, when we eat something, if we actually pay attention, we will find that it is only after having generated the thought 'This food is tasty' that we actually experience the pleasure of the food. However in the same moment that we are thinking 'This food tastes good', we cannot be simultaneously thinking about a pleasant sound, a pleasant sight, or a pleasant tactile feeling.

Thus what is being explained here is that the experience of pleasure is preceded by a conceptual thought, and furthermore conceptual thoughts of different sense pleasures do not occur simultaneously. Therefore the pleasures of the five senses cannot all occur at the same time. When we really analyse it, we can see from our own experience that this is true.

To summarise, the first point of the objection is that pleasure cannot be experienced without being apprehended by a conceptual thought. The second point is that the five objects and five senses cannot be simultaneously apprehended by conceptual thoughts. As mentioned previously, we know from our own experience that if we are eating something, it is only when we pay attention to it, and we start to think, 'Ah, this food tastes really good', that we actually experience the pleasure of that food. And at the moment when think that the food taste nice, there is no way we can also think that a certain sound or tactile feeling or smell is pleasant. These thoughts cannot occur simultaneously.

So in this way you can understand that a real or autonomous pleasure is refuted by showing that all of the five sense pleasures cannot be experienced at the same time. The next verse continues the explanation:

*352. Whenever any of the [five] objects is known
[As pleasurable] by one of the [five] senses,
Then the remaining [objects] are not so known
by the remaining [senses]
Since they then are not meaningful [causes of
pleasure].*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Whenever any of the five objects, forms and so forth, is known as pleasurable by one of the five senses, then the remaining objects are not known by the remaining senses, since the remaining objects are not meaningful [or autonomous] causes of pleasure.

This is basically re-emphasising the point made earlier.

The next verse provides further proof:

*353. The mind apprehends an image of a past object
Which has been apprehended by the senses
And imagines and fancies
It to be pleasurable.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

This is so, because the mind apprehends an image of a past object, which has been apprehended by the senses, and imagines and fancies it to be pleasure. It is not possible for multiple conceptual thoughts to generate simultaneously in one mental continuum.

This is a point emphasised in the text *Pramanavarttikakarika* or *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition*, by Dharmakirti, and it is a point that is raised again and again in debate in the monastery. It reminds me of when I was studying in Buxa, when this quote from *Valid Cognition* was presented in the debate. As I recall, Geshe Sonam Rinchen's explanation was that two conceptual thoughts of the same aspect cannot be generated simultaneously in one mental continuum. Later on, the late Khensur Urgen Tseten said 'Geshe Sonam's interpretation of this point was quite good, wasn't it?' I responded that my interpretation would be, two distinct aspects of the one omnipresent mental factor¹ could not occur at the same time. For example, two distinct feelings, such as pleasant and unpleasant feelings cannot possibly occur simultaneously within one mental continuum. Khensur Rinpoche didn't make any further comment. In any case, the main point is that it is not possible for a similar type but substantially different concepts to occur simultaneously in the one mental continuum.

This point in *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition* supports the explanation of the five sense

¹ The five omnipresent mental factors are feeling, recognition, intention, attention and contact.

pleasures not being able to be simultaneously apprehended by one conceptual mind. So, as mentioned previously, while experiencing a pleasant taste one cannot possibly simultaneously experience a pleasant sound and so forth.

This point also relates to an awareness to which an object appears but is not ascertained. The example is when you are excessively attached to a beautiful visual object; you cannot possibly hear a sound at the same time. We know through experience that if some sound occurs when we are excessively attached to a beautiful visual object, then we do not ascertain it at the time. That is because one is completely engrossed in the visual object of attachment at that moment. The main point, then, is that a conceptual mind can only ascertain the object that it is engaged with in that moment.

A further proof that a conceptual mind does not ascertain objects that it is not engaged with is, for example, someone who is not disturbed by external sound when they are in deep meditation. It is a fact that even sounds of things going on outside cannot disturb the meditator's mind when they are completely absorbed in single-pointed meditation on the object of meditation. This is proof that in order for the mind to ascertain an object there has to be a conceptual thought engaging with the object.

From our own experience, we know that it is only when we pay attention and think that the object looks beautiful, that we actually get a feeling of pleasure in relation to the beautiful object. Unless and until we actually pay attention to and think about the object as being beautiful we cannot possibly experience any pleasure from seeing that beautiful object.

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.2. Refuting individual objects as proofs of real physical pleasure

This is further subdivided into two:

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.2.1. Actual refutation

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.2.2. Refuting proofs of real physical pleasure

3.1.1.1.3.1.2.2.1. Actual refutation

The relative verse reads:

*354. Also the one sense which here [in the world
Is said to] know one object
Is meaningless without an object,
And the object also is meaningless without it.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Also the one sense, such as the eye-sense, which here in the world is said to know one object, such as form, is meaningless without an object and the object [form] is meaningless without it [the eye-sense]. Thus they are mutually interdependent. If things do not exist by way of their own-entity then this could not exist, therefore meaningful [or autonomous] physical pleasure does not exist.

In order to establish an object there has to be a sense that perceives the object. For example, establishing form depends on an eye sense that apprehends it as form. And likewise the eye sense that apprehends form is dependent on the object form, so without form there cannot be the eye sense that apprehends form. For example, even though a form does exist for a blind person, they are not able to apprehend it because they do not have the eye sense. So clearly, in order to establish form as existent there has to be an eye sense that apprehends it. Therefore they are mutually dependent.

The explanation that an object and the sense that apprehends the object are mutually dependent, i.e. one cannot exist without the other, establishes that things cannot exist by way

of their own entity. Therefore, as explained in the commentary, the conclusion is that meaningful or autonomous physical pleasure does not exist. Here *meaningful or autonomous* can refer to existing from its own side or existing without depending on the senses. This is the main point being established here.

Those of you who attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's recent teachings would recall that His Holiness also emphasised this same point when he explained the relationship between an object and the sense that perceives the object.

Let us recite the *Heart Sutra* before we conclude for the evening. While reciting the *Heart Sutra* it is good to reflect on its meaning, as it consists of the essence of the Buddha's teaching. So there is much to think about.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama also mentioned that, compared with the Chinese translation, the Tibetan version of the *Heart Sutra* contains some profound points. One thing he emphasised is that where the Tibetan version says 'the five aggregates also lack inherent existence' the Chinese translation doesn't have the word 'also'. This one word has a profound meaning for understanding the text.

His Holiness' understanding of other traditions and their texts is quite remarkable. The *Heart Sutra* is recited in Mongolian, Chinese, Vietnamese and even the Nepali tradition. It is amazing how His Holiness pays attention to all of the different aspects of the Buddhist tradition. Exhibiting his knowledge about the different traditions shows how he has assumed the great responsibility of preserving the Buddhadharma.

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Edited Version

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