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anything you may wish to take into account, is that it is empty of inherent existence. However, we don't develop such an understanding as a purely intellectual pursuit; rather, this knowledge should give us a strong incentive to apply Dharma practice in our life.

Using the reasoning of dependent arising, we can think about the things we desire and the things we don't want, in other words, our happiness or suffering. In fact, all the things we want to experience and things we want to avoid are merely dependent arisings. They do not exist, they do not occur naturally, by their own accord. Rather, all these things have eventuated in dependence upon other phenomena, which are the contributing causes. All phenomena have contributing causes.

There is a clear message here that if we want to achieve happiness, the only way is do this is by working to create the causes. Likewise, to avoid suffering, we have to work to avoid its causes. You have to feel a sense of responsibility that you are only one who can create these causes. It does not rest with any other being.

If you are aware of this truth – that everything is a result of dependent arising – it is a good basis for you to understand that you have to make an effort to create the causes of your future happiness. Something doesn't happen or not happen because we wish for it. Rather, it happens in dependence upon us meeting the right causes and conditions.

Having an understanding of emptiness based on the reasoning of dependent arising is very important, because these two concepts – emptiness and dependent arising – support each other. Whenever we say the word "emptiness", some understanding of dependent arising should arise at the same time – that all things including ourselves are the outcome of dependent arising.

It is said that even saying the word "emptiness" is very beneficial. If you read any of the sutras, such as the Diamond Cutter Sutra, you will see that there is enormous benefit in just saying the word "emptiness" to others or to ourselves.

When we understand that the ultimate reality or truth of a particular object is its emptiness of inherent existence, at the same time we will understand the truth of dependent arising of that phenomenon. Likewise, when we think of an object as being a dependent arising, then this knowledge will automatically lead us to realise the emptiness of that same object.

We can sit in meditation and, with the mind fully drawn inward, think about the question: "What is the ultimate reality of my own self, of this 'I'?" What is the nature of this 'I', which we feel resides deep down within us, and which is what we refer to when we say "I go" and "I sit", or identify with strongly whenever we hear our name called, the 'I' that responds. How does this 'I' exist in reality?

As said before, this 'I' is a dependent phenomenon, a dependent arising. It is dependent arising because the existence of that thing depends on a collection of various causes and conditions; its existence depends upon its parts. Anything that depends on a coming together of various causes and conditions, or on its parts, is a

dependent arising. Therefore, if a thing is a result of dependent arising, it lacks independent existence by way of lacking its own nature or character.

If we examine the 'I' or the self as a person as an object knowledge, we do not need to prove the existence of one as a person, because the fact that 'I' exist is obvious. The question is: "How do 'I' exist?" If we say that the 'I' exists as a dependent arising, it is clear that it doesn't exist as an independent entity, inherently, from its own side.

The next step in this reasoning process is to observe how the 'I' exists in our own experience. It is said that the realisation of the emptiness of the self, or the 'I' is something we have to develop based on personal experience. In other words, we do not just have to theoretically understand things as being empty of inherent existence, but we also have to use knowledge from our own experience to abandon this perception of 'I' as having an independent, inherent existence.

We need to observe the way this 'I' exists in our own experience. Regardless of any theoretical knowledge we may possess regarding this topic, we need to examine how we experience this 'I', how it appears to our own mind. Then we will notice that when this 'I' appears to the mind, it seems to have its own independent existence. The 'I' doesn't seem to be a dependent phenomenon; rather, it seems to exist in its own right. We apprehend the 'I' as seeming to exist from its own side, independently. This apprehension of the 'I' as having inherent existence is called the 'self-grasping' of a person, and is a misconception or wrong view.

Why? Because we are apprehending an 'I' that in fact does not exist. There is no such thing as an inherently existing 'I'. Yet our mind strongly apprehends that 'I'. This sense of 'I' within us is the 'I' to which we are strongly attached, which we apprehend strongly as existing inherently. However, in reality, as we said the 'I' does not exist inherently, but is a result of dependent arising. It is something that is designated upon the parts of our body, or the aggregates. The aggregates are the causes and conditions that constitute our human life. We must begin to recognise that the self-grasping of this 'I' of the person is a misconception or wrong view. If we can overcome this wrong view, we can see its effect in terms of all the other types of delusion such as desire, anger and so on, which act as a motivation for us to carry out the mundane actions that bind us to this round of suffering, or cyclic existence.

We have to realise the importance of doing this meditation, because it is said that without abandoning this self-grasping of a person, there is no way for us to achieve lasting happiness.

That's all for the teaching tonight. We will chant the Buddha's mantra, again sitting in a meditation posture with the mind calm and free from all outer distractions. Then, we use the mind to focus on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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