
achieving a good future life or liberation from cyclic existence or enlightenment. Even right in this moment, you can see the benefits of meditation practice.

We will leave the discussion here, and do a short breathing meditation. Just assume a correct and comfortable sitting posture, then try to remove all distracting thoughts from the mind, and let it completely rest or stabilise within. When we begin the actual meditation, we should make sure that our mental focus is one hundred percent on the object, which here is the incoming and outgoing breath.

The quality of our meditation is not determined by how long we do it. Rather, it is determined by the degree of mental focus on the object. If your mental focus is fully on the object, then even if your meditation is only a minute or two's duration, your sustained concentration is a sign that you are slowly making progress. On the contrary, if we think we are meditating, but our mind is not fully on the meditation object and instead is running after some other object and we are continually trying to bring it back, then even if our meditation session is long, we won't make much progress, because the mind has been developing the bad habit of continually wandering.

Also, the way we focus the mind on the breath – it's not like the mind is watching the breath in the same way that we perceive an external form, with the perceiver in here, and in the object out there. Rather, we have to try to completely close the gap between mind and object, so that the mind is completely absorbed in, or merged with, the object, and becomes one with it. (*Pause for meditation.*)

Now, we'll discuss another two lines from the text, in the verse we left off from last week. The middle of verse 106 says:

All the things of this world are but fog-like appearance;
When closely examined, they fade out of sight.

This lines contain another analogy for us – a "fog-like appearance". Fog is the early morning hazy cloud we may see in low-lying areas in the distance on a cold day. This image illustrates the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena, which is their true nature.

When we get closer to fog, we can see that there is nothing there, the fog or cloud-bank vanishes. Likewise, if we do not closely examine and analyse the way things exist, then everything will appear to us as being very solid, and as having a concrete existence. However, close analysis by a reasoning mind will show that things do not exist concretely.

The next two lines introduce another analogy:

Like mirages these things at a distance seem lovely,
But when we come closer, they are not to be found.

Here we have the example of a mirage, which can appear in a hot climate especially in desert areas, again from a long distance. Because of the combination of sunlight, sand particles, the reflection of light, and our visual consciousness, from a distance the mirage looks like a flowing river or stream. Of course, when we get closer to it, there is not a drop of water to be found.

This verse is saying that when the causes and conditions of things are not closely analysed, from their own side they will appear to have an inherent quality of existence.

For example, some things from their own side look as if they have a quality of beauty. We all have some fixed idea about certain objects being a model of beauty. We see that

object as beautiful without actually closely examining the quality of the beauty – what is in that object that makes it appear beautiful? These lines suggest that if we examine and analyse the object to find that quality of beauty, it cannot be found.

This is the way all things exist. They are all merely designated, merely labelled [on the base]. From its own side, a thing doesn't exist – like the quality of beauty doesn't exist from the side of an object. Things don't exist from their own side, and don't have self-existent qualities. Rather, the text is saying that all things are dependent-arising.

If we gain a realisation of the ultimate nature of things, we won't generate delusions with respect to the objects we perceive. At the moment, we continuously generate delusions – for example, when we perceive a beautiful, appealing object, we suddenly generate a strong desire to possess that object. Likewise, when we perceive an unpleasant object, we generate anger or hatred towards it.

The text is saying that the main reason why strong attachment or desire arise is because we perceive a quality that appeals to our mind; it objectively appears as if that the object possesses that quality. So, our mind views that object as beautiful. Therefore, when we perceive an object as having a quality of beauty, we can say to ourselves that this quality is partly a projection of the mind – it is not there with the object, but is something to do with being superimposed by your mind. With such a view, we can have less desire. Likewise, we will have less hatred if we see that the unpleasantness of an object is not inherent in the object, but rather is superimposed by your mind.

If we trace the root cause of these delusions further, we will see that deep down it is our strong misconception with respect to the true nature of our own self – the way one exists as a person, or 'I'. If we penetrate the true nature of the way the 'I' or this person exists, we can see that it is empty of any inherent existence. If we can gain this knowledge, it will counteract all the delusions we generate with respect to all the other objects we perceive with our mind.

Likewise, when we generate strong desire or anger, deep down we have a strong sense of 'I' which says "I want to have that object close to me" or "I want to get rid of that object". Whenever we experience this 'I' that says "I like this" or "I hate that", if we examine how the 'I' exists, then we can see that the way it appears to the mind is as if it exists inherently, as if it is self-existent.

You not only examine the 'I' at such times. At the same time, you can examine the object that is desired or hated by the 'I', due to the influence of misconception of its true nature. We can see that we also misconceive the object of desire or the hatred as if it exists in its own right.

We will finish the teaching here. As usual, we chant the Buddha's mantra. While we chant, we should try to focus the mind on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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Edited Version

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