
table, or the way it exists in reality. When we look at a brand-new table today, and look at it tomorrow, we won't notice any change. But that doesn't mean that the table we saw yesterday hasn't changed. In fact, it is undergoing change all the time, and at the subtlest timeframes, from moment to moment. We can define 'moment' in terms of an hour, minute, second, or even fractions of a second. Subtle impermanence is change that happens between the smallest units of time.

As we said before, everything, including this table, has the nature of being empty of true existence. The table being empty of true existence reflects the ultimate truth or nature of the table. From the moment the table comes into being, the way it exists depends on other factors: the causes and conditions. It lacks existence from its own side, which means it doesn't exist truly or inherently. Its existence is mere imputation. The emptiness of inherent existence of the table is what we call the suchness or the way the table exists in its ultimate sense.

However, it is not the case that the emptiness of the table and the table are like two separate items that we can place one on top of the other; rather, they are blended together, and reflect the nature of the same object.

Hence, whether we take ourselves, or an external object like a table, as an example, the reality is that nothing exists by itself or in its own right, inherently. Everything is dependent: the way things exist is that they depend on other things; they do not exist by themselves. Yet, to our mind, our conceptual thoughts, they appear as existing from their own side. For example, when we think of ourselves, the person - 'I' - appears to exist by itself, from its own side, rather than depending on our aggregates of body, consciousness, and so forth. There is no question that whatever object appears to our mind, there is this notion of that object having an inherent existence, an intrinsic 'self' and so we grasp at it in that way. Yet, in our everyday experience, we don't clearly recognise this notion of inherent existence. We mentally perceive the 'I' or 'self' to exist inherently and grasp at an inherently existent self. So we lack the clear recognition of this inherently existent self, which is the object of negation in realising the selflessness or emptiness of the 'I' or person.

However, whenever we have strong a feeling of love or hatred or life-threatening fear, we experience a stronger sense of 'I' or ego. In that moment, we can examine how the 'I' appears to us - it appears to us as if it exists inherently, independently of our mind and body. This will give us a vivid picture of the identity or nature of the 'I' as being the inherently existent self.

Let's analyse our experience of the 'I' and the usage of the word 'I'. The 'I' or the 'self' is the person who is experiences pain and pleasure. When our body is sick, we say, 'I am sick', when our mind is happy or unhappy, we say, 'I am happy or I am unhappy'. If we see a beautiful flower, we say, 'I see a beautiful flower'. When we think about these everyday statements, we get a sense of assuming the self, the 'I', or the experiencing person, is an entity different from the parts of the person. Likewise, when we think about the statements, 'my body' and 'my mind', we have a notion of viewing the 'I' as the owner or

controller of the mind and the body, with the mind and body being owned or controlled objects.

However, as a controller or owner, how can the 'I' exist? Can the 'I' exist outside or independent of the mind and the body? Of course, that's not feasible. This means that the existence of the 'I' depends upon the mind and body, and we cannot find the 'I' outside of the mind and body.

So then, how does the 'I' or the self exist? As discussed earlier, from our daily experience, we get a sense of the 'I' existing separately from our mind and body, as the owner or controller of the mind and the body. But upon analysis, we can clearly see that the 'I' exists *in dependence* on the mind and body; it cannot exist independently of them. If that is the case, the next question is: 'What relation could the 'I' have to the mind and body? Does the 'I' exist as one with them, or is it the same as the mind and body?'

When we look at this table, for example, it is an object with a specific use and shape, with supporting legs and a top on which to place things. This object we label as a table accordingly functions as a table. However, if we label it as a chair, then it would have the function of a chair. So we can see that what the table is for us is relative. When we say something is a table, it is just something designated or imputed upon the assembly of certain parts with a certain use.

We are discussing the topic of emptiness, which is a very difficult one, and I hope my explanation is not making it more difficult! I am trying to simplify it. As we have learned from some quotations from early masters, even if we gain a rudimentary understanding of the meaning of emptiness, there is a great benefit: 'Simply having a basic understanding will tear apart the wheel of life.'

The next verses talk about the benefits we can derive from even a vague or basic understanding of the view of emptiness, particularly in terms of overcoming strong attachment, anger, and so forth. From one angle, an understanding of dependent arising reflects the understating of emptiness. For example, if we understand how, from the start of our life through all the stages of our development, we have depended upon other factors, this gives us a clue about the view of emptiness. Indeed, after our birth and in the early stages of our development, we depended on our parents. Then, as we grew up, we have depended on neighbours, friends, societies, and our country. This is a clear indication of how our survival and our existence depends so much on others. So even being aware of the truth of dependence in our life is very beneficial.

We will leave tonight's teaching and continue from here next week.

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