
achieve the complete enlightenment of a buddha. In fact, for the first five perfections to serve as cause to achieve complete enlightenment, they must also be supported by skilful means or the method of great compassion and bodhicitta, as well as being conjoined with the wisdom of emptiness.

Take the example of the first perfection, the act of giving. When we give an object a recipient there are three elements or spheres: the object we give; and the giver, or the person who is giving. These are three spheres of the act of giving and we must realise the emptiness of them while we engage in the act of giving. Likewise, we must realise the emptiness of the three spheres of each of the other perfections when we engage in those practices.

To use another analogy, when we walk on a road, we need two legs to walk, and to go in the right direction, we need eyes. The wisdom of emptiness is likened to the eyes that see the road, whereas the legs are likened to compassion and bodhicitta.

As we said, it is necessary for the other five perfections, such as giving, to be conjoined with *both* method and wisdom to serve as a cause to achieve complete enlightenment. If they are conjoined with the wisdom of emptiness but not conjoined with the method of compassion or bodhicitta, then these five perfections would only serve as a cause to achieve self-liberation from cyclic existence, but not the complete enlightenment of a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. Likewise, if the five perfections of giving and so forth are conjoined with the method of great compassion or bodhicitta, but are not conjoined with the wisdom of emptiness, then they won't serve as a cause to remove the root cause of samsara, which is ignorance. They wouldn't even lead to self-liberation, let alone complete enlightenment.

We say that compassion is a remedy to overcome hatred, and that meditating on the unattractiveness of an object is a remedy to overcome desire. Strictly speaking, these practices – meditating on compassion or on an object's unattractiveness – can minimise or temporarily counteract their respective delusions of hatred or desire, but they lack the capacity to eliminate hatred or desire permanently.

On the other hand, the wisdom of emptiness can minimise or weaken mental delusions, as well as uproot them completely.

Lama Tsongkhapa says in his text *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*: 'If you lack the wisdom to see things as they are, even if you are familiar with renunciation and bodhicitta, you have no capacity to cut the root of cyclic existence. Therefore, you should exert effort in realising the truth of dependent arising.'

So, we must gain the realisation of emptiness to achieve liberation and the state of omniscience of a buddha. Now, what is the view of emptiness? To quote Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*: 'A person is not earth, not water, not fire, not wind, not space and not consciousness. Nor can we find the person outside of these.'

On the contrary, we grasp at the person as having true existence, because that's the way the self or 'I' appears to our mind. To our mind, the person – or 'I' or self – is something identifiable, something that can be pinpointed,

so there is a notion of true or real existence. We have a notion of the person existing truly within the five aggregates – either collectively, or within a specific aggregate, such as when we identify the self with the form aggregate or the consciousness aggregate.

We can examine here how the person or 'I' exists innately to our mind – for example, when we say, 'his hair is dark or blonde' or 'that's a man' or 'that's a woman'. In this context, we are identifying the self with the *form aggregate*. But when we say, 'he or she is a Christian, or Buddhist, or Hindu, or Jewish' and so forth, we are identifying that person more with the *aggregate of consciousness*, because different belief systems are related to the view of our mind. In reality, however, as Nagarjuna mentioned, the person, self or 'I' cannot be found in any of the aggregates.

According to some of the four Buddhist schools of tenets, a referent for the self of the person may be the five aggregates or just the consciousness of the person. Furthermore, the Mind Only (Chittamatra) school proposes a different type of consciousness that they call 'the mind basis of all or foundational mind', which serves as a kind of a 'storage' consciousness. They propose this consciousness as a referent for the person.

So there are conflicting views regarding the reference point of a person, and we need to find which view we should follow. The acceptable view is that the person is neither identical with all the aggregates, nor with consciousness or any of the five aggregates, yet the person exists, by dependence on the aggregates. Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland* says, 'the person is comprised of six elements, therefore it is lacking real existence, which is what it is.' If we reflect on Nagarjuna's statement that 'the person is not earth, fire, water, wind' and so forth, it will lead us to ask whether the person is any of the five aggregates of form, and so on. We will come to understand that the person is not this. Form is comprised of five elements, and if we refine our search to the subtlest of each of these elements, the person isn't there, nor is it the consciousness aggregate.

So, although the person is dependent on the aggregates, including consciousness, we cannot find the person in these aggregates. Therefore, the person lacks inherent existence or intrinsic self-existence. Just as the person doesn't exist inherently within the aggregates upon which it is designated, likewise all other phenomena do not exist inherently within the basis upon which they are designated. The fact that things are just designated or imputed upon their own basis of designation shows that they are lacking an existence from their own side.

Generally, we speak of two types of selflessness or emptiness – of a person and of other phenomena. There is really no difference between the two in terms of being an object of negation. The difference between the two is the *basis of negation*. In the case of the selflessness of a person, the basis of negation is the person; whereas, for other phenomena, the basis of the negation of inherent existence is other phenomena. So, the difference relates to the basis of designation of a person and other phenomena, which are the person and the other phenomena, respectively. Similarly, when we speak of the two types of self-grasping – the self-grasping of a person, and the self-grasping of

other phenomena – the difference lies with the basis of the designation of the person and the other phenomena.

The next question is, how can we gain the realisation of the selflessness of a person and of other phenomena? We know that such a realisation will not arise simply by praying, ‘May this realisation arise within me’. We must meditate on selflessness, recognising how things do not exist in the way they appear to our minds. By understanding and familiarising ourselves with the view of selflessness, we can completely dismantle the self-grasping view of the person or of other phenomena and gain the wisdom-knowledge of selflessness.

If we look at how we can overcome the concept of permanence in relation to our body or life, it is not enough to simply to understand and accept the fact that one day we will die. Rather, we must have an awareness of the moment-to-moment change in our life. To have such an awareness of subtle impermanence, we must meditate and strongly familiarise our mind with an understanding of impermanence on the subtlest level.

In this way, our meditation will undermine and diminish the view we normally have of holding onto life as being permanent when we think: ‘I am not going to die in a year, a month, a day, a minute and so on.’ Likewise, we must meditate and familiarise ourselves with an understanding of emptiness at the subtlest level, so that not an atom of true existence remains in our mind.

We will leave the teaching here. Thank you.

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