

Adjust your motivation to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of helping all sentient beings as vast as space and who have been your mothers. Listen to the teaching as a way of getting there.

Last time I talked about the four attributes of the truth of suffering. Have they become clear to you? Any questions?

Question: You said truth of suffering is more encompassing than samsara. What exactly is samsara? Geshela said that the truth of suffering pervades the aggregates and all environments. If samsara is not these then what exactly is it?

Answer: The difference can be explained another way, for example, that truth of suffering is an experience arisen from karma and delusion. Truth of suffering is the experience of suffering, whereas samsara, although also arisen from delusions, refers to the person itself, someone that experiences it. Samsara is something that moves from one lifetime to another like a bridge whereas truth of suffering is what is experienced on the journey through samsara.

When we talk about **samsara and truth of suffering** there are five things to talk about:

- 1- Firstly who or what goes around and around.
- 2- By what agent do they go around
- 3- What do they go around/what is the pivot point
- 4- By what condition does the person revolve
- 5- In what way do they revolve

This is similar to the description at the beginning of Chandrakirti's celebrated work *Madhyamika avatara* and Lama Tsong Khapa's work, *Gomparabsal, Clear Elucidation of Thought*. In these they talk about samsara by way of analogies. Of the above five the second is what pertains to samsara. The remaining four are instances of the truth of suffering.

Tonight I am not going to elaborate on these five. I'd like to keep to my plan. I'd like to talk about the remaining two attributes of the truth of suffering. Last time I talked about attribute of impermanence and suffering in great detail in relation to the twelve dependent links. I talked at great length about that.

Now I'd like to talk about emptiness and selflessness. These are difficult.

Attributes of Truth of Suffering Continued:

Emptiness and selflessness

By way of understanding the first two attributes of the truth of *suffering, impermanence* and suffering we need to come to realize the attributes of *emptiness and selflessness*. A person is empty of self. That is established by way of reason.

When a reasoning statement is formulated it is done this way:

Self sufficient substantially existent person that is not dependent either on a collection or a continuum is the subject matter. Generally speaking there is no person that can be found outside the five skandas/aggregates of body and mind. Yet instinctively, deep

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Attributes of the truth of suffering continued:

down, we think person exists independently of these. We take that as the subject of discussion and reformulate the term. It becomes; a self-sufficient substantially existing person not dependent on collection and continuum.

When we formulate a Buddhist reasoning we have three things;

- 1- topic of discussion
- 2- sign/reasoning itself
- 3- predicate of the thesis

If you want to establish sound as impermanent for example, impermanence is the topic to be established.

In Buddhist epistemology when you state the correct reasoning it must have a sign/reason itself and the predicate of the thesis and the topic.

The topic here is:

A self-sufficient substantially existent self/person not dependent on collection and continuum does not exist inherently. Such an existent person would be the object of negation.

Why? Because person does not exist inherently one with or separate from the aggregates.

The sign here is:

If such a person existed it would do so inherently one with aggregates or inherently separate from them, but it does not.

Predicate of the thesis?/(not sure if this is where this heading fits in to the discussion)

The reason stated has four points/a four point analysis:

- 1- Ascertaining the object of negation
- 2- Ascertaining logical pervasion. If it is a logical sign/a reason it should be the predicate of the thesis.
- 3- Ascertaining that person lacks inherent oneness/sameness with the aggregates
- 4- Ascertaining the absence of person being different from the aggregates

We need to revisit the first two attributes of the truth of suffering.

Firstly, *impermanence*. Why is the truth of suffering characterized by impermanence? It is because it is produced 'occasionally'. Secondly, misery. Why is it characterized by *suffering/misery* itself? Because it is under the condition of karma and delusions. We need to use these two attributes as a way of coming to terms with what we have just been talking about. The first two attributes help us understand emptiness.

To talk about emptiness we need to be sure what the object of negation is.

The object of negation can be constructed by intellectually formed or schooled ideas and by innate ideas. The first is called *artificial grasping at the object of negation* and the second is called *innate grasping at the object of negation*.

There are two analogies given for these ways of grasping. Take the way we grasp at the object of the person and aggregates for example. If they are seen like the merchant and the commodities which he has for sale we have an intellectually formed/schooled manner of grasping at person and its/his/her aggregates.

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Attributes of the truth of suffering continued:

The second analogy of the merchant and his apprentice who wants to be trained describes the relationship as a more subtle one because the apprentice is like a merchant themselves. Both are engaged in the same business, so that both are merchants in a way. This serves as an analogy of the innate grasping at self of a person.

When we grasp at the self sufficient substantially existent person in an *intellectual way/schooled by the views* of a particular school of thought we do so by thinking that person is somewhat separate from the aggregates. We think that the person doesn't change moment by moment, but the aggregates are produced and disintegrate at each moment. Secondly we think the person is not dependent on karma and delusions but view it as coming from beginningless time up to this lifetime independently. These views are likened to the analogy of the merchant and his goods.

We have *innate grasping* at self as a person when we think we would accept the chance to exchange this human body for a divine form if given the chance. At such a time we think a person is not dependent on aggregates. This describes a subtle way of grasping at self as person.

It also occurs to us that person is not what is labeled on the mental consciousness; as if the person exists different from/separate from the mind. If the person 'different from the mental consciousness' were given the opportunity to exchange their ordinary mind for Buddha's omniscient mind they would readily forego their mind and take on Buddha's mind as if their own mind were not what they are labeled on. At such a time they are considering the person exists self sufficiently and substantially different from the mental consciousness. It is almost like a merchant bartering between goods.

Thinking in this way after a while you realise this is problematic; a person cannot exist in such a self sufficient substantially existent way and there must be only one option left for person to exist, is that the person is simply labeled in dependence on the physical and mental aggregates.

When you understand this a sense of loss of self arises. If one were to engage in a process of exchanging either ones body for a divine body, or ones mind for a Buddha's mind, to let go of ones body or mind, one feels a sense of loss because one feels one is what is labeled onto the body and mind. However before such a realization dawns on us for the moment if given the chance to exchange ones sick body or mind for a divine one we would go for it. That shows we are still holding onto the belief that person is neither the body nor the mind but exists in an independent self sufficient substantial way independent of them. That mode of existence of person is the object of negation/what is to be removed.

Should self sufficient person exist it should do so either inherently one with the aggregates or completely different from them.

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Attributes of the truth of suffering continued:

Question from audience re that. Answer: If something exists its either one or plural isn't it? If something exists it is either one with itself or different from itself. If something exists it's either one with you or different from you isn't it?

What about food? It is different from you because it is just passing through your body isn't it? But what if I rely on it? Is your body you? You are labeled. If your body were you indeed the food would be you too.

If a self sufficient substantially existent person existed in that way it should be either inherently the same as/one with body and mind or completely autonomous. Why? It is a given of existence that if a phenomenon exists it is either singular or plural. There is no grey area between the two.

Person does not exist inherently one with the aggregates. Why? Because the aggregates are impermanent and other-dependent/ dependent on other conditions. If a self sufficient substantially existent person were one with the aggregates then indeed just as aggregates are impermanent, momentary and dependent on other so a person would be also.

I gave reasons in the last class why the aggregates are impermanent and so on.

Now this should establish how a *self sufficient substantially existent person is not one with the aggregates*. This helps establish the previous nights talk on how aggregates are impermanent and dependent. If person were inherently one with the aggregates then the person too would be impermanent and dependent. A self sufficient substantially existent person has an element of independence. If it were one with the aggregates it loses its character of independence.

That element helps establish emptiness of such a self.

This is a key reason. Then there are other subsidiary reasons that clearly prove that a self sufficiently existent person cannot be one with the aggregates. If it becomes one with them then they are lumped together and become one entity, inseparable, utterly indivisible. In that case just as there are five aggregates so there would be five persons. Conversely just as there is only one person there would have to be only one aggregate. When we die we leave our body aggregate in this life and move on. If the body and person are inseparable the person would not move on after death. There are a number of reasons which disprove that body and person are one.

The second point is the *absence of being different from the aggregates*.

Now that the person and the aggregates are established not to be inherently one the only alternative is for them to be separate. However the person does not exist inherently different from the aggregates because if it did a valid cognition should have seen it/ seen a person existing separate from the aggregates. No valid cognition thus far as seen such a separation. If such a self sufficient substantially existent person exists independent from and removed from the aggregates it should be demonstratable. We should be able to point to it. For example what we are made of are the five aggregates. Let's separate the person from the five aggregates. Let's remove aggregate one by one to the side thus separating

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them from the person. After putting the body, sensation, discriminating awarenesses, volitions/mental factors, and mental consciousnesses aside we should be left with the person on the other side. If we have a group of three animals, a horse, cow and sheep and you want to find the sheep you put the others aside and you'll be left with the sheep. If the sheep does exist in the group it will be findable by separating out the others from it. This reasoning establishes that the person is empty of its own inherent nature and therefore *the third attribute of the truth of suffering is emptiness.*

*Relying on the attribute of impermanence and suffering we need to be able to establish the attribute of emptiness. Then relying on emptiness we should be able to establish the fourth attribute which is **selflessness.***

Since there is no self sufficient substantially existent person the aggregates are not seen as its object of utility. However if such a person were true then by implication the aggregates would be seen as that person. As I have just pointed out since such a person does not exist in that way the aggregates are not considered its object of utility and as a result the aggregates do not have such a sovereign, self sufficient substantially existent lord as their master who can use the aggregates. The aggregates are without such a self and therefore selflessness established as an attribute.

The aggregates do not have a self because, according to the highest school of thought, there is an order of development of the views of self of a person and self of phenomena. Self here means self existent. According to the highest school initially we have self of self and then self of phenomena. We have the view of self of phenomena because we grasp at our aggregates as existing independently/truly. When we grasp/believe that way its called grasping at self in existence of phenomena, meaning the aggregates. On the basis of grasping at self of phenomena we develop self of a person, 'I'. With regard to conception of person, there are two facets: grasping at 'I' and grasping at 'mine'. Grasping at 'I' means the self existent 'I'/inherently existing 'I'. The moment we have this idea of an inherent self existing 'I' then almost involuntarily, as a natural progression we develop grasping at 'mine'. Then we say my hand, my house and so on. We grasp at things owned by the person.

We'll finish here.

Question from Audience: difference between intellectual and direct seeing absence of inherent person?

Answer from Geshela: Like seeing the vase visually in your room and then seeing it in your mind now.

As you know when you eye sees an object in front of you it sees it barely, starkly, what you see is what it is/seeing is believing as it were. When you understand something intellectually as you put it what you are referring to is the object under consideration but what you actually see is a generic image of the object/imagined object which appears to

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Attributes of the truth of suffering continued:

Questions from audience continued:

be that object. Intellectual understanding is mistaken. It could be correct in terms of its referent object but it's mistaken.

I was attending a teaching given by His Holiness in Dharamsala. There he was saying; "Although Buddhist logicians debate and say direct cognition of selflessness of person is a direct understanding it is not easy to gain. It's hard to pinpoint when exactly you have direct cognition. However the more time you spend on how a person is selfless, without inherent nature, meditating on it again and again, something will twig for you".

Gangsa means person. Da means inherent existence. Dzin means cling. We believe that person exists inherently or truly in itself. It's hard to pinpoint exact inherent existence of person. It's even harder to realize the lines of reasoning used to negate such a person. Yet this kind of belief is the root of all problem, every suffering of body and mind. Since it is such an evil force in us we have no option but to try to precisely identify what such a self existing person looks like and then how such an existent is wrong.