

20.6.2011 DBC Tenets/Drupta Geshe Jampa Tenzin

Please participate in listening to this discourse with the motivation of helping all sentient beings who've been ones mothers in the past and in order to help them you need to become Buddha. Think I will listen to the teachings as a way of advancing to that goal.

Tonight it is Tenets isn't it?

Last time we talked about the four truths and each has four attributes.

I wonder if you can relate back to me the **four attributes of the truth of suffering**; *impermanence, affliction/misery, emptiness and selflessness*.

(Ed: *impermanence* means constantly degenerating and so suffering in nature; *afflicted or miserable* means samsara is only painful no matter how it may appear; *emptiness* means that the aggregates have no true existence from their own side; *selfless* means neither person nor phenomena have any inherent existence)

What are the **four attributes of the truth of origin of suffering**? The four are *origin, cause, condition and strong condition*.

(Ed: *origin* refers to our rebirth into the cycle of existence in the first place which perpetuates/guarantees our suffering; *cause* refers to the karma we create out of our delusions; *condition* refers to the positive and negative predispositions laid on our mindstream by our karmic actions and *strong condition* means the production or ripening of those predispositions into suffering later on).

Can you give an example of the truth of suffering? The five contaminated aggregates. Yes indeed.

Give me an example of the truth of cause of suffering. Grasping and craving. Yes.

What is the difference between cyclic existence/samsara and the truth of suffering? Are they one and the same? Truth of suffering is more pervasive. It can be our psycho-physical aggregates as well as our natural environment, the mountains, trees, table or house etc. whereas cyclic existence is necessarily conjoined with consciousness of living beings. Cyclic existence is related to mind.

Does an Arahant/foe destroyer, a conqueror who has liberated self from inner foes of ignorance, anger etc, experience samsara and truth of suffering in their continuum?

They don't have them because they have directly seen selflessness of person. They do not have samsara in their continuum. Direct realization of selflessness of person/that one and others do not have objective independent existence, does not necessarily equate with absence of samsara. (ED: *There seems to be a contradiction here so that will need to be clarified*)

With direct realization of selflessness you have achieved a watershed but you still need to meditate on that powerful realization and go on to rid mind of all traces of negative thoughts and their traces.

Thank you for your answers.

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Can you give me the **four attributes of the truth of cessation?** The four are *cessation*, *peace*, *consummate state/excellence*, and *definite emergence (from samsara)*.

(Ed: *Cessation* refers to the dissolution of delusions back into emptiness/abandonment of afflictive emotions and actions; *peace* means suffering never arises; *consumation/excellence* refers to cessation of rebirth in the three realms (desire, form and formless) and so no more suffering and *definite emergence* means being able to always abide in a blissful abode.)

The truth of path leads to the truth of cessation.

(Ed: the **four attributes of the truth of path are:** *Path*, which is the way to move from samsara to the arya's abode; *knowledge*, which is the antidote to the ignorance which traps one in afflictive emotions; *achievement*, which is abandonment of wrong views and taking up of right views and *definite freedom*, which takes one beyond the suffering of cyclic existence.)

I asked these questions about the four truths to re-jog your memory to highlight the importance of the knowledge of the four truths and their attributes because these four truths are the foundation of Buddhist teaching and practice.

The first truth is the truth of suffering and of these we are mainly talking about the third type, pervasive conditioning which means the mere fact that we carry the afflicted aggregates of body and mind causes us suffering.

The five aggregates are present as our gross physical body which accommodates the other four aggregates. All in all these five are called the contaminated, afflicted aggregates. Although many of you know what the five aggregates are, for new people, they are the body and then four mental ones.

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The five aggregates

The first aggregate is the *body*, the second is an aggregation of *sensations/feelings*, the third is *discriminating awareness*, the fourth is *compositional factors/volitions/all psychological thoughts/emotions*, and the fifth is called the aggregation of *consciousnesses*. We have five sensory consciousnesses and one mental consciousness.

These five aggregates are called contamination- appropriated aggregates because the kind of body and mind we have is in samsara/cyclic existence. The aggregates of body and mind of this life were appropriated/received by one due to past negative emotions, thoughts and karma. Another reason it is called such is because these aggregates are the reason why we develop attachment, and other negative emotions which in turn will appropriate another set of afflicted aggregates in the future.

These current afflicted aggregates are an instance of the truth of suffering and as such they are characterized by the four attributes; impermanent, afflicted/miserable, empty and selfless.

The truth of suffering, our body and mind, are impermanent and we can see that changes take place to our body and mind across lifetimes. It's hard to perceive how they change momentarily unless you apply reasoning. Logic establishes the subtle momentary breakdown/change. Our body and mind is impermanent and therefore characterized by attributes of impermanence; all compounded phenomena undergo momentary change. Our aggregates especially undergo momentary change for they are propelled into existence by past karma and negative thoughts.

How do we know this? We compare how the qualities of the buddhas and how our body and mind change. The buddhas undergo change momentarily but the change doesn't lead to down grading of their qualities, whereas with our bodies there is wear and tear as we undergo momentary change. This brings about a downgrading and this causes suffering of mind and body. This is karma and delusion change.

Our afflicted aggregates of body and mind are said to be truth of suffering in that these are under the sway of karma and delusion which brings momentary change and therefore suffering ultimately.

It is in the very nature of things. For example if you have a golden vase which has the qualities of durability, timelessness, and superior quality of material it is valued accordingly. An earthenware vase has a lower value because it is less enduring, of lesser quality. That is in the nature of things.

Likewise it is in the nature of our existence and in the nature of existence of Buddhas and Arahats. What gives rise to a Buddha? What helps an ordinary being evolve into a perfect being called a Buddha are pure things like wisdom understanding the true nature of all things, emptiness/shunyata, as well as universal altruism, the wish to achieve the highest state of Buddhahood for the sake of being of service to all. Such noble uplifting enlightening attitudes cultivated initially then maintained, practiced, honed to perfection makes someone a Buddha. The resultant golden uplifting qualities of a Buddha like understanding selflessness and bodhicitta give rise to a being whose nature is perfect. Whereas our state of existence is samsaric/mundane and it is given rise to principally by

ignorance of the true nature of reality, by grasping at true existence of self and others as well as being driven by myopic self-centeredness, only wanting the best for oneself. When the causal attitudes are unwholesome as these what more can we expect than the resultant outcome we have.

We have just pointed out that the attitudes the Buddhas have are pure and the ones we have are impure. What determines this? Two things. A thought is pure and therefore correct if the object grasped by the mind exists in the way it is believed to exist. If it exists truly naturally in the way the mind perceives it then that mind is correct therefore pure. It also becomes pure on the grounds of the degree of subtlety it attains in its perception of the object.

How do we know that the object exists in the way it is perceived to and when it doesn't? That is determined by whether the perception is supported or undermined by valid reasoning. If a thought apprehending its respective object makes a judgment and is supported validly by inference and reasoning, and is a credible experience then it exists in the way it is perceived to be and the mind is judged as correct.

Our afflicted physio-psychological aggregates are brought into existence by many causes. The chief one is the view of transitory collection. This means grasping at our person as existing in and of itself, independent of any factors. That is against reality.

Let me elaborate more on this. When you think I will do a practice. As soon as you think that it is underpinned by the notion of 'I'. What is that 'I' like? That 'I' invariably is an object of negation. That means it is believed to be a truly existent 'I' and therefore an object to be negated by reasoning. We instinctively think this 'I' exists in itself but in reality this is against its true nature. When do we get the strongest sense of 'I' which seems to be independent? There are many occasions but it is more pronounced at times of extreme fright or personal tragedy, or when we are praised; at which times there is strong surge of 'I' seemingly unitary, independent and existent in and of itself.

At such times of extreme emotion at that time we are not critical and we think to ourself that 'I' exists selfsufficiently. We need to capture that 'I' at such times so we can critique how 'I' exists and how it seems to exist. Then we need to apply logic to verify if 'I' exists or not. Using the logic of the Middle Way philosophers it will clearly prove that the strong sense of 'I' doesn't exist truly. That moves one into the understanding of the emptiness of the independent 'I'.

Unfortunately as long as we remain in mundane existence every human activity we perform from morning until night is generated by that 'I'. When we live in the mundane world all human activities stem from the notion of such an independent 'I'. Any activity stemming from such a misconceived 'I' will necessarily become the origin of the truth of suffering.

That is why Lama Tsong Khapa says, "At the time when a person has no understanding of selflessness of person and at a time when the persons mind is not moistened by altruism, universal love and compassion, and at the time when the person has no opportunity to rely on the power of the field/Buddhas and so on, whatever they do will stem from such a misconceived 'I' and as a result whatever they do will contribute to the truth of origin of suffering, the source of cyclic existence, the vicious cycle.

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Whenever we do any practice of virtue we need to steep every action in the framework of seeing the person who does it as not existing independently. The person is not there but they are there, like an illusion. We need to have an idea of the illusory nature of things.

Unless our mind has some influence of the wisdom understanding selflessness, or some altruism, our actions are invariably faulted by a misconceived notion of 'I' and so whatever we do will be samsara-perpetuating actions.

We say collecting karma; how do we gather karma, where do we keep karma? We deposit it on our consciousness. Initially when our mind becomes a mind grasping at true existence of person and other phenomena that grasping is consciousness and when that grasping is immediately succeeded by mental consciousness that mind will develop intention. Intention stemming from grasping at true existence leaves a strong imprint of that intention on the mind. That is called karma.

The Twelve Dependent Links

If we talk about this process in relation to the *twelve links of dependent origination* just now three of the links have been described. I have explained the first three of the twelve. The first is called *ignorance*. The second is called *formation of karma*. The third link is called the link of *consciousness*. Recall that process. Initially there is an ignorant consciousness. It will will something/ want to do something. Then a strong imprint is laid on the mind. With these the first three links are laid. They are called projecting karma. They project another lifetime in samsara.

The predisposition/imprint of that particular intention is laid on the mind/mental consciousness. This will remain for an incredible length of time unless it is challenged by purification practice of some kind. In an instant of wanting to do something three things always take place; ignorance, karmic formation and imprints laid on consciousness. Thousands of imprints are deposited on the mind every day.

If we manage to gather so many imprints in the first three links it's a foregone conclusion that in a lifetime we gather an immense amount. However at the time of death depending on the positivity or negativity of the imprints laid on the mind craving and grasping, the 8th and the 9th links, will activate the strongest imprints. If positive imprints are strongest Then a positive but non-liberating karma will be generated.

When we are breathing our last, life is drawing to a close many thoughts criss- cross our mind. One of the last is desire, craving for our life. We don't want to lose it and cling on to it and so in the last chapter of our life we experience craving. This craving, not wanting to experience a separation of body and life, brings to maturity an assortment of imprints which have been deposited on our mind. Many of these will receive the moisture of craving due to desire for the synthesis of body and mind. After it experiences craving an inevitability dawns on the mind that despite ones craving life is about to be lost. That realization causes the 9th link, grasping, to kick in. Knowing there is going to be an inevitable separation of this life and body the dying person looks to the future and thinks I will let this life go but I will seek another one.

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Breathing ones last a strong attachment called craving and grasping surge forward. When these become heightened what immediately follows the completion of such links the tenth link of existence arises. It is a potent karma. The tenth link is called establishing karma. It will establish the next rebirth.

We have had the projecting karmas and in our lifetime we gather tons of imprints of karma on our consciousness. When we are about to breathe our last we are really working hard to realize the 8th, 9th and 10th link which will bring to fruition the projecting causes of the next rebirth in samsara. When it happens it will become contamination-appropriated aggregates.

When you want to grow rice you need a seed which is the main cause. A healthy potent seed is sown in the soil. Soil, moisture, heat, fertilizer are cooperating/subsidiary causes. As a result after a while seedlings come, the next generation of the seed. In the same way when we come into existence in samsara the seed of our existence is mainly the basic misconception that 'I' exists truly, self-sufficiently. That is like the seed. The first three links are like the seed, principally the first link, ignorance.

Just as the seed meets conditions, subsidiary causes, to boost growth, in the same way our principal seed of ignorance which has willed us to do something, that an independent 'I' will do it, generating an intention, a karma, a psychological event, and the seed of the karma is left on the consciousness. These three collectively form the seed. At the time of death the 8th, 9th and 10th link act like subsidiary causes for the seed to give rise to another samsaric existence. When you consider the nature of our cause, karma, delusion/ignorance boosted by craving and desire, what has gone to make us, it is nothing to be proud of. Therefore the result is bound to end in unpleasant experiences in the form of suffering.

Scriptures talking about the true nature of our existence say that it is under the sway of karma and negative thoughts, like a projectile thrown into space by a powerful force. For example if you have a powerful gun the bullet once fired cannot go backwards. It must follow the course projected by the force of the trigger. Once hurled into existence by the machine of ignorance, craving and grasping and we have no power to resist the law of its karmic course. In following that course we experience all kinds of misery, illness, aging and ultimately, when the potency of a particular lifetime runs out our lifetime comes to an end just as the bullet falls down when the force of its projection runs out.

Dependent on these six causes, (the first three links and the 8th, 9th and 10th link) the remaining resultant links of the 12 are the truth of suffering. They are the link of rebirth, the link of aging, and the link of name/(psychological events at time of conception), and form/(growth by the fetus). The next link is the link of assortment of sources of subsequent consciousness/sense faculties (development of sense faculties in fetus) and the last two links are contact (of our senses and an object of consciousness) and the link of sensation/feeling. These six are the resultant links. They are therefore the links of suffering.

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Of these six resultant links the link of rebirth and that of name and form happen first. As soon as we are conceived, assuming one is going to be reborn as a mammal, when the cells begin to divide the link of name and form start their evolution for that lifetime. The second moment of conception brings the onset of the aging process. The lapse of one moment followed by a second moment is technically aging. As the fetus grows in the womb the formation of sense organs, eyes, and ears and so on, where sense faculties develop and from where consciousness will arise, is the link of sense sources. After the eyes, ears and all have started three things come together; sense faculty, the object and consciousness which create the link of contact. As soon as contact comes into play the feeling of something nice to touch or unpleasant to touch comes and the 7th link of feeling/sensation is made. These are the twelve links.

From this you can infer that birth (conception) is truth of suffering, that aging is truth of suffering, that name and form (mental factors and our body) is truth of suffering. These are instances of truth of suffering. We have got all of them. Whatever comes into play via the twelve links, initially triggered by ignorance, brings about nothing good. That is why our aggregates are called contamination-appropriated aggregates, and are unfortunately doomed to experience the unpleasant.

I've spent a lot of time talking about the truth of suffering in relation to the twelve links. Understanding of the truth of suffering is crucial. When you do have a good understanding of it then of your own accord you will accept that it is quite unpleasant and you will do your best to seek to gain realization of the other three truths, cause, cessation and path. Thereby you will work out the process of turning your back on samsara. The second truth is the truth of cause of suffering. In a way Buddha should have taught that first because causes precede effects, but he taught the truth of suffering first, the effect first. That has great significance.

I explained the first two attributes of the truth of suffering are impermanence and suffering itself. Of impermanence I said there is momentary change and change across time. I went on to explain the second attribute which is suffering itself. I explained this in relation to our aggregates and how our aggregates are contamination-appropriated in relation to the twelve links. If you understand the first two attributes of the truth of suffering the next two attributes, emptiness and selflessness, will be easier to understand.