

The Three Higher Trainings

At the moment, we are bound to cyclic existence because we are under the control of our minds, and our minds are under the control of our delusions. As a result, we find ourselves in a state of complete distraction all the time, consistently unfocused, and unable to apply ourselves to the meaningful pursuit of the spiritual path. The method to overcome this unfortunate state is the practice of the first of the three higher trainings, the training in ethics. However, in order to completely subdue the mind, accomplishing the higher training in ethics alone is not sufficient—we must also develop our minds in meditative concentration. Without the basis of single-pointed placement and the strength of meditative equipoise, we will be unable to stabilize our realizations, and unable to focus our minds on virtue. And eventually, we will even find that developing the mind in the higher training in ethics and the higher training in concentration is not sufficient. In order to free our minds completely from the control of the delusions and their seeds, we will also need to practice the training in higher wisdom.

On the basis of the three higher trainings, a yogic practitioner can accomplish every objective on the path of subduing the mind. According to the Chittamatra presentation, the practices of the three higher trainings will bring three distinct results. The higher training in ethics will bring the result of a perfect human rebirth, which is the best state of rebirth from which to accomplish our spiritual goals. The higher training in concentration will bring rebirth in the form and formless realms. And the higher training in wisdom, on the basis of these two, will bring liberation, or the true cessation of suffering.

The Madhyamaka school presents the three higher trainings from the perspective of the objects to be abandoned, which are the gross manifestation of the delusions and their seeds. According to this presentation, when we practice the higher training in ethics, although we have not yet abandoned the gross delusions and their seeds, we are restrained from engaging in negative actions on a physical level. Through the higher training in concentration we are able to actually cease the gross manifestation of the delusions entirely. And finally, through the higher training in wisdom we are able to accomplish the complete cessation of the delusions and their imprints.

We may wonder why the three higher trainings are arranged in this particular order. The answer is found in a sutra that was taught at the request of Brahma, which says that in order to establish the basis, we need roots that are very firm and stable. The higher training in ethics is like the ground or the foundation upon which we can build the rest of the structure, which are the trainings in concentration and wisdom. And, subsequently, wisdom can only arise on the basis of the strength of single-pointed concentration. We can think of the higher training in ethics as the body, the higher training in concentration as two very strong arms, and the higher training in wisdom as a very sharp axe. Our delusions and their seeds are the tree.

THE HIGHER TRAINING IN ETHICS

In accordance with the text, among the three higher trainings, the higher training in ethics is discussed most extensively in the section on the medium scope. We will begin with a short discussion of the benefits of living in pure ethics.

It is often said that living in ethics is the basis of Buddhist practice. Your refuge vows become the basis of your pratimoksha vows, for example, which in turn can become the basis of your bodhisattva vows. Your bodhisattva vows in turn become the basis of your tantric vows. Thus, we can see that the practice of ethics pervades every type of practice in which we could wish to engage on the Buddhist path. This in itself should convince us that the benefits of the practice of ethics are immeasurable. In addition, in our everyday lives—whatever our lifestyle, whatever our work—whatever we undertake with a strong foundation in moral principles, anything is possible. In our studies, as well, whatever wisdom we are able to cultivate through listening, understanding, and meditating on the basis of the practice of ethics will never degenerate. And in trying to implement our studies into reality, ethics is like a medicinal tree that cures us of the sickness of every nonvirtue. As Nagarjuna has stated, ethics is the very foundation of all of the qualities that we develop within ourselves.

If a container is broken, how can it hold anything? In the same way, how can those with broken ethics ever develop positive qualities since the basis itself is in pieces? As a lame person cannot walk for long distances, how can someone without morality ever make their way to liberation? Buddha himself taught that after his passing the essence of his teachings would remain in the practice of higher ethics. Therefore, living in Vinaya or in the ethics of moral discipline is living in the very heart of Buddha's teachings. In sutra, Buddha states that keeping pure ethics and understanding the benefits of living this way become happiness in itself. In contrast, of course, when one lives in ethics for the sake of reputation or respect or for some other sort of worldly gain, it becomes suffering.

If, due to the circumstances of our existence, we should happen to incur transgressions of our code of ethics, we should remember to purify them and correct our behaviour at once. We should also remember that it is often said that compared to living in numberless forms of ethics in the time of Buddha when the teachings were so well established, living purely in just one form of ethics in the degenerate times of today is more meritorious.

How do we define ethics, or morality, exactly? Ethics is the quality of mind that wishes to protect and abstain from nonvirtue and negativity. Protect what? Protect the body, speech, and mind. Abstain how? Abstain with body, speech, and mind. There are various parts to any nonvirtuous action we engage in. The preliminary part is the motivation, which is followed by the actual course of action, which in turn is followed by the completion of the action. The quality of mind that wishes to protect our thoughts and actions from nonvirtue is an antidote to the motivation. It is also an antidote to the actual action.

How do we generate and strengthen the mental quality that wishes to protect and abstain? There are two methods to accomplish this. The first is to take vows or precepts from an abbot or a preceptor. The second is to seek to understand the shortcomings and failures of ignorance, attachment, and anger, and their antidotes.

For some, the practice of ethics brings happiness, and for others, it brings only suffering. For example, if one thinks, “I took these vows and precepts and if I break them or incur transgressions, it will cause me to take rebirth in the lower realms,” one’s practice of ethics will not become the cause of happiness. This is not the practice of living in ethics that brings joy. When you take on the practice of living in ethics, you should do so with the understanding that this practice is the antidote to your negative thoughts, such as attachment, anger, and ignorance. If you have the wisdom that understands the dependent arising of actions and their results, your practice of living in ethics will bring you great happiness.

In order to practice the higher training in ethics, we must have thoroughly examined the reasons for doing so. We must understand why it is necessary to protect our minds and abstain from nonvirtue and negativity. Also, we must understand what we need to protect our minds from. In addition to seeking protection from the three poisons, we should also consider that we need to protect our minds from the mistaken view of the way that things exist. This means that in order to practice the higher training in ethics perfectly, it is very important that we cultivate a little wisdom within our minds.

The obstacles that prevent us from living in pure ethics are the four gateways of downfall: not knowing, lack of conscientiousness, disrespect, and having many delusions.

The first gateway to downfall, not knowing, means not knowing the types of activities of the mind and body that are negative by nature, and not knowing the types of physical and mental activities that are negative because they contradict a particular discipline or a rule, or because by doing them you cause others to lose faith. The antidote to this downfall is to be familiar with whatever vows, precepts, and commitments you have taken.

The second gateway to downfall is lack of conscientiousness. Its antidote is not forgetting the teachings that you have had on what is to be abandoned and what is to be cultivated. If you remember these things, you will automatically develop awareness of whatever transgressions of body, speech, and mind you may commit. There are three ways to generate a sense of conscientiousness in your thoughts and actions: having a sense of humility in relation to yourself and Dharma, having consideration for others, and being fearful of the future suffering that could result from whatever transgressions of ethics you incur.

The third gateway to downfall is lack of respect for others, particularly lack of respect for our teacher, Buddha. If you have no respect for Buddha, you will have no consideration for his advice and teachings. Also, you should be wary of lack of respect for those who live in pure ethics, as this can also become a gateway to incurring transgression. Disrespect, in this context, refers not only to physical manifestations of disrespect, but especially to the mental attitude of disregarding and disparaging Buddha’s advice and teachings.

The fourth gateway to downfall is having many delusions. We should recognize the delusions that are strongest within our minds and try our best to apply their antidotes.

As beginners on the path, we have not yet developed the antidote of the wisdom that realizes emptiness, which is able to cut through all of our delusions and liberate us entirely from suffering. However, the training of living in pure ethics is a practice that we should be able to manage, right now, today. It is not beyond our reach.

Many people in the Western world these days are afflicted with the mental sickness called depression. Depression happens when the mind is overcome by a very strong sense of craving—for a certain object, for a certain person, for a certain experience. As this craving grows and its wishes are not actualized, aggression arises in the mind. The combination of these two emotions then gives rise to a sense of hopelessness. In some cases, the person may become suicidal, and in some cases the person may become deeply depressed. The root of this mental state is the combination of extreme attachment and anger.

When we are already caught up in these emotions, applying the ultimate antidote of wisdom that realizes selflessness is far beyond our ability. The best method to handle such an experience, therefore, is to prevent it before it occurs. And the most extraordinary, supreme way we can choose to prevent it is to live in the joy of pure ethics. In fact, living in the joy of pure ethics is the best antidote for all of the gross delusions that arise in our minds.

The mental sickness of depression can also arise from a deeply rooted sense of discontent, combined with limitless desires and expectations for what life will bring us. Living in ethics can help us to liberate ourselves from unrealistic hopes and assumptions. It can enable us to appreciate our lives without being trapped by desire.

Especially if you are a lay practitioner, you can familiarize your thoughts and actions with the training in higher ethics through such virtuous activities as taking the eight Mahayana precepts. If you can wear the beautiful cloak of the eight Mahayana precepts every so often in your life, it becomes a path to prevent your mind from being overtaken by delusions, and also another method by which to show respect and admiration for Buddha's teachings.

The master Sharawa says that in order to discriminate between what is good and bad in our life, we should utilize the guideline of Vinaya, the code of moral ethics. If we make a decision according to the guidelines of Vinaya, whatever decision we make will bring peace and happiness to our minds.

Whatever result comes from that decision, we can be assured that it will be a very good or fortunate result. Even monks and nuns practicing the tantric path should hold the practice of Vinaya in highest regard. In fact, particularly if you are a tantric practitioner, there is absolutely no way you can disregard the teachings on living in ethics. The attainments of the tantric path have no basis without the training in higher ethics. In fact, there is no tantra that disregards Vinaya. Vinaya itself is the basis of tantra.

Of course, sometimes what is permitted in tantric practice is not permitted in Vinaya. In the cases of those individuals who are able to perform extraordinary acts of benefit for others, even if Vinaya does not allow a particular action, if tantra allows it, it can be undertaken. For example, some very highly realized practitioners of tantra utilize the enjoyments of attachment on the path to enlightenment. Since they are able to engage in these activities without incurring any of the negative karma that is usually associated with the mind of attachment, this kind of conduct is considered permissible for these individuals. The restrictions in Vinaya are made only to prevent the practitioner from accumulating certain kinds of heavy negative karma that are ordinarily associated with certain actions. If a being with exceptionally high realizations is able to engage in that kind of action without accumulating the negative karma, and indeed instead accumulates great stores of positive karma, the action itself is permitted.

However, for those beings without realizations, as most of us are, whatever is not permitted in Vinaya is understood not to be permitted in tantra as well.

Generally, there are the rules of discipline that were set forth by Buddha and there are rules of discipline that are set forth within the Sangha. Of the two, the rules and regulations set forth within the community are considered more important. This is because whatever is set forth in the community includes the rules of discipline set forth by Buddha. And, in comparison to Buddha's rules of moral discipline, which are set forth in a very general context, the details of the rules of discipline created within the Sangha community are very specific—dependent on the time and the specific circumstances of those particular individuals.

There are many, many benefits discussed in the texts that describe how important it is to observe the internal rules of a Sangha community. The harmony within a Sangha community is the basis for happiness. Yet of all the hardships that we could ever encounter, the hardship of maintaining harmony within a community is the greatest, and the most admirable.

HIGHER TRAINING IN CONCENTRATION

In the *Lamrim Chenmo*, the extensive instructions on the trainings in concentration and wisdom are set forth in the later sections on calm abiding and superior insight, within the context of the bodhisattva's practice of the six perfections. As the instructions for cultivating meditative concentration and the wisdom that realizes emptiness are exactly the same according to the three higher trainings and the training of the six perfections, I will present only a general explanation of each here, and leave the detailed explanations for later.

From *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* by Togmay Sangpo:

By abandoning the objects of our delusions, we decrease the afflictions.

By abandoning mental wandering, we increase our practice of virtue.

In order to decrease the occasions when our mind gives rise to the afflictions, we should keep away from the six causes of the delusions, as we discussed before. According to Vasubandhu, it is most important that we maintain a distance from the objects of our delusions. If we abandon the circumstances that give rise to our negative states of mind, we will naturally experience a decline in those delusions. It will eventually become natural for us to place ourselves in a conducive environment, where our minds are distant from the delusions, and where we have space to apply the antidotes to our negative thoughts should they arise.

Also, as this quote mentions, by abandoning mental wandering we are able to increase our virtuous activities. The method to abandon mental wandering is the practice of concentration. Distractions can be brought on by internal or external conditions. Ordinarily, our minds are like cities of distractions—giving rise to countless superstitions and conceptual thoughts. Calming the city of distraction that we have within our own minds and maintaining focus on our objectives becomes the basis upon which we can enhance our virtuous thoughts and actions, and the basis to cultivate the realizations on the path. When we are able to free our minds from the objects of the delusions and distractions, we will then find it much easier to discriminate clearly between what to practice and what to abandon.

This verse concludes by saying that seeking solitude is the practice of the bodhisattvas. *Solitude* refers to the solitude of place. Right now, we are under the control of the mind, and the mind itself is under the control of the delusions. Therefore, ultimately, we are under the control of our delusions. We thus lack the wisdom to be able to differentiate right from wrong and in general our minds are more closely associated with the delusions than with their antidotes. So in order to gain victory, in order to conquer the delusions, we seek solitude so as to distance ourselves from our delusions in order to cultivate their antidotes within our minds.

Why do we need to seek the refuge of solitude in order to ascertain Dharma with a clear mind of wisdom and cultivate the antidotes? Isn't it possible to live in the midst of our distractions and still learn about Dharma? Of course it is possible. To merely gain an intellectual understanding of the Dharma we needn't seek solitude. However, in order for the Dharma to become a path that will benefit our future lifetimes, and in order to be able to effectively subdue our minds, we need solitude in order to be able to develop the antidotes to our delusions.

Shantideva says:

In this way becoming weary of objects of desire,
Develop joy in solitude
Within the peaceful forest,
Empty of argument and conflict.

In sutra it is said that solitude prevents contamination, which means the contamination of our deluded states of mind. This is the greatest advantage of solitude. A contaminated, or deluded, state of mind brings only misery and physical and mental suffering. However, in solitude, we are able to keep distant from the conditions that give rise to the delusions, and thus are less likely to experience their gross manifestations. In solitude, we are also able to pacify the mind of its addiction to conceptuality and superstition.

However, seeking solitude merely for the purpose of enjoying these benefits alone is not sufficient. We must also have the foundation of a sense of aversion for the desires of the mind. Physically isolating ourselves from the world alone will not ensure mental retreat from the afflictions. If we do not have a sense of aversion for the objects of the mind's desire, we will be unable to utilize the circumstances of our solitude to bring forth any beneficial result.

The reason that we do all of these practices and all of these trainings is to become a good person, a better person. That is the objective. Even in solitude the result that we are seeking is to become a good human being. Therefore, the most essential thing that we have to learn is how to become less selfish and how to cherish and benefit others more. This is the way that we become a good human being. Benefiting others does not mean that we have to try to help each and every individual sentient being right now. It means that we should try to enhance the mental qualities that wish to do this, and on that basis expand the capacity of our minds in order to actually bring this about. If benefiting others meant that you had to actually meet every sentient being and do something to benefit them right then, we would have to say that even Buddha has failed in that respect.

If we have only the thought of cherishing ourselves, no matter what we do, everything that we seek to accomplish will only move further and further out of reach. But if we cultivate the

thought of cherishing others, everything that we seek—happiness, good reputation, praise, material gain—will come to us. This is the natural reality of how things work.

From the moment our lives begin, every minute that passes brings us closer and closer to our inevitable death. If we cannot effect any kind of positive changes within ourselves while we are alive, when we die, we will depart totally empty-handed, in complete poverty. That would be a tremendous loss of opportunity.

THE HIGHER TRAINING IN WISDOM

In the *Commentary on the “Compendium on Valid Cognition,”* Dharmakirti states that although love and compassion are very highly regarded mental states, they cannot directly combat ignorance by themselves alone. Therefore, it is necessary to pursue the realization of emptiness. In the medium scope, this mode of practice makes up the third of the three higher trainings on the path of individual realization. In the great scope, the practice of the wisdom that realizes emptiness makes up the sixth perfection on the path of the bodhisattva.

At present, our limited understanding of the way that conventional and ultimate reality exist can be compared to a child’s first attempts at drawing a house. Our ideas are very rough, and our renderings are very crude.

However, let us suppose that this child perseveres in perfecting the house that he has drawn—that he draws it again and again, throughout his life, until eventually he grows up, becomes an architect, and is able to render this house on paper precisely as it should be built. In the same way, as we study the philosophical texts, contemplate their meanings, and meditate to actualize our understanding, we will, over time, be able to perfect our view.

Examining the examples, logic, and quotations in relation to the subject matter of emptiness is the first step. Even if we are unable to understand clearly or in great depth at first, we should still make great effort in our listening and studying. In the future these efforts will benefit us.

An Explanation of Conventional and Ultimate Reality According to the Diamond Cutter Sutra

Like a star, a cataract, a butter lamp
An illusion, a drop of dew, a water bubble
Like a dream, a bolt of lightning, a cloud—
View all compounded phenomena in this way.

These nine examples from the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* were taught by Buddha for the purpose of eliminating ignorance from our minds and helping us to realize the way things actually exist. Right now, due to ignorance, we are continually making incorrect assumptions about reality. We see something that appears pleasant, then we grasp at it, impute additional qualities onto it, and grasp at it even more. In this way, we generate all the poisonous states of mind and accumulate negative karma.

If you close your fist and pretend that there is something wonderful in the palm of your hand, make lots of noise and get very excited, and tell a child to come and see, merely by your behavior, the child will grow certain that you are holding something really great. On the basis

of this, that child will generate great hope, expectation, and excitement, and will wait with eager impatience for you open your hand and share. As long as we habitually grasp at the true existence of all of the people, things, and events in our lives, we are just like that child, and we are susceptible to exactly the same mistake.

From Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the "Middle Way"*:

One will find and hold two natures for all things, seeing [in them] ultimate reality and conventional reality.

In daylight, when the sky is clear, although the stars have not gone anywhere, they cannot be seen. This is analogous to what appears to the mind of an arya being in meditative equipoise on emptiness, who sees the ultimate nature of phenomena. To this kind of consciousness, there is no appearance of true existence, no appearance of duality, no appearance of conventional reality at all.

When night falls, however, and there is no sunlight, the stars shine brightly into the same sky. This is analogous to way that phenomena appear to the mind of an ordinary being, who perceives existence with the stains of the imprints of ignorance. Such an ordinary consciousness perceives what is pure as impure, what is impure as pure, what is suffering as happiness, and so forth. Due to the force of the pollutions of the mind of ignorance, conventional existence appears to an ordinary consciousness.

Thus, we can say that the analogy of the stars represents the dual nature of all phenomena: the manner in which things appear to a nonconceptual wisdom consciousness, such as that in the mind of an arya being, and the manner in which things appear to ordinary conceptual consciousness, such as that in the mind of an ordinary being with no realizations. The former is the ultimate mode of existence and ultimate truth, and the latter is the conventional mode of existence.

It is important to understand here that to the wisdom consciousness of the mind of meditative equipoise, the *appearance* of a phenomenon and its *actual mode of existence* are in complete accord. In contrast, however, to an ordinary mind, the appearance of a phenomenon and its actual mode of existence are completely discordant. Every conditioned phenomenon possesses conventional reality and ultimate reality. But this does not mean that the two aspects are unrelated.

To give another example of how to establish conventional and ultimate reality on the basis of one entity, suppose that a person named Peter comes from the West, meets a Tibetan lama, studies for a while, and generates renunciation. On this basis Peter becomes ordained and is given the name Tenzin. The basis is the same. The person is labeled Peter because he is a suitable base to be called Peter. He is later named Tenzin because he later becomes a suitable base to be called Tenzin.

From *Supplement to the "Middle Way"*:

[If it existed,] even [one] without cataracts would perceive the falling hair. Because this is not the case, [the falling hair] does not exist.

Here, the example of the cataract represents the appearance of existence to a consciousness that is polluted by ignorance, which sees true, inherent existence in phenomena. Although

this is what appears to and is apprehended by the mind polluted by the imprints of ignorance, in reality this mode of existence does not exist at all. In the same way, the appearance of the falling hair in space exists only to the eye that is obscured by cataracts. Outside of the perception of that consciousness, the falling hair does not exist at all.

The fact that inherent existence does not exist at all is proven by the fact that when the inherent existence of any object is sought by an unmistaken consciousness, it cannot be found. In the same way, the falling hair in space cannot be found when sought by the person with faultless eyesight.

From the *Sutra Showing the Display of Armor*:

All phenomena arise by
The collection of many conditions together.
Because of the collection of many conditions
There is no inherence.

The explanation of the third example—the flame of a butter lamp—is intended to eliminate the extreme of nihilism in the practitioner’s mind. Although, as we have already established, phenomena do not exist from their own side or by their own characteristics or nature, neither are phenomena nonexistent. The result of the flame of a butter lamp arises from the collection of many causes and conditions: the lamp itself, the wick, the butter, the match. Although we cannot say that the flame of the butter lamp itself resides in any of these parts, it has undeniably arisen from them.

In the same way, although we cannot say that any phenomenon resides inherently in any of its parts, neither can we say that phenomena are nonexistent. Existence itself is established based on the dependent arising of causes and conditions.

From the *Commentary to “Four Hundred Stanzas”*:

That which occurs like an illusion is not nondeceiving, because things that abide as [one] aspect appear as another aspect.

This means that what is noninherently existent by nature appears to be inherently existent, and is therefore deceptive. This is illustrated by the example of the illusion.

The traditional explanation of the illusion is the example of the magician who creates beautiful and terrible mirages that manipulate our emotions and cause us to experience attachment, aversion, and so forth. However, something that may seem a little closer to our lives in the twenty-first century is the example of a television program. If we see something very beautiful or pleasant on a television show, attachment and desire rise within us. If we see something unpleasant or horrible on a television show, aversion and anger rise within us. This is in spite of the fact that we are generally aware that what we are seeing on television is not actually real—it is a scripted story, or a doctored image.

This is the way that illusions function in our lives to affect us, and similarly, the way that we perceive our existence away from the television set is affected by the pollutions of the imprints of ignorance. We are propelled by the force of our karma and delusions from lifetime to lifetime, and in each of these lifetimes we experience various forms of happiness and suffering arising from our attachment, aversion, and so on. Because we do not understand

the nature of conventional and ultimate existence—as illustrated by the previous examples of the star, the mirage, and the flame of the lamp—we experience every illusion as a reality, and our happiness and suffering arise on this basis.

From Maitreya's *Discrimination between the Middle Way and Extremes*:

The meaning of impermanence is the meaning of nonexistence.

A drop of dew on a blade of grass is so delicate that even the rays of the rising sun will dry it up, or a strong wind may blow it away. The happiness that we experience in our lives is similarly fragile.

In his commentary on this verse from the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, Konchog Tenpai Dronme states:

The tiny dewdrop on the end of the blade of grass has an extremely unstable nature, such that it will instantly dry up due to even a small condition such as being touched by light. In the same way, all compounded phenomena, once they are established, without depending on a later cause, possess a transient nature. They are not even a little bit trustworthy.

The example of a water bubble also represents the nature of our happiness in cyclic existence. When a bubble arises from the water, it is very pleasant, shining, and nice. However, when it bursts, as it inevitably will, it returns to the nature of water. In the same way, as long we are in samsara, in the space between the peak of one gross suffering and the peak of the next, we experience the pleasant, shining bubble that we call happiness. However, soon enough, the bubble will burst and return to its original state of suffering. This is called the suffering of change, and it is very deceptive, because it appears in our lives disguised as happiness.

Ordinary sentient beings such as ourselves instinctively categorize our experiences as good or bad, happiness or suffering. According to these categories, we then experience feelings of pleasure or unhappiness. Beings who have realized emptiness directly, however, understand that all contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering, and thus, from the beginning, they do not make these kinds of distinctions. As a result, they do not experience contaminated feelings of pleasure or unhappiness. From their perspective, living in cyclic existence is like living on the point of a needle—there is never a single moment of happiness. From the very depths of cyclic existence up to the highest peak of the form and the formless realms, all of our existence is brought on by karma and delusions, and therefore can only bring suffering.

The last three examples from the verse in the *Diamond Cutter Sutra* use the three times—the past, the present, and the future—to illustrate emptiness. The first is the example of a dream, which shows the emptiness of our experiences of the past.

From chapter 7 of Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom of the Middle Way*:

Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of ghosts—
Like that [things] will arise and like that [things] will abide.
Like that, [things] will disintegrate.

When we remember things that we dream about, we generate attachment, anger, and so forth, even though the objects of the dream are not actually real. In the same way, although all the

things that we have experienced in the past exist, they do not exist in the manner in which we grasp them, which is as truly, inherently existing experiences of happiness or suffering.

The emptiness of the present is shown by the example of a bolt of lightning. According to Konchog Tenpai Dronme:

It is impossible to identify the source of lightning in the beginning, where it abides and remains in the middle, and where it goes in the end. In an instant the whiteness appears, and after that, it immediately becomes nonexistent.

As we cannot say that a bolt of lightning arose from here, abides here, and will end here, so we are unable to pinpoint the things of the present when we search for them. The things of the present are merely what lie between the things of the past and the future, thus their existence is entirely relative and imputed. From the commentary by Konchok Denpay Dronme:

Although a mere empty sky cannot rain, from the accumulation of clouds in that sky, rain falls. Due to that, the ripened crops are able to produce fruit continuously.

The example of a cloud shows how emptiness is like the future. In the same way that the sky alone is unable to bring forth rain, the clear nature of mind alone is unable to wander in samsara or attain nirvana. However, when the appropriate causes and conditions of delusions, karmic seeds, and imprints of lower rebirths are brought together, the ripening result of future rebirth in cyclic existence can occur.

This concludes the discussion of the training of higher wisdom in accordance with the verse from the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*.

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