

## Some general remarks on the Dharma

There are eight worlds in which humans and non-human beings exist in diverse forms. Living beings, like humans and animals, have a mind and these beings wish to be happy. At the same time they wish to avoid suffering. The mind (*sems*) that transcends matter is called consciousness (*shes pa*) and it is also called potency or energy (*nus pa*). This mind has many wishes. But happiness cannot be obtained only by wishing. The same is true with suffering. We do not wish to suffer. But only by wishing we cannot avoid suffering. Therefore, to obtain happiness and to avoid suffering we have to aspire. Happiness and suffering are both effects; they depend upon causes. In order to obtain happiness and to avoid suffering we have to look for the causes. Although animals have consciousness, they do not possess the discriminating capabilities of the mind. But humans possess them. We humans have the ability to gain transitory happiness and to overcome suffering temporarily through material objects. In the same way we can achieve this goal through our mind.

We have reached a high level of knowledge about the material world through modern science. By this we try to gain happiness and to avoid suffering. There are different methods for our mind to find a path towards happiness and therefore there exist different religions. Religions have their own faith and their own practices, their own notion about this and the next live and different methods to gain happiness and to overcome suffering.

Among these diverse religions, Buddhism was founded 2550 years ago by Buddha Shakyamuni. He was born as a prince and in his youth he had the chance to become acquainted with different religious systems and to study various fields of knowledge. Because of his high level of learning he was praised by erudite scholars. Likewise he was held as capable and courageous because of his power and wealth. He was strongly dedicated to the happiness of the people for whom he was responsible. He knew how to solve material problems, but he realized the different kinds of sufferings, like birth, aging, sickness and death and he thought, what would happen to him, if he would experience himself these sufferings. Therefore he developed a strong motivation to solve these kinds of sufferings. It was his conviction that he would not find the answer if he would stay residing in his palace. Hence he renounced his household life for homelessness and became renunciate. He met many virtuous friends, he meditated, he practiced and reached a high level of meditative stabilization (*ting nge 'dzin*) and he spend six years practicing austerities. At the age of 35 he attained enlightenment. He realized the secret of consciousness which is beyond thought.

As mentioned before, we as human beings are caught in the feeling of having never enough material means. The Buddha realized this problem and wanted to solve it. He found the solution to solve the problem of our mind. All problems of our mind are caused by ignorance. Through ignorance the afflictive emotions are caused. The mind is the main cause of all our problems in contemporary society. Therefore the Buddha has preached intensively the Dharma and turned three times the Wheel of Dharma.

In the first Turing of the Wheel of Dharma he taught the Four Noble Truths and this is considered the root of the Buddha-Dharma: suffering, cause, cessation, path. It is necessary to understand suffering. There are three kinds of suffering. The suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the pervasive suffering of being conditioned. The suffering of suffering is well-known to everyone. The suffering of change results from the attachment to the so-called happiness in our society. The reason for this suffering is, because happiness in our society is impermanent. The existing happiness is not stable and therefore turns into suffering. The pervasive suffering of

being conditioned is very subtle. Nobody is free from suffering, no matter if he or she is rich or poor, well-educated or non-educated, powerful or without power. This is the suffering of propensities or the pervasive suffering of being conditioned.

Not only humans but also animals have methods to relieve themselves from the suffering of suffering. Many religions offer methods to overcome the suffering of change. In general the methods to solve the suffering of change have improved due to the high level of scientific knowledge. For example, if you eat healthy food it is good for your body; if something is bad for the body, you don't eat it. This is a method to avoid one kind of suffering of change. Gaining stability in calm abiding meditation (*zhi gnas*) is the method of getting rid completely of the suffering of change. The method to eliminate the pervasive suffering of being conditioned is the unity of calm abiding and insight meditation (*lhag mthong*). The reason is, because this is the method to eliminate the cause of afflictive emotions of our mind. The cause of this suffering is the origin (the second Noble Truth). There are two origins: The karmic origin and the origin of afflictive emotions. The karmic origin comprises those karmas created through our body (like killing, stealing and so forth), our speech (like lying) and our mind (like attachment, hatred and ignorance). The result of these activities is the suffering of samsara.

When one removes the karmic origin and the origin of afflictive emotions, he or she has reached the cessation (the third Noble Truth). It is called cessation, because the cause of the suffering has been removed from the root. There are two types of cessation: The so-called Shravaka cessation and the Mahayana cessation. In order to reach one of these goals, the path has to be practiced (the fourth Noble Truth). The practice of the path consists of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi phyogs sum cu rtsa bdun*). These are:

- the four applications of mindfulness (*dran pa nye bar bzhag pa bzhi*)
- the four genuine abandonments (*yang dag par spong ba bzhi*)
- the four bases of miraculous powers (*rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi*)
- the five sense organs (*dbang po lnga*)
- the five powers (*stobs lnga*)
- the seven factors of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi yan lag bdun*)
- the eight limbs of the noble path (*'phags lam gyi yan lag brgyad*)

Through the practice of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment the troubles of our mind will be solved. The vehicles leading to the two kinds of cessation are classified into a lower and a higher vehicle through the different strength of motivation. Those with lesser motivation were the founders of the Shrivakayana. Those embraced with the mind of enlightenment (bodhicitta) have the strong motivation to free all sentient beings from samsara; they were the founders of the Mahayana.

The basis of Buddhism is interdependent origination, which is explained in detail in Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön's *Gongchig*. This view is compatible with modern science. In general the system of Buddhism can be compared with science, because it deals with the uncontrived nature of the phenomena. The abiding nature of matter and the abiding nature of the mind are shown clearly in Buddhism. It is impossible to remove suffering just by analyzing it. In order to remove the cause of suffering one has to practice. There are two kinds of obscurations: The gross obscuration and the subtle obscuration. By eliminating these two obscurations one will be liberated from suffering. Therefore the Shedra (*bshad grwa*, philosophical school) and the Drubdra (*sgrub grwa*, retreat center) are two very important institutions in our Dharma activity. In the philosophical school you analyze and ascertain, in the retreat center you practice. Kyobpa Jigten Sumgön has

explained profoundly and clearly the importance of these two methods. During his lifetime he liberated 300.000 of his students from suffering and they attained nirvana. Nowadays this tradition slowly disappears. Lamas cannot teach properly and students cannot practice properly. It is very important to preserve and to promote this tradition. Every responsible person should know that this is a crucial point. Only if we are successful in fulfilling this task can we pass on the Dharma to future generations.

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