



Enlightenment is within you

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Enlightenment is within you. Buddha cannot give you Enlightenment by his hands. Because the illusion is within you, then samsara and all the problems of the mind are within you. If the illusion, negative emotions, and samsara are from your mind, then enlightenment is also from your mind. When these problems are gone, enlightenment is there. So enlightenment is within your mind.

Dharma means methods - methods that you practise to get enlightened. When you have accomplished the practice, the result is Buddhahood. Before you begin the Dharma practice you must know how important the Dharma is. The length of our lives is determined by how long our physical bodies exist, not how long our minds exist. Mind will continue. The good or the bad things that happen to you in your life is the result of your past karma. Collectively, we human beings along with all other living beings in our universe share the same collective karma, the same realm, the same type of nature, the same type of form. We can communicate with one another. This is the result of collective karma.

However, the individual karma is not equal, or the same, among living beings. Some people are luckier than are others depending on the individual karma. Actually, the whole universe and you are an illusion of your own mind. They are the result of your karma. Karma is also mind. But once the illusion has manifested due to the ripening of karma, it is solidly there until its underlying cause is exhausted. When this happens, the effect is like a dream disappearing. You will then change from this illusion to another one corresponding to another cause. This is cause and result. No one knows one's own karma - what are the causes and results that are next to ripen. You do not know the karma that has brought about your present life. Neither do you know what cause is coming up next for yourself, nor its result. Nobody can know or find out about it.

Karma is accumulated. It is built up by your own negative emotions. It is invisible. It is not of any substance or form. Just like the negative emotions are invisible, so is karma. But the result of karma, however, is visible because it manifests as an illusion. Because your negative emotions are part of your mind and karma is also part of your mind, the resulting illusion is also part of your mind. Of these three aspects, only one is visible but it is also too late to change it. Whatever karma you have accumulated is limitless because your negative emotions from the past are limitless. You cannot make excuses now and claim that you have not done anything wrong.

Of the accumulated karma, the strongest karma will ripen next. It will yield the corresponding result. The future is never certain. When you begin the Dharma practice with this understanding of karma, you will have a very strong commitment. You will persist with your practice. You have found the Dharma and have some understanding of the Buddha. You have what is called a *precious human life*. Why is it precious? It is because you have found a solution to the mind. Fortunately your life is now meaningful. But your life is impermanent. You are ageing in every moment. Without a solution like enlightenment, life has no meaning. Living a comfortable life seems like a good idea and everyone wants that. But whether or not it will really turn out the way you want it, is entirely uncertain.

Every moment is meaningful if you live your lives applying the methods that can lead you out of samsara's trap. With this understanding, you should have a very strong intention. *But intention is only the first step*. You need to learn the Dharma. Very likely, people will not understand the Dharma immediately. But by knowing the example of the Buddha, they will develop the intention. They will then want to learn the Dharma. *This is the second step*. It is very important to learn from someone who knows the Dharma. Then you can receive the teachings in detail. Teachings are like the road directions to get somewhere. It is like when you want to go to San Francisco, you need directions so you study the map. An experienced person can show you how to get there. He may say, "taking this highway is longer," or "this way is shorter," or "here is the way to get there." It is the same with the Dharma. A qualified instructor is someone who can teach you and show you the directions. He knows the Dharma or the way. You should obtain the directions from him, study the directions, and then you must go to your destination. Otherwise, why did you learn them?

It is important that the dharma practise be done properly. For example, you may have very important business in Los Angeles. You have to be there at a certain time. From the moment you leave your house to go to Los Angeles, every minute is meaningful. You know the directions well. Along the way, you are focused. You will reach your destination, and you will accomplish what you have set out to do. Dharma practice should be like that.

In Dharma practice you apply what we call the paramitas. Paramita means to cross over, like crossing the ocean to reach the other side. Let us take for example, the drive to Los Angeles. In this context, the application of the Paramita of proper ethics means that you do not consume alcohol while you drive. Otherwise you may get drunk and have an accident. You do not fall asleep while driving is another caution. In other words, you avoid the things that will prevent you from reaching your goal. This kind of discipline is required to make your journey successful. When you go through the practice, you apply the Paramitas to put all your effort into making your journey to enlightenment a successful one.

Enlightenment is beyond our imagination. Dharma practice is limitless but our mind has the capacity to do the practice. To be precise, Dharma practice can be broken down into three aspects: the main practice and two side practices. The main practice is meditation. Meditation is a common word but in the Buddha Dharma, meditation is about removing all our problems of the mind. *Samadhi* is the realization of the nature of mind. Samadhi is meditation where the main focus is on the nature of mind. It is easy to say "nature of mind", but it is very difficult to realize it. The main meditation is on the view of the nature of mind to eliminate all mental problems. Mental problems do not mean the abnormal problems. Mental problems here refer to the negative emotions, and ignorance. Ignorance is the main cause of all negative emotions. The meditation has its focus on each of the negative emotions to eliminate them. In this way, you will be liberated. Of the two side practices contained in the Ngöndro or Foundation practices, one purifies your karma. The other develops the merit that supports and strengthens the practice to make it successful. The two side practices are the methods and meditation is the main practice. In this way you will be enlightened. This is Dharma practice.

When you do the Dharma practice in this life, you are sure to achieve something. You can become fully enlightened in this life. In the least, even if you are a very slow mover, you will still achieve something. It is certain that you will produce a positive cause for the future and it will keep growing. Even if you do not reach the goal in this life, you will get there in one of your future lives. Otherwise, once this opportunity is lost and another karma ripens, you might lose the chance forever. Your past karma is probably not very good, otherwise you would not be in samsara now. Look at how much negative emotions that you have now. It means that you have accumulated that much negative habit in your mind from the past. Nothing good can come out of it. This is one way of looking at it logically to convince yourself that the majority of your karma is not good if your negative emotions are still strong. Once you lose this opportunity you will lose it forever. This is why this human life is precious and it must not be wasted.

A common problem of people is to think like this, "*I must achieve the results quickly. I cannot wait more than five, or six years. Otherwise, I don't like it.*" But look at six years of an ordinary life without practice. What can you achieve that is lasting? You end up with nothing. You cannot achieve the results of the Dharma practice within six years. You simply cannot. But you are nevertheless engaged in something meaningful. After six years of practice, if you still want to pursue another goal, you can drop the Dharma and still do so. But is there another goal? For sentient beings, life holds no other goals beside enlightenment. I am not trying to discourage you but there really is no other objective in life. You can try to get rich, but then what? Suppose you can be a successful politician, or become a president of a country, but then what? The problem is still the same, isn't it? Dharma is the best. This is why even if you are progressing very slowly, the Dharma is still more meaningful than anything else in life.