

Abandoning Dualistic Thinking

Samsara and nirvana are no more different

Than the two sides of a hand

So abandon dualistic discrimination,

Then pure lands are nowhere else! That is my heart advice.

To give a brief explanation of the above verse, in general, the word ‘samsara’ in Sanskrit, ‘khor wa’ in Tibetan, means ‘uninterrupted.’ What is uninterrupted? The uninterrupted sufferings of many kinds such as those of birth, aging, sickness, and death which torment sentient beings. All sentient beings are tormented by the three root sufferings: pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning, suffering of change, and suffering upon suffering. The suffering of pervasive karmic conditioning is the source of the other two types of suffering. As long as we are not separated from the suffering of karmic conditioning we cannot attain Liberation. The antidote to the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning is the view of shunyata, of selflessness; there is no other way. The ‘view of selflessness’, is knowledge of the mode of existence of phenomena; the understanding of just how things exist. If we see exactly how things have always existed, without fabricating anything, we can rid ourselves of the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning; we can cut it out from the root. Pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning and unknowing ignorance is the root of accumulating delusions and karma. Transcendent wisdom awareness, ‘rig-pay ye-she’ in Tibetan, is like the light in a house, while the suffering of karmic conditioning and ignorance is like darkness.

The Sanskrit word, ‘nirvana’, is translated into Tibetan as ‘nyang-de’. ‘Nyang’, means experience of the above mentioned sufferings, and ‘de’ means complete liberation from them. If we can free ourselves from these sufferings we will attain eternal bliss, actual uncontaminated bliss. If we can

cut from the root the continuum of pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning and its root cause, ignorance, we can become completely free of suffering. Being bound by ignorance and the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning is called samsara, and liberation attained through having abandoned ignorance and the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning by correctly seeing the true nature of awareness is called nirvana. In brief, pure awareness is nirvana, and being under the control of ignorance is samsara. For someone who perseveres in practicing the path it is not at all difficult: it is no more different than the front and back of a hand, it is said. The root cause of wandering in samsara is attachment and aversion: clinging attachment to your own side, your family, your boy friend, girl friend, land, country, and so on; resenting and hating as enemies those whom you don't like; and indifferently ignoring those who are between the two. It is imperative that we abandon this harmful dualistic discrimination of bias and prejudice towards enemies, friends, and strangers which is the principal cause that has pulled us into samsara from beginningless time up to the present. If we can abandon this harmful attitude of biased attachment and aversion, then pure lands of the Buddhas are not somewhere far away and impossible to attain; they are nowhere else.

That is my heart advice.

Initial quote from page 8 of "Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar," written by Khenpo Karten Rinpoche. The teaching above was delivered at a Public Talk on Abandoning Dualistic Thinking, Saturday, March 25th, 2017 at the Manjushri Dharma Center.

In addition, at the meditation class prior to the teaching, Rinpoche offered a video from [Sogyal Rinpoche on the Unaltered Mind](#), which also contributed to the subject of Abandoning Dualistic Thinking.