

Our wandering in samsara happens because we have taken a mistaken path. This is because we have not recognized our own mind from the very start— we have not recognized that it is our own mind which creates our experiences. Ignorance and its retinue, the delusions of attachment, aversion, jealousy, pride, and so forth, are what cast us into suffering without freedom. What casts us into suffering? It is ignorance that casts us into suffering. Where are we cast? Into the places of suffering of the six lifeforms. When are we cast there? From beginningless time up to the present. Who is it that is cast into suffering? All sentient beings. What happens once we are cast there? We are completely tormented by the three types of suffering: suffering of pain, of change, and of pervasive karmic conditioning. Will there ever be a time that we are free? Yes, because once we are freed from ignorance and the rest, at that time we are liberated.

Ignorance arises due to our own mistaken perceptions. Therefore, to remedy it we need an unmistaken mind: pure wisdom awareness. What is the actual unmistaken state of mind? It is the pure awareness of transcendent wisdom insight. By discovering and recognizing the meaning of shunyata— selflessness, and meditating upon it with this pure wisdom awareness, we can now and forever expel the demonic ignorance that grasps appearances as truly existent reality. Ignorance grasping appearances as inherently existent is like gloomy darkness and insightful pure wisdom awareness is its exact opposite. The root of what propels us into cyclic existence is the ignorance which grasps appearances as truly existent. If we try to remove that ignorance just by saying prayers, counting mantras, or making prostration, it will not be dispelled. We must meditate on its direct antidote, the view of emptiness. If we meditate on our understanding of emptiness we can finally be liberated from samsara.

How are we liberated from samsara? If we can expel that demonic grasping ignorance and the five poisonous delusions that accompany it once and for all, that day we will be liberated. Again, how are we liberated? It is in a manner of antidotes dispelling that which is to be abandoned, like the sun being freed of cloud cover. When are we liberated? When the delusions in our mind are finished we are liberated. What happens when we are liberated? The continuum of suffering of the three realms and bad karma is severed and we attain the unexcelled state of stainless nirvana; we discover the kingdom of eternal happiness. Can ordinary beings be liberated? Whether we are liberated or not depends upon the effort we put forth. If we put effort into practice there is nothing we cannot accomplish. We can definitely attain liberation.

In summary, as Shantideva says in Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life,

What we see hear and think
Does not need to be stopped.
What causes our suffering is believing in its reality;
That is what we need to abandon.

Accordingly, I am also not saying that beautiful objects we perceive through our five senses are bad and must be abandoned. What we really need to abandon is our attachment and clinging to them. Again, as the Mahasiddha Tilopa said,

Son, appearances don't trap you, attachment does.
Give up clinging attachment, Naropa!

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