

Buddha Nature

FPMT Masters Program Supplementary Lecture

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Preliminary Prayers

Taking Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta

I take refuge until I am enlightened

In the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.

By my merits of listening to the Dharma,

May I become a buddha to benefit transmigratory beings.

Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la

Jang chhub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi

Dag gi chhö nyen gyi päi tshog nam kyi

Dro la phän chhir sang gyä drub par shog

Our current state

**Although wishing to be rid of misery,
They run towards misery itself.
Although wishing to have happiness
Like an enemy they ignorantly destroy it.**

**Even those who wish to obtain happiness and overcome suffering
Will wander with no aim
If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind –
The principal Dharma.**

--Shantideva, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

Path to Attain Happiness

**Enthused by great compassion,
You expounded the sublime truth
In order to eliminate all wrong views;
To you, the Gautama Buddha, I pay homage.
--Arya Nagarjuna**

**Do not commit any unwholesome actions.
Engage in perfect, wholesome actions.
Subdue your mind thoroughly.
This is the teaching of the Buddha.
--The Buddha, *Dhammapada***

Reason Why the Mind is Emphasized

There are two reasons why it is important to understand the nature of mind. One is because there is an intimate connection between mind and karma. The other is that our state of mind plays a crucial role in our experience of happiness and suffering.

--His Holiness The Dalai Lama

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Will wander with no aim
If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind –
The principal Dharma.**

--Shantideva, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

Concept of Buddha Nature

- All sentient beings have the potential to attain enlightenment
- The obscurations and causes of suffering are dependent on other factors, empty of inherent existence, not inherently part of the mind
- The obscurations are rooted in a distorted view of reality
- The truth can be discovered and this forms the antidote to the obscurations.
- Therefore, the obscurations can be abandoned
- Their abandonment is the attainment of Buddhahood

Outline of *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* By Gampopa

Prime cause, basis, condition, means, results and activity: by these six general key terms should the wise know peerless enlightenment.

- The prime cause is buddha nature
- The basis is a most precious human existence
- The special condition is the Dharma master
- The means is the Dharma master's instruction.
- The results are the bodies of perfect Buddhahood.
- The activity is to nonconceptually fulfill the welfare of beings.

Reasons that all sentient beings have Buddha nature

Because the Buddha's body pervades all,
And because suchness is without differentiation,
And because they possess the potential,
Every living being at all times has buddha nature.

--Maitreya, *Uttaratantra*

How Gampopa glosses “they possess the potential”

Those with enlightenment potential can be summed up as belonging to five groups: those with severed potential, undetermined potential, sravaka potential, pratekyabuddha potential, and those with Mahayana potential.

“Severed Potential” according to Asanga’s *Sravaka Levels*

Though seeing what is wrong with samsara, they are not in the least put off by it.

Though hearing about the qualities of enlightened beings, they feel not the slightest faith in them.

Without conscience and shame, and devoid of even a little compassion, they feel not the slightest regret for the unwholesome acts in which they fully indulge.

Through compounding those six shortcomings, they are far from ready for enlightenment.

“Severed Potential” according to Maitreya’s *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*

It is certain that some are solely engaged in what is harmful.

Some are constantly destroying whatever is good.

Others lack those virtues conducive to liberation.

They are devoid of anything that could in any way be wholesome.

Discussion

Are we all Buddhas and we just don't know it?
How does Buddha Nature fit into our practice?