

緣起

Dependent - Arising



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Dependent Arising 緣起

— teaching by H.E. Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche —
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Tonight, we will discuss about dependent arising or dependent origination.

It is an important thing to know about our life and there are two important things to know about LIFE:

The first thing is knowledge. We all have to have knowledge. The more knowledge we have, the better. We make a lot of mistakes without knowledge. We will not be able to achieve anything without knowing the way, thus making knowledge crucial. For example, we need to know how to repair a machine or how to connect it to electricity to initiate it, or we may get killed if we do not know how to do properly. "Super-knowledge", the highest level of knowledge, is to know the ultimate reality, the real meaning and big picture of life. The purpose or function of knowledge is to reduce or eradicate sufferings (苦受), confusions (困惑) and distorted views (邪見). This teaching is inspired by this pursuit of the super-knowledge. The first part of this teaching will talk about dependent origination. In it, we will find out how our experience of the world, all the difficulties, discomfort and problems in our life, come into existence.

The second quality is kindness (慈愛心). It is an innate element in all of us and it is a responsibility for us to grow this important quality within us. The function or benefit of having kindness is to generate happiness within oneself. More importantly, happiness is contagious - once you have the happiness within yourself, it will spread onto people around you and their happiness will flow back to you! In the second part of this teaching, we will explore the term "shared value" to see how everything is connected, how we are connected and how all things are intertwined.

Dependent arising/origination refers to the situation that one thing will give rise to another thing. If you do not stop the process, the cycle will go on. Take the economy as an example, if people stop to consume, sales of goods/services will drop. Manufacturers will reduce production and some workers will be laid off. The vicious cycle will continue if the declining trend of consumption persists and impacts adversely on the economy. Likewise, the rice that we eat grows from the seed to seedling, growing further to grain before becoming the rice. The process comes in stages. Without the seed,



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you will not have the seedling and so on. Then again, someone has to have the intention to grow the seed into rice. And, when all the necessary conditions - the soil, the fertile land, the water, the sunlight and so on - come together, plus all the time it needs to take for the development, the seed will progress on to become rice. The point here is that you do not need an external superhuman to be a creator of things. Things happen when the causes and conditions come together. After taking the time they need, what should happen will happen.

Here's another example. "Lion in the Well" is a story. Lion is known to be arrogant, as it is considered the king of animals. One day, this lion looked into the well and saw the image of a lion. The lion did not know that it was actually its own image. Out of pride, thinking itself as the most important of all things, the lion roared, trying to scare the image in the water. The "other" lion, which was a mere reflection, "did" exactly the same thing. The arrogant lion became angry and attacked, jumping at the image. So, the lion fell into the well and was trapped in it. Eventually, it suffered and died in the well.

This story is related to a Sanskrit term "klesha" which means disturbing emotion, afflicted mind or pain (煩惱、擾亂的心、痛苦). In the story, the lion did not know what it saw was just an image/reflection (distorted view). The image triggered the lion's arrogance and anger (disturbing emotion), causing it to take the action to attack. In the end, it was trapped in the well, suffering to death.

The distorted view is an important psychological aspect of personal identity. It boils down to the question of "what is a person?" Is it the body? Since the body is made up of cells, which cell then? Is it the mind? And the mind is filled with thoughts; so, which thought then? If you believe there is something beyond the mind and the body, what is it and where is it? This is a profound philosophical question because it is where ignorance, the first of the 12 nidanas, starts.

If we look at the picture of the 12 nidanas, there is a blind man walking with a stick at the 1 o'clock position of the circle. This represents the beginning