

CHAPTER 6 How All Blame Lies in a Single Point [63]

On another occasion when father Atiśa and his son were staying at their residence at Nyethang Or, Drom prostrated to Atiśa and, recollecting the method of holding one's mind and so forth, [stated:] "Ignorance, craving, and grasping are the causes of sentient beings. Volition and becoming serve as their conditions, while their effects are consciousness, name and form, the six sense fields, contact, feelings, birth, and aging and death.¹⁸⁵ So it is these three—causes, conditions, and effects—that alone turn the wheel of impurity throughout the universe. Covering all our own defects with our palms, we unearth all the frailties of others with our fingers. Students do not implement the teacher's words and sons do not listen to what their fathers tell them. O great Atiśa, a negative era has dawned. Although sentient beings share the experience of the impure cycle of the twelve links of dependent origination, the beings of this degenerate era are partaking individually in what is a common resource. Since it could potentially benefit one or two future trainees, I request you to give a brief explanation of the twelve links of dependent origination."

Atiśa replied, "I shall explain this later when we have to lift our robes because of muddy water."

"In that case, what is the root of bondage?" asked Drom.

Atiśa: "It is the grasping at self."

"What is this grasping at self?" enquired Drom.

"This is something that wants all positive qualities for oneself alone and wants others alone to take on all misfortunes."

"Then please explain this in such a manner so you can say 'This is self-grasping,'" asked Drom.

Atiśa replied: "Where would one find something of which it could be said that 'This is the reified self-grasping?'"

"In that case, please explain to me how it is that [this self-grasping] wants everything and transfers [all] blames onto others."

Atiśa replied, "Upāsaka, why even ask me? This is pervasive in sentient beings. You know this, so what need is there to ask? Even so, I have also seen attachment and aversion labelled as self-grasping."

"Atiśa, there are people who possess such forms of grasping?"

“Where do they exist?” responded Atiśa. [64]

“They are [within] our own mental continuum,” replied [Drom].

“Upāsaka, what is one’s own mental continuum?”

“It is that which wants everything and grasps [at it all],” replied Drom.

Atiśa: “I, too, would say the same.”

“Where does this self-grasping reside?” inquired Drom.

“It is devoid of parts, and I have never seen it myself. There is nothing that abides where there is nowhere to abide. I do not know the colors and shapes of something with no reality,” replied [Atiśa].

Drom then asked, “If this is so, how can something so feeble exist?”

Atiśa responded, “Can’t one perceive mirage water, a double moon, dream horses and elephants, and so on?”

“Master, these are delusions.”

Atiśa said, “I accept this to be so. It is not that he, self-grasping, indulges in attachment and aversion on the basis of being existent. Dogs bark in the wilderness because of an empty container, and our mindstream is greatly perturbed with no ground [at all].”

“Master, if such are the examples, self-grasping seems to be something that never existed at all,” said Drom.

“What is this thing that ‘seems to be’? It must be real.”

“Master, in that case do the forms and functions of the abyss of the three lower realms, the qualities of the higher realms, and the ethical norms of affirmation and rejection [also] exist?”

“There is a dreamer of dreams. Isn’t there?” Atiśa responded.

“Master, this is not the same. Dreams are not created by oneself. Though false, they arise [spontaneously]. Birth in the higher realms, lower realms, ethical norms of affirmation and rejection were created.”

“Who created them?” asked Atiśa.

“They were created by the mind,” replied [Drom].

“I, too, would say the same. Dreams are also created by the mind, Upāsaka, for were they not created by the mind, who created them? Are they created by some other thing? For were they not created by something else or by the mind, Upāsaka, then you have lied about what is itself a lie. The objects of dreams are false; they are devoid of all [characterizations], such as self, other, and so on. In the same manner, even the ethical norms of affirmation and rejection, such as [the causes for taking birth in] the lower realms and so on, are conjured by the mind itself, which then does the affirming and rejecting.”

“If this is so, is self-grasping the root of attachment and aversion, and this is one’s own mind?” asked Drom.

“What is the colour of the mind?” asked Atiśa.

“I have never seen it.”

“Then what kind of shape does it have?” asked Atiśa.

“Master, I have never seen it.” “Since it exists with neither color nor shape, [65] and also since it has never been seen with the eyes, this indicates that it does not exist as a form. So empty it of physicality and set it aside. Upāsaka, what type of sound does it have, melodious or unmelodious, loud or muffled?”

“Master, I have never heard it before,” replied Drom.

“So since it does not appear as melodious or unmelodious, loud or muffled, and so on, it is not heard by the ears. Given that if it does exist [as sound], it should be audible to the ears, and [given that it is not heard], it does not exist. Now that the mind is devoid also of sound, set it aside. Upāsaka, what type of smell does it have, fragrant or unfragrant?”

“Master, I have never smelled an odor of the mind or mind itself,” replied Drom.

“Drom, had it an odour there is no doubt it would have been smelled by the nose. Given that it has never been smelled, this indicates that the mind is devoid of smell. So set aside this emptiness that is the absence of smell. Drom, does your mind exist as some kind of taste, be it delicious or unsavoury?”

“All sorts of things seem to emerge from the master’s speech. How can there be such a norm¹⁸⁶ [pertaining to] the distinction between a delicious or unsavory taste on the basis of eating the mind?” exclaimed Drom.

“Drom, in that case, does the mind not exist?” “Master, how can there be the eating of mind, and how can there be the tasting of mind?” asked Drom.

“Drom, this is an indication that your mind is not a taste. For were it a taste, the tongue would experience it. As it is not experienced by the tongue, this indicates that it is not a taste. So set aside that which is devoid also of taste. Drom, what kind of tactile quality does the mind have, soft or coarse?”

“Master, I have never seen the tactile quality of the mind,” he replied.

“Drom, why is this so?”

“There is no norm pertaining to observing the tactile quality of the mind,” replied Drom.

Atiśa then responded: “Normlessness abounds in sentient beings who are wild. Given that the mind is not an object of tactile experience, this is an indication that it is devoid of tactile quality. So set aside the mind that is also not a tactile phenomenon. Drom, what kind of things exist as the object of mental consciousness?”

“Master, in order for something to appear as an object of mental consciousness, it seems that the senses need to have an immediately preceding condition. For without first becoming the object of the senses, there is no immediately preceding condition that is the object of mental consciousness.”

“Fabrications of conceptualisation can appear, too,” responded Atiśa.

“Master, even fabrications are preceded by their propensities. Furthermore, isn’t the entailment, ‘Because something is not an object of the five senses, it does not exist as any of the five sense objects’ a little too sweeping?”

“Upāsaka, what are you saying? I have not listed all objects to be within these [five sense objects]. I have [only] listed your mind in addition to these [sense objects]. For if the mind exists as any of these [five sense objects], then when you observe it, it should exist as a form, be heard as a sound, and so on. [66] Since it is not perceived as any of these, where does the mind reside? Upāsaka, even ordinary mundane people would give up and shake their hands and exclaim ‘I have never seen such a thing with my eyes, nor have I heard it with my ears. I have never smelled its odour, never tasted its flavour, nor does it exist anywhere within [the sphere of] mental consciousness.’ You, [on the other hand,] are a person who has been ripened by the pith instructions of the sublime teachers, in whose heart the higher attainments of the meditation deities have entered, and a person who practices the three baskets of the sacred words in one sitting. So you [of all people] should not add meaningless branches and leaves [onto a non-existent tree].

“All of this is the mind. I have realized this nature of mind, for I am a son of Avadhūti. Now even if one’s faults are exposed, it is the mind. Even if one is praised, it is the mind. Whether happy or sad, it is the mind. Given that all of these are equal in being the mind, whatever defects arise in your mental continuum wherein self is perceived when there is no self, crush them and let them go. There is no point in concealing such unestablished defects inside a cave that is [itself] not established. There is no point in turning these into poisons and causing illness. There is no reason that the number of illnesses should remain [fixed] at five. There is no need for these to sever the life of liberation and cast one into the three lower realms. Although dreams are unreal, it serves no purpose to dream of suffering.

“Drom, cast out all these false defects. If the sign of having cleansed these defects is positive, this is fine; if it is not, this is fine too. Within this equality of [everything] being the appearance of an unreal mind, if others feel delighted when they are praised, go praise them. Do not search for another’s faults, for there is no searcher within you. If something is to be concealed at all, conceal your own higher qualities. The time has now come for this. If something is to be proclaimed at all, proclaim the higher qualities of others. Others will be delighted, and they will not accumulate negative karma on the basis of you. This also has the benefit of dislodging the foundation stones of the afflictions, such as attachment and aversion. Whatever good qualities exist in others, seek out each of them individually and reveal them. Upāsaka, [now] do you understand how everything is the mind?”

“Yes, I do,” replied Drom.

“In that case, do you understand the mind’s true mode of being?”

“Yes, I do,” replied Drom. Atiśa: “So what need is there of desires for this mind; cultivate contentment. Even though you perceive many sentient beings, all of them are your fathers and mothers who have taken joys in your overcoming of misfortune and [attainment] of good fortune. They have cleaned your runny nose with their mouths, your excrement with their hands, have nurtured you with kingdoms and with gifts, and some, despite having been abandoned [by us], have cared for us again. [67] It is due to the kindness of the teacher that positive qualities are revealed. In general, it is the teacher who has done you the great kindness of granting you your ultimate aim. And it is your parents who are the source of great kindness granting you joy and happiness in this life. You should therefore recognize their kindness and repay their kindness.

“For this, serve the teacher through respectful veneration and meditative practice, and toward your parents, in order to repay their kindness, cultivate immeasurable loving-kindness, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy

when they are happy, and immeasurable equanimity that is free of discriminating thoughts of near and distant. For the benefit of all—all your mothers—strive as much as possible to attain buddhahood and, discarding lingering doubts, cherish your persistence in meditative practice. Abandoning all obstacles such as sloth, mental dullness, and laziness, and endeavour with joyful perseverance.

“Drom, although one speaks of ‘recognizing the kindness of others and repaying it,’ it all seems to pertain to the practice of the four immeasurable thoughts, such as loving-kindness and compassion; the stabilization of the awakening mind; its enhancement from high to ever higher levels; and the definite steering of one’s parents with the paddles of [the two awakening minds,] aspirational and engaging. [So] this [recognizing others’ kindness and repaying it] refers to a cousin of desire, whereby one has relinquished self-centeredness and generates kindheartedness desiring one’s parents [to have happiness] and desiring to repay their kindness.”

Drom replied: “Though the master has given many excellent [teachings],

If summarized, it is this:

Reveal your own shortcomings,
But do not seek out others’ errors.
Conceal your own good qualities,
But proclaim those of others.

Forsake gifts and ministrations;
At all times relinquish gain and fame.
Have modest desires, be easily satisfied,
And reciprocate kindness.

Cultivate love and compassion,
And stabilize your awakening mind.

“There is nothing other than this.”

Atiśa responded, “Yes, this is so. When properly condensed, [my teachings] are encompassed in these [lines].”

This concludes the sixth chapter from the *Jewel Garland of Dialogues*, “How All Blame Lies in a Single Point.”

Thupten Jinpa. *The Book of Kadam: 2 (Library of Tibetan Classics)* (pp. 121-126). Wisdom Publications. Kindle Edition.

