
Verse 8: All Things Are Like Illusions

*I will learn to keep all these practices
Untainted by thoughts of the eight worldly concerns.
May I recognize all things as like illusions,
And, without attachment, gain freedom from bondage.*

May all my practices and actions, in the past, present, and future, be undefiled by the eight worldly concerns, be untainted by wealth or fame; and through recognizing all phenomena as like illusions, may I eradicate all the clinging to true existence within my mind. May I be released from the bondage of the four extremes and concepts, and attain the ultimate liberation.

a. Stay away from the eight worldly concerns

If our mind is contaminated by the eight worldly concerns, even though we have practiced virtuous deeds, the fruit of these deeds will not be excellent. On the contrary, only merits undefiled by the eight worldly concerns are merits imbued with the Mahayana prajna. Worldly people have no intention of keeping away from the eight worldly concerns, and that is why they cannot obtain the ultimate wisdom, or the ultimate liberation. Many Dharma practitioners practice in anonymity, delve in listening, reflecting, meditating, and serve the Three Jewels diligently and conscientiously, not for fame or wealth. This indicates that they know the harms of the eight worldly concerns, and are learning to keep away from them. But, some practitioners still have a deep love of prestige and self-promotion, and this reveals that their practice is far from enough, that they need to learn more about the harm of the eight worldly concerns, to realign their objectives, and to work harder!

One time, a patron was coming to visit the great Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal. Before the patron arrived, Geshe Ben Gungyal cleaned the shrine room, and decorated the Buddha statues. However, when he suddenly discovered that his motivations were impure, and that he was only trying to impress his patrons, he immediately took a handful of ashes and put them on the offerings. Later, Padampa Sangye praised that those ashes were the best offering to the Buddha in Tibet! This is because Geshe Ben Gungyal transcend his worldly concerns, and moreover, he recognized that all phenomena are like dreams and illusions, devoid of any true, independent or intrinsic existence.

b. View all phenomena as illusions

If we refer to relevant instructions in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, they are the stanzas that follow:

*When encountering objects which please us,
To view them like rainbows in summer,
Not ultimately real, however beautiful they appear,
And to relinquish craving and attachment, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The various forms of suffering are like the death of one's child in a dream:

*By clinging to deluded perceptions as real we exhaust ourselves.
Therefore, when encountering unfavorable circumstances,
To view them as illusions is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

When afflictive emotions arise, such as attachment or anger, we should directly examine the nature of these emotions, so that we will not be deluded by these phenomena, and that we will be released from bondage and achieve enlightenment.

This verse addresses the Dharma practice from the highest perspective. The instructions given in *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind on the Great Perfection* are exactly the instructions given here. If we recognize that all phenomena are like dreams and illusions, we will have made this human life meaningful.

Postscript

This lojong text was composed by Geshe Langri Tangpa, who is regarded as the emanation of Buddha Amitabha. Sarva Mangalam (May all be auspicious)!

Khenpo Sodargye gave this teaching to his Han Chinese disciples at Larung Gar in the year of 1998, and the written commentary in Chinese was completed on June 4th, 1998.