

## EMBODIMENT, KARMA AND FREEDOM

In samsara action is not an option – if you are embodied you have to act. With a body, even if circumstances are favourable, you cannot escape the fundamental force of reificatory assumption, desire and aversion. Whether the power seems embedded in the subject or in the object, subject and object are bound together and the autonomy of the subject is an illusion. The eight worldly dharmas or concerns, gain and loss, happiness and suffering, fame and notoriety, praise and blame preoccupy us and have us chasing the ephemeral and making self-centred choices from amongst the limited options our karma offers us. The subject cannot control events and is free merely to move between confluence with object, contact with object, and isolation from object.

Meditation offers a chance to see that the three wheels that drive samsara, the subject, the object and the connection between them, can turn in space free of the linking of cause and effect. If we have little sense of the space we move in, and cannot at all see that it is our source, ground, field, essence then when we act we impact and shape the interpreted environment we inhabit. Our selective attention gives us access to only a little of the potential we are part of. The environment also acts on us, shaping our feelings, moods, memories and all the other self-aspects which inform our being in the world with others. Shaping and being shaped is the basic dialogic pulse, the mutual interaction and development of subject and object.

Karma highlights the truth that what do you do matters, matters a lot, and is actually a vital part of the world that you share with others. No matter which of the six realms of samsara you are in, your way of participating strongly influences not only what is occurring for you now, but what will happen for you in the future. We are not mere observers or bystanders but are implicated in all aspects of the experiential field which manifest for us.

With dualistic vision it can appear that there is always already a world out there, existing quite independently of us. However no school or strand of buddhism gives credence to this view.

The theravada focus on renunciation and mindful self-control highlights the ease with which subject can get lost in the world of objects.

The mahayana focus on wisdom and compassion highlights that all phenomena, whether seemingly subject or object, are empty of inherent self-nature since they arise dependently. Moreover we are already connected to all sentient beings through countless interactions in previous lives. Specifically, all beings have already been our mother and have taken care of us and so we owe each and every sentient being a debt of gratitude.

In the vajrayana we see that all experience occurs within the mandala of the enlightened deity. Abiding in this pure vision there are no self-existing entities for our habitual tendencies to attach themselves to and so they dissolve.

In mahamudra and dzogchen the non-duality of awareness and experience is ground, path and result, so that we awaken to the primordial integrity free of all splitting, polarisation and reification.

Buddhism emphasises that there are truly no victims and no persecutors. These are merely transient roles in the ongoing drama of the patterning of experience. Blaming self and/or other is a waste of time. Where am I? Who am I? What am I? How am I? We need to inspect our capacity and our circumstances again and again so that we come to see that each action is in fact simple and self-liberating, arising and passing like a cloud or a rainbow. Both blaming and excusing merely intensify the delusion of the separation of subject and object, self and other.

At each moment the doors of samsara and nirvana are open. This is freedom. But are we free to be free, to free ourselves from our habits of identifying with finite entities and so find ourselves free to go through the door of freedom?

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