

Module 18 Talk 2  
Buddha Nature – How the Sun Sees the Clouds  
Reading: *The Heart Attack Sutra*, Karl Brunnhölzl, pages 57-66

Buddha Nature, and in particular the enlightened manifestation of the five Buddha Families, is an important teaching. The discussion of this topic on March 30 was very brief, so I would like to elaborate on it just a bit.

Buddha Nature is the main topic of the third turning of the wheel of dharma. It is how we relate to the nature of reality beyond both our ego-self, and seeing emptiness as some sort of vague nothingness. As with any dharma, the purpose is liberation, and not to provide a new theory of reality. If we are going to talk about what the Buddha sees, we should understand that we are the Buddha and that our nature is the same as the Buddha's nature. This is one useful way to understand *Buddha Nature*.

The issue of effort is very important here, because practice is so intimately related to letting go and relaxation. Brunnhölzl writes: (p. 53):

*From a more pessimistic point of view we could say that the Buddhist path is simply one disappointment after another – the only good thing is that enlightenment is the last one. On a more positive note, we could say that if we go through the intricacies of training the mind in not clinging, it is like training to be a top-notch ballet dancer. When we see these people, the movements are so light, so full of grace, and completely without effort, but actually the training is very hard and they have to pay attention to every minute detail, every day, over and over again. The effortlessness and the lack of rigidity come only through intense training.*

When we train in relaxation, we are often told do short sessions and stop before the point of fatigue. If we are following such advice, balance and intelligence are still required. If we quit and go to sleep that is most likely giving up. If we stop, adjust our posture, and hold our seat, that is a better way. Good posture as well as setting a clear intention are excellent ways to work with our minds. The airplane of realization cannot land in a forest of trees, but good posture and setting an intention help to create a landing field.

Now for the Five Wisdoms discussed by Brunnhölzl, 62-63: This a traditional topic and can be approached from either beneath the clouds of confusion or as aspects of Buddha Nature which is what we are doing here. In this discussion, I will also be introducing some quotes from *Everyday Consciousness and Buddha-Awakening* by Khenchen Thrangu, Rinpoche (ISBN 1-55939-170-7). The five wisdoms are not separate, not things, and not necessarily sequential. Discussing these may help us to overcome fear, persist in our practice and go beyond that last disappointment.

Brunnhölzl writes, "*Dharmadhatu wisdom* is nothing other than the fundamental nature of the mind as it is, which is inseparable spaciousness and luminosity. 'Dharmadhatu' stands for the mind's quality of infinite spaciousness in which there is nothing to hold onto, while 'wisdom' refers to the quality of lucid awareness or wakefulness. Khenchen Thrangu (p. 60) writes: "It

[dharmadhatu wisdom] corresponds to the primordial awareness that knows the nature of reality exactly as it is, and is no less than the transformation of the all-base consciousness itself.”

Brunnhölzl used the word *luminosity*. Light or luminosity and color are constant images in any discussion of the five wisdoms. The color for the dharmadhatu wisdom is white. Khenchen Thrangu also introduced *transformation* which emphasized the relation between an aspect of wisdom that arises spontaneously and an aspect of samsaric mind that is abandoned. In this case, the eighth consciousness, the all-base which is the storehouse of all personal karma is abandoned and what remains is complete spaciousness. This is also the transcendence of the klesha (afflicted emotion) ignorance.

Brunnhölzl writes “*Mirrorlike wisdom* means that the wisdom of a buddha is able to see everything very clearly and unmixed... Similar to a mirror, that wisdom is completely unbiased toward anything that appears in it, nor does it attempt to own anything.” Khenchen Thrangu (p 76) writes, “Relative appearances arise that are dependent on each other and are connected with one another. These appear just like reflections in a mirror... Considering all mental afflictions, it is mainly anger that surges up in our mind and makes it restless; therefore the manifestation of completely purified anger is [the mirrorlike wisdom].” The color for the mirrorlike wisdom is blue.

Brunnhölzl writes “The *Wisdom of Equality* further highlights the notion of being unbiased. In the wisdom of a buddha there is no me and others, no good or bad, no subject or object. This wisdom also includes not just the cognitive equality of no bias, but also the emotional or affective quality of no bias. This means having an equal mind toward all sentient beings.”

Usually, when we have a preference for some rather than others, it is our *pride* that makes us feel superior to some. The color for the wisdom of equality is yellow or gold suggesting enriching, which is the wisdom beyond our ego centered pride which may cause us to feel that some people are less worth of our attention than others. Khenchen Thrangu (p. 76) writes, “The nature of the klesha mind is to grasp on to a self, a pride that takes the self to be the highest and the best. When the klesha-mind is abandoned, the pride accompanying that high esteem of the self vanishes all by itself... If you think you are the best, the most superior, you will not develop any new qualities.”

Brunnhölzl writes (p. 63), “Discriminating awareness wisdom means that though there is no bias with regard to whatever appears in mirrorlike wisdom, there is still a crystal clear discrimination of every detail of phenomenon... If we have no biases or rigid ideas about someone or something, we can see clearly what is going on in the minds of other sentient beings and what they need.” Khenchen Thrangu (p. 63) writes, “Although a Buddha sees everything as equal he or she still knows everything specifically without mixing anything up, by way of his or her discriminating primordial awareness. For example, doctors need to be able to discriminate specifically: to a patient with headache they have to give headache medicine; if the patient has a stomach problem, they have to give medicine for the stomach.” The color for discriminating awareness wisdom is red, and the corresponding klesha to be given up is passion or attachment.

Brunnhölzl writes, “The last one – all-accomplishing wisdom – is what makes buddhas actually do something about all of this. They see everything very clearly and precisely, and without any bias. Because of seeing the equality of self and others, they also see that sentient beings suffer due to ignorance about their true state, which leads buddhas to do something about this suffering... It [the wisdom of a buddha] means knowing everything about suffering and happiness, including their causes, having the motivation to benefit others through their knowledge, and also having the power to accomplish that benefit.” The color for all-accomplishing wisdom is green, and the corresponding klesha is envy or jealousy which limits our ability to act without resenting others.

There are many ways in which the five wisdoms are put to practical use in Tibetan Buddhism. From a completely enlightened view, they are what a buddha does spontaneously without effort. From our point of view, they may appear as glimpses of the Buddha Nature within us. Khenchen Thrangu (p. 65) writes, “Now the question arises as to where the five primordial awarenesses actually abide. They are in fact located within every one of us.”

For our own training, we can contemplate how the five afflicted emotions or kleshas of ignorance, anger, pride, passion and envy, or various combinations of them cloud our consciousness and limit us. Practices such as the tonglen, and the four limitless ones can be very helpful. These topics have been covered in some of our earlier teachings, specifically modules 1, 2 and 6, and we will surely cover these again at some point.

The teaching of the five wisdoms is a powerful way of understanding both our enlightened nature and our confusion. We will continue to expound on these profound teachings in the future.