Aryadeva's
Four Hundred Verses

༄༅། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Dongak and Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2006 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, theFoundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, a network of Buddhist Centres in Australia and worldwide.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

7 March 2006

I am very happy that we have come together again today. I thank you and welcome you.

You all know the importance of generating a good motivation at the beginning and at the end: initially a good motivation for the action, which is followed by a good dedication at the end.

One should base all one's activities on love and compassion, which are the basis of bodhicitta. First one generates the motivation of bodhicitta based on love and compassion, and after the action one dedicates with bodhicitta based on love and compassion. By basing bodhicitta on love and compassion one can see how bodhicitta is the root of all qualities.

One should consider oneself very fortunate to be able to generate an understanding of bodhicitta. One has not been able to do so for many lifetimes, but now in this lifetime one has found the Dharma, a qualified virtuous friend and an understanding of bodhicitta. These come about very rarely, and having found them now shows that one has many merits. One should therefore rejoice in one's good fortune.

Having found the Dharma in this life you then also train your mind in the Dharma and bodhicitta. In order for one's Dharma to be effective it needs to be applied to unsuitable mental states. If one places the insight gained from listening and contemplating over here and one's unsuitable mental states over there, then the Dharma will not help to improve one's mind.

One is very fortunate to have some understanding of the Dharma. There are many, many people who wish to have mental happiness, but who are unable to achieve it because of a lack of Dharma knowledge. But with Dharma knowledge one has the method for achieving inner happiness. Because the majority of beings are not in that state one should feel very fortunate.

You should now generate the motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim, I am going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

I myself try to practice in this way, by generating the thought of bodhicitta - wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and wanting to liberate all sentient beings from their sufferings. I find that the more I am able to generate these thoughts the happier my mind becomes.

The text is called *The Treatise of Four Hundred Verses [on the practise of the Bodhisattva Yogas] put into Word and Chapter*.

It is divided into four major outlines

1. Meaning of the title
2. Translators prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion

1. Meaning of the title

The Sanskrit title of the text is *Tsadu-shadaka Shastra Karika Nama. Tsadu* means four, *shadaka* means hundred, *shastra* means treatise, *karika* means put into word and chapter, and *nama* means it is called. So the text is called *The Treatise of Four Hundred Verses put into Word and Chapter*.

The text has sixteen chapters, each of which has twenty-five verses, which gives us four hundred verses. The original root text was called *The Treatise of Hundreds*. Even though it is implicit, four was not explicitly stated by Aryadeva when he composed the root text. In fact the four was added by Chandrakirti, who wrote an extensive commentary to *The Four Hundred Verses*.

Aryadeva called the text the *Treatise of Hundreds* because of its function, which is to dispel misconceptions. *Hundreds* is meant only figuratively, and not as a definitive number. In actuality the number of misconceptions is limitless, and this text dispels them all.

The relevance of the title also becomes clearer when one looks at the definition of *a pure Buddhist treatise*, which *is pure speech endowed with the qualities of generation and refuge*. This text eliminates hundreds of misconceptions and categories of afflictions by generating the antidote, and rescues sentient beings from the suffering of lower realms in particular, and cyclic existence in general. It is a pure Buddhist treatise.

Because of its function it was originally called, as Chandrakirti explained, *The Treatise of Hundreds*. Once one knows the meaning of the title one can read the text with the appropriate motivation.

Other scholars mistakenly assigned a different meaning to the name but we won't go into that right now.

2. Translator's prostration

The translator's prostration is to Youthful Manjushri, and the purpose is twofold.

a. To indicate that the text belongs to the Abhidharma basket of teachings the translator prostrates to the Youthful Manjushri, who is the deity of wisdom. Any teaching of the Buddha will fall into one of the three baskets of teachings - the Abhidharma basket, the Sutra basket or the Vinaya basket. One purpose of the translator's prostration at the beginning of the text is for the translator to show what basket the teachings belong to. This text falls into the category of the Abhidharma basket, because it is a text that on an explicit level deals primarily with the higher training of wisdom. But that does not mean preclude dealing with other aspects of the path on an explicit level - it is just that they are not the primary focus.

We explained this in great detail when we went through the translator's prostration to *Introduction to the Middle Way*, so you can refer to that explanation.[1]

b. The second purpose is to be able complete the translation of the text.

3. Meaning of the Text

This comes in two parts:
3.1. An overview of the text
3.2. Specific explanation of the different chapters

3.1. An overview of the text

3.1.1. Showing the qualities of the author
3.1.2. Eliminating misconceptions of other texts
3.1.3. Summary of the essential thought of the text.

3.1.1 Showing the qualities of the author

This is similar to showing the greatness of the author at the beginning of the *Lam rim*.

The author of the text is the sage Aryadeva, who was a direct disciple of Nagarjuna. For this reason one can say that this text does not divert from the thought of Nagarjuna. What this means is that the thought of this text does not contradict *The Collection of Six Texts*[2] by Nagarjuna. This becomes significant because later on, as we shall see, there are some scholars who question the purpose and validity of this text.

Aryadeva was born in Sri Lanka as a prince of a royal family. After some time he gave up the life of a prince, became ordained, went to South India and studied at the feet of Nagarjuna. This is really a very pure life story.

He studied both the systems of sutra and tantra extensively at the feet of Nagarjuna and through his practice attained the illusory body. He therefore attained enlightenment in that very lifetime, because if someone attains the illusory body they attain enlightenment in that very lifetime. As there are sources showing he attained the illusory body, one knows that Aryadeva attained enlightenment within that very lifetime.

3.1.2. Eliminating misconceptions of other texts

Then comes the refutation of some mistaken views in a commentary on *The Four-hundred Verses* by the Indian pandit Ven. Dharmapala. Two things are being refuted: Ven. Dharmapala's mistaken interpretation of the title and his mistaken interpretation of the essential meaning of the text.

a. Mistaken interpretation of the title

Ven. Dharmapala said that the text is called the *Treatise of Hundreds* because the first eight chapters are the hundred-fold explanation of the Dharma and the second eight chapters are a hundred-fold discussion of the Dharma. He gave a two-fold meaning to the title, relating it differently to the first eight chapters and the second eight chapters.

Chandrakirti said this is incorrect and that it shows that Ven. Dharmapala did not read the text very carefully. He says that Aryadeva composed the text solely for the purpose of giving a person with a Mahayana aspiration a complete explanation of the whole Mahayana path, and that the text does so in a continuous and complete manner.

b. Mistaken interpretation of the essential meaning of the text

Dharmapala assigned the refutation of the inherent existence of conceptually fabricated phenomena, i.e. the Mind Only point of view, as the essential meaning of the text. But there is no doubt Aryadeva is a person who does not accept any kind of true existence, since he establishes the lack of true existence of dependent arising. He is not a person who accepts other-powered phenomena or thoroughly-established phenomena as existing truly. In the mind of Aryadeva there is not the slightest assertion of any type of true existence.

Aryadeva establishes that in order to even just attain individual liberation one needs to realise subtle selflessness of phenomena, something that is not ascertained by the Realists.

3.1.3. The Direction of the Text in Brief

Here an *objection* is posited: If both Aryadeva's text and Nagarjuna's text are of the same thought, then does that not make Aryadeva's text redundant?

The answer is that this is not the case. Even though Nagarjuna's texts refute misconceptions of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike they are not argumentative texts, but primarily concerned with establishing the pure Buddhist view for those wanting to attain liberation and enlightenment. Aryadeva, however, goes to great lengths to refute the different misconceptions and to engage with the different positions more. It is a more argumentative text.

Aryadeva's text establishes Nagarjuna's text as the text showing the yogi practices that have to be followed in order to attain complete enlightenment. By doing so it

---

[1] 12 March 2002

[2] *Rig-tsog truk*

From Jetsun Cho gi Gyaltsen's *The General Explanation on the first Chapter of the Abhisamayalamkara*:

Four texts conveying the object: suchness of dependent arising; two texts showing the object possessor, the view realising emptiness, to be the root of the path leading to liberation.

The first set again has two: Two texts primarily eliminating the object of negation: true existence; two texts showing the validity of activity and action despite lacking true existence.

The first two: 1) The *Root Wisdom* eliminating 'true phenomena', the thesis of the self of person and phenomena mentally constructed by those propounding 'real existence'. 2)The *Grounding Fine* refuting the 'Sixteen Subjects of Intellectuals' used to prove 'real existence'.

The second two: 1) The *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* showing in general the validity of activity and action despite lack of true existence, elaborating on *Root Wisdom*'s seventh chapter 'Analysis of Generation, Abiding and Disintegration'. 2) The *Elimination of Dispute* showing the validity of refutation and establishment despite lack of true existence, elaborating on the first chapter of *Root Wisdom*, 'Analysis of Conditions'.

The remaining two are the *Precious Garlan*d and the *Sixty Reasons*. They explain the realisation of the two truths that is indispensable for liberation from samsara. What need is there to talk about attaining Buddhahood? They also explain the need for a path abandoning the extreme views relating to the existence and non-existence of a path to liberation.

implicitly shows that those wanting to attain lesser liberation also need to realise the suchness of phenomena.

Opponent: *The Four-hundred Verses* are still redundant because this has been done already by Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland of the Middle Way*.

The answer is that there is no fault because this text deals extensively with refuting the four misconceptions of grasping at purity, happiness, permanence and self as a preparation for the generation of bodhicitta; it is an extensive explanation of training in the path common to the medium capable being as preparation for bodhicitta. *The Four-hundred Verses* is also not redundant because it refutes misconceptions with regards to the two truths, also taught by Nagarjuna, in a broader manner.

Another point that is raised is the absence of a homage at the beginning of the text, which is a requirement that one finds in all ancient texts. Chandrakirti says that Aryadeva did not explicitly state a homage at the beginning of the text, in order to drive the point home that the thought of his text is no different from Nagarjuna's text, and to show his affinity with the thought of Nagarjuna. Implicitly, of course Aryadeva would pay homage to the buddhas, bodhisattvas and so forth.

How does the text show the stages of the path?

How does the text show the stages of the path? The answer is by showing the mode of abiding of illusory worldly phenomena, and then their ultimate nature. Initially the text explains the conventional illusory nature of phenomena, their nominal side, and then it explains their ultimate nature. From the point of view of the two truths one can say that first conventional truth is explained and after that ultimate truth is explained. The conventional illusory truth becomes the method through which ultimate truth is realised.

Next comes an overview of the chapters of the *Four Hundred Verses,* and then comes a specific explanation of the individual verses. You should read through the text in advance in order to prepare yourselves for the class. Then what you hear in the teaching will be clearer.

Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

14 March 2006

As usual, please generate a good motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

In the four lines of the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer it says, 'I have to attain enlightenment.' This enlightenment is based on the love and compassion that one initially generates. Then, on the basis of increasing one's love and compassion, one generates the superior intention that naturally leads to bodhicitta. To be true bodhicitta it has to be based on these factors.

3.1. An overview of the text (cont.)

3.1.3. The direction of the text in brief

As we said last time, Aryadeva initially explains the nominal world of illusory conventional truth, and then uses that as the basis for explaining ultimate truth.

Specific content of the individual chapters

In the overview it states that the first four chapters deal with generating renunciation by overcoming the four mistaken conceptions: the conception that grasps at the aggregates as permanent; the conception that grasps at the contaminated aggregates as happiness; the conception that grasps at them to be pure and the conception that grasps at them as having a self. These chapters explain extensively how to generate renunciation to samsara on the basis of showing that grasping at the permanence etc. of the contaminated aggregates is distorted.

The five contaminated aggregates

The five contaminated aggregates are the aggregates of form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and primary consciousness. These five aggregates are referred to as the *contaminated aggregates* or *closely taken aggregates*. They are that which one should fear and renounce.

Initially we have the **form aggregate**. For example your body would be a form aggregate. The form aggregate comes first because it is the most obvious of the five. It is what one sees first.

Subsequent to the form aggregate we have the **aggregate of feeling**. Depending on whether one sees a pleasant form or an unpleasant form, one generates feelings of, respectively, happiness or suffering. That's why the aggregate of feeling comes second.

After the aggregate of feeling comes the **aggregate of recognition**, which are the mistaken conceptions imputing non-existent values of true existence, permanence, etc. onto the feelings of happiness and suffering. They greatly exaggerate and distort the actual nature of the feelings of happiness and suffering.

This then in turn gives rise to the different afflictions such as anger and attachment, which belong to **the aggregate of compositional factors**.

These in turn lead to further instances of **the aggregate of primary consciousness**.

The five contaminated or suffering aggregates are also called the closely taken aggregates. They are called this for two reasons:

a. The name of the cause is assigned to the result. The cause of the closely taken aggregates is karma and affliction. Karma and affliction immediately generate the contaminated aggregates. So they are the closely taken aggregates from the point of view of the cause.

b. They are called the closely taken aggregates from the point of view of the effect, because they immediately generate further karma and afflictions.

This should also be related to the twelve interdependent links, because two of the interdependent links are karma and three of the interdependent links are affliction. So when we say that karma and affliction are the cause that closely generates the contaminated aggregates, then one should relate that to the process of how this actually happens.

Of the twelve interdependent links, the first dependent link of ignorance and the eighth and ninth dependent links of craving and grasping are afflictions. The second link of compositional karma, which is projecting karma, and the tenth link which is establishing karma, are the karmas that generate further instances of contaminated aggregates, or new cyclic existence. There is always the question, 'What is cyclic existence?'. Cyclic existence is that which takes rebirth through karma and afflictions. So the continuity that takes rebirth through karma and afflictions is cyclic existence. That's very good to know.

Summary of the individual chapters

The first eight chapters

We said that the first four chapters show how to generate renunciation by showing the four conceptions of permanence, happiness, purity and self to be distorted.

The **first chapter** deals with overcoming the misconception of the aggregates as permanent, by establishing them as impermanent. The aggregates are impermanent because they are generated in dependence on causes and conditions. Because they are generated through causes and conditions, they are impermanent and lack permanence. The chapter also shows how to meditate extensively on death and impermanence.

Because of their impermanence the five contaminated aggregates unreliable and therefore unsuitable to be the final object of all one's hope for happiness. Here one has to remember that the contaminated aggregates are impermanent because they are generated by karma and afflictions. Therefore the contaminated aggregates are harmful, and to perceive them as happiness is a mistaken

conception that has to be overcome. This is the content of the **second chapter**.

The **third chapter** shows that since the contaminated aggregates are misery and always disappointing, the three realms are therefore impure, and to perceive them as pure is a misconception that needs to be overcome.

The **fourth chapter** shows that because the five aggregates are impure and should be abandoned, it is unsuitable to generate pride by thinking of them in terms of 'I' and 'mine'. The chapter shows the logic that refutes the referent object of pride. In such a way it shows the self to be distorted.

The first four chapters explain how one generates renunciation by overcoming the four misconceptions. By training well, and meditating on the practices common to the middle capable being one comes to see that being in cyclic existence like being in a burning pit. By explaining the method of how to attain individual liberation for those of lesser inclination, these chapters also implicitly explain how those of Mahayana inclination generate wishing bodhicitta.

Those of Mahayana inclination initially generate renunciation by reflecting on their own suffering situation. Then they generate love and compassion by transferring that understanding to others and by meditating on their suffering. So by meditating on the samsaric nature of others' existence, practitioners of Mahayana inclination generate love and compassion for others. This then leads to the generation of wishing bodhicitta. So one can see how Aryadeva implicitly explains here how those of Mahayana inclination generate bodhicitta.

For a student of lesser inclination the first four chapters merely show the method to be liberated from cyclic existence and attain liberation.

The **fifth chapter** shows how the attainment of complete enlightenment depends upon the Mahayana yogic practices, which then leads to the necessity for the generation of engaging bodhicitta. **Wishing bodhicitta** is a mere wishing state where the person only wishes for complete enlightenment. **Engaging bodhicitta** is where the person is actually practising the Bodhisattva path at the time. This chapter explains the necessity for engaging bodhicitta by explaining how the attainment of complete enlightenment depends upon the practices of the Bodhisattva path.

Seeing that it is impossible to accomplish even one's own purpose if one's mind is under the control of the mental afflictions, let alone the purpose of others, the **sixth chapter** explains the way the mental afflictions are generated.

The **seventh chapter** explains the methods for overcoming the manifest afflictions, whose generation, abiding, and increase comes about primarily through contact with external objects, such as form and so forth, by taking these external objects as the focal object.

Since not knowing the mode of abiding of forms and so forth is the primary cause for the generation of afflictions in those who are confused, the **eighth chapter** makes the disciple a suitable vessel by generating the wish to abandon the mental afflictions, and by generating an interest in emptiness just from the point of view of doubt.

The first eight chapters show the path that ripens the mental continuum of the disciple by explaining conventional truth.

The last eight chapters

The last eight chapters explain ultimate truth for the purpose of purifying both the afflictive obscurations and the knowledge obscurations. The knowledge obscurations are the obscurations to omniscience.

The **ninth chapter**, by showing that functionalities lack any essence of permanence, shows that they completely lack permanence.

The **tenth chapter** shows outer and inner selflessness.

The **eleventh chapter** refutes the view of permanence of time.

The **twelfth chapter** refutes extreme views extensively.

The **thirteenth chapter** shows in detail the lack of true existence of the different sense powers and their objects.

The **fourteenth chapter** overcomes extreme view by showing how those who wish to attain liberation and enlightenment also need to realise the lack of true existence of dependently arisen phenomena, and how dependently arisen phenomena are illusory like a fire wheel.

The **fifteenth chapter** shows in a more extensive manner how to meditate on the lack of true existence of generation, abiding and disintegration.

The **sixteenth chapter** explains the purpose for composing the commentary, and how to meditate on the relationship between the teacher and the disciple, by refuting remaining arguments.

3.2. Specific explanation of the different chapters

This has two main outlines:

3.2.1. The sequence of the path relative to illusory conventional truth; and

3.2.2. The sequence of the path relative to ultimate truth.

3.2.1. The sequence of the path relative to illusory conventional truth

This has two outlines:

3.2.1.1. Showing how to the generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions; and

3.2.1.2. After having generated the wishing bodhicitta how to train in the path.

3.2.1.1. Showing how to the generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions

This has four outlines:

3.2.1.1.1. Showing the way of abandoning mistaken grasping at permanence by explaining extensively how to be mindful of death

3.2.1.1.2. Explaining the method for abandoning the mistaken grasping at happiness by mediating on the contaminated body as suffering.

3.2.1.1.3. Explaining the method for abandoning the mistaken grasping at samsara as pure by meditating on it as impure.

3.2.1.1.4. Explaining the way for abandoning distorted self-grasping by showing how contaminated form and so forth can not be held as 'I' and 'mine'.

The first major chapter that we are going to do is the explanation of how to abandon grasping at permanence, by meditating extensively on the mindfulness of death.

The way I'm going to go through the verses is that I will primarily follow Gyal-tsab's commentary. The way I am going to do the commentary is that I am going to primarily concentrate on explaining the words of the root text. Gyal-tsab uses many, many examples for each verse in his commentary. If you were to go through all the examples it would take many years to complete the commentary. So I am just going to concentrate on the part of the commentary that deals with the words of the root text themselves and Gyal-tsab's explanation of the root text. I am also going to include comments by Chandrakirti and other scholars, and I will also include something of my own. In that way it should be quite good. You should also read it well from your own side.

Chandrakirti's commentary also lists many, many examples for each of the points, but it is not suitable to our situation to go through all the examples. Of course when the commentators wrote their commentaries, they had lots of time, and their students had lots of time. They could spend all day going through different texts, and comparing quotes and different sources and so forth. But we don't really have that kind of leisurely situation. We have to go from one point to the next in a steady manner. Therefore we are just going to concentrate on the words of the root text.

We can recite the *Heart Sutra* once and pray for the success of the Commonwealth Games that start tomorrow. We can pray that they will run smoothly without any problems and obstacles.

Questions

What are the twelve interdependent links?

Student: Ignorance; karma; consciousness; name and form; the six senses; contact; feeling; craving; grasping; becoming; birth; and ageing and death.

How many of them are karmas?

Students: Two

What are the two karmas?

Student: The second and the tenth dependent links, karma and becoming.

Even though in effect it is karma, but the word 'karma' is actually not present in the name of the second link. It is the compositional link. What is being generated are the samsaric aggregates and what is doing it is karma. So the first dependent link is ignorance, then out of ignorance one generates karma, but the karma does not abide. It disintegrates in the next moment and leaves a potential on the mind-stream, which is why consciousness is third. The tenth link, becoming, is the establishing karma.

First there is ignorance, and out of this karma is generated, which disintegrates leaving consciousness. After the karmic imprint is placed on the consciousness, it is ripened by the eighth and ninth links of craving and grasping and becomes establishing karma, existence.

Compositional link two is projecting karma. When it is ripened it becomes establishing karma.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

21 March 2006

First, please sit yourself in a comfortable upright proper meditation posture and then generate the single-pointed motivation of bodhicitta, wanting to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Then really think, 'For that purpose I am going to use what I learn in this profound teaching in my practice as much as possible'.

The ***first chapter*** comes under the outline 3.2.1.1.1. Showing the way of abandoning mistaken grasping at permanence by explaining extensively how to be mindful of death.[1]

1. The explanation of the meaning of the chapter.

2. The explanation of the title of the chapter.

1. THE EXPLANATION OF THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE CHAPTER

1.1. A brief explanation exhorting the disciple to conscientious striving on the path for liberation by being mindful of death.

1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on impermanence.

1.3. The benefits of meditating on impermanence.

1.1. A brief explanation exhorting the disciple to conscientious striving on the path for liberation by being mindful of death

Because of a lack of conscientiousness the mind does not aspire for liberation, which is why one needs to generate conscientiousness. This is done by meditating on death and impermanence.

If you look closely at the words of the heading you can see its deep meaning. What does the path to liberation refer to? First of all liberation is liberation from suffering and its causes. The path that leads there is the practice of the six perfections of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom practised in dependence on renunciation. This can also be summed up as the three higher trainings. What one is liberated from is cyclic existence, and what this means is that one is liberated from suffering and its causes, which are karma and afflictions. So practising generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom on the basis of renunciation becomes the path to liberation, and these practices can also be summed up as the three higher trainings.

If one is not conscientious, i.e. if one is reckless, then the mind will not enter the path to liberation. What makes the mind reckless is a lack of awareness of impermanence and death. If the mind is under the power of the grasping at permanence then it becomes consumed with this life and is not concerned at all with liberation. This automatically shows that grasping at permanence is a distorted and confused state. By overcoming grasping at permanence one can generate the conscientiousness that strives in the path to liberation.

Conscientiousness is a virtue, and recklessness is a non-virtue. Therefore it is important to know what distinguishes them from each other. The *Compendium of Knowledge* defines ***conscientiousness*** as: While abiding within detachment, non-anger and non-ignorance together with enthusiastic effort, protecting whatever meditation on virtuous objects (virtuous states) and (protecting) the mind from contaminated objects; having the function of perfectly completing and accomplishing all samsaric and non-samsaric perfections.

It is a mental factor that is combined with enthusiasm and abides in a state of non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance. It protects any meditation on virtue and protects the mind from contaminated objects. The function of conscientiousness is to accomplish all temporary and ultimate accumulations of virtue and merit.

If the mind is under the control of attachment, for example, then it is difficult to meditate extensively on virtue. So by definition conscientiousness is a mental state that abides free from attachment, anger and ignorance.

To sum it up, conscientiousness is a mental state that is free from mental afflictions, is combined with enthusiasm, protects the meditation on virtue and protects the mind from contamination. So you can see that without having conscientiousness it is impossible to meditate on virtue.

Conscientiousness is one of the eleven virtuous mental factors and its opposite, recklessness, is one of the twenty proximate afflictions. The definition of ***recklessness*** is exactly the opposite to conscientiousness: A mental factor that abides within attachment, anger and ignorance while being combined with laziness, not protecting the mind from contaminated dharmas and not meditating on virtuous dharmas; having the function of obstruction virtue and increasing non-virtue.

Recklessness is a mental state under the control of attachment, anger and ignorance, and is combined with laziness. It actually prevents the mind from engaging in virtue and leads to engagement with contaminated objects. The function of recklessness is the exact opposite of conscientiousness in that it greatly increases non-virtue, and it greatly decreases one's virtuous practices. It is a state of mind where one thinks, 'It does not matter. I can just leave my mind under the control of the afflictions'.

[1] To simplify the numbering, the first four chapters from 3.2.1.1.1 to 3.2.1.1.4 will start with 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. They all fall under the heading 3.2.1.1 Showing how to generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions.

Now we go to the root text, which is a very special text. One should tell oneself that now, when one has the great opportunity to study this text that explains in such an excellent manner how to overcome the grasping at his life, one should make an effort to lessen the grasping at this life.

> ***The ruler of the three worlds*** ***[1]***
> ***Is the autonomous Lord of Death himself.***
> ***Realising this, if one sleeps like the perfect ones***
> ***What could be worse than that?***

Grasping at one's permanence and thinking one is not going to die is the main obstacle to generating enthusiasm for striving on the path to liberation. If one allows one's mind to remain under the control of grasping at permanence, thinking, 'Oh, I am not going to die', then one is not going to be interested in wanting to achieve liberation. Therefore it is important that one repeatedly meditates on death and impermanence in order generate a yearning for liberation.

One's grasping at one's permanence is a distorted and confused mental state, because by nature the aggregates are changing moment by moment. Although they are momentary in nature one does not perceive the aggregates in such a manner: rather one perceives them as abiding, and this perception of the aggregates as abiding is a mistaken, distorted perception. Why? Because the aggregates are actually changing moment by moment.

Meditation on the impermanence of the aggregates has many benefits: not only does it generate the wish for liberation, but it also lays the groundwork for understanding that the aggregates are suffering, impure and lack self.

What kind of person is the person referred to in the third line, a person under the Lord of Death? It is a person who, because of true-grasping at functionalities, is not liberated from the three realms. Such a person has generated no antidote to true-grasping at functionalities in their mind, and therefore they not liberated from the three realms. The only way to be liberated from the three realms is to realise emptiness.

The common explanation of the three realms is that they are the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. However one can also relate the three realms to the lower realms, the intermediate or human realm, and the higher realms of the divine beings.

The reason why one is under the control of the Lord of Death is because one has not realised selflessness. The Lord of Death is the ruler of the three realms and exists in all of the three realms. This relates to the point that is always mentioned - there is no place where one can hide from, or not be affected by, the Lord of Death. Regardless of whether one is in a higher or lower realm, if one has not liberated oneself with the realisation of emptiness one will always be under the control of the Lord of Death. Here one does not need to relate the Lord of Death to an external being or some form and so forth, but one can relate it to the very ending of life, because it is the ending of life that is death. The Lord of Death is autonomous in that he does not order others to do his bidding, nor is he instructed or ordered by others to kill: it is something he just does autonomously.

The Lord of Death is always looming like a butcher brandishing a sharp knife, and it depends completely on the Lord of Death whether or not one will live. Sometimes one thinks, 'Oh, whether I will live or not depends on other factors in my life', but whether one lives or not is completely in the hands of the Lord of Death. So the Lord of Death looms over one like a butcher with a sharp knife and it is only a question of time as to when one will be killed. Realising this one should generate renunciation with the same urgency as if one had red-hot coals lying on one's head, or as if one were in a pit of burning coal. Through recklessness one is prevented from following a path to liberation, but becoming mindful of one's death will generate conscientiousness, and one will generate an urgency to attain liberation, similar to wanting to become free from burning coal and fire.

There could be nothing worse than being lazy and reckless and remain like the perfect ones, the arhats and buddhas, who have already conquered the Lord of Death. Rather, one should repeatedly meditate on death and impermanence and generate a strong yearning for liberation, and practise the path to liberation with conscientiousness, and in such a way take the essence of this precious human life.

It is similar to the analogy where a king's minister is in danger of being killed by the king and therefore has to be very much aware and on his guard. Likewise one should be aware and conscientious because the Lord of Death is constantly looming. One should practise the path to liberation conscientiously.

The common fear of death that everybody experiences comes from the fear of losing one's possessions, losing one's relatives and losing one's body. Of these three, losing one's body probably causes the most suffering, and it is probably the most difficult for those who have a perfect body. Even in this life one just has to analyse how much suffering it causes if one loses a valuable possession compared to when one loses something that does not have much value.

The fear of death in relation to the Dharma is different. Geshe Potowa said that he was not afraid of death but of birth, because death is over very quickly, but then comes the next life which, for most people, will be fuelled by non-virtue. So it will be a lower rebirth that will be very hard to bear. One can observe that there are different types of lower rebirth or suffering rebirths that would be very difficult to bear.

Since one is under the control of mental afflictions there is nothing one can do about dying. But there is something that one can do about the way that one dies: one can lessen the grasping at this life by meditating on death and impermanence and one can lessen the fear of a lower rebirth by practising virtue and purifying all non-virtue. On the one hand everyone grasps at the happiness of this life, one grasps at one's possessions, one grasps at one's

body and so forth, and these different graspings can be lessened by meditating on death and impermanence. The next life is determined by one's karma: non-virtue causes one to be reborn in the lower realms and virtue causes one to be born in the higher realms; so to avoid being born in the lower realms one needs to purify one's virtue and one needs to create the cause for higher rebirth virtue. By knowing the Dharma and how to practise it, and applying it to one's life one can reap its benefits. In this way one can die without worry.

1.2. Extensive explanation of how to meditate on impermanence

1.2.1. The way of meditating on mindfulness of one's own death.

1.2.2. How it is unsuitable to mourn others suffering of death but not thinking about one's own suffering of death that is still experiencing.

1.2.3. Advice to abandon attachment to harmful activities and practise the path to liberation enthusiastically.

1.2.1. The way of meditating on mindfulness of one's own death

This comes in two points:

1.2.1.1. Meditating on coarse impermanence

1.2.1.2. Meditating on subtle impermanence

1.2.1.1. Meditating on coarse impermanence

Coarse impermanence is the impermanence that can be directly observed: one can see somebody dying, and one can see the glass breaking and so forth. Subtle impermanence, however, needs to be established by reason, by a valid sign, because it refers to the momentariness of the object, which is not something that can initially be observed directly.

Subtle impermanence refers to the momentariness of the object. The definition of ***impermanence*** is momentary. It refers to the non-abiding of the object. The object is always in flux and never abiding, not even for one moment. This is not something that one can observe directly: it is something that has to be established by valid reasoning, by valid sign.

Coarse impermanence is what is referred to here as death and impermanence. It is taught in five outlines:

1.2.1.1.1. Life is not an antidote to death and should not be trusted.

1.2.1.1.2. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death as death affects everybody equally.

1.2.1.1.3. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death by thinking that there are antidotes to sickness and aging.

1.2.1.1.4. It is very unsuitable to be unafraid of death as the time of death is indefinite.

1.2.1.1.5. Refuting the argument that a brave person is not afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.1. LIFE IS NOT AN ANTIDOTE TO DEATH AND SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED

This comes in two points:

1.2.1.1.1.1. Actual

1.2.1.1.1.2. Since one's life is very long one does not need to be afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.1.1. Counteracting the thought that life is the antidote to death and therefore one does not need to be afraid of death

> ***One is born to die*** ***[2]***
> ***Further those in the nature of going without freedom***
> ***Appear to be in the process***
> ***Of dying not living.***

Here the mistaken notion is that since life is the antidote to death one does not need to be afraid of death. As life stops death and as one is presently is very much alive one is not going to die. One is going to be alive for a long time and therefore there is no need to be afraid of death now, as the time of death lies far into the future.

The attitude described here is, 'Oh, as long as I have my life I don't need to worry about death. I am just going to enjoy life until I die, and then when I die then I will worry about death. Anyway, life counteracts death, and at the moment I am very much alive, so I don't need to worry about death'.

This attitude of not worrying about the Lord of Death until I am going to die is incorrect, because even though one might be alive right now, life is not the antidote to death. Actually it is precisely because one is alive that one is going to die.

One is born to die and those in the nature of going without freedom appear to be in the process of dying not living. Far from being the antidote to death, life is a condition for death. First one is born and the inevitable result of being born is that one will die. One is shepherded by sickness and old age towards death just like sheep are inevitably led to the butcher for slaughter. Thinking that one is protected because one is alive is a mistaken notion: because one is alive one can become sick, being alive is why one becomes old and also why one dies. So being alive does not really have any qualities.

Since rebirth in one's mother's womb, one is continuously moving towards one's death without a moment's respite. Therefore none of these qualities that you ascribe to life are there.

By meditating well on death and impermanence one's Dharma mind will develop well.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

28 March 2006

Please sit yourself very comfortably in an upright posture and then generate the motivation of bodhicitta, thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Towards this end I am going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

One can relate the first two verses to the points mentioned in the Lam Rim with regard to the first root of the death and impermanence meditation, which is that death is definite. This is supported by three reasons, the first two of which are that the Lord of Death will definitely come, and that life is not permanent but constantly ebbing away.

1. An ordinary individual who has not realised emptiness is not free from the Lord of Death. Such a person is ruled by the Lord of Death and it is definite that the Lord of Death is going to come.

2. There is no definiteness to life. It is always changing and in a constant state of flux. For example, by the time one has looked at a watch or at a clock and registered the time, it is already later, because time never stands still. Similarly, life is in a constant state of flux, constantly changing and moving towards death without any break.

To illustrate this point the commentary uses the analogy of a royal messenger. Today of course, kings would use a telephone to communicate with another king, but in ancient times, and in Tibet they used royal messengers, whose job was to carry messages back and forth between kings and so forth, and nobody was allowed to stop them. Here the analogy that is used is of a messenger in the service of a king who is without compassion, a king who tells the messenger, 'If you do not arrive exactly on time, then you will be killed'. Out of fear of being killed messenger who is working for such a king travels towards his destination in constant movement, without any break. One's life is similar; there is no break, it is constantly changing and in a constant state of flux, always moving towards death.

For these two reasons it is unsuitable to be unafraid of death.

As we said last week, there are two reasons why beings are afraid of death:

1. The worldly reason, which is that at the time of death one will be separated from one's possessions, one's relatives and friends, and one's body

2. The Dharma reason, where one actually worries more about what comes after death as a result of one's non-virtuous karma

Here, it is important that one does not become paralysed by fear of one's death. Instead of remaining in a state of fear, one should make preparations for the next life by generating the motivation, 'I have to practise the Dharma; I have to engage in virtue; I have to start generating concern for the welfare of others'.

Here one has to generate the right understanding. The point is that there is a way to deal with one's fear, and there is a way to prepare for death, so that one can then actually die joyfully and happy. This can be done for example, by making the mind happy through thinking about virtuous objects, and generating joy in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Through this type of mental training one can prepare for a happy death, which will then also produce happiness in the future life. This means one asks oneself, who is the one that produces future happiness and future suffering? At a time when basically everything external is lost, and when one is completely thrown back onto oneself, what is it that produces future suffering and future happiness?

The answer lies in the power of one's own mind; through the positive power of one's mind one produces future happiness, and through the negative power of one's mind one produces future suffering. So at the time of death, when one becomes separated from everybody else, what is the actual refuge? It is the positive power of one's mind. If one can utilise that and die in a happy virtuous state, then one will definitely have a happy future life.

1.2.1.1.1. Life is not an antidote to death and should not be trusted (cont.)

1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting that it is unsuitable to be afraid of death because one will live for a long time[1]

You see the past as brief [3]
And the future as the opposite.
Whether you think they are equal or not
This is clearly like a wail of fear.

This verse deals with another mistaken attitude, where one thinks, 'The general lifespan of a human is around a hundred years. I have now used up sixteen of those, so I have another eighty-four human years left, which is still quite a long time to use to enjoy myself. I only need to worry about death when the time of death draws nearer. For the time being I can remain hopeful and just enjoy myself and then worry about death when it comes in eighty-four years'. This verse says that just because one is young and has not lived for a full human lifespan that does not mean that one should not worry. One becomes reckless because of such thinking, which is highly inappropriate, because the time of death is actually indefinite.

Generally the past and the future depend on each other. But there can be confusion in one's mind, because if one were to really see one's past, then one would see that it is very long. However, one is actually imputing the length of time of the past onto the future. Because of that, one becomes reckless, which is highly inappropriate. As

[1] Last week this was given as, since one's life is very long one does not need to be afraid of death.

Precious Garland by Nagarjuna states, the conditions for death are abound.

> There are many conditions for death.
> The conditions for life are very few.
> Even those become conditions for death
> Therefore one should always train one's mind in the treasure of the Dharma.

This relates to the second root of the death and impermanence meditation in the Lam Rim, which is that the time of death is indefinite. Why? Because there are many more conditions for death than for life. Even the few conditions for life quite often actually become conditions for death. So there is no telling when one will die and therefore it is highly inappropriate to become reckless by thinking, 'I still have many more years to live'.

Regardless of whether you think that your past has been short and that you still have a long future, or whether you think that both your past and your future are long, both of these ways of thinking actually indicate very clearly a fear of death. All one has to do is look a little bit deeper into the mind of the person.

Analogy: The analogy used here is of a person who, despite travelling along a dangerous road where many people are robbed, is singing and dancing. Even though the person is afraid, they try to portray a very brave appearance on the outside by singing and dancing. But if one looks very closely at that person, then one can see that the singing and dancing are only a façade of braveness, generated to make himself unafraid. What this indicates is that inside the person is actually afraid. Similarly, holding views in which one thinks that the past has been brief and the future is long, or thinking both the past and future are long, indicate that the person is actually afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.2. It is unsuitable the be unafraid of death because death affects everybody equally

Mistaken argument: Even though the time of death is uncertain, since death is actually something that happens to everybody sooner or later, there is no need for me to be personally afraid.

> *If you do not have the fear of death* [4]
> *Because your general nature accords with others.*
> *Does the harm to one*
> *Generate suffering through jealousy?*

This verse deals with a misconception that actually arises from the previous train of thought, where a person thinks, 'Even though it is not certain how long my future is going to be, everybody has to die sooner or later. So why should I worry.' This is also quite a common way of thinking, and is also inappropriate.

What the text is trying to do is to highlight and overcome ways of thinking that encourage recklessness.

If a person thinks, 'I don't have to be afraid of death because death is something that happens to everybody', and does not generate any unhappiness when recognising that everybody is dying but becomes miserable when seeing that death afflicts a particular individual, then that type of unhappiness came about through jealousy. But the suffering of death is different, for it does not come about through jealousy. It is in the very nature of death to cause suffering.

Analogy: Here the commentary illustrates the point by using the example of a village where initially only one person is taxed by the king. That one person will of course feel unhappy. Why? Because of jealousy. None of the other fellow villagers have been taxed, so the taxed person is unhappy because of jealousy. Once the king starts to tax everybody equally, then that person's unhappiness will cease.

The suffering of death is not like that; it is something that one has to experience individually. It is not a suffering that becomes less just because it is experienced by everybody else. For example, when one is reborn in the hell realms there will be many other fellow hell-beings who all experience suffering, but it does not lessen one's own suffering. This pertains to the point that one has to experience the fruits of one's own karma, which cannot be experienced by somebody else. Happiness and suffering are an individual experience, and because it is in the nature of death to cause suffering it is appropriate to be afraid of death. The suffering of death is not something that comes about though jealousy, but through its own nature. Hence it is suitable to fear it.

1.2.1.1.3. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death because there are cures and treatments for sickness and old age

Mistaken Argument: I don't need to worry because when I get sick, I can always go to the doctor and through the practice of taking the essence (which is a particular practice where one takes the 'essence' of flowers or stones and so forth), I can purify my body and attain the common siddhi of longevity. Therefore I don't need to worry about death.

> *Though you are unafraid of sickness and aging* [5]
> *Because they have a treatment*
> *Since the later cut has not cure,*
> *It is very clear that you should fear it*

This is a very common way of thinking that is highly inappropriate, because even though one can temporarily cure sicknesses, and temporarily extend one's lifespan through, for example, the practice of taking the essence, this is only a momentary achievement. There is no cure for death, and ultimately everybody has to die. Even though these different types of cures and achievements might exist, death will definitely come, and it cannot be reversed by any means. Therefore death is something that you should be afraid of.

Analogy: Here the analogy that the commentary uses is that of the laundry servants of the king who are responsible for washing his clothes. If they lose any of the clothes, then in order to pacify the king and avoid being killed as punishment, the servants might, for example, compose a plea with a nice eulogy for the king. But while that might work with a king it will definitely not work with the Lord of Death. No matter how many poetic pleas we may write for the Lord of Death, death will not spare us, and will definitely come.

1.2.1.1.4. It is extremely unsuitable to be unafraid of death because of the time of death being indefinite

This comes in two parts:

1.2.1.1.4.1. One needs to be afraid of death since one can directly see that death is a shared experience for everybody

1.2.1.1.4.2. Refuting that one does not need to be afraid because one does not see any definite time of death

1.2.1.1.4.1. One needs to be afraid of death since one can directly see that death is a shared experience for everybody

Mistaken argument: I can see that everybody is going to die, and that death is something that affects everybody, but my time of death has not arrived yet, so therefore I don't need to worry.

Like livestock about to be slaughtered, *[6]*
Death is common for all.
Further, if one sees that others die
Why are you not afraid of the Lord of Death?

Death is something that afflicts everybody and it is directly observable, so therefore one needs to be afraid of death. Death is not very difficult to observe; it is similar to livestock that is to be slaughtered. One knows they are all going to die and actually they also observe each other being slaughtered and dying. Similarly, death is something that affects all ordinary individuals in common. How can one remain unafraid, saying, 'I don't see death', when one can see that many people have died in the past, and that there are many people who are dying in the present, and that there are many people who are going to die in the future. Therefore one should contemplate the danger of death and not remain like livestock being lead to slaughter, who are unable to do anything to avoid it, even when they see other animals being killed right there in front of them. Instead of remaining reckless, and unconcerned about virtue and non-virtue, one should generate conscientiousness for virtue and practise virtue.

1.2.1.1.4.2. Refuting that one does not need to be afraid because one does not see any definite time of death

Mistaken argument: I don't worry about death because there is no point to it since one doesn't know when one is going to die. Again, this is a very popular attitude.

If you think I am permanent *[7]*
Because the time is indefinite
Then at the time of death, the Lord of Death
Will harm you.

This also leads on from the previous thought where the person thinks, 'Even though death is directly observable, since the time of death is indefinite, I don't need to place any great importance in reversing my situation'. It talks about respect, so placing any great importance on reversing it is also an unsuitable thought, and an extremely foolish one at that. This way of thinking says in effect, 'Because the time of death is uncertain, therefore I am permanent'. This is extremely foolish precisely because the time of death is uncertain. In fact, from today onwards one should expect to die any time because the time of death is indefinite. Even though one may not die today, when the time of death comes the Lord of Death will harm you, and cause you suffering. Therefore do not place your hopes in any lifespan that you might have left, but think about death and generate conscientiousness for practising the path to liberation. This verse is basically telling you to practise virtue, because even though you might not die today, and the time of death is indefinite, when the time of death comes you are going to suffer. Therefore make preparations to counteract that and practise virtue. Death comes to everybody so therefore one should make preparations for death.

1.2.1.1.5. Refuting that is not the cause of fear for a brave person

This is another popular attitude where one says, 'I am brave and strong so therefore I don't fear death because fear of death is for weaklings'. Some brave people will engage in harmful actions towards others, even at the cost of their life. They will be unafraid of death because they are so brave. Despite the indefiniteness of the time of death, they will engage in harmful actions even at the cost of their life.

We have finished four classes, so next time is discussion group. Have good discussions and after that write a good exam.

Correction to 14 March 2006 :

The twelve interdependent links are called:
1. The dependent link of ignorance
2. The dependent link of compositional factors
3. The dependent link of primary consciousness
4. The dependent link of a variety of names and form
5. The dependent link of a variety of the six sources
6. The dependent link of contact
7. The dependent link of feeling
8. The dependent link of craving
9. The dependent link of grasping
10. The dependent link of existence
11. The dependent link of rebirth
12. The dependent link of aging and death.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 April 2006

Please sit yourself in a comfortable position and generate a good motivation.

The different types of motivations that one can generate are:

1. Engaging in spiritual or Dharma practices with the intention to merely gain some benefit in the present life.

2. The motivation to practise the Dharma in order to obtain a better rebirth in the next lifetime, so that one can continue to engage in Dharma practice. This is an advanced motivation.

3. Even more advanced is the motivation to obtain a good rebirth for practising Dharma so that one can obtain liberation from samsara.

4. The highest motivation is to generate the motivation to practise the Dharma in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit for all sentient beings.

When the advice is given to generate a good motivation, it relates to the state of mind one needs to have before engaging in the practice, as well as during the practice and towards the end of the practice. If one already has what is called a contrived motivation of bodhicitta, meaning that it is generated with an effort, it is not necessary to generate a further motivation. One can just keep that good motivation of bodhicitta within one's mind prior to engaging in the practice, maintain it during the practice and towards the end of the practice. When it is advised to check one's motivation, and generate a good motivation it refers to someone who either does not have a clear motivation, or who has an inferior one.

The motivation to practice Dharma in order to benefit oneself in this life is not a bad motivation in itself. If one can gain some benefit for oneself, by refraining from harming others, then doing a deed with this attitude is of course not bad. However if one has a mere thought to benefit oneself only in this life, then whatever one engages in does not become a cause for one's future spiritual lives. Therefore in relation to thinking about future lives, it is said that the motivation to benefit only this life is inferior; one can transform it to an advanced motivation which is to benefit the next life.

Just wishing to obtaining a good future life is not sufficient either, as it is inferior compared to wanting to attain liberation for oneself. The state of being free from the sufferings of entire cyclic existence is the state of liberation.

The motivation to achieve liberation merely for oneself is inferior to the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. The earlier motivations become an obstacle todeveloping the later more superior motivation. The lamas give advice to check one's motivation in relation to these different levels of motivations, and thus encourage us to generate the superior motivation.

What we call a contrived bodhicitta motivation is, of course, a superior motivation that one develops initially in order to engage in any kind of Mahayana practice. With a sufficient amount of practice, the contrived bodhicitta motivation will develop into a spontaneous bodhicitta motivation, which is even better. Initially when we haven't trained our mind it seems quite difficult to develop and maintain such motivations, therefore we need to be reminded, and to check our motivation again and again. However as we become more familiar with these different types of motivations and their benefits, then it naturally becomes easier to develop them.

It is a matter of becoming more aware and more familiar with these different types of motivations. The Lam Rim teachings mention that one needs to develop what is called a special virtuous state of mind, and within that virtuous state of mind we invoke the merit field. Then one engages in the practice of meditation and so forth. It says in the Lam Rim that what we call a special virtuous state of mind is developed in relation to generating the right type of motivation. Therefore as we familiarise ourselves, those states of mind should become easier to develop.

Normally we leave our mind in the state with which we are more familiar, which is focussed on worldly activities. Because we are so used to focusing on external worldly objects, which are merely to benefit our temporary needs, it seems inevitable that we do so, and we have a natural tendency to think about the temporary benefits just for ourselves. We think in that way because of the mindset with which we have been conditioned, but as we become more familiar with the superior motivations mentioned earlier, it will become more natural to develop them within our mind.

When I mentioned that the motivation to benefit this life is inferior, this is not to underestimate in any way the value of doing good deeds without a particular belief in future lives. There are those who live a very moral life, being very generous and helping others even though they don't have an understanding about future lives - some people are naturally very kind and generous to others. I am not saying that this is not valid. Furthermore I personally would not be able to say that leading a moral life and being generous without the particular intention to benefit future lives would not bring a good result for the future lives; I feel it can definitely bring good result for future lives.

What the teachings are indicating is that there are particular causes for obtaining a good future life with the eight freedoms and the ten endowments, which is a life that is suitable to practice the Dharma. One of the particular causes for attaining a precious human rebirth which has all these conditions to practice Dharma is by engaging in virtuous deeds accompanied with

aspirational prayers. The virtuous deeds are the practice of generosity, moral ethics and so forth. When done with the motivation to attain a good future life by making stainless prayers to attain a good future rebirth, it then becomes the cause for a precious human rebirth.

There are examples that emphasise the point about obtaining good results by engaging in virtuous deeds in this life, even without any intention to benefit future lives. We can see people who have an enormous amount of wealth and no financial problems even though they may have no interest in the Dharma. On the other hand we also see people who may be very interested in the Dharma, but who don't have much wealth and have difficulties supporting themselves. These are the results of the past; those who have the Dharma but no wealth are perhaps those who made prayers in the past but were not very generous. In this way we can see that depending on the causes there are definitely differences in the results that are obtained.

1.2.1.1.5. Refuting that it does not cause the brave ones to fear[1]

This heading has two further sub-divisions:

1.2.1.1.5.1. Unfeasibility of only cowards fearing death

1.2.1.1.5.2. Unsuitability of doing negative deeds to safeguard one's life

1.2.1.1.5.1. Unfeasibility of only cowards fearing death

If you consider future goals *[8]*
But not your waning life,
Who would call intelligent
Such selling of yourself?

What this verse is referring to is the misconception that many hold, which is that it is only cowards who fear death, and that brave heroes never fear death. According to this view, we Buddhists may be the ones who are cowards. According to the worldly viewpoint those who give up worldly activities that gain wealth and fame, and who dedicate their life to engaging in spiritual practice are cowards. They are so afraid of death that they don't want to put any effort towards material gains, and instead dedicate their life to spiritual practice. This may be seen as a sign of being a coward according to a worldly point of view.

The explanation of the verse in accordance to the sub-heading says that it is only cowards who fear death. Thus those who are brave do not fear death. In order to gain fame and wealth and subdue enemies some may even bring harm upon themselves in combat and so forth. As not fearing death would be considered a sign of bravery, they risk their own lives just for some worldly gain such as fame or material gains.

The qualm arises, can it be accepted that it is cowardly to fear death, and brave if one doesn't fear death?

The answer is that it is not acceptable.

What we derive from the meaning of the verse is that one who uses their life just for material worldly gain such as wealth, fame and so forth is selling their precious life for a temporary gain. It is as if they are exchanging their life for temporary worldly gains, while their life is slowly being exhausted moment-by-moment. Although it may be considered as a great achievement by like-minded worldly beings, intelligent beings who have the wisdom-eye of Dharma will not consider that as being a worthwhile activity – for them it is a total loss.

We can use more contemporary examples. In our world we see suicide killings where people give up their life to destroy many other lives. The person who commits that act thinks there will be some gain from doing it, but where is the gain? When we look at it even from an ordinary perspective we see it as being foolish, don't we?

Because they have taken their own life, where is the gain for this life? If there is no gain for this life, what about future lives? In this case there will be no gain for the next life, because they have created so much negative karma by taking their own life and the lives of so many other beings as well. Spending our life to merely secure some material gain is a bit more subtle version of the same thing.

When we work for some personal gain in this life such as wealth, fame and so forth it is done with the intention to benefit our future. Ultimately, however, our future in this life is to experience death. So, how can our material gains benefit our future after death? The meaning of the verse is that although one is exchanging one's precious life just for these temporary gains now, one can use one's life for a much greater purpose.

1.2.1.1.5.2. Unsuitability of doing negative deeds to safeguard one's life

This sub-heading arises from the qualm that may arise from the previous point: if it is not acceptable to give up one's life for temporary worldly gains then in order to protect one's life, is it acceptable to engage in negative deeds? Since it is important to sustain one's life, is it permissible or worthwhile to engage in negative deeds to sustain one's life? To counteract this qualm the next verse says:

Why do you do ill deeds, *[9?]*
Pledging you as security?
Of course, like the wise, you must be
Free of attachment to yourself.

Qualm: If one should protect one's life then is it permissible to engage in non-virtuous deeds to protect one's life?

Answer: It is not permissible.

The meaning of the verse is that if one engages in negative deeds, then that is similar to offering oneself as collateral in order to gain some temporary benefit. Through engaging in negative deeds now we are treating ourselves as collateral, because we have to repay with much more severe consequences later. If we engage in negative deeds, then although we may gain some temporary benefits and temporary pleasure now, we

[1] On the 28 March 2006 this was given as 1.2.1.1.5. Refuting that is not the cause of fear for a brave person

have to face much greater negative consequences in the future. For example, there are those who engage in wrong livelihood such as stealing. Now if someone has to steal in order to survive because they are starving and desperate, then that is understandable and could be acceptable.

However individual people engage in theft and robberies and steal just for the sake of gaining more wealth; that is clearly engaging in negative deeds out of excessive desire and attachment. In this life they may get some benefit, but even in this life they may face some negative consequences if they are caught. The consequences in the future life will definitely be very heavy. An example used in the commentary is, if one goes to a bar to drink, it is as though one is offering one's own body as collateral for the temporary pleasure of drinking. If someone engages excessively in drinking, becoming an alcoholic, then they are actually giving up their own life for the sake of some temporary pleasure.

The meaning of the second part of the verse is that unless one is wise like a foe destroyer who has abandoned attachment, then engaging in such negative deeds out of attachment will have negative consequences for oneself in the future.

One should consider one's desires and attachments as if they were another entity within oneself that has no compassion or love for oneself. One's desires and attachments do not bring any true happiness or true gain to oneself; they just bring about more suffering. Out of attachment to alcohol, someone who consumes alcohol excessively can completely destroy themselves, bringing so much suffering in this life and future lives. Therefore when we think of the attachment or desire within our mind we can relate to it as being like an entity which has no compassion for us. Thus we should not place any trust in the desires within our own mind.

The main point is that even though one may reason with oneself that one is engaging in desires to sustain one's life, the excessive desires that we may use as our excuse are, in fact, a means of bringing more suffering to oneself. They may seem to offer happiness, but they just bring more suffering in the future.

Let us take a drug dealer as a vivid example of someone who engages in a non-virtuous activity with the intention to sustain themselves. As far as they are concerned, they are in a trade that they feel will sustain and give them a good life. In some countries they are risking their own life, because if they are caught they will be put to death. In some other countries, if they are caught they will be imprisoned for life. So even though their initial intention was to do something to sustain them, in fact it becomes a cause to be doomed in this very life, either by being put to death or leading a very miserable life in prison for the rest of their lives. These are very clear examples of how excessive desire leads to non-virtuous deeds that bring about undesirable results and suffering for oneself. Therefore the main point made here is that we must be very diligent and careful in choosing what we want to do in life to sustain ourselves, and make the right choices for our livelihood.

This is actually very practical advice about choosing a right livelihood, in which we don't endanger ourselves and our livelihood in this life. A drug dealer with a certain type of mind-set will take risks knowing that they may be caught and so forth, but they disregard that and the consequences they may face. They believe they can get away with it, can make good money, and everything will be fine. For someone who is more diligent and who can think out things more carefully, the dangers and the consequences if things go wrong would be clear. It is usually the case that initially things don't seem to go wrong but later on they do. So in that way we see that the ultimate result is more suffering for people who engage in such wrong livelihoods. Therefore this kind of advice is showing us how to choose what is best for our life, which is a very practical advice.

The next heading is 1.2.1.2. Contemplating and meditating on subtle impermanence.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 April 2006

As usual we can sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation to receive the teachings by thinking, 'The reason I receive these teachings is in order to benefit all sentient beings and for that purpose, may I be able to use the teachings to achieve enlightenment'.

1.2.1. How to cultivate awareness of one's own death (cont.)

1.2.1.1 Meditation on coarse impermanence

We have been talking on topics related to these headings. The verses we have covered so far have been related to the grosser levels of impermanence that are more noticeable to us. However subtle impermanence is harder to recognise and ascertain.

Next is subtle impermanence.

1.2.1.2. Contemplating and meditating on subtle impermanence

Subtle impermanence refers to the momentary changes that occur in any functional phenomena. The definition of impermanence is, 'that which is momentary'. The reason why subtle impermanence is referred to as being subtle is because one needs to rely upon logical reasons in order to perceive or understand the momentary changes in any functional phenomenon. Whereas gross impermanence can be perceived directly by the sense perceptions, so therefore one does not need to rely on logical reasons to perceive or understand the gross level of impermanence.

This heading is further divided into two subdivisions.

1.2.1.2.1. Since life diminishes moment by moment do not rely upon it
1.2.1.2.2. Inappropriateness of attachment to continuation because wanting to live long and not wanting to be old are contradictory

The second subdivision indicates that there is a contradiction between being attached to the continuation of life while at the same time not wanting to become old. On one hand we are attached to the continuity of life because we want to live for a long time, but on the other hand we do not wish to get old. The natural result of life's continuity is aging; however one does not wish to become old. So the two desires - continuity of life and not wishing to become old - are contradictory. Therefore, if one doesn't want to become old, it is absurd to be attached to the continuity of one's life.

1.2.1.2.1. Since life diminishes moment by moment do not rely upon it

The purpose for emphasising awareness and meditation on impermanence is to overcome our excessive attachment in general, and to our present life in particular. Attachment towards any animate or inanimate object arises in relation to the false qualities that we ourselves have projected upon the object, and afterwards we don't wish for those good qualities to change. But the very nature of the object is that it is changing from moment to moment on gross and subtle levels.

If we are familiar with the subtle impermanent nature of the objects to which we are attached, we will not be surprised and experience too much suffering when we notice the gross changes. Most of us are attached to life and material things, with the wrong view that it is sustainable and long lasting. We see our own life, as well as the things that sustain our life as having a permanent unchanging nature. Because of that view, we plan for our future as though we will live for ever. We are also attached to things as though they will not change and last for ever. But changes do occur, and when we are not prepared for it, it brings a lot of suffering to our mind. Therefore the more we familiarise our mind with the meditations on impermanence, the less suffering we will experience. When we consider these points we can definitely see the benefit of the Dharma. People may ask, 'How can Dharma help?', 'How can understanding the teachings and practising them help the mind?' If one begins to relate the points made in the teachings to one's own life, one can begin to definitely see the benefits that occur as a result of having gained, for example, an understanding on impermanence.

Qualm: Is it permissible or suitable to engage in negativities in order to sustain one's life?

Answer: It is not suitable.

This qualm arises from our normal thinking patterns. If we need to sustain our life, then it may seem acceptable to engage in non-virtuous deeds when those deeds are done in order to sustain oneself. The following verse is a response to that sort of misconception.

> *No matter whose life, it does not* *[10]*
> *Differ from the moments of mind*
> *This people certainly do not perceive.*
> *Thus it is rare to know the self.*

If one is interested in practising Dharma, there can be hindrances that arise from the misconception, 'I will have a long life'. The laziness of procrastination arises because of that misconception, and we think, 'First, I have to accomplish all of my worldly activities such as making money and so forth, then later when I have more free time I can practise the Dharma in a leisurely manner'. That kind of procrastinating attitude arises because of our misconception that life is a continuity that lasts long into the future.

What this verse is indicating is that what we call life is actually nothing more than fluctuating moments of mind. Therefore each moment that we live is actually an exhaustion of that moment of life. We need to understand that life is not something very stable and unchanging that remains for a long time, but rather, in reality, it is only moments of mind.

Just like all other impermanent phenomena, what we call life is also a phenomenon that is changing from moment

to moment. The realisation of that is hindered by the erroneous state of mind perceiving phenomena and oneself as unchanging and permanent. The misconception of seeing things as having a permanent nature is what obstructs both oneself and other beings from perceiving the actual reality of life. Because of not being able to understand this reality, beings fail to understand the nature of themselves, which in this case relates to the subtle impermanence of life. Therefore in order to overcome this misconception one needs to meditate and generate awareness on subtle impermanence. As the verse indicates, because of not being able to ascertain the certainty of subtle impermanence, beings who know themselves are rare.

1.2.1.2.2. Inappropriateness of attachment to continuation because liking to live long and not wanting to be old is contradictory

The next verse is an explanation which serves as an answer to yet another qualm, or doubt, that arises in the mind. Even when the earlier doubt is cleared, one may think, 'Although the mind itself is momentary, the continuation of the mind lasts, therefore it is appropriate to be attached to the continuation of life'.

Qualm: Although life may be impermanent its continuation lasts, therefore is it suitable to be attached to the continuation of life?

Answer: It is not suitable.

You would like to live long *[11]*
But dislike old age.
Amazing! Your behaviour
Seems right to people like you

We have a general common misconception, that regards a later perceived object as being exactly the same object that we had seen earlier. This misconception arises because of the fact that in the later moment there is what is called a 'similar type' aspect of the previous object. When we relate to, for example, any external object that we may see such as the mountains, the sea, landscapes, etc. they are constantly changing from moment to moment. However because there is a similar type in the next moment, (in Tibetan it is called *rig da*, - *rig* is type and *da* is similar) it appears to be the same object although in reality we are not seeing the actual object that we first perceived.

When we are looking at a mountain or a tree, subtle changes occur each moment as we are looking at it, therefore each moment it is a different mountain or tree from the previous moment. The mountain or tree we see in each moment is not the same tree or mountain that we saw in the earlier moment. However when we see the similar type of mountain, tree or any other object in the next moment, we think we are seeing the actual object we saw earlier and refer to it as the actual object; this misperception leads us to think that the object has remained unchanged.

This can be related to ourselves and our life. As ordinary beings, we can only experience and relate to gross impermanence, such as when things fall apart, when mountains are flattened, trees cut down, houses collapse and when death occurs. We see this and think that things have changed or do not exist anymore. That is the gross level of impermanence that we are relating to. On a subtle level each moment of existence is one of change from moment to moment, even though we may not perceive that.

Another more vivid example is the perception we have right here of this room and gathering. In reality, more than half an hour has passed since we first gathered here, but when we look around and see the same objects and people, it appears as though nothing has really changed. We think, 'I see the same people around me, the same objects, and the teacher is the same'. This is however a false notion. When we consider the fact how more than half an hour has already passed, that is already a change. During that time, subtle momentary changes have constantly occurred as well.

Another very good analogy of impermanence, even for subtle impermanence is when we look at the time. As we are looking at the clock, the seconds constantly tick away, without stoping even for a moment. That is the reality of every functional object: it does not last; it goes on changing moment by moment.

Verse 11 serves as an answer to the earlier doubt, stating that this is an erroneous state of mind and therefore such a misconception should be overcome. The verse says that if you think that it is suitable to be attached to the continuation of life, then that contradicts what you dislike as a result of the continuation of life, which is becoming old and feeble, with white hair, wrinkles and so forth. The verse says that if you do not wish to experience old age, then how could it be reasonable for you to be attached to the continuation of life? Holding on to the view that it is suitable to be attached to a continuation of life, is only considered suitable for you and like-minded beings, but not for the wise. The verse indicates that for the wise who have the 'wisdom eye' which in this case means having the understanding of subtle impermanence, holding such a wrong view is not considered suitable.

1.2.2. Inappropriateness of grieving only at others' death while overlooking the disadvantages of not being free from fear of death oneself

This heading has two further sub-divisions:

1.2.2.1. A brief explanation
1.2.2.2. Extensive explanation by answering objections

1.2.2.1. A brief explanation

Qualm: Old age and death can be regarded as an unwished-for suffering when it occurs to others, but can I not accept it for myself?

This doubt arises when there is an experience of suffering, such as when death happens to a loved one, for example, one's own child, but one still believes that it will be fine for oneself, thinking, 'I don't mind experiencing old age and death myself'.

Answer: It is inappropriate to have such a view.

Why do you grieve at death [12]
On account of your son and others?
When the one that laments is a victim
How is that not reprehensible?

The meaning of the verse is that just as you would lament and suffer the death of your loved ones, such as your own son, it is suitable for you to recognise the sufferings that you will experience at your own death, especially as you have committed many negative deeds. The indication is, because you are in a situation in which you are creating negative karmas, and you will definitely experience death, it is suitable for you to consider the sufferings that you will experience at the time of death.

This verse has two main points of advice.

1. Generating an awareness of one's own death. This verse actually indicates the absurdity of our mind, where we think that even though we feel suffering and grief when others die, 'It shouldn't be any problem for me'. Not fearing death is a misconception which hinders our practice of Dharma. With this misconception we are led into engaging in worldly negative deeds as mentioned earlier, which are related only to the benefits of this lifetime. When we are attached only to this life and spend all our time and energy in sustaining this life, then we naturally engage in negative deeds. This verse helps to counteract this misconception as well as the misconception that one will not experience the suffering of one's own death.

2. Overcoming grief. This verse is also practical advice for those who may be experiencing extreme grief and suffering because of the death of a loved one, for example one's own child. When someone dear in our life passes away, one can be overpowered by that grief and it can become an obstruction to engaging in virtuous deeds and so forth. The verse indicates that it is natural for loved ones to die, because that is the nature of an impermanent phenomenon. There are the subtle changes throughout life and eventually the gross change of death occurs. So rather than being overly consumed by grief, one can engage in virtuous deeds that will help those who have died, as well as using the experience to generate an awareness of one own death.

The Buddha has said in the sutras…

'For those who develop an understanding of the reality of impermanence and meditate upon that, that person will not experience great shock or grief when they are separated from loved ones, through death or any other circumstances.' So, by meditating repeatedly one generates an awareness, of how things change from moment to moment on gross and subtle levels.

To generate the awareness of impermanence the Buddha explained four points in the sutras:

1. The end result of being born, is to die;

2. The end result of a gathering, is to disperse;

3. The end result of reaching a high status is to fall to the low;

4. The end result of accumulation - wealth and so forth, is exhaustion.

When we really think about these four main points that are raised in the sutras, we realise that this is really how things are. Contemplating and meditating on these aspects of impermanence can reduce great suffering in one's own mind.

How these four points are of use

There is a story that relates to these four points. There was once a family who were familiar with the recitation of the sutras. They memorised these four points and recited them repeatedly within the family. All of them, particularly the parents, wherever they went and in whatever actions they engaged in, would be reciting these four points. A magician wanted to test their faith and how much they understood the meaning of what they were reciting. He took the opportunity one day when the son was in the forest collecting wood. The magician found the place where the child had left his belongings, and conjured a dead child, who looked just like the son. When the other children saw that conjured dead child, they went back to the father saying, 'Oh, we saw that your son has died'. The father continued to recite the four points so the magician asked him, 'Don't you feel any grief?' To which the father replied, 'A son came without having asked him to come and then left without having been asked to go. All phenomena are in the same nature, so there is no reason for me to be shocked and grief-stricken about that'. When the mother was asked whether she felt any grief on the account of her son's death, she replied in the same way as the father and quoted another saying, 'In the evening there are a lot of birds that gather on a tree to roost, and in the morning they all fly away and disperse. All phenomena are similar in that way'. The magician asked the boy's sister the same thing, and she replied saying, 'In the markets many people gather during the day, but towards the evening when everything is closed, all people are dispersed and gone. All phenomena are similar'. The following verses pick up on the themes of this story.

They are covered under the following sub-headings.

1.2.2.2. The extensive explanation by answering objections

This is further divided into six subdivisions.

1.2.2.2.1. Refuting the appropriateness of grief because one's son went to the next world without asking

1.2.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of being very attached to one's son

1.2.2.2.3. Inappropriateness of grieving over a dead person (in this case a son) in front of other people

1.2.2.2.4. Inappropriateness of grieving for a dead relative to ensure a close relationship with surviving relatives

1.2.2.2.5. Inappropriateness of attachment to being with relatives and so forth

1.2.2.2.6. Inappropriateness of attachment to the seasons' marvels

We will discuss the verses relating to these sub-headings next Tuesday evening.

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 May 2006

As usual we will sit in a comfortable position and generate the positive motivation, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma. Having done so may I use whatever wisdom I receive from listening to the Dharma to engage in the practice of subduing my own mind.

1.2.2. Inappropriateness of grieving only at others' death while overlooking the disadvantages of not being free from fear of death oneself (cont.)

1.2.2.1. A brief explanation (cont.)

Qualm: It is appropriate to grieve over a loved one's death, such as one's son, but I need not worry about my own death.

Answer: This is not acceptable.

> *Why do you grieve at death* [12]
> *On account of your son and others?*
> *When the one that laments is a victim*
> *How is that not reprehensible?*[1]

In order to overcome this doubt the text explains that just as suffering is experienced when others die, it will be exactly the same for oneself when one faces death. Given the fact that one has engaged in negative deeds and non-virtuous activities, there will be great suffering at the time of death. Therefore it is erroneous to think that one need not worry about one's own death; in fact one should be concerned about one's own death.

In terms of putting it into practice, the main point of the teaching is that we need to be concerned about our own death, and generate a fear of death now, so that it becomes an impetus for us to engage in the practice of Dharma. Then there will be no grief or suffering at the actual time of our own death. In other words, having fear and concern now about our own death serves as preparation for our own future death.

How does one prepare for one's own death? So that we will not have to experience suffering and grief at the time of death, we can prepare by purifying the negative karmas that we have already accumulated in the past, and by further engaging in accumulating virtuous karmas. In reality we are preparing not only for our immediate death in this lifetime, but we are preparing for what happens after death.

The fear that the teachings talk about is specifically the fear of the lower realms in the future life; it is not so much the fear of the actual experience of death itself, but what will happen after death. If one has not purified negative karmas then that will be a cause to go to the lower realms, therefore that is the main fear that has to be generated. In relation to the death of others, one tries to overcome extreme grief by contemplating the fact that it is the nature of impermanence and samsara that others have to die. It is likewise with oneself; because one is in samsara and in the nature of being impermanent, one will have to experience death. Therefore one should contemplate the need to prepare for death now

As we contemplate the meaning of the teachings it becomes apparent that generating an awareness of impermanence is crucial for leading a good life. It is quite comforting, because when we contemplate and generate an awareness of impermanence, it actually brings a certain amount of calmness and peace to our mind. Maintaining an awareness of impermanence actually allows us to cope with a lot of difficulties in life, not getting too distressed or shocked when things go wrong. There are so many experiences we have during our life, the ups and downs, times when things go well and times when things don't go well, but if we are able to maintain an awareness of impermanence one seems to be able to cope better with these ups and downs in one's life. So this becomes the reason and necessity for gaining a good understanding, meditating and then generating the awareness of impermanence throughout our life.

1.2.2.2. The extensive explanation by answering objections

1.2.2.2.1. REFUTING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF GRIEF BECAUSE ONE'S SON WENT TO THE NEXT WORLD WITHOUT ASKING

This is subdivided into two.

1.2.2.2.1.1. The actual explanation

1.2.2.2.1.2. But for one's own confusion implicitly he did not ask to go.

(The literal translation of the Tibetan word *te-muk*, translated here as confusion, is ignorance. So the heading means because of one's ignorance implicitly he did not ask to go.)

1.2.2.2.1.1. The actual explanation

Qualm: Though it is improper to grieve over my own death,[2] it is nevertheless reasonable to grieve when the son whom one is attached to goes to the next world without asking. (So the doubt is, that because one has strong attachment for one's own son, shouldn't that be a good reason to grieve his loss?)

Answer: Even that is not reasonable.

> *If, unrequested, someone has* [13]
> *Become your son, it is not*

[1] Although not read out on the night this verse is included as a point of reference to the discussion that follows.

[2] Translator: I think there is a misprint here and it should read as improper to grieve about dying rather than the 'proper' used in the text.

Unreasonable if he leaves
Without having asked.

The reason why it is not reasonable or suitable to grieve over a son's death if he leaves without asking, because of the fact that the son came into this world without having been asked. Because he came without having been asked, the natural consequence is that he will go without asking to leave. If you can accept the fact that the son came into this world without have been asked for, then one should be able to accept the fact that he will leave without having asked to leave, which is a natural outcome. So there is no reason to feel astonished, or shocked and grieve about it.

The main point is to see the absurdity of the extremes where one is extremely pleased when a son is born without having been asked, and then extremely sad and grief-stricken when the son leaves without having asked. If a son came without having been asked to come, then it should be natural to accept that he will leave without asking to go. One must train one's mind to be free from the extreme emotions of being overly excited and pleased when a son is born, and being extremely sad and grief-stricken when the son dies. One needs to contemplate the nature of impermanence in which things come into existence and then cease to exist. It is the natural outcome for life and other phenomenon as well.

There is also the example given in *Yogic Deeds of the Bodhisattvas.*

1.2.2.2.1.2. But for one's own confusion, implicitly he did ask to go

Because of ignorance or confusion one does not realise it, but in fact the son implicitly did ask to go. Though it seems the son leaves without having asked, in reality you have failed to notice the many signs indicating his passing over to the next life.

Only because of your confusion *[14]*
You did not notice your son's [indications].
His enthusiasm to go
Is shown by his growing old.

A more literal translation could be willingness instead of enthusiasm. So the meaning of the verse is, the son's willingness to go to the next life is actually shown through various signs of ageing, such as the hair turning white, wrinkles starting to form on the forehead and so forth. These are signs indicating that the son is preparing to go into the next life, and the fact that these signs have not been understood, is only because of your ignorance.

1.2.2.2.2. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF BEING VERY ATTACHED TO ONE'S SON

This outline comes from the story that Geshe-la told last week. In the story the loss is illustrated with a son, but in fact it relates to a son, daughter, any relatives or loved and dear friends.

There are three sub-divisions:

1.2.2.2.2.1. Reasons for the inappropriateness of extreme attachment to one's son

1.2.2.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of attachment whether he is obedient or disobedient

1.2.2.2.2.3. Unfeasibility of a father's attachment to his son being steadfast without depending on the other factors.

The explanation of the following verses relates to the theme of attachment, which is mixed with what we call love in worldly terms. These verses are actually indicating what we call love for a son or a daughter or any loved or dear one is actually an attachment that is combined with love.

1.2.2.2.2.1. Reasons for the inappropriateness of extreme attachment to one's son

Qualm: Although my son shows willingness to go to the next life, because of my great attachment to my son it causes me grief.

Answer: Attachment to one's son is not appropriate.

A son does not love (his father) *[15]*
As much as his father loves him.
People in the world go down;
Thus, a high rebirth is hard to find.

In fact the doubt indicates its own absurdity. 'Even though I accept that my son showed all the signs of ageing and so forth preparatory to going into the next life, I still feel grief and therefore I suffer, because I have so much attachment to my son.' Using this as a reason for it being appropriate to experience suffering actually shows how strong attachment to a loved one, or son, becomes a cause for the misery and suffering that is experienced later on.

Furthermore when we relate this to our own experience it becomes quite clear that the stronger the attachment that we have to an animate or inanimate object the more suffering we experience when we have to give that object up. The amount of anguish in one's mind is dependant on how attached we are to the object, so therefore it becomes clear that if we don't wish to experience anguish or misery in our mind then we have to lessen that attachment and practise detachment.

In order to overcome the doubt about whether it is appropriate to experience great misery and suffering because of one's attachment, the answer is explained in the verse by way of explaining how one should overcome one's attachment to one's son. The attachment one has to one's son is very much one-sided: one feels he is so precious, loving and good, but in fact this same attitude is not returned from the son. The same amount of what we call love, which is in fact love mixed with attachment, is not shown to the father from the son's side, therefore the relationship is very much one-sided and unbalanced.

In relation to other kinds of relationships, when we feel a very strong attachment to someone, and when they say, 'I am very attached to another person' that initial strong attachment should become less, when we realise that the other person does not love us, or is not attached to us as much. We often do hear people complaining, 'Oh I really do love that person so much, but I don't feel any love or response from them' and that then starts to make them feel uncomfortable.

A further explanation of this verse is that continuously being attached to one's son is similar to the situation where people engage in so many inappropriate activities because of their attachment to their loved ones. They try to prove their love or attachment to the other, and engage in creating negative karma, so their attachment to the loved ones becomes a cause to fall to the lower realms. Because so many beings in the samsaric world are completely immersed in constantly creating the negative karma that makes them fall to the lower realms, it is very rare for beings to obtain a higher rebirth, let alone liberation.

Having understood that reality one should thus strive to overcome attachment and respect elders, both in lay society and towards one's Gurus and other enlightened beings. Respecting elders can refer in the worldly sense to one's parents, etc. and in the supermundane to one's teachers and enlightened beings. One must replace attachment with respect for one's loved ones and elders, and generate faith in one's teachers. This will overcome the contrary feelings of attachment and so forth.

1.2.2.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of attachment whether he is obedient or disobedient

Qualm: It is appropriate to show love and concern for the son because he is obedient and acts according to one's wishes.

Answer: That is inappropriate.

When he is disobedient *[16]*
No one will call him lovable.
In that case attachment is
Nothing but a transaction.

It is common amongst worldly beings that what we call love, which is strong attachment, is focused on a son or any child who is obedient and acts in accord with the parents' wishes, and that they express less love or attachment to those who are not obedient and who don't act in accordance with the parents' wishes. When we look into the situation closely this seems to be the reality of most worldly relations. If the other behaves or acts in accordance with one's wishes then one has a stronger love or attachment to that person, but as soon as they don't accord with one's wishes then the love and attachment decreases. That is, of course, inappropriate in terms of the relationship between the parents and children. It is more appropriate if the love is there regardless of whether they are obedient or not. However it seems that when we look into what we call love for a son or daughter, it is very much based on whether they are obedient or not.

Having attachment to a son or loved one who is obedient is inappropriate, as it is similar to using one's love or attachment as a trading object. If they are obedient then in return you show your love or attachment, which means if they were not obedient then you would not show your love. What we call love in the worldly sense is based on whether others are behaving in accordance to one's wishes. What we call attachment and love is very much like a transaction, something that is used like a trading object; you are trading your love or attachment in return for their obedience.

1.2.2.2.2.3. Unfeasibility of a father's attachment to his son being steadfast without depending on the other factors

Qualm: A father's attachment to his son is steadfast, irrespective of whether he is obedient or disobedient.

The doubt that is indicted here is that attachment itself seems to be quite stable and strong, because whether the son is obedient or not there is still attachment. In other words, it may seem appropriate to have attachment to the son because attachment is actually very stable.

Answer: Attachment is actually not steadfast and stable.

Suffering caused by separation *[17]*
Is quickly gone from human hearts
See, too, attachment's instability,
Indicated by suffering's end.

I think the literal translation looks at attachment and its instability as indicated by the end of suffering.

The main indication here is overcoming the doubt that attachment is steadfast or stable. The suffering that is caused by separation from the object of one's attachment, in this case one's son, is actually not stable, because that attachment itself quickly passes from the hearts of human beings; attachment felt from the heart actually fades away very quickly.

The explanation of the last part of the verse is that if the bonds of attachment were not to loosen, then the result of attachment, which is suffering, would not cease. But in reality the suffering caused by attachment can be overcome and the suffering does stop. So if the suffering that is a result of attachment ceases, then the causes of the suffering, which is attachment, must also cease. Therefore attachment is not stable.

The main point here is that since suffering is a result of attachment, and suffering can be overcome, then it is natural that the cause of that suffering, which is attachment, can also cease. To clarify this point there is an analogy given in the commentary which Geshe-la feels would be good to relate.

Once a king was crossing the river with some ministers, and at a certain point some sort of evil spirit caused havoc and capsized the boat. One of the ministers had his son with him and fearing that everyone including his son might die, he gave himself up to the spirit as a token to let the others go. He entrusted his son to the king, asking the king to look after his son and take care of his wellbeing.

When the king and the others reached the opposite shore safely, the son initially felt great grief on account of his father's death. However the king took great care of the late minister's son looking after him well, and he grew up to be very strong and intelligent lad. Eventually, the son not only overcame his grief over his father's death, but in fact began to see it almost as an advantage. It was because of his father's death that he was put into the king's care, which meant he received a better education,

and everything worked out very well for him. So what was once a loss later turned into an advantage.

We may have similar cases here in Australia, when rich parents pass away then the children, who may have not been doing so well financially, receive wealth as an inheritance. They might initially feel some grief, but then later may feel happy that they inherited quite a lot of wealth. It is possible that people think in that way.

1.2.2.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF GRIEVING OVER A DEAD PERSON (IN THIS CASE A SON) IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE

What this sub-division indicates is that in some cultures, and it might also be the same here in the west, when a very close member of the family dies (either one's spouse or one's parents) then for a certain period of time after their death the family have to wear certain clothing to indicate their grief. Sometimes in Tibet they would have to put their hair in a certain position as an indication that someone has died in the family, and wear a certain kind of clothing. This is something that is practised in many cultures to conform to worldly customs and traditions.

Qualm: It is inappropriate to grieve a loved one's death, such as one's sons, but, 'In order to conform with worldly tradition and so forth I still have to indicate that I am grieving and that should be appropriate'.

Answer: It is inappropriate.

> *Knowing it is of no benefit,* *[18]*
> *Still you have injured yourself.*
> *Your make yourself a hypocrite,*
> *Which also is improper.*

The qualm that is raised is that though it is inappropriate to grieve in one's heart over a dead son or any other relative, for the sake of convention and to confirm with worldly views, one must beat one's heart and so forth. In some cultures like in Tibet and other eastern cultures when someone dies the surviving close relatives act quite frantically as if they have gone a bit mad, pulling their hair, beating on their chests and wailing loudly, all of which is to be a sign that they are really grieving a lot. What I have seen here at funerals, is people walking very slow and solemn, some are held by their arms on either side and need support just to walk.

The reason why many follow that custom over a long time is just to conform to the tradition, because if one was not to follow that tradition one may be seen as being insensitive or heartless. So just to conform with the views of others, one has to show the appearance of being really sad and so forth, when one may not really be feeling it inside.

The explanation in the verse uses an analogy of the extreme case when the mourners start pulling out their hair and beating their chest and wearing very solemn uncomfortable clothes, in some cases not eating for many days because of their grieving. When these sorts of traditions or customs are followed to that extreme the person who is doing so would actually know inside themselves that this is not really comfortable. They may think, 'If I could get away with not having to do this, I would rather do that'. They actually feel uncomfortable with the custom, but still they go ahead and follow it. That is actually being hypocritical and they are deceiving themselves, because inside they know it is not comfortable, or useful, but still they outwardly go through all of that grieving process. In an extreme case it is putting up with a lot of suffering without really wanting or needing it, just to conform with the views of others. That is being like a hypocrite.

In Tibetan hypocrisy is called *yo-gyu,* which is one of the four wrong livelihoods - portraying a quality when in fact there is no quality within oneself. That is normally what we call hypocrisy. This case is similar to showing false qualities, because one is following a tradition and custom with which one does not feel really comfortable, just for the sake of pleasing others and in order not be blamed or criticised by them. Putting up with all of this is similar to pretending to have qualities one doesn't have, so in that sense it is hypocrisy.

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks or Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 May 2006

It is good to begin by focusing your mind inward, keeping it free from distractions, and generate a good motivation to receive the teachings. You can think, 'By receiving these teachings may I be able to develop the wisdom to achieve enlightenment for the sake of liberating all sentient beings from samsara.'

1.2.2.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF GRIEVING OVER A DEAD PERSON (IN THIS CASE A SON) IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE

The doubt that was answered in verse 18 is whether in order to mourn a loved one it is appropriate to inflict sufferings upon oneself to show one's grief. This verse indicated the inappropriateness of harming oneself in mourning, even for the sake of conforming to public expectations.

1.2.2.2.4. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF GRIEVING FOR A DEAD RELATIVE TO ENSURE A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH SURVIVING RELATIVES.

Qualm / objection: Even though I may agree that self-torment is of no benefit, nevertheless in order to ensure a good relationship with surviving relatives, I must endure that suffering.

Answer: That is inappropriate

People in this world wander, *[19]*
Full, as it were, of suffering.
Why fill with suffering
People who already suffer?

This verse deals with the doubt as to whether it is appropriate to endure suffering if it is to maintain a good relationship with relatives. The verse refutes that doubt by indicating how beings who are born in a male or female body in samsara undergo many types of sufferings again and again, just by the mere fact of being born in samsara. As if there was not enough suffering already, why add extra suffering? In other words, what point is there in enduring extra suffering in addition to the many sufferings that are already being experienced in samsara.

The analogy given to portray this unnecessary added suffering is, 'like rubbing salt onto a sore wound'. Having a sore wound is bad enough, but if salt were to be rubbed into it even greater pain would be experienced. Likewise enduring the suffering of mourning is just an extra suffering on top of the already existing sufferings experienced in samsara. So why inflict that extra suffering upon oneself? It is far better and more worthwhile to use one's time and energy to develop methods for removing all the sufferings of samsara and obtain liberation.

1.2.2.2.5. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ATTACHMENT TO BEING WITH RELATIVES AND SO FORTH

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.2.2.5.1. Actual explanation
1.2.2.2.5.2. Inappropriateness of attachment to lasting friendships

1.2.2.2.5.1. Actual explanation

Qualm / objection: Even though parting from a close one causes suffering, it is nevertheless appropriate to be attached to a close one because, having met, being together gives joy and happiness.

Answer: That is not appropriate.

If meeting is a joy to you *[20]*
Why is parting not also a joy?
Do not meeting and parting
Both seem to go together?

In order to overcome that doubt, the main point being raised in this verse is in relation to the Buddha's quote, 'the end result of all meeting is separation'. The explanation of the verse is that if one considers meeting and being together with a close one as joy, then since the end result of being together is separation, why not consider separation as a joy as well? In retrospect, if one cannot accept separation as a joy, then it would be foolish to regard meeting and being together with a loved one as a source of joy and happiness, because it will end in separation. Thus one should not be attached to meeting and being together with a close one.

Because separation and meeting are inter-related, separation is a natural outcome of a meeting. When one comes into existence, then the other will naturally follow. The very fact that there is a meeting means that separation will follow sooner or later. If one can accept the fact that separation comes as a natural result of a meeting, then there will be less suffering when it happens. Failing to notice or acknowledge and understand this brings sorrow in one's mind.

The analogy given in the text is, whenever there is an auspicious sign, naturally an inauspicious sign will follow. Also, a poisoned meal may be tasty when consumed, but it will bring great discomfort and suffering later. Becoming ill and feeling discomfort afterwards is a natural consequence of eating poisonous food.

Thus for those who experience the obvious suffering of separation, it is important to meditate on impermanence. The suffering that comes from separation is experienced when one fails to understand that meeting is an impermanent phenomena. The impermanent nature of a meeting is that it naturally changes into separation.

The reason why we fail to understand this is because we have the erroneous view of seeing things as being permanent. When things meet, whether it is a meeting with other beings or meeting with fortune and the like, it is experienced with an erroneous view of permanence. There is a mistaken view that it will last for a long time. So, when the change that becomes a separation actually occurs, it is a shock for the mind, and cannot be accepted. The mind becomes very heavy and sad, and it becomes very difficult for one to bear that mental suffering. This comes about because of not being able to understand the

impermanent nature of things.

We can see those who meditate on impermanence and practise it in their daily life do not experience great loss and sadness when things change, and neither do they experience strong excitement when good things happen. So, there is a stable mind in which there is an acceptance for whatever happens, whether it be good or bad, or whether it comes and goes out of existence. That kind of stable mind is definitely a mind that is calmer and more peaceful and joyful. When we see that, then it becomes obvious that meditating on impermanence and putting it into practice definitely has benefits for the mind.

The suffering that is experienced because of failing to gain some sort of understanding and awareness of impermanence is very obvious, especially when it comes to the suffering of separation. The suffering is very obvious, whether it's a separation from parents or one's spouse, or one's children. That sort of suffering whether it comes from a natural consequence such as death, or because of some disagreement in the relationship, is really a very strong suffering. We may not really be able to relate to this kind of suffering sometimes if we haven't experienced it ourselves. But when we actually experience it ourselves, then we can get a real understanding of the agony it brings to one's mind. When we look around, we see so many examples of suffering as a result of problems within the family, relationships and so forth, either because of the fear of separation, or when separation actually occurs. So if we don't prepare our mind now to be able to deal with a situation like that, then we will experience the same kind of suffering that others experience. When we look around and see that there are so many others experiencing suffering, it is obvious that the same type of suffering will definitely fall upon oneself. Rather than just ignoring it, and looking at it as a spectator when others are suffering, one should use that as an example and ask oneself, 'How will I deal with separation when it happens to me?'

Then we come to the main point mentioned in the verse: the more awareness we generate about the nature of separation, the less suffering we will experience when a separation occurs. That is something which we must definitely prepare for now, because it is definitely going to happen. Separation will happen sooner or later, and one will definitely have to experience it one day. Therefore it is worthwhile and appropriate that we devote some time and energy now to prepare for what will be experienced in the future.

1.2.2.2.5.2. Inappropriateness of attachment to lasting friendships

Qualm / objection: The time spent together is long, so therefore it is appropriate to cherish being together now.

Answer: The periods spent together are not long.

> *When the past is beginningless* [21]
> *And the future endless,*
> *Why do you notice being together*
> *But not the separations, though they be long?*

That kind of erroneous view can arise for example with relationships. There are those who think that they have had a very long relationship with someone, such as for twenty or thirty years, but when that comes to an end, they lament and experience great suffering.

Whatever length of time may have been spent together at this present time, it is very short in relation to the past in samsara, which is actually beginningless, and the future continuum of the mind is endless. Therefore, 'How can you assert or assume that the time that you spend together now is a long time when in fact, it is actually just a moment in comparison to the past and future?'.

1.2.2.2.6. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ATTACHMENT TO THE SEASONS' MARVELS

Qualm: The suffering of separation and so forth vanishes when one experiences the good times of the seasons, such as nice scenery, beautiful flowers, enjoying watching the moon or sunsets.

Answer:

> *Time, [consisting of] instants and so forth,* [22]
> *Is certainly like an enemy.*
> *Therefore never be attached*
> *To that which is your enemy.*

In Australia we talk about the different things that happen in the different seasons. When we think in that way, we have the erroneous view of being attached to the different times, thinking that one can overcome one's sufferings and so forth by experiencing the marvels of the different seasons. That view can cause a strong attachment, particularly in relation to the experiences of the different times and seasons that occur in this life. However having such a strong attachment can be a hindrance to one's passing over to the next life. If one overcomes attachments to things such as one's wealth, belongings and relationships and so forth, but is attached to the seasons and times and marvels of this world, which are connected to the experience of joy in this life, then that can be a hindrance to obtaining a good rebirth for the future life. Therefore this verse particularly emphasises the point of overcoming those attachments that are related to the time and the seasons.

The erroneous view is that even though there are other sufferings, one can overcome that by experiencing the seasonal good times. The second part of the verse indicates how to overcome that wrong view. To overcome attachment to what we call the marvels of different times, we must consider how a good time is in itself a factor that shortens our life, because each moment that we spend marvelling something is a moment gone from our life. In other words, in each second we enjoy something, we are actually moving closer to our death. Therefore in that regard time is an enemy that is robbing us of our precious life. Therefore marvelling something is not only a waste of time, but it is also actually a big obstacle to our own practice. Contemplating in that way can overcome attachment towards having a good time.

1.2.3. Advice to make effort to practise the path to liberation, giving up attachment to bad actions

This heading is divided into two-subdivisions:

1.2.3.1. Inappropriateness of relying on punitive action regarding what must be done

1.2.3.2. Advice as to the appropriateness of giving up bad actions and to live in seclusion from the very start

1.2.3.1. Inappropriateness of relying on punitive action regarding what must be done

Qualm / objection: Though all that has been said earlier is reasonable, separating from one's family is very hard. Because I cannot bear to be separated from my dear loved ones, I am not able to go into the forest to meditate.

Answer:

Fool, because you fear separation, [23]
You do not leave home.
Who that is wise does under punishment
What must certainly be done?

Allowing fear of separation from one's family and loved ones, which hinders oneself from going into seclusion in order to practice the Dharma, is like being a fool. Fear of separation from one's family arises out of attachment. When one does not accept the reality of separation it can be seen as being like a punishment; when death occurs where one will definitely have to be separated from one's loved ones, wealth and everything else. Rather than leaving it to involuntary circumstance when death takes away everything, which is like a punishment, it is best to give up one's attachments to one's home, relatives, loved ones and so forth now, and go into seclusion to practise the Dharma. That would be an action taken up by the wise ones.

It is clear that if one fails to generate an awareness of impermanence, then this erroneous view will definitely prevail. We will always be led into believing that we can hold on to our dear loved ones, our wealth and so forth. By being attached to these objects, one will not accept the fact that one will have to separate from them. The point emphasised here is that death will definitely separate us from all of the objects that we are attached to. If we can voluntarily train our mind in detachment towards the object that we are normally attached to now, then that in itself is a preparation for death. Then at the time of death, one will not experience great suffering. Therefore be wise and train in cultivating detachment now. In general, one's practice can be as simple as generating a kind mind and showing love and concern to others. Then, based on that, one can listen to Dharma teachings, which leaves positive imprints in our mind. We can then put the wisdom one has gained from listening into practise and lead a righteous life. That is the best way to prepare for death so that we don't experience great suffering at the time. Then when the actual separation occurs, we will be able to deal with it.

1.2.3.2. Advice as to the appropriateness of giving up bad actions to live in seclusion from the very start

Seclusion or isolation can refer to an actual place, as mentioned in the instructions on preparing to develop calm abiding. An appropriate place is a quiet place that is free from dangers, distractions, noise and so forth. Such secluded or isolated places are actual places where one develops calm abiding and so forth during retreats.

However the main seclusion being emphasised here is a seclusion of one's mind and seclusion from physical misdeeds. Secluding or isolating one's mind from distractions and conceptual thoughts, and isolating one's body from negative physical actions (what we call bad behaviour) can be practised anywhere. Even living in the environment where we are now, where we are surrounded by other people and a busy life, one can still practise secluding one's mind from conceptual, negative thoughts, and seclude one's physical body by refraining from bad physical behaviours. This can definitely be practised. Therefore one does not need take seclusion or isolation in the literal sense of an isolated place, otherwise one may think, 'If I'm in a city, then I am not able to practise'. That is not the case.

In fact, being in a secluded place is not sufficient if one's mind is continuously distracted. The main point here is to have isolation within one's mind. If someone goes to an actual secluded place to engage in the practice of meditation, they may be practising the physical seclusion where their body is not engaging in normal worldly activities, but if they allow their mind to be continuously distracted, then their mind will not be in seclusion. If their mind is continuously wandering into the town and city, then their mind is in the city. Therefore real seclusion has to be a seclusion of one's mind, keeping it free from engaging in worldly distractions.

Qualm / objection: I will first take care of my worldly affairs by bringing up my son, teaching him all the skills so he can take care of my affairs, and then I will be ready to go into seclusion and meditate.

Answer: That is not appropriate.

You may think you must obviously [24]
Go to the forest once this has been done.
Whatever you do must be left behind.
What is the value of having done it?

Having reflected on the meanings of the earlier verses, one comes to the point where one feels that one must definitely go into seclusion to meditate and practise, but then one thinks, 'Before doing that I need to have my affairs in order. If I have a son, I need to raise him well and teach him all the right ways of dealing with worldly activities. Then I will be able to place my affairs in the hands of my son, and then I'll be free to go off and meditate and practise the Dharma'.

The verse refutes that, indicating that it is not appropriate to have such a view. Even though you may plan so that you can go into seclusion when you have settled all your affairs, such as bringing up your son and so forth, all of those worldly affairs that need to be taken care of have to come to an end. In other words, there is no real lasting effect of completing anything worldly. Therefore since all worldly activities themselves come to an end, and all the gains from worldly activities also have to come to an end at the time of death, there is no real value in obtaining the gains from worldly activities.

That being the case, rather than spending so much time and energy in trying to settle worldly affairs, which have no real valued end result, and which have to be left behind anyway, it is far better to put one's time and

energy into engaging in the practice of the Dharma from the very start, and practise detachment. Furthermore, worldly activities involve trying to subdue one's enemies and trying to please one's friends or close ones, which is never-ending. One can never completely please one's close ones and so-called enemies can never really be subdued. As soon as one enemy is subdued, another enemy arises. Therefore, one can spend one's whole life trying to subdue one's enemies and please one's friends, trying to settle what can never be settled.

Another fact is that even though one's plan is to complete all one's worldly activities so that one has time to go out to meditate and practise in seclusion, in reality death could happen at any time. It is a fact that death does not have a specific time and can occur at any given time. When death will occur can never be predicted for any one person and it could happen at any time. So even though one may have a plan in one's mind, death may already approach before being able to accomplish that plan, which means that one would not have had the time to practice the Dharma in seclusion. Therefore this verse is emphasising that one should overcome that erroneous view of settling one's worldly affairs first before going into seclusion. Rather, one should start from the very beginning.

The analogy that is given portrays the similarity of our actions to washing spoiled fruit in order to use it. If it is spoiled, then no matter how much you wash it you will still be unable to consume it, so why waste energy in trying to clean it. It is better to throw it out when one notices that it is spoilt and no good, isn't it?

1.3. The benefits of meditating on impermanence

Doubt: Having a sense of strong attachment to the 'I' and 'mine', there is a fear that arises from actually committing oneself to go into seclusion.

> *Whoever with certainty has* [25]
> *The thought, 'I am going to die,'*
> *Having completely relinquished attachment,*
> *Why would they fear even the Lord of Death?*

This verse overcomes an erroneous view or doubt, which is that having considered the great importance of going into seclusion, one hesitates to go because of the fear of attachment to what we call the self or 'I', and to the belongings, which are what is called 'mine'. Reflecting on the reality of death can also overcome the fears that are related to the attachments of what is called 'I' and 'mine'.

The best antidote to overcome the fears in relation to 'I' and 'mine' is to meditate on impermanence, particularly on death and impermanence. Reflecting on all the earlier indications about death: how death is certain, but the time of death is uncertain and that death can occur at any time, one then will naturally come to terms with accepting death. When one reaches that point, then that will naturally overcome the fears in relation to the self and everything else that is related to the self, i.e. belongings. The fear of death itself is a strong attachment to what is called a self, so when one comes to terms with accepting death, that naturally has the effect on being able to let go of what we consider as our self. Meditating on death and impermanence will naturally reduce attachment to the self in relation to the body and the belongings; one will overcome the fears in relation to the self and belongings, which includes attachments to relationships and so forth. Thus one will develop the courage to be able to go into seclusion and meditate, giving up one's home and so forth. By doing so one will overcome not only the fears that are related just to the self and to belongings, but death itself and what will happen after death.

These are the crucial points that are summarised in this chapter, which is to contemplate and meditate upon death and impermanence. As one meditates on death and impermanence, then the mind becomes fearless and more courageous, and able to face any kind of circumstance that involves practising the Dharma, whether it be going into seclusion or whatever else necessary. When death itself is experienced, it is said that it there will actually be fearlessness in one's mind. In fact, instead of fear, there will be a joy, which the teachings indicate is similar to the joy of a child going back home.

In summary the explanation in the text places emphasis on the importance of meditating on death and impermanence by recalling the various types of meditations that help to bring that awareness of death and impermanence, such as thinking about the certainty of death and the uncertainty of its timing. Nothing but a spiritual practice of the Dharma helps at the time of death. So when we contemplate death in these various ways we develop a firm ground or basis on which to generate all the realisations on the path. Then the text quotes from Geshe Potowa who said that 'since the path to generating insights is blocked until an awareness of death and impermanence has arisen in the mind, continually meditate on course and subtle impermanence'. So Geshe Potowa is emphasising the point that without an awareness of death and impermanence, it is impossible to gain other further realisations along the path. Therefore it is crucial to develop that awareness in one's mind, which then serves as the basis to develop other realisations.

It is customary in Sanskrit or Tibetan texts to have the chapter's name at the end. Therefore the concluding lines in the actual root text are:

> *This is the first chapter of the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing the means to abandon the belief in permanence*

The commentary likewise explains that this concludes the first chapter on generating awareness of impermanence. The main obstacle to generating an awareness of impermanence is a the wrong view or belief in permanence. Therefore this chapter has dealt with overcoming the erroneous view of permanence. That concludes this chapter.

Next week will be a discussion evening, so please engage in a meaningful and good discussion. After that there will be the exam, so prepare for the exam so you can do it well.

© *Tara Institute*

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 May 2006

As usual, we can sit in a comfortable position with our bodies in a meditative posture, and generate a positive motivation to receive the teachings, such as, 'I need to attain enlightenment to relieve the sufferings of all sentient beings, so therefore I will listen to the Dharma and practise to the best of my ability.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLAINING HOW TO ABANDON THE ERRONEOUS BELIEF IN PLEASURES BY MEDITATING ON THE CONTAMINATED BODY AS SUFFERING

In the first chapter the erroneous view of permanence is removed with an explanation of impermanence. The second chapter explains the methods and ways to abandon what is called contaminated pleasure, by meditating on the contaminated body as suffering. Of course the body itself is what we call a physical object, and therefore it is not an experience of suffering. What is indicated here though, is that the contaminated body is in the nature of suffering. In Tibetan there is a particular term *dul nga wa* which can translate as 'nature of suffering'.

The teachings explain the methods for overcoming the erroneous view of seeing the body as a pleasurable object, by pointing out that actual reality of the contaminated body is in the nature of suffering. We need to understand this in relation to our own contaminated body, and understand that it is in the nature of suffering. It is only when we can relate it to ourselves that we begin to engage in practice.

It is important to actually relate the teachings to oneself, which in this case means to understand the circumstances of one's own physical body. Chapter one related how our body is impermanent so therefore one uses all the explanations to relate that notion to one's own body, thinking about how it is in the nature of being impermanent, how it is changing from moment to moment, and contemplating the gross and subtle changes of our own body. In the second chapter we further contemplate on our own body as being in the nature of suffering, and gain an understanding of how this body does not produce real lasting happiness, but is in the nature of producing suffering. When we relate this to our own condition then it becomes more realistic for us.

The chapter is divided into two sub-headings.

1. Explaining the stanzas individually
2. Summarising the purpose of the chapter

1. EXPLAINING THE STANZAS INDIVIDUALLY

This is subdivided into three.

1.1. How to meditate on the suffering nature of the coarse body
1.2. The Teacher therefore spoke of meditating on the body as suffering
1.3. How to meditate on the pervasive suffering of conditioning

1.1. How to meditate on the suffering nature of the coarse body

This has three subdivisions.

1.1.1. The way of showing the suffering body
1.1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on suffering
1.1.3. Refuting the existence of real pleasure

1.1.1. The way of showing the suffering body

This is further subdivided into two.

1.1.1.1. The necessity of protecting the body from deterioration despite recognising its suffering nature
1.1.1.2. Eliminating strong attachment to the body

1.1.1.1. The necessity of protecting the body from deterioration despite recognising its suffering nature

> ***Although the body is seen like a foe,*** ***[26]***
> ***Nevertheless it should be protected***
> ***By long sustaining a disciplined (body)***
> ***Great merit is created.***

With respect to the contaminated body, one must first recognise that it is attachment to this contaminated body that prevents us from wanting to be free from the conditions of this body. For as long as one has attachment to the body one does not have any wish to separated from it, and to that extent one does not develop true renunciation. When one begins to recognise the body as being a contaminated body that is in the nature of suffering, then that can serve as a basis to develop a true sense of renunciation, and the wish to be free from the conditions of this limited body, and thus develop a strong wish to achieve liberation. If one does not have that view of wishing to be free from a contaminated body, then for as long as we are attached to this body the thought of wishing to achieve liberation can never occur. That is how one should contemplate.

The explanation of the first part of the verse is that an arya or noble being considers the contaminated body to be like a foe, because it is a basis for one to experience suffering. It is made up of many gross repulsive elements and it serves as a basis for experiencing many different types of illnesses - traditionally four hundred and eighty-four sicknesses are mentioned but there seem to be more. The body serves as a basis for experiencing so many types of illness and is a source of so much suffering, and that is why the noble beings definitely see the body as something to be shunned.

In the teachings of the four noble truths, the Buddha mentions that the contaminated body is a truth of

suffering, as seen or understood by the noble beings, therefore it is called a noble truth. However even though noble beings see the body as a foe or an enemy, the body still needs to be protected. When we reflect further, we realise that we experience so much suffering physically, such as sickness and other shortcomings like feeling lazy and lethargic, because we have this contaminated body. All those downfalls come about because of having a contaminated body. Even though we can see it as a foe there is still a greater purpose in protecting and nourishing our body.

The purpose for protecting such a body is because one can engage in various practices such as observing morality; having practised morality one can then further train in meditation and develop wisdom. Therefore by protecting this body we are able to use it to engage in practices whereby we accumulate great extensive merit. Therefore the longer we have the body the greater purpose we can achieve.

When the body is regarded as an enemy because of its faults then the doubt may arise that there is no reason to sustain this contaminated body. Also, after having engaged in lengthy meditation on the impermanence of the body the view that there is no point in sustaining such a body may arise. To remove such doubts, which would be the extreme of neglecting the body, the purpose of sustaining the body is mentioned here.

Another way to view the contaminated body is that although it is something that is to be abandoned it can temporarily be used for one's practice. Ultimately the body has to be abandoned because it is in the nature of samsara, and anything in the nature of samsara has to be abandoned if we wish to achieve liberation and enlightenment. So in that sense it is ultimately an object of abandonment, however temporarily it is something to be nourished, because we need to have this body in order to engage in practice. So we can serve a great purpose by sustaining and maintaining such a body.

1.1.1.2. Eliminating strong attachment to the body

Assertion: If the body is to be protected then one should pamper it with food and clothing and so forth.

Answer: There are no faults in that.

> ***When human suffering is produced*** ***[27]***
> ***By the body, and pleasure by other (factors),***
> ***Why are you devoted to***
> ***This hull, a container of suffering?***

When we hear a part of the teaching saying the body should be nourished and protected, it may lead to the view, 'Oh then in that case I can pamper it by wearing nice clothes, eating nice delicious foods and so forth', and then indulging the body in it that way.

The explanation of the verse is that the sufferings experienced in relation to the body, the sufferings of hunger and thirst, the sufferings of feeling of cold, etc., are actually produced by the body itself. Furthermore the pleasures that are experienced in relation to the body such as the pleasure and contentment of having eaten a hearty meal, the pleasure that is experienced from having quenched one's thirst by drinking, the pleasure of feeling warmth when one wears clothes and so forth, actually come from external factors.

We need to realise that one should actually use the body and exert oneself to accumulate virtue, rather than becoming completely attached to the body itself. The main point here is that it is the body itself which produces sufferings, and unless we ultimately get rid of the causes to have such a contaminated body, those sufferings will be experienced over and over again.

The text relates an analogy that Geshe-la thinks is a good analogy to illustrate this point. At one time a man riding a chariot met a beautiful girl, who was actually an emanation of an ogress. He gave her a ride and as they were riding along in the forest there appeared in front of them a really ugly ogress in a very fearsome aspect, which was actually another manifestation of the pretty girl. Wanting to destroy that ogress the charioteer took out his sword but as soon as his sword cut through it, two ogresses appeared, and then as he destroyed the two ogresses they appeared as four. So they were multiplying. At that point he heard a voice from the gods saying, 'Rather than trying to destroy all the ogresses out there in front of you, if you were to destroy the ogress in the aspect of a beautiful woman which is riding with you it would be equivalent of vanquishing all of the ogresses. Having heard that, he got rid of the beautiful lady riding with him in his chariot. Having destroyed the main source of all the manifestations, all the ogresses were overcome.

This analogy is used to illustrate the fact that until we overcome the main source of the sufferings we experience in relation to the body, we will continuously and repeatedly experience the various types of sufferings. The main source of suffering is the contaminated body itself, so therefore until we abandon the contaminated body we will definitely have to experience the different types of sufferings over and over again. The text indicates that the method of abandoning the contaminated body is by continually and repeatedly meditating on impermanence and the nature of suffering of the contaminated body. That will then get rid of the attachment, which is the main cause for the contaminated body. So by removing the causes one can abandon the contaminated body itself.

Until and unless we overcome attachment to our contaminated body we will have to experience these sufferings repeatedly. So when we look into how to overcome attachment to the body we look into what causes attachment to the body. On further analysis, when we relate this to the teachings then we need to realise that it is the ignorance of grasping at a true existence of the body that is the main source. That ignorance of grasping at a true existence is only overcome with the wisdom realising selflessness and emptiness. Therefore in a broader sense one must strive to gain the realisations of selflessness and emptiness in order to overcome grasping to the body.

As we expand our understanding and knowledge of the Dharma with a topic like suffering, then we use our

understandings of other topics of the Dharma, such as the twelve interdependent links. Through ignorance one creates karma, that karma is left as an imprint on the consciousness, which becomes the causes for further rebirth. By understanding how the twelve interdependent links bring us into the cycle of samsara then we can contemplate or meditate on the reverse: the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness overcomes the particular ignorance of grasping at a truly existent self is by. Ignorance ceases when one gains the realisation of realising emptiness, which is an antidote for overcoming ignorance. When ignorance ceases then compositional factors, which are the second link cease. Thus no more further imprints can be left upon the consciousness to take further rebirth into cycle existence. In that way the conditions to be reborn in cyclic existence cease. So, in this way one can expand one's knowledge in a broader sense beyond the immediate topics.

1.1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on suffering

This is further subdivided into seven.

1.1.2.1. Considering how this body mainly has suffering
1.1.2.2. Considering how suffering comes easily without the need for great effort
1.1.2.3. Considering how the body does not transcend its suffering nature
1.1.2.4. Considering how suffering causes harm
1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful suffering or pain is
1.1.2.6. Considering how the sensation of pleasure is like a visitor to the body
1.1.2.7. It is therefore proper to develop aversion to the suffering nature of the body.

As one gains further understanding and a real sense of how the body is in the nature of suffering, then that becomes an impetus for developing a real sense of renunciation.

As we relate this to our own body, and see how it is in the nature of suffering and how it really brings about all the different sufferings upon oneself, then that understanding can be used as a basis for understanding the suffering of others. And when we relate suffering to others, that helps us to develop a true sense of love and compassion towards other sentient beings.

1.1.2.1. Considering how this body mainly has suffering

This subdivision is subdivided into two.

1.1.2.1.1. The actual explanation
1.1.2.1.2. Considering how suffering follows one though one wants pleasure and does not want suffering

1.1.2.1.1. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION

When humans do not have ***[28]***
As much pleasure as pain,
Should so much pain
Be considered negligible?

This verse is intended to overcome a further doubt which is that pain occurs only because of the body, and since it can be alleviated it is weak. As suffering is weak, pleasure is greater, so therefore one does not fear pain. This means that one might have the false view that when things are fine one is experiencing more pleasure than pain, and even when one does experience pain there is the idea that it can be overcome. Then one might have this doubt that even if there is some pain it is tolerable, and wonder whether there is a need to make an effort to get rid of it.

As an explanation of this verse the text gives an example of how, for example, a person called Devadatta experiences the pleasure of sitting on a comfortable cushion, enjoying many sensual pleasures. While engaged in that very pleasurable state, a wasp stings him. All the senses are then completely focused onto that pain and any sense of pleasure and enjoyment completely vanishes from that moment. He would think about his suffering and feel aversion towards that.

If we relate that example to ourselves we can definitely relate it to the times where everything seems to be going along well, then suddenly there is some mishap or tragic experience. At that moment all the pleasure that we have felt earlier completely vanishes to the same degree as the intense pain or suffering being experienced.

Using that example, one considers how the contaminated body is actually the source of so much pain and suffering, and how the pain is much greater than the fleeting pleasures that are experienced. When that is the actual reality for humans, how could one still neglect the fact of pain because of the earlier doubt that one need not fear pain because it can be overcome? Having considered how pain dominates the human existence more than pleasure, and how when there is pleasure it can be immediately overridden by slightest unpleasant feeling, can pain or suffering still be considered as being negligible? One should not neglect the fact of the body is a true source of pain, and should engage in methods to overcome or abandon the contaminated body.

The verse emphasises how we are dominated by suffering, and that it is a false view that that we can survive on pleasure and pleasurable experiences. If we fail to understand that the very nature of our existence is based on suffering then that would be an obstacle to overcoming the contaminated body. To counter that, one develops a sense of understanding that the very nature of our contaminated bodies is suffering, and that engaging in virtue and abandoning negativity is the means to overcome and abandon the contaminated body.

1.1.2.1.2. CONSIDERING HOW SUFFERING FOLLOWS ONE THOUGH ONE WANTS PLEASURE AND DOES NOT WANT SUFFERING

Ordinary people are bent on pleasure; ***[29]***
Those who have pleasure are hard to find.
Thus it is as if transitory
Beings are pursued by suffering.

What is being explained here is that even though ordinary beings are obsessed with engaging in pleasure, the reality is that very few experience real pleasure. The very pursuit of pleasure is in fact a cause to experience more suffering. Therefore that is an indication that those

who have pleasure are hard to find, because the pursuit and experience of pleasure become the cause for suffering.

'It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering' indicates that in the very process of trying to gain pleasure they are creating more causes to experience suffering. Therefore the suffering perpetuates itself more and more. It is as though transitory beings are pursued by suffering. The example given here is that it is like being followed by a shadow. Wherever you go the shadow follows, and just like a shadow suffering follows beings wherever they are.

If we look into our own experience in life, how many times have we been disappointed, because we haven't had that real happiness when we have thought, 'If I just have this then I would be really happy' or 'If I just obtained this object or situation I would be very happy'? We have actually experienced more problems afterwards. It is indicated here in the teachings that the very pursuit of happiness or pleasure becomes the means for experiencing more unhappiness and dissatisfaction. As it is explained with the analogy of the shadow we cannot outrun our shadow. If we try to run away from the shadow it just follows us wherever we go. Likewise, for as long as we have this contaminated body it will perpetually experience suffering over and over again, because of the basis that we have.

Therefore for as long as we have a contaminated body we are carrying our own burden of suffering with us, and the more we contemplate how the very physical contaminated body that we have serves as a basis for us to experience suffering, then the more strong attachment to the body will be lessened.

As long as we have a body there will be a shadow of the body, and likewise as long as we have a contaminated body we will have the sufferings which are related to it. Shantideva explained that even though beings wish for happiness, they destroy their own happiness by pursuing the causes of their suffering. Even though they do not wish for suffering they continuously run towards it, creating the cause for their own suffering and that is very pitiful.

It is necessary to contemplate and think about the meaning of these teachings over and over again. The more we familiarise our mind with the meanings of the topics the more one gains an inner understanding. Even if we cannot develop an uncontrived renunciation right away we can still leave very strong imprints on our mind to develop renunciation in the future. Meanwhile our strong sense of grasping to our external bodies and the external objects can be reduced, and thus the mind becomes more in tune with the Dharma.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 June 2006

As usual it would be good to sit in an upright, comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to attain the ultimate state of enlightenment, so therefore I will listen to the teachings as a means of receiving the methods for practising'.

1.1.2.1.2. CONSIDERING HOW SUFFERING FOLLOWS ONE THOUGH, ONE WANTS PLEASURE AND DOES NOT WANT SUFFERING (CONT)

It is really important to contemplate the meaning of what was explained under this heading, such as the fact that even though we wish for happiness we do not experience happiness, and even though we do not wish for suffering that is what we do experience, and how suffering follows us just as our shadow does. Having considered all these facts, when we look into our own experience in life we definitely see that whatever we do, suffering always follows. Having contemplated in such a way should help us to develop renunciation.

We should definitely put some effort into thinking about why this is so. Why is it that even though we wish for happiness and do not wish for suffering we experience suffering over and over again? Why is it that suffering follows us just like our shadow follows us? It is very important that we think about these questions over and over again, so that we really start to feel the reality of these facts and why they are so.

1.1.2.2. Considering how suffering comes easily without need of great effort

This is further sub-divided into two.

1.1.2.2.1. If one wishes for rare pleasure it is appropriate to fear plentiful suffering
1.1.2.2.2. Valuing the body out of attachment is like valuing a foe or an enemy.

1.1.2.2.1. IF ONE WISHES FOR RARE PLEASURE IT IS APPROPRIATE TO FEAR PLENTIFUL SUFFERING

Suffering is found at will, *[30]*
But what pleasure is there at will?
Why do you value the rare
But do not fear the plentiful?

'Suffering is found at will' indicates that suffering comes about very easily and pleasure does not. 'What pleasure is there at will' indicates that even though one wishes for pleasure it does not come about at will, it is neither plentiful nor bountiful, and it does not come about as easily as suffering.

An analogy given in the commentary is that in the daytime when there is very strong heat it is very rare to feel coolness. That is how rare the experience of pleasure is. When we relate the meaning of this verse to our own experience we can definitely find that it is a fact that even though we wish for happiness it is rare for us to experience real happiness. At a physical level it is very rare that we have complete physical well-being. Even though we may feel that things are healthy we are bound to feel some kind of physical discomfort at a some point. In fact in our daily life during the course of even one day we find that we experience much more physical discomfort than we do well-being. Of course what we wish for is well-being, for things to go well, and to feel comfortable and pleasure and happiness. But the reality is that we end up experiencing much more physical discomfort and suffering than we do pleasure. When we contemplate on the earlier points in the teaching we can really begin to realise that the reason for this is because we have a contaminated body. It is because of the nature of our body, which is that it is a contaminated body, that we experience suffering so readily. Contemplating in this way should help our mind to further develop a sense of renunciation.

The main points that one needs to understand from the explanation of the teaching is the means of overcoming the erroneous or wrong view that we have that our bodies are pleasurable objects. As a result of that view we have an attachment to our bodies, because we see them as being pleasurable. But that is an erroneous view and the reality is that the body is contaminated and is in the nature of suffering. That understanding, however, does not come about easily. It is relatively easy to relate and understand the suffering of suffering, which is the first type of suffering. That suffering is actually called pain, and when we experience great pain related to our body then that is something which we can immediately identify with, and understand. But that does not give a very deep sense of understanding of how the body is a contaminated body.

We experience some pain in relation to the body but then we go back to experiencing some pleasure and forget about the reality of the body as being contaminated. When we go further into looking into the very reality of the body, and how the very nature of the body is actually in the nature of suffering, then that understanding should develop a deeper sense of wishing to renounce the body. When we develop a deeper sense of renunciation, wanting to abandon this body, then the wish to be liberated will become stronger. That is what we call the aspiration to achieve liberation. So in that sense the understanding of how to develop renunciation becomes much deeper and more profound.

Once we develop a strong sense of renunciation in relation to ourselves, that deeper understanding becomes an impetus to develop what we call love and compassion towards other beings. By understanding how other beings also have the same reality of having a contaminated body, and how their suffering is much deeper, the understanding of love and compassion becomes much more profound. When we consider how others cherish such a contaminated body that is actually

only a source of more suffering, isn't that what we call a real object of compassion?

A more obvious example or analogy of how we can develop love and compassion towards others is if we see someone who is very ill, or suffering from an illness, and who does not consult a doctor and just bears that illness. If they could be cured by consulting a doctor yet they do not consult a doctor and just bear that illness, then we would think that was very foolish wouldn't we? We would think, 'How foolish not to cure themselves from an illness that can be cured? How foolish to bear such a suffering unnecessarily?'. It is a similar to not wishing to be liberated from our contaminated body.

Returning to the analogy again, if an illness, no matter how painful or how much suffering it causes, can be cured by consulting a skilled doctor, then the wisest thing for any one would be to consult a doctor and follow the prescribed treatment. That is exactly the reality of our own case, and we are extremely fortunate to have the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is like a skilled doctor in that he prescribes the exact methods and techniques for overcoming the source of our suffering, our contaminated bodies and their causes. Therefore it would be wise for us to actually follow that advice as much as we can.

'Why do you value the rare but do not fear the plentiful?' Here the proper noun 'you' refers to worldly or ordinary beings, so the verse asks why do you ordinary beings value the rare, meaning the pleasurable experience, but do not fear the plentiful, which refers to the suffering.

'Why do you not fear the plentiful?' indicates that one should take that into consideration. The commentary reads, 'If you value rare and desired pleasure, it is appropriate to feel aversion for undesirable and plentiful suffering.' The main point here is that we value pleasure to the point of doing anything possible to obtain it, spending so much time and energy trying experience that contaminated pleasure, whereas if suffering comes we almost ignore it. We just try to deal with the suffering and do not put any effort into trying to abandon the causes for that suffering. The main point here is that we put so much time and energy into experiencing some temporary and fleeting pleasure, while not wanting any suffering. So why don't we spend more time and energy in engaging in the practice of abandoning the causes for our own suffering?

1.1.2.2.2. VALUING THE BODY OUT OF ATTACHMENT IS LIKE VALUING A FOE

Here valuing can also connote attachment, so having attachment to the body is like having attachment to a foe.

> *A comfortable body* [31]
> *Is a container of suffering.*
> *Thus valuing the body and*
> *Valuing a foe both seem alike.*

This very body that we have is what we consider a comfortable body, but in reality it is like a container of suffering. The analogy given is that the body is so fragile, with delicate skin like the skin of a baby so that even the prick of a small thorn causes suffering. In that sense it is like a container of suffering because even a small thorn prick will cause so much suffering to the body.

Even though we consider the body a comfortable body, and we nourish and feed it and put so much time and energy into its upkeep, trying to make the body feel comfortable and at ease, the reality is that it is like a container of suffering where even a small discomfort can cause unease. That is what is to be contemplated.

Therefore since the reality is that our body is like a container of suffering, meaning that it is a condition for us to experience so much suffering, cherishing such a body is similar to cherishing a foe or an enemy.

One of the main points made in this verse is that no matter how much the body is nourished and cared for it still produces only suffering. The analogy that is given in the commentary relates to a story where a king saw a man asleep on the wooden planks of a chariot in the noon-day heat. The king felt sorry for this person so he provided him with very nice clothing and bedding, but as the person got quite used to that nice comfortable bed he was not even able to bear a small mustard seed lying in the bed. Where he had once been able to sleep on a bare chariot without any problem, he had become so spoilt with such a comfortable bed that he could not even bear the unease of a mustard seed in his bed. This analogy shows how when we think that we are going to take care of this body and nourish it and cherish it to make it feel comfortable, in fact it just becomes a further source for the experience of more suffering. Because it is a contaminated body even what we call very small suffering could become quite unbearable if we keep cherishing this body.

1.1.2.3. Considering how the body does not transcend its suffering nature

> *The body, however long one spends,* [32]
> *Will not in itself become pleasurable.*
> *To say its nature can be overruled*
> *By other factors is improper.*

What this verse relates is that no matter how much care is given to such a body with comforts and so forth, and no matter how long a time one spends doing that, it will not itself become pleasurable, and the reason is because the nature of the body is suffering.

To explain the verse further, it would be improper to consider that even though the body is in the nature of suffering, that nature can be overcome by other external factors. It is not appropriate to think that the body's very nature of suffering could be overcome by outside factors.

The analogy that is given in the commentary to illustrate this is that no matter how much a mother crow nurtures a cuckoo fledgling, the fledgling will always be a cuckoo and never a crow. A cuckoo fledging will never turn into a crow no matter how long the mother crow nourishes it or looks after it. Asserting that the body by nature is pleasurable is like that. Pampering our body with clothing and making it feel pleasurable from other external sources and conditions will never change the fact that the body is by its very nature in the nature of suffering. In other words, pampering and clothing and

nourishing the body will never change the fact of its suffering state; it will not change the reality that it will experience suffering.

This is actually quite easy to understand, but we should not leave it at that thinking, 'Oh this makes a lot of sense and it's easy to understand'. We have to try to apply it to our practice; we have to try to really contemplate this fact, and the more we contemplate it the more it becomes a real reality for ourselves, and the stronger our deep sense of renunciation will become. The main thing is that not trusting such a contaminated body will develop our sense of renunciation, and then we can progress slowly in our practice. It helps our mind. Therefore it is important to bring our mind inward into this topic, meaning relating it to ourselves, our experience and really contemplating and using it in our meditation.

1.1.2.4. Considering how suffering causes harm

Doubt: The body's nature cannot be suffering, for those who are wealthy, such as kings with many attendants have nothing but pleasurable feelings from birth to death.

This heading deals with a particular doubt which may arise in our mind. In the earlier verses the emphasis was on how the body is a contaminated body, meaning that it is in the nature of suffering, which indicates that whoever has a contaminated body will be under the influence of suffering. However the doubt that may arise in the mind is that there are those who seem to experience great pleasure such as great kings or rich people and so forth. They have everything at their disposal and it may seem that they experience so much pleasure. Because they are very influential they have many people around them doing things for them, they have money to spend and they seem to be able to obtain whatever object they desire. So we may think, 'Oh they are really well-off, and they don't have to go through any difficulties or suffering'. Thinking in that way, however, is of course incorrect. What is being mentioned in the text is as long as they do not escape the contaminated body, which is in the nature of suffering, they will definitely experience mental suffering as well. This is a very important point being made in the teachings for us to really meditate on again and again. It also helps to further develop our compassion for beings who seem to be well off, rich and influential, and understand that they also go through sufferings.

The next verse serves as an answer to the doubt, which is quite easy to understand literally.

> *The high have mental suffering;* *[33]*
> *For the common it comes from the body.*
> *Day by day, both kinds of suffering*
> *Overwhelm people in the world.*

First of all, the sufferings of kings and other great beings may not be obvious at a physical level because they have so much material wealth at their disposal. They may appear to have quite a comfortable life but that is mainly on the physical level. On the mental level they have a great fear of a decline of their own prosperity, they fear that they may lose their wealth or that they may not be able to maintain their wealth. They suffer from the fear of others taking away their wealth and so forth, and also experience unbearable suffering over the prosperity of others, which comes out of jealousy. It is not sufficient that they have wealth themselves - when they see other's wealth, it brings suffering to their mind, because they are not able to bear seeing other's experiencing the same amount of wealth. As it indicates here, so much mental suffering is experienced by beings who have high status and great wealth.

For common people who lack the necessities of life the experience of suffering arises from the body. Because they lack sufficient necessities to keep the physical body comfortable, such as protection from heat and cold and hunger, ordinary beings experience suffering more on a physical level.

In such a way rich and poor alike are overwhelmed by mental and physical sufferings on a daily basis.

The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, mentioned in one of his texts that, 'No matter who it may be, what their status, or where they come from, all beings are alike in having to experience so much suffering'. This statement is very true.

1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful pain or suffering is

Doubt: Though these two kinds of suffering exist, one does not notice them, because great pleasure makes them insignificant.

Answer:

> *Pleasure is governed by thoughts;* *[34]*
> *Thoughts are governed by pain.*
> *Thus there is nothing anywhere*
> *More powerful than pain.*

The thought may arise, 'Even though there is harm to the body, it can still be overcome by the pleasure, so it is appropriate to consider what we call pleasure as being something desirable'. The answer is that it is not appropriate.

To further explain the doubt, if one thinks, 'Yes I can accept that there are both physical and mental sufferings, but experiencing great pleasure can overcome both sufferings so there is no need to consider the body as being in the nature of suffering'. The answer is that this is not the case, as it is not possible for pleasure to completely overcome our sufferings.

When we relate this doubt to our own experience we find that it's true that we often feel, 'Oh yes I have a lot of suffering and it is difficult, but there is always some way to get out of it. If I am sick I can go to the doctor, or if I am unhappy I can do something about it'. So we always feel that we have a solution, which usually consists of trying to gain some temporary pleasure to overcome the suffering. We think that as long as we have that temporary solution to overcome our suffering then things should be fine, and it is that illusion which keeps us going in samsara. The fact is, as mentioned here, pleasure cannot really overcome suffering, because suffering is more powerful.

As an answer to this doubt the explanation in the verse is

that the reason why pleasure cannot overcome real suffering is because pleasure is nothing much more than a thought. What we call pleasure is actually governed by our thoughts, meaning that pleasure is actually a conceptual thought. To further explain this point, the analogy given is of a benefactor who engages in a generous act of giving something to others. That act of giving can produce a certain amount of comfort in the mind feeling, 'I have done something good', and a certain amount of happiness is felt from that. However in that elated state of mind the thought arises, 'Oh but if I continue to engage in this generous act my resources and wealth might come to an end'. When that thought arises the earlier thoughts of happiness and feeling quite good about one's generous act are completely overridden by the fear of losing one's wealth, and that brings suffering to the mind.

This shows very clearly what we call pleasure and suffering are just mental conceptual attitudes that we have in the mind. Therefore, even when we engage in an act that brings us pleasure it can so easily be overcome by suffering, just by a change of attitude. Feelings are not really stable, because they are just dependent upon conceptual states of mind. Therefore what we call 'pleasurable' or 'comfortable' feelings are not really stable, but are governed by our conceptual thoughts, which in turn are governed by the painful attitudes of mind.

As the commentary further explains, 'The arising and the cessation of pleasure are governed by thoughts, and since pleasurable thoughts are destroyed by pain, they are governed by pain. Therefore nowhere in the world is there pleasure more powerful than pain'.

As we have mentioned before it is important to contemplate these points made in the teaching.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཱརྱ་དེ་ཝ་ཡི་བརྩི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 June 2006

As usual it is good to sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to liberate all beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose, I will listen to the teachings and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful suffering is (cont)

Doubt: The experience of pleasure can overcome suffering.

> *Pleasure is governed by thoughts;* *[34]*
> *Thoughts are governed by pain.*
> *Thus there is nothing anywhere*
> *More powerful than pain.*

The view that the experience of pleasure will overcome suffering leads to the view that there is no need to consider the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering, because when one experiences pleasure it can overcome that suffering. Such a doubt is eliminated with this verse, which explains that it is not the case that the experience of pleasure can overcome suffering. In fact the suffering that we experience on a continual basis is much more prevalent than the fleeting pleasures we occasionally experience. Since suffering is more predominant than pleasure, it is not the case that pleasure can overpower suffering.

The main point made in relation to this verse is that we need to contemplate more deeply on how the fleeting pleasures that we experience are actually contaminated pleasures, and so are in the nature of suffering. Therefore contaminated pleasures cannot be relied upon; we cannot trust the contaminated pleasures, because ultimately they bring us more suffering.

Contemplating more deeply on the fact of how the contaminated pleasures are actually also in the nature of suffering can in the long run help to develop a sense of renunciation. Normally, it is relatively easy for us to develop a sense of renunciation, or disgust, towards obvious physical and mental suffering, but we don't seem to give much regard to the suffering of change and the pervasive sufferings. In fact we seem to deliberately engage in experiencing the contaminated pleasures, which are in reality sufferings of change. Therefore it is very important for us to really contemplate and develop a sense of renunciation towards all levels of suffering.

1.1.2.6. Considering how the sensation of pleasure is like a visitor or guest to the body

Doubt: Although contaminated pleasures relating to the physical body are hard to find, they do no harm. But since pain harms, it is alien (or like a guest) to the body.

> *With the passage of time* *[35]*
> *Pain increases.*
> *Pleasure, therefore, seems as if*
> *Alien to this body.*

This verse serves as an answer to the doubt that arises from the view that contaminated pleasures are favourable, and therefore must arise naturally in the body. Whereas pain is unfavourable and harms the body, it is as if it is alien to the body.

> Pleasurable sensations are not natural to the body, for with the passing of time from childhood to youth, maturity and old age, suffering - such as that of aging - increases and pleasure vanishes.

As indicated in the commentary, childhood refers to the period from birth to the early teens, youth is from the early teens to 18 or 20, then maturity follows from 18 or 20 to about 35 to 40, and old age comes from then on. The pleasures that are experienced in childhood are all left behind, and it is as though one is moving forward towards more suffering, not towards more pleasures. The pleasures experienced in the earlier stages are left behind and will not be experienced again; one moves forward towards more difficulties and problems as we mature.

In youth, a certain amount of pleasure is experienced, but later it transforms into more problems. As we grow up we are given more responsibilities which are followed by more worries mentally. Then as old age comes, we experience more suffering related to the physical body as well. Therefore it is as if we are moving forward towards more and more suffering and leaving behind the pleasant or 'pleasurable' experiences. In this way, we can clearly see how suffering prevails as we become older. Therefore it is not really in the nature of our body to experience pleasure; rather suffering is much more prevalent in relation to our body.

In relation to the doubt that pleasure is in the nature of the body and suffering is alien or like a guest, in fact when we look into our situation it is the complete opposite of that. The reality is that pleasure is alien and like a guest, because it is experienced randomly, whereas suffering is in the nature of our body as it is experienced constantly throughout our life. When we are young, we experience a certain amount of pleasure, but we leave that behind and move forward towards experiencing more difficulties and problems in life, so therefore more suffering occurs and more pain is experienced. As we age, our bodies start to fail us and we experience much more suffering. When we look at our contaminated bodies, it becomes obvious that our body is in the nature of suffering rather than pleasure, which is completely contrary to the earlier doubt that pleasure is the nature of the body and suffering is alien, like a guest. Rather, the reality is that suffering is in the nature of the body, and pleasures are like the guest.

We need to relate the main points that are made in this verse to ourselves, and contemplate the sufferings that we experience in relation to this body. On very rare occasions we experience some pleasure and it only comes randomly. What we experience on a more continuous

basis is suffering. Therefore suffering is more in the nature of our body. When we reflect further we see how pleasure is fleeting, and suffering is much more prevalent. When we consider the sufferings that we experienced in our childhood, such as a trauma or some sort of abuse that haunts us again and again throughout our life, we see that certain kinds of traumatic sufferings experienced as a child can be carried throughout life. Every time we reflect on them, it brings so much pain and suffering in the mind and it is perpetuated throughout our life. Whereas what is left of the pleasures that we experienced as a child is but a memory. Do those memories give us any pleasure and happiness now in our life? We don't see that. Rather, we find that the pleasures were all fleeting and they are just mere memories.

The pleasures we experienced as a child are just a memory, whereas the suffering that we experienced is much deeper in ourselves. So when we reflect on that reality we can see how suffering is much more prevalent. That is why the teachings explain how the nature of our contaminated body is actually suffering. In contemplating that, it is very important that we develop a real sense of renunciation to overcome the contaminated body. Contemplating further we realise that it is karma and delusions that are the contributing causes to bring about this body. Having the strong grasping at the self (or the 'I') produces the delusions and karma, which is what we call the causes to obtain such a body. When one develops renunciation, one develops a deep sense of understanding that one must overcome that initial ignorance of grasping at the self. This then overcomes the delusions and karma that produce such a contaminated body.

Relating to earlier doubts about whether we have to nourish our body, it was explained in the earlier part of the text that we need to sustain our body, because we can use it to obtain the ultimate goals that we wish to achieve, and we can accumulate much merit with this body. Therefore while we still have this contaminated body, we need to nourish it to achieve our ultimate goals. We can use this body to live an ethical life, to accumulate merit and engage in the six perfections.

Meanwhile we must also understand that the nature of the body is contaminated. Therefore with an intention of completely and entirely overcoming the causes for obtaining this body in the future, we use the body we have now to accumulate merit. When we have that understanding we can see that there is a huge difference in how the body is nourished and sustained when one has understanding of the Dharma. It's completely different from a worldly view of sustaining the body, which is just for its fleeting mundane achievements. Whereas with the Dharma attitude, we engage in sustaining the body in order to accumulate merit for the purpose of obtaining the ultimate goals. Therefore we can definitely see that there is a huge difference from the Dharma point of view.

Contemplating on the nature of the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering serves as an impetus to develop a strong longing to achieve what is called liberation – to be free from samsara, which is to be free from this conditioning. The very attitude of developing renunciation is an attitude of wishing to be free from being bound by karma and delusions. For as long as we are bound by karma and delusions, we are held in the cycle of obtaining such a contaminated body over and over again. What binds us is karma and delusions. Therefore in developing renunciation, one develops a very strong longing to overcome that factor that binds us to the cyclic existence, which means overcoming the delusions and karma.

As we develop that strong sense of renunciation with the understanding of what binds us to samsara, which is delusions and karma, we can then use that very understanding of renunciation to focus on others, and wish for them to be free from samsara, which then becomes love and compassion. Therefore when we develop a strong sense of renunciation within ourselves, that can also serve as an impetus to develop love and compassion by focussing on others. Then that love and compassion we have for others becomes much deeper and more profound, rather than just a sense of pity. The need to help others becomes really very strong in the mind, because one sees others in this very pitiful situation of being completely bound by the delusions and karma, and engulfed in ignorance. When one understands the state that others are in, when we get a glimpse of that by developing our renunciation, then a very strong wish to free other beings from that state of being bound to samsara will develop as well.

I explain this in an attempt to lead to a deeper, and more profound meaning, deriving it from other sources of the teachings. Therefore when we relate the verses here to other sources of the teachings, then the understanding becomes much deeper. In personalising the teachings for ourselves there may be some sort of doubt that renunciation is just focussing on oneself, which seems very selfish. But in fact, when one understands how developing renunciation can be an impetus for developing love and compassion for oneself and love and compassion towards others, we can see how renunciation and love and compassion are related and linked, and one can see the great importance of why one should develop renunciation. As explained in the teachings, renunciation is a basis for developing love and compassion. As the teachings explain, without developing renunciation, it is quite impossible to develop the real true, unique love and compassion towards others. Therefore as one enhances renunciation within oneself, with an understanding of the teachings we can then use that experience of renunciation to develop love and compassion towards others. This is quite important for us to understand and integrate.

1.1.2.7. It is therefore proper to develop aversion to the suffering nature of the body.

Doubt: Although the body's nature is suffering, causes of pleasure act as a remedy. Therefore one need not feel aversion towards the body.

There seem to be many causes *[36]*
Of suffering like sickness and others,
But humans do not seem to have
As many causes of pleasure.

When we think about it, this doubt can definitely arise in the mind, but that view is not correct. The verse acts as an explanation for why that attitude is incorrect. As a means to overcome that erroneous attitude, the commentary explains that there are many more causes for physical suffering than there are for pleasure. The reality is that there are many more causes for physical suffering: there are internal causes such as the different types of illnesses that arise within our body, as well as many external causes such as the feeling of extreme cold or heat, and other kinds of unpleasant sensations that can arise from the elements, or from harm that is inflicted by others. Therefore there are actually many more internal and external causes and conditions for the body to experience suffering rather than pleasure. In comparison the causes to experience pleasure are fewer. Therefore it is a completely erroneous view to think that pleasure can act as a remedy for suffering, when in reality suffering is experienced much more. Since the causes for pleasure are few, they cannot serve as a remedy to overcome suffering. Therefore one must feel an aversion towards suffering, by understanding how prevalent it is within our physical body.

1.1.3. Refuting the existence of real pleasure

This has five sub-divisions.

1.1.3.1. Showing that though real suffering exists, real pleasure does not

1.1.3.2. Showing it is erroneous to think of suffering as pleasure

1.1.3.3. From the start there is no real pleasure in riding and so forth

1.1.3.4. Ordinary people think of the feeling of satisfaction from alleviated pain as real pleasure

1.1.3.5. Showing other reasons why there is no real pleasure

1.1.3.1. Showing that though real suffering exists, real pleasure does not

This is sub-divided in two.

1.1.3.1.1. Reasons why seeing a slight increase in pleasure does not prove the existence of real pleasure.

1.1.3.1.2. Although there are causes producing real suffering, there are none producing real pleasure.

1.1.3.1.1. REASONS WHY SEEING A SLIGHT INCREASE IN PLEASURE DOES NOT PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF REAL PLEASURE

Assertion: If pleasure did not exist it could not increase, but since it is seen to increase, real pleasure does exist.

Answer:

With the intensification of pleasure *[37]*
Its opposite is seen to occur
With the intensification of pain
There will not likewise be its opposite

The explanation of the verse shows that it is not true to say that there is real pleasure just because there is an increase of pleasure. When we experience pleasure and it seems to increase, an obstacle or hindrance, which is pain, occurs and we lose that experience of pleasure. Just as we reach a heightened experience of that pleasure, what takes place eventually is actually pain. After experiencing pleasure we end up with dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

While that is true for pleasure, the same does not apply to pain. When we experience great pain, as the pain increases it is not as though there will be any pleasurable experience at the end of that pain. The pain continues to increase with no hint of pleasure.

At a very subtle level, although pleasure increases, it does not go up to a heightened state where we are just left in the state of bliss and where we are completely satisfied. From our own experience we find that we are never left with a completely satisfying experience for too long. Soon after a pleasurable experience, something happens where we lose that nice feeling of pleasure, and in fact we are left with a dissatisfied and discontented mind. So in the end what is left in place of pleasure is actually pain.

Whereas on a very subtle level when suffering begins to increase, it can increases to the point where we are completely overcome physically and mentally with agony, which can continue for long period of time. With experience we can find that this is actually very true, isn't it?

The main point is that just because there is some pleasure which increases to a certain point, that does not mean that real pleasure exists. Rather the very fact that pleasure is not stable proves that pleasure is not real.

1.1.3.1.2. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE CAUSES PRODUCING REAL SUFFERING, THERE ARE NONE PRODUCING REAL PLEASURE

With the conditions for pleasure *[38]*
Its opposite is seen.
With the conditions for pain
There is not its opposite

The first two lines, 'With the conditions for pleasure, its opposite is seen' refer to the fact that, as explained in the commentary, when, for example, we engage in the partaking of a delicious meal, this is considered as a condition for the experience of pleasure. If, however, we indulge to the point where we overeat, it is obvious that we will experience discomfort, suffering and pain as a result. Therefore as the verse mentions, pain is seen to occur together with the conditions for pleasure. This refers to the fact that by the very process of continually engaging in the conditions for pleasure such as eating, those very conditions for pleasure will turn into a cause for the experience of pain.

Yet when one has prolonged contact with the causes of pain, while engaging in these conditions for pain there is never an experience of pleasure. In other words, while experiencing the conditions for having pain, we are never left with an experience of pleasure. That is a fact; there is no real lasting pleasure. What is really prevalent in relation to our physical contaminated body is suffering.

The main point being made here is whether the pleasure that we experience is real or not. If the pleasure that we experienced was real, then the more we engage in the conditions for pleasure the more pleasure we should naturally experience, and we should be left with an end result of great pleasure and bliss. But the reality is that the more we engage in the conditions for the pleasure that we think we are experiencing, the more we are left with misery and pain.

Whereas the conditions of suffering are more of a real experience, because of the fact that the very conditions that produce suffering don't change. As we engage in the conditions for suffering we experience more suffering. It is only by avoiding the conditions for suffering that we can overcome that experience. Whereas with pleasure, it is not the case that we experience more and more pleasure as we engage more in the causes. In fact we are left with pain. I think that we can see the reality of this quite clearly when we relate this to ourselves.

As the teachings indicate, there is an assertion that for every contaminated pleasure, or what we call worldly pleasure, there is definitely a suffering. In reality, contaminated pleasures are actually a form of suffering. This assertion is made based on our experience, which is that even though the immediate experience may be pleasurable, the ultimate outcome of that experience is an experience of suffering, because the end result of engaging in that pleasure is suffering. Therefore the teachings indicate that every contaminated or worldly pleasure is actually in the nature of suffering. That is based on reality. Therefore developing renunciation in relation to the worldly pleasures, which is explained in the teachings as being a suffering of change, is what we need to try to meditate on. For as long as we hold onto the view that contaminated pleasures are to be acquired and held onto, then a real sense of renunciation and wishing to achieve liberation cannot occur in our mind.

1.1.3.2. Showing it is erroneous to think of suffering as pleasure

This is sub-divided into six sub-divisions.

1.1.3.2.1. Inappropriateness of considering the process of dying pleasurable.

1.1.3.2.2. Inappropriateness of considering being afflicted pleasurable

1.1.3.2.3. Inappropriateness of considering pleasurable a composite of various incompatible factors which is like an enemy

1.1.3.2.4. Inappropriateness of considering being destroyed pleasurable

1.1.3.2.5. Inappropriateness of considering the doing of tiring actions pleasurable

1.1.3.2.6. Inappropriateness of considering pleasurable the creation of causes of suffering for the sake of a little pleasure

1.1.3.2.1. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING THE PROCESS OF DYING PLEASURABLE.

Doubt: When we see someone else experiencing worldly pleasures, we comment, 'They are having a pleasurable and enjoyable time'.

> *When you have spent, are spending* *[39]*
> *An will spend time dying,*
> *It is not at all proper to call*
> *The process of dying pleasurable.*

This verse is presented to overcome yet another doubt that we normally take for granted. There are expressions in the worldly sense relating to the experience of pleasure by others. As the commentary indicates with its explanation of the verse, there is no real pleasure that is experienced by anyone.

Composite or compounded things by their very nature disintegrate moment by moment and furthermore this is true with regard to the three times. Because of being in the nature of impermanence, compounded things are changing from moment-to-moment, meaning that they are disintegrating. That reality of disintegration moment-by-moment is true at all times. In relation to the three times it was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future. Therefore we have already spent certain amount of time disintegrating in the past, which has led to our physical condition now.

At this very moment, we are spending time in disintegration, meaning that from the very subtle level to the gross level our body is changing. It will continue to change in the future, leading ultimately to the actual gross disintegration of our body, where it completely ceases to function, which is when we experience death. Therefore in reality, we are spending our time in the process of dying. Every moment brings us closer to death, and it is as if we are spending all our time in the process of dying. When we reflect on that reality, there is no time for pleasure. Therefore the main point here is that we need to put every moment of our life in trying to prepare for the actual moment of death, and to not to waste our time in fleeting pleasures.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 June 2006

Sitting in a comfortable and upright position, we generate a motivation to listen to the teachings. We can generate a motivation such as: 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to obtain enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings so that I can put them into practice to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings'.

1.1.3.2.2. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING BEING AFFLICTED, OR HARMED, AS BEING PLEASURABLE

When beings with bodies are constantly [40]
Afflicted by hunger and so forth,
It is not at all proper to call
Being afflicted pleasurable.

Like the earlier verses this one is an attempt to overcome the erroneous view we have of clinging onto contaminated worldly pleasures as being real pleasure and happiness, which is the main obstacle to developing renunciation. We are constantly experiencing the various types of obvious sufferings such as hunger, thirst and extreme heat and cold and so forth, as well as the subtle sufferings. Even when we are constantly afflicted by these normal and obvious sufferings in life, we still hold onto the view that our body is pleasurable. This is the erroneous view that prevents us from developing real renunciation.

When we really look into the situation further, and deeply investigate, we find that even the so-called pleasures that we experience are in reality not real pleasure at all; they are only contaminated pleasures. That will then give a sense of not completely putting our full trust and reliance on this contaminated body and the pleasures that are derived from it. With a firm foundation of understanding on this, one can then develop a sense of renunciation.

However, the fact that we do not experience real pleasure is not denying the fact that we do temporarily experience some happiness or pleasure, which will be explained in detail in a later verse. The main point here, however, is that any contaminated pleasures that we experience are not real, lasting pleasures. In fact, when we investigate further, even the pleasure that we do experience is actually based on suffering. As it is in the nature of suffering it is not a real or reliable source, which is the main point that is being made in this verse.

The two lines 'When beings with bodies are constantly afflicted by hunger and so forth' indicate that with this contaminated body, even on a very obvious level, we experience so many different types of suffering, such as hunger, thirst, feeling too cold or too warm. If we reflect further on the condition of our body, it seems to be quite obvious that it is in the nature of suffering. For example, the body relies on food: if we don't get our meals on time, what kind of experience do we have? Even if it gets a little bit late for our lunch we suffer. If we start feeling thirsty and we cannot get a drink what kind of uncomfortable experience do we go through? Being hungry is hard to bear. We immediately try to find some food to feed our bodies. Likewise with thirst, we need to have water or some other drink in order to quench our thirst, otherwise the body starts to cry out, and we feel very uncomfortable.

If the body's nature was pleasurable, it would not have to rely on these external conditions. The very fact that the body cannot maintain itself without the constant input of contaminated substances to maintain it, shows the fact that the body itself is not completely reliable. It cannot be sustained by itself, and needs to depend on all these external conditions. As soon as we don't have them, we immediately experience suffering. So therefore it is not at all proper to call being afflicted pleasurable.

While our bodies suffer in this way it is not at all proper to consider our physical body and the rest of the contaminated aggregates as being pleasurable; as it is in the nature of suffering, it is not pleasurable. Actually, it is quite easy to understand the verses literally. For our practice it is not enough just to understand the verse; we have to think about it further and try to use it in our meditation. Normally we might think: 'Oh, the suffering of hunger and thirst is experienced only by impoverished or poor people who do not have food, like the people in Africa'. But in fact, we all suffer from hunger and thirst. As soon as we get hungry, we are experiencing the suffering of hunger, and as soon as we feel thirsty we have the suffering of thirst. It is not something which is reserved only for the impoverished or poor, is it? Thirst and hunger are something that all who have a contaminated body experience equally.

1.1.3.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING PLEASURABLE A COMPOSITE OF VARIOUS INCOMPATIBLE FACTORS WHICH IS LIKE AN ENEMY

Though powerless, the combining of [41]
All the elements produces [the body];
Thus it is not at all proper to call
What is incompatible pleasurable.

This verse is presented to show the fragility of the body itself. To come into existence this contaminated body depends on many factors, the main ones being the four elements. One may think that if all these conditions are intact within the body then the body should experience well-being and pleasure. This verse is presented mainly as a means of overcoming that doubt. The reality is that there is no such thing as the body being completely in harmony and well-being all the time. In fact, the basis for the body to not be well is always present.

The term 'though powerless' means that any one of the elements in itself is powerless to produce the body. All four elements have to come together in order to produce the body. The earth element is the one which stabilises our body or makes it firm. From the time of conception

where the sperm and egg meet, it is the earth element which stabilises the fertilised egg and allows it to develop. Just as a fruit needs warmth to ripen, it is the fire element within the body that allows the foetus to mature. Then the wind element allows the body to expand and grow. The water element is that which binds the different parts together. So from the very moment of conception the four elements contribute to the development of the body.

Although it is the combination of all four elements that allows the body to sustain itself and grow, the four elements are imbalanced. It is not as though the four elements are compatible with each other and in perfect harmony. There is always the tendency for either one or the other of the elements to be a bit out of balance. For example, when the fire element increases too much then that causes fever, and the different diseases that arise from the fire element to be experienced. Likewise if the wind element increases too much, and is out of balance with the other elements, then we suffer from the diseases related to that factor.

It is only seldom that all the elements are in harmony. The short periods of time when they are in harmony is what we consider as having good health. But there's always the basis for them to go out of balance; even the slightest factor will throw one of the four elements out of balance, which will then produce what we call ill-health, and then we experience suffering. The main point here is that the body itself is dependent on all four elements to be able to sustain itself, and since the four elements themselves are not compatible, our bodies are always prone to experience suffering, and therefore our body is in the nature of suffering.

In order to use this verse in our meditation practice, it is of utmost importance that we reflect on the meaning of the verse. As it is explained here, in order for us to survive we have to rely on this body, and in order for this body to be able to survive, it has to depend on the four elements. If the four elements were always in perfect harmony, then one would feel at ease, but in reality although the body depends on them the four elements are not in harmony. The analogy given in the commentary is that if different types of opposing animals such as a horse, a jackal, a snake, a bird, a deer and a child-eating crocodile are put together they are never going to be in harmony. By nature, they are creatures which prey on each other, and we could therefore never expect them to be in harmony. Likewise the elements within our body can never really be in harmony. The very fact that water opposes fire, and so forth means that the reality of our body is in its very nature a basis for suffering.

This further emphasises the point that one cannot totally rely on this contaminated body, and that one needs to develop a strong wish to abandon the causes for such a contaminated body by developing renunciation. As another analogy of how the four elements are not in harmony, one could use an example of four individuals, who never get along, having to live together. No-one would consider such a room or house to be a comfortable, happy place. Why? Because these four individuals cannot get along; if you put them together, the outcome will definitely be quite disastrous, won't it? It's like that with the body: the four elements within our body are like four individuals who are not in harmony. Therefore, the body naturally experiences the result of being uncomfortable and is always in a state of unease.

1.1.3.2.4. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING BEING DESTROYED OR HARMED PLEASURABLE

When there is never that [42]
Which will relieve cold and so forth,
It is not at all proper to call
Being destroyed pleasurable.

Following on from the previous verse (41) the doubt may arise that the extremes of the external elements such as extreme cold or heat can be overcome by applying an opposing force. Therefore one may have a doubt that it is still possible for the body to experience pleasure when one overcomes the cause of suffering.

The meaning derived from this verse (42) is that just because one has the sensation of temporarily overcoming harmful agents such as extreme cold by applying an opposing agent such as heat, one cannot call the body pleasurable. With temporary relief from an earlier suffering it seems that we are experiencing pleasure. For example, when one experiences heat after experiencing extreme cold, the first moment will be pleasurable because of the fact that it is removing the earlier extreme suffering of cold. In reality, however, it is just replacing one suffering with yet another suffering.

Because the earlier suffering from cold was more extreme we experience the first moment of warmth as being pleasurable. If that were real pleasure, then the more heat that we experience, the more pleasure we should feel. But the reality is that if we remain in the heat for too long then it again starts to become quite unpleasant, and so we experience suffering again. Likewise when we go into cold from extreme heat, the first moments we experience would be of pleasure. That is because the second experience is removing the earlier extreme suffering of heat. But then if we stay in the cold, we will again experience suffering. Therefore, just because intense suffering can be removed with another later experience, which is experienced as pleasure, that in itself is not proof that the body has a nature of pleasure. In reality, that pleasure that we experience is actually in the nature of suffering. Therefore the real condition of the body is one of suffering.

1.1.3.2.5. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING THE DOING OF TIRING ACTIONS CONSIDERING THEM AS BEING PLEASURABLE

Doubt: Since conventionally one uses the expression 'Devadatta is lying down comfortably', real pleasure does exist.

When on earth no action is [43]
Done without exertion,
It is not at all proper to call
Performing actions pleasurable.

This verse is presented as an answer to the above assertion. The indication here is that the normal conventional view is that someone who is lying down looking very comfortable is experiencing real pleasure, and so we think that there must be real pleasure. The first two lines imply that whatever the action of any ordinary being who lives on this planet Earth there is always some effort which goes into it. There is always some effort involved in whatever one is doing, whether it is sitting, standing up, making a cup of tea, or lying down. They all require some effort - nothing which is done without some effort.

Whatever actions worldly beings do, there is nothing which is done without some effort or exertion, which implies that there is some unease. On the subtle level one may not immediately notice it, but whenever there is effort there is always some unease, which implies that it is discomfort, and thus it is a suffering. This however, should not be applied to the Dharma activities we do, where even though there is suffering it is said that one should endure that suffering.

In the worldly sense, if we look further into the small details of what it takes to experience even what we would normally consider pleasurable, for example, doing something to have a good time, we find that there is some exertion and unease involved in that as well. Lying down, standing up, going around, working, engaging in recreation activities and so forth all require some effort, therefore on a subtle level there is an unease, which is suffering. So it is not painless, as there is always some suffering involved. That being the case, it is not at all proper to call actions pleasurable, when in reality any action that is performed requires some effort and some unease.

1.1.3.2.6. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING PLEASURABLE THE CREATION OF THE CAUSES OF SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF A LITTLE PLEASURE.

Doubt: If there were no pleasure, it would not be feasible to experience suffering for the sake of pleasure, but since suffering for pleasure's sake is seen, pleasure does exist.

> *In this [life] and in others, always* *[44]*
> *One should guard against ill deeds.*
> *Calling them pleasurable is not at all*
> *Proper when there are bad rebirths.*

This is an answer to the doubt where one feels that if there were to be no pleasure at all, then it would not be feasible to experience suffering for the sake of pleasure. But since we do voluntarily experience suffering in order to get some pleasure, it must be the case that there is some pleasure. When we relate the first part of this doubt to our own lives, it seems that in whatever job we do we endure a lot of suffering. We all have so many complaints and we know that it is not easy. However we endure a lot of suffering at work with the intention of gaining pleasure. In order to get a pleasurable result, we have to sacrifice ourselves by doing jobs that we are not happy with, where we experience hardships and so forth. It is really true isn't it that we exert ourselves and involuntarily experience suffering with an intention of experiencing some pleasure?

The explanation of the verse is that those who do not know about the consequences of karma, engage in ill-deeds for the sake of a little pleasure. However as a result of engaging in the causes for obtaining pleasure all of those deeds would be considered as being ill-deeds, and the result of that would be suffering in this life, such as exerting ourselves, rising early for work and meeting with all the unfavourable circumstances during work. All of that is suffering, so even in this life, one has to experience the result of suffering. Furthermore there are cases where, for the sake of pleasure in this life, one may face the consequence of death.

So there is suffering even in this life as a result of engaging in the causes to experience some fleeting pleasure, not to mention the sufferings in future lives. Therefore engaging in negative activities for the sake of pleasure is the action of the unwise. Those who are wise, would never consider engaging in ill-deeds for the sake of a little pleasure. Therefore, engaging in deeds to seek some fleeting, temporary pleasure could not be considered as being proper. How could one consider it proper?

Further examples of how the pursuit of temporary pleasure or happiness include acts of stealing, cheating others, engaging in drug abuse or drug trafficking and so forth. These are actions which bring negative, unpleasant results, even in this lifetime, not to mention the negative consequences that are going to be experienced in the next lifetime. If engaging in such ill-deeds brings negative results for this life and for future lifetimes could one still consider that as being desirable or favourable? It cannot be considered at all proper.

Understanding that reality, one should guard oneself from ill-deeds at all times. Just as we guard our possessions against theft and make sure that we never lose our things in robberies or thefts, we should guard our virtuous deeds. Guarding ourself from engaging in negative deeds is something that we should pay much more attention to, as it is of great importance to us. Taken on a very practical level the advice given here is something that we should definitely consider and cherish. The advice about the negative consequences of stealing and so forth is something which is really quite obvious isn't it? The negative results and negative consequences of stealing and so forth are obvious to anyone in this life. We need to pay attention to following such advice starting from the very practical to the more profound deeper levels.

1.1.3.3. From the start there is no real pleasure in riding and so forth

Doubt: One sees that those intent on pleasure ride horses and elephants, considering it a discomfort to walk on their own two feet. Therefore pleasure does exist.

The root verse which serves as an answer is:

There is never any pleasure *[45]*
For humans in riding and so forth.
How can that which at the start
Does not begin, in the end increase?

The riding of horses or elephants is seen to be something that produces real pleasure. One should consider the fact that on a subtle level there is some discomfort right from the very beginning of the act, whether it be riding, or eating, or drinking or any other kind of worldly activity. When we start riding a horse, slowly it starts to feel uncomfortable. In fact if you ride for too long, you might even get sores on your backside. From my own experience, having ridden to Lhasa on horses from the province where I come from took many months. Once you have ridden for a certain period of time, the whole body starts to ache. The body becomes all tense and tired from having sat on the horse, then one starts feeling pain on the backside as well. So then you get off the horse and start walking with the horse for a while, before you get on again. Just getting off the horse and walking for a time is such a relief. It is the same with any other worldly activity such as eating or drinking; as soon as we engage in an activity to the point of excess it starts to become very uncomfortable.

The main point here is the fact that there is some discomfort from the very beginning, and that when that same action is prolonged for a certain time, it starts to feel very uncomfortable and unpleasant. On a very subtle level there is already discomfort at the start. To emphasise this further, how could suffering increase if it had not already been there at the beginning? The fact is that in order for suffering to increase, it had to have been there from the beginning.

In reality, that which from the very start was a small incipient cause of pain is mistaken for pleasure. What is actually the cause for pain is, in the initial stages, mistaken for pleasure and we grasp onto that pleasure. But in reality it is an initial cause for pain, so therefore in its very nature it is suffering. As mentioned earlier, as the activity starts to increase it becomes more noticeable to the point where we start to feel uncomfortable, and at that stage we call it suffering. The fact remains that in the initial stage the cause of suffering was already there.

Furthermore, what we consider as pleasurable starts with a small cause of suffering in the beginning, whereas what we call suffering does not start with a cause of pleasure. Therefore what we consider pleasure is not real, but what we call suffering is actually more prevalent. So therefore in all of the three times, the beginning, the middle and the end, the contaminated body is always in the nature of suffering.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 July 2006

As usual we will generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings, such as thinking, 'By listening to the teachings, may I be able to put them into practice so that I can create the causes to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, in order to alleviate their suffering'.

1.1.3.4. Ordinary people think of the feeling of satisfaction from alleviated pain as real pleasure

Assertion: 'Pleasure caused by the alleviation of pain does exist'.

Answer:

Thinking the alleviation *[46]*
Of pain is pleasure
Is like someone who feels delight
Vomiting into a gold pot

The explanation of the verse is given in the following analogy: if a rich man vomits into a gold pot and sees his servant vomit into a clay pot, whether rich or lowly the actual unpleasant sensation of vomiting is the same. In reality, while there is no difference in the actual unpleasant feeling of vomiting (for both a rich person vomiting into a gold pot or a lowly servant person vomiting into a normal clay pot), the rich person may have the mistaken feeling of satisfaction, knowing that he is vomiting into a gold pot. That sort of pompous feeling may arise in the mind of a rich person.

In our circumstances this analogy is used to show how ordinary beings feel a pleasant sensation when a type of suffering, such as moving from extreme heat or extreme cold to the opposite, is alleviated. The immediate sensation is one of pleasure. However, any pleasurable feeling that we experience is, in reality, in the nature of suffering. When we experience different pleasures in our samsaric world, we have a sense of joy or pride, just like the rich person has some sort of pride in vomiting into a gold pot. In reality, the rich person is actually experiencing discomfort and unease, but, because of a notion that he is vomiting into a gold pot he may develop some pride. Likewise ordinary beings develop a sense of pride and joy in the pleasures they experience, when in reality they are actually suffering.

Yet another example is given of how suffering is actually experienced as a satisfaction or pleasure. If someone, who is experiencing unease or pain from being out in the sun, moves out of the scorching sun and into the shade, that first moment of coolness when they move into the shade is experienced as pleasure, and that particular pleasure is called a pleasure of alleviated pain. In fact it is not real pleasure, as it is just a removal of pain, but it is experienced as pleasure because the earlier extreme, unpleasant sensation of feeling too hot has been removed.

Although the alleviation of the suffering of extreme heat, achieved by moving into the shade, is experienced as being pleasure, it is, in reality, not real pleasure; in fact, it is in the nature of suffering. That is because from that first moment of coolness the suffering of cold begins. The suffering of cold is experienced as a pleasure only because the unpleasant feeling of heat has been diminished. Actually, if that person remains in the shade for too long, and the experience of cold increases it too will turn into the unpleasant sensation of being too cold.

So the suffering of cold is actually there from the very beginning, as soon as the person steps into the shade, but it is not experienced as a suffering yet. So as the text mentions: 'Thus there is no pleasurable sensation entirely free from discomfort'. All pleasurable sensations are actually based on a discomfort or suffering. As the text further mentions: 'Since ordinary people's pain does not require even a weak pleasurable feeling as a basis in relation to which it is established, it is said that ordinary people have real suffering but no real pleasure'.

When we look into reality this is actually very true. For any pleasurable experience that we have, there seems to be a basis of suffering; however experiencing suffering does not have to be based on an initial experience of pleasure. Every pleasurable feeling is based on a subtle suffering, which will then be experienced as extreme suffering later on. For those reasons it is explained that for ordinary beings there is no real pleasure, only real suffering. Of course for Arya (noble) beings, there is the absence of suffering and real pleasure.

It is however incorrect to assert that pleasure does not exist nominally or relatively, for to deny that would be to deny the fact that pleasure exists at all. This can be understood with the analogy that when blue and yellow are juxtaposed, or placed side-by-side, then the perception that sees blue sees it as blue and not as yellow, and the perception that sees yellow sees it as yellow and not as blue. That is because blue is nominally existent as blue, and yellow is nominally existent as yellow, and thus they have been perceived correctly.

If, however, you place something that is considered long beside another longer object, then you would see the first long object as being short. Therefore something that is first asserted as being long can later be perceived as being short. What this analogy indicates, is that what we perceive as being pleasure, is in fact only perceived as a pleasure because it is the moment of absence of an earlier intense suffering. But even though it is perceived as being pleasurable, in reality it actually has suffering in its nature. When we think about the pleasure and suffering that we experience, and actually look into how we experience it, then it becomes clear to our mind that what we call pleasure is not a real pleasure at all, as it obviously turns into a suffering later. The difference between pleasure and suffering is only in how we

interpret it, like in the analogy of the long and short objects.

1.1.3.5. Showing other reasons why there is no real pleasure

This has two sub-divisions.

1.1.3.5.1. Real pleasure's existence is not established by seeing slight incipient pain stop intense pain.

1.1.3.5.2. Common beings do not have pleasure that can effectively override pain.

1.1.3.5.1. REAL PLEASURE'S EXISTENCE IS NOT ESTABLISHED BY SEEING SLIGHT INCIPIENT PAIN STOP INTENSE PAIN

Assertion: 'Pleasure does exist because when one moves a load from one shoulder to the other, a sense of pleasure arises. If there was no pleasure, one would not move it.'

Answer:

By beginning it stops the produced – *[47]*
How can pain that begins be pleasure?
It seems the Subduer therefore said
Both birth and cessation are suffering.

The meaning of the verse is as described in the commentary:

> When the discomfort of carrying a load on the right shoulder for a long time becomes intense and one moves it on to the left one, it is merely that a slight pain which is beginning stops the intense pain already produced...

This means that when one moves a heavy load from one shoulder to the other, the intense pain felt on the shoulder on which the load was first carried decreases. When you move the load to the other shoulder, it is initially experienced as a sensation of relief and pleasure. However the pain of being too heavy has already begun on the shoulder where the load has been moved onto. The discomfort or pain actually begins from the moment the load is placed on the other shoulder. Therefore as it says in the text: 'How can there be pleasure while a new and different pain is beginning [on one shoulder] or while intense pain is stopping [on the other shoulder?]'.

Although it is viewed as pleasure because pain is stopped or reduced, in fact a new pain is already starting. So in reality you cannot say that it is real pleasure, as it is, in fact, the beginning of another suffering. The main point is that even though it may be a fact that a particular type of suffering is ceasing, another type of suffering is starting. So one cannot use that as an assertion to say that there is real pleasure. Similarly:

> Although when one takes birth some forms of suffering stop, it is inappropriate to regard that as pleasure.

Even though some types of sufferings stop when birth takes place, it is the beginning of a whole other cycle of more suffering. So in fact it is not real pleasure.

In the *Sutra of Advice to Katyayana* the Buddha mentions:

> When Katyayana's [son] is born, only suffering is born.
> Also when he ceases, only suffering ceases.

This is further explained in the *Sutra on Nanda Entering the Womb*. However the point being made here is that there is no real pleasure when a being is born. The meaning here seems to be that when a being is born, it is born amidst suffering (for the being itself, the mother who is giving birth and so forth), while during life there is suffering, and even at the very end when one experiences death, that is also experienced amidst suffering. That seems to be the main point.

Another point to be understood here is that when it is asserted that there is real suffering but no real pleasure, the 'real' should not be taken as being real in the sense of truly existent, because in that case, of course, both suffering and pleasure don't truly exist. That is not what is being negated here. Neither pleasure nor suffering exist truly or inherently. Here when it is talking about 'real', it is nominally real, in the sense of the experience of suffering and pleasure.

1.1.3.5.2. COMMON BEINGS DO NOT HAVE PLEASURE THAT CAN EFFECTIVELY OVERRIDE PAIN.

Assertion or doubt: 'Real suffering exists but is not apparent because pleasure conceals it'.

Answer:

If common beings do not see suffering *[48]*
Because pleasure disguises it,
Why is there no pleasure
Which obscures suffering?

The answer to this assertion or doubt is:

> If real suffering exists but common beings do not notice it because pleasurable feelings disguise it, there should be pleasure which is stronger than suffering. Why is there no pleasure that can obscure suffering? Because ordinary people do not have real pleasure.

What it seems to assert here, is that there is a real pleasure which conceals suffering. If someone were to believe that real pleasure does exist because it is the pleasure which conceals suffering, then as an answer to that, the text mentions that in fact there is no real pleasure which conceals suffering. What pleasure is there that could actually conceal suffering?

The analogy that is given in the commentary is:

> A man pursued by an elephant falls into an old well. He stops his fall halfway down by catching hold of some couch-grass at whose root a rat is gnawing. Below a large snake lies in wait and from the sides pythons writhe toward him. Meanwhile he is absorbed in tasting the honey which drips from above and thinks of that as pleasure.

The meaning of this analogy is:

> When childish beings in cyclic existence, pursued by the elephant of death, fall into the well of old age, they stop their fall half way by catching hold of the couch-grass root of virtuous paths of action. Below the snake of bad rebirths lies in wait and pythons of disturbing emotions writhe toward them from all sides. While the rat of maturation is gnawing at the couch-grass root of life, they are

absorbed in tasting the honeyed drops of craving for attractive objects, but as an analogy, there is only suffering and not even the slightest real pleasure.

Visualise that you are the person who falls down a well, and halfway down you are able to catch hold of a piece of grass. That grass, of course, is not very strong and on top of that, there is a rat gnawing at the roots, so at any moment, the grass could snap and you could fall further down the well, at the bottom of which there is a huge snake opening its mouth ready to consume you; and at the side of the well there are other snakes about to attack you. If, in this critical situation with fear and dread all around, you opened your mouth and allowed some drips of honey to fall onto your tongue and were completely engrossed in that pleasure, that would be quite an absurd situation to be in. To enjoy that honey when, in fact, there is fear all around you is said to be the situation of ordinary beings in samsara.

To explain this analogy:

- The person who is being chased by the wild elephant relates to 'childish beings in cyclic existence, pursued by the elephant of death'. Beings in cyclic existence cannot escape death.
- In 'fall into the well of old age' the well is an analogy for old age.
- Stopping half way down the well is the situation where you are half-way towards death.
- Holding onto the grass is analogous to the ten virtuous deeds that we engage in, in whatever way we can.
- When we are experiencing the pleasures of this life, we are actually using up the merit that we have accumulated through the ten virtuous deeds.
- The rat gnawing at the root of the grass, making it snap at any moment, is like the situation where we are using up our good karma or the good merit accumulated by the ten virtuous deeds in our life. It is the karma that we have created in the past that is holding us up right now, but it is being exhausted.

  Below the snake of bad rebirths lies in wait and pythons of disturbing emotions writhe toward them from all sides. While the rat of maturation is gnawing at the couch-grass root of life, they are absorbed in tasting the honeyed drops of craving for attractive objects...

When we think about the reality of our situation, it is very true that we are half-way through our life (or even further), and what keeps us going right now is the result of the ten virtuous deeds that we have accumulated in the past. But at any given moment, when that merit is exhausted, we will experience death. Given the fact that we have created a lot of negative karmas, we could fall down into the lower realms at any time. Therefore at this stage in our life, it is very important for us to recollect our own situation and be very, very grateful and thankful that we have had opportunity to accumulate the virtue in the past that sustains us right now. While we are sustained right now, we should use every means possible to create more merit, and more virtue, so that we can save ourselves from falling into the pit of the lower realms in future lives, and to sustain us in those future lives. That is something to think about over and over again

1.2. The Teacher therefore spoke of meditating on the body as suffering

Assertion or doubt: If the body's nature were suffering, it would be unnecessary for the Teacher [Buddha] to say that the body is suffering, just as there is no need to point out that the sun is hot.

Answer:

> *Common beings must be told, "You are not* *[49]*
> *Free from attachment to suffering."*
> *Certainly Tathagatas therefore have said*
> *This is the worst confusion of all.*

The answer to this assertion is that there is no such fault, for although the body's nature is suffering, one does not realise it because of confusion or ignorance; and thinking of it as pleasurable one circles in the cyclic existence. As the verse indicates, what the Buddha has mentioned is that by mistaking suffering for pleasure, you are not free from attachment. Therefore common or ordinary beings need to be told this. Because of their ignorance, even suffering is seen as being pleasurable, therefore attachment to the objects that give pleasure develops. But in fact it is only due to confusion or ignorance that they are perceived in that way. Therefore it is necessary to be taught about ignorance; in fact there is a great need for the Tathagata to have proclaimed this. As the Tathagata has further said:

> 'Sister, the foremost of all obstructions is ignorance'. In other words, he has said that confusing real suffering with pleasure is the worst confusion [or ignorance] of all.

The main point made here is that the confusion which regards real suffering as pleasure is the worst kind of confusion of all. It is that confusion which leads one into being born into cyclic existence, over and over again. Therefore we need to know about suffering to emphasise that point, and there is great reason why the Buddha had taught that, which is to remove the confusion.

1.3. How to meditate on the pervasive suffering of conditioning

Amongst the sufferings all-pervasive suffering is said to be the most difficult to identify. All-pervasive suffering has different interpretations. 'All pervasive' can mean suffering pervading from the very peak of the cycle of existence in the god realms down to the hell realms. Another interpretation of pervasive suffering is that it pervades throughout every life – from the past life, into this one, and from this into the next life, suffering pervading through all lives. In this way, one can understand one's own contaminated body to be the basis of all pervasive suffering.

Therefore our own contaminated body is an example of pervasive suffering. At any time during the day or

during our life, there are times when without any particular obvious reason we may feel a sudden unpleasant state of mind. Without any apparent reason some sort of uncomfortable unease in our mind may come up. That is said to be proof of how our mind is intertwined with the contaminated aggregates, which is pervasive suffering. Pervasive suffering is said to be a very subtle type of suffering that is hard for us to identify, and as such it becomes one of the main obstacles to developing renunciation. It is said that of all the sufferings, all pervasive suffering is the hardest to recognise and identify.

Within the sensations it is hard to identify pleasurable sensation as being a suffering. An analogy given by the great master Vasubandhu is that although it would be difficult for us to feel a very small thin thread in our hand, it would be felt right away if it were to enter into the eye. All-pervasive suffering is similar: it is hard to identify, but it definitely harms. There will be further explanation about the contaminated aggregates and all-pervasive suffering in the next class.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 July 2006

Sitting in a comfortable position, and withdrawing one's mind from external distractions, let us keep the mind focused inward, and generate a positive motivation, such as: 'In order for me to liberate all sentient beings from every type of suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the Dharma and put it into practice, creating the causes to achieve enlightenment'.

1.3. How to meditate on the pervasive suffering of conditioning

The meaning of pervasive, or more literally, pervasive compounded suffering was explained last week. To explain it briefly again, pervasive can mean either our mind being pervaded with suffering from past life to future life and so forth, or it can mean the suffering that pervades from the peak of samsaric existence to the lowest hell realms, which is called the hell without respite.

'Compounded' in this context means the compounding of the different delusions that pervade our minds. This specifically relates to the seeds of delusion. When we relate that to ourselves we can see how true it is. We see how easily our mind is provoked into delusion, and how vulnerable to delusions our mind is. That is an indication of how the seeds of delusion pervade our mental state. There is a difference between the seed and the imprint of delusions, however here we particularly talking about the seeds of delusion, because our mind is pervaded by those seeds. That is why the mind is habituated by the influence of delusions, and why they arise in the mind very easily.

Both the mental and physical aggregates serve as the basis for the seeds of delusion to pervade, which brings us to the second connotation of the word *du che,* which we translate as compounded. This refers to the physical and mental aggregates that, when put together, serve as the basis on which the seeds of delusions prevail. So when we refer to our own mental and physical aggregates we can understand how they are actually in the nature of suffering.

It is good for our practice if we use the summarised explanation of all-pervasive compounded suffering to really contemplate the fact that, for as long as we are under the influence of delusions and karma, we are bound to acquire the contaminated aggregates, which are the basis for the delusions. In summary, for as long as we are under the influence of delusions and karma we are bound to experience sufferings, over and over again. Contemplating in that way helps us to generate a real sense of renunciation, a real wish to overcome this conditioning.

When we understand the meaning of all-pervasive compounded suffering and relate it to our own conditioning it should really instil the genuine thought: 'Unless and until I overcome the contaminated aggregates within myself, there is no way that I can be free from samsara'. That is precisely what the teachings explain: without developing a disgust or a distaste towards the all-pervasive compounded suffering, one can never generate a genuine sense of renunciation.

Assertion: Although the body is impermanent it is pleasurable

Answer: This is not so.

> *The impermanent is definitely harmed.* 50
> *What is harmed is not pleasurable.*
> *Therefore all that is impermanent*
> *Is said to be suffering.*

This again relates to a pleasure that is perceived as real pleasure.

> Whatever is impermanent, like the body which is a maturation of contaminated past actions and disturbing emotions…

Our contaminated body and our contaminated state of mind are said to be the maturation of contaminated past actions and disturbing emotions. This,

> …is definitely damaged by factors causing disintegration, and therefore produces aversion. Anything affected by causes of harm, whose character is to produce aversion, is not pleasurable.

As mentioned earlier, our very physical aggregates are in this situation because they are impermanent. This, in itself, is a cause of the sufferings that are experienced, so our aggregates are not pleasurable.

> Therefore all that is impermanent and contaminated is said to be suffering….

This explanation relates exactly to the teaching on The Four Seals that the Buddha gave in the Sutras, which is said to be the essential basis for all the Buddhist schools.

- All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- The contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering
- All phenomena are empty and selfless
- Nirvana is peace

We can relate the **first two seals** to our own conditioning. Because our physical aggregates are compounded phenomenon they are impermanent, and as mentioned in this commentary, being impermanent means that they are vulnerable or subject to harm. Therefore the conclusion is, all contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering. So in addition to being impermanent our contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering.

The **second two seals** relate to what we call the means of overcoming such a conditioned state, through the realisation of emptiness and selflessness, and thus achieving the state of peace of nirvana.

The analogy given in the commentary is that whatever falls into a salt pit will eventually become very salty. Likewise, since our contaminated body is in the nature of suffering, whatever is experienced with it will also be an experience of suffering.

2. Summarising the purpose of this chapter

This has three sub-divisions

2.1. The actual purpose
2.2. Showing that real pleasure does not exist
2.3. Eliminating others criticisms

2.1. The actual purpose

> Having aroused in trainees aversion to cyclic existence, the author Aryadeva quotes sutra saying that birth is suffering, to bring them to enlightenment. Also in the treatises of knowledge the Teacher says that the five contaminated aggregates are suffering.
>
> They are suffering, its sources, the world,
> The basis of views and also existence

This quote presents the categories that are in the nature of suffering, and they are: the sources of suffering i.e. karma & delusions, the world or environment, the basis of views, and samsaric existence itself.

The **five contaminated aggregates** were explained earlier: they are the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of discrimination, the aggregate of compositional factors, and the aggregate of consciousness. Quoting from another text, the reason why the five aggregates are in the nature of suffering is because they are intertwined with the three types of sufferings, and they do not accord with the Aryas. There is not a single contaminated aggregate that is not intertwined with one of the three types of sufferings.

To explain the actual quote:

The five contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering because they are intertwined with suffering. We can also relate this to our bodies; no matter how much we take care of our aggregates, we find that all our suffering arises because of them. When we think about it, there are so many different types of suffering that arise on the basis of just our bodies. We hear about so many different types of diseases, some which even doctors can't identify.

The Tibetan word for what we call the **world** or the environment is *jig ten*. The Tibetan word *jig* has the connotation of change, which refers to momentary changes and changes due to opposing forces, *ten* means base, so the basis of all momentary changes is the world.

The **basis of views** refers to all the views that bind us to cyclic existence such as the view of the transitory collections and so forth.

Last is samsaric **existence**. The Tibetan word for samsaric existence is *se pa*, which has the connotation of a continuation, of being born again and again with suffering. Therefore it refers to ordinary beings existing in samsara.

The commentary says that even though the quotes are found in Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Knowledge* they are actually direct quotes from the sutras. The next quotes are:

> Whatever without exception has any of
> The three kinds of suffering, is thus suffering

Here **whatever** refers to whatever is intertwined with the three types of suffering.

The next quote is also from the *Treasury of Knowledge*, and is a direct quote from a sutra:

> The attractive, the unattractive and
> All else that is contaminated…

From an attractive object, one experiences a feeling of pleasure, which is the suffering of change. From an unattractive object, one experiences a feeling of pain, which is the suffering of suffering. From all else that is contaminated, one experiences the all-pervasive compounded suffering. Thus these lines refer to the way in which the three types of sufferings are experienced by all level of beings in samsara.

Having developed attachment towards an attractive object one experiences a sense of pleasure. Even though the feeling of pleasure is initially experienced, it is not real pleasure, but it is contaminated pleasure, and so it is actually in the nature of suffering.

Of the three types of suffering, the **suffering of change** is when an initial pleasurable feeling turns into an unpleasant experience and then one experiences pain. **The suffering of suffering,** is the actual pain one experiences in relation to an uncomfortable feeling. That which serves as a basis for experiencing either pleasure or pain is the contaminated aggregates, which identifies the third type of suffering, the **all-pervasive compounded suffering**.

In relation to **attractive objects**, one experiences the pleasure derived from attractive objects, but because it changes into an unpleasant experience later on, it is what we call in the nature of suffering. Because it transforms into an actual pain that is an indication that it is actually in the nature of suffering. Even the pleasure we experience is actually in the nature of suffering, and because it has what we call the nature of changing it is contaminated. So within the object itself and the experience of the object there is also underlying basis of what is called the all-pervasive compounded suffering. So when analysed further, on both an obvious and at deeper levels, attractive and unattractive objects all have a combination of all three types of sufferings.

Unattractive objects are contaminated and therefore they are in the nature of suffering. Because the immediate experience one has is an unpleasant sensation, it is experienced as suffering, and it is clear from the very first moment that this experience is one of suffering. Therefore it is in the nature of suffering, and also what we call contaminated and compounded. Therefore it has the basis of all-pervasive compounded suffering.

The last line of the quote, 'All else that is **contaminated**' refers to everything else that is compounded. Of the four

seals this refers to the second seal, (which is that all compounded phenomena are in the nature of suffering). Here, 'All else that is contaminated', refers to the all other existences that are contaminated compounded phenomenon, and in the nature of suffering. The reason is because it is produced through the influence of delusions and karma, and does not accord with the Aryas. Therefore it is in the nature of suffering.

'**All else'** also can be related, in principle, to all of the samsaric realms. We can refer to the individual realms in samsara and how all of the three types of sufferings are experienced in all six realms. More specifically:

- In the **desire realms** it is said that the experience of all three types of sufferings, the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and all-pervasive compounded suffering, are prevalent.
- From **below the third concentration in the form realms** there is no suffering of pain, but there is the suffering of change and all-pervasive compounded suffering.
- From the **fourth concentration and above in the formless realms**, the first two types of sufferings are not experienced, so the only suffering prevalent is the all-pervasive compounded suffering.

> The author Aryadeva explains the faults of cyclic existence, establishing the intended meaning of these statements to bring those who are afraid and desire liberation into the Great Vehicle.

From our own experience, when we hear the faults of samsara, and when we realise the subtleties of the sufferings in cyclic existence, and what brings about rebirth in cyclic existence, we become really focussed and develop a sense of urgency about the situation. Those who have fear and a desire to be free of such conditions may have a tendency of wishing just to be free themselves. Here, however, the intention of the author Aryadeva is to bring those who have that fear and a wish to be liberated, into the Greater Vehicle, i.e. the Mahayana path. The intention is not to bring such trainees to the goal of achieving mere liberation, but to actually lead them to full enlightenment. That is the real intention behind Aryadeva's explanation.

> Moreover the Teacher said, 'Monks, while you have been circling in cyclic existence there is no one who has not been in position of your father, mother and so forth'.

Again, this is indicating the need to develop the wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all beings, by generating the awareness of how all beings have been kind to us at one time or another. Realising this, just as bodhisattvas willingly make sacrifices to rescue sentient beings from cyclic existence in the ship of the Great Vehicle, the author of the treatise shows extensively in the first four chapters how to generate the aspiring altruistic attitude, i.e. aspiring bodhicitta, intent on highest enlightenment, by explaining the faults of cyclic existence.

2.2. Showing that real pleasure does not exist

As the commentary reads:

> According to the protector Nagarjuna, who asserts that phenomena do not even have an atom of inherent existence, there is real suffering but not the least real contaminated pleasure.

If there were, it would entail many errors, as was explained earlier.

> Therefore, as already explained, the pleasure of alleviated suffering, meaning the arising of a feeling of satisfaction when suffering is somewhat weaker, is posited as pleasure.

This was also explained earlier in detail; in worldly terms what is called pleasure is nothing but a state of alleviation of an earlier intense pain. So an earlier intense pain being alleviated is perceived as pleasure, but in fact it is not real pleasure.

2.3. Eliminating others criticisms

The criticism refers to the debates between Master Vasubandhu and Master Aryadeva.

The actual question asked of Aryadeva by Vasubandhu is,

> The one who denies the existence of pleasure should be asked this…

The question refers to Aryadeva's assertion that there is real suffering but there are no real contaminated pleasures.

> He presents us numerous parallel reasons for either the existence or non existence of both real pleasure and real suffering, the need to accept the true existence of functional things being a forgone conclusion in that system. With regard to this the author of the commentary Chandrakirti states numerous refutations here.

A lot of these refutations were explained earlier in the chapter. According to Vasubandhu, the forgone conclusion is that there is true or inherent existence. He concludes that because compounded phenomena exist they have a true and real existence.

Chandrakirti's refutations include:

> If pleasurable feelings existed inherently it would be senseless for them to rise again. Moreover if collected effects existed as truly functional things, they would not need to be produced by causes, and if collective effects existed truly as functional things they would not need to be produced by causes.

This sort of explanation has been given earlier. If things were to have inherent existence then there would be no need for causes to produce them again, because inherent existence connotes a permanent existence. The explanation of how these questions are refuted by Aryadeva should be quite clear, as they were also presented in Chapter 1.

Furthermore there is also *The King of Meditative Stabilisation Sutra* which reads as follows:

> A person who is tormented by thirst
> In summer at noon - that transmigrator
> Sees mirages as a body of water.
> Understand all phenomena are like this
>
> Although a mirage contains no water,
> Confused sentient beings want to drink it.
> Unreal water cannot be drunk;
> Understand all phenomena are like this.

The analogy in the sutra is of a person, tormented by thirst in summer at noon, who sees a mirage as a body of water. It shows how, under certain conditions, a person may see water when water does not actually exist at all, and be totally convinced they are seeing water, and so develop attachment and a longing to drink the water and so forth. Although there is no water at all the conviction is still very strong.

'Understand that all phenomena are like this', refers to the fact that although phenomena don't inherently exist, beings in cyclic existence, who don't have an understanding of the lack of inherent existence, perceive things as being inherently existent, and they totally believe in the appearance of inherent existence and phenomena.

In the second verse of the quote 'all phenomena' refers to existence in general. With reference to our own existence it refers to the five contaminated aggregates. When we view the five contaminated aggregates within ourselves it appears, of course, that they exist nominally, and are in the nature of being impermanent. However they do not exist inherently. Even though they do not exist inherently, ordinary beings perceive the contaminated mind and body as being inherently existent. From that misperception all the rest of the assumptions that cause attachments and aversions to arise. It is mentioned here that all phenomena are like the analogy of the mirage in a sense that even though they appear to be truly and inherently existent, in reality they do not exist like that at all.

The chapter concludes with its name.

> *This is the second chapter of the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds** *showing the means to abandon belief in pleasure.*

CHAPTER 3 EXPLAINING THE MEANS TO ABANDON ERRONEOUS BELIEF IN CLEANNESS BY CONSIDERING THE UNCLEAN NATURE OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

Now we come to the third chapter. The Tibetan word *rap che,* which refers to the different parts to the text, and sometimes the word *liu,* is used. In English this is translated as chapters.

Having explained the five contaminated aggregates as being impermanent, and being in the nature of suffering, this chapter is an explanation of the means to abandon the erroneous belief in the cleanness of the physical contaminated body.

It is presented under two main headings:

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

2. Summarising the purpose of the chapter

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

1.1. Refuting that pleasure is experienced through satisfaction from savouring attractive objects

1.2. Explaining extensively why it is appropriate to consider the body clean

1.3. Refuting the idea of cleanness because of wearing perfumes and so forth

1.4. Refuting the idea that anything towards which freedom from desire may arise is clean

1.5. Nominally all four non-erroneous features are possible with regard to one thing

1.1. Refuting that pleasure is experienced through satisfaction from savouring attractive objects

This has two sub headings:

1.1.1. Refuting satisfaction through completely the enjoying the objects one craves

1.1.2. An analogy [showing how] rather than becoming free from desire, it increases in proportion to use of the things one craves

We will go into the text next session.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses and text from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 July 2006

As usual let us sit in an upright, comfortable position, and set our motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, and to liberate them from suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings and try to put them into practice as much as I can'.

EXPLAINING THE MEANS TO ABANDON ERRONEOUS BELIEF IN CLEANNESS BY CONSIDERING THE UNCLEAN NATURE OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

We have come to the third chapter in the text, which has two sub-headings

1. Presenting the material in the chapter
2. Explaining the name of the chapter

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

This is subdivided into five, which we listed last week.

It is good to develop an understanding from the heading itself, so that one understands what is presented under that heading.

1.1. Refuting that pleasure is experienced through satisfaction from savouring attractive objects

That is subdivided into two:

1.1.1. Refuting satisfaction through completely enjoying the objects one craves
1.1.2. An analogy [showing how] rather than becoming free from desire, it increases in proportion to use of the things one craves

As mentioned previously, the material so far has mainly been advice about the methods of developing renunciation. Therefore the main content of the first chapter was how the five aggregates are in the nature of being impermanent. The second chapter dealt mainly with how the five aggregates are in the nature of suffering. In this third chapter, the primary content is about the uncleanliness of the physical aggregate, which is the body.

1.1.1. Refuting satisfaction through completely enjoying the objects one craves

Doubt or assertion:

> Though the body's nature is suffering, it gains pleasure from satisfaction through the experience of attractive objects. Thus the use of such objects is appropriate.

Answer:

> ***Regardless of the amount of time,***
> ***Concerning objects there is no limit.***
> ***Your exertion for the body's sake***
> ***Is, like a bad physician's, useless.***

Even if one accepts that the body's nature is suffering, one may still have the doubt in one's mind that since one gains pleasure and satisfaction from external objects of desire, it is therefore acceptable to engage with such objects of desire. The above verse is presented in order to eliminate that doubt.

> Having enjoyed things fully during one's youth and then amassed wealth, it does not follow that one will later turn to religious practices when free from attachment to such things.

It is really true that we assume that if we have spent sufficient time in acquiring wealth and engaging in pleasures when we are young, then later on, when we get to a certain age, we will have more time and leisure to practise the Dharma. In that way, one may procrastinate about one's practice. This advice is given for those who have this type of mentality.

One should contemplate the advice given in the text. Does it apply to oneself or not? Is it true of oneself or not? When we contemplate in such a way and see that there is some truth there, then it is said that we are personalising the advice given in the teachings, and that we are making the teachings our own personal advice. In that way, it helps the mind to really start to overcome such wrong conceptions and become more encouraged about practising the Dharma more purely. A real sense of Dharma mind will develop from contemplating these points over and over again, and then personalising them.

The notion that one could enjoy the sensual pleasures now and practise Dharma later is a totally wrong conception. If there was a predictable order in life then during one's youth one could enjoy life and indulge in the sensual pleasures, during the middle part of one's life one would accumulate wealth, and towards the end of one's life, one would have time to practise Dharma. If that was the predictable normal sequence of life, then maybe we could be quite happy. We could follow that order, thinking that it's appropriate to enjoy oneself in the beginning and accumulate wealth and so forth in the middle, and then one will have time to practise the Dharma later on. But that is not the case, because, of course, there is no such predictable order.

> Regardless of the amount of time spent, be it aeons, one will not come to an end of the objects one craves by reaching their limit, for there is none.

The analogy given to explain this is:

> Though a bad physician who is incapable of healing gives treatment, his efforts are fruitless. Your exertion to satisfy the body with pleasure is similarly fruitless.

The analogy is very explicit: if a physician does not have the knowledge and skill, then no matter how long he or she may treat the patient, there will be no cure, because he does not have the right technique or skills. Likewise, no matter how much time one tries to enjoy pleasures, there is no end to that enjoyment. Therefore, spending one's time and effort in trying to satisfy the body with

pleasures will be fruitless, as there is no real satisfying end-result in trying to please one's physical body.

A further analogy is that a monkey wearing a leopard skin is a source of constant anxiety to other monkeys. If a leopard skin was to be put over one monkey, then all the other monkeys will always be in a state of anxiety, because they mistake that monkey for a leopard. It is not the case that the monkeys will be afraid for a certain time and then they will get over it. The meaning of the analogy is that no matter how long we may indulge ourselves in worldly pleasures, there is no real satisfaction to be derived from that.

1.1.2. An analogy [showing how] rather than becoming free from desire, it increases in proportion to use of the things one craves

Assertion: Those who are satisfied by sensual pleasure will not crave things.

Answer:

> ***Just as the craving for earth*** ***52***
> ***Does not stop in those that subsist on it,***
> ***Similarly, longing for sensual pleasure***
> ***Grows in people as they indulge.***

The doubt is that if one was to partake of sensual pleasures, then after a certain point one's needs would be satisfied. To overcome such a doubt, it is explained that there is no point where one could say that one was content, and had no need to indulge anymore. In fact indulgence just increases the desires even more.

The analogy presented in the verse is that an earthworm never stops craving the earth on which it subsists. According to some ways of looking at it, the earth can be seen as something very bland, and nothing very special – it is just the earth. However, earthworms, who dwell in the earth and consume substances from the it, crave and survive on the earth. Even though earth is something that has no real value in itself, an earthworm who depends on it begins to really crave and continuously partake of the substances in it. At no point does the earthworm feel satisfied and think that it needs nothing more from the earth. That is how an earthworm dwelling in the earth survives. The main point of the analogy is that even though the earth is seen to be one of the lowest dwelling places, for an earthworm it is their haven, which they see as being pleasurable; they partake of the essence of the substances that they derive from the earth, and they are never satisfied with that.

> Similarly human beings indulging in the things they crave are not only dissatisfied by them, their longing for sensual pleasure keeps growing.

This is very true for humans who only indulge in the sensual pleasures. There is no real point where we can say that we are satisfied. Rather than becoming satisfied, the desire for the objects of one's pleasures just increases in proportion. They are like deer tormented by thirst. This analogy particularly relates to deer on a very hot summer day. From a distance they see a mirage where they think there is water. Even though they move towards the source of that mirage with the intention of quenching their thirst, their thirst will never be quenched, because in fact there is no water there to begin with.

In his commentary Chandrakirti gave more examples such as sleep, and sexual desire, as well as looking in a mirror. These are said to be yet further examples of where there is no real satisfaction; the more you engage in them, the more you want to experience them again. It never seems that we have enough sleep, and we are never satisfied. In the evening we have to go to sleep again and if we sleep in, we would like to sleep in longer. Lust and desire are said to be similar. There is no real end to engaging in sexual desire; it is said that one will never be satisfied. There will be no point where one says, 'That is sufficient'. Likewise with looking into the mirror; one has to keep looking again and again. These other examples show how one's desires can never be satisfied.

1.2. Explaining extensively why it is inappropriate to consider the body clean

This is subdivided in two:

1.2.1. Refuting desire for women's bodies
1.2.2. Refuting desire while seeing the body as unclean

1.2.1. Refuting desire for women's bodies

This is subdivided into six:

1.2.1.1. Inappropriateness of desire towards a woman's beautiful appearance
1.2.1.2. Inappropriateness of desire based on the difficulty of finding [one with] a beautiful appearance
1.2.1.3. Refuting desire for a woman with good qualities
1.2.1.4. Inappropriateness of desire for a woman exceptionally attached to one
1.2.1.5. Advice to associate with women given in social treatises is erroneous
1.2.1.6. Other reasons for the inappropriateness of desire for women

1.2.1.1. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF DESIRE TOWARDS A WOMAN'S BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCE

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.1.1.1. Reasons for the inappropriateness of desire for a woman's beautiful appearance

1.2.1.1.2. Desire is not necessarily caused only by a beautiful appearance

1.2.1.1.1. Reasons for the inappropriateness of desire for a woman's beautiful appearance

Assertion or doubt: Even if pointing out the above mentioned disadvantages can stop one desiring ordinary women, it cannot stop desire for women whose appearance and behaviour are exceptionally beautiful.

Answer:

> ***Among all women there is not the least*** ***53***
> ***Difference in sexual intercourse.***
> ***When others, too, enjoy her appearance,***
> ***What use is this perfect woman to you?***

Many might find this to be true when they look into their own situation.

As these verses are presented, one should not misinterpret them by thinking, 'Oh, it seems that they are talking a lot about the faults of women'. In fact, as

mentioned earlier, the main fault that is being dealt with here in this chapter is the uncleanliness of the body. Although a woman's body is explicitly mentioned here, it also relates, of course, to a man's body. Both a man's and a woman's body are equal in the nature of being unclean, meaning that there are many faults in relation to the body. Nevertheless, even though, for example, a man's body is unclean, a woman is still attached to it. Likewise, even though a woman's body is unclean, men feel attached to it.

The main point being made here is that in both cases sexual desire or attachment towards the opposite sex can be overcome by seeing the uncleanliness of the body. The first three chapters are specifically to overcome the erroneous views that we have in relation to the five contaminated aggregates and specifically the physical aggregate. One erroneous view is that the physical aggregate – the body - is permanent. To overcome that erroneous view of permanence the first chapter explained how the body is in the nature of being impermanent. The next erroneous view one has in relation to the body is that it is a source of pleasure. To overcome that erroneous view, the second chapter deals mainly with how the body is not pleasurable, but is in the nature of dissatisfaction, or suffering. The third erroneous view to overcome is that of the body being pure and clean. That erroneous view is overcome by explaining the natural uncleanliness of the body; how the body is not as pure and clean as one may think it is. These erroneous views arise from specific delusions in the mind.

I wonder whether one of the reasons why a woman's body is explicitly used here with reference to attachment is because male attachment is much stronger. So in order to deal with male attachment more directly, a woman's body is specifically mentioned. I wonder if it is the case that males have more sudden spurts of attachment, which seem to be stronger, and to arise quickly and immediately, whereas a woman may not have that immediate sexual desire arising, but then it may be a case that when it does arise, it may be slower to subside. *[Geshe-la laughs]* I'm not sure if that is the case or not. *[laughter]* Those of you who have experience may know whether this is true or not. That is just my guess, as I don't have much experience! *[laughter]*

In normal circumstances a man may pretend he doesn't have much attachment. He might think that with normal women it easy not to feel too attached. But then the doubt may arise, 'When a very, very beautiful woman really appears in front of me, then I may not be able to overcome my attachment; maybe it's not possible?' What is being pointed out here is that it is possible to overcome these sexual desires.

Chandrakirti actually uses a specific example of someone having a really excessive attachment towards a beautiful woman, to the point where it is like putting butter on a hot plate - it just completely melts. With such attachment one's heart completely merges into the object that one sees, like butter melting, and you feel one with that object. One's inner mind is completely immersed in the object of one's desire. In that sort of circumstance, where one sees the object as extremely beautiful, appealing and attractive in every way, then it may seem to be almost impossible to distance yourself from that object, in one's thoughts and every other way. What Chandrakirti says is that even in cases like that, it is still possible to overcome attachment. The objection that is raised to which this verse serves as an answer is:

> Even if pointing out the above mentioned disadvantages can stop one desiring ordinary women, it cannot stop desire for women whose appearance and behaviour are exceptionally beautiful.

The verse answers that objection, saying that even though the woman appears to be very beautiful and the behaviour very appealing, it is still possible to overcome that lust for the woman's body.

As the commentary mentions:

> What use is this perfect woman with her beautiful appearance and behaviour to you who lust for a woman's body. It is inappropriate to feel particularly attracted to her, since the unclean part of all women stinks and constantly drips of its own accord. It is a sewer for the body's filth, and like a lavatory readily receives the filth emptied into it by many people.

Again, this applies to both male and female bodies, even though the body itself isn't the object of attachment. When we investigate and analyse what the body is made up of, and particularly what goes in and comes out of the body, we can see that it is actually not really of a clean nature. It is very true that, as the commentary mentions, the body is like a lavatory, because no matter how delicious food may seem, taste and smell, no matter how beautiful it looks, as soon as it has been chewed in your mouth and goes down into your belly, then it starts to ferment, and from then on it becomes an unpleasant substance. It turns into excrement, which is true in both male and female bodies. What comes out is definitely very unpleasant; it doesn't have a pleasant colour, and it doesn't smell nice. In a way, our bodies are a mechanism that is like a walking lavatory. What comes out is definitely something that we do not appreciate. How could a body that produces such an unclean substance be clean itself?

> Except to erroneous perception, there is not the least difference of good or bad regarding the sensation of intercourse with this cesspit-like dark filth. Since a woman's appearance may also be enjoyed by other men and even dogs, crows and so forth, it is unreasonable to feel particularly attracted by beauty.

In relation to the earlier assertion that one cannot overcome attachment to a body with an exceptionally beautiful appearance: in reality no matter how beautiful a body may appear, the nature of the body is no different from any other body, which is that it is unclean. Therefore being attached to such a body is like being completely obsessed with a filthy substance. It is just erroneous perceptions that make one believe that it is beautiful or attractive and so forth, which generates

attachment. The analogy that is given relates to a particular incident where:

> An unattractive woman's husband told her she was ugly-looking. She replied that ugly or good-looking, when it came to sexual intercourse there was no difference.

There are also further analogies that are found in Chandrakirti's commentary: the wife puts peas in different bowls and presents them to the husband. When the husband looks in astonishment, saying, 'Why do you have the same sort of food in different bowls?', the woman replies, 'Well there is no difference is there?'. Similarly, intercourse with any woman is the same. No matter how they may appear, they are all the same.

1.2.1.1.2. Desire is not necessarily caused only by a beautiful appearance

Doubt: For what reason does it follow that an unintelligent and misguided person like you will only be attracted to someone beautiful?

Answer:

> ***Whoever sees her as appealing*** ***54***
> ***Thinks himself satisfied with her.***
> ***Since even dogs and the like share this,***
> ***Why, fool, are you attracted?***

The verse says that desires will also arise for ugly women. In answer to the objection or doubt that one would be attracted only to a beautiful or women, the verse indicates that actually that is not the case, because whatever object that one is attracted to will be an object of one's desire. Therefore:

> Just as grandma appeals to grandpa, any man who finds a woman attractive feels satisfied with her. Even dogs, crows and the like share this desire for their own mates.

So no matter how unattractive an object may seem to us, there will be others who will be attracted to that object. For example, a male donkey will be attracted a she-donkey and vice versa; it will be the same with dogs too. It is the same in each category, whether animal or human. There will be a desire for an object that one finds attractive, regardless of whether or not the object can be considered as being beautiful in general.

There is also the analogy that is presented in the commentary. This is a story about how two particular evil spirits were prejudiced about the attractiveness of their wives. They were arguing about whose wife was more attractive, so they approached a monk and asked him to be the judge. In answer to their question the monk just said, 'The one you find most attractive is the best looking'. He didn't say that one was better than the other, but he just said that the one that you find most attractive to you is the best looking.

1.2.1.2. Inappropriateness of desire based on the difficulty of finding [one with] a beautiful appearance

Assertion: A captivating woman is hard to find and since finding one is remarkable, it is reasonable to desire her.

This doubt may arise when one feels that one has come into contact with a very beautiful woman, which is very difficult to find, as it is so rare, it seems appropriate to have a strong attachment towards her.

Answer:

> ***This woman, every part of whom is*** ***55***
> ***Lovely to you, was common to all before.***
> ***Finding her is not as***
> ***Astonishing as it is for you.***

This verse particularly relates to the object of desire being extremely attractive. In such a case one may not only feel that such a beautiful and attractive woman is rare and hard to find, but others may encourage and influence you to think in that way. They may even say that you are extremely lucky to have such a beautiful woman, and she should be your partner. One may then feel astonished, thinking, 'How could I have met with such a beautiful object? It is such a rare opportunity, and such a rare thing'. In that way the desire towards the object increases rather than decreasing.

The answer that the verse presents is that is not so.

> When this woman, every part of whom seems lovely to you, was common to all before she met you, how can finding what is common to all astonish you? It is absurd.

As the commentary explains, there is no such thing as a woman or a man that particularly and exceptionally belongs only to you. It would be uncommon if it specifically belonged only to you. In this case, there is no such man or woman who can be said to be uncommon, someone to whom no one can have access to or befriend. There are no such objects like that. Therefore it is just an absurdity to think that only you have a very beautiful, exceptionally attractive woman belonging to you. There is nothing astonishing about that, just as there is nothing remarkable about being in contact with something that is common.

The analogy that is given in the commentary is that, 'It is like King Udayana's amazement at his discovery of a woman who was common property'. Apparently King Udayana had come into contact with a woman with whom he was astonished and amazed, thinking that he had found something remarkable and very uncommon. But in fact, the woman was already common property, to parents and friends and others and so forth. Even though the king thought he had found something remarkably uncommon, that was not the case. Similarly, in your case, your view of attractive objects would be the same. That is what is being indicated.

1.2.1.3. Refuting desire for a woman with good qualities

We will cover this heading in the next session.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 August 2006

As usual, we can sit in a proper posture and set our motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

It is very useful to initially train our mind in setting a proper motivation. If you try to take some time in your practice to set your motivation, then it becomes the basis for the success and fruitfulness of your practice. The bodhicitta motivation is based on developing love and compassion, which is focussed particularly on sentient beings who are suffering. The wish to free beings from all suffering is what we call compassion, and the wish for them to have happiness is what we call love. Generating this motivation is the real basis for developing the bodhicitta attitude, which is accompanied with the wish to achieve enlightenment. When enlightenment is obtained, that becomes the ultimate means to benefit sentient beings. If we initially train our mind to develop this sort of motivation then our practice becomes a very sound one. It is definitely very beneficial to meditate on the motivation itself.

Of the two chapters that we have already covered, the first chapter dealt with the contaminated aggregates being in the nature of impermanence. The main point of that chapter is that the aggregates, in particular our physical aggregate, or body, are in the nature of being impermanent. On a subtle level our body is changing from moment to moment, and on a grosser level we go through the aging process and ultimately face death. In that way we contemplate the nature of our bodies as being impermanent.

In the second chapter the verses deal with how the contaminated aggregates in general, and the body in particular, are in the nature of suffering. As explained extensively in the chapter, we contemplate the body as being in the nature of suffering. From the very moment we are born we experience so many different types of sufferings in relation to our body, and throughout life, there are different levels of suffering that we experience. Thinking about these points and then contemplating on them in detail is important.

Now we come to the third chapter, the main point of which is how the body is naturally impure. We have an erroneous view of the body as being pure and clean, and with that mistaken view, attachment to one's own body and the bodies of others arises. That erroneous view is one of the main obstacles to developing renunciation, so therefore it is very important to see the real nature of the body as being impure.

1.2.1.2 The inappropriateness of desire based on the difficulty of finding a woman with a beautiful appearance

This particularly relates to the misconception or doubt in one's mind where one thinks, 'Oh, but if it is a very beautiful woman then it would be appropriate to be attached to her'. This heading was covered earlier.

1.2.1.3. Refuting desire for a woman with good qualities

The next misconception that may arise within ordinary beings is that even though it may be inappropriate to be attracted to the mere appearance of a beautiful woman, if they had very good qualities then that would be a good reason for a man to be attached to a woman, or for a woman to be attached to a man.

This heading is divided into two:

1.2.1.3.1. Inappropriateness of desire for a woman with good qualities

1.2.1.3.2. Neither desire as a consequence only of good qualities nor the converse necessarily pertains

1.2.1.3.1. Inappropriateness of desire for a woman with good qualities

Doubt or assertion: Although desire for a woman in general is inappropriate, it is reasonable to be attracted to a woman with good qualities, good behaviour and so forth.

Answer:

If those with good qualities seem attractive 56
And their opposite the reverse
Which is true, former or latter?
For neither alone persists.

It is true that these good qualities do exist in beings. If we are talking about women, then there are definitely women who are really kind natured, and who are of what we call very good conduct.

In relation to the doubt raised above, the verse explains that while those with good qualities seem attractive and a cause for desire, the opposite, those with faults, seems to be the reverse, and is a cause for aversion. This indicates that if one gives a reason of good qualities and so forth as a cause to be attached to a woman, then the reverse would also be true, i.e. that which is unattractive would be a cause for aversion.

If that is your line of reasoning then, since it is the case that even in the one object there are times when you see qualities and times when you see faults, it would be completely absurd to have attraction and aversion to the same object. Therefore one cannot assert that there is an entirely, absolutely attractive object that always has good qualities, or the opposite, which is that an unattractive object always has faults.

Within the one object one sees qualities that appear attractive, to which one develops attachment, and that very same object could later appear to have faults which leads to aversion. Therefore which instance should one trust, the one with qualities or the one with faults? In reality neither are trustworthy. When you see

attractiveness, attachment develops and due to that, one exaggerates the qualities, while due to aversion one exaggerates the faults of an object. Thus, neither of these instances should be relied upon; rather one must overcome both attachment and aversion towards the object.

The essence of the teachings can really be applied here. When one contemplates how both aversion and attachment arise, one sees that it is not only because of the external condition - how the objects appear - but because one has a faulty state of mind, an erroneous view, to begin with. This is how we can understand the three poisons on a deeper level.

Attachment and aversion arise as a result of the fundamental erroneous view that we have, which is ignorance. This shows that attachment and aversion do not arise merely in dependence on external conditions, but rather due to an underlying misperception that we have of the object. The faulty state of mind called *tsul-min yi-che* in Tibetan, which can be translated as belief in the improper, is a state of mind that perceives the object contrary to its actual nature. Thus it exaggerates the qualities or faults of the object, which leads to the development of attachment or aversion to the object.

One contemplates in this way how both attachment and aversion arise because of the ignorance that one has in one's mind, and then one can understand further how that ignorance is developed. That understanding can enhance one's understanding of the importance of developing what is called the right view, or the view of emptiness. Without overcoming ignorance, it will not be possible for one to overcome attachment and aversion. Therefore the view of emptiness or selflessness becomes vital, as it is the direct opponent for overcoming ignorance.

Furthermore, as one understands the functioning of one's mind, how one feels attached to objects that seem to have special qualities, and how one develops aversion to objects that seem to have innate faults, that should help us to understand our relationship with others. If one can see how one's faulty state of mind exaggerates the qualities or faults of one's partner, then one will not go to the extremes of being either excessively attached, or developing hatred, because one understands it is all in relation to one's own attitude.

This can also help to further develop one's patience in a relationship. If the other is excessively attached, or develops aversion to oneself, then one has to practise patience in order to sustain the relationship. It is also important to understand how real compassion and love works. We can see that what we call love in a worldly sense is really very much related to how we perceive the object. If the object seems attractive then one has a sense of love and compassion; one wishes for the object to be happy and one wishes for them not to experience any suffering, but only for as long as they seem to satisfy us. As soon as the object disagrees with us then one's love is replaced with anger.

We can see here how our worldly sense of love and compassion is actually very superficial. That is because the main fault in a worldly sense of love and compassion is that it uses oneself as a reason for developing love and compassion. 'For a long as they are good to me then I love them; if they are not good to me, then I don't love them anymore'. Whereas with true unconditional love and compassion the reason would be others, 'Because the other wants happiness and does not want suffering, I have to have love and compassion for them'. When you use the other as a reason to develop love and compassion then that is a true sense of love and compassion. When it is only in reference to one's own needs then it is superficial. It is important to contemplate these points.

When one says one has love and feels compassion for others it is really important to investigate one's mind. Where do those feelings arise from? If it is from some ordinary, worldly point of view then one should see that it is actually arising from a self-cherishing, self-grasping mind: 'Because they seem to be agreeable to me, then I love them and have compassion for them'. If one really looks into one's love and compassion and sees that it is arising from a self-cherishing mind, then it is not yet true unconditional love.

If one does not investigate with an unbiased mind where the attitude of love comes from, then one fails to understand the so-called love that one feels for the other is actually coming from the self-cherishing mind. That is where love and attachment become mixed up. What one thinks of as love is actually attachment. Whereas the real love that was mentioned earlier is based not merely on how the other appears to you, and relates to your satisfaction and feelings, but it is based on using the other as a reason for love. If one starts to feel a concern for others, wishing them to be happy and free from suffering, because the other is suffering, or because the other needs happiness, then that is when love and compassion becomes true unconditional love and compassion. It is definitely the case that most worldly love actually arises from what is called a self-cherishing mind, so what we call worldly love is in fact attachment. In worldly love you do have a sense of caring for the other, and you do wish them to be happy and free from suffering, but if it is merely based on reasons in relation to just oneself, then it is not sustainable. This is the main point.

There is also a difference in the degree of what we call love, attachment and aversion. When we are attached to someone there is some sort of real love that is mixed with the attachment, and because there is some sense of love there, one can benefit others. Even with attachment there is a sense of caring and you can actually help others to a certain extent. However, because aversion is an angry state of mind, it is entirely based on a harmful intention. In the moments when one feels aversion to another, there is no benefit that one can give, because aversion is based on an intention of wishing harm upon the other. There can be no benefit with anger or aversion within one's mind, whereas with attachment one can benefit others to a certain point.

Furthermore, as Dharmakirti mentions in his text, because attachment is an erroneous state of mind it exaggerates the qualities to the point where one does not see faults even if they exist. The qualities are exaggerated to the point where they completely overpower the faults, so therefore the object appears entirely attractive and favourable to oneself.

With an exaggerated view of the qualities of the object one develops excessive attachment, but as soon as one starts to see the faults of the object then one immediately feels disturbed and thus develops aversion. The analogy that is given in the commentary is that it is like the joy one feels while enjoying a good meal, and the unhappiness one feels when going to the lavatory. This is very true. You know that when a delicious meal is presented to us we are really happy and enjoy it, but once we go to the toilet and see what comes out it is not so pleasant. However the natural consequence of eating delicious food is to produce what we have to go the toilet for.

Relating that to the very attractive, very beautiful, entirely pleasant object which we saw earlier, we start to feel uncomfortable and unhappy as soon as we begin to see some faults. If the other disagrees with us, then we start to feel aversion to the object. This is how attachment and aversion pervade our mind.

1.2.1.3.2. Neither desire as a consequence only of good qualities nor the converse necessarily pertains

Doubt or assertion: It is only good qualities that are a cause for attachment.

> It does not follow that only a woman with good qualities, because she conforms to one's ideas, is a cause for desire, for one sees that a fool's desire arises not only toward those with good qualities but also toward those with faults.

Answer:

> *A fool's desire does not arise* *57*
> *Only for those with good qualities.*
> *How can reason prevent*
> *Those involved in it without reason?*

If that were the case then attachment would arise only to those with good qualities, but a fool is attached to any woman they are attracted to, regardless of whether they have good qualities or not.

The meaning of the last two lines of the verse is:

> How can the desire of those involved in it without good qualities as reason be prevented by reason of the absence of such good qualities.

The analogy that is given here is of a sexually abnormal Brahmin woman who cried because she did not experience the pleasure other women enjoy. There is a long story behind this but we won't go through that. The conclusion or moral of the story is that if you see faults in an object then it is easy to overcome attachment to that object, but if you only see good qualities in an object then it is extremely difficult, or it seems to be impossible, to overcome attachment to that object.

What is being emphasised here is that we should understand that regardless of whether others have qualities or faults one should maintain one's good feeling towards them, especially if they are friends. One should accept the fact that there will be both qualities and faults in the object. Trying to find a friend or partner who only has good qualities is quite impossible in samsara. Therefore from the very start we must accept the fact that whoever we befriend will possess both qualities and faults, and then rejoice in their good qualities and try to develop patience with the faults. Then we can maintain a good relationship. It's quite strange how we want to choose friends who never get angry; while we are allowed to get angry ourselves, our friends are not allowed to. How absurd is that?

1.2.1.4. THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF DESIRE FOR A WOMAN EXCEPTIONALLY ATTACHED TO ONE

Assertion or doubt: Women commit suicide when their husbands die, but men are not like that. Therefore it is reasonable to form a relationship with a woman who desires one.

Answer: A woman does not desire one alone.

> *As long as she knows no other* *58*
> *She will remain with you*
> *As with disease, women should always be*
> *Kept from opportunity.*

The meaning of the verse is that if she has not experienced the taste of other men she will remain with you and be loving, but once she experiences the taste of others she may reject you.

Now of course this relates to both men and women. It is very true that for as long as both seem to satisfy the each other, they are loving towards each other, and the relationship lasts. However as soon as either the man or the woman starts to wish for further experience and begins to develop a relationship with someone else, then the relationship is harmed, and the partners become more distant.

If one has a chronic disease then one always has to be on guard and careful with one's diet and medication and so forth. Similarly one always has to be on one's guard in one's relationship, because at any moment one's partner could go off with someone else. When they start to come home a bit late, then one starts wondering where they have gone. One is on the lookout, trying to listen from others where they could have been, and one starts to check on who they are with. Then when they get home, there will be many questions asked of them.

The next session will be discussion night. I have heard that you are doing your homework very well. That is very good. Have a good discussion as well.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

DISCUSSION

BLOCK: **4**
WEEK: **5**
8TH AUGUST 06

---

1. Give some examples of the feeling of satisfaction from the alleviation of pain. How can this satisfaction be considered to be in the nature of suffering? (3)

2. It is asserted that there is real suffering but no real pleasure. Explain the meaning of 'real' and 'nominal' pain and pleasure. (2)

3. Link each part of the analogy that explains how 'Common beings do not have pleasure that can override pain.' (10 x 0.5)

The person who is being chased by the wild elephant_____
The elephant_____
The well_____
Stopping half way down the well_____
The couch-grass root_____
Holding onto the grass_____
The snake_____
The pythons_____
The rat gnawing at the root of the grass_____
Tasting the honey which drips from above_____

4. What is the 'suffering of change'? Give an example [2]

5. Summarize the main content of the first three chapters. [3]

6. What advice is there for us that have the mentality of 'having enjoyed things fully during one's youth and then amassed wealth, later I will turn to religious practices when free from attachment to such things? [2]

7. 'Those who are satisfied by sensual pleasure will not crave things.' How does Geshe la address this assertion? [3]

8. In general, what benefits are there to think of an attractive man or woman's body as like a walking lavatory cesspit-like filth? [3]

9. What's the main difference between a worldly sense of love and compassion and a true sense of unconditional love and compassion? [1]

10. Describe how attachment arises? [2]

11. Although desire for a woman in general is inappropriate, it is reasonable to be attracted to a woman with good qualities, good behaviour and so forth. How is this doubt answered in the commentary? [3]

Tara Institute Study Group 2006 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'

EXAM

NAME:

BLOCK: 4
WEEK: 6
15TH AUG 06

MARK: /29

1. Give some examples of the feeling of satisfaction from the alleviation of pain. How can this satisfaction be considered to be in the nature of suffering? (3)

2. It is asserted that there is real suffering but no real pleasure. Explain the meaning of 'real' and 'nominal' pain and pleasure. (2)

3. Link each part of the analogy that explains how 'Common beings do not have pleasure that can override pain.' (10 x 0.5)

The person who is being chased by the wild elephant_____

The elephant_____

The well_____

Stopping half way down the well_____

The couch-grass root_____

Holding onto the grass_____

The snake_____

The pythons_____

The rat gnawing at the root of the grass_____

Tasting the honey which drips from above_____

4. What is the 'suffering of change'? Give an example [2]

5. Summarize the main content of the first three chapters. [3]

6. What advice is there for us that have the mentality of 'having enjoyed things fully during one's youth and then amassed wealth, later I will turn to religious practices when free from attachment to such things? [2]

7. 'Those who are satisfied by sensual pleasure will not crave things.' How does Geshe la address this assertion? [3]

8. In general, what benefits are there to think of an attractive man or woman's body as like a walking lavatory cesspit-like filth? [3]

9. What's the main difference between a worldly sense of love and compassion and a true sense of unconditional love and compassion? [1]

10. Describe how attachment arises? [2]

11. Although desire for a woman in general is inappropriate, it is reasonable to be attracted to a woman with good qualities, good behaviour and so forth. How is this doubt answered in the commentary? [3]

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 August 2006

As usual we shall sit in a comfortable upright position in a relaxed manner, and develop a motivation for receiving the teachings, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and then put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1.5. ADVICE TO ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN GIVEN IN SOCIAL TREATISES IS ERRONEOUS

Assertion or doubt:

> Texts on social conventions recommend indulgence in sensual pleasures during youth; thus it is acceptable.

Answer:

> It is inappropriate to act according to conventions which encourage one and others to act improperly.

In old age one dislikes [59]
What one did during youth.
Why would the liberated not
Be extremely saddened by it?

The heading refers to the social treatises that are the works used in social contexts about the benefits of engaging in a sexual relationship and the qualities of women and so forth. These treatises encourage the need for relationships and so forth. So, is it appropriate to follow those social treatises that suggest having sexual relationships and so forth? The answer, which this verse relates to, is that it is not appropriate.

Although these conventions encourage people to act improperly it is inappropriate to follow that advice. As the commentary says:

> If the passionate, in their old age, despite not having achieved freedom from desire, dislike the mere memory of the bad things they did during their youth why would liberated Foe Destroyers not be extremely saddened...

Generally speaking, when some people reach old age they are actually saddened when they think about their youth and the things they did then, especially the various sexual relationships that they had during their youth. This is the case even for those who have not entirely abandoned or overcome desire. The mere memories of their engagement in social relationships in their youth bring sadness and regret to their mind. When they think about it, that brings about suffering.

> ... why would liberated Foe Destroyers not be extremely saddened by and deprecate lascivious behaviour? Since they see it as utterly reprehensible and a source of aversion, those interested in their own good should give it up.

As the commentary suggests, the explanation of the verse is that the liberated, meaning the Foe Destroyers, will definitely then see it as being something to be avoided.

The main point being made here is that if attachment and desire, specifically sexual desire, were to be something to be adopted because they were useful, then having engaged in excessive sexual relationships or desire in one's youth would bring about deep satisfaction and be a source of joy and pride. But as mentioned here in the commentary, the main point being made in the root text is that this is not the case. Rather it is the reverse: when in old age people think about their earlier engagements and sexual behaviour, then it brings sadness to the mind. This is a natural occurrence even for those who have not purposely given up or abandoned desire. So that is an obvious reason why desire is not something to be cultivated and nurtured, but rather is something to be abandoned. The liberated or the Foe Destroyers, have abandoned desire and continuously see it as being something to be completely abandoned for one's ultimate benefit.

The practical application of this advice in a personal sense, would be that even though it may be initially difficult to completely abandon and give up sexual desire, it is nevertheless something that one should try to minimise and try to slowly overcome by not giving it full attention. By seeing the disadvantages of desire, slowly work on reducing the lustful mind and intentions in your mind. Then in old age, as a result of having put in some earlier effort into seeing the faults and minimising one's engagement in sexual desire and so forth, there will be joy in one's mind. Even a mere attempt at trying to overcome desire will bring joy to one's mind.

1.2.1.6. OTHER REASONS FOR THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF DESIRE FOR WOMEN

This is sub-divided into five categories:

1.2.1.6.1. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from intercourse with women as the best pleasure in the Desire Realm

1.2.1.6.2. Unfeasibility of having exclusive control over a woman because of one's desire for her

1.2.1.6.3. Refuting that desire is pleasurable (This is not actually covered as a heading in Gyel-tsap's commentary)

1.2.1.6.4. Unfeasibility of women alone as the cause of pleasure during intercourse with them

1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them

1.2.1.6.1. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from intercourse with women as the best pleasure in the Desire Realm

Doubt or assertion:

> Since pleasure in relation to women is the best pleasure in the Desire Realm, one should keep a woman for that purpose.

Answer: That is not correct.

Those without desire have no pleasure, [60]
Nor do those not foolish have it.
How can there be pleasure for one
Whose mind constantly strays?

The commentary's explanation of the verse is:

> How can the pleasure of one who desires a woman and whose mind constantly strays from reality be the best? It is not the best.

What the text is asking here is how can the mind that does not see reality, that does not see things as they are, consider the pleasure gained from sexual pleasure as being the best pleasure? How can that be so, when the mind itself is not clear? The reason why it is not the best pleasure in samsara is that:

> Those without desire for women do not have pleasure focusing on them. Moreover those who are sensible do not have desire.

What is being indicated here is that the pleasure that is experienced in relation to women is only for those who relate to women in that way. But in reality it is not a real source of pleasure. What is being indicated here specifically is the cause-and-effect relationship between desire or attachment to a woman, and the pleasure that is derived from that. The seeming pleasure that one experiences is only in relation to the attachment or desire that one has for the woman. Those who do not have the cause of attachment to a woman do not experience this seeming pleasure. Therefore the root text is basically showing the cause-and-effect relationship between attachment and the pleasure derived from that. The attachment itself arises only in those who are infatuated with desire - those who do not have sensible minds. Whereas for those who have sensible minds, attachment either does not arise, or they do not follow their attachment.

This analogy is given in the commentary:

> A young man desired a king's queen and although he experienced suffering for a long time on her account, he was not able to accomplish what he wanted.

The analogy refers to an actual incident where a simple person became very attached to a queen and tried many ways to obtain her attention, such as trying to be taken on as a servant. To cut what is actually quite a long story short, despite all the attempts that he made he was not able to achieve what he wanted, which was to be with the queen. In fact while pursuing these attempts he experienced a lot of difficulty and a lot of suffering, and in the end what he experienced was great disappointment. What this story shows is that the result of attachment is actually much greater suffering than real pleasure.

If one experiences pleasure it is only momentary and fleeting. In fact the main outcome of being attached to external objects and seeing them as a source of satisfaction (as was the case with the simpleton and the queen) is in the end only suffering. So we can see that when we focus on external objects, become attached to them, and try to pursue and obtain them, it actually just brings more misery and suffering. That is something which we can also relate to in many different situations.

The reality of the situation is contrary to what we assume. If obsessive attachment to external objects, whether they be actual objects or just thoughts and ideas, was a source of joy and real pleasure, then we ordinary beings, rather than the Foe Destroyers or the Arhats, would be the ones who experience the most pleasure. But in fact, it is the Arhats, who have completely overcome and abandoned the attachment to external objects, who are the ones experiencing the most joy, true pleasure and real happiness.

1.2.1.6.2. Unfeasibility of having exclusive control over a woman because of one's desire for her

As the heading suggests the main point being made here refers to the erroneous view that we have of possessing an object of desire. For example, if a man has an obsessive desire for his spouse then he has a mind of complete control over her, 'She is mine and no-one else's but mine'. He has a mind set of completely owning his spouse. This is also the case for women with an obsessive desire for their husband.

Assertion or doubt:

> Even if you make a woman your own, why keep her possessively out of jealousy toward other men with the thought that she is yours and no one else's? It is unreasonable to do so.

> *You cannot have intercourse constantly* *[61]*
> *With a woman to match your attentiveness to her.*
> *Why keep her possessively with the thought,*
> *"She is mine and no one else's."*

This is something which happens very often in normal relationships and daily life. It is definitely appropriate to think about this, to consider how the teachings deal with it, and how to combat these situations.

As the commentary reads:

> You lustful person, you are not capable of constant sexual intercourse with a woman to match your attentiveness toward her in the hope of enjoyment.

This is quite clearly the explanation of the verse.

The main point being made here is that the greater the possessive attitude towards one's spouse, the greater the degree of attachment. This leads to jealousy arising in one's mind when one's partner seems to have even a casual relationship with others. Even just talking with another brings a lot of jealousy, and that is because of one's obsessive, possessive feeling towards the object, 'Its mine and no one else's but mine'. Even though we may not use those words, that's how we think, 'The object of my desire belongs only to myself'. That possessive feeling arises from very strong grasping at the object.

The next analogy given in the text indicates that jealousy does not arise when others interact with something to which we are not attached. Rather jealousy arises only in relation to an object that one has obsessive attachment towards. It is actually absurd when you think about it that the very object that one is obsessed with is not, in reality, at least not in practical terms, something that one is using all the time anyway. Yet even when one does not use it all the time, a sense of jealousy arises when others use it.

The analogy which is related in the commentary is:

An old Brahmin whose digestion was weak found a lot of good food. Though he was unable to eat it, he did not give it to anyone else but took still more.

This is an absurd situation of someone who has a lot of food they cannot possibly digest themselves. He has digestion problems to begin with, and he couldn't possibly consume all the food. While he could have shared it with others, he did not do so out of obsessive attachment to the food. In fact, he still wants to take more. A further example that is given is about a king who has a lot of queens, and who can not possibly have a relationship with all of them, yet he has a sense of possessing them all and keeps them in his palace.

1.2.1.6.3. Refuting that desire is pleasurable

In the Desire Realm it is conventionally accepted that having women is a source of happiness. However in reality, that is not the case. Even though it is conventionally accepted, it is inappropriate.

If desire were pleasurable [62]
There would be no need for women.
Pleasure is not regarded as
Something to get rid of.

As the commentary explains:

If desire were pleasurable one wouldn't need women as a means to quell it, for pleasure is not regarded as something of which to rid oneself.

When we consider the facts this is very true. If desire or attachment itself was pleasure, then one wouldn't need to try to satisfy it or try to overcome it. In other words in the case of a man desiring a woman, he would not need to have a woman to fulfil his desire, because the desire alone is pleasurable. What is being indicated here is that attachment or desire in itself is not something that is pleasurable. In layman's terms it means that if desire itself was pleasurable, then a man wouldn't have to rely on a woman because he would just be satisfied by having desire for her. Just the desire for the woman would be fine, because that in itself would be pleasure.

The analogy which is given in the commentary is:

A hungry man entered a house at night and saw a pot of ash, which he mistook for flour...

I think that the flour in Tibetan would be *tsampa* which is an instant food.

…and another of water. [Out of delusion about the contents] he mixed them together and ate. When his hunger was gone he realized it was ash. Feeling disgusted, he threw the remainder away and left.

The analogy actually goes further to say that he becomes quite unwell, and sick from the ash. So the moral of the story is that while under the influence of a delusional mind, in this case being completely overwhelmed by hunger, the person failed to recognise ash as being ash, and thought it was something edible. Also the time and circumstances didn't help the situation; in the dark, he thought there was something edible. So having consumed it, he was sick. Actually this analogy really fits the situation of desire towards any object, and particularly the case of sexual desire, in that it is only out of delusion and the illusion of being a pleasurable object that one seems to experience some pleasure. But in reality what is left afterwards is an unpleasant feeling – more suffering. When we really contemplate the situation of sexual desire, we can see that it actually brings much more unpleasantness in the future as a result. Contemplating in this way should help us to minimise and eventually overcome sexual desire and indeed all desires.

1.2.1.6.4. Unfeasibility of women alone as the cause of pleasure during intercourse with them

Assertion or doubt: Pleasure occurs through intercourse with a woman.

Answer:

Even in intercourse with a woman [63]
Pleasure arises from other [factors].
What sensible person would say
It is caused just by his lover?

Who but a fool would say that his lover alone is the cause of pleasure during intercourse? The pleasure from intercourse is caused by other factors, namely by an incorrect mental approach.

The analogy which is given in the commentary is:

A simpleton's wife made him work and he enjoyed it.

What is being indicated with this analogy of a simpleton, is that only fools would think that all pleasure comes only from one's spouse. As the analogy indicates, the wife asked her husband to do a lot of errands for her, such as fetching wood, making a fire with it, then boiling water and then, 'You have to wash my body and serve me in various different ways'. In such a way the story describes the many errands and tasks the wife gave the man to do, which in reality were not pleasurable tasks. But as the man's mind was completely obsessed with his wife, he saw them as being pleasurable tasks, which he did willingly and without any hesitation, whereas normally he might not have considered them as being pleasant. His willingness was only because of his obsessiveness towards his wife. Only a fool would accept doing so many errands for a bossy and lazy wife. This also refers to a wife who serves a bossy and lazy husband.

Other commentaries indicate that the main point being made in relation to this verse is that the actual interaction with men and women – sexual desire that is experienced from sexual intercourse, for example - is not something that is in itself pleasure in its own right. There has to be attachment involved. Without attachment, the mere fact of having a sexual relationship would not be considered as a pleasure. Specific examples would be a celibate person, one who has taken vows to refrain from sexual activity, such as an ordained person who has taken vows because they are trying to overcome attachment. If they were forced to have a relationship with a woman (in the case of a man), it would not be experienced as pleasure. Rather it would be experienced as an unease in the mind; it would actually be considered as suffering. That is because the attachment is lacking. Without attachment, then it is not experienced as pleasure. Going back to the

earlier point: if the mere sexual contact with the other sex was in itself a pleasure, then anyone who experienced it would have to experience pleasure from that. However it is a fact that not everyone experiences it as pleasure.

1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them

Assertion:

> Sensuality does give rise to real pleasure, because the infatuated seek sensual gratification again and again.

Answer:

> They do not seek it because desire is pleasurable by nature
>
> *Blinded by desire they do not see* [64]
> *Sensuality's faults, like a leper scratching.*
> *Those free from desire see the infatuated*
> *As suffering like the leper.*
>
> Like a leper who, because it gives a little pleasure, keeps scratching without seeing the harm it causes, like bleeding and oozing...

The first part of the verse is very obvious with this particular analogy of a leper who has sores on his body, which can apparently be very itchy. When the leper tries to soothe the itch by scratching the sores, the scratching gives a temporary satisfaction, but the actual result of the scratching is unpleasant when blood and puss start to ooze out. Nevertheless, he keeps scratching again and again, and it is impossible for him to control it, because of the intense desire to scratch. The itch is so strong that the desire overpowers the knowledge of the consequences.

Similarly,

> ...those whose eye of intelligence is blinded by desire, do not see sensuality's faults.

People seem to keep engaging in sensual activity again and again. I don't know what sort of real pleasure is experienced, but somehow people seem to get into relationships again and again.

The analogy given to describe it further is:

> It is like gambling and drinking which cause one to waste one's property

This again is a very obvious problem in society: by engaging in gambling and drinking people may experience temporary pleasure, but they lose so much and this causes so much suffering afterwards. Yet they go on doing it. Engaging in drinking, for example, seems to really harm the physical body.

I think the particular point is that engaging in sexual desire again and again, is not beneficial for the health either. *[laughter]* It is explained in teachings that it is not beneficial for one's health, when one excessively engages in sexual intercourse. It is explained that by engaging in sexual intercourse, one loses one's seminal fluids, which actually is essence of strength in one's body.

1.2.2. Refuting desire while seeing the body as unclean

We can refer to this heading in our next class.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

29 August 2006

Sitting in an upright position we set our motivation for receiving the teachings, such as developing the state of mind where we think, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings in order to gain the means and methods to achieve enlightenment'.

Normally we talk a lot about the benefits of bodhicitta. We find that in almost every teaching the benefits of bodhicitta are explained in great detail. The significance of explaining bodhicitta in very great detail is so that we can put some of it into practical use, such as developing a bodhicitta motivation for whatever practice we do. Therefore, it is really beneficial to try to incorporate the bodhicitta attitude into our practice at the very outset, and in that way we can use it in a practical way that is of great significance and benefit to ourselves and others.

1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them (cont)

We covered this outline last week. The root verse explained that the person who is blinded by desire does not see the faults of sensuality. The verse indicated the analogy of lepers scratching their wounds: even though the scratching causes blood and pus to ooze out and the wounds become very sore, the lepers cannot control themselves and continuously scratch their bodies, which then causes more and more pain. Similarly, even when there is a lot of suffering that comes about as a result of desire, those infatuated by desire cannot stop their desire for objects.

As was explained with a further analogy last week, it is the same with gambling and drinking. With addiction to alcohol to the point where one's health deteriorates and one loses one's wealth and so forth, or with addiction to gambling to the point of losing one's possessions, still they blindly carry on and comfortably indulge in their addiction. These are further examples of desire.

1.2.2. Refuting desire while seeing the body as unclean

This heading shows that if one does not see the body as being unclean then many faults arise. There are six subdivisions:

1.2.2.1. Refuting that a woman's physical and verbal behaviour is pleasurable because with her one bears the gross insults that she inflicts

When we actually relate to this we find this is actually very true, in that it explicitly shows all the faults that arise from desire.

1.2.2.2. Refuting the existence of pleasure to women because of the jealousy felt over them towards other men

1.2.2.3. Inappropriateness of strong desire on realising that women's bodies are unclean

1.2.2.4. Refuting that the body is not objectionable on the grounds that it is without shortcomings

1.2.2.5. Refuting the idea that women's bodies are clean

1.2.2.6. Refuting other seeming reasons for considering the body clean

1.2.2.1. REFUTING THAT A WOMAN'S PHYSICAL AND VERBAL BEHAVIOUR ARE PLEASURABLE BECAUSE WHEN WITH HER ONE BEARS THE GROSS INSULTS THAT SHE INFLICTS

Assertion:

> Though sensual pleasure is unclean, bearing insults from a woman, like being spat on, and responding with flattering physical and verbal behaviour is pleasurable for those that [are under the influence of] desire.

Answer: That is incorrect.

> *During a famine the destitute,* 65
> *Tormented by hunger [bear] what occurs.*
> *This is how all the infatuated*
> *Behave when they are with women.*

To further illustrate the meaning, normally one would not bear such insults from anyone, but if under the influence of such strong desire for a woman one bears any kind of insult, even to the extent of physical pain. There are cases where being bound with chains, strapped up and beaten up is also experienced as pleasure. These sort of circumstances are nothing else but the desire that completely overwhelms the mind, to the extent that it perceives this as being pleasure. Normally, of course, it is not considered as pleasure at all, because it is actually pain, but in that moment it is perceived as pleasure. For someone who is infatuated by the desire, say for a woman, when she insults and uses disparaging words, then rather than becoming angry and upset with that, one tries to please them with nice words. To consider that sort of behaviour as being pleasurable is not correct.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> During a famine the destitute, tormented by hunger, bear what occurs, such as being insulted even a hundred times by merciless rich men. in the hope that he will give them a trifle. Since the behaviour of the infatuated when they are with a woman is like that, it cannot be pleasurable.

When someone is really destitute and at the mercy of others, gaining some meagre food just for bare survival may mean bearing insults and the like. There is no choice but to bear those insults. It is similar with those who are infatuated with desire, as in the case of a man for a woman: there are times when they do not wish to be insulted and so forth, but they have to bear the insults because of their desire for the object.

As the commentary says, those who willingly accept the insults and hardships from an object of desire do so only

because the lust in their mind influences them in that way. There is no other reason.

The analogy is:

> …like someone in prison who wanted to drink the liquid from cow dung.

Apparently when someone is in a destitute situation, such as being in prison, and neither fed well nor given drink, then in a state of complete weakness they may even be willing to drink liquefied cow dung, which would give them some sort of nourishment. Even though one would normally never consider drinking something like that, they are willing to do so in such a situation. The main point being made here is that this is inappropriate for anyone in their right mind. It is not feasible for anyone who can see the obvious uncleanliness of the body to be attached to it, and to indulge in that sort of desire for such an obviously unclean object.

As I mentioned earlier, and which is also explicitly mentioned towards the end of the chapter, although these examples explicitly refer to a woman's body it is exactly the same for women who are attached to a man's body; they should use the same analytical meditation procedure in exactly the same way.

1.2.2.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF PLEASURE TO WOMEN BECAUSE OF THE JEALOUSY FELT OVER THEM TOWARDS OTHER MEN

Assertion:

> There is real pleasure from women because those who are attached to the pleasure from women are seen to jealous of others.

Answer:

> This does not establish the existence of real pleasure in relation to women.
>
> *Through arrogance one may be* *66*
> *Attached even to one's privy,*
> *Anyone infatuated with*
> *A woman would be jealous of others.*

When we refer again to the earlier explanations of what is, and what is not, real pleasure the teachings are not denying that there is a seemingly pleasure that one experiences in relation to the objects of desire, in this case from sexual desire. What is being shown, however, is that in realty, there is no real pleasure, and for those who do not have attachment to the object, not even the fleeting pleasure is experienced. When this relates to the relationships between men and women, it is the same experience for both. The fact that there is no real pleasure from its own side can be seen with attachment, and particularly in the case where the attachment is exceedingly strong.

One seems to get some pleasure from the object, and that attachment is based on exaggerating the qualities of the object. There are instances where the exaggeration has to be really worked at. When you see a beautiful object you may not see it as being extremely beautiful in the beginning, but as you view the object and think about its qualities again and again, then the more one becomes familiar with the object and exaggerates its qualities, the stronger and stronger the attachment to that object becomes. Then one seems to get some pleasure whilst being in the company of that object.

If we just follow the influence of the desires in our mind, which is to exaggerate the qualities of the object, then there would be no way of dealing with attachment, because one is completely under the influence of the desirous mind that keeps exaggerating the qualities more and more. We need to recognise that the only way to deal with desire, to initially minimise it, and then to eventually overcome it, is to analyse it in the way the teachings describe. There is no other way to combat desire except in this way.

The actual meaning of the verse is that just because others are jealous of the desirable object, that does not serve as a sound reason to say that there is real pleasure to be derived from the object of desire.

As the commentary explains:

> A rich man who is arrogant because of his wealth may be possessive about his privy and forbid others to use it.

A toilet, especially in the Eastern context, is not considered to be a place to be proud of; it is not considered a clean place. However a rich person, who is proud of his wealth, may be very attached to his own toilet and be angry and jealous when others use it. In the Eastern context it is quite absurd to be very attached to such an unclean place such as a toilet. The main meaning from the analogy is that one could be attached to even lowly things such as a toilet, but that does not mean that just because one is attached to something it has to be very special, with a lot of qualities. One can be attached and jealously can arise even for such an unclean thing as a toilet. Although it is not specifically mentioned, this can also be the case for other things.

The main point is that a rich person, or anyone else, who is attached to the toilet, is attached not because it is a great object with qualities, but rather because of their miserliness and their attachment to objects.

The meaning is indicated in the next part of the commentary:

> Anyone who is infatuated with a particular woman is seen to be baselessly jealous towards other men.
>
> King Gambhirasikhara who was arrogant about his status would not allow a serving woman to drink water.

Out of his miserliness he even made his maids drink water from another source than his.

1.2.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF STRONG DESIRE ON REALISING THAT WOMEN'S BODIES ARE UNCLEAN

Assertion: Although women's bodies are unclean desire is reasonable because they are a source of pleasure. As mentioned before this applies equally to women's and men's bodies.

Answer: When one realises that they are unclean desire is inappropriate.

It is reasonable for confusion *67*
And anger about unclean to occur;
It is not at all reasonable
For desire to occur.

The doubt that even though it is accepted that by nature bodies are unclean, desire is reasonable, because bodies are a source of pleasure seems to be a very strong doubt.

As the commentary explains:

> When one steps in excrement without noticing it, it is feasible that confusion could occur and that the offensive smell could give rise to anger. However it is not at all reasonable for incongruous desire to occur.

This is a very explicit example of stepping in some excrement because one did not seen it in the first place, maybe because it was dark or just because one did not see it. Not seeing the excrement in the first place is the analogy of the ignorance in one's mind when one engages with the object of desire. The ignorance blinds one from the true nature of the object of desire, seeing it as being pleasurable. Stepping in excrement without having seen it means that out of ignorance one stepped on it, and then when the foul smell starts to rise that generates anger in one's mind. Feeling happy and pleasurable and attached to that experience is just totally unreasonable. That is the analogy that is being explained.

Similarly when attached to the physical body of the opposite sex (here it specifically mentions a man being attached to a woman) then out of ignorance one may initially feel desire for that object, and then become upset when it does not meet with one's actual satisfaction and provide pleasure. Blindly maintaining one's desire is not feasible at all, and the analogy is that it is like stepping in excrement at night.

1.2.2.4. REFUTING THAT THE BODY IS NOT OBJECTIONABLE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS WITHOUT SHORTCOMINGS

Assertion:

> Though the body is unclean it is not considered to be objectionable because conventionally it is without shortcomings. In some areas there is a common saying that 'Brahmins are purer than others and women are purest of all'.

Answer: That this is not correct.

If, accepted to some people, *68*
A pot of filth is objectionable,
Why would one not think objectionable
That from which the filth comes?

Of course this is in a setting where the caste system was at its strongest. Within the caste system in India Brahmins are said to be the highest caste, and they are considered to be the pure caste. Conventionally there are sayings where Brahmins are purer than others meaning other castes, but women are the purest of all, meaning that women are very pure. So there is this very high regard in the conventional sense, which relates of course to the physical body. That is not correct.

The meaning of the verse is:

> When all except people not in their right mind find a pot full of filth, such as vomit, objectionable, why would anyone sensible not consider the body from which this filth comes objectionable?

Again the analogy is very explicit in portraying the main meaning of this teaching, which is that the filth coming out of the body, such as vomit or excrement, is considered to be very dirty, and even the very containers of that filth are considered to be dirty. So if the very pot holding filth such as excrement or vomit is also dirty, then why wouldn't any sensible person consider the very source of the filth, our bodies, as being dirty as well. When we think about it, it is exactly the case that our bodies are filth producers; they are the mechanism that constantly produce filth. Because excrement is constantly produced we have to constantly go to the toilet, and many other kinds of dirty substances are constantly produced by this body. Therefore when we look at it realistically, we can see that if we can consider what comes out of it as dirty, then why is the source itself, the body, not dirty as well?

A further analogy given in the commentary is of a

> lustful man who saw attractive qualities in a beautiful woman, but found fault with her when he saw her carrying a pot full of vomit.

A rich man had a beautiful maid but when others saw her carrying a pot of vomit, they thought she was not clean, and no longer regarded her as beautiful.

When we think about these analogies and the meanings that are derived from the teachings we can see how explicit and meaningful they are, and how much weight they carry.

1.2.2.5. REFUTING THE IDEA THAT WOMEN'S BODIES ARE CLEAN

Assertion or doubt: Women's bodies are clean because people regard them as clean.

Answer: It is absurd that a women's body is by nature clean.

Clean things are looked upon *69*
As most worthless of all.
What intelligent person
Would say that it is clean?

The commentary explains that:

> Clean things like flowers, perfume, ornaments and so forth are looked upon as most worthless of all by virtue of having being in contact with a woman's body…

Here again one has to understand that as with all the other verses the meaning here is in relation to any male or female contaminated body. When we look into the analogy further, the meaning is that what is initially considered to be nice and clean, turns into something filthy as a result of coming into contact with this contaminated body, whether it be male or female.

Let us look first of all at delicious, nice-smelling food which is consumed: soon after coming into contact with this body it is turned into excrement, something which is named nicely, but which is actually filthy. Likewise with other substances such as perfume, or as mentioned here, flowers and so forth. Initially they are very beautiful for a

certain period of time if they are left on their own, but having come into contact with this body perfume begins to mix with sweat and starts to smell quite foul. Therefore anything that comes into contact with this body turns into something being filthy, and the reason for that is because the body itself is quite contaminated and not clean to begin with.

The further analogy given in the commentary is:

> …just as the sweet water of the Ganges becomes saline on meeting the ocean.

The analogy of the Ganges River that is given here is that at its source the Ganges is clean, fresh, sweet water, but as it flows down into plains and meets with the saline ocean the Ganges water becomes saline, because of coming into contact with the saline sea water. Likewise in relation to the physical body, whatever comes into contact with the contaminated body also becomes filthy, because the nature of the body is unclean.

In this way the teaching provides many different ways and angles for contemplating the unclean nature of the body.

1.2.2.6. REFUTING OTHER SEEMING REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE BODY CLEAN

This is subdivided into three further subdivisions:

1.2.2.6.1. Refuting the idea of the body as clean because others are seen to be proud of it

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting that the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

1.2.2.6.3. Refuting that women's body need not be given up on the grounds that sages are seen to enjoy them

1.2.2.6.1. Refuting the idea of the body as clean because others are seen to be proud of it

Assertion or doubt:

> The body is clean because one sees people taking pride in it.

Answer:

> *Whoever has lived in a privy* *70*
> *And without it would not have survived,*
> *In such a dung worm, arrogance*
> *Arises through stupidity.*

As the commentary explains:

> Whatever is born from the womb has lived in the mother's womb between the stomach and the intestines, which is like living inside a privy. Like a dung worm it has been nurtured by excremental juices without which you would have not survived.

What is being described here as excremental juices refers to the amniotic fluid, without which the baby would not survive. When we are in that sort of state we are like what is called a dung worm. So it is absurd to be proud of that, and thinking of that as clean only arises through stupidity. When one actually thinks of the reality of how one came into being then there is nothing to be so proud of. Rather, it is as it is explained in the analogy.

Then the commentary goes on:

> It is like the following analogy, a young man who had been put in a cesspit and lived on excrement escaped, and afterwards thought it was unclean when someone else's clothing touched him.

What this analogy refers to is the particular instance where a man, who had indulged in adultery, was punished for that act and, in the tradition of old days, thrown into a cesspit. He had to live in filth for a period of time. After he escaped from that the cesspit he was taken to the doctors who cleaned him up and nourished him, and he was restored to his normal health. After he had regained his former lustre and his health was restored, he went through a particular area where a lowly person touched him. Completely forgetting that he had recently being immersed in filth himself, he considered that even the touch of a lowly person's clothing was very dirty. This shows the absurdity of the situation.

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

We will leave this for the next session, when we might also be able to finish the third chapter.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 September 2006

As we sit in a comfortable and upright position, let us generate a positive motivation, such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.2.6. REFUTING OTHER SEEMING REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE BODY CLEAN (CONT.)

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting that the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

Assertion or doubt:

> The body is definitely clean since washing and so forth removes dirt from it.

Answer:

> *No means whatsoever will purify* 71
> *The inside of the body*
> *The efforts you make toward the outside*
> *Do not match those toward the inside*

The misconception one can have is that it is only external dirt which makes the body unclean, and once that dirt is removed then the body remains clean. When we relate this to ourselves, this is a notion that we definitely carry don't we? After a shower or bath we have the feeling, 'Now I'm very clean'. The main point that is being stressed here in the verse is, what use is there in paying so much attention in cleaning the outside of our body, when the inside remains dirty?

> When whatever means employed, such as ritual ablution and washing do not cleanse the inside of the body. You do not make as much effort to clean the external filth that has come out of your body as you do to cleanse the inside of the body, but it would be reasonable to do so.

As is indicated here, in an attempt to clean the body one may even go to the extent of ritual ablutions to cleanse the body in an attempt to clean it of impurities, but in fact that ritual does not in itself really help to purify the inside. When it is appropriate to focus on cleaning inside of the body, performing the ablutions and so forth does not really help, therefore it is not really appropriate. The point being made here, 'You do not make as much effort...to cleanse the inside of the body but it would be reasonable to do so', indicates that we clean the outside with the idea that it will make us clean, but in fact the inside of the body remains unclean. Again, this is tackling the notion that we have that if we keep our bodies clean on the outside, then we can conclude that we have a clean body.

But in reality, as mentioned earlier, if what is produced from the body is unclean, then how can the source itself be clean? Therefore we use that logical explanation here as well: cleaning the outside of the body, which is just the surface of the body, in itself cannot be a means to clean the inside. While the inside remains dirty, there is no way that we can really clean the body.

This verse is tackling the notion that we have of cleanliness, from which arises a sense of our bodies being pure, from which attachment arises. Whether in relation to our body or to others' bodies, that notion of the body as being clean and pure serves as the basis for attachment to the body to arise. So in order to overcome that attachment we need to really question the very basis of the misconception that we have about the body, which is that it is clean and pure. If one generates a notion that the body is clean just because we are able to clean it and put on perfume and so forth, which is the feeling of being clean that is socially accepted, in reality that is not really cleaning the body. By nature, under the skin, the body is still dirty. If we cannot really clean what is inside just by cleaning the surface how can we rest by thinking that the body is clean and pure? When we analyse in this way, we can then definitely begin to also see through reasoning that there is a misconception which lies behind the notion that the body is clean and pure. That notion only arises because of ignorance; it is the ignorant mind that contributes to this notion. The analogy given in the commentary is:

> Two jackals were sitting under a palasa tree. When a palasa blossom [a particular type of tree which has a particular type of blossom] fell, one of them thought they were all like that. The other thought that though the blossom that had fallen was not meat, the ones still on the tree were meat.

This is like thinking that what leaves the body is filthy, while that which remains in it is clean. As indicated in the analogy, one of the jackals has a realistic understanding that all the blossoms are the same and has no further assumptions. Whereas the other jackal thought, 'Well, the one that fell down wasn't be meat, but there must still be meat on the tree'. By being overly attached to meat in general it assumes there must be meat on the tree. Our thinking about the body is similar. Even though we may generate a conception that what is produced from the body is not clean (which is quite obvious), we can still hold the notion that the body must be pure and clean, and therefore attractive.

1.2.2.6.3. Refuting that women's bodies need not be given up on the grounds that sages are seen to enjoy them

Assertion:

> Since ascetic sages do not give up women's bodies, craving for women is not something to abandon.

Answer:

> *If, like leprosy, being full of* 72
> *Urine were not common to all,*
> *Those full of urine, just like lepers,*
> *Would be shunned by everyone.*

Here, 'sages' refers to Brahmins and also kings and the like. In India at that time Brahmans, kings and the like were considered to be of high caste, and therefore pure and clean. Brahmins particularly are considered to be very pure because of their caste and their social standing; likewise with kings and other noble beings.

This sub-division arises because of the assertion that since very highly regarded people such as Brahmins and kings, who are considered socially as being pure, have a relationship with women, then that must be an indication that women, by default, must also be pure. Basically, this doubt arises from thinking that if pure beings can have attachment, then the same must be feasible for me too. *[laughter]*. This is using others as an excuse for oneself to also have attachment.

This is also very much related to our normal erroneous way of thinking. When we see others misbehaving in some way, we take their example as a reason or excuse for us to also engage in that way. It is hard for us to see others doing good and say, 'Because others are doing good, I should also follow that example and also be good'. [*laughter]*.

The meaning of this verse is explained with an analogy. The reason why sages, Brahmins, kings and the like – those who are considered to be pure, and who are socially held in high esteem - have attachment to women's bodies is because they themselves possess a similar body. which is made out of a

similar substance. It is not because women's bodies are so pure that they are attached to such bodies, but because they have a similar impure body themselves, so having an impure body to begin with is the reason why one is attached to other impure bodies.

The meaning of the verse is also explained in the commentary, however the main point that one should understand is that the verse serves as an answer to the assertion by using the analogy of lepers. If those who have contracted leprosy were pure and clean, then they would not be shunned, abandoned or avoided. The fact that those who have contracted leprosy are shunned by society and kept at a distance is because leprosy is seen as being impure and contagious, and that's why others fear it. Using that as an analogy, it explains how women's bodies are not pure and clean. The reason that sages and the like have attachment to a woman's body, is because they have a similar type of body themselves, not because the other's bodies are by nature clean. As the commentary reads:

> Although women are full of urine, these sages do not give them up because they themselves are the same.

It is quite explicit that the reason for not giving up women is because they have the same type of body. The commentary continues:

> If only some and not all were full of urine, those full of urine would be shunned by those who were not, just as one holds one's nose and avoids contact with lepers. Women are not avoided because all are alike, not because they are clean.

As explicitly indicated here with the leper analogy, the reason why those who don't have leprosy are almost disgusted by those who do have leprosy, is because it is seen as being dirty, or something which one does not like to have contact with. That's why they are kept at a distance and generally shunned in society. If there were some women who were considered dirty and some others who were pure, then that would also be the case with women. But all women are alike, and those who are attached to women also have the similar bodies. Therefore attachment arises for anyone who has a similar body. That is the main point.

The main points to be understood here is that while in reality, male and female bodies are unclean by nature, the reason we are attached to the body is because of the erroneous notion of seeing the body as being pure and clean. Out of that ignorance attachment to the body arises. The analogy making the meaning of the point clearer is:

> A man without a goitre visited a place full of people with goitres and was thought ugly.

Apparently there are certain areas (especially in old times) where almost everyone in the village would have a goitre. It was very normal to have a goitre, and not considered as ugly. Whereas of course in a larger society, having a goitre is considered as ugly. However, in an area where everyone has a goitre, it becomes the norm, and so when someone without a goitre comes to such a place, they would be seen as being very strange. Some goitres are really quite large, as big as the head, so if that is the norm, then someone without a goitre looks very strange, as if something was missing.

When you derive the meaning of the analogy the point is that even though a goitre is not normally considered to be a beautiful feature of the body, in a place where everyone has a one it is considered to be nice and normal, and maybe even beautiful. Therefore when someone who does not have a goitre arrives, they are seen as being ugly. The notion of a goitres as a beautiful extension of the body arises out of their ignorance, and out of their misconception they consider it as being beautiful. That is similar to our attachment to the body.

1.3. Refuting the idea of cleanness because of wearing perfumes and so forth

Assertion or doubt:

> Though a woman's body is unclean, the uncleanness can be removed by beautifying it with perfumes and so forth.

Answer:

> *Just as someone lacking a part* *73*
> *Is delighted with a substitute nose,*
> *Desire holds that impurity is*
> *Remedied by flowers and so forth.*

Even after having accepting that a body is by nature impure and unclean, and therefore any contaminated body including a woman's body is also in the nature of being unclean and impure, a further doubt may arise that uncleanness can be removed with perfumes and so forth.

This is something that we definitely see, and that we don't have to ponder. People rely upon external substances such as perfume, make-up and so forth to beautify themselves, and by doing so, they have the feeling that they are clean and pure. The main doubt is that even though the body is unclean, the uncleanness can be removed and the body can be beautified through perfumes and so forth, so isn't that reasonable? Therefore, the argument goes, it is appropriate to have attachment to the body, because it can be beautified.

This mode of thinking really does occur, doesn't it? We have this notion when we are dirty that the moment after cleaning up and putting on perfume and makeup we have become clean and beautiful. So, we feel that it is appropriate to have attachment to such a beautified body. As was pointed out earlier, the need to clean and beautify the body, indicates that the body by its very nature is impure and unclean. It is only when it is beautified and made clean through external substances and conditions, that it is then viewed as being clean and pure, and thus attachment arises.

In explaining the meaning of the verse, the commentary gives this analogy:

> It is like a man lacking a part because his nose has been cut off, who is delighted with and proud of a golden artificial substitute.

In reality, it is considered as ugly when a such a prominent limb of the body as the nose is missing. However if the person puts on a beautiful substitute they can actually generate a sense of pride by thinking that the substituted nose makes them beautiful. In fact, because the natural nose is missing, it is not a situation to be proud of at all, but because other external conditions have created a nose, then a sense of pride arises from that. However, in reality, despite the artificial nose, it is still a person without a nose, so there is nothing to be really proud of. Even if they put on an artificial nose, it still remains the fact that they are a noseless person.

As the commentary further says:

> Attaching flowers and so forth to the body as a means to remedy its foulness and holding that this will make the body clean, will not do so.

This is the same as the earlier analogy: the notion that one can beautify the body by attaching perfume, flowers and so forth to it, thinking that such external objects make one beautiful. In reality, the body remains by its very nature unclean and impure, and nothing can really change that, but still the notion arises, 'I am beautiful'. The analogy given in the commentary is that

> It is like smearing butter on a cat's nose, which makes it think even a handful of insipid food is rich and tasty.

This particular analogy refers to tsampa. Normally if you make

a tsampa meal with a lot of butter and sugar, it is considered to be rich and tasty. In particular, adding butter to the tsampa makes it rich and tasty. So if you smear butter on a cat's nose and give it tsampa made with just plain water and no butter at all, it thinks that it's eating a very delicious tsampa meal with butter, just because of the fact there's some butter smeared on its nose. The cat can smell the butter and it assumes that the meal it's eating is also rich with butter.

1.4. Refuting the idea that anything towards which freedom from desire may arise is clean

Assertion:

> There are fragrances and so forth for which one invariably feels desire.

Answer:

> *It is inappropriate to call clean that* *74*
> *Toward which freedom from desire arises.*
> *Nor is there anything which is*
> *A definitive cause of desire.*

The meaning of the verse as the commentary explains:

> There is no thing which is a definitive cause of desire since in the end one will become free of desire toward all things. To call clean the body, toward which exalted Foe Destroyers have generated freedom from desire, is inappropriate.

The main point being made here is that if an object was truly desirable and therefore attractive from its own side, then Foe Destroyers would not lack desire for the object, but will also see it as being attractive. However the fact is, Foe Destroyers have overcome the state of seeing desirous objects as being attractive. This is because the very nature of objects are not desirable, and there's no real attractiveness within the objects themselves.

The analogy that is given in the text is:

> A merchant not recognising his daughter, felt strong desire for her, but when he recognised her, he was free from desire.

The analogy indicates that even in worldly circumstances, there can be similar situations to the Foe Destroyers in their rejection of objects as desirous. This analogy is of a merchant who left on a trading mission while his wife was still pregnant. He was gone for a long period of time, and did not know that the child was a girl, who had grown up by the time the merchant returned. When he came back to his home town he saw some older girls playing, and noticed that he had an attraction towards one girl. When someone pointed out to him that that this girl was his daughter, the attachment immediately went away. Suddenly what seemed initially attractive was no longer an object of desire.

1.5. Nominally all four non-erroneous features are possible with regard to one thing

The outline refers to the way the four erroneous features of impermanence, uncleanliness, suffering and selflessness can be all posited in the one object.

Assertion:

> Is it possible or not for a single thing to comprise all four of these undistorted features, such as impermanence and so forth?

> *In summary, all four, that is* *75*
> *Impermanence, uncleanness, suffering*
> *And selflessness are possible*
> *With regard to a single [thing].*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> In summary, all four – impermanence, uncleanness, suffering and selflessness – are possible with regard to a single [contaminated] thing [for example, even a contaminated body]. Whatever is a product is impermanent, because of being momentary. Whatever is impermanent is unclean because it produces aversion. Whatever is unclean is suffering because it harms. Whatever is suffering is selfless, because it is not under its own power. Therefore, developing aversion to cyclic existence, the uncleanness of which is exemplified by one's own body, make effort to gain the path to liberation.

This summary refers to all of the points that were made earlier, by thinking about the body as being impermanent and unclean in nature and so forth. Contemplating that, one develops renunciation. Having developed renunciation, one then strives to train in the path to achieve liberation.

The actual verses from the root text have already been completed, however the next stanza is from the author of the commentary, Gyel-tsap Je himself:

> Understanding that sentient beings are also bound
> Like oneself in this unclean prison,
> With energy generate compassion observing transmigrators,
> And make effort to accomplish highest enlightenment.

'Unclean prison' in the context of the first two lines of this summarising stanza, refers particularly to our contaminated body. To think of any inmate being attached to their prison would be quite absurd. However, we are in a similar situation of being attached to our own unclean body. This chapter has gone into detail about explaining how the body is unclean, and impure by its very nature. If we can then understand how we are obsessed with this impure body and therefore attached to it, we clearly see the absurdity and the inappropriateness of being overly obsessed and attached to this body. One can then begin to develop renunciation, which means, 'I wish to abandon such an impure body which is a source of suffering for ourselves'.

Renunciation and compassion

Once one develops that attitude of renouncing the impure, contaminated body in particular and samsara in general, then using that same attitude we divert our attention toward other sentient beings. Then we can see how other sentient beings are also in a similar situation to ourselves, being overly obsessed with our impure, prison-like bodies, and how they experience great suffering because of that. When we can understand that and develop the wish to free other sentient beings from that situation, that is what is called compassion. Renunciation and compassion are similar attitudes but they differ in terms of their focus. When the focus is on oneself, wishing to be free from samsara it is called **renunciation**. **Great compassion** is when the focus is on all other sentient beings, wishing them to be free from the prison of cyclic existence.

It is a fact that it is not possible to develop compassion for other sentient beings without first developing renunciation for oneself. If, however, one focuses only on oneself, wishing to be free from suffering only for oneself and just remains with that attitude, then it is only a cause to achieve self-liberation. With that attitude one cannot achieve enlightenment, only liberation. Therefore the emphasis here is, as it has been from the very beginning of the text, on developing love and compassion toward other sentient beings, thus creating the causes to achieve enlightenment, which is the ultimate means to benefit other sentient beings.

In the process of contemplation, one first contemplates one's own situation, seeing how we are bound by the chains of desire and grasping to samsara. After contemplating thoroughly on how we are in the prison of samsara, we then use that as a basis to understand how others are also suffering just like ourselves. Then, as one directs one's focus towards other sentient beings,

contemplating the fact that other sentient beings have all been equally kind to oneself, as well as suffering just like oneself, one begins to generate love and compassion for others.

It is feasible to think about the welfare of other sentient beings. Because everyone is in the same situation as oneself. Furthermore there is much more reason to focus on other sentient beings and their welfare, because each and every sentient being has been equally kind to oneself. When the mental state of recognising the kindness of other sentient beings becomes very strong, then the wish to repay their kindness can be developed.

Then one goes further, looking into how one could possibly free other beings from suffering. One then comes to understand that the only way to free all sentient beings from suffering is to achieve enlightenment for oneself first. Since there is no other way, striving to achieve enlightenment to benefit other sentient beings, becomes the ultimate way. When one contemplates in this way, then bodhicitta can be developed. This is the way we train our mind, by doing the essential practice which we can derive from these teachings. It is very useful therefore, just even to recite this last stanza. As we recite it, we think about the meaning and then spend some time just contemplating that meaning. That in itself can be a great daily meditation for ourselves.

Seven-fold cause and effect method for developing bodhicitta

Using the earlier contemplation as a basis, one can further enhance the method for developing love and compassion and thus the bodhicitta attitude, by using the seven-fold cause and effect sequence of developing bodhicitta. The first four are the basis for developing love and compassion and helping other beings. They serve as a basis by reinforcing the need to benefit other sentient beings. Whereas the fifth, sixth, and seventh are the actual tools for helping other sentient beings, the seventh one being the actual bodhicitta mind. Five and six are great compassion and special intention.

1. Perceiving all beings as one's mother: In answer to the question, 'Why do we need to help other sentient beings?' we contemplate how, all sentient beings have been kind to us, particularly through the kindness of having been our mother over many lifetimes in the past; and how they have helped and cared for us in so many numerous ways, just like our own mother does in this life.

2. Remembering their kindness: The next step is remembering the kindness of all beings who have been kind to us as a mother.

3. Repaying the kindness: Based on remembering the kindness, the wish to repay that kindness can be generated. When the wish to repay that kindness becomes strong in the mind, then the real purpose of benefiting other sentient beings is stabilised in our mind.

4. Great love: By now we have gained a little bit of insight, so we can lead, help and guide others sentient beings who are blinded by the ignorance of not understanding reality. Most beings don't have the means to gain the insight, which is the Dharma and the teachings. Most of us have the teachings and perfect teachers who expound the teachings by explaining them clearly to us, and we have the intelligence to understand the teachings, so we have a much greater advantage. We already have many qualities, techniques and methods to help other sentient beings.

Therefore it is most appropriate that we extend our help to them, with both temporary help and ultimate help. Temporary help is giving the things that other beings might need now – practical needs such as food and clothing, medicine and so forth. That help is however only of temporary benefit. The ultimate means to help other sentient beings is to guide them out of samsara - the cause for all suffering. By giving them the means to come out of samsara, you're helping them out of their prison. By guiding and helping others, and giving advice you are helping them to free themselves, so that they do not have to experience the sufferings over and over again. That is the ultimate way to help them.

You can relate the seven cause and effect sequence in a very practical way in every-day life, if you can consider you mother as being kind to you in this life. As one thinks about the kindness of one's mother, one comes to a point where remembering her kindness becomes spontaneous and natural. Then the next stage which follows naturally, is the wish to repay that kindness. We can see that there are people who say that they would do anything to help their mother; it is really a spontaneous wish and they will go out of their way to help their mother in whatever circumstances. When the earlier stage of recognising and remembering the kindness becomes strong, then the wish to repay the kindness to one's mother in this life becomes very strong. Naturally, one then wishes to do anything. When one wishes one's mother to be happy and joyful that is what is called love. When that is extended to all sentient beings, it becomes great love.

5. Great compassion: When the wish for one's mother to be completely free from all suffering is generated, then that is what we call compassion. When this wish is extended to all living beings, it becomes great compassion.

6. Special intention: When the wish for all mother sentient beings to be happy and free from suffering is generated to the point where one feels that there is no-one else but myself who has that responsibility. Just as one would think that 'I have the responsibility to make my mother as happy as possible and to see that she does not suffer in any way', taking upon that responsibility oneself, similarly when that sort of responsibility is extended to all sentient beings, then that is when special intention is developed.

Furthermore, one comes to understand that even though one is willing to take on full responsibility for bringing about the happiness for one's own mother, one may find that one does not have the capacity or ability to do so right now. When that understanding is extended to all sentient beings, and one searches for a solution, one comes to realize clearly that it is only by achieving enlightenment that one can help all beings to be free from suffering. It is only an enlightened being, a buddha who has the means to do that. So, in order to benefit my mothers-all sentient beings, I have to achieve enlightenment and become a buddha myself. That is the only way.

7. Bodhichitta: When that confirmation is developed, and the determination to achieve enlightenment in order to fulfil the responsibility of helping one's mothers-all sentient beings is developed in one's mind, that is when bodhicitta is developed.

This is the process of the seven-fold cause and effect training of the mind in developing bodhicitta. Contemplating this again and again leaves a very strong imprint on the mind for developing bodhicitta. So it is very useful and very important for us to meditate in such a way.

2. Explaining the name of the chapter[1]

This traditionally comes at the end.

> *This concludes the commentary on the third chapter, showing how to abandon erroneous belief in cleanness, from Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas".*

This concludes the outlines of the main part of the text as well as the commentary.

[1] In the teaching of 18 July 2006 this was given as 2. Summarising the purpose of the chapter.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 September 2006

As usual we sit in an upright, comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to attain enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and put it into practice as best as I can'.

CHAPTER 4: EXPLAINING HOW TO ABANDON ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF OURSELF BY SHOWING THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING CONTAMINATED THINGS AS 'I' AND 'MINE'

This chapter explains how to abandon erroneous conceptions of ourself by showing the inappropriateness of considering contaminated things as 'I' and 'mine'. In general 'I' refers to the self of the person, and 'mine' refers to other existent phenomena, such as the aggregates and all external phenomena. More particularly 'I' is called the possessor and 'mine' refers to what is being possessed. Therefore the 'I' as a possessor is the actual being or person, and what is being possessed is referred to here as being mine.

The erroneous conception of the self of person, is viewing the 'I' itself, as having inherent existence, or having its own characteristics. Since neither the 'I', nor what is possessed by the 'I', mine, exists by its own characteristics, and neither 'I' nor 'mine' exist inherently, this chapter (and others further on), shows how to overcome that misconception. They show how a conception of 'I' and 'mine' is an erroneous view, because they do not exist in the way that we see them.

There are two main headings:

1 Explaining the material of the chapter

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explaining the material of the chapter

This section is presented under two main headings:

1.1. Briefly showing how to refute the referent object of pride
1.2. Extensive explanation

1.1. Briefly showing how to refute the referent object of pride

> *Who that is wise about worldly existence* 76
> *Would be arrogant, thinking "I" and "mine"?*
> *For all things belong equally*
> *To all embodied beings.*

The antidote to overcome manifest conceptions of a self is explained in this chapter, while destroying the seeds of conception of a self is explained in the later chapters. The *seed of conception is* explained as *that which serves as a basis for producing further conceptions of a self.* This had been explained in earlier teachings[1], however just to mention it again, the seed is the basis that produces further conceptions of the self.

> Moreover, since the kings are very proud, the conceptions of "I" and "mine" are explained mainly with reference to them.

So the manifest level of the 'I' and 'mine' is being dealt with in this chapter, and the example that is used is the king, because kings can have great pride and arrogance.

Generally all phenomena are said to be classified into self and others. However, here the 'I' and 'mine' refer particularly to the possessor and that which is possessed by the 'I' (that which is directly used by what is called the self).

> By considering oneself praiseworthy, arrogant pride arises, thinking, "I am the owner", which is a conception of the self, and, "These things are mine."

Because of a great sense of natural pride and arrogance a king thinks, 'I am the owner', which comes from the grasping at the self. The misconception here, which is called the grasping at the self, should be understood in relation to the pride of the king. When arrogance is developed as in, 'I am the owner' and 'These things are mine', that conception arises from the misconception of grasping at the self. This is because the king has the view of the self as being an independent self, not depending on anything else. This misconception of a self-sufficient independent self then leads to pride and arrogance, which arises as, 'I am the owner and the subjects and so forth are mine'. So the secondary misconception of ownership arises from the primary misconception of viewing the 'I' as being an independent self-sufficient 'I'.

The misconception that these things are mine also arises through viewing the objects that are possessed as being self-sufficient independent existing phenomena. Because of that misconception, further misconceptions such as, 'These things are mine' arise with an arrogance and strong sense of attachment.

> This does not occur in the excellent who think correctly about the state of worldly existence.

What is being explained here is that from this sort of misconception, which is based on grasping at the self, followed by thinking, 'I am the owner and these things are mine', will not occur for excellent beings, who have the correct understanding of worldly existence.

The erroneous view of 'I' and 'mine' which ordinary beings have, is what leads one into samsara. Because of the grasping, attachment arises, and from attachment one creates karma. Likewise with anger: when one does not meet with the conditions that one wishes for then aversion arises, which is the reverse of attachment, and one creates karma. So due to attachment and aversion one creates karma, which become the causes to circle in samsara over and over again. Therefore 'the excellent', who are noble beings that have that correct understanding of selflessness, will not adopt this erroneous view.

> Generating such pride might be appropriate if a certain person could have control over certain things throughout their lives.

[1] See for example 9 September 2003

What is being explained here is, if holding such an erroneous view was in accordance with reality, then that would be a worthwhile view to hold on to.

> However, all things, such as different places, are the same as that through the power of previous actions they will eventually be used by all ordinary embodied beings.

What this refers to is the fact that even though a majestic being such as a king may hold the view of 'I' and 'mine', they could not possibly use all possessions just for themselves. The reality, is that everything is used commonly by all beings, and no one person can claim anything as being theirs, only to be used by themselves. There is nothing which can be owned and used entirely by one person. Everything in the universe is used commonly by beings who dwell in the universe. As the commentary states, 'For example, forests and houses are common property'.

Relating this explanation to the verse, we come back to the main point. As mentioned earlier, this presentation is an attempt to overcome what we call the manifest pride that is generated in beings such as kings and so forth, in fact in all those who are arrogant. Contemplating how there is nothing that can be claimed as being solely possessed by oneself, and how in reality everything is shared common property, definitely minimises and reduces a sense of pride, in particular the feeling that things are mine and belong to me.

One can also apply further understanding in relation to what is explained here, which is that things do not exist from their own side but are interdependent. That can also help to reduce the manifest level of pride. We can clearly see how a very powerful king could think, 'I own a lot of possessions, I own this country' and so forth. That very strong sense of manifest egotistical pride can definitely be tackled by this realistic approach of contemplating on how things are shared and common property.

When we use this explanation in a practical sense in our life we find we can relate it to personal experience. We do find, don't we, that there is a difference between viewing something as being entirely mine, possessed by myself and belonging to me, as opposed to an object that one considers as common property. With common property there is less sense of possessiveness, isn't there? Whereas for a particular thing that one regards as being 'mine' that sense of possessiveness is a lot stronger. That is something that we can see from our own experience.

When we take this as practical advice, it actually becomes very good advice about reducing a strong sense of attachment to things. As mentioned earlier the stronger the sense of ownership one has for something the stronger the attachment one has to that object. Whereas if one could consider things that one has as being common property, which can be used by anyone, then that reduces strong attachment to things.

It is the same in a family. If someone keeps things aside saying, 'This can only be used by a particular person', then whoever claims that object would have a strong attachment to it, whereas there is not that strong possessiveness or attachment to an object that is considered as being common property. Therefore this is actually pointing out a practical way of reducing attachment to objects.

1.2. Extensive explanation

There are three sub-divisions.

1.2.1. Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth
1.2.2. Refuting arrogance because of caste
1.2.3. Showing other means to giving up ill deeds

1.2.1.Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth

This is sub-divided into five categories.

1.2.1.1. Abandoning haughtiness for five reasons
1.2.1.2. It is inappropriate for a king to be proud
1.2.1.3. Considering what is religious and irreligious
1.2.1.4. It is appropriate for a king to feel distressed[2]
1.2.1.5. It is inappropriate for a king to have excessive attachment to his kingdom[3]

1.2.1.1. ABANDONING HAUGHTINESS FOR FIVE REASONS

This has five sub-divisions.

1.2.1.1.1. Inappropriateness of arrogance because the name of the king has been given to a servant
1.2.1.1.2. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the power to give and collect wealth
1.2.1.1.3. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of enjoying whatever objects one wishes.
1.2.1.1.4. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of being the guardian of people.
1.2.1.1.5. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the merit of protecting all beings.

1.2.1.1.1. Inappropriateness of arrogance because the name of a king has been given to a servant

Assertion: Since all world enterprises are under the king's control, pride is appropriate.

Answer:

> *Society's servant, paid with a sixth part,* *77*
> *Why are you so arrogant?*
> *Your becoming the agent of actions*
> *Depends on being placed in control.*

In the first place how did the king come the king? He was selected by the people. It was actually the people who chose the king to work for them. So in fact the king is actually a servant of the people.

As the commentary explains, referring the earliest eras on this planet,

> After the crops of wild rice, which were not planted by the people of the first era, declined and land was apportioned…

What the commentary is explaining here is how the world of this era came into existence. The first beings who inhabited this earth were beings of a pure race, who were like godly beings. They had a natural radiance of light from their body, so they did not need the light from sun. Nor did they have to rely on contaminated food, because they survived on what is called the food of concentration; they were high beings who did not have to rely on gross food. Also, there was no distinction between male and female. They were equal, with no sense of difference or discrimination. Then, as time passed by things started to slowly degenerate, and one of the first things that occurred was that people started to develop a fondness for each other, and then a bit of attraction to each other, and that led to a slow transformation in their appearance, which is when the different male and female organs began to form.

[2] The text says 'it is inappropriate' but this is a misprint or mistranslation.
[3] This translation is a correction of what is in the text.

Because of that initial attachment to each other, their natural radiance started to diminish, and then the ability to sustain themselves on the food of concentration started to wain. Then they started to have to look for something to sustain themselves. Nevertheless their karma was still quite good and there were crops that they could eat. These crops were actually quite miraculous in that after they were reaped in the morning, they were ripe again by evening, so it was like they had a ready crop that grew spontaneously. However that also started to diminish, and they had to start accumulating for the next day, the day after and so forth.

Meanwhile, because they were attracted to each other and there were these distinct separate organs, there was sexual intercourse, and because of this reproduction occurred, and they started having babies. Then they had to make shelters, whereas earlier didn't need shelters because they were able to sustain themselves. With the need for shelter the beings started to become busier and busier, and more and more possessive of their things. They had to have houses which they had to protect, they had to start to accumulate their wealth and harvest, they had to start dividing the land and claim, 'This is my land where I grow my crop; you can not take my crop, and you can not come onto my land', and that is how disputes started to arise. Also because of attachment there were disputes and arguments over relationships, and this is how times slowly became more and more degenerate, with more and more problems.

As things started to get out of hand with disputes and so forth they all came together, and had a meeting. They decided to elect one of themselves, who was a bit stronger and more powerful than the rest, to be the leader to bring order. Having decided to elect a leader, they realised that, as his main job would be to rule and bring things into order, he should not have to do extra work to support himself, so they decided to offer him one sixth of their harvests.

> ...people began stealing each other's harvests. For protection they gave one sixth of their harvest as payment to the person they appointed to guard their fields and called him the king.

This is the explanation of how the first king came to exist on our planet in this era - he was appointed by the people. After that the hereditary system developed, but the first king was an appointed king.

> How then can it be appropriate for you, the king, to feel arrogant when you are the servant of a community of many people, paid with a sixth of the harvest? It is inappropriate to claim proudly…

This is further explaining, how, in accordance with the explanation in the verse, because the king was appointed by the people and thus paid by the people to be its leader, he is actually like the servant of the community. 'So that is why it is totally absurd that you feel proud when you are actually a servant of us'.

> It is inappropriate to claim proudly, "I control all activities". Your becoming the agent of an action depends upon your being placed in control and appointed agent by the people.

This explanation relates to the fact that it is inappropriate for the king to feel arrogant, and, in particular, to feel that, 'Everything belongs to me. I am the possessor, and everything is mine'. Firstly, in reality, the king was appointed to that position by the people, who elected him and appointed him as king. So the very term and the very position is given by the people. Secondly, the ministers, servants and so forth are actually the ones who decide whether or not the king is an appropriate person to rule. If the subjects, from all the ministers and officials down to the servants and so forth, anonymously agree that the king is unsuitable to lead then the king will not have any power, and nor will he be able to exercise any power. So, because of these facts, it is inappropriate for the king to feel, with a sense of arrogance, that, 'Everything is mine and belongs to me'. With that understanding then the strong sense of pride and arrogance can definitely be reduced.

What is being directly tackled here is that false sense of pride as in, 'I am powerful', 'I am the owner' or 'I am the leader, and the subjects, and so forth, are my subjects and belong to me'. What is being pointed out here that the very status that you have of being in power, or regarding yourself as king is something that is totally dependent on the nomination of the people. It is not something that independently arose from your being. The king does not independently exist from his own side. In other words there is no inherent king from his own side. Rather, from the very beginning he has been totally dependant on the people who elected him, or named him as king. As mentioned earlier, if the subjects anonymously disapprove and agree not to have him, then the king can be deposed.

The analogy used here is,

> For instance, it is inappropriate for a servant to feel proud when his master delegates a task for him.

When a master asks a servant to do something they willingly carry on that task without any sense of pride. They know that they have to do it because the master ordered it. In fact this analogy shows that it should be understood that the king is like the servant of the people. There should be no pride or arrogance in just being the servant of the community.

1.2.1.1.2. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the power to give and collect wealth

Generally another reason for a king to feel proud is because he feels that he has the power to give and take things back at his will. In fact it is inappropriate to have that view.

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king controls the giving and getting of wealth.

Answer: That is inappropriate.

> *When those in his care receive their due,* *78*
> *They think of their master as the giver.*
> *When the master gives what is to be given,*
> *He thinks with conceit, "I am the giver."*

As the commentary states.

> When those in the king's care receive their annual wages due for service rendered, they think of themselves as inferior and of their master as the giver.

This is referring to that fact that anyone receiving their due, their monthly wage or whatever, for whatever they are worth, receives it with humbleness, because anyone receiving what they are owed does not develop a sense of pride in receiving it. That being the case for those who receive wages, the master, in the case of king, or any other master, thinks, with conceit and arrogance, 'I am the giver' when he gives those in his care the wealth that is due. It is inappropriate to feel proud of being a benefactor just

because of paying employees their wages.

The main point being made here is in relation to the king. Just as those who work for the king would not develop a sense of pride and conceit in receiving their wages, because they are rightfully receiving what they worked for, likewise the king, from his side, should not feel conceit and pride in giving wages, because he is giving it to those who have worked for it, and to whom the wages are due. In other words there is no sense of pride in giving to those who are the right recipients. If the king did not give the due wages then it would be a debt, because he owns the people what they are entitled to receive as their pay. The main point being made here is that just as those who receive a payment do not have any conceit, likewise the king who gives that should not feel any conceit or pride in doing what is the normal outcome of work, which is that it be rightly done, and that payment for that work be rightly given.

So no sense of pride and conceit need be developed on either side. The receivers, such as the king's ministers, servants and other workers and so forth, do not have conceit and pride when they receive their wages, and likewise it is inappropriate for the king to feel pride in giving, because in reality it is not giving but just what rightly belongs to the other.

1.2.1.1.3. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of enjoying whatever objects one wishes

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king is free to enjoy all objects.

Answer: It is not appropriate.

> *That which you wrongly regard,* *79*
> *Others [consider] a source of suffering.*
> *Living by working for others,*
> *What causes you pleasure?*

The commentary states,

> What wrongly appears as a cause for superlative happiness to you king is seen as a source of suffering for those with discriminating wisdom and disciplined senses.

What is being explained here is that what seems to be happiness is actually a completely misconception, because it is in fact actually just suffering. It rightly appears as suffering to those with discriminating wisdom and disciplined senses. Therefore, what you think of as being happiness is in fact not really happiness or joy.

Further, as the commentary explains,

> Since you have experienced uninterrupted suffering in the process of protecting large communities of people and must live by working for others, it is not a cause only for happiness. How can this cause you pleasure when it is a source of many problems?

This is referring to the misconception of the king himself, who has a sense of ownership and enjoyment at his disposal, whenever he likes. The pleasure that he himself thinks he has is, in fact, erroneous, when his obligations and all the actual work he does are considered. This also relates to the misconception we have of the riches of the king, and, in fact, of all those who have similar status to a king, and who have riches. We see them as having all the enjoyments, when in reality, besides the actual pleasure itself not being real happiness and actually being suffering, there is all of the suffering from the worry, and so forth, of protecting large communities of people, and constantly working for the welfare of others. Dealing with so many difficulties, problems, wars and so forth, are all part of the responsibility of kings. So in comparison with the responsibilities and anxieties and frustrations of that workload, the seeming enjoyments are nothing. When that is realised by the king, as well as by those of us who view the position of the king, then the conception of it as being joy and pleasure is removed.

The analogy given here is that it is 'like craving for women and liquor and so forth'. Again, those who have attachment and crave for sexual intercourse, as well as those who are addicted to that, and to liquor and so forth, give up everything for their addiction, and it seems pleasurable to them, but in reality they suffer much more.

A further analogy is that it is similar to feeling glad at being appointed to punish thieves. Actually. punishing others for one's living, is not a really desirable job to have.

1.2.1.1.4. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of being the guardian of the people

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king is the protector of his people.

Answer: Pride merely because of that is inappropriate.

> *When a ruler seems to be the protector* *80*
> *Of his people, as well as protected,*
> *Why be proud because of the one?*
> *Why not be free from pride because of the other?*

As the commentary explains,

> A king may feel proud because he protects his people but it also seems the ruler himself is protected by the people, since he could not be the king unless they protected him. In that case why be arrogant because of the one?

What is being explained here in practical terms here is that the king may take pride in being the ruler, and thus being the protector of his subjects, but in reality the king himself has to be protected by the people. To begin with, without his personal guards and so forth, the king would be in danger, and furthermore on a wider range the subjects are the ones who put the king in his position, and they are therefore the protectors of his sovereignty, his status and so forth. While it may seem obviously inappropriate for the subjects to have a sense of pride in being the protectors of the king, why should the king have arrogance and pride over being the protector for the subjects, when both are actually equal in protecting each other.

The main point is the absurdity of the situation. If it is not feasible for the subjects to take pride in being the protector of the king then why should the king take pride in being the ruler or protector of his subjects, when they are equal.

The analogy is that it is just like a husband and a wife. They have an equal responsibility for looking after each other and there is no sense of pride about that. If that is the case between friends or partners, then the analogy fits the meaning of the king and his subjects in that there should be no pride in protecting each other.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 October 2006

As usual, let us sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I am going to listen to the teachings'.

1.2.1. Refuting Arrogance based on power and wealth (cont.)

1.2.1.1. ABANDONING HAUGHTINESS FOR FIVE REASONS

1.2.1.1.5. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the merit of protecting all beings

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king has the merit of protecting everyone like his own children.

Answer:

Those in each caste prefer their own work; *81*
Thus a living is hard to find.
If you become non-virtuous
Good rebirths will be scarce for you.

At present when people are strongly involved in the five degenerations, most are untrustworthy and engaged in non-virtue, because in each caste, such as the Brahmin caste and so forth, people prefer their own work and it is therefore difficult to make a living without any problems.

This refers to degenerate times, where one does not have much choice about the type of work one does. This is the case even for Brahmins, who are very particular and only work in clean jobs. They are so particular that they have a tradition of not accepting food prepared by other castes; if it was prepared by someone not in the Brahmin caste they would pretend to accept it, but not eat it. However in degenerate times when food is scarce, Brahmins have to perform jobs that they normally wouldn't do, in order to sustain themselves.

When you seize a sixth part of their merit you become non-virtuous because you also seize a sixth part of their ill deeds. Since good rebirths will therefore be scarce for you, arrogance is inappropriate.

This refers to earlier times when in return for protecting subjects, one sixth of the harvest was taken by the kings. What the subjects are able to earn is relative to whatever their merit allows them to gain. So when one sixth of their earnings is seized, it is as though the king is taking one sixth of their merit.

The very merit that you claim is the merit you seize from others.

Also, it is not only merit but ill deeds that are part of the one sixth that is seized. Therefore there is nothing to be proud of there.

The main point is that taking one sixth part of merit from the subjects ultimately becomes a non-virtue for the king.

Therefore, since good rebirths will be scarce for you arrogance is inappropriate.

The analogy is of a leper who instead of taking medicine wants to drink milk and eat fish. The meaning of the analogy is that a physician treats a leper with medicines and advice about restrictions in diet. If the leper does not take his medicine and eats harmful foods (apparently these are milk and fish) he is making an already bad situation worse. The patient is contributing to his illness by not following instructions, so there is wrongdoing by the patient.

It is similar for the king. Not only does a king perform many ill deeds, but to these he adds the wrong actions done by others.

The reference in the commentary, 'since good rebirth is scarce for you' refers to the analogy of the leper. The king has not only engaged in, and accumulated misdeeds in this life, but he also has misdeeds from previous lifetimes. Therefore there is no question that a good rebirth in the next life is out of the question. Rather it will be rebirth in the lower realms, and on top of that he takes on the misdeeds of others.

The main point to be understood is that the king not only engages in misdeeds himself, but also influences others to engage in misdeeds such as killing. So on the king's orders many others engage in negative karma. That is a definite cause for the king to be reborn in lower realms. As that is the real situation of the king, being proud and arrogant is quite inappropriate.

As personal advice for ourselves, it should be understood that not only should one try to minimise one's own negative karmas, but we should also prevent ourselves from influencing others to perform misdeeds. Just as a king can influence so many people, we too, can influence others. In our own limited environment it is important to purify our negative karma, and it is equally important not to influence others to create negative karma. That is very important.

Therefore, as the text indicates, in a situation where the king is creating negative karma, there is no room for the king, (or ourselves) to feel pride or arrogance.

1.2.1.2. IT IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR A KING TO BE PROUD

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king is the protector of his people and independent.

Answer: That is not so.

Those who act at others' insistence *82*
Are called fools on this earth.
There is no one else at all
So dependent on others as you.

In relation to the king's situation, we may think that it is quite feasible for the king to be proud because he has so many subjects, and seemingly independent, as he does not have to rely upon others. In that way we may think that it is appropriate for a king to have pride.

Someone who does not do work that must be done and which he can do, but acts only at the insistence of others is called a fool on this earth. Since a king's actions depend on the requests and insistence of others, there is no one else at all so dependent on

others as you. Therefore it is unjustified to feel proud.

As the commentary relates, it is very true that there is no reason for the king to feel proud. If anyone had the ability to do something, but only did it when they are told to do so, then they are quite foolish. Why do they have to wait for others to instruct them in what they know? It is similar for a king or any leader. The very position of the king is that they are waiting for public work to be assigned so they can take the initiative. Leaders constantly depend on feedback to know what is to be done, therefore they are completely dependent on others. When a king sees that reality there is no room for him to feel proud.

The analogy is:

> For instance, it is not appropriate for someone who catches and frees dogs and monkeys for others to feel proud.

To explain the analogy more specifically, when dogs or monkeys are captured and taught to do tricks, and perform for others, they have no pride in those tricks, because someone else has trained them. Their tricks are not seen as an inborn quality of the performing animals themselves. It is the same with the king's position.

1.2.1.3. CONSIDERING WHAT IS RELIGIOUS AND IRRELIGIOUS

This has five subheadings:
1.2.1.3.1. Establishing that violent action towards others by a king is irreligious
1.2.1.3.2. Refuting that it is a religious activity
1.2.1.3.3. Not everything stated by sages should be taken as valid
1.2.1.3.4. Violence toward enemies is irreligious
1.2.1.3.5. Dying in battle is not a cause for a happy transmigration

Dying in battle is also something that was brought up in questions on Wednesday nights. It is not a cause for a happy transmigration, and we should understand that.

1.2.1.3.1. Establishing that violent action towards others by a king is irreligious

This has three subheadings
1.2.1.3.1.1. Inappropriateness of pride because the protection of the people depends on the king
1.2.1.3.1.2. Punishment of wrongdoers by the king is unsuitable as a religious activity
1.2.1.3.1.3. Refuting that punishment of the unruly by the king is not an ill deed

1.2.1.3.1.1. Inappropriateness of pride because the protection of the people depends on the king.

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because the protection of his people against harm from others depends on the king.

> *Claiming that "protection depends on me", 83*
> *You take payment from the people,*
> *But if you perform ill deeds,*
> *Who is equally merciless?*

As the commentary further explains

> Who is as merciless as a king who performs ill deeds? None. Claiming that protection of his people depends on him, when his people do not make large payment, he takes by force and himself performs many ill deeds such as killing.

That is the situation of the king. To counteract the misconception that pride is appropriate because the king protects his people, it clearly mentions here that the so-called protection is entirely dependent on the dues that the king receives. As long as he is paid there seems to be protection, but as soon as the people do not pay the king he engages in force to punish them, even to the extent of killing. Therefore, the king is engaging in grave misdeeds.

The analogy mentioned here in the commentary is that

> He is like a bad physician who, greedy for money, does not relieve pain at once but only gradually.

This analogy refers to a story where a butcher was grinding bones when one of the splinters from the bones lodged in his eye. When he went to see a physician, rather than relieving the cause right away by taking out the splinter, the doctor actually treated it with some medication and kept asking him to come back. In that way the treatment was prolonged so that the physician could get more money from the butcher.

How this story is analogous to the meaning in the verse is that just as physician who prolongs treatment so as to get more money would be seen as cruel and commits a great misdeed, similarly it is the king's duty to provide protection for his subjects, because of the payment that he receives from them. As mentioned previously the subjects give a sixth part of their earnings to the king in order to receive protection and guidance and so forth. If, rather than taking on his duty willingly, and honestly providing that protection and work for his subjects, the king abuses that trust, and feels proud about it, and actually does wrong deeds in relation to his subjects, then that is actually a great misdeed.

Therefore as mentioned here the analogy is that the king is like a bad physician who, greedy for money, does not relieve pain at once but ekes out the treatment. So you can see how the analogy fits with the king's situation.

1.2.1.3.1.2. Punishment of wrong doers by the king is unsuitable as a religious activity

Assertion: If wrongdoers are not punished, it is detrimental to others. Therefore, to protect other people it is proper to exact punishment.

Answer: That is not so.

> *If people who do ill deeds 84*
> *Should not be treated with mercy,*
> *All ordinary childish people*
> *Would also not need to be protected.*

> If it inappropriate to be merciful toward people who have done great wrong such as killing, ordinary childish people would also not need to be protected with compassion.

What is being related here is that if one asserts that the king has the right to punish the wrongdoers, because they have to be dealt with severely for their wrongdoings, then as all would have equally engaged in wrongdoings, is there any other ordinary being who would not fall into the scope of compassion?

As the commentary goes onto say

> A king should be especially merciful to wrongdoers.

This is in relation to the description in the teachings where one focuses on beings who are doing great ill deeds and engaging in negative karma. Because of their activities they are creating the cause for their own suffering so they definitely become an object of compassion. In Tibetan there is a common saying for people who are doing great misdeeds: there is a natural tendency to call them an object of compassion. Whereas those who are suffering in a particular situation, are more an object of pity or love. Therefore there is this general spoken reference of how people who commit wrongdoing are actually an object of compassion.

The commentary further states in relation to this particular instance:

> A king should be especially merciful to wrongdoers, otherwise although not called a brigand he will be one.

Even though a king would never be publicly considered as a thief, in reality he would be a thief if, having received payment from his subjects, he harms, punishes and mistreats them, rather than protecting them. After having received payment to protect them and help them, if he does not give what is deemed necessary for that payment, then in realty he is like a thief.

> A king must protect them just as he must protect his own body and wealth.

Even though wrongdoing is a source of problems and so forth, nevertheless the king has the obligation and duty to protect even wrongdoers, in the sense of dealing with them in an appropriate way, and not inflicting harm and severe punishment on them. Rather he should protect them in an appropriate way. Therefore having love or care for his subjects has the connotation of protecting them even from misdeeds or misguidance. He has to develop measures for preventing them from doing wrong things in the first place.

1.2.1.3.1.3. Refuting that punishment of the unruly by the king is not an ill deed

Assertion: A king who punishes wrongdoers to protect everyone is not a wrongdoer himself because he is engaged in helping the good.

> *There is nothing that will not serve* *85*
> *As a reason for happiness.*
> *Reasons such as scriptural statements*
> *Will not destroy demerit.*

The assertion is that the king who punishes wrongdoers to protect everyone is not a wrongdoer himself because he is working for the good of the people and helping others. So the punishment inflicted by the king is not considered to be a wrongdoing. That is the doubt being expressed in this assertion.

As the commentary states:

> There is nothing that through attachment to wrong ideas will not serve as a reason for happiness. Those who enjoy killing fish and pigs think, "This is the traditional work of my caste", and feel happy.

That is a misconception that people can hold in terms of being proud or even happy about their wrongdoing.

> Some deleterious Brahmin treatises say that animals were created by the lord of the nine transmigrations to provide sustenance, and killing them is therefore not an ill deed. Reasons such as scriptural statements, false arguments and the like will not dissipate or destroy the limitless ill deeds of those who exert themselves to kill and who hold such views.

As explained in the commentary there are those who rely on false treatises. With wrong reasonings they hold the view that there is no ill deed in killing animals and so forth. They state that because animals are given by god for the purpose of sustaining humans, there is no ill deed in killing them. However that argument does not take away the demerit or the negative karma of that deed: the negative karma of killing is still created. In fact, because these acts are not seen as a wrongdoing or ill deed, the negative karma created will be limitless.

The analogy is that

> It is like thinking ones undigested meal has been digested and eating more food.

This corresponds to a story about a greedy man consuming food, who enjoyed it so much that he wanted more. He had already eaten quite a lot and it was still undigested so he asked a Brahmin whether it would be okay to have more food and drink. When the Brahmin responded, 'Yes that's fine. You can have more food', that gave the greedy person the leeway to even eat more, because he thought, 'Now I have got good reason to eat more. The Brahmin said it is okay'. But because he had taken yet more food while the earlier meal had not been digested properly he actually got quite ill as a result.

How this analogy relates to the meaning of earlier explanation in relation to the negative karma created, is like this: Ordinary beings have already accumulated negative karmic deeds in the past, in addition to that which is already prevalent in the mindstream. If one relies on faulty treatises then that will then be an influence to create even more negative karma on top of the negative karma already created.

1.2.1.3.2. Refuting that it is a religious activity

This is further divided into three.

1.2.1.3.2.1. Refuting that protecting the people by punishing the unruly is a religious activity

1.2.1.3.2.2. Analogy showing that when an intelligent king protects his people out of attachment it is not a religious activity

1.2.1.3.2.3. The reasons why it is not a religious activity is because it is a basis for pride and carelessness.

1.2.1.3.2.1. Refuting that protecting the people by punishing the unruly is a religious activity

We should understand that this refers to a particular type of irreligious king, and that these examples do not relate to a religious or Dharma king.

Assertion: Since protecting his people is a cause for high rebirth and therefore religious practice a king needs no other religious practice.

Answer: that that is not so.

If giving proper protection is 86
A ruler's religious practice,
Why would the toil of artisans too
Not be religious practice?

If it is a ruler's religious practice when, as a king paid with a sixth, he gives proper protection to his people and is acknowledged to do so, why would the work of artisans who toil to make weapons and moats for others' protection not also be religious practice?

The assertion is that as protecting people is a cause for higher rebirth and therefore a religious practice, a king needs no other practices. This is referring to how the king, because he engages in practices of protecting others, is doing a virtuous deed. To refute that misconception the text mentions here that a king is basically doing something for which he is paid.

The protection and so forth that he is doing for others is not so much out of a great concern, love and compassion for his people, but rather because he is paid to do his job. He is merely fulfilling his requirements for the payment that he receives, which is a sixth of the earnings of his subjects. So if the king's activities, such as protecting his subjects and ruling them, are to be considered as a virtuous deed even when he receives the payment for them, so why couldn't we also consider people who make, for example, weapons, moats and so forth for money, which also protects people, as doing virtuous deeds? They are also doing deeds which seem to protect the subjects.

The analogy given here is:

The king is like a man hired to protect the town.

The main point in relation to the analogy is that when some are paid to carry out the punishment of others, such as executioners and so forth, what they are in fact doing is actually harming others. If the king can be considered as doing virtuous deeds for something that he receives payment for anyway, then we could also assert that others who do their job or fulfil their obligations for payment, even if they are harming others, would actually be doing good deeds. But that would definitely be against the logical reason of what we call the workings of karma. Therefore the king in reality is no different from someone who makes weapons and so forth, or who imposes punishments on others and so forth.

The Textbook

It seems that the translation in the text book that you have is actually very accurate and good. Apparently the main source for this book is a teaching that was given by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, from which the commentary was written, and some extra explanations added.

The way this book came about was related to me by a translator who used to translate for Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, and who now lives in New Zealand. When he recently came to visit me he told me about this particular translation of the text.

Apparently Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey only gave a complete teaching on *The Four Hundred Verses* on one occasion. He was requested a few times to teach it again but he said, I won't be able to go through the whole teaching again', and after quite a few requests were made he said, 'I can give the main points'.

Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey said, 'I can give you the essence of *The Four Hundred Verses*, so that you can keep that as a main point of reference. Apparently this was related to Dr Barry, who was one of Geshe Dhargyey's students. The main essence of the *Four Hundred Verses* is that it indicates that 95% of the humans in the world, because of their deeds and so forth, will go to the lower realms. Not following that 95% is the essence of *The Four Hundred Verses*. Dr Barry was quite shocked when he first heard that, but when he thought about it more in detail he felt that it was actually very sound advice. We can see this when we go through each verse, and realise that that basically the essence is that the text is explaining how so many ordinary beings are engaged in so-called normal activities, which are based on wrong deeds and negative karma.

The Five Degenerations

In verse 81, which was covered earlier, there was mention of degenerate times. Actually, five types of degenerations are explained in the teachings. These are:

1. Degeneration of delusion: The sign of the degeneration of delusions is that even with very gross delusions, not to mention the subtle ones, it manifests immediately when there is the slightest condition for the gross delusion to arise, thus causing the mind to be afflicted. That is the sign of the degeneration of delusion.

2. Degeneration of karma: Because delusions arise so easily they influence one to engage in acts that cause negative karma or non-virtue to be created very rapidly. That would be the sign of the degeneration of karma.

There is also another interpretation which says that the second degeneration is the degeneration of sentient beings. The sign of degeneration of sentient beings is found in the verse in the *Guru Puja*, where it says that even when countless Buddhas have come, there are those beings who have not been liberated. They can be considered as degenerate beings for not being tamed or liberated.

So there are two ways of presenting the second degeneration.

3. Degeneration of views: The sign of degeneration of view is not seeing what is to be abandoned and what is to be taken up. The presence of ill deeds with a worldly distracted view would be the sign of degeneration of view.

4. Degeneration of life span: The earlier prevalent delusions and negative karma and so forth contribute to the very short life span of beings. That is a sign of the degeneration of life span.

5. Degeneration of time: When all the earlier degenerations are present then that is called the degeneration of time.

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 October 2006

As usual we will sit in a comfortable and upright position, and generate a positive motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1. Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth

1.2.1.3. CONSIDERING WHAT IS RELIGIOUS AND IRRELIGIOUS

1.2.1.3.2. REFUTING THAT IT IS A RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

1.2.1.3.2.2. Analogy showing that when an intelligent king protects his people out of attachment, it is not a religious activity

Assertion: Since an intelligent king protects his people out of attachment, he is irreproachable.

Answer:

This example shows the ruler on whom 87
The people rely as reprehensible.
The excellent see attachment to existence
As mother of all those in the world.

As the commentary explains:

> Being a ruler on whom the people rely for protection is a source of arrogance and all kinds of recklessness and is therefore reprehensible. The wise Exalted ones who see things without error regard attachment to existence as the mother of those in the world because it produces them.

The assertion or the doubt is in relation to the status of a king. Because of his status, in a worldly sense he appears to be 'the protector' or the main leader of all (ministers, as well as subjects). Even those following religion seem to be under the rule of the king. In that sense it seems that the king is the most superior, and the protector of all. Therefore the doubt may arise, as the king is a protector of all he must be irreproachable.

However, that would not be the case for the Exalted ones who see all reality, including the faults that can be seen in a king. As explained here, the king is involved in a lot of negative activities, which cause the creation of a lot of negative karmas. The king's status is therefore reprehensible.

The analogy used in the root text to explain the reprehensible status of the king is, attachment to existence is like the mother of those in the world, because it has produced them. What this is referring to is that attachment itself is analogous to a mother: just as a mother produces children, so attachment to worldly existence is the cause for rebirth in cyclic existence. Recognising that attachment to worldly existence serves as a mother producing those to be re-born in cyclic existence, the wise or Exalted ones, who are noble beings understanding reality, purposely see attachment as a fault. Therefore the wise eradicate it, meaning that they abandon attachment to worldly existence.

1.2.1.3.2.3. The reason why it is not a religious activity is because it is a basis for pride and carelessness [or lack of conscientiousness]

This is again dealing with the doubt that the king's activity could be a religious activity. Here the text is refuting that doubt on the basis that the king's status serves as a basis for pride and carelessness to arise, so therefore it could not be a religious activity.

Assertion: Because of his compassion, a king's protection of his people is his religious practice.

Answer: That is not so.

The sensible do not acquire kingship. 88
Since fools have no compassion,
These merciless rulers of men,
Although protectors, are irreligious.

> The sensible, who have not foolishly turned away from good paths like ethical conduct and are not attached just to power and wealth, do not acquire kingship.

The doubt is that a king may seemingly appear to have compassion and to protect his people. From a worldly point of view the king's compassion and protection may be seen as a very noble deed and thus a religious deed. But the explanation in the text is that this is not so.

> Fools, who are ignorant about actions and their effects, have no compassion. Kings, these merciless rulers of men, although they are protectors, are irreligious and a source of conceit and recklessness.

The main point being made in the commentary is that although from a worldly point of view kings may appear to be religious, because of their seeming compassion and protection of their subjects, in reality their activities, which are filled with conceit and pride, are actually quite foolish ones. The king's activities are the activities of fools, because they are counter to developing the paths and the realisations on the paths.

Because of the recklessness and conceit, the king's actions, rather than being religious, are contrary to the Dharma, because they strengthen delusions in the mind and therefore go against the paths and the grounds leading to enlightenment. Therefore the king's activities are definitely an irreligious activity rather than a religious or Dharma activity.

As the commentary further explicitly mentions, these kings are actually merciless rulers of men, because of their deluded state of mind. Their main activities are merely trying to strengthen their power and wealth, or conquer other countries, or, as mentioned earlier, punishing subjects who don't listen to them. Therefore all of their activities are focussed on either strengthening their own power or accumulating wealth, which is only focused on benefit for this lifetime. Therefore the activities of a king are completely irreligious and their seemingly compassion is in fact, completely contrived. In

fact they are actually merciless beings.

Therefore those who are really wise will completely shun and avoid the state of kingship. It is only fools who would want to go after such status and power, which only becomes a means to create more negative karma and thus strengthen their position in samsara. Therefore it is only foolish beings who would want to have the power of kingship. A king who is foolish in that way does not have compassion.

To clarify the main point being made here: a king is referred to as a fool because of not having the wisdom to know the consequences of cause and effect i.e. creating positive karma generates a positive effect and creating negative karma results in experiencing a negative effect. If one does not have the wisdom to understand that, then one is engulfed in the ignorance of that reality. Therefore in that regard, not having the wisdom to know the consequences of one's actions, and their results is completely foolish.

Furthermore the king has arrogance. Anyone who is ignorant of the real consequences of actions and their results, as well as having an arrogant mind, has no room for real compassion in their mind. Therefore the verse and the commentary on the verse explain how, rather than having compassion the reality is contrary to that - the king does not have compassion.

Then, as the commentary reads:

> ...although they are protectors [in a worldly sense, they] are irreligious and a source of conceit and recklessness

Here, the actual explanation is that kings have what is translated here as recklessness. Actually in the Tibetan the meaning is more like violence inflicted on others. So the reason why they are irreligious is because of their source of conceit and violence towards others. Therefore it is not proper to claim that the king has compassion and is thus following a religious practice.

1.2.1.3.3. Not everything stated by sages should be taken as valid

This is sub-divided into two.

1.2.1.3.3.1. Why not everything stated by sages is valid

1.2.1.3.3.2. Showing that the happiness of the people is not assured by taking social treatises to be valid

1.2.1.3.3.1. Why not everything stated by sages is valid

The English word 'sages', as used here, is a translation from the Tibetan word *trang song*. The syllable *trang* has a connotation of being honest, while *song* has the connotation of reaching a certain level in their practice. So the practice of those called *trang song* is supposed to be based on honesty and morality; they are meant to have good moral ethics and a honest mind. Also the very word *trang song* has the connotation of those who live in isolated places and who practice austerities. Therefore the Indian sadhus are also referred to as *trang songs* or sages.

Assertion: Treatises by sages state that even if, owing to the code of the royal caste, a king acts violently, he has not performed an ill deed.

Answer:

Sages' activities are not all *89*
[Actions] that the wise perform,
For there are inferior,
Mediocre and superior ones.

There are statements that are found in certain treatises composed by sages of the past. As the commentary explains:

> Not all the activities described in treatises by sages are performed by wise sages, for there are different kinds: inferior, mediocre and superior sages.

This refers to a treatise of a sage, which says that even if a king acts violently, he has not performed an ill-deed. That sort of statement doesn't necessarily have to be taken at face value, because it wouldn't necessarily have been composed by a great learned and experienced sage. There are different levels of accomplishments within the sages: there are some who are quite inferior. Even though it is in a treatise composed by a sage, it cannot be taken at face value and quoted, because it is clearly not a statement made by a great and learned sage. If it is found in one of the treatises, this would be clearly a statement made by an inferior sage. Based on those reasons, the quote that a king's violent activity is valid, even if he performs an ill deed, is definitely from an inferior sage's treatise.

In general, treatises stating doubts about whether a king's activities are virtuous or not and leave it as a doubt, would be considered as a statement from a treatise composed by a mediocre sage.

A clear statement that a king's activities that involved violence are definitely an ill deed would be a statement that is found in treatises by superior sages. The most superior sage is the Buddha.

Therefore because there are different treatises which have different statements in relation to the same topic, ranging from the very inferior to the superior, your quotation is definitely from an inferior sage's treatises and cannot be taken as valid.

1.2.1.3.3.2. Showing that the happiness of the people is not assured by taking social treatises to be valid

Assertion: Because past kings who took these social treatises to be valid looked after their people well, these treatises must be valid.

Answer: It is not certain that people will be happy by following these social treatises.

Virtuous rulers of the past *90*
Protected the people like their children.
Through the practices of this time of strife
It is now like a waste without wildlife.

> Former virtuous and kind rulers, such as universal monarchs who protected the people like their own children, increased happiness and prosperity. But those who rely on the practices of this time of strife nowadays devastate the world, making it like a waste without wildlife. Therefore treatises incompatible with religious practice are not valid.

The assertion refers to past kings who took social

treatises to be valid, and looked after the people, because they relied on those social treatises. It is seen that they have taken care of their subjects, so it therefore follows that the treatise on which they relied must be valid as well. That is the assertion or doubt being raised.

The response to this doubt is that earlier kings, such as the universal monarchs, did definitely protect the people like their own children and increased their happiness and prosperity, because of the fact that they relied upon valid treatises. They were, in fact, religious kings in the real sense, because they relied upon valid, authentic treatises, which explained the ways and means of genuinely taking care of subjects out of real compassion and love. Therefore, because the treatises that were relied upon by kings of the past were sound, valid treatises, the actions and activities followed by the kings who relied upon these treatises are authentic.

We can say the kings themselves acted out of real compassion. The kings of the past, for example, King Srongtsen Gampo in Tibet is said to have based his monarchy upon the moral values that are known as the ten virtues of the gods and humans. Therefore the values that guided him were based on the ten virtues as we know them from the teachings nowadays. If a king's rule of the country was based on the ten virtues, they definitely ruled out of real concern and compassion for their subjects. Therefore their activities were consistent with the valid treatises that they were relying upon.

The great kings of the past ruled upon the basis of the ten virtues. Based on the understanding of the wisdom of knowing karma - the consequences of cause and effect - they promoted the ten virtues amongst their subjects. Because that was the basis of the government, the people created virtuous merit and karma naturally. With people naturally living in a happy state, prosperity, wealth and so forth naturally increased, and happiness naturally increased. Therefore under that kind of monarchical rule, people were genuinely happy.

In relation to the rulers of these days the commentary reads:

> But those who rely on the practices of this time of strife nowadays devastate the world, making it like a waste without wildlife.

This refers to the fact that the moral values of those who rule based on the ten virtues, or abiding of the law of karma, have been shunned. Therefore slowly, slowly we can see how throughout time, the effect of the rulers becoming more selfishly based. They have ruled more out of self-interest for power, gain and wealth, rather than out of a real sense of genuine care and concern for the subjects. As a result we can see that there have been more wars, and more calamities and mishaps. Therefore delusions have become much more prevalent within the subjects as well. In this way we can see that there has definitely been a degeneration in times, as we see the rulers of these days basing their rule on mostly unethical codes, rather than moral and ethical codes.

Some kings rule without relying on authentic religious sources and they rule for their own benefit. They may quote some treatise, but they are not really authentic treatises. In that way we can see how degeneration has taken place. Therefore the very activities of the kings are reason enough to show how that the very treatises on which they rely, if in fact they are relying on any treatises, are not sound, valid treatises. In this way the doubt expressed above can be removed.

The definition of a valid treatise is a treatise that proclaims a means of benefiting the mind, and benefiting oneself. In other words, a valid treatise is unfailing and infallible. Treatises that are infallible through reasoning, or through the experience that one gains from them are valid treatises. Whereas treatises that may indicate something when one refers to it, or which have no real logical basis, or which, when practised, result in experiences that do not accord to what is being explained, are not valid treatises.

1.2.1.3.4. VIOLENCE TOWARD ENEMIES IS IRRELIGIOUS

Assertion: Treatises state it is not irreligious even if a king harms his enemies when occasions to do so arise.

Answer:

> *If a king who seizes the occasion* *91*
> *To harm is not doing wrong,*
> *Then others, too, such as thieves*
> *Have not done so in the first place.*

This doubt arises in relation to certain treatises that seem to encourage subduing enemies. They contain passages saying that in an event that an enemy arises, and if you have the power, then you must overcome the enemy. Basically these treatises justify an irreligious activity as moral and justified.

> If a king who seizes the occasion to harm an enemy or anyone else that has acted improperly by beating him with sticks and the like is not doing wrong, others too, like thieves, have not done wrong in the first place – a thief finds an occasion to strike at someone rich first, and the king later finds an occasion to strike back.

The doubt refers to the case where if a so-called enemy arises, and it is not seen as immoral if the king were to harm that enemy, because an opportunity arises to strike. In that case a thief, who finds an opportunity to rob a rich person, could also be stated as not being immoral.

The main point here is in relation to a statement made in a treatise that one should strike when the occasion arises. What is being refuted is the justification to strike back when an occasion arises. This is the same as saying that a thief should take something when the occasion arises. Can that also be considered as being proper or moral? Of course it would not be accepted even in a worldly sense. If the thief's act of taking something when the occasion arises is not immoral, then why would we punish a thief? Such reasoning can not be followed.

1.2.1.3.5. DYING IN BATTLE IS NOT A CAUSE FOR A HAPPY TRANSMIGRATION

Assertion: By defeating the enemy in battle one acquires wealth and pleases the king, and if one dies for him in battle one will go to a high rebirth. Therefore a king

should take pleasure in warfare.

Answer:

If giving all one has for liquor 92
And so on is not an offering,
Why consider it an offering
To give oneself in battle?

If giving all one has for liquor, gambling and women is not an offering that pleases the excellent and if it is also unmeritorious, why consider giving one's life in battle out of anger and greed, an offering to please the excellent? For what reason would one take a high rebirth through this? Is it not feasible.

Apparently there are treatises and certain worldly beings who claim that it is definitely desirable to go to war and even die in war. If one goes to war and is able to vanquish enemies and fight bravely, then one will receive medals and prizes when one returns. Even if one were to die in war, that too would be fine. One would have had a worthwhile death, because through dying in the service of the king one will have a good rebirth. Those are the sort of treatises that seem to encourage people to go to war and fight. Not only are people encouraged to go to war with the promise of getting medals, or a gift, or wealth and so forth as a token of appreciation later on (if one is able to survive), but if one were to die in battle good things are promised after death. Saying that they would have good rebirths after death overcomes their fear.

The actual analogy given in the root text itself is that it is similar to those who give everything they have – wealth and so forth - for addictions such as intoxicants, gambling or women (such as going to prostitutes and so forth). In instances like this where people completely give in to these addictions, they may spend all their wealth and become impoverished from that. Let alone the noble or wise beings praising such behaviour, even ordinary worldly beings would see that as being unmeritorious, or an ill deed. Even worldly beings shun such people. Would such activities such as spending all of one's money on liquor or gambling or going to prostitutes, for example, be on considered as meritorious or a good deed in a worldly sense? No-one would agree, would they?

So the main reason why this would not be considered as a good deed is because there is an indulgence, a very excessive desire or attachment, that is involved. Those who indulge themselves in liquor, gambling or women are considered as being immoral and as committing an ill deed. Why? Because their actions are based on excessive attachment and greed. It is exactly the same for those who go into battle. They go out of anger and greed. Therefore how could that be seen as noble when the very basis of the reasoning is exactly the same as in the earlier case. Therefore going into battle has to be considered as being immoral. How can the deed of going into battle become a cause to be reborn in high rebirths? It cannot be so.

1.2.1.4. IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR A KING TO FEEL DISTRESSED

Assertion: It is reasonable to like being a king, because a king is the guardian of all his people.

Answer: That is not so.

You, the king, guardian of the people, 93
Have no guardian yourself.
Since your guardianship does not
Release you, who would be happy?

As the commentary explains:

Since a king is the guardian of his people, they follow his instructions, giving up unsuitable activities and engaging in suitable ones. However you, the king, have no guardian and, living in a morass of corruption without any guardian, your actions are arbitrary. Because you have guardianship yet have no mentor, the causes of suffering in bad rebirths hold you fast and have not released you. Therefore who would be happy about gaining kingship? It is unreasonable to be happy.

This doubt arises in relation to a worldly thought that many will have: the king's position of protector is a desirable situation, because he is the protector of all. To overcome this doubt the text goes into an explanation of how in reality, the king's position is not a desirable one, because he is himself without a real protector. The fact that the king is a protector for his subjects is not denied. Of course, in reality, the king has the responsibility and to a certain extent the guardianship of his people, and the people likewise follow his instructions. To a certain extent, people following his instructions may avoid unsuitable activities and engage in suitable ones. That is a fact which is undenied in general.

However there is no real pride in being a protector of others, when there is no real protector for the king himself. 'Because of the fact that you have no guardian yourself' also means that the king, being superior out of his pride or status, may not accept any other superior being or person over him. Therefore the king will not have a mentor. Without having a mentor and no one to look up to himself, there is nothing to prevent the king from engaging in misdeeds and corruption and so forth, and thus misbehaviours. Therefore, being mentorless and protectorless becomes a fault for a king, because he may act in a corrupt way, without conscientiousness.

The main point here is showing the absurdity of the situation where a protector of others, having no protector himself, is led or influenced into engaging in deeds that will result in being reborn in lower realms. That being the case, who with a wise mind would desire a state of being like a king. No one with real wisdom would actually want to be a king.

1.2.1.5. IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR A KING TO HAVE EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT TO HIS KINGDOM

Note that there is a misprint in the translation of the text book. We will go over this outline in the next session.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 October 2006

As usual we will sit in a comfortable position while we generate a positive motivation in our mind, such as, 'I will receive the teachings in order to benefit all sentient beings. By listening to the Dharma and putting it into practice as best as possible, may I achieve enlightenment'.

1.2.1. Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth (cont.)

1.2.1.5. IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR A KING TO HAVE EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT TO HIS KINGDOM

Assertion: Since a king whose punishments are mild does not become famous, while one who punishes harshly is famous even after his death, it is appropriate to give harsh punishment.

Answer:

Though a king is famous after his death 94
It will bring no benefit.
Do you, being worthless, and those who
Cook dogs not have notoriety?

The doubt refers to generally accepting that since the king maintains his fame even after death, it therefore seems that anything contributing to that fame, such as giving harsh punishments, is appropriate. As the common people seem to remember harsh punishments and severe rulings, that adds to the fame of a king, even after his death. That being the case, then the doubt arises that if one can become famous and maintain one's fame, and since harsh punishments can contribute to that fame, then it may seem appropriate to punish harshly.

> If posthumous fame brought some benefit, that would be all right, but even though a king is famous after his death, it brings no benefits, such as the elimination of ill deeds.

As the commentary explains, fame cannot remove ill deeds or negative karma. If it could help to do that, then maybe it is worthwhile considering punishing harshly. But that is not the case. There are different types of fame such as genuine 'good fame' and 'notorious fame'. The deeds contributing to good fame will be those that lead one to a higher rebirth, which can be considered as being a fame that is of a good quality. Notorious fame, robbing others through taxes and so forth, is of no benefit or use. The causes that you have engaged in to accumulate that kind of bad fame are definitely a cause to be reborn in the lower realms. There is no question about that.

> If fame could wash away the stains of wrongdoing, why would you, because of your worthless actions like seizing others' wealth, and those who cook dogs, because of their awesomeness to dogs, not enjoy great fame?

What is being referred to here is that if your notorious deeds, which have accumulated the fame of creating wrong deeds or negative karmas, were a means to wash away the negative deeds of others, such as those who cook dogs and so forth, then the fame that you have accumulated through your good deeds will not be a means to wash away your negative karma or deeds. Therefore the wise will not see the deeds that contribute to your fame as being a fame that is worthwhile obtaining. The wise will definitely see that as something to be shunned.

1.2.2. Refuting arrogance because of caste

This refers the son of the king being naturally born into the caste of the king. Merely being in that caste is regarded as a reason for arrogance. This is subdivided into three:

1.2.2.1. Refuting arrogance because of being a king's son
1.2.2.2. Refuting arrogance merely because of being royal caste
1.2.2.3. Refuting that one becomes royal caste through the work of protecting everyone

1.2.2.1. REFUTING ARROGANCE BECAUSE OF BEING A KING'S SON

Assertion: A prince of royal caste is fit to rule while others are not, therefore pride is appropriate.

Answer: It is not.

When all power and wealth 95
Are produced by merit,
It cannot be said that this one
Will not be a basis for power and wealth.

The assertion refers to the fact that the monarchy can only be inherited by the king's son, namely the prince, because he is in the same caste. It is not like a lineage that can be passed onto anyone. Therefore from a worldly point of view, it can be seen as appropriate to feel proud about being born into the king's caste. However the text refutes that reason.

The main assertion here is that it is only a prince who is fit to have the authority of a king, with the ability to punish or give status to others and so forth. The assertion here is that such activities are only fit for a prince. However the root text refutes this, saying that such activities are not only an activity of a prince.

It is not merely due to being born as a son of a king that one receives that authority, but rather because of the merit that one has accumulated from previous lifetimes. Without having created the merit, one would not be have that sort of status and ability. Therefore the real contributing factor to having power and authority is merit rather than caste.

Therefore it is not appropriate to claim that it is only fit for a prince born into that particular caste to have that authority over others. Rather, it is because of his merit, and as anyone could accumulate that merit, they too would have that authority and power and so forth. That is the main contributing factor. These are qualities that any being who has accumulated the merit can share equally with the prince. Thus it is not appropriate for the

prince, or anyone born in the king's caste, to feel proud of that status. Of course, this also refers to the obvious fact that all of us have equally been kings many times in the past, although we do not carry anything from that *[laughter]*. Also, someone may be a king one day, but it could all end by the next morning, and a king and ruler in the morning could be imprisoned by evening.

1.2.2.2. REFUTING ARROGANCE MERELY BECAUSE OF BEING ROYAL CASTE

This is subdivided into two.

1.2.2.2.1. There have not always been distinct castes, meaning that there has not always been a distinct caste system.
1.2.2.2.2. Since there are four castes, a royal caste existent by way of its own entity is not ascertained.

1.2.2.2.1. THERE HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN DISTINCT CASTES

Assertion: Since the practice of kingship is only explained to those of the royal caste but not the other three and thus the royal caste alone should rule, pride because of caste is appropriate.

Answer:

> *In the world caste is determined* *96*
> *With regard to the main means of livelihood.*
> *Thus there is no division among*
> *All sentient beings by way of caste.*

The assertion states that of the original four castes not even one of them, including the royal caste, can be ascertained as being existent from its own side, from its own nature.

The assertion or the doubt again refers to the royal caste as being the superior caste, which alone has the authority of ruling. Here the authority of ruling refers to the particular activities that only a king is fit to do, such as being the ruler of all the subjects in that nation. The ultimate decision about the kind of punishments to be inflicted is said to be in the king's hands. Another authority that only a king has is rewarding those for whatever virtue or good deeds they have done, and presenting prizes. These are some of the main activities of a ruler. The assertion here is that it is only a king who has the authority to engage in those kinds of activities of rulership. Thus, pride in caste is appropriate.

However, as the root text and the commentary explain, there is no certainty in the caste system itself. The reason as explained here is that the caste system is not something which is of its own entity. Rather it was created in India by the people of the first eras in relation to different types of livelihoods of the people of that era.

As the commentary explains:

> Humans of the first era were born miraculously from mind and were endowed with luminosity. They had miraculous powers and could travel in space. They lived on the food of joy and did not have male or female sexual organs. Later, as they began to eat coarse food, they gradually developed different shapes determined by their male and female organs, and birth from the womb occurred.

It is from that time onwards that birth from the womb started to occur. As explained earlier, the godly beings of the earlier era did not need to have to labour or worry about their food because they had a miraculous, spontaneous food, and they didn't have to depend on coarse food.

When they first began to depend on coarse food it was spontaneously produced right after it was consumed, because the merit was still high. However, that natural ability slowly started to diminish, and the beings began to hoard their food so that they would have something for the next day. While some hoarded or collected food, others, out of greediness, wanted to take it away from them, which is when stealing started to occur. This implies that if you have nothing to keep, then there would be nothing that others could steal.

> Then, because of hoarding, stealing and so forth began. To protect against stealing, a man in his prime was appointed by the majority of the community to guard the fields. Those who agreed to do this work were known as the royal caste.

What is being explained here is the fact that initially there was no royal caste system at all. There was no necessity because everyone was equal. Whereas when the times began to degenerate, there was a need for someone to be in charge, so the people of that era appointed someone as their king. From then onwards the royal caste system developed. The main point being made here is that before that era there was no royal caste, or any other caste for that matter.

Then the commentary goes on to explain the other caste systems, the next of which is the Brahmin caste.

> Those who wished to subdue their senses left the towns to do ascetic practices and were called Brahmins.

When things started to disintegrate, there were some who decided to abandon worldly life and lead an ascetic life. The Tibetan word *dram se* has the connotation of those who leave a life of worldliness for a more subdued life. Thus they leave normal worldly activities, and go off to lead a more ascetic kind of life. They were then known as *dram se*. In India these people were called Brahmins, and that is how the Brahmin caste system developed.

Then there is the 'official caste'.

> Those who carried out the king's orders were called the official caste,...

The last caste system was the 'common caste':

> ... those put to menial work like ploughing the fields were known as the common caste. Thus, in the world, caste was determined with regard to the main means of gaining a livelihood.

As the commentary further explains:

> There is no innate division among sentient beings based on castes distinct by way of their own entity.

And the analogy is:

> It is like pots distinguished by their different contents.

As with the analogy, the caste system was only developed gradually as the social structures of the time degenerated. It is not really something that is distinct from its own side; it is like different pots which have different contents, while still maintaining the same entity of being pots.

Thus the caste system came about gradually, which in itself indicates that from the very beginning there is no intrinsic caste system which came about independently from its own side.

> Thus it is very wrong to accept statements in treatises by sages that say even if a king uses violence it is not irreligious.

Some treatises explain that using violence is acceptable, but to then assume that it is therefore religious is wrong. That is not so; it is still an irreligious activity.

Although this explanation of how they developed the caste system came from an earlier time in India, we find that even though they may not claim to have castes, there naturally seems to be a caste system, which naturally developed in other nations, except perhaps for the Brahmin caste. For example, in those countries which had kings as rulers, there was naturally a hierarchy. It was only those who were born to a king and queen who became rulers. Likewise there was an aristocratic class of the ministers or other noble families who worked directly under the king. Then we had what we call to this day the working class. So we can see that the distinction between the people came about naturally.

1.2.2.2.2. SINCE THERE ARE FOUR CASTES, A ROYAL CASTE EXISTENT BY WAY OF ITS OWN ENTITY IS NOT ASCERTAINED

Assertion: Since there are four different ancestral lineages among humans, there are castes which differ by way of their own entity.

Answer:

> *Since it was very long ago* *97*
> *And women's minds are fickle,*
> *There is no one from the from the caste*
> *Known as the royal caste.*

As the commentary explains:

> It is very difficult to find anyone whose caste is certain because of being born from parents of pure caste.

The reason why it is very difficult to find a pure caste is because:

> Since the division into four castes occurred very long ago in the world, and women's fickle minds have turned toward other men, there is no one who definitely belongs to the caste known as the royal caste.

What is being explained here is that because the original caste system developed so many thousands of years ago, it is unlikely that anyone today could claim that they are from a very pure caste. As time goes on, there are inter-caste marriages and so forth, so therefore the caste system has been mixed and therefore it is hard to find someone of pure royal caste. Also a king might have many queens. Actually to be of really pure caste, a prince would have to be the son of a king and a queen, which means that the queen would have to have been a daughter of another king and queen. Throughout history, as we have noticed, a king might have a son by queens who did not have the authentic lineage of a princess. Also, children may have different fathers, or not be sure who their real father is. In this way we can see how it is hard to determine a pure caste from a pure lineage going back to earlier times. So there is already a flaw in the caste system. Therefore in this way we can see how, as time goes on, it is very difficult to find a really pure caste.

> Therefore pride on account of one's ancestry is unjustified.

Therefore being proud just because of caste is inappropriate, because the caste system itself is not certain to be pure. I remember someone mentioning to me about how her daughter was pregnant, and it had not been determined who the father really was. She told me how, in earlier times, having a child without identifying the father was not considered very proper. However times have changed and she said, 'Actually I don't particularly mind who the father is. Whether he has one or two or three fathers, I don't care. The fact is that my child has a child and that is okay'. So it seems that in earlier times if a woman were to bear a child, the father had to be identified and would have to be their legitimate husband. If that was not so, then it seems that it was considered as being immoral or not in accord with the norms of the society. I think that may be one reason why some abortions took place - out of embarrassment or shame or an inability to deal with the pressure and so forth. That is actually quite a pitiful state of affairs.

1.2.2.3. REFUTING THAT ONE BECOMES ROYAL CASTE THROUGH THE WORK OF PROTECTING EVERYONE[1]

Assertion: If one does not become royal through caste, one becomes a member of the royal caste through one's work of protecting everyone

Answer:

> *If even one of common caste* *98*
> *Through his work could become royal caste,*
> *One might wonder why even a commoner*
> *Should not become Brahmin through his work.*

The doubt being raised here is in relation to the earlier doubt, which is that there is a flaw in the caste system. If someone were to work hard, then through their ability to protect others they could achieve royalty. Thus they might become proud of that. The doubt basically is that even if one were not to become a king because of one's caste, one could join the royal caste system, thus becoming royalty, because of having the ability to protect all the subjects. That is the assertion that is being raised.

> If, by doing the work of the royal caste such as protection of the people, even people of common caste could become royal caste, one might wonder why even those of common caste should not become Brahmin by doing Brahmin work such as reciting the

[1] In the text book there is a misprint. This heading is categorised as c, when it is actually 3.

> Vedas. Thus it is wrong to think that one belongs to the royal caste because of one's work.

What is being explained here is the absurdity of assuming that someone could be of a royal caste just because they have the ability to do the same things that a king does, such as protecting others. The main point is that if merely by doing the work of those of a particular caste system was to determine that one belonged to that caste, then, as mentioned here, even someone from a common caste could also do the main work of the Brahmins, such as reciting the Vedas and doing pujas. Would they then also become a Brahmin? Of course that cannot be so.

The analogy used here is:

> For instance, though one speaks of a boat going to "that bank" and coming to "this bank," neither this bank nor that bank exist by way of their own entity.

This analogy is also used to show how things are merely labelled, and that they do not exist from their own side. The caste system, as mentioned earlier, was initially established by way of the social norms of the society. But it is not as though caste was something that existed from its own side from the very beginning. As the analogy explains, when we refer to 'this bank' or 'that bank', it is all in relation to which point of view you are looking from. When you are on this side of the river, then the bank over there becomes 'that bank'. However if you go to the other side, then the side of the river that you earlier called this bank, becomes 'that bank'. So there is no inherently existent 'this' or 'that' bank that always remains that way. So this is also the analogy showing that all existence, and in particular the caste system, is like that.

This analogy can be understood on a subtle level in relation to the explanation of a lack of inherent existence, and it can also be related to a normal general sense where things began. In relation to the caste systems, as mentioned earlier, there was a time when there were no castes, but then the caste system began at a certain period in time. Therefore it operates in relation to the norms of the people who established it.

The river bank analogy is actually a very vivid analogy of how 'this' and 'that' are terms that are nominally used for defining certain purposes. But when we look into it, there is no real 'this' or 'that' that can be determined as being always 'this' and always 'that'. This analogy is used to explain the subtleties of how things do not exist from their own side. If we refer to inherent existence we can refer to the subtleties of the emptiness or lack of inherent existence of things, or we can relate it to even the general sense of how things do not exist from the very beginning.

The main point of the whole chapter is using the king as a particular example of how, using all the various different reasons, it is inappropriate for the king to be proud. The chapter goes through all the various doubts or reasons why one would normally think that the king himself, or others, might think that it is appropriate for the king to be proud. The chapter gives various reasons why that is inappropriate. The very last reasons that were given referred to the actual caste of royalty itself, questioning whether they are real royalty or not. So having pride based on a notion that one is of a royal caste is questionable. Therefore one can see that there is no real basis or sound reasoning for a king to be proud.

The chapter talked about the caste system. If we relate that to our normal world at this time, we do find that there are many who were once rulers but who later have to do all kinds of ordinary work when they fall from power. They have to engage in normal activities that the working class engage in. Likewise, those from the working class may gain power later on and become rulers. So we can see that status rises and falls. When we think about it in that way and relate it to our own life, and our own personal practice, we can see that since there is no stability in status or power or any kind of social standing, then there is no real reason for oneself or others to feel proud in that way. For example, imagine that soon after a king is enthroned, someone claims, 'Oh, the king was not his legitimate father, he actually had another father'. If someone could prove that and they could actually depose that king, saying that he was not fit to be a king, then the whole pride of being enthroned as a king would be completely wasted.

We don't have that many more sessions left this year - I think there are nine left. So basically for October and November will we have the teaching sessions and then the first two weeks in December will be a discussion and then an exam week. After that we will not have any teachings until next year.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 October 2006

As usual we sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.3. Showing other means to give up ill deeds

This is subdivided into two.

1.2.3.1. Refuting the appropriateness of arrogance because kings have great possessions and, when the time is right, can distribute great power and wealth such as riches to many people.

1.2.3.2. Refuting that it is therefore appropriate for kings to be conceited.

1.2.3.1. Refuting the appropriateness of arrogance because kings have great possessions and, when the time is right, can distribute great power and wealth such as riches to many people

This sub-division is in relation to further doubts about the appropriateness of the king being arrogant.

Assertion: Through the power and wealth of kingship it is possible to distribute possessions and so forth to a great many people when the time is right. Therefore pride is appropriate.

Here the doubt is whether the king can be arrogant, based on the fact that by having riches and many possessions he would be able to do good, such as giving to the poor and others. Also, because of riches the king may have a sense of pride thinking, 'Because of my riches I am able to subdue others'. Basically this means that by being generous and so forth one will be able to influence others, and by thinking in that way a king may feel that he has reason to be proud. Even if that were the case, the verse says that this is not a reason for the king to feel arrogant.

A king's ill deeds cannot be 99
Distributed like his wealth.
What wise person ever destroys
Their future for another's sake?

While it is true that the king can distribute possessions that accumulate over a long period…

It is an accepted fact that the riches and so forth of the king have been accumulated over a long time, even from before he inherited them. It is also true that due to that wealth one can influence others.

…a king cannot distribute the ill deeds created in connection with them as he can power and wealth.

While it may be true that the king can distribute the wealth that he has accumulated over a long time, he has also accumulated a lot of negative karma in relation to that wealth, to his greed and to the way the wealth was collected. While the king may be able to distribute his wealth amongst others, he cannot distribute the negative karma that he accrued in relation to his wealth, because karma is not something that he can distribute and share with others.

Because of the fact that the negative karmas the king has accumulated cannot be distributed, or shared with others, the negative consequences of the negative karma he has created have to be experienced by the king himself.

…what wise person would destroy the future lives on account of something trivial for someone else's sake?

Anyone with a wise mind would not give up a long-term goal, such as the results for future lifetimes, for trivial things such as wealth and fame in this present short life-time. The really wise ones would not engage in pursuing that path.

The main point being made here is the fact that it is not wise to accumulate a great amount of negative deeds for the sake of a small benefit. The king may claim that his riches and wealth and so forth are accumulated for the benefit of others, but the negative karma that the king has to accumulate when acquiring that wealth far exceeds the small benefit that he can do for himself or others. Even if he does share with others, the benefit to them is minimal in relation to the negative karma that he has created for himself. This is personal advice that we have to relate to our own life. Sometimes we might get some small benefit but we end up creating so much negative karma, which is not very good for us in the long term.

In relation to the main assertion or doubt raised earlier, that it is appropriate for the king to feel proud because of his wealth and so forth, the commentary explains here that it is in fact a state of shame rather than pride when a king accumulates so many negative karmas.

The analogy in the commentary is that it is like sacrificing a buffalo to the gods and then sharing the meat with others. Through ignorance this is seen as a good deed, but rather than accumulating merit, the negative karma that is created in sacrificing that buffalo cannot be shared. The main point being made here is that the negative karma that one accumulates has to be experienced by oneself alone, even if one accumulates it with an intention to benefit others.

1.2.3.2. Refuting that it is therefore appropriate for kings to be very conceited

Assertion: Since one lives with great power and wealth pride is appropriate.

Answer:

Pride caused by power and wealth 100
Does not remain in the hearts of the wise,
Once one has looked at others
With equal or superior power.

After all the earlier reasons indicating that under no circumstances is pride in the status and wealth appropriate, the king might still feel that it is appropriate to maintain a sense of pride.

> Regarding pride caused by the power of wealth and kingship and so forth, which thinks, 'I am better than others', one must look at those with equal power and wealth as well as others much more mighty than oneself who have superlative powers and wealth.

Pride will initially arise when a king has the notion that he is the greatest, has many subjects, and is ruling over others and so forth. However in reality there are other kings who are equal to him, or who are even superior to him. When one has that conceited mind of pride then one should look upon those who are either equal, or superior, to oneself in order to overcome that pride.

> Having done so pride will not so remain in the hearts of the wise, who know how to analyse in detail the way things are.

As is explained here, when one looks into one's situation with wisdom, then pride can be reduced when one sees oneself in comparison to others.

The concluding lines of this chapter are that in order to benefit others one must overcome pride. Therefore one must respect all others, like teachers, with a sense of humility, and have a general sense of respect towards all in that way. If one practises in this way then it becomes a cause for all good qualities to arise in one's mind. One can make others happy and joyful by practising humility and paying respect to others. In general, respecting others is the ultimate way to give joy to others.

The analogy given here is of the Brahmin Vasudhara's wife, who was proud of her beauty. In order to overcome that pride the Brahmin put her into the retinue of the king's queens. Her initially strong sense of pride in being the most beautiful was immediately reduced when she was amongst other beautiful women.

As a summarising stanza Gyaltsab Je, the author of the commentary, added this verse

> Thinking about impermanence and uncleanliness of the body,
> Understand the faults of attachment to it.
> Make effort to achieve unsurpassable enlightenment
> And give up pride in both 'I' and 'mine'.

This verse summarises the earlier chapters as well as this fourth chapter. Thinking about impermanence and the uncleanliness of the body refers to the points made in earlier chapters on the extensive ways of thinking about how the contaminated body's nature is impermanent as well as unclean. Having understood the faults of that the body, attachment towards it needs to be overcome. Furthermore we need to give up the sense of pride in 'I' and 'mine' and in that way make an effort towards achieving the unsurpassable enlightenment, the ultimate state of buddhahood.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the fourth chapter of the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds** *showing the means to abandon conceptions of the self.*

The outline that we are in began with was:

3.2.1.[1] Explaining the stages of the paths depending on conventional truths

This was subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1. Showing how the aspiring altruistic intention is generated after trainings in the attitude of a person of intermediate capacity by elimination of the four errors.[2]

This was then subdivided into the first four chapters, which we have now completed.

3.2.1.2. Explaining how to generate the deeds having generated the practical altruistic intention.[3]

As the outline structure indicates, the first four chapters relate to the faults of the body: first of all overcoming the erroneous view of permanence with the explanation of impermanence; secondly overcoming the erroneous view that the body is clean by explaining the uncleanliness of the body; thirdly explaining that the body is selfless by overcoming the erroneous view that there is a self.

These explanations are explicitly in relation to the practices of the medium scope. However implicitly they also explain how to develop an altruistic or a bodhicitta intention. Overcoming the erroneous views in relation to the body are explicitly explained as a means to develop a renunciation of cyclic existence, the immediate result of which is develop renunciation, then abandoning cyclic existence and obtaining liberation for oneself. Implicitly what should also be understood here is that while one relates an understanding of the nature of suffering to one's own situation, when one focuses upon others one sees how they, too, are in the nature of suffering just like oneself. Then, based on that, one develops love and compassion, and based on that, an altruistic intention develops to free them from all suffering and lead them to enlightenment. This is how the teachings implicitly teach how to develop the altruistic intention. As explained here in this teaching, and in the commentary, one should use that understanding in all other circumstances when it comes to the teachings of the medium scope or the small scope, but particularly the medium scope.

We can relate all three scopes of understanding to the twelve interdependent links[4]. In relation to the **small scope**, the twelve interdependent links show how through ignorance and karma and so forth, one is lead into the lower realms, and when one contemplates on the twelve interdependent links in reverse order in relation to the small scope then that becomes a means to free oneself from the lower realms, and in particular from the

[1] To make things easier the numbering of each chapter begins with 1. Thus 'Presenting the name of the chapter' is actually 3.2.1.1.4.2. The numbering of this heading and the two following sub-headings refers back to the overall structure of the text.

[2] This was given on 14 March 2006 as 'Showing how to generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is abandoning the four misconceptions'.

[3] This was given on 14 March 2006 as 'After having generated the wishing bodhicitta how to train in the path'.

[4] These were listed on 28 March 2006.

sufferings of the lower realms. In the **medium scope** the twelve interdependent links are explained not only in relation to how one is led into the lower realms, but also into the higher rebirth of cyclic existence. With that understanding of how the twelve interdependent links lead an individual into cyclic existence, one then contemplates the reverse order of the twelve interdependent links, which then becomes a means for an individual to develop renunciation, and to be free from cyclic existence. In the **great scope** one uses the understanding of the twelve interdependent links to understand how all suffering beings are led into samsara through the means of the twelve interdependent links. Contemplating the twelve links in reverse order in relation to all sentient beings then becomes the means to release oneself and all other sentient beings from not only cyclic existence, but from the very imprints of cyclic existence, thus leading to enlightenment.

Of course I have mentioned this many times previously, but just in case people need to be reminded of these main points, we can see that how contemplation on the twelve interdependent links becomes a really profound way of developing what we call love and compassion, and thus serving as a basis to develop bodhicitta. Even though the twelve interdependent links are specifically explained in the medium scope, when we contemplate that explanation it becomes a very profound way bringing about a true sense of the suffering of cyclic existence, even at a very subtle level. Whereas if we contemplate only immediate suffering at a more superficial level, of people suffering from hunger or thirst or an immediate danger or physical or mental hardships, then when we see others who are not suffering in that way, we may become complacent and think, 'Oh, they are not really suffering'. Whereas if we contemplate in relation to the twelve interdependent links then our understanding of the suffering of oneself and other sentient beings becomes much more profound.

The importance of really contemplating the twelve interdependent links cannot be underestimated; otherwise our compassion may become very superficial. If we may think that suffering refers to hunger, thirst, poverty and so forth we have some sense of pity towards those suffering in this way, but at the same time we might envy people who have a lot of wealth, who are beautiful, who seem to have things going well, thinking, 'Oh that's a desirable state'. So on one hand while we are trying to develop love and compassion for some we may actually envy the status and the wealth and beauty of others. Then our love and compassion becomes really superficial, rather than deep and profound.

3.2.1.2. Explaining how to train in the deeds having generated a practical altruistic intention

'Practical altruistic intention' can also be translated as aspirational bodhicitta. As mentioned earlier, the first four chapters implicitly explain aspirational bodhicitta, which is the very strong motivation or intention to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings. The bodhicitta is still on an aspirational level, as one has not yet actually promised to engage in the deeds. That aspirational bodhicitta is therefore just a noble intention.

Having generated aspirational bodhicitta the text now explains how to implicitly engage in the deeds of the bodhisattva. On the actual path to enlightenment it is explained how aspirational bodhicitta is developed during the meditative equipoise of a bodhisattva, whereas the engaging bodhisattva attitude is manifested in what is called the post-meditative state.

An understanding of aspirational bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta can actually be implied in whatever practices we do. For example, in the Tara practice, the opening lines are, 'To benefit all sentient beings I need to attain the state of mother Tara', which is when one can develop aspirational bodhicitta, for the sake of all sentient beings, and for that purpose wishing to attain the state of mother Tara. The next lines say, 'For that purpose I will engage in the practice of making offerings and so forth for the practice of mother Tara'. This indicates the engaging bodhisattva attitude.

This major heading is subdivided into four categories, each of which is a main chapter heading.

3.2.1.2.1 The actual meaning, which is the main topic of the fifth chapter.

3.2.1.2.2. Explaining the means to abandoning the disturbing attitudes and emotions which prevent the deeds, which is the main topic of the sixth chapter.

3.2.1.2.3. Abandoning attachment to sense objects on which disturbing emotions focus, which is the main topic of the seventh chapter.

3.2.1.2.4. Showing the methods of fully training the students mind stream making it receptive to the development of spiritual paths, this is the main topic of the eighth chapter.

CHAPTER 5: THE ACTUAL MEANING

The outline in the translated text book does not indicate the two main sub categories of this chapter, however according to Gyaltsab Je's commentary, they are:

1.[5] The explanation of the material of the chapter

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. The explanation of the material of the chapter

This is subdivided into four.

1.1. Showing the greatness of buddhahood, the resultant attainment

1.2. Explaining how to practice the bodhisattva deeds, the cause of buddhahood

1.3. Proof of resultant omniscience

1.4. Showing why those with poor intelligence fear the great vehicle

1.1. Showing the greatness of buddhahood, the

[5] For convenience the numbering of each chapter begins with 1. This heading is actually 3.2.1.2.1.1.

resultant attainment

This has three subdivisions.

1.1.1. Distinctive features of a buddha's activities

1.1.2. Their effect

1.1.3. Not answering fourteen questions is no suitable proof for lack of omniscience

1.1.1. Distinctive features of a buddha's activities

As explained in the commentary, what one derives from the earlier explanations is that having a Hinayana disposition, meaning being inclined to a mental disposition where one wants to free oneself from cyclic existence, and thus seek self-liberation, helps to generate an aversion to cyclic existence. From the same earlier explanations, having a Mahayana disposition, meaning having a wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, helps to develop great compassion and bodhicitta and the desire to seek buddhahood. That being so, the question arises as to what are the causes to achieve aversion to cyclic existence, and then developing bodhicitta.

> Question: Where are these causes found?
>
> Answer: In the Buddha.
>
> Question: What is a buddha like? What are the characteristics of a buddha?
>
> Answer:
>
> *Not a single movement of buddhas* *101*
> *Is without reason; even their breathing*
> *Is exclusively for*
> *The benefit of sentient beings*

The explanation here is the same as with that of identifying the object of refuge, and then aspiring to go for refuge. Where does the attitude of sentient beings with different dispositions, particularly relating to the Mahayana disposition come from? The answer to that question is that it comes from seeing the qualities of the Buddha. When one sees the qualities of the Buddha, and fully understands and appreciates them, then the spontaneous wish to be exactly like the Buddha will arise in the mind. Therefore by seeing the qualities of the Buddha one generates the wish to develop what we call bodhicitta, which is the cause to achieve enlightenment, and then proceeds on to achieving enlightenment.

One thinks of the qualities of the Buddha with the spontaneous wish, 'How wonderful it would be if I could become like that myself'. If we contemplate that wish further, it becomes stronger and stronger. As the wish to become a buddha becomes stronger, then the wish to practise, such as generating bodhicitta and so forth, occurs naturally. Those who have developed a strong wish to become a buddha waste no time; every moment is spent on practising the means and methods of becoming a buddha.

The next question is, if these qualities come from the Buddha, then what is the buddha like? Who or what is a buddha?

As the commentary explains:

> Such a supremely compassionate person performs inconceivable activities for the welfare of all sentient beings without exception.

This explains how a buddha is a being whose sole wish is to benefit all sentient beings indiscriminately.

The commentary goes on to elaborate:

> Buddhas make no movement of the three doors that is not for the benefit of sentient beings.

This indicates that whatever a buddha does through their three doors, meaning body, speech and mind i.e. every single movement, is for the benefit of all sentient beings. There is no purpose of self left.

The commentary quotes from the *King of Meditative Stabilisation*:

> Countless hundreds and thousands of rays come from
> The soles of the King of the Teaching's [or King of the Dharma, which refers to the Buddha] feet,
> Cooling sentient beings in all of the hells.
> Free from suffering they enjoy bliss.

And

> When a conqueror places his foot on the threshold
> Those blind from birth, those whose ears do not hear,
> The protectorless and those with small merit -
> All of these gain eyes and ears

These lines explain the great miraculous abilities that a buddha has: just by placing his foot on a threshold a buddha benefits so many beings on a practical way, giving sight to those who are blind, sound to those who are deaf, giving merit to those who have less merit and so forth.

> Even his breath, which flows naturally without depending on any intention…

We breath without having to think about it; it is very natural and not as though we have to think, 'I am going to breath in, and I am going to breath out' every time we breath. Breathing is natural and spontaneous. A buddha's activities of benefiting other sentients beings are just like that.

> …forms a huge rain cloud above the hell realms like a mound of eye ointment, fascinating the hell beings. From it falls a delicious cooling rain making the mass of fire in the hells die down. Freed from their suffering, the hell beings wonder whose power pacified it, whereupon they see the Buddha's body adorned with the major and minor marks.

The force of that admiration of the Buddha stills the suffering of the hells and produces in the minds of the hell beings a virtuous concordance with the attainments of liberation. The main point is that the virtuous activities of the Buddha are such that, even in the hell realms the beings who are suffering there are cooled through the merit of the Buddha. As it explains in the commentary, a rain of nectar falls, which cools the beings in the hell realms. They are astonished to be suddenly released from their suffering, and look up to see where this is coming from, and they see the Buddha. Thus great faith is generated in their minds.

> If his breathing is given for the temporary and

ultimate welfare off all sentient beings, what need is there to mention the benefit of activities such as his teachings?

As explained in the commentary, the force of that admiration stills the suffering of the hells and produces virtue in their minds in accordance with the attainment of liberation. It seems quite amazing and unimaginable that this could take place even in the hell realms, but what we should understand here, is that even beings born in the hell realms may have strong connections with an enlightened being. Those born in the lower realms, such as a hell realm, may have virtuous imprints from past lifetimes in which they have made strong prayers or connections with enlightened beings or bodhisattvas. Then, even though they are born into the hell realms due to past karma, and have to experience the negative consequences of that past karma, they still have the imprints on their mind to make a connection and thus benefit from enlightened beings. It should be understood that when we do our practice and prayers, they can be limitless if we include all beings in our scope. It is hard for us to know now which beings we have a connection with, but when we make prayers to benefit all sentient beings then it is possible even to benefit beings who are born in the hell realms in the future.

As explained in the commentary, if the mere appearance of the Buddha in remote areas such as the hell realms can bring so much benefit for the beings, then there is no question of the great benefit that the Buddha extends to those beings of intelligent mind through the teachings and so forth. The Buddha's activities are explained in more detail in other sources: there are the Buddha's deeds through speech, through physical activities and through the Buddha's mind. The manner of how the Buddha benefits other beings through his body, speech and mind is inconceivable and unimaginable. Just the physical appearance of the Buddha can bring so much benefit, not to mention how much we can benefit from receiving and hearing the Buddhas teachings. Therefore thinking about the qualities of the Buddha in that way should instil great faith in our mind, and turn our mind to receiving the benefits from the buddhas.

1.1.2. Their effect

Just as ordinary people are *102*
Terrified by the words 'Lord of Death',
So the words 'Omniscient One'
Terrify the Lord of Death.

The effect here is the effect of having generated faith in the Buddha. As it explains in the commentary those who trust the Buddha will gain freedom from all fears, even the fear of death. As I normally explain, in accordance with other advice, the mere memory of the Buddha at the time of death can free oneself from the lower realms.

The words 'Lord of Death' terrify ordinary people.

This passage of the root text indicates that ordinary people are really terrified when they hear the word 'death'.

Simply hearing the words 'Omniscient One' endows whoever hears them with the good fortune to attain nirvana, thereby terrifying and subjugating Death as well.

What is being explained here is that just as ordinary beings will be fearful of the mere mention of death, similarly whoever hears the words 'Omniscient One', 'Buddha', or 'Enlightened One' with good fortune has the power to attain nirvana. As nirvana is the ultimate state of overcoming death the words 'Omniscient One' thus have the effect of overcoming what we call death.

The main point here is that ordinary beings experience fear whenever death is mentioned, or when they think about death. The analogy uses the symbolic figure of the Lord of Death. Just as ordinary people are frightened by death the Lord of Death has a fear of the mere mention of the Buddha, or the Omniscient One, because the Lord of Death is not able to overpower the Omniscient One. Rather it is the reverse. By relying on the Omniscient One, or the Buddha, one has the power to completely subdue death.

The commentary further quotes from a sutra where it says:

Those who hear my name will attain nirvana in any of the three vehicles.

This passage indicates that whatever sentient being hears the Buddha's name, will attain nirvana. Here the word 'nirvana' is used in a generalised form, but when it mentions any of the three vehicles then it refers to either self-liberation or the ultimate state of enlightenment, therefore the ultimate state of all the three vehicles.

This understanding brings more weight and purpose to the recitation of the name of the Buddha as in, OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA. If we recite it loud enough for other beings to hear, then it has the effect of leaving a profound imprint on oneself and others' minds. When we have this understanding, that serves as a great, great purpose.

1.1.3. Not answering fourteen questions is not suitable proof for lack of omniscience

This refers to doubts that others have about the state of buddhahood, or the Buddha being omniscient, because the Buddha Shakyamuni did not answer certain questions he was asked.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཱརྱ་དེ་ཝས་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

31 October 2006

As usual we will sit in a comfortable, upright position and generate a positive motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1. Showing the greatness of buddhahood, the resultant attainment (cont.)

1.1.3. Not answering fourteen questions is no suitable proof for lack of omniscience

This outline arises after having explained the qualities of the Buddha. Someone raises the question that the Buddha could not be omniscient, because he didn't answer fourteen questions that were put to him. The text explains how that is not a reason proving that the Buddha is not omniscient, and in fact it proves the Buddha's omniscience.

Assertion: Surely he lacked omniscience since he did not answer fourteen questions such as whether the self and the world are permanent or impermanent and so forth.

Answer: Rather than disproving, it establishes his omniscience.

> *A subduer has [perception of] that* *103*
> *Which should and should not be done or said.*
> *What reason is there to say*
> *That the Omniscient One is not all-knowing?*

The fourteen questions are:

- Four questions in relation to whether or not the self and the environment are permanent. Are they: 1) permanent? 2) not permanent? 3) both permanent and not permanent? 4) neither permanent nor not permanent?
- Four more questions in relation to whether or not there is an end to the cyclic existence.
- Four questions in relation to whether or not the Buddha remains after passing away.
- Two questions, as to whether the body and life force are the same or different.

When these questions were put to the Shakyamuni Buddha, he did not give a verbal answer. This is taken to mean that he did not know the answers, and hence cannot be regarded as being omniscient.

What is being explained here is that the very fact the Buddha did not answer is proof that he is omniscient.

> A subduer directly perceives the right and wrong time for temporary and ultimate actions…

In every action that the Buddha does, there are times to act and times not to act. So even non-action is out of consideration for the benefit of others, and becomes a means to benefit others. What this connotes is the fact that the Buddha knows exactly the mental dispositions of sentient beings, and therefore acting or not acting indicates that he knows exactly how to engage with sentient beings in order to benefit them. Likewise with the Buddha's speech: knowing the mental dispositions of sentient beings, the Buddha knows exactly when to say something and when not to say something. When there is a benefit for the listener, the Buddha will say what is appropriate, but if there is no benefit, then the Buddha says nothing. Therefore what he says depends on whether or not there is a benefit to the other. As the text goes on to say:

> …what actions should not be done, what is not beneficial, what is harmful as well as all that should or should not be said.

Therefore what is being explained here is that by not answering those fourteen questions, the Buddha was acting to benefit other beings.

> Since the Buddha possessed such perception, he did not give an answer to these questions, which were based on a belief in the true existence of persons and phenomena. It is not feasible for a basis of attribution whose existence has been negated to have an attribute.

What this is explaining is how the Buddha knew that the questions were asked on the basis of person and phenomena having true existence. If the Buddha were to answer that person and phenomena do exist, then, to the mind of the questioner, that would assert that there is true existence of person, which would lead them to the extreme of eternalism. If the Buddha were to say that there is no person or phenomena, then that would lead them to completely negate the existence of person and phenomena, thus leading them to nihilism. Whatever answer the Buddha gave on that particular occasion would have contributed to the person who asked the questions following one of the two extremes. Therefore at that time the most appropriate response was for the Buddha not to answer, which saved them from falling into either of the extremes. As the commentary explains, that is why the Buddha did not answer those questions.

We can see that there is very sound, but intricate logic and reasoning here. The very argument used to show the Buddha is not omniscient, is used as a reason to prove that the Buddha is, in fact, omniscient. That is how the logic and reasoning becomes profound. As the Precious Garland also says:

> Asked whether it had an end
> The Conqueror was silent.
>
> Because he did not give this profound teaching
> To worldly beings who were not receptive vessels,
>
> The All-knowing One is therefore known
> As omniscient by the wise.

The first line, 'Asked whether it had an end', refers to whether the environment, or the world has an end. 'The Conqueror was silent', means that the Buddha Shakyamuni, the Conqueror, did not give an answer. 'Because he did not give this profound teaching to worldly beings who were not receptive vessels', indicates that they were holding onto the wrong view that the world, or environment, as well as the beings who live in that environment are truly existent. Because of strongly holding onto that wrong view they were not receptive vessels, and they would have not been able to receive the teachings on selflessness of person and phenomena. 'The All-knowing One is therefore known as omniscient by the wise' means that because the Buddha did not answer, that in itself becomes the proof to the wise ones,

who know how the Buddha interacts, that the Buddha is omniscient.

The analogy refers to a king who wanted to penalise a rich Brahmin, telling him that the Brahmin that would be punished unless he quickly sent his family's well. Knowing that the king was giving them an impossible task to do, so that they can be penalised, the Brahmin's daughter gave a very cunning answer so as not to be punished. Then the further question is:

> If Buddha does not say what should not be said, did he not say, referring to Devadatta, 'What of this boy who wears one piece of cloth and has taken the bait?'

At face value, that remark seems hurtful to Devadatta, but as the text says:

> Although he said this, it was not to harm others but to turn them away from ill deeds.

The Buddha sees that there is a danger of pride arising in Devadatta's mind. If that is not stopped he could engage in negativity, and accumulate a lot of negative karma. So in order to save Devadatta from creating further negative karma, the Buddha said what he did in order to stop him from engaging in those negative deeds. The particular incidents of negative karma that Devadatta would have engaged in, would have created a schism, thus leading many followers of the Buddha astray and onto a false path. That would have created so much negative karma for Devadatta, as well as those he misled also creating negative karmas. Therefore, the Buddha had to say what he did in order to prevent a grave misdeed. The text is saying that even though the Buddha's words are unpleasant, they are entirely virtuous because they are said with the intention to benefit the other. Therefore even words which may sound harsh on the surface are in fact only to benefit and not to harm.

1.2. Explaining how to practice bodhisattva deeds, the cause of buddhahood

This has three subdivisions.

1.2.1. Special features of the motivation for training in these deeds
1.2.2. Merit of generating the altruistic intention
1.2.3. Actual mode of training in the deeds

1.2.1. Special features of the motivation for training in these deeds

Even by itself, the heading implies a very profound teaching that we can benefit from. This is subdivided into two.

1.2.1.1. Showing mind as the principal of the three doors
1.2.1.2. Showing how even that which is non-virtuous in others becomes supremely virtuous in bodhisattvas by the power of their attitude

1.2.1.1. SHOWING MIND AS THE PRINCIPAL OF THE THREE DOORS

> Mind should be understood as paramount or foremost in all activities of the three doors.

The three doors indicate body, speech and mind, and of the three the primary one is the mind, which is the defining factor of motivation.

> *Without intention, actions like going* *104*
> *Are not seen to have merit and so forth.*
> *In all actions, therefore, the mind*
> *Should be understood as paramount.*
>
> This is because actions like coming and going are not seen to be meritorious or unmeritorious except through the power of the virtuous or non-virtuous intention motivating them.

The text is quite explicit in explaining how whatever actions we do depend entirely on our motivation. On the physical level, actions such as standing up, sitting down, walking can be virtuous or non-virtuous. Depending on the motivation one has in one's mind, the actions that one does on the physical and verbal level can be either meritorious, or non-meritorious, or even neutral, when there is no particular motivation. Let us take prostrations as an example. The teachings indicate that the physical activity of just prostrating in front of a holy object is in itself a meritorious act that we create on a physical level. Becoming a virtuous act is dependent on the motivation. With a mental state of knowing that bowing down to a holy object is meritorious, the physical action of prostration becomes meritorious or virtuous. Without an intention or motivation the actions of lying down, stretching out on the ground and standing up cannot, in themselves, be virtuous or non-virtuous.

To give another example of how physical activities can be virtuous or non-virtuous, take, for example, the very fact of deciding to come to the teaching. From the motivation of wishing to go to the teaching so as to learn and therefore to benefit others, all the activities that precede coming to the teaching, such as walking down from your room, coming in and taking a cushion can be said to be virtuous, because it is all done with a virtuous motivation to receive the teachings. On a negative side, from the moment that one decides to engage in the act of stealing, for example, all of the preceding actions prior to the actual theft, would also be said to be non-virtuous actions, because of the motivation that is involved. It is the same with all other activities.

As mentioned previously with prostration, without any proper motivation the act of just stretching oneself on the ground cannot be said to be virtuous just by itself. It only becomes virtuous in relation to the appropriate intention in the mind. This can apply to whatever actions we engage in. When we do certain virtuous actions like, for example, circumambulating a holy stupa, it is said that just the mere fact of going around becomes virtuous because of the power of the holy object. If on top of that, however, one has a good motivation then the merit that one accumulates is even greater. If we check up our motivation in whatever actions we do, then it can actually become a very appropriate way to accumulate merit. Hence in whatever actions we do we should try to be mindful of the motivation. It is the same with travelling to go on a pilgrimage and so forth.

1.2.1.2. SHOWING HOW EVEN THAT WHICH IS NON-VIRTUOUS IN OTHERS BECOMES SUPREMELY VIRTUOUS IN BODHISATTVAS BY THE POWER OF THEIR ATTITUDE

In this outline one must understand that 'others' refers to ordinary beings. Actions that would be considered as non-virtuous when done by an ordinary being become virtuous actions when done by bodhisattvas, who have obtained the grounds due to the power of their motivation.

As explained in other teachings, there are three non-virtues of body[1] plus four non-virtues of speech[2]. These seven non-virtues are said to be an exception for the bodhisattvas who

[1] Killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.
[2] Lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle gossip.

have obtained the grounds, which means the bodhisattvas who have reached the first ground and upwards. When they engage in one of these the seven physical or verbal activities, it is a means for them to accumulate merit rather than creating negative karma. This is because of the power of their motivation and intention to benefit others. So even if they were to engage in one of these seven activities it would be only for the benefit of others, therefore it would be a means for them to accumulate merit rather than negative karma.

The last three non-virtues are covetousness, harmful intention and wrong views, and there is no exceptions with them. They cannot be virtuous at any time. Therefore in relation to the motivation, the attitude in the mind, determines whether actions are virtuous or non-virtuous.

In bodhisattvas, through their intention, *105*
All actions, virtuous and non-virtuous,
Become perfect virtue because
They are in control of their minds.

As the commentary explains:

> Since mind is foremost in all activities, virtuous actions such as giving or even such actions as killing, which in others would be non-virtuous, all become perfect virtue in bodhisattvas who are in control of their minds...

The main point is that there is no question that the activities that are normally considered as virtuous such as giving, generosity and so forth, are virtuous for bodhisattvas. Not only that, but even actions such as killing, which are non-virtuous in others, become perfectly virtuous for bodhisattvas.

> This is because they have gained the ability at will to engage in virtue and not to engage in non-virtue.

The main point being made here is that bodhisattvas have complete control over their mind at all times. In the beginning, during the causal instance, as well as during the actual engagement of the activity, the bodhisattva is able to maintain a virtuous frame of mind. Whereas if we take ourselves as an example, then we find that even though the causal motivation may be virtuous, we may become distracted during the activity. Then delusions such as anger, or jealousy or attachment may arise during the performance of an action, for which we initially had a good motivation. Therefore even though the causal motivation is virtuous, the motivation during the activity can become non-virtuous. The reason why we are not able to maintain our motivation is because our minds are so easily influenced by delusions and thus distracted. Even though we may initially have a good motivation, it's hard to follow it up or carry it through all the way.

Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, have complete control over their mind at all times. During the causal time, as well as the actual time of performing the action, and at all times in completion, their mind remains in a virtuous frame. Therefore all becomes virtuous. Of the two motivations, the causal motivation and the motivation of the actual time of performing the action, it is said that the motivation at the actual time of performing the action is of greater importance.

According to the commentary the analogy is:

> It is like the following analogy: A bodhisattva called Mahakaruna, who was a captain, used a short spear to slay a pirate captain who intended to kill a group of five hundred bodhisattvas on board.

The story is of how, in the past, a bodhisattva was travelling in a boat as its captain, along with five hundred bodhisattvas, who were manifesting as 'traders' being taken across the sea in order to trade. During the voyage, a pirate captain boarded the boat, intending to kill all five hundred on board and take their belongings. The bodhisattva captain, called Mahakaruna, knew that through his omniscience, so in order to protect the pirate captain from going into the hell realms, as well as to protect the lives of the five hundred traders on board, he killed the pirate. Out of his great compassion Mahakaruna knew that by killing the pirate captain he would be saved from the great misdeed of killing the five hundred traders, and it would also protect others. Knowing that it would be for the best and for the benefit of the pirate captain, and out of great compassion, he engaged in the deed of actually taking the life of the pirate captain. It was a skilful means that was enacted out of great compassion and without even an atom of malice. It is said that his actions became a cause to stop being reborn in cyclic existence for 500 years.

Because of these kinds of circumstances, and for the sole benefit for others, it is said that actions such as killing are permitted for bodhisattvas who are on the grounds.

1.2.2. Merit of generating the altruistic intention

This has two subdivisions.

1.2.2.1. Merit of generating the first ultimate altruistic intention
1.2.2.2. Specific merit of causing others to generate the altruistic intention

1.2.2.1. MERIT OF GENERATING THE FIRST ULTIMATE ALTRUISTIC INTENTION

Question: When are such bodhisattvas known as 'ultimate bodhisattvas'?

Answer: After they have attained the first of the ten grounds.

The merit of bodhisattvas with *106*
The first intention far exceeds
That which would make all beings on earth
Become universal monarchs.

Ultimate bodhisattvas are those who have developed ultimate bodhicitta in their mind. Of course those who have studied the Madhyamika would know that that ultimate bodhicitta is only obtained on the first ground. The merits that are obtained are from having obtained the first ground.

As the commentary explains:

> If the accumulated merit through which one becomes a universal monarch ruling the four continents is great, there is no need to mention that the merit required for all beings on earth to do so would be greater. The merit of a bodhisattva who has generated the first ultimate altruistic intention far exceeds the merit that would make all beings on earth become universal monarchs.

This is in relation to how much merit one has to accumulate just to be reborn as a universal monarch, which is a king ruling the three worlds. The merit that one being has to accumulate in order to achieve that status is said to be extremely great. But the merit that is acquired by a bodhisattva who obtains the first ground is far greater than the merit that all beings would have to accumulate in order to achieve the state of universal monarch, which gives an indication of how unimaginable it is. If you think about the

actual benefits of being a bodhisattva on the first ground, you could come to understand the extent of the merit that he or she has. The result of the merit to be reborn as a universal monarch is experienced in one lifetime. For as long as one has the karma to live as a universal monarch, then one enjoys the status and the riches and all the associated good things. But it is still limited to one lifetime as a universal monarch. Whereas the merit that a bodhisattva on the first ground accumulates is not exhausted. This is because the more one engages in virtuous activity, the more one accumulates merit. Therefore rather than exhausting merit, one continually adds to the merit on that level.

As explained in the commentary:

> It is like the following analogy: A king issued an edict which made it easy to know what was permitted and not permitted. This brought the king wealth and his subjects security and so forth. Some failing to differentiate between the attributes of conventional and ultimate bodhisattvas, claim that if they are common beings, they cannot be fully qualified bodhisattvas.

Such claims and false understandings are a grave mistake because they lead to the creation of negative karmas.

1.2.2.2. SPECIFIC MERIT OF CAUSING OTHERS TO GENERATE THE ALTRUISTIC INTENTION

This section further explains how, there is not only great merit in developing the altruistic intention within oneself, but if one were to serve as the cause for others to develop that intention, a great amount of merit would be accumulated.

Question: How much merit is there in inspiring others to develop the altruistic intention of the Great Vehicle?

Answer:

> *Someone may build a precious* *107*
> *Reliquary, as high as the world;*
> *It is said training others to generate*
> *The altruistic intention is more excellent.*

As the commentary explains:

> It is said that the merit of one who builds a reliquary for the Buddha's relics, as vast as the three thousand great thousand world systems and as high as the world "Beneath None," made of the seven precious substances such as gold and lapis lazuli and adorned with every kind of ornament is surpassed...

What is being explained here is that generally, erecting a reliquary, or stupa, which contains the relics of the Buddha, is incredibly meritorious. The analogy that is given here is of one person erecting a stupa reaching to the highest in the three worlds. From the lowest world where it begins, it is as vast as the whole world spreading out. Not only is it of such enormous size, but it is also adorned with all the precious jewels and many other offerings. The merit that is accumulated from that offering is inconceivably great. However,

> ...because it is more excellent, the merit of one who trains others to develop the altruistic intentions is far greater.

Therefore, as explained here, the merit that one accumulates from teaching and guiding others in the Mahayana path, and leading them to develop the altruistic intention is far greater that the merit that one accumulates from building a huge and beautifully adorned stupa.

The practical analogy given here is that if a man were to die and had two good friends, and if one were to look after the body of the deceased person, giving it proper funeral rites, and the other friend takes on the responsibility of looking after the deceased's wife and children and so forth, then the one who takes the responsibility of caring for the deceased's wife and children will naturally have far greater merit than just having taken care of the deceased person's body. That is quite obvious, because by looking after the surviving family he is helping the lineage to go on. So in that way it is seen to be a greater deed.

Likewise erecting a monument, and enshrining the relics of the Buddha, and making offerings is definitely a great meritorious deed, but that in itself will not immediately benefit other sentient beings to a great extent, nor does it help to keep up the lineage of the Buddha's teachings. Whereas the activity of guiding and teaching others, and inspiring them to develop the altruistic intention, is a practical means to keep up the lineage of the Buddha's teachings, prolonging them so they can benefit many other beings in the future. In that way we can see the extent of the benefit.

The significance and unimaginable benefit of guiding and teaching others with a bodhicitta intention, especially those who have already developed bodhicitta in their mind, is said to be unimaginably great. Bodhisattvas serve as a representative of the buddhas who have come in the past, and also the buddhas who have come to this world in our era, by helping the disciples who have not yet been liberated by the present buddhas to proceed on to the path to liberation and enlightenment. Therefore in all the past, present and future activities of the Buddha, the bodhisattva or anyone who gives teachings that inspire the development of bodhicitta in others, really becomes the greatest means to uphold the virtuous activities in the doctrine of the past, present and future buddhas, and is helping the teachings to remain for many eons. In this way we can see that that is of really incredible and great benefit. It is also good for us to contemplate in this way, thinking about the great benefits.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 November 2006

As usual we will set our motivation for receiving the teachings, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.3. Actual mode of training in the deeds

This has five sub-divisions.
1.2.3.1. Physical and verbal conduct in acting for others' welfare
1.2.3.2. Specific attitude
The first and second sub-divisions include how to benefit others through one's body, speech and mind.
1.2.3.3. Faults of deficient compassion
1.2.3.4. Faults of not appreciating bodhisattvas and suitability of cultivating appreciation
1.2.3.5. Why they can complete their deeds

1.2.3.1. Physical and verbal conduct in acting for others' welfare

This refers to the way bodhisattvas engage in benefiting others through both their physical actions and their speech.

Question: How do bodhisattvas act to benefit sentient beings?
Answer: They act according to those beings' mental dispositions.

> *A spiritual guide who wishes to help* 108
> *Must be attentive toward students.*
> *They are called students because*
> *Of not knowing what will benefit.*

This verse explains how a spiritual guide (meaning a teacher or a lama) will benefit other sentient beings. In the beginning the manner of helping their students is by being generous with material needs, as well as being kind in their speech, saying such things as, 'How are you doing? Is everything going well?'. By checking in such a way the lama is serving the student physically by giving material needs, as well as by verbally asking to make sure that they are okay and so forth.

Normally, the six perfections combined with the four means for gathering students constitute the activities of a bodhisattva that benefit sentient beings. The first two means of gathering students, being generous and uttering kind words to other sentient beings, are specifically mentioned here.[1] Initially, kind speech is a means to gather students. It is a specific kind of speech in accordance with worldly concerns, which is checking up on the students' welfare and so forth. Along with the worldly aspect, there is also teaching Dharma with kind words. Here, however, uttering kind words refers to the general well being, from the worldly point of view.

A doubt is raised here concerning why the lama is serving the students rather than the other way around. The doubt asks: 'Is that appropriate? Isn't it the case that the students should serve the lama?' What is explained here is that the students don't initially have the wisdom or intelligence to know that serving the lama is meritorious and beneficial for themselves. As the commentary mentions:

> They are called students because they do not know what actions are of benefit and need someone else's advice.

What is being addressed here is the fact that the students do not initially have the wisdom to know what actions are to be adopted or what negativities should be abandoned. Therefore they are called students because they don't have that knowledge, and need advice from a teacher.

The explanation given here is in accordance with how a lama or teacher subdues a student. First, to draw the student near, the lama is generous. Then through kind words the teacher allows the student to develop more trust and faith in the teacher. Once faith is developed, then the teacher can guide them with the teachings and lead them into the actual practice of the teachings. The analogy given in the commentary is that it is just like a wild elephant that is initially subdued with sweets and edible things. Once the elephant comes near and eats what is offered, they use the rope to tie the elephant and then a hook to tame it. That is the means of subduing a wild elephant.

The main points that are made here are good for us to contemplate and remember: the bodhisattva's activities in benefiting others consist mainly of showing good physical conduct, being kind to others and also using kind words.

1.2.3.2. Specific attitude

This is sub-divided into five headings:
1.2.3.2.1. Analogy showing one must be compassionate towards a recalcitrant person
1.2.3.2.2. Stages of guiding trainees
1.2.3.2.3. Being particularly compassionate towards those with very strong disturbing emotions
1.2.3.2.4. How to act for others' welfare according to their capacities and inclinations
1.2.3.2.5. The effect of strongly developed compassion

1.2.3.2.1. Analogy showing one must be compassionate towards a recalcitrant person

Even though the heading refers to a person, it basically means a disciple.

> Even if students are recalcitrant, one must endeavour to overcome their disturbing emotions.

I don't know whether the English word recalcitrant has the same connotation as the Tibetan word *ngong me kor*, which has the connotation of not seeing one's own faults.

[1] The other two are: Leading others to practise the Dharma, and Practising what you teach to others.

If someone does not see their own misbehaviours as faulty and thinks that they are doing fine, then when they are told to change, they may become a bit rebellious about that. The meaning will be discussed later, but the main point relates to how, without a gesture of kindness from the lama, the student may become rebellious towards the lama at certain times. In that case the lama is patient and does not give up, but is persistent in taking care of the students.

Just as a physician is not upset with *109*
Someone who rages while possessed by a demon,
Subduers see disturbing emotions as
The enemy, not the person who has them.

The analogy refers to a possessed patient who rages at his doctor. Although the patient's condition is translated as being 'possessed', the connotation of the original Tibetan word is also 'being unstable in the mind'. We do definitely see examples of patients who have either a sickness that affects the stability of their mind, or who could be actually possessed. In either case, they may be rebellious and not appreciate help from a doctor. They may even be physically violent towards the doctor. There are definitely cases where we can see that. A physician with a kind heart would understand the situation, and not be upset with the patient. Rather they would try to help further. Of course if the physician didn't have kindness in their heart and was impatient, they might well become upset. A physician with a kind heart, who understands the sickness and the situation of the patient, does not become upset with the patient, however, but looks into how to help them.

The meaning of the analogy is:

> Similarly, subduers see that because they make sentient beings unruly, the disturbing emotions in a trainee's mindstream are at fault and not the person who has them.

Here, subduers, refers to the ultimate Subduer, Buddha Shakyamuni and all enlightened beings, as well as the bodhisattvas. When the buddhas and bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings of a wicked nature who have unruly minds, they see the delusions as being at fault. They have a complete understanding that it is due to delusions that the sentient beings act in that way, and that serves as a means for even more kindness and more compassion for sentient beings to arise, and they extend their help accordingly. Also, because of their skilful means, buddhas and bodhisattvas are able to extend their help to beings who are unruly, or whose minds are disturbed, or who have strong delusions. Even though the sentient beings may not immediately appreciate their help, buddhas and bodhisattvas nevertheless extend their help with their skilful means. That is how the buddhas and bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings. As the commentary adds:

> Those who wish to take care of trainees must learn to act like this.

We can definitely see how, even to this day, lamas benefit their students in very skilful ways, and through this the students naturally begin to develop a strong faith. There are students who are really amazed about the extent of the lama's kindness and skilful ways of guiding and teaching. When the students have benefited in that way, then slowly and gradually they develop faith. It is also very important for us to think along these lines and try to put this advice into practice.

What we can take from this advice is to try and develop patience with others who seem to have very strong negative minds. We can develop patience by seeing that in reality it is the delusions within the other person's mind that cause the person to act in that way, rather than the person's intrinsic nature. If we can think along those lines and remind ourselves of this, then we can develop patience and not retaliate. Teachers and lamas, of course, use skilful means to benefit others in this way.

The great master Shantideva mentions in his work *Bodhicharyavatara* that it is a kind physician who does not become upset by seeing a patient affected by a disease that has altered their mind. Rather than becoming upset with the patient they will seek a means to cure the patient. Similarly, rather than becoming upset buddhas and bodhisattvas have great compassion, and they endeavour to help to cure us of our delusions, because they see delusions as the cause of problems and not our own nature.

1.2.3.2.2. STAGES OF GUIDING TRAINEES

This refers to the ways and means of guiding disciples.

That for which someone has *110*
Liking should first be assessed.
Those who are disinclined will not
Be vessels for the excellent teaching.

This verse explains how a spiritual guide should teach their students in a gradual way.

> A spiritual guide teaching students should discuss whatever practice, such as giving, appeals to a particular trainee. Having first taught this properly, an assessment should be made. One should only discuss the profound later...

If the profound teachings were given first, then the students' minds are not yet suitable to receive them. The mind is very easily distracted, therefore the mind should be slowly trained so that it becomes a suitable vessel to receive the profound teachings later on.

> Those whose minds are disinclined because of being deterred by discussion of the profound at the outset will not be receptive vessels for the ultimate teaching. The miserly dislike talk of generosity.

This is a really vivid example of how not to force others to do things for which they are not ready. If someone is very miserly, then persisting with talking about how someone who is very miserly has to be generous would be hard for them to accept. However, if you talk about generosity as being a cause for wealth to someone who has a strong inclination of wanting to have wealth, then that is a suitable approach.

Similarly if you initially tell someone who is not able to maintain their ethics, 'You must keep your ethics. You must be moral', then it is very hard for them to accept or

even hear that. However if you tell someone who has an inclination to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime, that the cause to obtain such a rebirth, would be to observe ethics, then that would be something which would be accepted.

It is similar if you say, 'You should be patient' to someone who gets very upset and angry easily. It is very hard for them to accept that. However if you know that someone likes to have good features and look beautiful, and you say, 'If you practice patience you could be very beautiful' that sounds much nicer, and much more acceptable.

Actually, this is very sound advice that we should keep in our mind, particularly those who teach and guide others. It is actually very important advice. What is being indicated here is that just because something is right in the teachings, that doesn't necessarily mean that we have to initially mention it all explicitly. It seems that we have to find tactful means to convey the message to others.

1.2.3.2.3. BEING PARTICULARLY COMPASSIONATE TOWARDS THOSE WITH VERY STRONG DISTURBING EMOTIONS

> A bodhisattva is particularly compassionate to one who, despite having been stopped from doing wrong a hundred times, again and again engages in improper actions.

Just as a mother is especially *111*
Anxious about a sick child,
Bodhisattvas are especially
Compassionate toward the unwise

We don't have to really look far for examples; we can use ourselves as examples for this! The main point being made here is with respect to the manner in which a bodhisattva helps those who have been told over and over again how they should avoid doing certain negative things that are wrong, and how to adopt positive actions. As mentioned here, a bodhisattva has more compassion for such beings.

The analogy used here is of the kindness and compassion a mother has for her sick child. For example, in general if she has five children, her compassion and love for all is equal. However if there is one with a particular illness, then she would naturally have more concern and compassion for that sick child.

As the commentary reads:

> Similarly, bodhisattvas are especially compassionate toward the unwise.

What is being explained here is that the bodhisattva's compassion is of a stronger degree for those who are unwise. Here, 'unwise' refers to those students or disciples who are naturally inclined to engage in negativities because of their strong delusions and who are not naturally able to engage in virtue. The bodhisattva's compassion for them is much stronger, because they see the grave state of suffering that such people inflict upon themselves.

An analogy is:

> A Candala woman greatly feared that the king would put her sixth son to death because of his wrong deeds.

This analogy shows how a mother of six children had equal compassion for all, but had very strong concerns for the sixth one who, having done wrong deeds, was going to be sentenced by the king. As he was likely to be sentenced to death, the mother had incredible concern for this child. Shantideva explained of how a bodhisattva has much more compassion for those who do wrong deeds, compared to those who are virtuous. The explanations given in the commentary also explain that vividly.

1.2.3.2.4. HOW TO ACT FOR OTHERS' WELFARE ACCORDING TO THEIR CAPACITIES AND INCLINATIONS

This refers to the fact that generally, students are categorised into three different levels or capacities. They are the very dull, the mediocre and the very intelligent, and this sub-heading describes how to benefit each according to their capacities. This explanation is actually practised in the monasteries. When the teachers are giving explanations of a text to the students, they always keep in mind that monks are students who are of these three capacities. Those who are quite dull may not be able to understand the profound meanings of the explanations of the text, and there are those who are of mediocre capacity and the very intelligent. So the teacher will then teach in such a way that all levels of students will be able to get something from the teaching, and when the teaching is over they will have something to keep in their mind. This is actually very beneficial and useful advice that we should remember.

When we do the Mandala Offering the last verse says 'Please release a rain of vast and profound Dharma, precisely in accordance with the needs of those to be trained'. Of course the teacher then has to act in accordance with the request to teach according to the disposition of the students.

Actually there is a very profound meaning here, showing that a bodhisattva's deeds in helping sentient beings do not discriminate between beings. It is not as though the bodhisattva only wants to help those who have an intelligent mind and who are thus are able to follow a high level of teaching. That is not the connotation here. Rather the bodhisattvas help beings of all capacities – from the intelligent to the dull. A bodhisattva will help even a dull sentient being in accordance with whatever they can handle.

As teachers that is something that we need to understand and practise. It is not as though we put aside students saying: 'These are dull students. We don't want to teach them now, I only want to teach the intelligent students'. We should not discriminate in that way.

They become students of some *112*
And become teachers of others,
Through skilful means and knowledge
Giving understanding to those who do not understand.

As the commentary explains:

> Since people's dispositions, interests and capacities differ, when bodhisattvas act for their good, they teach some what is of benefit after first becoming their students.

This explicitly explains how bodhisattvas, through their skilful means, benefit sentient beings in many and varied ways. In some situations, they may even become disciples of others and in other cases act as teachers and guides. Manifesting as disciples of certain teachers would be a means to specifically benefit beings who have the knowledge and the ability to teach, but who may be having a problem with their pride. So in order to overcome their pride, the bodhisattvas would manifest as disciples and then slowly guide the teacher to overcome their pride.

This shows the very skilful ways and means that a bodhisattva uses to help some beings. If the bodhisattva just told the teacher, 'You need to work with your pride, so I will teach you, because you need to learn something from me', then because of their pride the teacher would never consider coming and listening to the bodhisattva. Therefore a bodhisattva's only means of helping them is to manifest as their disciple and then slowly begin to benefit the teacher, who becomes more acquainted with the 'disciple', and then slowly begins to see their qualities. As he sees these qualities, the teacher would slowly begin to notice that the 'disciple' has even more qualities than themselves. Then they will naturally begin to become more subdued, and will then maybe begin to listen and learn from the bodhisattva.

If the bodhisattva were to manifest initially as just another teacher, they would not have been able to subdue and help the teacher with the problem. This shows how bodhisattvas use skilful means in order to subdue other beings. Even if it takes time that will not discourage the bodhisattva. Serving and acting as a disciple will slowly, slowly enrich the teacher and help them to overcome their delusion of pride. As mentioned earlier, if the bodhisattva were to initially announce to them that the teacher has to learn something from them, the teacher would not have listened. This is how a bodhisattva is able to subdue through their skilful means. As the commentary mentions:

> ...when bodhisattvas act for their good, they teach some what is of benefit after first becoming their students.

The explanation in the commentary follows exactly the first two lines of the root verse itself. Becoming students of some, and teachers of others means that:

> They act as spiritual guides to those who feel inferior and teach them by pointing out their special attributes. Through all kinds of skilful means and knowledge in training, they make sentient beings who do not understand the suchness of phenomena understand it.

The analogy which is given to explain that meaning is:

> It is like the following analogy: A good physician will prescribe different diets to his patients, such as rich food or bland food.

This is of course a very vivid example. Depending on the sickness or the disturbed element that the patient has, the doctor may prescribe different diets at different times. When for example, the person is suffering from a diseases that contribute to a lot of stress and they are very weak in their body, then the doctor would prescribe rich foods, which would be grounding and nourishing and give them strength. Nowadays, for example, we hear a lot about high cholesterol, and if this is the case, the doctor will prescribe foods that have less fat. We talk about using diet food that is either rich in some kinds of things, such as minerals and proteins and so forth, or diet food that is low in fats and so forth. That is what is prescribed nowadays, and in ancient times doctors had similar techniques.

Therefore what is being described in this analogy is how the doctor may prescribe different kinds of foods for the same patient. That is not to punish or in any way torture the patient, but rather to benefit them. Depending on their sickness, they prescribe either a rich diet or a bland diet. Even if it is the same patient, the different advice is appropriate at different times. Likewise bodhisattvas act for other sentient beings, in dependence on their mental capacity and so forth.

More explicitly, the meaning of benefiting other sentient beings is specifically in relation to teaching the profound view, which is emptiness. Initially, when the being is not ready, they do not have the capacity to comprehend the teachings on emptiness, so it is not beneficial to teach that. However when their mind has ripened, then the teachings on emptiness become appropriate and can be taught. That is how a bodhisattva will guide sentient beings, just like a doctor prescribes the different kinds of diets at different times.

We don't have too much left in the fifth chapter, so we might finish it soon.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 November 2006

As usual we will sit in an upright and comfortable position and generate a positive motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.3. Actual mode of training in the deeds (cont.)

1.2.3.2. SPECIFIC ATTITUDE

1.2.3.2.5. THE EFFECT OF STRONGLY DEVELOPED COMPASSION

This is sub-divided into two:

1.2.3.2.5.1. When the strength of compassion is thoroughly developed, those who cannot be trained are rare

1.2.3.2.5.2. Faults of not giving encouragement for others' benefit

1.2.3.2.5.1. When the strength of compassion is thoroughly developed, those who cannot be trained are rare

As the heading suggests, this section explains that when compassion has developed to a certain point then benefiting others is definitely possible, and it is only on very rare occasions that there is no benefit. This is explained with an analogy.

> *Just as for an experienced physician* 113
> *A sickness that cannot be cured is rare,*
> *Once bodhisattvas have found their strength,*
> *Those they cannot train are extremely few.*

As the commentary reads:

> A bodhisattva with a well-developed capacity for maturing sentient beings is like an experienced physician who only rarely finds a disease incurable and beyond treatment.

We can understand the point of this section very clearly through the analogy of a physician who is very well trained and skilled in his practice. Not only is it very rare for him not to cure a patient, but it is also very rare for the physician to give up on the patient. Rather he will look after the patient and use every means to try to cure them. Similarly, a bodhisattva with a well-developed capacity for compassion has the ability to nurture sentient beings under their care and benefit them.

> Similarly, one should understand that when bodhisattvas who are able to discern superior and inferior aptitudes and are skilled in the four ways of gathering students have found their strength, those they cannot train are extremely few.

What is being related here is that, because of the bodhisattva's capacities, such as knowing the mental disposition of the disciples, there are very few beings that they cannot train. As mentioned here, bodhisattvas are also skilled in the four ways of gathering students, which are, as I mentioned before: being generous; uttering kind words; leading others to practise the Dharma; and practising what one teaches. When a bodhisattva is skilled in these four means then that definitely becomes the means to not only gather students, but also to be able to help and guide them. As the commentary mentions, with all these capacities and qualities, it is very rare that a bodhisattva will not be able to benefit their students.

It is good to remember that this description of the capacities and qualities of a bodhisattva refers to a bodhisattva who is still a state of training. If in the training stage one obtains such immense qualities, then by that measure one can gain an inkling of just how vast the qualities of a fully enlightened being are. Thus a very strong faith in the Buddha develops. With normal education we can see how the earlier stages of study are well structured. Knowing this we can predict the results that will be obtained by an intelligent student who is able to study in that way. The qualities that they will obtain can definitely be seen just from the structure of their studies. It is the same with seeing the qualities of a bodhisattva.

A further analogy is given to explain how knowing the mental disposition and capacity of the disciples can serve as a means to benefit the disciples.

> It is like the following analogy: While all the other physicians did not realise it, the Master Nagarjuna recognised that desire for a woman had caused the mental illness of a king's son and was able to pacify it.

Normal physicians who were looking for a physical cause for the son's illness were not able to find what was causing the illness. But Nagarjuna, with his capacity for clairvoyance, was able to actually see what was really causing the king's son's illness. Even though the symptoms were physical, the cause was actually mental - a very strong desire for a woman. Having determined that, a cure was then developed.

What this analogy is explaining is that ultimately we can only really benefit others through reading their mind, i.e. through clairvoyance. Then we are able to really help to soothe mental as well as physical sufferings. Clairvoyance is the way bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings. An analogy from the *Lamp on the Path* by Atisha is that just as a bird needs two wings to soar into the sky, those who are guiding and helping other sentient beings in the Dharma must have clairvoyance to be able to know their mind, and be able to teach according to the students' capacity. As it has been explained, this is really essential.

1.2.3.2.5.2. Faults of not giving encouragement for others' benefit

This subheading relates to a question as to whether it would be a fault if, having seen that others will fall into lower realms, a bodhisattva doesn't act to teach them and guide them away from this fate. It may seem like a form of laziness, but for a bodhisattva it is much more than that.

If some within a bodhisattva's sphere, *114*
Lacking encouragement, go
To bad rebirths, that one will be
Criticised by others with intelligence.

As the commentary explains:

> If a bodhisattva possessing the special ability to train sentient beings encourages trainees within his or her sphere of influence, they will not go to bad transmigrations. If some, lacking encouragement, go to bad rebirths, the promise to help all sentient beings will have been impaired.

As explained here, the main query is whether it would be faulty if a bodhisattva, who has the ability to teach and see the state of mind of others, sees that some will be reborn in bad rebirths because of their lack of Dharma practice, but doesn't then engage in teaching them. If the bodhisattva did not act to help other beings by teaching them, then the fault is that the promise to help all sentient beings would have been impaired. Therefore that bodhisattva would be criticised by others with intelligence. It is definitely a fault in a bodhisattva if he does not engage in helping sentient beings.

> Thus one should encourage people by teaching them appropriate practices. It is like the following analogy: A leader who does not assist those in his care will be criticised.

It is very clear that a person would be criticised by others if they take on the responsibility of leading of others, but do not then extend their care to anyone in that circle who is facing problems, or difficulties such as illness.

1.2.3.3. FAULTS OF DEFICIENT COMPASSION

If there is a lack of compassion then that would be a fault.

How can one unwilling to say *115*
That compassion for the oppressed is good,
Later out of compassion
Give to the protectorless?

The main points being made here are that compassion is extremely important, and that compassion must always be present. It is explained in the teachings that compassion is extremely important in the **beginning**, because it is the basis for the development of bodhicitta in the mind. It is due to compassion for other sentient beings that one aspires to achieve enlightenment. That is why, compassion is extremely important at the very beginning, because it serves as the very reason for aiming to achieve enlightenment.

In the **middle** of one's practice in the Dharma, compassion is also important. Even after having developed bodhicitta, it is possible that one can become discouraged, because the number of sentient beings is as limitless as space. Furthermore these limitless numbers of sentient beings are of different mental capacities and dispositions, including some who are unruly, quite tough and difficult to tame. Faced with this it would be very easy to give up one's intention to achieve enlightenment, if one lacked compassion. Therefore towards the middle, compassion is important.

At the **end**, even after having achieved the goal of enlightenment, one will engage in benefiting the numberless sentient beings out of compassion. That is how it is explained that compassion is extremely important in the beginning, the middle and the end.

The commentary states:

> If out of jealousy a bodhisattva who is a beginner is unwilling to admit that it is good to act compassionately toward other sentient beings who are oppressed by suffering and its causes...

Basically the specific meaning here is that it is a fault if through lack of compassion, and out of jealousy, one were not to engage in the act of benefiting others. A bodhisattva who is lax in developing compassion toward sentient beings from the beginning will not be able to give them protection and so forth later on. The main point being made here is that if a bodhisattva does not train well in compassion from the very beginning, then later on they will not be able to sustain practices such as being generous to others and serving them in various different ways, not just once or twice, but numberless times over a very long period of time. Bodhisattva have to train in benefiting other sentient beings for many aeons, so if there is any lack of compassion from the very beginning, then their practice of benefiting others could not be sustained. Therefore it is extremely important to develop strong great compassion from the very outset and to maintain that compassion.

We can relate the faults of not having a sustained concern or compassion for others to ourselves. In our regular activities, we can see that even though initially we may have a good intention to help someone else, after some time we find that it starts to become too demanding and too difficult. What is really happening is that our compassion and concern is waning. We are not able maintain that concern for the other, and so it seems to become more and more difficult to help and benefit them. Thus we become discouraged. We may back out from initial involvement or we may slowly back out and not continue. That is a sign of our waning compassion. Compassion is even more important for bodhisattvas, who have made promises to benefit other sentient beings, to maintain their ability to help others and not give up. Thinking along those lines it is necessary for us to make an attempt to slowly develop our compassion as best as we can.

Because compassion is so extremely important for practice, there are many techniques for developing compassion, such as *tong len* – the giving and taking practice. These are practices that are tailored to train our mind in developing compassion. Once we train our mind well, then the compassion can become more and more firm and stable, and when it is developed, genuine compassion can be maintained.

The lack of compassion is further explained with the analogy that:

> It is like stealing a blind man's things or killing for a pair of boots.

What is being explained here is that someone who lacks compassion would steal a blind man's things for very trivial reasons. Anyone in their right mind would consider such an act as very bad and very cruel. Stealing the possessions of a blind person, of all people, is considered to be particularly cruel. Likewise, killing someone for their shoes is also considered as an extremely grave misdeed. Such misdeeds prevail because of a lack of compassion, and we can see how the lack of compassion can lead to such grave misdeeds. Furthermore with a lack of compassion one cannot benefit others fully. Therefore it is important for us to really recognise from the very beginning how compassion is extremely important, and thus train in developing compassion in our mind as much as we can.

These analogies are quite a vivid representations of the faults of the lack of compassion. If a blind person had a meagre meal then snatching away their food would be a shameless act, because the blind person cannot see and therefore cannot prevent it. Stealing from them really shows the extreme of lacking compassion. Likewise with the extreme example of killing someone for their shoes: that is really something that can definitely happen because of a lack of compassion.

1.2.3.4. FAULTS OF NOT APPRECIATING BODHISATTVAS AND SUITABILITY OF CULTIVATING APPRECIATION

1.2.3.4.1. Faults of not appreciating bodhisattvas
1.2.3.4.2. Suitability of cultivating appreciation

These sub-divisions can also be understood as being similar to the faults of not relying properly on a guru. As we know from the *Lam Rim* there is a difference between the disadvantages of not relying on a guru and the faults of not properly relying on a guru. The fault of not relying properly on the guru comes from not appreciating the qualities of the guru. This lack of appreciation of the qualities of the guru then leads onto acquiring the faults of not properly relying on the spiritual guru. That is how the connection comes.

1.2.3.4.1. FAULTS OF NOT APPRECIATING BODHISATTVAS

Question: What are the faults of hating a bodhisattva who is governed by compassion?

Answer:

When those [beings] suffer loss *116*
Who are indifferent toward
One who stays in the world to help transmigrators,
What doubt about those who are hostile?

A bodhisattva who is governed by compassion has developed their compassion to the point where their whole being is completely imbued with it; everything that they do is influenced by that compassion. The worldly analogy that we use is that it is like someone who is completely obsessed with attachment; their whole being is imbued with that attachment and whatever they do is influenced by it. A bodhisattva is so completely imbued and influenced by compassion that they have no choice but to help other sentient beings.

> It is a great loss for those who, through indifference, do not appreciate and render service to one who is motivated by the wish for all sentient beings without exception to attain the final state of nirvana in which the aggregates do not remain...

The main point being explained here is that while a bodhisattva's goal is to obtain the ultimate state of nirvana, all their actions are to benefit other beings. It would be a fault if one were to have an attitude of indifference, which means not making any effort to serve, pay respect and so forth, to a bodhisattva. One is letting oneself down by not paying respect and so forth. If indifference towards a bodhisattva is a fault, then how much greater is the fault of intentionally developing negative attitudes of hatred and so forth towards the bodhisattva. It would be a great misdeed.

1.2.3.4.2. Suitability of cultivating appreciation

This heading refers to the activities of a bodhisattva. As mentioned previously, a bodhisattva will engage in great deeds over many aeons to benefit other sentient beings. Having realised that, then it is appropriate to appreciate the deeds that are difficult to perform, and the limitless qualities of the bodhisattvas.

This section therefore has two sub-headings:

1.2.3.4.2.1. Suitability of appreciating deeds difficult to perform
1.2.3.4.2.2. Considering their limitless qualities, one should appreciate them

1.2.3.4.1.1. Suitability of appreciating deeds difficult to perform

> It is proper to rid oneself of animosity toward bodhisattvas and develop strong appreciation for them, since they do what is most difficult.

One who to all lives has the five *117*
Super-knowledges [appears] as inferior
With a nature like the inferior –
This is extremely hard to do.

As explained in the commentary:

> A bodhisattva who has attained forbearance as well as the five kinds of super-knowledge [which is another translation of the five kinds of clairvoyance] which will not decline throughout all future lives...

The five kinds of clairvoyance are:

1. The clairvoyance of the gods' eyes;
2. The clairvoyance of miraculous feats;
3. The clairvoyance of hearing of the gods;
4. The clairvoyance of knowing other peoples' minds;
5. The clairvoyance of remembering past events, of past lives and so forth.

One that may sound a little out of place is the clairvoyance of miraculous feats. This is not indicating a clairvoyance which in itself is a miraculous feat. Rather, what is to be understood is that as a result of a particular kind of clairvoyance, one gains an ability to perform miraculous feats.

A bodhisattva who has obtained the forbearance of Dharma has obtained on a particular level on the path, as well as the five kinds of clairvoyance. Compared to an

ordinary being, such a bodhisattva has unimaginable abilities that they use to benefit other sentient beings. The capacities they have are superior compared with those of ordinary beings.

A bodhisattva with such qualities as having obtained the forbearance of Dharma as well as the five kinds of clairvoyance has the attributes to attain further higher levels. However, a bodhisattva uses those abilities and qualities as a means to benefit sentient beings. He or she may even take a lower rebirth such as dogs or other animals in order to benefit the beings in that realm. We can understand how the bodhisattva is almost making a sacrifice for the sake of others. If we had qualities that we could use to obtain even higher qualities, then we would put all our time and energy into obtaining those higher qualities. However a bodhisattva, out of their great compassion, uses the qualities that they have obtained for the service of other sentient beings, even taking a lowly rebirth such as an animal in order to be able to help the beings in that realm. There are many stories relating to how bodhisattvas have helped other beings in lower rebirths in that way. This is how the bodhisattvas' great activities are to be understood.

The analogy is:

> It is like the bodhisattva who saw that many dogs would be harmed in the future and took rebirth as a dog to prevent it.

This is how one can understand the great limitless activities that a bodhisattva engages in so as to benefit other sentient beings. As explained here in the commentary, in order to benefit other sentient beings a bodhisattva even takes rebirth as a dog.

1.2.3.4.1.2. Considering their limitless qualities, one should appreciate them

> One should develop faith in bodhisattvas by considering their boundless qualities.

The Tathagata said that the merit *118*
Gathered constantly through skilful means
For a very long time is immeasurable
Even for the omniscient.

As the commentary explains:

> Through their ability effortlessly to accomplish difficult feats for sentient beings, the merit created constantly by their three doors and accumulated over an extremely long period of countless aeons is as limitless as space.

The three doors are understood as the doors of body, speech and mind. Through their body, speech and mind the activities and the efforts in which the bodhisattvas engage are as limitless as space. What is being explained here are the boundless qualities of a bodhisattva. As the text explains, the bodhisattvas engage to benefit a limitless number of sentient beings, with a limitless amount of knowledge, qualities and abilities, for a limitless period of time.

That being the case, even an omniscient mind is not able to fathom the qualities of the bodhisattvas deeds. As the text says:

> It is said to be immeasurable even for the omniscient.

What is to be understood is that this phrase is a means of illustrating the extent of the qualities of a bodhisattva. Of course, we do not take it literally, as there is nothing that an omniscient mind does not know. It is because it knows all existence that it is omniscient! However Buddha himself has mentioned it in the sutras as a means of showing the qualities of a bodhisattva.

It would be appropriate to contemplate this, in order to further generate and develop our faith, and an appreciation of the qualities of the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas. When enlightened beings engage in the practices as a bodhisattva, they engage in deeds to benefit sentient beings, even to the extent of taking a lowly rebirth. If they were to take a very grand, high manifestation or remain in their natural manifested state, then it would not be possible for ordinary beings like ourselves to relate to them. Therefore a bodhisattva appears in an ordinary guise in order to lead us and guide us and teach us the Dharma. The kindness and the skilful means and the great abilities of a bodhisattva are something that we can relate to. So in that way, contemplating the limitless deeds, as well as the limitless ways and manners in which they benefit sentient beings, will develop our faith.

We should also note that, as the teachings mention, it is hard to detect where a bodhisattva could be. Therefore it is very important that we be careful about that. As Gyaltsab Rinpoche has mentioned in one of his works, the obscurity of a bodhisattva is similar to a fire-pit that is covered up by earth. On the surface, it may look like normal ground, but if one were to fall into the pit or put one's hand into it, one would definitely be burnt. It is explained that we are not able to notice where bodhisattvas are. So if we are not careful, we could engage in great misdeeds in relation to bodhisattvas. That could mean that there could also be bodhisattvas amongst us here, so we must be careful!

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 November 2006

As usual we can sit in an upright and comfortable position, and generate a good motivation for receiving the teachings, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and put it into practice as best as I can.'

1.2.3. Actual mode of training in the deeds (cont.)

1.2.3.5. WHY THE BODHISATTVAS CAN COMPLETE THEIR DEEDS

This is subdivided into five:

1.2.3.5.1. Why they take special delight in generosity
1.2.3.5.2. Criticism of inferior generosity
1.2.3.5.3. Why they can accomplish all deeds
1.2.3.5.4. Why they do not strive just for their own happiness
1.2.3.5.5. Why they can take special physical forms or manifestations

1.2.3.5.1. WHY THEY TAKE SPECIAL DELIGHT IN GENEROSITY

This heading corresponds to the explanation of other Madhyamika texts, which say that the bliss experienced by a bodhisattva from merely hearing someone asking for something, is much greater than the bliss experienced by an arhat who has reached non-abiding Nirvana.

Assertion: The life stories of the Buddha and so forth say that talk of ethical conduct does not interest bodhisattvas to the same extent as talk of giving.

The word 'giving' indicates 119
Death, practice and other existences.
That is why the word 'giving' always
Is of interest to bodhisattvas

The assertion arises from the general explanation that bodhisattvas are the basis of many qualities. That being so, why is there particular reference to bodhisattvas feeling greater joy in the act of generosity.

The Sanskrit word for giving is *dana.* The literal meaning of the word can also have different meanings according to the context.

1. The etymology of the root word *dana* can be used to indicate dying or death, and thus it indicates impermanence. So one meaning of the word is death and impermanence.

2. Another meaning that it indicates is the practice of what we call generosity, and within the three types of generosity, it can include all of the six perfections as well.

The three types of generosity are:

- the generosity of giving material needs
- the generosity of giving of protection
- the generosity of teaching the Dharma.

The manner of how the three divisions of generosity include the practice of the six perfections can be understood as follows:

- The first of the six perfections, which is generosity, is included in the generosity of material wealth.
- The perfections of moral ethics and patience are included in the generosity of giving protection.
- The perfections of concentration and wisdom are included in the generosity of Dharma.
- The perfection of joyous effort is included in all three acts of generosity, as any practice of the Dharma needs joyous effort or enthusiasm.

3. The connotation of *dana* can also refer to the desire for a better rebirth, which is achieved by guarding the three doors and thus maintaining the purity of speech, the purity of one's physical actions and the purity of mind. So, guarding and controlling our speech, physical actions and the mind, serves as the basis for attaining what we call higher rebirths in future lifetimes. That is how *dana* has the connotation of practices for other existences.

The commentary explains why the word giving or *dana* is of special interest:

> …since the word 'giving' denotes death, practices of certain dharmas and other existences [meaning serving causes for obtaining other higher existences in future lifetimes], it is always of interest to bodhisattvas who therefore take special delight in giving.

The analogy that is given is that it is like a man, who is condemned to death, hearing he is to be spared. When a person who is condemned to death hears that he is spared from that sentence, no other words could be sweeter to his ears. Similarly the very sound of the words 'giving' and 'generosity' are the most pleasing for a bodhisattva's ears. As the commentary further explains, because the word generosity (or *dana* in Sanskrit) connotes the purposes of accumulating extensive merit, and has a further connotation of death and impermanence, as well as a connotation of attaining higher rebirth in future existences, 'giving' is the highest, most pleasing word that is heard by the giver as well as the receiver. That is why the bodhisattva delights in the practice of generosity.

The main point that we can reflect on is how the division of the three types of generosity includes all of the practices of the six perfections. Then we can understand that there is no higher practice than that which includes all of the six perfections.

1.2.3.5.2. CRITICISM OF INFERIOR GENEROSITY

Assertion or question: Is it only a bodhisattva's generosity, and not that of others, that is boundless?

When one thinks that by giving gifts now 120
There will be a great result,
Receiving and giving are like trade
For profit, which will be criticised.

As the commentary explains:

> To receive and give away things thinking that giving gifts in this life will result in great prosperity is like trade for profit and will therefore be criticised by the excellent.

The main point being made here is that generosity done with an intention to receive benefit for oneself is just like trading to receive something back in return. Generosity with such an attitude is an inferior generosity. Why? Because it is seen as inferior act of generosity, by superior beings.

The analogy that is given here is that 'it is like the profit from selling one's goods'. The analogy should be understood in the context of how, if you sell goods for a certain price with an intention to receive a profit, you don't obtain any more than whatever profit you have received from the trade. That means one does not receive any merit from it.

The merit of a generous act, made with an attitude of receiving something in return, such as wealth and so forth for future lifetimes, will be exhausted when good wealth and so forth are achieved in the future life. That is what we call the extended effect of an act of generosity, yet it is not a cause to obtain liberation.

Why is such an act of generosity not a cause for liberation? As explained in the commentary it is because the very attitude of achieving some material gain in this or future lifetimes becomes a cause to tighten the noose of samsara. Grasping at material wealth, and attachment or a desire for material wealth, are causes to remain in samsara rather than the means to be free from samsara. So the very aim of achieving that goal of material wealth is a cause to strengthen or tighten the noose of samsara.

As explained here, a bodhisattva's generosity is an act of generosity with the sole aim of benefiting other sentient beings. So that act of generosity becomes the ultimate means for achieving liberation and ultimate enlightenment. It is said that the merits from an act of generosity made with a bodhicitta attitude are not exhausted, but in fact increase.

Having understood that, it is good that we should try to avoid inferior acts of generosity. This means that when we engage in any kind of act of generosity we should try to generate an attitude of real love and compassion towards other sentient beings, wishing them to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. Then we should dedicate it towards the ultimate state of enlightenment, in order to benefit sentient beings. With that sort of attitude, whatever we actively engage in becomes a superior act of generosity.

1.2.3.3. WHY THE BODHISATTVAS CAN ACCOMPLISH ALL DEEDS

For such a one, even previously *121*
Performed ill deeds will have no (effect)
There is nothing one with virtue
Considers should not be accomplished

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

> Though bodhisattvas who create limitless merit may even have performed a few ill deeds previously [i.e. when they where ordinary beings) these would not be able to produce an effect.

Because of the limitless merit that bodhisattvas, and in particular superior bodhisattvas, have accumulated over long periods of time, they have such vast merit that there couldn't be any trace of negative karmas left. Even if there were some traces of negative karmic imprints left, such as a residue from the negative karmas that they created as ordinary beings, that would not serve as a cause to bring a fully ripened effect.

It is said:

> A few grams of salt can change the taste
> Of a little water, but not of the Ganges.
> Understand it is likewise with small ill deeds
> And expansive roots of virtue.

This analogy illustrates the meaning of what was explained earlier. If we put a few grams of salt into a small amount of water we can immediately taste its effect - the water will be salty. But if a few grams of salt were to be put in a vast amount of water such as the Ganges, then one would not notice the effect at all.

It is said that even if there were some small negative deed by a bodhisattva, it would be like a small spoonful of salt in the river Ganges. Because of the vast amount of merit that the bodhisattva has accumulated, the bodhisattva would not experience a negative result. Therefore, because of their great store of merit even a negative residue of an ill deed cannot cause a bodhisattva to experience a negative result.

> There is nothing that bodhisattvas, whose virtuous activity is powerful, consider should not be done for others' benefit.

The main point being explained here is that because what we call the vast merit and virtuous activity of a bodhisattva is so powerful, the residue of small negative deeds or imprints cannot hinder their virtuous activities of benefiting other sentient beings.

The analogy can be understood from the earlier quotation about salt and the Ganges, which was quite vivid and clear.

1.2.3.4. WHY THE BODHISATTVAS DO NOT STRIVE JUST FOR THEIR OWN HAPPINESS

Question: Since superior bodhisattvas have a mind that is completely virtuous, and hence they will not be reborn out of delusions and karma, why wouldn't such a bodhisattva become completely engrossed in meditative equipoise on the bliss of peace and nirvana?

Answer:

Even here nothing harms *122*
One with a powerful mind, and thus
For such a one, worldly existence
And nirvana are no different.

Hearers and solitary realisers are striving towards the ultimate goal of achieving what we call the bliss of nirvana, or the bliss of abiding in peace. As you would have heard before, when they achieve that state they will remain in blissful meditative equipoise for many eons on end. The question is that if the bodhisattva has also the ability to do so, why does a bodhisattva not engage in that blissful state of meditation? We have to consider and understand this well.

> Bodhisattvas whose minds hold a special wish, and who do not create even the slightest ill deed though remaining in cyclic existence, are not tainted by its faults. Since even in cyclic existence nothing harms them, there is no difference, in terms of harm, whether they remain in cyclic existence or enter into nirvana.

As the commentary explains, superior bodhisattvas are constantly engaged in accumulating virtue. Their every deed and activity has the intention of benefiting sentient beings. Whatever activity they engage in is an act of virtue, so even though they remain in cyclic existence they are not tainted by its faults. What this means is that they do not have to experience the disadvantages of being in samsara like an ordinary being does. As was explained previously and extensively in the earlier part of the teaching, the faults of being in samsara are understood as the various types of suffering that a samsaric being has to undergo, such as the suffering of birth, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age and finally the suffering of death. We all have to experience those sufferings as a result of being born as ordinary human beings. Even though a superior bodhisattva may appear to us as having an ordinary body, they do not have to experience the sufferings of samsara that an ordinary being does. That is the main meaning of bodhisattvas not being tainted by samsaric faults.

> Since even in cyclic existence nothing harms them, there is no difference in terms of harm, whether they remain in worldly existence or enter nirvana. Thus that they do not prefer one kind of peace to another.

What is being explained here is that for a superior bodhisattva there is no difference in terms of the bliss that is experienced in singled-pointed equipoise upon the bliss of nirvana or in helping sentient beings in cyclic existence. Because there is no difference in the bliss that they experience, they do not prefer one over the other, because even though they abide in the worldly samsaric existence, they are not bound by the sufferings of cyclic existence of birth, sickness, ageing and death. Even though they appear to us as ordinary beings, and it seems that they have to depend on food and clothing and get sick and even have to die, that does not, in fact, affect their mind, and they do not experience suffering. Wherever a superior bodhisattva abides they have a perpetual experience of bliss and happiness, so therefore they choose to remain and benefit sentient beings.

As explained in the teachings, there is no difference between the bliss that is experienced by an arhat or hearers and solitary realisers in a state of nirvana, and that experienced by superior bodhisattvas who have attained the first ground. Even though it may appear that those who remain in what we call equipoise, or the bliss of peace, seem to experience more happiness, the bodhisattva experiences that same bliss. Therefore there is no hesitation and they remain in cyclic existence and benefit sentient beings. The difference lies in the different attitudes of the arhats or solitary realisers and hearers, compared with the attitude of a bodhisattva, whose only intention is to benefit other sentient beings.

We can understand how a bodhisattva has no hesitation and no difficulty in benefiting other sentient beings with the analogy of a mother's great love for an only child, especially when the child is sick. She will have no hesitation in helping her sick child. Similarly the bodhisattva has no hesitation in benefiting sentient beings.

There are only three verses left in this chapter, which we can cover in the next session.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 November 2006

As usual we will sit in an upright and comfortable position, bringing our mind inward from external distractions. Let us try to keep a focused mind in a virtuous state and develop a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the Dharma teachings and put them into practice to the best of my ability'.

1.2.3. Actual mode of training in the deeds (cont.)

1.2.3.5. WHY THE BODHISATTVAS CAN COMPLETE THEIR DEEDS

1.2.3.5.5. WHY THE BODHISATTVAS CAN TAKE SPECIAL PHYSICAL FORMS [OR MANIFESTATIONS]

Question: Why do bodhisattvas have mastery of most bodhisattva activities from the time they generate the first ultimate altruistic intention?

Answer:

> *Why should anyone who takes birth* *123*
> *Through constant control of the mind*
> *Not become a ruler*
> *Of the entire world?*

This refers to bodhisattvas who have obtained the first ground, which in turn refers to a bodhisattva who has attained the path of seeing. Of the five paths, it is on the path of seeing that the first ground is obtained.

Paths and Grounds

Bodhisattvas on the first two paths, which are the path of accumulation and the path of preparation are referred to as the ordinary bodhisattvas, while bodhisattvas on the three later paths, the path of meditation, the path of seeing and the path of no-more-learning are referred to as the superior beings. So when a bodhisattva attains the path of seeing they become a superior bodhisattva, realising emptiness directly. Enlightenment is achieved when the path of no-more-learning is obtained.

The first ultimate altruistic intention, refers to ultimate bodhicitta, which is attained on the first ground on the path of seeing. As we have previously learnt, the bodhisattva on that level has obtained the ability to manifest in a hundred different realms, the ability to see and hear the Dharma from a hundred buddhas and so forth.[1] There are certain superior achievements that a bodhisattva gains from that point onwards. That is what is being referred to here.

The Five Paths

The commentary gives an explanation of the causes for achieving this attainment, however we can go further back to the initial causes. According to the explanations given in other teachings, these causes refer to the causes that are developed at the beginning of the path. On the **path of accumulation** the bodhisattva is training in achieving what we call the wisdom acquired from listening. When the wisdom realising emptiness acquired from listening is developed to the extent that it turns into the wisdom realising emptiness that is derived from contemplation, then the bodhisattva obtains the **path of preparation**.

When the bodhisattva further develops the wisdom realising emptiness to the point where it becomes a direct meditative perception of emptiness through the union of calm abiding and special insight, then that is the point when the bodhisattva attains the **path of seeing** and has a direct realisation of emptiness.

On the earlier paths of accumulation and preparation the activities the bodhisattva engages in are accumulating extensive vast merit and wisdom. This is the main cause for a bodhisattva entering the path of seeing, when he becomes a superior bodhisattva who has obtained the great miraculous feats.

We can take the causes back further, to before achieving the path. The understandings gained by an ordinary being serve as a cause to become the qualities that are needed to become a bodhisattva. Therefore when we refer to earlier causes we can refer to the very basic causes that we have within ourselves right now. We already have some intellectual understanding of emptiness, that is derived from the teachings that we have heard, and we also have some basis of love and compassion within ourselves. What we have now as an ordinary being, is further developed to become the causes to generate real bodhicitta and to develop an actual realisation of emptiness.

Therefore at a very early stage every single cause that we create counts; every small amount of merit that we accumulate, every understanding that we gain now, and every small negativity that we are able to avoid now, all serve as a cause to achieve further realisations. When we relate the teachings to ourselves in that way, then we can see the importance of both nurturing whatever small qualities we have now, and trying to avoid any negativity that we can. That then becomes the cause to achieve further realisations, all the way up to enlightenment.

When we relate the teachings to ourselves in this way then we can begin to feel that there is some worth in our existence, not just as a human being, but as a human being with the basis to achieve further realisations. As mentioned earlier, as human beings we definitely have some good qualities, so we can really begin to feel that we are fortunate.

> Bodhisattvas who have attained the grounds can, through their constant mental control, take rebirth in worldly existences as they wish. Why then

[1] See teaching of 9 November 2004, where the qualities of the grounds were discussed in detail.

would they not become rulers of the entire world with dominion over the welfare of sentient beings?

As explained here, the bodhisattvas who have attained the grounds refers to the arya bodhisattvas who have reached the first ground and upwards through their constant mental control. This means that they have been able to control the mind to avoid earlier negativities and so forth, and remain in constant contemplation. Through their constant mental control they are able to take rebirth in worldly existences. This means that they are able to manifest anywhere where they are needed to benefit sentient beings, and be reborn there to assist in the welfare of sentient beings.

Having constant mental control enables bodhisattvas to take rebirth in worldly existence at their wish, has a connotation of bodhisattvas intentionally taking rebirth in worldly existences or samsara. So the bodhisattvas who are reborn in samsara are not there due to forces out of their control, but they have voluntarily taken rebirth in samsara. That being the case why would they not become rulers of the entire world with dominion over the welfare of sentient beings? This is a rhetorical question, because bodhisattvas do have the ability to become rulers of the entire world. If it helps other beings why would they not want to be rulers of the world?

As the commentary further reads:

> By taking birth as lords of the four continents and so forth, they accomplish the well-being of others. They are like a wish-granting jewel or swish-fulfilling tree, and a fine pot of treasure.

The quality of a wish-granting jewel is that it has the ability to grant whatever prayers or wishes that are made to such a jewel. Referring to a bodhisattva as a wish-granting jewel means that a bodhisattva is able to bring about benefits in accordance to the needs of sentient beings.

The main points that we can derive from this explanation is that bodhisattvas are able to engage in such extensive deeds through constant control over the mind. We need to try to take the importance of controlling the mind as the essential advice for ourselves, as that serves as the basis for achieving all other qualities.

Control of the mind is achieved through meditation, and that is why meditation is emphasised at all times. Engaging in meditation and slowly subduing the mind is a means to control the mind. As the teachings indicate the controlled mind is a happy and peaceful mind, and an uncontrolled mind is a mind of unhappiness, chaos and suffering. Therefore the importance of meditation cannot be underestimated, because it is the means to develop a controlled mind.

Of course one of the main obstacles to controlling the mind is all the negative thoughts and emotions that arise in the mind, which mainly come from previous imprints of negativity within our own mind. Therefore in order to remove the obstacles to meditation we need to engage in purification practices. The purpose of purification is to purify the negative karmic imprints within oneself, and as we purify the negative karma then we are also naturally engaging in accumulating merit and virtue. In that way, as we purify we gain merit, and as we gain merit we purify. So purifying and gaining merit enhance each other. That is the manner of practising.

It should be understood that the Tibetan word *jang* is used for both purification and the accumulation of virtue and merit. How it should be understood is that *jang* could be translated as 'endeavour', so we endeavour to purify and we endeavour to accumulate merit. So, the same word is used in different contexts of avoiding negative karma and accumulating positive karma.

1.3. Proof of resultant omniscience

The omniscient mind or dharmakaya is achieved as a result of the various practices of a bodhisattva. This heading explains the proof of omniscience or dharmakaya mind.

Question: What is the result of doing bodhisattva deeds?

Answer: The inconceivable features of a fearless supramundane buddha's power is the result of bodhisattva deeds.

> *Even in this world among excellent things* *124*
> *Some are seen to be most excellent.*
> *Thus realise that certainly also*
> *Inconceivable power exists.*

The teachings explain in great detail the incredible miraculous powers of the body, speech and mind of the enlightened Buddha.

In order to explain this verse the commentary says:

> The Mimasakas [a non-Buddhist school] and others, who lack conviction with regard to this, say that the Tathagata is not omniscient because of being a person, like any common man on the road.

The reasoning that the non-Buddhist schools such as the Mimasakas present is a syllogism: the Tathagata (the subject) is not omniscient (the predicate), because of being a person (reason). The commentary explains that 'This is inappropriate', and as a counter measure the author asks:

> Are the subject and the predicate to which your reason is applied one or different? In the first case, the Tathagata is unsuitable as a subject, because subject and predicate are one, just as a pot cannot be its own attribute. In the second case the Tathagata is also unsuitable as such, because the subject and predicate are different and resemble in all respect a pot and a woollen cloth.

The manner of refuting the non-Buddhist schools view is presented with the assumption that the non-Buddhist schools view the subject and the predicate as being inherently existent. That being the case as the commentary further explains:

> Similarly because of being asserted as inherently existent, if the reason and the thesis are inherently one, they should be inseparably one, and if they are inherently different they should be unrelated.

What is being explained here is that if the subject and the predicate are inherently one then a syllogism relying on

them to give a reason is absurd, because they are inherently one. If they are inherently separate then that also is an absurdity, because then there is no connection whatsoever between the subject and the predicate. You cannot use the subject to explain the predicate because they are inherently independently separate, which means that there is no relationship whatsoever between the two. In that way the argument of those who lack conviction is being refuted on the basis of the assertion that the subject, the predicate and the reasons are all viewed as being inherently existent.

So a counter question or syllogism is put forth:

> Furthermore, the subject, the sound of the Vedas, is not permanent, non-produced, self created or valid because of being sound like a madman's utterances.

What this refers to is that these non-Buddhist schools adhere to the belief that the sound of the Vedas is actually permanent. Therefore according to the non-Buddhist school they are non-produced and furthermore they are self-created and that's why they are valid. The counter syllogism is that the sound of the Vedas is not permanent, and furthermore is non-produced, and is not self-created or valid, because of being sound like a madman's utterances. This syllogism is used to counter the very reasoning that that the non-Buddhists gave, which is that the Buddha is not omniscient because he is an ordinary being. The counter syllogism that the sound of the Vedas cannot be valid is based on their reason that it is valid because it is permanent. However the sound of the Vedas is not permanent and is non-self-produced and so forth, so it cannot be stated as being valid, just like the sound of a madman's utterance cannot be considered as being valid.

Furthermore the text says that using your sort of line of reasoning you could say:

> You are not Brahmins because you have hands like fishermen.

The non-Buddhists say that the Buddha is not omniscient because they see the Buddha as having the features of an ordinary being. The response here is that if that is the case then you cannot be Brahmin because you have hands and arms like fishermen. What is being indicated is that if you follow your line of reasoning then many other assertions that you make about yourself cannot be valid.

There are also other counter reasons that are presented in other texts such as: Is one's mother a suitable object for sexual copulation, because she is similar to your own wife? This would obviously be an absurd logical assumption. There are many other examples that use the line of reasoning of similarity to assert whether something is suitable or not.

The real reason why the Buddha is omniscient is:

> Therefore, just as the excellent features of an effect are seen to arise through the special features of its cause, the existence of omniscience too can certainly be accepted.

The analogy that is given here is that:

> Among exceptional and excellent things, some which are particularly excellent are seen even in this world.

Within our worldly existence, amongst excellent things there are certain things that are even more excellent. We have many examples in our worldly existence of certain things that are the supreme amongst the supreme. So in that way we can therefore say that within beings, because of particular causes the result can be a particular type of incredible being, such as an omniscient being - the Buddha.

The particular examples that are given are:

- When text was written the caste system was dominant, and even today the caste system is very much prevalent in India. Within the caste system the purest and best caste is the Brahmin caste.
- The most enjoyable and most pleasant state of existence within samsara is called the peak of existence.
- Amongst the various mountains, the most supreme is known as Mount Meru.
- Kings are prevalent in the world and among the various kings the most supreme king is known as the universal monarch.

These examples are prevalent in this world system. There is the caste system, and what was commonly accepted at that time was that the Brahmin caste was the most supreme; because there are different places where one can take rebirth in samsara, being reborn in the peak of existence is considered to be the best rebirth within samsara; because there are different types of mountains, the most supreme is Mount Meru; and since kings are prevalent in the world, the most supreme king is the universal monarch. Therefore the use of these analogies reflects what is commonly agreed and accepted by beings in the world.

As the commentary further explains:

> Thus you should realise that the superlative awareness, the inconceivable power of Tathagatas, definitely exists, because of the stores of merit accumulated by bodhisattvas over three countless eons.

The **first countless eon**, where bodhisattvas accumulate merit, is from the first moment that a bodhisattva enters the path of accumulation, up to the path of seeing. At a certain stage of the path of seeing the bodhisattvas attain the first ground.

From the first ground up to the seventh ground is the **second countless eon**.

The last three grounds, the eighth, ninth and tenth ground, are **the third countless eon**

We can see how even bodhisattvas are at different levels all the way up to what is called the last continuum. The tenth ground of a bodhisattva is when they reach the stage that is called the last continuum of a sentient being. The next stage is an enlightened being, a buddha, which

is the most superior of all. When compared to the earlier stages the qualities that are achieved after attaining buddhahood are incredible and inconceivable. You can see how that all these different stages that we call attainments are superior to the ones preceding them, and the most superior of all is the enlightened state.

Therefore, as explained here, within the mental continuum the most superior mental continuum is the mental continuum of a buddha's mind, which is an omniscient mind.

As the commentary further explains:

> Moreover you should accept this proof of omniscience established by reasoning without depending on scriptural citations.

What is being established here is, as we can see, a logical way of explaining how omniscience does actually exist. Furthermore when we relate that to other states of mind, for example the understanding of emptiness, we see that the realisation of emptiness begins with a conceptual understanding of emptiness. That conceptual understanding of emptiness, when further developed and refined, then becomes the direct clear understanding of emptiness. An understanding of emptiness at a conceptual level is not a direct perception, because it is mixed with a generic image. However when that crude understanding of emptiness is further developed, it can turn into what we call the clear and direct understanding of emptiness. So that proves that the mind progressively becomes clearer and more mature. That is how an understanding of emptiness is then related to all other realisations, and the mind itself becomes clearer and clearer, all the way up to becoming an omniscient mind.

1.4. Showing why those with poor intelligence fear the Great Vehicle

If it is possible that as the development of a mind progresses one can attain a state of omniscience, and an omniscient being is considered a valid being, then this question arises: Why are most people afraid of the Great Vehicle and uninterested in attaining buddhahood?

Answer: It is because of their weak conviction.

> *Just as the ignorant feel afraid* *125*
> *Of the extremely profound teaching,*
> *So the weak feel afraid*
> *Of the marvellous teaching.*

Having explained that buddhahood is possible, and that buddhahood is an omniscient mind, then the next question or doubt that arises is that if that is so, then why are people so afraid of the Great Vehicle.

The response to the question mentions a weak conviction, which can refer to not having the ability to conceive that such a superior goal can be achieved. Because of not being able to conceive of such a goal the conviction is weak. Furthermore such people are ignorant.

As the commentary reads:

> The ignorant, whose minds are untrained, feel afraid of the very profound teaching of dependant arising free from inherent production with the feasibility of all actions and agents.

There are disciples and students of three different levels of ability: the very inferior level, the mediocre and the intelligent level. This explanation refers to beings of inferior intelligence who do not have the capacity to really grasp the meaning of the teachings, and whose minds are untrained. We can refer to them as being untrained in the understanding of reality. Such beings therefore feel very afraid of the profound teaching of dependent arising. What can be understood here is that the teaching of dependent arising is a profound explanation. The understanding that is gained from dependent arising is an understanding of emptiness, and the understanding of emptiness is when one gains the understanding of interdependentness. Like purification and gaining merit, which were mentioned earlier, emptiness and dependent arising enhance each other. Beings who are ignorant, or who have weak conviction, or who are untrained, are afraid of the profound teaching of dependent arising and emptiness, which, as mentioned here, are free from inherent production.

As the commentary further explains

> Similarly those whose conviction is weak feel afraid of the marvellous profound and extensive teaching of the Great Vehicle and of the superlative power of a buddha.

The summarising stanza from Gyaltsab Rinpoche reads as follows:

> Having considered the faults of cyclic existence well,
>
> Enter this profound and extensive Great Vehicle
>
> Of which those with poor intelligence feel afraid,
>
> And make bodhisattva deeds your quintessential practice.

This is quite clear so no further explanation is needed.

2. Presenting the name of chapter

> *This is the chapter on the* **Four Hundred Deeds** *showing the bodhisattva deeds.*
>
> This concludes the commentary on the fifth chapter showing the bodhisattva deeds from the *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the 'Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas*'.

We have covered the fifth chapter well. The sixth chapter presents the main obstacle to engaging in bodhisattva deeds, which is the delusions.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Aryadeva's Four Hundred Verses

༄༅། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2007 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, a network of Buddhist Centres in Australia and worldwide.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 February 2007

We have this great opportunity to gather together again this year and continue. So first of all I'd like to greet everyone with *Tashi delek!*

The reason why I say that it is auspicious that we have gathered together again is because we are here to exchange knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. The Dharma presents methods to discard negative emotions and acquire positive beneficial attitudes, which is a means of subduing the mind. Therefore this gathering, where we learn and discuss the means of doing that, is really beneficial. Discarding negative states of mind is based on cultivating positive attitudes, which is basically an attitude of wishing to benefit and be kind to others. Based on a compassionate and loving attitude of wishing to benefit others we can slowly work at removing the negative states of the mind within oneself. That is why I say that having this opportunity to jointly engage in the Dharma is most auspicious and beneficial.

It is important that we think along these lines on a continuous basis so as to encourage ourselves. To further recognise how important that basis of love and compassion is, we must remind ourselves that the wish to benefit others is likened to a very valuable priceless object, which indeed it is. If we were to lose this attitude of love and compassion, then what kind of life would we have? It would really be an empty life without much meaning. For as long as we nurture and hold on to this attitude of love and compassion, to that extent we will have a happier and healthier life. That is because to the extent that we develop love and compassion and based on that, extend some benefit to others by being kind to them, or showing a kind attitude, or good behaviour, others will also like us. They will befriend us and we will be accepted and considered as a friend wherever we go. Therefore just as it is as of benefit for others, it is also of practical benefit for ourselves. Therefore we must maintain and develop this priceless attitude.

We must also understand that learning the Dharma is not a means to merely acquire knowledge. Rather the main purpose of learning is to subdue the mind. That is something that we need to understand and continually remind ourselves. Subduing the mind basically means overcoming the negative attitudes in our mind. These attitudes are based on self-cherishing, which is thinking only about oneself all the time, making oneself as the centre and always considering everything else as being less important in relation to oneself. The stronger that self cherishing attitude is, the weaker the attitude of cherishing others and benefiting others will be.

Let us consider the state of mind where we have lost the attitude of benefiting and helping others. What kind of outcome will that bring to us? First of all we find that there will be feelings of being neglected or not being loved by others. Instead of feeling lost and uncomfortable and negative we should look into the reasons why others are neglecting and abandoning us. We must look into our own mind and see whether we have an attitude of only thinking about ourselves while neglecting others. If we really look into the main reason why others abandon us, we will find that that the very attitude that we criticise in others is something that we have within ourselves. The more self-cherishing and self-clinging that we have the more the attitude of others towards us will be similar.

It is very important that rather than thinking negatively about others, we investigate and look into ourself and the kinds of attitudes we hold. Therefore we must look into the benefits of cherishing others and really develop a sense of love and compassion towards others, while overcoming the self-cherishing attitude – the mind that clings only to the self. In order to try to train our mind it is good to do this sort of analysis or meditation on what is the most beneficial. For example, we can see two groups of people: one group are those who are nurturing, and who have a loving attitude towards others; they have compassion and cherish others. The other group of people are those who are self-centred and who only think about themselves; their life is based on self-centredness. If we put ourselves in the middle of these two groups and analyse them, and if were given the choice of joining one of them, then which group would we be inclined to join? Would we join the group of people who have a compassionate and loving attitude towards others, or would we join the group of people who are self-centred and who think only about themselves? If our natural choice was to join the group who exhibit love and compassion and kindness towards others, then that means that we see the value and benefit of such an attitude. Questioning and analysing in this way should give us enough reason to really develop that attitude of loving-kindness towards all others, and thus overcome our self-centredness and self-cherishing.

Having analysed in such a way, on further analysis we will come to realise that the good attitudes of love and compassion in these people didn't come about just by itself. Love and compassion are not qualities that arise without any training or development of the mind. So we think, 'If I were to naturally choose that group then I must follow suit. I must also develop the attitude of love and kindness in my heart. That is something I must do'. Developing our attitude in this way gives an outline for the motivation for practising Dharma and is the whole basis of the Dharma. So, as I normally remind you, the motivation of developing loving-kindness is very important, and we need to remind ourselves to generate and maintain that motivation.

I can also definitely see your development towards having a kinder mind, and that is something that I feel happy about. I can see that you have developed an awareness of karma, which is basically an ability to differentiate between negative and positive karmas. I'm

not saying that you may have developed deep-rooted, infallible faith in karma, as that is not something which is easily developed. Nevertheless, I see that you have a good understanding of karma and live your life accordingly. Because of the understanding you have, you are able to think, 'I should minimise engaging in negative deeds as much as possible and engage in positive deeds, and in this way bring about positive consequences for myself and others'. That is something which I definitely see that you are adopting, and that is a really good basis. The understanding and abiding by the law of karma, is said to be the basis or the very foundation of leading a Dharma life. That is something which is really important to maintain.

Recently, when I visited my own teacher, Khensur Urgyen Tseten, one of the first things he asked me was, 'How's your development of the Dharma going? Has you mind become kinder?', and my response to Khensur Rinpoche was, 'I feel that my mind has become much happier now, so I suppose that must be a sign that my mind has been becoming a little bit kinder'.

Part A Showing how the aspiring altruistic intention is generated after training in the attitudes of a person of intermediate capacity by explaining elimination of the four errors

The first four chapters mainly dealt with overcoming the four erroneous views, which is also something that His Holiness emphasised in his recent teachings in India. Studying this would have helped those who attended his teachings understand the points he made. The means of overcoming the four erroneous views that hinder the development of right attitude or view are the main practices of the medium scope. Overcoming these erroneous views is the means to overcome the obstacles to developing the bodhicitta mind and the actions of a bodhisattva. The first chapter covered overcoming the erroneous belief in permanence. The second chapter is on overcoming the erroneous belief of seeing the contaminated aggregates as pleasurable. The third is overcoming the erroneous belief of the contaminated aggregates being clean, while the fourth chapter is overcoming the erroneous belief of seeing the contaminated aggregates as having a self.

To actually give a more specific summary of the chapters presented so far in the *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattva* or the *Four Hundred*, the first four chapters explicitly present the four noble truths, by explaining the means of overcoming the four erroneous views, while implicitly they also show the means of overcoming the obstacles to developing bodhicitta.

Part B Explaining how to train in the deeds, having generated the practical altruistic intention.

The fifth chapter explained how to overcome particular obstacles to developing the bodhicitta attitude. The main subject matter was the actual explanation of the state of the bodhicitta mind, including an explanation of the bodhisattva's deeds and the bodhicitta attitude. The sixth chapter specifically goes into overcoming the obstacles to engaging in the bodhisattva deeds. If you understand this summary of the chapters then it becomes a good means to integrate it into your meditation practice.

CHAPTER VI: EXPLAINING THE MEANS TO ABANDON DISTURBING ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS WHICH PREVENT THE DEEDS

The sixth chapter explains how to overcome particular delusions in order to develop a bodhicitta attitude. It is subdivided into two:

1. Explaining the material of the chapter

2. Presenting the name of the chapter.

1. Explaining the material of the chapter

Presenting the material of the chapter is sub-divided into two categories.

1.1. Refuting the contention that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions are eliminated by tormenting the body with ascetic practices

1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

1.1. Refuting the contention that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions are eliminated by tormenting the body with ascetic practices

As the heading itself suggests, this section refutes the idea that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes (the delusions) are eliminated by enduring severe ascetic practices, which is a view that others hold.

The refutation is not suggesting that we don't need to practise ascetic practices, rather it is refuting asceticism as the main means for overcoming delusions, and therefore a means to obtain liberation. That is what is being refuted here.

One must understand that when delusions and karma are explained, they should be understood in the context of the twelve interdependent links. Three of the twelve interdependent links, are identified as delusions, and they are to be abandoned. Two of the twelve interdependent links are identified as karma. One must also understand that whilst all delusions are to be abandoned, not all karmas are to be abandoned. If it is a delusion, then one can assert that it is something to be abandoned entirely. Whereas with karma, there are certain karmas that are beneficial, such as the karma to be reborn in higher rebirths, i.e. as a human being or in the god realms. Those kind of meritorious karmas are not seen as an object of abandonment. However there are those karmas that are a cause to be reborn in the lower realms and these are definitely to be abandoned. There is no question about that. We can therefore conclude that all delusions as well as karmas that are causes to be born in the lower realms are to be abandoned, whereas the karmas that are classified as meritorious karma are not to be abandoned. Even though they are still causes to be

reborn in samsara, they can nevertheless be utilised for one's practice. Therefore they are not entirely abandonments as such. Also, when we consider the classification of karma into virtuous and non-virtuous karma, non-virtuous karma is definitely to be abandoned, whereas virtuous karma is not.

If desire increases through pleasure ***126***
And anger increases through pain,
Why are those with pleasure not ascetics?
Why are the ascetics those with pain?

As the commentary reads:

> Since the source of all trouble lies in cyclic existence, which is caused by contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, Bodhisattvas who act as close friends to transmigrators encourage trainees to put an end to such actions and emotions.

What is being specified here is contaminated karma, which as mentioned before, are the karmas to be abandoned. That is what is being explained. Basically this assertion is presenting the view of a non-Buddhist school, called Jainism, which practises great austerities in relation to mortifying their body, such as intentionally inflicting pain on the body by piercing it with thorns and so forth. They also go around naked as a means of practising austerity. These are the kinds of practices that are being negated by the verse. The Jains claim that Buddhist practices are not an authentic practice, because they don't practise austerity, whereas, 'we Jains practise austerity', they say.

> If [you claim] that is so, it is unreasonable to give the ordained buildings five hundred masonry courses high and food of a hundred flavours. Since these are pleasurable they increase desire.

What this refers to here is the non-Buddhist schools' claim that if you are saying that one must overcome the delusions, it is not proper that the Buddha has allowed you dwelling places that are reasonably comfortable to live in, good clothing that covers you well, as well as foods 'of a hundred flavours', indicating foods which are tasty and good. It is not proper that this is permitted to you, since these conditions will increase desire because they are pleasurable.

What they are saying may seem quite reasonable. The first line in the verse says, 'If desire increases through pleasure'. This is refuting the Jains' claim that pleasures increase desire, so therefore anything that gives pleasure should be avoided. The commentary further presents their argument:

> From the outset, one should therefore avoid things like visual form that arouse desire. Those who undergo overt suffering by mortifying their bodies with heat and cold, letting their hair become matted and so forth are called ascetics, overcoming contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

After claiming that Buddhist practices are not ascetic, they go on to explain that their way of practising is an ascetic practice, and that should be the practice to adopt.

The non-Buddhist schools say that pleasure leads to desire. Therefore, they claim, anything that seems to give rise to any pleasure should be completely abandoned in order to overcome desire. The refutation of this assertion is as follows:

> If pleasure from one's body and possessions increases desire, and pleasure as well as its causes should be avoided, physical and mental pain which increase anger should be avoided too.

What is being explained here is that if you claim that anything that increases pleasure is to be abandoned because it increases desire, then anything that causes pain should also be abandoned, because pain gives rise to the delusion of anger. Therefore that should be avoided as well. In other words, 'The austerities that you practise, including inflicting pain on yourself, are a cause for anger to arise, so why do you practise them?'. The commentary goes on:

> Why are those who have pleasure not ascetics and why are the ascetics those who fast and experience the pain...

and so forth.

As the text explains, those who overcome the contaminated actions and disturbing emotions are called real ascetics, not those who torment the body. That is the standing statement or reasoning that a Buddhist would give in response. As the commentary further explains, the Supramundane Victor (which refers to the Buddha) knowing the disposition of beings' minds, and seeing that some beings mind are inflicted by strong desire while in other beings the main delusion that is afflicting them is anger, gave different practices to overcome those delusions. As the commentary reads:

> The Supramundane Victor gave certain individuals twelve rules of training to prevent desire. To prevent anger he permitted the angry to have fine food, clothing and so forth.

There are twelve rules for ordained Sangha with respect to their clothing, food and shelter. In relation to the robes, fine clothes are to be avoided and only patched clothes should be worn. Thus, different folds in the robes represent patches. Furthermore, clothing that has been discarded by others can be adopted and worn, which is another way of decreasing attachment to clothing. There are also rules in relation to how clothes should be worn. Also, ordained Sangha should not keep more than the three robes, and they should be made of wool or cotton, and no other kind of expensive material like silk and so forth should be used.

Food must be acquired through alms, which means going out to beg for one's food. The second rule in relation to food is to eat one's food at one time, meaning in one sitting, which refers to eating one meal a day. To further emphasise that, the rule is that meals should not be eaten after noon.

In order to overcome strong attachment to dwellings, the rules prescribe that the Sangha dwell in forest areas (which means in the forest or in the wilderness). Secondly, their dwellings should not have a proper roof, which means living out in the open and finding natural sources to protect oneself from the elements. The third

rule is to dwell in areas like cemeteries, or isolated places, which is in order to increase one's practice and to abandon attachment to dwellings. These are the four rules in relation to dwellings.

In relation to seating, one should not sit in a position leaning against anything i.e. one should avoid comfortable chairs and sit where one can avoid leaning on anything. This is to overcome laziness, and just leaning back and relaxing. This is prescribed in order to overcome a particular attachment to one's sitting place. Also Sangha should sit in isolated places. The list of these twelve rules is clarified further on. You could actually go ahead and read them.

To refute the accusation of the non-Buddhist schools that Buddhists do not practise austerity, first of all the refutation is based on the actual mortification and inflicting of harm on the body itself, which is not in itself a practice of real austerity. Mortifying the body is a practice of ignorance, rather than a practice to overcome delusions. That being so, then the Buddhist refutation also goes on to explain that, 'It is not as though we Buddhists don't have ascetic practices. In fact the Buddha laid down rules as a means to overcome attachment to dwellings and clothing and so forth, and these are ascetic practices in themselves, which are not easy to practise. These are not extreme as your practices, they are however practices that strengthen detachment. They are moderate practices, which become a means for overcoming desire and attachment. So we Buddhists do have ascetic practices'.

As the commentary further explains:

> To prevent anger he gave the angry fine food, clothing and so forth. Therefore only the Shakyas who conquer disturbing emotions should be called ascetics.

What is being explained here is the skilful means of the Buddha and it is actually quite profound. In order to combat and overcome strong desires in those with strong desire, and thus practise detachment, the particular rules in relation to food, clothing and so forth were presented (as was explained earlier). Depriving someone, whose main delusion is anger, of food and clothing will just disturb their mind even further. Rather than being a means to overcome their delusion, it will actually increase it. So therefore as a skilful means to subdue the minds of those who are afflicted with anger, the Buddha prescribed fine food and clothing that would nourish the body, to the point where the mind can be subdued, and they can slowly overcome that strong aversion or anger in their mind, and thus help to subdue their mind. Thus as a summary it is claimed here that the Shakyas, meaning the followers of Shakyamuni Buddha, are the ones who are practising austerities in the real sense.

The presentation in this text follows that the advice that I give to people in relation to partners who are living together, or any other relationship that one has, which I've shared with you before. If your partner, for example, were to come home one day quite upset with something that may have happened during the day, they might be quite agitated and upset. When you see them coming back in that state of mind, it would be very unskilful to start pestering them with questions like 'What happened?' or 'Tell me what went wrong?', when all they really want is to be quiet and have some peace of mind. So to really help calm them down, the best thing is to welcome them home, smile at them and say, 'What can I serve you?' and go and make a cup of tea for them, or maybe offer to make a delicious meal. After offering tea, a delicious meal and so forth, their mind will naturally calm down and then, without having been asked, they might start relating what is wrong and share their problem. But if you were to ask them questions right away, that would be considered as pestering, which could just agitate their mind even further. So therefore I normally advise that in relationships a more skilful way to react when one notices that they are unhappy or sad or agitated in some way is to offer them food to make them relax. That would then be a good way, so that one lives in harmony.

The commentary presents this analogy:

> Just as one gets sugar and so forth by crushing sugar cane, all kinds of happiness in this life and in the future are gained by crushing the disturbing emotions.

The analogy being used here is deriving sugar from sugar cane by crushing it. That analogy is used to explain how the delusions are the very root of unhappiness. So therefore just as the sugar cane is crushed to derive the sugar, likewise the very root of the delusions is dealt with and the delusions are thus eradicated from the mind, leaving real happiness and peace - what we call liberation. It is not by inflicting more pain and more harm upon oneself that one eradicates the delusion, but rather combating and dealing the delusions themselves, so that one can overcome and uproot them from the very core. That is the real way of dealing with the delusions.

1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

We will cover this second heading next week.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 February 2007

As usual we will bring our attention inward and focus our mind on the teaching to be received. For that purpose we generate the bodhicitta motivation, which is, 'For the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I need to attentively listen to the Dharma and then use it to overcome all the delusions'.

1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

This section explains the means to abandon disturbing emotions, and to do that we first need to identify them. Only then can we attempt to overcome the disturbing emotions. That is the purpose of this section.

The technical definition of a delusion is the mental factor that causes the mind to be disturbed and uncomfortable. That definition includes the nature of what a delusion is, which is a mental factor, and its function, which is that it disturbs the mind and makes it agitated.

At our stage, as an ordinary person, rather that trying to overcome the delusions we actually seem to befriend and harbour them within us, because we don't recognise them as delusions. When we actually begin to recognise and identify delusions as such then we begin to develop a strong wish to get rid of them, because we do not want our mind to be disturbed or to be uncomfortable. Therefore it is really important to initially recognise delusions, and then slowly try to overcome them.

In general, the delusions are classified into the six root delusions and the twenty secondary, or proximate, delusions. They have been explained before, so we won't go into detail about them now. You can refer back to your notes or look into the text, where it explains the specific delusions. Some of the six root delusions are actually identified here in the text, but the main point is to not just look at the list and be able to name them. Rather you should use the list of the delusions as a means of recognising those that seem to occur in your mind. When you are in a disturbed state of mind try to relate that to a particular type of delusion, and thus recognise the source of the disturbance. Just that mere recognition and acknowledgment of the delusion helps one to understand what is going on in one's mind. Using that process we can then slowly work at eliminating the delusions.

One develops a keen wish to overcome these delusions when one identifies and recognises the delusions within oneself as being a disturbing state of mind. When one really begins to identify the function of the delusions and how they disturb ourselves and others then a wish such as, 'I must overcome the delusions' can be generated in one's mind. The determination, 'I must abandon them', arises spontaneously in the mind. Therefore the text explains the means of abandoning disturbing emotions in this section.

Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions is further divided into two main categories.

1.2.1. The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions

1.2.2. How to cultivate the antidote which totally destroys the seeds of the delusions

This twofold classification is actually very useful. The first subdivision refers to the way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions or delusions which, when they arise in a manifest form, arise obviously in our mind. However the means to help to overcome those manifest delusions in our mind will not in themselves serve as an antidote to overcome the seeds of the delusions. For us, what serves as the antidote to overcome the seeds of delusions is actually the wisdom realising selflessness. Overcoming the seeds of delusions is very difficult to attempt without having developed what we call the wisdom realising selflessness.

On a daily basis, what disturbs us continuously are the manifest delusions. Thus techniques such as thinking about the unattractive features of an object that you are attracted to as a means of overcoming desire, or thinking about love and compassion as a means of overcoming anger are the antidotes that help us to overcome the manifest delusions.

Seeds and imprints

However while these techniques help to overcome the manifest delusions in our mind, they will not in themselves serve as a direct means to overcome the seeds of the delusions. That is how understanding this twofold subdivision can be helpful to our minds. As explained in previous teachings, there is a difference between the seed of a delusion and the imprint of a delusion. These are also classified respectively as the adventitious afflictions and the afflictions to omniscience. Even in Tibetan the terms for seed and imprint are sometimes used interchangeably so it can be confusing. However when we differentiate between the two obscurations with reference to seed and imprint then the seed relates to the delusions themselves, whereas the imprint is what we call the obscuration to omniscience. So the seed of the delusion is an obscuration to liberation, whereas the imprint is an obscuration to omniscience. To completely remove the imprint of delusions, which are the obscurations to omniscience, one has to use the wisdom realising emptiness that is infused with bodhichitta. To reiterate, the difference between a seed and an imprint is that the seed of delusion causes the next moment of a continuum to arise as a delusion bringing about an effect, while the imprint is like the residue of delusion that obscures our mind from omniscience.

1.2.1. The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions

The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions is further sub-divided into three.

1.2.1.1. General explanation of how to abandon the three

poisons

1.2.1.2. Individual explanation

1.2.1.3. Detailed explanation of how to abandon anger and desire.

1.2.1.1. General explanation of how to abandon the three poisons

This has five subdivisions which are:

1.2.1.1.1. Functions of the three poisons must be understood

1.2.1.1.2. Reason for the need to eliminate the three poisons

1.2.1.1.3. Antidotes to anger and desire must be applied individually

1.2.1.1.4. How to treat students having desire and anger.

This is in relation to how a teacher treats students with particular types of strong delusions in their mind.

1.2.1.1.5. How to apply the antidotes on understanding the sequence in which disturbing emotions arise

1.2.1.1.1. Functions of the three poisons must be understood

First of all the functions of the three poisons must be understood. The three poisons, as we all know, are desire, anger and ignorance, and they are three of the six root delusions.[1]

They are referred to as poisons because for as long as one of these delusions is prevalent within oneself there is no ultimate personal benefit whatsoever, and it also serves as a means of harm for oneself and others. Therefore it is likened to poison, which if consumed would affect one with unwanted consequences. Likewise, for as long as the delusions are prevalent in one's mind they bring about unwanted sufferings. Despite this, however, it seems that we befriend and welcome the three poisons to our mind, instead of trying to remove them.

In the beginning, it is actually very difficult to recognise the difference between attachment and real love, and in fact in a worldly sense the word love basically refers to what we call attachment. We are encouraged to express love, but when it is mixed with strong attachment, then it can bring unfavourable consequences. Recognising that, and in order to overcome attachment, one must be able to differentiate between real love and attachment, and then cultivate the love and drop the attachment.

It is also good to note the reasons why the root delusions are called root delusions and the secondary delusions are called secondary, or more literally, proximate (meaning close) delusions. There are two different interpretations. One is that the six root delusions are called root delusions because they serve as the primary, or main delusions that arise in the mind, while the secondary or proximate delusions are like the branches or extensions that are derived from the main delusions.

Another interpretation is that each one of the six root delusion arises in many different ways and circumstances, whereas the secondary or the proximate delusions arise very specifically. They are a specific state of mind that can be identified as a particular type of emotion at that particular time. Therefore root delusions are more general in nature, and when one of the root delusions arises a lot of other secondary delusions can arise. That then contributes to focusing on the object of the root delusion in many different ways.

Desire or attachment

The definition of attachment is that it is a mental factor which focuses on a contaminated object and exaggerates the qualities of that object, thus seeing it as being attractive.

The definition of attachment specifies focusing with an exaggerated view. The Tibetan term is *drotak* meaning superimposition. What that means in plain English is exaggerating the qualities of the object. A delusion is classified as a mistaken consciousness. If you were to define attachment as a mental factor that focuses on the qualities of an object and sees it as being attractive, then it would be hard to say that it is a mistaken consciousness, because there are indeed certain qualities in objects. Viewing an object, seeing its qualities, and being attracted to it is not sufficient to identify the attachment as a mistaken consciousness. What makes it a mistaken consciousness is the exaggerated part. Focusing on the object one sees its qualities but what happens is that the mind exaggerates those qualities. This means that one sees extra qualities of the object which are in fact not there. It is that extra perception, which is contrary to the actual mode of the existence of the object, that is referred to as being a mistaken consciousness.

We can actually gauge this from our own experience of having a very strong attachment to an object. How do we view the object? It seems completely appealing and attractive from every side, but later on, when our attachment to the object is reduced, we see it as being the complete opposite and even quite sour. That is how one can identify a feeling of attachment.

Anger

The definition of anger is focusing on one of the three types of object, and being unable to be patient or endure the object, and then generating an intention to harm the object.

The three main objects are oneself, one's friends and one's enemies. So harm to oneself, or one's friends is a reason for one to feel angry, while benefiting our enemies is another reason to feel anger. In relation to the three types of objects one has further reasonings which are: others have harmed me in the past, are harming me now and will harm me in the future; in relation to friends, others have harmed my friends in the past, are harming my friends now and will harm them in the future; and in terms of one's enemies, they have helped my enemies in the past, they are helping my enemies now and they will help my enemies in the future. These are the nine reasons to become angry. It is said that the negative delusion of anger is not present in the higher realms, because they don't have the reasons described above.

[1] The other three are pride, doubt and deluded views.

Focusing on an object, not being able to endure or be patient with the object, and thus developing an intention to harm the object is anger. The object of anger is mostly related to one of the three objects or the three reasonings.

Ignorance

That which obscures an understanding of the reality of phenomena is what is called ignorance.

The verse from the root text is:

> *Desire's activity is acquisition;* *127*
> *Anger's activity is conflict.*
> *As wind is to all the elements*
> *Confusion's activity is nurture.*

Having understood how the disturbing emotions functions one must get rid of them.

Each of the three poisons are then explained.

Attachment

Desire's activity is to acquire both the animate and inanimate.

As it is explained in the commentary the very function of desire seems to be that we want to possess things.

Its antidote is to meditate on repulsiveness and to give up one's circle of friends and one's possessions.

As attachment is an exaggerated view of the qualities of an object the antidote is to see the actual mode of existence of the object by examining its unattractive features.

The techniques of how to meditate on the repulsiveness or the unattractiveness of an object have been explained previously. Although there are different ways, primarily one uses one's own contaminated body as the object of meditation. As described in the Abhidharma texts, if one were to do a close contemplation on one's physical body then one uses an analytic process based on the structure of the body. One begins with one's feet examining the toenails in detail, how they are made, what is their essence and then moves onto the toes themselves and the soles of the feet. Then go up the leg to the torso, seeing all the organs within one's body all the way up to the top of the crown of our head. As well as investigating the internal nature of the body, we are also investigating the nature of its surface.

When we look into how our body is structured we should find that there is nothing there that is really and truly attractive. So the primary practice is really in relation to one's own body. If one has a strong attachment to one's own body then in the process of that meditation one comes to realise that there is really nothing that is attractive in our body, and so the strong initial attachment that one has to the body will be reduced. In that way this meditation will help us to overcome attachment to our body.

If one uses this analysis that we call the close contemplation of our body, and in this way see the uncleanliness of the body and unattractiveness of the body, we can start to lose attachment to our own body. Then that same process is used on other bodies that one may be attached to. However there are those who say that it is relatively easy to meditate on the unattractiveness of one's own body but when it comes to the bodies of others it is much more difficult.

One technique to visualise the repulsiveness of the body that is explained in some teachings, which is very effective, is to visualise the blood and fluids oozing out on the right side of the body, while on the other side the body the flesh is open and you can see the skeletal part of the body. At the front you visualise the actual organs, the intestines and the flesh and so forth being piled up in front of you. So in that way one dissects the body and meditates on its different aspects. The body becomes really repulsive and then any attachment will definitely be overcome at that moment.

As the commentary explains, the other means of overcoming attachment is to give up one's circle of friends and possessions. What this means is to give up one's attachment to one's circle of friends and possessions. So we must be give up and limit that attachment.

Anger

Anger's activity is strife and conflict.

Again this identifies the function of anger, which, when we relate it to our own experience, is very true. The very moment that anger arises brings up the wish to have a confrontation with others. The emotion of anger is very strong and the wish for conflict often initially arises with those with whom we share our accommodation and our food. In the moment of anger we can see nothing pleasant in staying together, or eating together,

Cultivating love and using houses and so forth that one likes are its antidote.

As the commentary explains, developing love is one of the means for overcoming anger. Here love is to be understood as wishing for the other to be free from suffering and to be happy. Keep that in mind when the circumstances arise for others to be upset. Because they are not in a happy state of mind, that leads them to say things or do things that are irrational and which, if we have not prepared ourselves, then become a cause for us to develop anger and be upset. When others are not happy or not well, and say or do things that are irrational we usually respond to that with anger, because we don't consider their plight or difficulty, and we see them as harming us. In fact when we reflect on why they are in that state of mind, why they are upset, or behaving irrationally, or saying unpleasant things, it is because their mind is disturbed. We can think about how they must be really suffering to be saying and doing the things that they are doing. In order to be able to understand this one first of all has to use oneself as an example. Judging from one's own experience, when one gets angry and upset how does one feel? Does one feel content or happy? One definitely feels ill-at-ease and uncomfortable doesn't one? Others have that same experience, and because of not feeling happy they are disturbed, which influences them to do or say things that seem to be irrational. If we can think along these lines to see others in a pitiful state, and thus develop a sense of wishing them to be free from

that negative state and to be happy, then instead of anger one can develop the love that will prevent anger from arising in the mind. So when thinking about anger it is very important to refer to oneself first and judge from one's own experience. As the teachings say, when anger arises in the mind then it disturbs oneself as well as others, and it brings no happiness to oneself or others. That is how anger harms. By thinking along these lines one develops the antidote, which is compassion or love.

The text refers to houses, but I think the more direct translation from the Tibetan is 'conducive or nice temples' - the sort of temples or nice dwellings that are conducive for the mind. 'So forth' refers to nice, nourishing food that makes the body strong and healthy. So when we notice that someone is angry, then as mentioned previously, we can allow them to ease down and offer them some good food and so forth that will help them to calm down.

The reason providing good dwellings and nourishment as well as clothing can help to reduce manifest anger is because of the very nature of anger. One of the reasons why anger arises is when unwanted or unfavourable circumstances are being experienced, and such unfavourable circumstances can be not having sufficient food, not having sufficient clothing or not having a sufficient place to live. Therefore as a direct means of opposing anger, if one can help to change the outer conditions by providing a good dwelling, good food and nourishment, clothing and so forth, then that opposes the unfavourable conditions and the immediate reason for them to be upset and angry is overcome.

Ignorance

> Just as wind increases the strength of fire and the other elements, confusion's activity is to nurture both desire and anger.

This is using the analogy of fire, where wind strengthens and enlarges the fire. Likewise the activity of confusion or ignorance is said to nurture and increase the delusions of desire and anger. Some texts use the analogy of ignorance as the leader, with anger and desire being the right hand men or servants. This analogy shows that ignorance is the main delusion, which is supported by anger and desire.

> Its antidote is meditation on dependant arising and so forth.

What is being indicated here is meditation on emptiness.

The analogy in the commentary is that it is like killing a sea monster with fire. There is a long story about this but the main point is that anger and desire and ignorance can be overcome. The word fire as used here is analogous to the fire of the wisdom realising emptiness, which can destroy all our negativities. So in a positive sense the fire is destroying something that is negative.

Of the three poisons it is said that **desire** is like the vast and extensive sea, which covers most of the world. So in this sense desire is something that links us from this existence to the next existence as explained in the twelve interdependent links. It is craving and grasping, which are both desires, which propel us to the next life, and which are the connecting link between this life and the next. So desire is therefore likened to the sea which is very pervasive and extends beyond our direct perception.

Anger is likened to the fire that destroys positiveness. Just as fire will destroy houses and good things, anger destroys all our positive deeds, it destroys our good state of mind, it destroys that peace of mind, and then it further destroys the virtuous imprints and so forth in our mind.

Ignorance is likened to wind which, as mentioned earlier, nurtures and helps the fire to expand. That which can completely overcome and uproot the three poisons from their very roots is the wisdom realising emptiness.

1.2.1.1.2. REASON FOR THE NEED TO ELIMINATE THE THREE POISONS

This heading is in line with the following doubt that may arise in the mind. It seems to be possible to abandon attachment, anger and ignorance but why do I have to do that? Why is there a need to overcome or abandon these delusions? This subdivision is an answer to that doubt.

> Assertion: though there are antidotes to the three poisons, why should one get rid of them?
>
> Answer: Because they produce suffering.

The root text reads:

> *Desire is painful because of not getting,* *128*
> *Anger is painful through lack of might,*
> *And confusion through not understanding,*
> *Because of this, these are not recognised.*

The text then describes how each of the three poisons causes suffering.

> Desire produces suffering when one does not encounter what one badly wants.

Reflecting on the meaning of this it seems very true that the very nature of desire is wanting to possess something. When one does not acquire what one wants that brings a lot of suffering to one's mind, which comes from the attachment to what one wants. So attachment is the cause for the suffering that arises in the mind.

> Anger produces suffering when one lacks might to crush the strong.

We know from our experience that we become very upset and angry with a situation or a person when we have no power to do anything about it. So we just have to endure the mental agitation, because we can't do anything about it and we can't fight back. When there is an unjust situation, or something with which one does not agree, and one cannot do anything about it, then this produces suffering in the mind.

> Confusion induces suffering when one fails to understand a subtle matter thoroughly.

This refers to not understanding something on a higher level. Not understanding the actual reality of things then becomes a cause for us to experience all the different types of suffering. This refers to the actual mode of existence, or the reality of the situation. If, after having used one's analytical process one still does not

understand the reality of certain things, then that can cause a lot of suffering to arise in the mind.

On a very practical level if someone accuses us of not knowing anything and being completely stupid that could really offend us, and we could get very upset and angry with that wouldn't we?

As the commentary concludes

> Therefore persevere in getting rid of the disturbing emotions.

Having identified each of the delusions and understood how they serve as causes for us to experience various types of sufferings one must then use one's full ability and might to overcome them. As an analogy, if we know an enemy is coming to attack us in a worldly sense we would prepare ourselves by wearing armour and carrying a sword to defend ourself in battle. We would be prepared because we recognise the danger that the enemy poses. Likewise we must recognise that the delusions are harmful entities that harm our peace of mind, and that we must battle to overcome them.

1.2.1.1.3 ANTIDOTES TO ANGER AND DESIRE MUST BE APPLIED INDIVIDUALLY

> Question: Do anger and desire occur together the way confusion occurs with both of them?
>
> Answer:

The respective verse from the root text is:

> *Just as it is seen that bile* *129*
> *Does not occur with phlegm,*
> *One sees that desire, too,*
> *Does not occur with anger*

This explains how the delusion of ignorance arises simultaneously with other delusions so that, for example, when anger arises ignorance is also manifested at the same time. When either anger or attachment is in the mind then ignorance is also manifest. However anger and attachment cannot arise at the same time in the continuum.

As the commentary explains:

> Just as it is seen that bile and phlegm do not occur together, one sees that desire and anger, too, do not occur simultaneously in manifest form in one mental continuum.

The meaning what we derive from the explanation is that according to medical explanations phlegm and bile do not occur at the same time. That is said to be because of the element that is in union with each kind of sickness. As explained in the texts, when there is an excess of fluid in the body then that causes phlegm to be prevalent, whereas when there is heat in the body that is a cause for bile to be affected. The very nature of the elements that produce phlegm and bile (water and fire) is that they oppose to each other, and cannot exist in unison without harming each other. That is the main point. Of course water and fire can be in close proximity but they cannot be together without affecting each other. Likewise within our body phlegm and bile do not occur at the same time.

That is the analogy that is used to explain the main point, which is that desire and anger do not occur simultaneously in a manifest form in one mental continuum. That is, in one person's mind in one moment of the mental continuum, anger and desire cannot arise simultaneously.

We can also understand from the very definitions of anger and desire that attachment is a mental factor that desires the object, wants to possess the object and exaggerates the qualities of the object. Whereas the anger focusing on an object is a wish to be able to avoid that object, not wanting to be near that object, and wanting to harm the object. That being the case, wishing to have an object and wishing to avoid it cannot arise at the same time.

We can see from our own experience with objects that if we have a strong wish to have it then attachment arises, Whereas when anger arises we wish to avoid an object and have an aversion to it. So we can see how the wish to possess some mistaken thing, and the wish to avoid something changes from moment to moment. Without even having to think about it desire immediately arises in our mind when we see something that appears attractive to us. Whereas when we see something we don't like aversion arises in our mind immediately. In this way aversion and anger arise spontaneously in our mind at different times, but as explained here, they don't arise at the same time.

When we relate this to our own experiences, we can think of a person who is very attractive and who seems very pleasing and nice, but at another time one does not want to be with that person and does not want to see them. Sometimes we want to be close to them and at other times we avoid them. We can see how this goes on throughout the course of our life.

This state of indecisiveness prevails in our life. When we are very attached to a person, we really want to live with them, and be with them, and we think we can actually have a good life with them. But then when we start to see their negative qualities and begin to develop some aversion towards them, then if one is already married we might think that we want to divorce them. So there are times when you when may go through such indecisive states, 'Oh, I want to live with them, no, I want to divorce them. Should I live with or should I divorce them?' If we actually investigate what goes on in our mind, we can see that there are so many interesting things that go on that it can be quit spectacle.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 March 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to have a good motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings.

In the last session we left off with an explanation of how the antidotes to anger and desire must be applied separately.

1.2.1.1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON THE THREE POISONS (CONT.)

1.2.1.1.4. HOW TO TREAT STUDENTS HAVING DESIRE AND ANGER

Earlier we described how the antidotes to desire and anger have to be applied individually, because anger and attachment do not arise simultaneously. This next topic explains how a teacher who guides students, having understood how antidotes must be applied separately, must individually guide students to overcome their delusions.

It seems that one method is to ask students with strong desire to do prostrations in order to use up their physical energy.

> *Desire should be driven like a slave* 130
> *Because severity is its cure,*
> *And anger looked upon as a lord*
> *Because indulgence is its cure.*

As the commentary explains:

> Understanding the characteristics of desire and anger and how they function...

Earlier when the definitions of desire and anger were explained, both the nature and function of desire and anger were described.

> ...a spiritual teacher engaged in forming students makes those with desire work like slaves. This is because severity and lack of deference cure desire.

What this refers to is a way of curing students from having strong desire. Although the words 'slave' is used it can also be used in the sense of a servant or what is known here as a civil servant. In other words it can refer to those who work from morning to evening, and who are like servants to their boss. Because they are preoccupied with work, there is no time for self indulgence. Likewise, a teacher will give those with strong desire extra virtuous activities, in order to distract them from objects of desire. Thus desire is prevented from arising, because students are not given the opportunity to engage with objects of desire.

As the commentary reads:

> The angry should be looked upon as lords. By treating them with indulgence and serving them respectfully their anger will not arise; thus indulgence cures it.

As explained earlier, one of the main reasons for anger to arise, is not meeting with the objects of desire, or lacking the necessities. But, as explained earlier, and again here, when you provide someone with basic needs it reduces their manifest anger and prevents anger from arising. If the teacher treats the students for whom anger is a problem like lords, paying them respect and giving them what they need, their manifest anger will be reduced. What is being described here are the manifest delusions.

Understanding these explanations and applying them in our daily lives, can help us to understand and deal with others who may also have manifest delusions.

1.2.1.1.5. HOW TO APPLY THE ANTIDOTES ON UNDERSTANDING THE SEQUENCE IN WHICH DISTURBING EMOTIONS ARISE

Having recognised delusions, and further recognised the sequence in which they arise, the next point to understand is that delusions are prevalent at particular times. This refers to the delusions that are present in the morning, during the day, and at night.

> *First there is confusion,* 131
> *In the middle there is anger,*
> *And later there is desire,*
> *In three stages during the day.*

As the commentary explains:

> At night sleep and lethargy increase and because phlegm predominates, first in the morning there is confusion.

This is as explained. During the night when we sleep the mind is in a state of stupor and then we wake up that state is still prevalent. So it is very difficult to wake up, because the residue of stupor is still prevalent in the mind. In the morning this hangover of stupor leads to the mind being in a very dull state. If we want to engage in an early-morning activity then having a dull mind is an obstacle that causes unease and suffering.

As the commentary goes on:

> In the middle of the day one rides on the wheel of suffering caused by the frustrations of making a living, and anger arises because one is plagued by hunger and thirst.

After we have properly woken up, we begin to engage in major activities such as going to work. As we engage in these activities during the day there may be a lot of obstacles that will result in anger arising. As we work we also experience hunger and thirst, which also leads to agitation. During our normal activities there are many instances where things go wrong, so there are lots of situations where anger arises.

After work we come home, wash up and apply nice smelling perfumes and go out and that is when attachment starts to arise.

As the text identifies, there are three times when particular delusions are more prevalent. Along with understanding how we are influenced by the three delusions at all times, we must also understand this sequence of the particular times when particular

delusions are more prevalent than others. For example in the morning there is a dullness stemming from ignorance. As stupor and dullness can be recognised, one can then apply the antidote to overcome dullness. As an antidote to this morning dullness, young monks in the monastery are taught to recite the mantra of Manjushri (OM AH RA PA TSA NA DHI) as soon they wake up. During the day anger is more prevalent so we can apply the antidote to that. In the evening there are more conditions for attachment to rise so one can apply the antidote to attachment then.

Relating this to earlier explanations we can apply the understanding of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance, we can apply love to overcome anger, and we can meditate on the ugliness of objects as a means of overcoming attachment.

1.2.1.2. INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATION

This has three subdivisions:

1.2.1.2.1. How to abandon desire
1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred
1.2.1.2.3. How to abandon confusion

1.2.1.2.1. HOW TO ABANDON DESIRE

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it.
1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it

Desire is hard to recognise as being a fault and therefore it is very hard to discard it.

Desire is no friend, but seems like one, *132*
Which is why you do not fear it.
But shouldn't people particularly
Rid themselves of a harmful friend?

Desire masquerading as a friend deceives ordinary people.

Since that is so:

you must pay special attention to getting rid of it.

As explained in the commentary it is extremely hard to recognise desire as a delusion to abandon, because we are so influenced by it. Desire manifests within us very cunningly in the aspect of a friend who wishes benefit us. Though it is harmful, it disguises itself as a friend. Because desire seems to be a friend it is therefore very hard to recognise it as something to be discarded. When we allow ourselves to follow attachment or desire there is a pleasurable feeling as well, so that makes it even harder to see desire as something to be discarded.

As the commentary explains:

Ultimately it produces suffering, so it is not a friend, but looks like one because it seems benevolent. Therefore you do not fear it.

When desire or attachment arises it arises in the aspect of a friend, so rather than fearing it we trust it.

Shouldn't people make a particular effort to rid themselves of a harmful friend?

Even in worldly terms if one sees that a friend is harmful, we will distance ourselves from them out of common sense, even if they have been a friend for a long time. That is because they are harming us. In fact attachment is not a friend, because it definitely harms us. So shouldn't any wise person distance themselves from attachment, just as in the analogy of worldly friend who harms oneself.

Similarly one should get rid of desire.

If we look to the explanation in the teaching with our own deeper common sense and experiences we come to recognise that attachment brings us more suffering in the long run. So we learn not to completely rely on attachment. Then one can start to gradually overcome and abandon attachment. However I agree that it is not easy to recognise attachment as something to be abandoned. Even ordained people say that the very source of enjoyment comes from one's attachment. So if ordained people find it hard to give up attachment it must be even harder for lay people.

Not realising that attachment is a source of suffering and therefore not pleasurable is the source of many problems. It leads us into so much suffering. Attachment is really suffering rather than real pleasure, and the real source of attachment is ignorance.

As it is difficult to recognise attachment, we must use many different reasonings and antidotes to overcome attachment.

To further describe the severity of attachment Lama Tsong Khapa gave the analogy of attachment as being like the drop of oil on a piece of paper. That one drop begins to permeate and stain the thickness of the paper while it also spreads out on the surface of the paper. It can create a very dark obvious stain that is impossible to get rid of. When we are attached we are immersed in the object. With anger it is easier to distance ourselves from the object of our anger, because we can actually distance ourselves physically from that object. However with attachment even if we distance ourselves physically, the mind does not give it up. Put in a position of choosing to give up life or give up the object of attachment some people will even choose to give up life. With attachment we become completely immersed in the object.

Furthermore, the reason that we find anger is easier to overcome is because of the obvious suffering that anger causes in our mind. But with attachment, the more desire we have the more we want to hold onto the object. We don't see the disadvantages as easily and don't even recognise it as suffering.

1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

Desire arises from causes and *133*
Also arises through circumstance.
Desire arising, through circumstance
Is easy to deal with; not the other.

The commentary explains:

Never give desire a chance to arise!

There are two ways in which desire arises.

It arises in two ways: some forms of desire arise from

a cause of a similar type created by repeated familiarity in the past.

All desire arises from a cause, the difference arises in relation to some having immediate causes and others not having an apparent cause. Attachment is often a cause of a similar type. This refers to the lack of immediate apparent conditions that cause attachment to arise.

When attachment seems to arise spontaneously, without having to think about or see a particular object, it is said to be attachment of the first type. Such attachment arises continuously from the past, which includes past life times. So this kind of attachment results from having a continuum with spontaneous desire arising.

Some arise adventitiously through the circumstance provided by the proximity of an object.

The second type is a strong attachment arising as result of contact with a beautiful object. Of the two types of attachment this second type is relatively easier to overcome, because once the object causing the desire is removed and is out of sight the particular attachment will subside.

The first type of attachment that arises through strong familiarity is not as easy to overcome. As the commentary states:

The other is not like that, since a strong antidote is needed to get rid of it.

This refers to the more common example of desire that arises through acquaintance or familiarity, which is very strong and difficult to overcome. It is very much like trying to overcome the habit of drinking or smoking: the longer you have had the habit the more difficult it is to overcome.

The previous discussion has concentrated on the negative side of desire or attachment. In a sense there is a positive side, which is that it is associated with love and kindness. For someone with a strong affinity for love and kindness, attachment is very difficult to overcome, and is not easily removed. That is because of the strong imprint of love and kindness that is due to familiarity.

The kind that arises through circumstance is like the following: a bird cannot fly without one of its wings.

The second type of attacment is like finding a bird with one wing - it cannot fly without both of its wings. The reason why it is easier to overcome this type of adventitious attachment is because circumstantial desire arises from the object. If the object is removed desire is not maintained for very long. Just like a bird needs two wings to fly, desire needs an external condition, which affects the internal condition of desire.

As the *Abhidharma* text mentions, when all three conditions for desire are prevalent it is extremely hard for desire not to be present. These three conditions are

1. One has not abandoned attachment
2. One is in close proximity to the object of desire
3. One has the faulty state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of the object.

When these conditions are present there is definitely room for us to be influenced by attachment.

Is important to understand the circumstances in which desire arises in order to eventually overcome it. So understanding the profundity of how desire arises is very useful. As explained earlier, all three conditions have to be present for desire to arise at both a subtle and a manifest level. If there was just one condition, such as meeting the object of desire, and we then concluded that anyone who comes into contact with objects of desire would have desire, then that would not be true, because those who have overcome desire are not influenced by it. Thus just meeting with an object is not a sufficient cause in itself for desire to arise. To go into it more deeply, the very basis of the condition for attachment to rise is the grasping at the self. That is the real culprit, grasping at the self.

1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred

Anger is lasting and certainly *134*
Makes one do grave non-virtue.
Thus constant awareness of their distinctions
Will bring to an end disturbing emotions.

Anger is a fault more grave than desire, and therefore one should strive to get rid of it.

This verse is explaining that anger is a fault so one should get rid of it.

Since anger, which is made to last and held fast by resentment…

The actual word for resentment in Tibetan is *tro-wa*. Resentment is a mental factor which induces anger to last longer. That which makes anger long-lasting is another type of delusion, which causes resentment.

...certainly burns one's own and others' mindstreams and causes others harm, it is totally non-virtuous.

If one does not overcome anger when it initially arises, it becomes resentment, which is holding on to the initial cause of anger and thus harbouring agitation and anger towards that object.

When one does not retaliate, one might say that one is practising patience, but in fact that may just lead to more resentment. Not retaliating is called patience, but one may fall into the state of mind of holding on to resentment. One may seem very cool and calm but still be agitated. For as long as we harbour anger it harms ourselves and others and destroys our virtues.

Unlike attachment anger has no benefit either for oneself or others - it is totally non-virtuous. With attachment one can benefit others and there is some kind of pleasure in that. The disadvantage is that as the attachment is more difficult to recognise, it is more difficult to overcome. However with anger there is no benefit for either oneself or others. Because attachment is not totally non-virtuous, attachment in the desire realm is non-virtuous, but in the form and formless realms it is not non-virtuous.

The disadvantage or faults of anger are very obvious. We can see how there are so many grave misdeeds. As we see in the news, there are even those who kill their parents in anger, and other grave misdeeds are also performed out of anger.

As the commentary explains:

It makes one do serious misdeeds such as the five

heinous crimes.

If one were to harbour anger and not engage in overcoming anger or overcoming the imprints of anger, it will result in the sufferings of the lower realms. If we engage in the practice of purification, however, our anger can be purified.

As the commentary further explains:

> Through consistent awareness of their different faults, disadvantages, causes and the means to eliminate them, disturbing emotions will be brought to an end. Thus, once their specific antidotes are known, one must get rid of them.

What is being summarised is that through having a constant awareness of how there is no benefit for oneself or others, and how it destroys virtue and puts non-virtuous imprints on our mind, and how it leads us to engage in heinous crimes, and knowing the causes of anger attachment and ignorance, and knowing the means of eliminating them, one must apply the antidotes.

Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 March 2007

As usual we can sit in an appropriate posture and set our motivation, such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, and lead them to ultimate happiness I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I listen to the Dharma and will apply it in practice'. It would be very good to have that attitude in mind.

It is most important to remind oneself that the whole purpose of listening to teachings and studying the text is so that it can be put it into practice. If we have that attitude from the very beginning, and remind ourselves of it throughout our studies, then that leaves a good imprint, from which we can benefit.

1.2.1.2.3. How to abandon confusion

This is subdivided into two which are:

1.2.1.2.3.1. Recognising the root of disturbing emotions

1.2.1.2.3.2. Recognising the antidote which eliminates it

As these two sub-divisions suggest, first there is identifying the actual root of all delusions and then having identified that, showing the means of how to eradicate that root by recognising the antidote.

1.2.1.2.3.1. Recognising the root of disturbing emotions

> Question: The different characteristics of desire and anger have been described but what are the various characteristics of confusion?

The answer is the root verse:

> *As the tactile sense pervades the body* 135
> *Confusion is present in them all.*
> *By overcoming confusion one will also*
> *Overcome all disturbing emotions.*

As the verse indicates, the way in which confusion is the root of all delusions is described with the following analogy: the tactile or body sense is said to be a sense which pervades the whole body, and if this tactile sense is withdrawn then all the senses in relation to the physical body are also withdrawn. Similarly confusion or ignorance pervades all the delusions and so therefore once ignorance itself is severed, then all the other delusions are also severed. Another analogy that can be used is that it is like getting rid of a poisonous plant. Merely cutting off its branches will not stop the plant from growing; the only way to stop the plant from growing is to uproot it. That is true also for the delusions: unless the root of the delusions is uprooted they will continuously prevail within oneself. We can see for ourselves that even though we may be quite successful in overcoming desire on one day, on the next day we fall prey to our desires and maybe a few days later we might again fall victim to our desires. That is because desire has not been uprooted from our mind.

> In the body the tactile sense organ pervades all other sense organs such as the eye and acts as a basis without which none of the others could exist.

As explained here just as what we call the tactile sense pervades the whole body likewise confusion pervades all of the delusions within oneself.

The text further reads:

> Confusion, which is the disturbing attitude ignorance, misconceives dependent arising free from inherent existence as truly existent.

That is how ignorance misinterprets reality. What is being described here is how ignorance serves as a root of all delusions and thus pervades all of the delusions.

> It similarly is present in and pervades all disturbing emotions such as desire and anger.

Although all phenomena are dependent arising and lack inherent existence, which is the actual mode of existence, ignorance misconceives the mode of existence, which is of interdependent arising, and perceives it as having an inherent existence. To that extent it is a misconception. Ignorance obscures the mind from seeing the actual mode of existence, which is of interdependent origination or dependent arising.

As the text further describes:

> Misconceiving things distorted by confusion as inherently pleasant or unpleasant one thinks of them as desirable or repugnant.

As described in their respective definitions both attachment and anger are an exaggerated view based on the qualities of the objects. Attachment is an exaggerated view of the attractive qualities of the object being viewed, thus leading to the arousal of desire. Whereas anger is the exaggerated view of the negative qualities of the object, thus leading to the development of an attitude of repugnance towards the object. Both of these exaggerated views are based upon the initial misconception of viewing the object itself as being inherently existent.

One must understand that these exaggerated views arise on a fundamental misconception. The very root or fundamental misconception is the misconception of ignorance which sees the object as being inherently existent. Thus by seeing the object itself as being inherently existent any qualities that are attributed to it are also viewed as being inherently existent. So the attractive qualities of an object are also seen as being inherently existent, and the same is also true with anger, where the negative qualities of the object are also seen as being inherently existent.

When we look into it, we see from our experience that the attractive or appealing qualities of an object appear to us as existing from the object's own side, regardless of anything that our mind imputes upon it. Therefore, out of ignorance, the object (and its qualities) is viewed as existing inherently, in and of itself, and from its own side. Thus it is explained that those sentient beings who have not given up either grasping at true existence or grasping at the self, as well as those who have not abandoned the imprints of grasping at the self, will view objects as being inherently existent. Because the object itself is viewed as being inherently existent, then other qualities about it are exaggerated as well. As the teachings say, for a sentient being there is always an appearance of inherent existence. For those who specifically have abandoned grasping at the self or grasping at true existence, the appearance of true existence or inherent existence is still there, however the belief in true existence does not exist anymore. The reason why the belief is not there is because they have abandoned grasping at true existence. But because the imprint of grasping at true

existence is still left upon the mind, that causes their mind to still see things as being truly existent. Thus only an enlightened mind that has completely eradicated the very imprints of grasping at true existence will not have even the appearance true existence.

It is very important to develop a really good understanding of these points about the lack of inherent existence, and thus gain an understanding of emptiness or selflessness. As Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom* mentions, even a doubt about the validity of emptiness which is the lack of true existence, will shatter the very foundation of samsara. As Nagarjuna has mentioned, it is really true that when one gains a conceptual understanding, or even just a glimpse into the concept of emptiness, that can really work at eliminating our misconceptions. Based on that understanding one can start working on eliminating the very root of our delusions, and thus the root of samsara.

As described earlier, attachment is an exaggerated view of the qualities of an object. So the stronger the exaggeration is, the stronger the attachment is to the object. When an object appears to us as being attractive then, for as long as we entirely believe in the attractiveness of that object, we will have a strong attachment. Even without an understanding of emptiness we can recall from our experience that if we see someone in the distance who appears to be very attractive, then desire may arise in our mind, even though we haven't had close contact with the object yet. However if we get closer to the object we begin to see faults in the person. Then that initial strong attachment and desire will start to wane and reduce, because we begin to notice that they are not as attractive as we thought initially. It could be because of the distance, because of their make-up, or something else but when we come close to them the attractiveness is not there. So even from this obvious experience we suddenly realise that what appeared to be entirely attractive and beautiful is not really true.

An understanding of selflessness or emptiness goes beyond even that. It actually explains how the very appearance of the object we have, is not true; how its whole appearance is actually an illusion and not true. Whether an object appears to be attractive or repulsive it appears to us as being inherently existent, and existing from its own side. Onto that false appearance we add further exaggerations. It is said that for as long as we have the appearance of the inherent existence of objects and believe in that, then to that extent we create karma in relation to those objects. As is explained in the teachings from the time someone sees emptiness directly they will not create any new throwing karma, which means the karma to be reborn again in samsara.

As is explained in the teachings, although there may still be an appearance of inherent existence to someone who realises emptiness, there is no belief in it, so they will not create any new karma to be reborn into samsara. With this understanding we can begin to see how the process of eliminating the causes for samsara works.

This understanding will then help us to gain a deeper understanding of the twelve interdependent links. The first of these links is the ignorance of grasping at true or inherent existence, which is indicated as the fundamental or root cause of samsara. With this explanation one comes to understand how that ignorance is identified as being the root cause of all the other delusions.

As the commentary further explains:

> Thus one must understand how the mode of apprehension entailed in the conception of true existence is present in the modes of apprehension of anger and desire. All other disturbing attitudes and emotions depend on the disturbing attitude ignorance, which is principal.

I want to emphasise the use of the term 'principal', which is called so, because by overcoming confusion through meditation on dependent arising and inherent existence, all other disturbing attitudes and emotions will be overcome as well.

As a conclusion the commentary further emphasises:

> Therefore make an effort to understand emptiness as the meaning of dependent arising.

From this explanation one understands how ignorance is the principal or the main cause of all samsara. It is also explained in the root text of the *Madhyamika* that all delusions and all experiences in samsara come from the initial misconception of holding onto the transitory collections.

Of course the older students have heard this on many occasions. However just as a summary, what is being explained in this verse is that without overcoming ignorance there wll be no cessation of the causes to be in cyclic existence or samsara. Therefore in order to attain liberation, as well as enlightenment, one needs to overcome the principal cause, which is ignorance, by gaining the wisdom realising emptiness which serves as the direct antidote. That is the essence of what needs to be understood.

1.2.1.2.3.2. Recognising the antidote which eliminates it

The root verse which corresponds to this sub-heading reads as follows:

> *When dependent arising is seen* *136*
> *Confusion will not occur.*
> *Thus every effort has been made here*
> *To explain precisely the subject.*

These last two verses are verses that are often quoted in other texts, because they serve as very important explanations of how to bring about the cessation of all suffering. Therefore it would be good to actually memorise them and keep them in mind. The previous verse identified the root cause of all suffering, which is ignorance and this next verse shows us how over to overcome ignorance, which is through the realisation of emptiness and dependent arising. So these two verses are very important verses.

A good understanding of these two verses serves as a basis for whatever practice one engages in, such as the Lam Rim topics. Whatever Lam Rim topic one meditates on can be based upon the understanding one gains from these two verses. So in that way they serve as a very good foundation for one's practice, because as they is explain that all practices should ultimately lead to achieving the same goals.

The verse serves as an answer to the following question:

> What are the means to get rid of confusion, which is the root of futility?

What is being explained here is that there are so many activities in our life, where we put so much time, energy and effort, but to achieve what? In the end we find that we are putting all our energy and effort into achieving very futile results. There is no real essence in what we achieve.

Having meditated on the faults of samsara, and really looking into the causes of these faults, or into our senseless activities, and all the delusions that arise in our mind, we

should ask ourselves, 'What is the purpose?' 'What are the causes?' Having raised that question, we must use the different reasons and analogies explained in the teachings to develop a good understanding that ignorance is the main cause. However that understanding by itself does not really help one's mind much. One should really try to relate that understanding to one's experience, and develop a strong feeling, really looking into it from every angle and see how ignorance really serves as the root cause. Then you will develop the strong sense, 'Without getting rid of this cause I will never have real happiness, and things will never be right'. This instils a strong wish to get rid of the cause, which is ignorance. The verse in this section shows how to get rid of that ignorance.

Using this understanding in one's practice, in meditation, even analysing it in analytical meditation, one should arrive at the point of wanting to get rid of the cause. Then the natural question that may arise in the mind is, 'Is it possible to get rid of ignorance?'. When that question arises one must further look into how this ignorance perceives things. First of all one looks into how everything appears to us. Things appear to us as real. Is this true? Is it valid? Do things exist in the way they appear to us? If they existed exactly in the way they appear to us then one could conclude that there is nothing that one can do about it.

But through investigation and analysis one can slowly begin to see that things do not exist in the way they appear. When one begins to see the falsity of appearance and how the actual mode of existence is contrary to how it appears, then that means that there is a valid reasoning that one can use to overcome the misconception that we have. I wonder if you are getting the point that is being made here: it is that if one can see a discrepancy between how things appear and how they actually exist, then one can see that there is a need to overcome the misconception. Because things do not exist in the way they appear then one can conclude that there is a valid reason to overcome this misconception, the belief in appearance.

One comes to understand what emptiness means when one begins to understand what it is negating, and what is being negated is what appears to us and our belief in it. When we focus on phenomena, which means anything external, internal, impermanent or permanent, in brief all existence, they appear to be inherently existent, existing from their own side without depending on anything. What we call the view of emptiness is the opposite of that: it is seeing the non-validity of that appearance. When one begins to understand that all existence lacks inherent existence, that they do not have any inherent or independent existence then that is what is called the understanding of selflessness or emptiness. And that view, which comes from a deepening experience, serves as a means to completely eradicate that misconception about the nature of existence.

First of all one analyses how grasping at true existence is a misconception, because it views things as existing without depending on any causes or conditions whatsoever. This view that things exist in and of themselves is what we call the view of grasping at true existence.

As the text explains:

> If a sprout, action and so forth exist by way of their own entities…

The analogy is a sprout and its cause, which is the seed, explaining action and its cause which is ignorance. Here action is the karma which is specifically the second of the twelve interdependent links, compositional action. This specific karma is created as a result of the first link, which is ignorance.

> If the sprout and action existed by way of their own entities they would not depend on the seed nor on ignorance, but they do.

This means that if a sprout existed by way of its own entity, or by itself, then it would not have to depend on anything else. Then one would have to conclude that a sprout would not have to depend on a seed. Likewise if compositional action were to exist from its own side, by its own entity, then one would have to conclude that it does not depend on ignorance. However, using the obvious analogy, as any ordinary person who sees the cause and effect sequence of a sprout and a seed knows, for a sprout to exist it has to depend on the seed. There can be no sprout arising without a preceding seed. Likewise for compositional action or karma there has to be the ignorance that precedes it. The fact that it has to depend on an earlier preceding cause for its existence is proof in itself that it does not exist by its own entity or by itself.

First of all, it is obvious that a sprout exists, and likewise karma exists. For a sprout to come into existence it depends upon a seed. Likewise the second of the twelve interdependent links, compositional action or karma exists, and its existence depends on the preceding cause of ignorance. Therefore since a sprout and karma are dependent originations they do not exist independently in and of themselves. The commentary further explains with the help of many different kinds of reasoning that one must understand that the existence of the sprout is exclusively a dependent existence, and not an existence by way of its own identity.

One derives a further understanding of dependent origination from this explanation, and when one gets some understanding of dependent origination, then one can begin to understand how that serves as a sound reasoning to validate emptiness. Within the four schools the Mind Only school and below assert dependent origination as a sequence of cause and effect. Where there is a cause there is an effect and that cause and effect sequence is what is meant by dependent origination.

However for the Prasangika school, which is the highest Buddhist school, the explanation goes further, saying that it is not merely the cause and effect sequence that determines the dependent origination of phenomena, but rather the dependence on different parts and conditions. From the Prasangika point of view anything that exists is a dependent origination. So even what we call permanent phenomena, which are said to be causeless, have parts and so therefore everything that exists has parts to it. Things are not partless, because everything has a part to it. Therefore anything that exists depends on its parts for its existence. Things could not exist without depending on their parts to make them what they are. Therefore it is said that anything which exists is in the nature of dependent arising.

As explained earlier in the commentary one uses many different kinds of reasoning to show what is explained in this point. One should not rely only on one reason for understanding things as lacking inherent existence and thus being empty of inherent existence. As the commentary further reads:

> When dependent arising free from existence by way of its own entity is seen by directly valid perception,

confusion will not arise, and because confusion has ended, all other disturbing attitudes and emotions too will end.

When dependent arising itself is seen as a way of explaining how things do not have their own entity or independent nature, and when that is seen by direct valid perception then confusion will not arise, and confusion or ignorance will be severed.

> Thus here in the *Treatise of Four Hundred* every effort is made specifically to explain how emptiness means dependent arising.

This is specifically clarified in Lama Tsong Khapa's concise work *The Three Principles of the Path*, where he clearly states that once one has come to an understanding of how dependent origination and emptiness enhance each other and are not contradictory, one has understood the meaning of the Buddha's intent. What is being emphasised here is that the understanding of dependent origination becomes a means to understand emptiness. That is why it is very important to emphasise it. In *The Three Principles of the Path*, Lama Tsong Khapa mentions dependent origination first for the specific reason that that the understanding of dependent origination can enhance the understanding of emptiness, and in fact the term dependent origination is often used interchangeably with emptiness in many texts.

However another important point is raised in the commentary:

> By merely understanding the dependent arising of a sprout, one does not understand the emptiness of true existence; if one did it would not be a reason establishing emptiness of true existence.

The mere understanding of the interdependence of a sprout does not necessarily mean that one has gained an understanding of emptiness. However dependent arising is used as a reason in the syllogism or a thesis that gives a reasoning for emptiness. The syllogism is: a sprout is empty of inherent existence, because it is a dependent arising. You use that syllogism for someone who has understood that the sprout is a dependent arising, but who has not understood yet that a sprout lacks inherent existence, which means they have not understood yet the emptiness of the sprout. For such a person this syllogism is a valid reasoning: a sprout is empty of inherent existence or lacks inherent existence. Why? Because it is a dependent arising. If understanding dependent arising were to equate with the understanding of emptiness then you couldn't use this syllogism, because if they have understood the sprout to be dependent arising that means they would have already understood emptiness.

The fact that this syllogism is used as a valid reasoning, means that there are those who have understood that the sprout is dependent origination or a dependent arising, but not yet understood emptiness or the lack of inherent existence of it. Therefore gaining an understanding of dependent origination doesn't necessarily equate with gaining an understanding or emptiness.

When you say that a sprout is empty of inherent existence because it is a dependent arising, this makes them begin to realise, 'Oh, I already understand a sprout is a dependent arising, so that means it must also be empty of inherent existence'. For such a person dependent arising serves as a reason that makes a great deal of sense.

> When one discovers that existence by way of a thing's own entity is invalidated in many ways one discovers how phenomena exist. Understanding that they only exist dependently means one should thereby understand that they do not exist by way of their own entity.

When one comes to understand that if the independent entity of any existence is invalidated though many reasons, one discovers how phenomena actually exist, and that they only exist dependently means one should then understand that they do not exist by way of their own entity. When one understands that, one understands that they do exist but they lack independent existence.

This is a very important point and many great scholars such as Nagarjuna and Lama Tsong Khapa have clarified and emphasised it in their teachings. Those who were recently at His Holiness' teachings will recall that His Holiness also considered this as the essence of the explanation of emptiness. So it is important to get the point.

First of all one must understand that emptiness and interdependent origination enhance and do not contradict each other. This does not mean, that someone who merely understands interdependent origination will automatically understand emptiness and vice-versa. What it does mean is that they do not contradict each other. The way they enhance each other is, as I explained, that for someone using many sound logical reasonings and analysis to establish emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, can easily establish the dependent origination of all phenomena and vice-versa, without having to use extra reasonings and much extra effort.

Of course we can refer to this commentary and other commentaries to get further understanding. However the main point is that emptiness and interdependent origination enhance each other and do not contradict each other. If one equates the lack of inherent existence with the non-existence of phenomena, then one has lost the point and fallen into an extreme view. However if one uses the understanding that the lack of inherent existence means that things exist in dependence on causes and conditions and their parts, one has focused on the right understanding, and not fallen into the extreme.

When you understand that things lack inherent existence that does not mean that they do not exist at all but that they exist in dependence, in relation to causes and conditions, and so forth. Things exist in relation to causes and conditions and those causes and conditions contributing to their existence also lack inherent existence. Because things exist in relation to other causes and phenomena; they do not have an inherent independent existence. Thus that understanding of dependent origination, that things exist in dependence on causes and conditions and its parts, enhances the understanding that things lack inherent existence. That is how the understanding of dependent origination enhances the understanding of emptiness. The understanding of one enhances and contributes to the understanding of the other, and in that way it becomes a very effective means of understanding the real intent of the Buddha's teachings, which is a very precious and holy understanding.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 March 2007

As usual it will be appropriate to set a motivation for the teaching. While sitting in a comfortable and upright posture, we generate a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I need to listen to the Dharma and put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1.3. Detailed explanation of how to abandon anger and desire

Even though desire will be explained first, anger is mentioned first in the heading simply because this order sounds better in Tibetan.

This heading is sub-divided into two categories:

1.2.1.3.1. How to abandon desire

1.2.1.3.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon anger

1.2.1.3.1. How to abandon desire

This is further divided into two sub-headings.

1.2.1.3.1.1. Characteristics of a person habituated to desire

This section gives a description of the outer signs and characteristics of a person who is habituated to desire.

1.2.1.3.1.2. Means of caring for such a person

This section explains how to help a person with strong desire.

1.2.1.3.1.1. Characteristics of a person habituated to desire

> Question: How does one recognise people in whom desire is a strong habit?
>
> Answer:
>
> *They always like "Claiming the Earth,"* 137
> *Are extravagant, greedy and fastidious.*
> *Characteristics such as these*
> *Are seen in people with desire.*

The verse shows some of the characteristics of a person who is known to have desire. As the commentary explains, people who are habituated with strong desire are:

> always like dances such as "Claiming the Earth,"...
>
> They like dancing and singing and opera, in which they like to participate.

They also like 'fun and flirtation' as well as making jokes and so forth with others. There are also those who are extravagant, liking clothes and so forth. As indicated in the text they also have a liking for:

> ... flowers, perfume, garlands, jewellery, colour [such as make-up] and so forth.

As further explained in the commentary, people who are known to be habituated with desire also have, to a certain extent, the quality of being generous to others in addition to spending a lot of money on themselves. They utter kind words to others, as well as honest words, and they also take extra care in keeping things tidy - they can be obsessed with cleanliness. Those are the sort of characteristics that are seen in people who have strong desire. When you see such characteristics in others or in oneself, then that is an indication of strong desire. Although it might not be true in all cases it is generally the case that those with strong desire have the qualities described above.

As explained in the commentary the characteristics of someone with strong anger in their mind are the opposite of those with strong desire in their mind. That seems to suggest that they are not extravagant, they don't seem to like going to the opera and so forth. They may like to be alone and also not say things honestly or in a nice way to others.

An equal mix of both types of characteristics is a characteristic of someone who has confusion or ignorance prevalent in their mind. So, those who have characteristics of both desire and anger are people who have confusion in their mind.

Having heard about these characteristics, it is good to be mindful of them and relate them to oneself or others to see if they apply to oneself or not.

1.2.1.3.1.2. Means of caring for [or subduing] such a person

> Question: How does one train someone in whom desire is a strong habit?
>
> Answer:
>
> *Buddhas told those with desire* 138
> *That food, clothes and dwellings are all*
> *To be avoided and to remain*
> *Close to their spiritual guides.*

As the commentary explains:

> Buddhas told those with desire that objects of beauty and quality which stimulate desire such as fine food, clothes and dwellings are all to be avoided,...

As indicated earlier in the text, the Buddha placed restrictions on the food, clothing and dwellings that are appropriate for ordained sangha. Even in a worldly context, we find it is basically different kinds of foods that serve as a continual basis on which attachment arises. The same is true for clothing and housing. On a continual basis they arouse a strong desire in us, that is really prevalent.

The restrictions which the Buddha particularly laid down for ordained sangha are a means of overcoming manifest desire. As mentioned previously the Buddha laid down twelve rules of training.[1] Ordained sangha should dwell in isolated places, like cemeteries, or in places without a roof. Even with our limited experience, we can see that if we put someone with very strong desire for objects, and things like dwellings and so forth, into a situation where everyone else is living similarly (in moderate dwellings and so forth), then the strong desires for dwellings and so forth can definitely be reduced or minimised. Because everyone has a similar environment the manifest strong desire for objects can be reduced.

Specifically, for monks who are attached to dwellings like nice temples and so forth, it is laid down that they should live in isolation, or in cemeteries, or in housing without roofing. For those who are particularly attached to sleep and bedding, there are the restrictions of not sleeping by lying down completely, but by sitting in an upright posture and living in isolated areas like forests and so forth. There are also specific restrictions in relation to food for fully ordained monks: relying on foods from alms, eating only in one sitting, and not eating after noon. Monks should wear inexpensive, woollen, patched clothes. 'Inexpensive'

[1] See 20 February 2007.

particularly refers to second-hand clothes which others have already used for at least four months.

These restrictions were laid down by the Buddha so that his followers would be venerated because they were seen as being modest. Being satisfied with meagre shelter and food and so forth is also a bodhisattva practice, which is to hold a low place and to be satisfied with little. In that way these restrictions also help others to generate faith and admiration in the followers of the Buddha. Ultimately the main purpose is that these are a means of leading others onto the path, and the practise of Dharma.

The commentary further explains how to guide such beings:

> …and that they should always remain close to their spiritual guides. Being made to work constantly by their spiritual guide will curb their desire and through instruction in training, they will be able to rid themselves of their incorrect mental approach.

These are the means of guiding someone whose mind is pervaded by desire. If we follow such instructions it helps the mind to overcome the manifest desires in the mind. It is also mentioned in teachings that as one practises in such a way, one should seek companions who are able to be content and also live on meagre necessities. Then the mutual benefit for each other becomes a means for practising well.

The text mentioned earlier that to guide and lead beings who have strong manifest anger prevalent in their mind, the teacher provides them with nice clothing and food and dwellings and so forth, which helps to overcome their manifest level of anger. Then they can be trained along the path. It is good to really keep this advice in mind to be used in practical ways. That means remembering that the best means of helping someone with strong anger prevalent in their mind is by providing necessities, which will calm them down.

What we normally tend to do is the opposite. When someone is angry we tend to become upset and respond with anger ourselves. So instead of resolving the situation we fuel it even more. Actually our anger just worsens the situation rather than making it better. So if one sees someone angry, then rather than responding with anger just let them be for a while and if possible provide them with nice things, that will help to subdue them. If, say, you have two children and one seems to be a little more short tempered, then maybe a good way to deal with that child is to provide them with better food. If you give better food to a child who has a short temper, that will help them to calm down.

1.2.1.3.2. EXPLAINING EXTENSIVELY HOW TO ABANDON ANGER

This sub-division is sub-divided into five.

1.2.1.3.2.1. Considering the disadvantages of anger

1.2.1.3.2.2. Explaining extensively how to apply antidotes to anger

1.2.1.3.2.3. Refuting that it is not wrong to punish the slanderer of an innocent person

1.2.1.3.2.4. Preventing anger by considering the benefits of patience

1.2.1.3.2.5. Appropriateness of cultivating patience when disparaged by others

1.2.1.3.2.1. Considering the disadvantages of anger

> If one wants to get rid of anger, one should think about its disadvantages.
>
> *Through anger, those who are powerless* 139
> *Only make themselves look ugly;*
> *But one who has power and is merciless*
> *Is said to be the worst.*

It is of course very true that it is only by seeing the disadvantages of anger that a wish to actually overcome anger is instilled. Seeing the disadvantages is the necessary beginning. As the commentary explains, when one exhibits anger towards those who are more powerful than oneself, then, because the other is more powerful, one is not able to do anything about the situation beyond being angry. In this situation one suffers just because of the fact that one is powerless, and not able to fight back. Furthermore a state of anger makes one's face turn dark and unappealing. Angry frowns and the like make one look ugly: in fact one's whole appearance looks unappealing. Someone with a frown on their face and looking a bit fierce is not a person who is welcomed or liked to be seen by others. Therefore it brings about a situation where one is just left by oneself, and often not able to deal with the situation. The first part of the explanation in the commentary has concerned the inappropriateness of being angry towards someone who is more powerful.

What is explained next is that it is equally inappropriate to be angry towards those who are less powerful than oneself, because that is abusing their powerless situation. Being angry and merciless towards those less powerful is totally inappropriate. Such anger arises because of a lack of concern or love for the object. The combination of lacking concern and love for the object together with the object being less powerful than oneself will lead one to doing disastrous things, such as hurting them physically, or even leading to the situation of taking their life and so forth. So grave misdeeds can be inflicted on a less powerful object as a result of anger. Even in a worldly sense when a more powerful person abuses their power to hurt the less powerful, that is seen as being unfair and totally inappropriate.

Therefore it is made clear here that in either situation one should avoid exhibiting or harbouring anger. For one more powerful than oneself there is no point. Firstly, by getting angry towards the more powerful one will achieve nothing, because by itself, one's anger can do nothing to harm them. Because they are more powerful, one cannot do anything to harm them. So, just being angry and harbouring anger in one's mind cannot help the situation. Furthermore it makes one look ugly and so forth, and so it is inappropriate. For those who are less powerful than oneself, it would be considered as being inhuman and inappropriate to be angry with them, even in a worldly sense. From the Dharma point of view, it is definitely, totally inappropriate to be angry towards those who are less powerful. The point about having no compassion towards the object is very true. The very wish to harm the object is because the lack of love or compassion in one's heart.

As I often point out, even in normal situations with normal relationships one first has some affection, love and concern for the other. But as the love and concern begins to wane and diminish, then what replaces the concern and love is anger. So if anger towards the object starts to arise in the mind then that is a clear sign that one's affection and love for them is slowly waning and actually diminishing. Therefore one must be very careful towards those for whom one feels strong affection and concern. Initially, one needs to try and maintain that affection and concern and see all the good reasons as to why one should maintain it. If affection and concern diminishes then what comes in its place is anger.

Of course there are many more details about the disadvantages of anger and the advantages of practising patience, and these are described more extensively in the sixth chapter of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life.* So it is good to relate what is discussed here to those teachings, and learn from them. We do not have time to go into detail now, but it is good to remind oneself and look at those teachings as a means to enhance one's practice. As one studies a text like this, one should remind oneself of the other texts one has studied and revise them, and that will enhance the points which are made here. By revising and looking them up again, it really brings a deeper understanding to one's mind. Whatever understanding one gains not only deepens, but also becomes firmer and in that way we really make progress.

1.2.1.3.2.2. Explaining extensively how to apply antidotes to anger

That is sub-divided into five headings:

1.2.1.3.2.2.1. Inappropriateness of anger at the circumstances which terminate the effects of ill deeds

1.2.1.3.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of anger because unpleasant words are designated as harmful by oneself and are not inherently harmful

1.2.1.3.2.2.3. Advice to punish the abuser in treatises on social conventions is wrong

1.2.1.3.2.2.4. Inappropriateness of anger at those who make others aware of one's faults

1.2.1.3.2.2.5. Inappropriateness of anger when inferiors use abusive language

1.2.1.3.2.2.1. Inappropriateness of anger at the circumstances which terminate the effects of ill deeds

It is foolish to feel angry when one hears harsh words.

It is said unpleasant words *140*
End previously done ill deeds.
The ignorant and unwise do not
Want to purify themselves.

The point being made here is that if one hears words of criticism and gets angry or upset, then that is very foolish. As the commentary reads:

> Hearing unpleasant words is said to rid one of the effects of previously done ill deeds by bringing them to an end.

What is being emphasised here is a combination of the inappropriateness of anger with an understanding of karma. What this means basically is whatever unpleasant experience we may have, such as hearing criticism and so forth, is a result of particular karma that we have created in the past. As the teachings on karma emphasise, nothing can be produced without a cause. Anything that is produced is preceded by its own appropriate causes. Therefore when we experience certain kinds of words that are hurtful, it is definitely a result of a particular type of karma that we have created in the past that we have to hear those words. At this point, we can use the understanding of karma to understand that hearing these hurtful words now is a means of overcoming the particular negative karma that one has created in the past. In other words, hearing the unpleasant words is purifying or exhausting that particular karma now. Therefore if one uses the understanding of karma, then there is no real reason for us to feel unhappy about the situation, but instead we should feel rather glad that we are now exhausting that karma. As the commentary goes on to say:

> Not to feel glad but angry at the circumstances that end these effects is simply to be ignorant regarding actions and their effects and unwise in not wanting to purify ill deeds.

What is being explained here is that if one were not to accept the criticism, then that in itself indicates that one is failing to accept the cause and effect sequence of karma in general. If one were not to accept the cause and effect sequence of karma, then that means that one is not ready to accept the criticism as a means to exhaust one's karma. So feeling unhappy about criticism is indication that one is being foolish, because of either being ignorant of an understanding of karma, or, if one has such an understanding, then not accepting it. In contrast, if one accepts the criticism as a way of experiencing the effects of the karma that one has already created, in addition to a means of actually exhausting that karma, then it should actually bring joy to the mind, rather than feeling unhappy and hurt. That is what is being indicated here as the main point.

1.2.1.3.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of anger because unpleasant words are designated as harmful by oneself and are not inherently harmful

These sub-headings on antidotes to anger are actually very important points, so we have to pay careful attention to them.

> For the following reason, too, it is appropriate to be angry about harsh words.
>
> *Though unpleasant to hear* *141*
> *They are not intrinsically harmful.*
> *Thus it is fantasy to think that*
> *What comes from preconception comes from elsewhere.*

What is being explained here is that although harsh words are unpleasant, the words themselves are not intrinsically harmful; it is not as though the words themselves will harm us. If they were harmful, then one would have to assume that those who are uttering those words would also be harmed, because they have uttered the words. It is actually very clear: if words were to be intrinsically harmful from their own side, the one who spoke those words would have to be harmed too. As the commentary reads:

> Thus, when the damage done by anger comes from one's own preconception that one has been insulted, it is just fantasy...

What is being explained here is that even though one conceives the anger that arises on hearing unpleasant words as being a result of the words that have been uttered, the words themselves do not harm us. What is actually harming us is only our preconception, what is called *namtok* in Tibetan, which is all of the different kind of superstitious minds which occur within oneself. It is only the superstitions or preconceptions in our minds that are harming us.

As the commentary says:

> ...it is just fantasy to suppose it comes from elsewhere. When one's own ideas have done the harm, it is unreasonable to be angry with others.

What is being indicated here is that the reason one is hurt is not because the words that have been uttered are intrinsically harmful themselves, but because of the way one perceives them. As a result of one's preconception, we feel the harm. Therefore it is not fair to blame others because we feel hurt. We can verify this through our own experience. For example, when certain words are uttered there may be times when they do not affect us, because of the context in which they were said. Yet at other times those very same words can make us feel hurt, blamed and so forth. If words

were intrinsically harmful from their own side, then one would have to conclude that they would be harmful at all times. Also, as mentioned earlier, if they are intrinsically harmful, then the one who uttered those words would have to feel harmed too.

But the fact is that the one who utters the words is not harmed, and we are also not harmed in every situation; it is only sometimes and in certain situations that we feel harmed. It is because of our preconceptions and how our superstitious mind interprets them that we are actually harmed. So actually the one to blame is our own superstitious mind, rather than the words or the person who utters them. Therefore the conclusion is that the harm that we bring upon ourselves through our misconception shouldn't be a reason for us to become upset with others and blame them for hurting us.

1.2.1.3.2.2.3. Advice to punish the abuser in treatises on social conventions is wrong

Assertion: Treatises on social conventions state that those who are abusive should be punished.

Answer:

Just as it plainly says *142*
The abuser should be punished,
Likewise why should one who speaks
Pleasantly not be rewarded?

What is being explained in the commentary is that the kind of assertion that those who utter hurtful words should be punished, while those who say pleasant words are not rewarded, is a very biased way of looking at things. There are some biased treatises that do not really see the situation in an even-handed way.

As the commentary explains:

> Just as it plainly says those who are abusive should be punished, likewise why should those who speak pleasingly not be rewarded? It would be reasonable to reward them, but since these treatises do not mention that, they are misleading.

What is being explained here is that that there is a disparity between these two situations. The treatises that mention punishing those who use unpleasant words are misleading, as they are not based on sound reasonings.

1.2.1.3.2.2.4. Inappropriateness of anger at those who make others aware of one's faults

If that for which you are reviled *143*
Is known to others though they are not told,
And anger at the speaker is unreasonable,
How much more so toward those who lie.

This verse serves as an answer to the assertion:

> Anger is reasonable because abuse reveals one's faults to others.

The commentary uses that very reasoning as a counter-reasoning to show that anger is not reasonable. As it says:

> If those things for which you are reviled, such as your blindness or lameness, are known to others even when they have not been told, it is unreasonable to be angry...[when they have been told]

What is being explained here is that if someone criticises you for faults that you actually have, (the examples here are if you are blind in one eye or if you are lame), by calling you a 'blind person' or 'lame guy', and if those faults are known to others, then mentioning them doesn't change anything. So why should one become upset about what is already known to others anyway? It is unreasonable to be angry about such statements, because others know about it already, whether it has been mentioned or not.

As the commentary further explains:

> If that is unreasonable, how much more so is anger toward those who speak untruly, when one does not possess a fault.

What is being explained here is that if someone were to call you a 'blind person' or a 'lame person' when in fact you are not blind or lame, then because they are uttering lies why should one get upset about lies? They might go around and tell everyone that one is blind or lame, but it is obvious that one is not lame or blind. Relating this illustration to other faults, if others mention faults that one does not have, then because they are in the wrong and obviously telling lies, one shouldn't take it as a criticism, because basically it is just a lie.

If someone points to something that is in fact a fault, others may already know about anyway, it is inappropriate to get angry or upset about it. So if they are pointing out faults which one does not have, it is also inappropriate to get angry, because they are in the wrong; they are telling lies and that is inappropriate. In both situations it is inappropriate to get angry. It is good for us to think about these lines. The analogy here is:

> It is wrong for a king to punish both someone who calls the blind "blind" as well as someone who calls those who are not blind "blind."

A king will not punish someone who calls a blind person blind, because that is saying something that is obviously true. Likewise the king will not punish someone who describes someone else as being blind when they are not blind, because it is just an inappropriate lie.

Thinking about these points is a good way for us to consider and practise patience. If we can actually practise along the lines as advised here, then we could begin to consider ourselves as leading a meaningful life and doing a spiritual practice. But because we are not able to practise like that, we normally react just like children – whenever there is some criticism or whatever, we just get angry and fierce. On a practical level trying to reduce our anger and apply the practices of patience definitely benefits us in our immediate life, so we are able to lead a good happy life now, even if you are not to think along the lines of liberation and enlightenment, which seem so far into the future.

The immediate benefit in this life should encourage us to practice along these lines, even one does not really have any sight of liberation and enlightenment right now. It is actually very appropriate to look into the immediate benefits that one receives now, as it is difficult to see how doing a practice can benefit future life times. When we look into the benefit that we receive now, then that can serve as a reason to assume that if we have an immediate benefit from these practices, and if there were to be future lifetimes, then there would be no question that it will benefit the future as well. Because if it benefits now, it follows through logical reason, that it will benefit the future, whenever that future comes - in this life and in future lifetimes. As Lama Tsong Khapa clarifies in his teachings, by practising patience, one actually receives the immediate benefit of having a calmer and more peaceful mind now, and that definitely creates the causes for us to obtain higher rebirths in future lifetimes as well.

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 March 2007

As usual it would be good to generate an appropriate motivation for receiving the teachings, such as thinking along the lines of, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings and to liberate them from suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and try to put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1. THE WAY TO ABANDON MANIFEST DISTURBING EMOTIONS (CONT.)

1.2.1.3. DETAILED EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON ANGER AND DESIRE

1.2.1.3.2.2.5. The inappropriateness of anger when inferiors use abusive language.

Abuse from inferiors 144
Does not ensure escape.
Abuse from inferiors thus should be
Seen as isolated and trivial.

This verse is an answer to the question, 'Is it reasonable to be angry on hearing abuse from one's inferiors?' and the answer is that it is not.

As the commentary explains,

> Merely some abusive words from inferiors, who like what is profane and constantly do ill deeds, taking delight in others' suffering, do not ensure one's escape…

What is being explained here is that it is inappropriate to treat abuse from someone who is inferior as serious, or to allow that to affect oneself, because as indicated here, inferior beings are those who do not like the Dharma, do not take pleasure in practising the Dharma, constantly engage in ill deeds, and thus constantly engage in negative deeds, and they also take delight in the suffering of others. This means that whenever these inferior beings see others suffering, then rather than feeling compassion for them, they take pleasure in seeing that suffering. We consider such beings to be inferior beings in relation to the Dharma.

Since these inferior beings are in such an ignorant state it is totally unreasonable for us to take their abuse seriously and let it affect us. Therefore it is not appropriate to feel angry towards such beings. Instead of feeling angry towards them one should be happy. The reason for this is explained in the next few lines of the commentary;

> Therefore regarding mere abuse from one's inferiors as an isolated and trivial error, it is appropriate to feel glad.

The reason for feeling glad is, because inferior beings who have the characteristics that were described earlier, take pleasure in the suffering of others, and it is possible that they could hurt us physically or even kill us. The fact that they only use abusive words and haven't harmed us in any other way is very fortunate. So we should feel very glad that it is only words that they have uttered, and they did not hurt us physically or threaten or kill us.

If we were to come into contact with a well known notorious evil being, and they merely criticise us, then we would feel very glad that nothing more serious had happened to us - we would feel glad that they didn't harm us physically or kill us. If one thinks along these lines then rather than being angry at hearing criticism one should feel glad.

What is being implied here is that when very negative or inferior beings start to abuse us one should actually be careful. The text is actually giving us practical advice about not going into combat with inferior beings.

1.2.1.3.2.3. Refuting that it is not wrong to punish the slander of an innocent person

This section is in line with the worldly view that if someone were to use bad words, slander, and so forth towards an innocent person, then that is punishable, because they were criticising an innocent person. However, as explained here, that is an inappropriate view.

Assertion: Is it not wrong to punish those who slander the innocent?

Answer:

If harming others is not even 145
Of the slightest use to you,
Your approval of useless aggression
Is just an addiction.

As the commentary explains,

> Retaliation by hurting others like the slanderer is not the slightest use…

Normally one would feel that it is justifiable to punish or retaliate when others abuse or criticise you without any basis. In other words, if one feels one is innocent, or if others are innocent when someone criticises or abuses you (or them), then it is seen as appropriate to retaliate. That is the normal view. What is being explained here is that when someone abuses or criticises us, retaliating with anger would be inappropriate, even if one feels innocent of the criticism.

As the commentary explains, retaliation by hurting others is not of the slightest use in reversing what has already been done. In fact that anger and retaliation will not in any way reverse whatever the harm or hurt that has been inflicted upon us.

What is being explained here specifically is that anger and retaliation could be seen as being reasonable if it could undo the harm that has been inflicted upon oneself. However the reverse is the case: undoing the harm that others have done to us by actually becoming upset and angry does even more harm to oneself.

Furthermore if retaliation and getting upset were to bring some gain in terms of qualities then again that could be seen as reasonable. However, rather than bringing qualities and gains, retaliation only brings loss for oneself, therefore there is no point in retaliating. Now these are all very sound reasonings, and although they seem very reasonable to us practising along these lines might not be so easy. So it is important to think about these practical reasons and thus remind ourselves constantly of the uselessness of retaliating and getting angry.

One must however not misunderstand or misinterpret what is meant here when it says not to retaliate. When it says not to retaliate with anger, there is no indication to suggest that one should not react at all and take the loss. In other words when others criticise and abuse us we don't have to accept their views and not do anything about it, and allow oneself to be defeated. That is not being suggested here. What is being said is not to retaliate with anger. When others criticise us or wrongly abuse us then there will of course be times

when we have to deal with the situation. If it is wrong criticism that is harmful to oneself and others then one has to deal with it in order to correct the situation. However as explained here one does that without feeling anger in one's mind and without animosity. With love and compassion in one's mind one can still correct things and make them right. It is important that we keep this in mind.

As the commentary further explains,

> In that case your approval of aggression, which has nothing but drawbacks and no advantages, is just an addiction to something wrong.

What is being explained here is that if it is clear that there are no benefits or advantages to oneself, but one still retaliated then that would be just out of habituation, or as translated here, addiction. One would be retaliating out of habituation without any really sound reasoning.

1.2.1.3.2.4. Preventing anger by considering the benefits of patience

This is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse
1.2.1.3.2.4.2. Inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak
1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards a cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments.

The following three verses will explain the benefits of practising patience. Having explained earlier the disadvantages of anger, that there is no benefit whatsoever in retaliating out of anger, then the question may arise, 'What are the advantages of practising patience?' The sequence presented in the teachings, helps us to remember as well to practice in that way.

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse

Question: What wise person tolerates the worthless abuse of others?

Answer:

If through patience enormous merit *146*
Is acquired effortlessly,
Who is as foolish as
One who obstructs this.

One must understand what patience actually means. The definition of patience is not allowing one's mind to be influenced by anger, in the event of being abused or suffering, or by any suffering one experiences from that or from any other reason. In a nutshell, patience is not allowing the mind to be upset by an abuser or by suffering.

When there is abuse and the like from others, patience means not allowing the mind to be influenced by anger and thus getting upset. If one were to actually practise patience then that would be of benefit for the mind.

As the commentary explains,

> If through patience one gives anger no opportunity and does not harm others…

One of the advantages of patience is that if one practises it then anger has no opportunity to arise in the mind, and thus one will not harm others. Therefore patience prevents anger and harm to others. By practising patience there is no opportunity for anger to arise, thus one's own mind remains calm and peaceful, which is a direct benefit to oneself. As the commentary further explains,

> …one will acquire the fragrance and adornment [of virtue], a flowing river [of tranquillity] undisturbed by ill will, and a pleasing appearance.

As explained here in the commentary the person who practises patience is naturally adorned with these ornaments and these qualities will be continuously experienced like the continuity of a river - one will continually experience that positive result. It is the opposite for someone who has anger.

As the commentary further explains, by practising patience one creates the causes to obtain the ultimate benefits of achieving liberation and enlightenment. Until the ultimate goals are achieved, one will attain rebirth with a good appearance in future lifetimes, which serves as a quality for practising the Dharma. Therefore the benefits from practising patience can be understood clearly as being for both oneself and others. Without patience we couldn't possibly endure the hardships and so forth associated with spiritual practices, and likewise without patience we cannot possibly benefit others to a satisfactory degree, because one would not be able to endure the difficulties involved in that. So to benefit others it is essential to engage in the practice of patience.

As the commentary says,

> Then who is as foolish as one who obstructs the supreme path, for he destroys his good qualities. Therefore only those who bear abuse should be called wise.

If one were to retaliate with anger and not engage in the practice of patience one would experience so much loss, such as losing ones merit and virtues, as well as disturbing one's mind now and losing in so many ways in the future. Only a foolish person would destroy so much virtue. Thus someone who does not retaliate with anger in response to the abuse and criticism of others is a wise person, because of all the benefits they will achieve from that.

Of course this is completely contrary to the worldly view, where someone, who does not retaliate when they feel innocent of the criticism and abuse from others, would be considered foolish and very stupid, whereas someone who does retaliate would be considered as wise and brave. According to the teachings here, however, the complete opposite is the case.

In a worldly context anyone who repays kindness with kindness and harm with harm is considered to be a wise and brave person. Now there is nothing wrong with repaying kindness with kindness, but repaying harm with harm is what is considered as being foolish here, as it is of no benefit. So the main point, as explained earlier, is that there is no benefit in retaliating with harm when others abuse and criticise us.

If someone hits us with a stick and we hit them back it is not as though that retaliation will remove the pain: if we happen to hurt our head, hitting them back will not heal our head. Also if we hit back, the other person may hit us again and we might get hit twice!

1.2.1.3.2.4.2. The inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak

For the following reasons one should get rid of anger:

Aggression especially *147*
Does not arise toward the powerful.
Why then do you approve of
Aggression which defeats the weak?

Aggression followed by harm does not arise towards those who are more powerful than oneself; it will only arise towards those who are inferior to oneself, which means those who are less powerful than oneself. What this means is

that one lacks the ability to fight with, and dos not dare to be aggressive with those who are more powerful than oneself, because one realises that one is not capable of harming them. So out of fear of the mighty one does not dare to harm them. Therefore we can only inflict harm on those who are less powerful than ourself. Even in a worldly context that is not justified, and is considered unfair. When you cannot do anything to prevent those more powerful than yourself from harming you, trying to use aggression to harm those weaker than oneself is very unfair. When we actually look into it we are actually only acting out our aggression on those who we think can take it, or in other words, on those on whom we can inflict it without fear of retribution.

In a practical sense, this can lead to situations where one becomes upset and angry with someone who is more powerful than oneself at work, or some other outside environment, but because one is not able to retaliate in that context, one comes home and starts acting out one's anger or aggression on one's partner or someone else.

As the commentary explains,

> Aggression especially does not arise towards the strong because one is powerless to harm them. For that reason then do you approve of aggression and anger towards the wretched, which defeats only the weak? Such approval is improper.

1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments

> Assertion: It is reasonable to get angry, since if one is patient, others may think one is incapable of retaliating and despise one.
>
> Answer: It is not reasonable.
>
> *Whoever is patient with a source* *148*
> *Of anger develops meditation.*
> *Saying you fear the source of*
> *Good qualities is just foolish of you.*

This of course is very much in accordance with worldly perspectives. Not retaliating when others criticise us and so forth might be seen as being weak and foolish, and thus one might be despised. So out of a fear of being seen as a weakling by others, one may then feel that it is appropriate to retaliate with anger. That is basically how many may feel: they fear being despised if they do not retaliate.

As the commentary explains,

> Whoever patiently tolerates the causes for anger will develop meditative stabilisation on love and other kinds of meditation.

This is in relation to the good qualities that are said to be obtained by practising patience, and thus developing the love and so forth. These qualities are explained in *Precious Garland*, which says,

> Gods and humans will be friendly,
> Even non-humans will protect you,
> You will have pleasures of the mind and many,
> [Of the body], poisons and weapons will not harm you,
> Effortlessly will you attain your aims
> And be born in the world of Brahma.
> Though [through love] you are not liberated
> You will attain the eight virtues of love.

As *Precious Garland* explains, gods and humans will be friendly towards oneself and one will receive protection from humans and non-humans alike. One will also have pleasures of the mind and many, which refers to the mind and physical body. In relation to the physical body, poisons and weapons will not harm oneself, and, as mentioned earlier, one will effortlessly attain ones aims. By practising patience one will be able to achieve one's goals and thus be reborn in the realm of Brahma. Here Brahma can be understood from two points of view: from the worldly point of view Brahma is one of the highest abodes in the samsaric realm, and in another context Brahma can also refer to the enlightened state of a Buddha, the ultimate Brahma. 'Though through love you are not liberated' refers to the fact that even if one is liberated in this lifetime by practising patience, one will surely attain the eight virtues of love as a result of practising patience.

When the first line says that 'gods and humans will be friendly' that refers to how by the mere fact of practising patience one is naturally adorned with certain qualities of attractiveness and becomes appealing. Because one becomes appealing humans are naturally attracted to oneself, as well as the gods, who are also naturally attracted in the sense of wanting to benefit us and be helpful to us. So, in other words, by being patient one attracts not only human friends but the gods.

As the commentary further reads,

> It is just foolish of you to claim you fear patience and give up the source of the above-mentioned virtues because of contempt regarding your ability to retaliate, for you destroy an excellent source of good qualities.

What it being explained here is similar to what was mentioned earlier - it would be very foolish to give in to retaliation and not to practise patience when the benefits of patience are so obvious.

1.2.1.3.2.5. Appropriateness of cultivating patience when disparaged by others

> Assertion: Since it is difficult for the powerful to bear being disparaged by inferiors, it is proper to punish them.
>
> Answer:
>
> *Who has gone to the next world* *149*
> *Having ended all disparagement?*
> *Therefore consider contempt*
> *Preferable to ill deeds.*

Again this assertion or doubt arises from a purely worldly point of view: powerful people lose face if they are criticised and so forth by inferiors, and that is seen as very disgraceful. Thus it is seen as proper to punish those who have criticised.

As the commentary explains:

> Who goes or has gone to the next world having completely put an end to his enemies by defeat and humiliation? Not even a few have done so.

What is being raised here is a counter question. Is there anyone who has come to the end of their life, who has conquered or vanquished all their enemies? There is no one whatsoever.

As the commentary further explains

> By retaliating one creates ill deeds and will go to bad rebirths. Therefore one should endure contempt, thinking it is preferable to the ill deeds created by subjugating one's enemies.

There is no such thing as completely defeating all enemies and having no enemies when one dies. But it is a fact is that having attempted to defeat enemies by retaliating with

anger, one actually carries the negative karmic imprints into the next life, and will experience the negative consequences of being reborn in the lower rebirths. That is what one will take onto the next life. Therefore as the commentary further states,

> Through doing the former one will not go to bad rebirth but by doing ill deeds one will.

If one were to practise patience and not retaliate that would save one from experiencing the negative consequences of experiencing bad rebirths in the next lifetime, whereas if one were to retaliate one would have to experience the negative results. Therefore it is wiser and much more reasonable to accept the criticism and not to retaliate with anger, as that brings more benefit.

The main point being made is that it is much more preferable to endure criticisms and so forth than to retaliate with anger. That is because by practising the former one will not experience negative consequences in future lifetimes, whereas if one were to engage in the retaliation, one would have to experience the negative consequences in future lifetimes. Furthermore the negative karmic consequences that will ripen in the next lifetime will be further causes for one to again experience anger and retaliation, and therefore the cycle will not stop. The analogy that is given here is that just like a water wheel there is no end to disparagement. This is a very vivid analogy, a water wheel, like a Ferris wheel, continuously goes round and round, likewise through retaliation and anger one just creates more causes to act again in the same way, and that is how the cycle continues from one life to the next.

1.2.2. HOW TO CULTIVATE THE ANTIDOTE WHICH TOTALLY DESTROYS THE SEED

The previous sections concerned overcoming the manifest disturbing emotions. The following verse concerns uprooting the seed.

> *Disturbing emotions will never* *150*
> *Remain in the mind of one*
> *Who understands the reality of*
> *The abiding and so forth of consciousness.*

What has being explained earlier is that patience can serve as an antidote to overcome manifest anger, however patience in itself is not an appropriate antidote to completely overcome anger at its root. Likewise, although meditating or cultivating compassion can be antidote to overcoming manifest anger, however it too cannot serve as the actual antidote to overcoming the root of anger.

As was explained earlier, both desire and anger arise from the ignorance that grasps at the self, which is the main source of the delusions that arise in the mind. Therefore without overcoming the grasping at the self completely one cannot overcome the other delusions, such as anger and attachment.

> Since products change from moment to moment, they do not have inherent duration. Their production and disintegration are therefore not inherently existent either,

What is being explained is that what we call mind or consciousness is produced in dependence on causes, so therefore it is a product and because it is a product it is in the nature of impermanence. Thus it changes from moment to moment. Whatever is a product exists by its nature in this three-fold manner, in which there is a moment of production, a moment of abiding and a moment of disintegration. The moment of production is not inherently existent because it depends on causes and conditions for its production. The moment of abiding also being dependent on causes and conditions for its abiding, is also not inherently existent, and nor is disintegration inherently existent. So in all three instances of the existence of a product there is not a single moment where one can find inherent existence.

Because it lacks inherent existence or production it changes from moment to moment. Having understood that, as the commentary reads,

> One must abandon all disturbing emotions understanding that the three realms are like an illusion, since production, disintegration and abiding and so forth do not have inherent existence.

Having further understood how the three realms, which include all existence, are like an illusion, the disturbing emotions are also similar, and thus one can, and should, abandon the disturbing emotions. So as the commentary further reads,

> Disturbing emotions will never remain in the mind of any adept [or yogi] who understands that the production, disintegration, abiding and so forth of consciousness do not have even an atom of real or inherent existence and who gains familiarity with this.

What is being explained here is that for a yogi or meditator, who understands what is described here, the negative emotions will not remain in the consciousness. The yogi who is engaged in removing the delusions can completely eradicate and overcome the delusions, or what can be called the negative emotions, in the mind.

The analogy given here is the one I have mentioned earlier, which is that it is like uprooting a poisonous tree. If one were to try to remove a poisonous tree by merely cutting off the branches that would not stop it from growing. If, however, one were to uproot the poisonous tree from its very roots then that would prevent the poisonous tree from further growing. So if we merely try to overcome our manifest levels of attachment and anger that will not uproot the delusions in our mind. Rather we have to combat the ignorance of the grasping at true existence.

As the commentary clarifies,

> Thus by first gaining familiarity with antidotes that overcome manifest disturbing emotions and then eventually understanding dependent arising as devoid of inherent existence, one should rid oneself of all the seeds of disturbing emotions.

The summary stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

> Transmigrators governed by disturbing emotions like desire,
> Which prevent activities for the attainment of enlightenment,
> Are conveyed to the happiness of liberation by teaching them
> To become familiar with love and repulsiveness and by teaching them suchness.

2. Presentation of the name of the chapter

> *This is the sixth chapter from the* **Four Hundred on Yogic Deeds** *showing the means to abandon the disturbing emotions.*

This concludes the commentary on the sixth chapter, showing the means to abandon disturbing emotions.

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 April 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set one's motivation such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, I need to achieve the state of enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as much as I can'.

CHAPTER 7 ABANDONING ATTACHMENT TO SENSE OBJECTS ON WHICH DISTURBING EMOTIONS FOCUS

It was explained earlier that having understood how the delusions arise and so forth, one must then battle to overcome them. This particular chapter is about identifying the sense objects themselves and how to abandon attachment to those sense objects. Unless we can overcome attachment to those sense objects they will become a condition for our attachment to arise, increase, and remain in our mind. That is how the sense objects influence us.

The commentary goes on to explain that in order to establish disgust for cyclic existence the faults of cyclic existence need to be explained. One must understand that the causes for rebirth in cyclic existence are attachment to sense objects, so therefore meditating on attachment to the sense objects becomes the means to develop that disgust. As explained in the commentary, in order to develop disgust for cyclic existence, one must develop detachment towards the causes for rebirth. The main cause for rebirth, as explained in the twelve interdependent links, is the second link, which is compositional karma. That in turn is under the influence of the first link, ignorance. Due to ignorance one creates what is called compositional karma, which becomes the main cause to throw one into cyclic existence for the next rebirth. Detachment towards that karma is a very profound way of saying that in order to stop cyclic existence; one must develop detachment towards its very cause, which is compositional karma itself. Until we avert that particular karma, we will never stop the causes for future rebirths in cyclic existence. Therefore, one must develop detachment towards compositional karma.

The chapter falls into two main sub-headings which are:

1. The explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. The explanation of the material in the chapter

Explaining the material of the chapter comes under three main headings, which are:

1.1. Considering the disadvantages of cyclic existence
1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth there
1.3. Explaining the need to abandon contaminated actions

1.1. Considering the disadvantages of cyclic existence

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence
1.1.2. Specifically abandoning attachment to happy rebirths

1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence

This is further is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.1. Why it is necessary to cultivate fear of cyclic existence
1.1.1.2. How to generate aversion to it

One must also try to relate these headings to the Lam Rim headings, which specifically consider the disadvantages of cyclic existence. The presentation that is given here is actually no different to what is taught in the Lam Rim. Although each has a different way of presenting the topic and a different way of presenting the headings, one should understand that essentially, both come to the same point. For example, the Lam Rim considers the disadvantages of cyclic existence under the heading of thinking about the three types of sufferings, the six types of sufferings and so forth. All of these explanations that are given in the Lam Rim are condensed in this text and that is how one should understand it. Even if one does not take the explanations here as being a completely separate topic, one can use it in the context of the explanations of the Lam Rim.

The specific differences between the presentation of the Lam Rim and that presented here is the different approach to the explanation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence. In the Lam Rim, these disadvantages are presented mainly from the point of view of the results of cyclic existence, such as the different types of sufferings. Through that the disadvantages of cyclic existence are presented. Whereas what is unique to this text is the presentation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence through an explanation of the causes of cyclic existence. When you combine the two, then it is clear that without overcoming the causes of cyclic existence then one cannot overcome the results. The realisation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence that one must develop is the same; it is just the presentation that is different.

1.1.1.1. WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CULTIVATE FEAR OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

The reason why one must develop fear of cyclic existence is explained here.

On the basis of the influence of delusion and karma, that which continues to experience cyclic existence, being re-born in cyclic existence over and over again is what is called samsara. The reverse of that is considered as *liberation, which is having severed the delusions and karma, and thus being free from being re-born again and again in this cyclic existence*. That is what liberation is – being free from that conditioning.

When we consider the actual results of the influence of delusions and karma, we see that our contaminated body, the contaminated aggregates, is the result of the continuum of delusions and karma. When we see and experience the disadvantages of the contaminated aggregates, we realise that to overcome these disadvantages delusion and karma, which are the causes, must cease. Without the cessation of delusion and karma, one cannot overcome this condition of having contaminated aggregates.

> One must first think about the disadvantages of cyclic existence in order to give up the contaminated actions which are its cause.
>
> *When there is no end at all* 151
> *To this ocean of suffering,*
> *Why are you childish people*
> *Not afraid of drowning in it?*

Cyclic existence is explained with an analogy of a great ocean. We find this description in many of the teachings,

because if one were to be shipwrecked and stranded in the ocean, it would be almost impossible to escape, because of all the dangers that exist there. Similarly, once one is in cyclic existence, there are so many factors that bind us to that existence and it is extremely difficult to break free from it. Also there is a reference in other texts to the colour of the ocean resembling a milky colour. That makes the analogy even more vivid. A milky colour prevents one from seeing the depths and thus the dangers within the ocean. It is like an illusion, where you see the top of the ocean but may not be fully aware of the dangers that lurk beneath the surface. Thus cyclic existence is similar to a milky surface, which prevents you from seeing the actual dangers.

One must integrate these explanations of the disadvantages of cyclic existence into one's own experience, so that it can become a means for us to develop some renunciation, or the wish to be free from cyclic existence. If we were to just use it to look at others and see how they are suffering, then it would be hard to develop that renunciation within oneself. In relation to oneself, one can definitely see how one has fallen into the sea of cyclic existence, through the mere fact that we have obtained a body of contaminated aggregates.

As the commentary reads:

> The beginningless cycle of rebirths is an ocean of suffering without any end at all, infested by thirty-six sea snake fetters of ignorance, pride and craving of worldly existence.

Here, there is reference to thirty-six fetters. There are, of course, different ways of classifying the fetters; however the main classification is the nine-fold classification of the fetters. What is translated here as fetters is from the Tibetan word *kun jor*. *Kun* has a connotation of 'all', so it refers to all types of suffering, while *jor* means that which makes you come into contact. So the literal meaning of *kun jor* is that which makes you come into contact with all types of suffering. The nine fetters are: attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views, view of superiority, doubt, jealousy and miserliness. When one honestly looks into oneself, one comes to realise how many of these fetters one has within oneself and then one can see how much one is immersed in samsaric existence.

As the commentary further explains:

> It is churned by sea monsters of the sixty-two wrong views and fraught with whirlpools of birth and death.

Here sea monster is added to the list of analogies that include the ocean of cyclic existence, and the sea snake fetters. Within the ocean there are various types of fearsome creatures, and the sixty-two wrong views are like these unknown sea monsters. Again there is a whole list of different types of wrong views, and there are also different interpretations of the classifications of the different wrong views. We can go into more detail later, but one classification is based on the self and environment. In relation to the self: whether the self is permanent or impermanent, whether it is both or whether it is neither. In relation to the environment: is it permanent, impermanent, both or neither? In relation to self and the three times: was it existent in the past, or in the present, the future, all three or neither? So there are these views which are established as being wrong views because they are extreme views. There are also explanations of the wrong views in relation to the view of the transitory collections. However, we are not going into the details of the numbers right now, because all we need now is a basic understanding that there are different types of wrong extreme views basically in relation to oneself and the environment. Those wrong views are likened to sea monsters and they are what bind us to cyclic existence. Fearsome sea monsters would, if you were stranded in the ocean, harm you or devour you, and bring a lot of suffering. Likewise, these wrong views are the factors that bring us tremendous suffering in cyclic existence.

The commentary further reads on:

> Why are you ordinary childish people, drowning in it since beginningless time, not afraid?

Ordinary people have a great fear of drowning in the ocean, where it is hard to see its depth and expanse; this is similar to being in cyclic existence, where one cannot see or really understand the causes for being there. Just as it is hard to fathom the depth and the breadth of the ocean, it is even harder to understand the nature of cyclic existence, which goes back to beginningless time. So if ordinary beings are afraid of the ocean, which is a physical aspect that one can not measure and so forth, then how much more should one be actually afraid of cyclic existence, which is beginningless. The lines in the text indicate that one should develop the fear of such an existence.

> If one should fear to drown in a sea whose depth and breadth are apparent, how much more so in this one!

This refers to the analogy of someone being stranded in an ocean, surrounded by fearsome creatures. If that situation is fearful then why wouldn't one be afraid of the situation of being in cyclic existence, which is beginningless and seemingly endless as well? Cyclic existence is a much more fearsome place to be in. Therefore the main point being made here is that for all these obvious reasons, one must definitely develop a strong fear of cyclic existence, and thus develop a wish to rid oneself of that situation. In Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way* he explains in great detail again using the analogy of an ocean, how the beings within cyclic existence have been continuously tossed in waves of suffering and torment from beginningless time. Unless the causes and conditions for that are stopped, it seems to be endless as well. In that kind of situation where beings are experiencing so much suffering on a continual basis, anyone aware of the fact that they are in that situation would definitely develop a strong fear, and thus the wish to be free from that. The reasons why we should develop a fear of cyclic existence is described in great detail in the following section.

1.1.1.2. HOW TO GENERATE AVERSION TO IT

This heading means how to generate aversion towards cyclic existence, and it is sub-divided into four sections.

1.1.1.2.1. Inappropriateness of attachment to youth

This refers particularly to our appearance. We may develop great pride in our appearance, especially in our youth. What is explained in this heading is that being attached to our appearance serves as a cause for remaining in cyclic existence. Therefore the text explains how it is inappropriate to be attached to one's youth.

1.1.1.2.2. Appropriateness of fear, because of being governed by contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions

What this sub-heading explains is that fear is developed by realising that one is governed, or influenced by contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes. These are what are called the delusions. It is very true that for as long as we are governed by them we are under the control of

contaminated actions and delusions, and for as long as we are under their control, then we have no choice whatsoever in the type of rebirth we will have in a future lifetime. As ordinary beings we cannot say with any certainty that we will not be re-born in the lower realms. If one finds oneself under the influence of delusions and karma, then that is already a sign that one has no real control over one's future rebirths, which are entirely dependent on the kind of karmic imprints that we gather through the influence of delusions. Therefore when we think about this reality, it should actually bring about a really strong fear of being held cyclic existence. Through these explanations, one can actually come to understand how what we have now is a result of being in cyclic existence, and that understanding can really bring us in touch with reality.

Those who are intentionally re-born in cyclic existence are the bodhisattvas, who out of great compassion, come back to cyclic existence to benefit all sentient beings. This is explained in the text, *The Grounds and Paths of the Bodhisattva: A Commentary on the Bodhisattvas' Deeds*. However what is explained in this sub-heading is that by realising the great shortcomings of being in cyclic existence, one must then develop a very strong intention to avoid remaining in cyclic existence.

1.1.1.2.3. Advice to make effort to abandon the causes for rebirth in cyclic existence
1.1.1.2.4. Refuting that effort to abandon cyclic existence is purposeless and ineffectual

1.1.1.2.1. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ATTACHMENT TO YOUTH

Assertion: Though cyclic existence has many disadvantages, those who are proud of their youth and so forth are not afraid.

Answer:

Youth lies behind and then *152*
Once more it is ahead.
Though [one imagines] it will last,
In this world it is like a race.

It is definitely the case that for many of those who are in the prime of life, a strong pride in their youthful state prevents them from really putting the Dharma into practice, because they have a sense that everything is fine and going well. That particular delusion is called haughtiness.

As explained further in the commentary:

> Since youth and the like do not last, pride on that account is unreasonable.

As explained here, no matter how youthful or how beautiful one may look, and how good the circumstances may be, that situation will not last. It will definitely change and pass away. The more we contemplate the fact that youth and the good circumstances of youth will not last long, the less attachment we will have to that state. Youth is impermanent and definitely subject to change, so it will not be long before youth has gone. Contemplating that fact will definitely help to reduce attachment to youth.

As the commentary further reads:

> In this life youth lies behind old age; after death it is once more ahead and then again it is behind old age. Though one imagines one can remain young, in this world youth, old age and death compete ...

As explained here, it is definitely the case where in this life we say that youth comes first, and at a certain stage we leave youth behind and it becomes the past, and old age comes to the forefront. Then after a certain period of old age, we come to the point where we have to experience death and then due to the influence of delusions and karma, we have to take rebirth again. Then youth will be in front again, and after that old age comes up and youth is left behind and one has to experience that cycle again. In this way, youth, old age and death follow each other in a circle, and that circle seems to go on and on. When we really contemplate that, we feel disgusted about this situation where we have to experience these states again and again with all the shortcomings that accompany them.

The commentary goes on to say:

> Though one imagines one can remain young, in this world youth, old age and death compete as if in a race, claiming "I'm ahead, I'm ahead!" Since none can always remain ahead, it is unreasonable to feel proud because of that.

It is as though youth, old age and death are competing in a race and each one claims that they are ahead. But the fact remains that once one is ahead, the other follows and after that the third. In this way the cycle continues. Nevertheless when you are young you feel, 'I am ahead, I'm youthful and that is what is ahead right now'. That is how we are continuously immersed in this illusion. The main point that we need to contemplate is the reality of how the duration of these states is actually very short. Then strong attachment in relation to youth and so forth will definitely be reduced. We can see the actual result of contemplating in that way.

1.1.1.2.2. APPROPRIATENESS OF FEAR, BECAUSE OF BEING GOVERNED BY CONTAMINATED ACTIONS AND DISTURBING ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS

Assertion: Though one must go on to another life, it is not frightening.

Answer:

In worldly existence there is never *153*
Rebirth of one's own free will.
Being under others' control,
Who with intelligence would be fearless?

There are those who may feel, 'Oh well, I am going to take rebirth again, and go onto the next life. There is no big deal about that. It's okay, I can face that'.

As the commentary explains however:

> In worldly existence childish beings like you do not have the power to will their own rebirth in good rebirths as gods, humans and so forth, but are under the control of other factors—contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

As explained here, if you, who are under the control of contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, were to have the control to be reborn as you like, such as a good rebirth in a human or god realms, then that would be fine, and it would be appropriate for you to say that you are not afraid. But if you are under the control of contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, then you have no control over your birth whatsoever. So how can you claim not to be afraid of being reborn again. It is as explained in the teachings: when a great practitioner dies they have great joy in their mind rather than fear, because of their certainty as to where they will be reborn. A middling practitioner will have no fear in their mind, and even a lesser practitioner will have at the very least no regrets in their mind when they die.

As the text continues:

> [For someone who is] under the control of other factors – contaminated actions and disturbing emotions. While in

such a frightening situation, what intelligent person would be fearless? One should feel repugnance at being controlled by contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

As explained here, for as long someone is actually under the control of contaminated actions and delusions, it is definitely appropriate that one develops fear. There definitely should be fear about the next rebirth, as that is what decides where one will go for the rebirth after that. The main point that is being made here is that if one is influenced or controlled by karma and delusions then, as a natural consequence, there definitely should be fear. Even if one were to claim that one has no fear, the natural consequence of being controlled by the karma of delusions is that fear will be generated at the time of death.

1.1.1.2.3. ADVICE TO MAKE EFFORT TO ABANDON THE CAUSES FOR REBIRTH IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE

Having explained how the fear is appropriate and will arise, and thus having initially developed a fear of cyclic existence, the advice now is how to overcome or abandon the causes for rebirth and cyclic existence.

Assertion: Though unable to cut through worldly existence in this life because of being enthralled by pleasure, one will try to do so in a future rebirth.

Answer:

The future is endless and *154*
You were always a common being.
Act so that it will never again
Be as it was in the past.

Here it is pointed out that we usually have the view, 'I think it is just too difficult to practise now, because I am so engrossed in the desires and the pleasures of this life. So therefore maybe in a future lifetime I will do better!'. If one had this view out of laziness and procrastination then of course that would be a negative context. However we do find individuals who, while they are engaging in a practice of Dharma, accumulate virtue. They state that in this life they are not able benefit others much because of their limitations. But while they are accumulating virtue and merit, they say that while they may not be able to benefit others much in this life, 'Maybe in a future lifetime, I will have better conditions to help others'. That is a form of aspiration or prayer. It is not as though they are not doing anything now, and are just wishing for something good in the future. But rather while they are engaging in virtue now, they understand their limitations and realise that can't really do much to benefit others now, but they wish that they may be able to be of benefit in the future; that is a good attitude.

As the commentary explains:

Future rebirths are endless and the past is beginningless.

Future rebirths are endless and the past is beginningless. Throughout the beginningless past you were always only a common being. If you are an ordinary being now, which means that you are without any of the realisations, then it is definitely safe to assume that in all past lifetimes, you have always been an ordinary being.

As the commentary further explains:

[That being the case] act so that the present and future will not be as meaningless as the past during which you failed to free yourself from worldly existence.

The fact that we are an ordinary being shows that we have been an ordinary being in all our past lifetimes, and that we have not been able to free ourselves from cyclic existence. Having coming that realisation now, what we can do is to change the present, which will then change the future. The text is advising us that don't have remain as an ordinary being just as we have in all past lifetimes, which were meaningless, but rather we can put this life to meaningful use now, and for the future, so as to create the causes to free oneself.

The commentary also quotes from *The Array of Tree Trunks Sutra*:

Think of the past bodies you have meaninglessly wasted
Because of your desires.
From today engage in the discipline of seeking enlightenment
And through that discipline destroy desire.

This sutra quite vividly explains how we have, in the past, wasted all our rebirths in a very meaningless way because of our desires. Therefore, as the sutra advises:

From today engage in the discipline of seeking enlightenment
And through that discipline destroy desire.

So by exerting ourselves to overcome desire, we begin to set the basis for developing liberation and enlightenment.

The main point being made here is that there is no one who wouldn't wish to achieve the ultimate results of liberation and enlightenment. In the short term, if we were given a choice, we would all definitely also wish for a good rebirth. However while we wish to achieve that, it is as though we intentionally destroy the causes for achieving that result by engaging in desire. Therefore it is as if we are wasting the causes for achieving the result that we want.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 April 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set a motivation for receiving the teachings, such as generating the thought, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the advice and instructions in the teachings and engage in putting them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence

1.1.1.2. HOW TO GENERATE AVERSION TO IT (CONT.)

1.1.1.2.4. REFUTING THAT EFFORT TO ABANDON CYCLIC EXISTENCE IS PURPOSELESS AND INEFFECTUAL

This is sub-divided into two categories:

1.1.1.2.4.1. The actual meaning
1.1.1.2.4.2. Repudiating hope for the future without effort in this life

1.1.1.2.4.1. The actual meaning

> *The conjunction of a listener,* 155
> *What is to be heard and exponent*
> *Is very rare. In brief the cycle of*
> *Rebirths neither has nor has not an end.*

The verse and the explanation of it is in response to this question:

> Does the cycle of rebirth have an end or not? If it does one will gain freedom without the need for effort. If it does not effort to cut through the cycle of birth and death is senseless since despite effort one will not gain freedom?

This may seem quite a fair question to ask. Since there is going to be an end cyclic existence anyway why strive towards achieving that end. Likewise if there is no end to cyclic existence then it is also meaningless to strive to end it. From an ordinary perspective it seems quite a logical doubt to have, why should one make effort to try to overcome samsara when it is going to end any way? And if there is no end then there is no point in trying to end samsara.

The main point of the explanation of the verse is that there is an end to samsara for those who have both acquired and used the favourable conditions that contribute towards overcoming samsara. Whereas there will be no end to samsara for those who don't have or don't use the favourable conditions.

As the commentary states:

> A listener is one who has attained a special life of leisure and fortune…

This refers to the eight freedoms and the ten endowments that contribute to the perfect human rebirth.

> … and is ready to generate spiritual paths.

Not only are there the conditions for a human rebirth, but there are those who are ready to generate the special spiritual path. This refers to the specific realisations of emptiness, which serve as the antidote that overcomes delusions.

> What is to be heard refers to discourses teaching suchness [or emptiness], and their exponents are the Tathagatas. These three occur in the world simultaneously as rarely as the udambara flower.

Using the analogy of this rare flower, those who achieve the combination of the perfect human life with leisure and endowments, and who strive to achieve realisations, and who come into contact with the Tathagata's teaching are very rare.

The reason why it is rare for the Tathagata or enlightened Buddha to give teachings on this planet is because the causes that need to be created in order to achieve enlightenment are very rare. This means that the accumulation of merit takes place over countless eons, and it is very rare to find those who are prepared to make a concerted effort strive to accumulate merit over countless eons. Not only are the causes rare but so too is the effort required. So the result, which is becoming an enlightened buddha who gives teachings to the world, is thus very rare.

We can use also the analogy in a contemporary worldly sense: we only rarely see people wearing expensive jewellery made of gold, diamonds and other expensive gems, because the causes to obtain those precious gems are very rare. For example, if an earring cost a million dollars it would be hard to find ordinary people wearing such an ornament, because acquiring a million dollars is very difficult.

'The three rare ones' refers specifically to the Tathagata, who is the founder or the exponent of the teachings; the teaching itself, which is the Dharma; and the followers of the teaching, who are the Sangha. These three are said to be the three supreme rare ones in this world.

The Dharma refers not only to the actual oral teachings of the Buddha but also to the realisations that are derived from the teachings. These fall into two categories, cessation and the path. The realisations of the path specifically refer to the realisations of emptiness, and those who have obtained the realisations of emptiness and the cessation of delusions are the Sangha. Thus they can be understood as being very rare.

Having explained what the three rare ones refers to, the commentary continues,

> Thus, in brief, for a person who has three rare and supreme prerequisites for the growth of spiritual paths, the cycle of rebirth is not without an end…

In our case we may not have had the fortune to meet the actual Buddha or Tathagata who came to this world in the supreme emanation, however we have come into contact with great spiritual teachers who we call spiritual friends, and who serve as the representative of the buddhas. These great masters have practised and studied and prayed over many lifetimes to be able to expound the Buddha's teachings. So they are like actual representations of the Buddha—when we come into contact with them, receiving personal guidance and instructions from them, they are like the buddhas for us. Having met these great teachers is equivalent of having met the buddhas and through their presentations we also meet the Buddha's teachings. They are also called the Sangha. So in this way we have the great fortune to meet with what we call the three supreme ones, and if we fortunate beings put what they teach into practice then there will be an end to samsara.

As mentioned earlier, the Dharma refers to the specific realisations that are obtained from having listened to the

teachings and received instructions, and that realisation of emptiness becomes the main means for overcoming samsara. The direct perception of emptiness definitely serves as a direct antidote to overcome the delusions that are the cause of samsara. Thus there is an end to samsara.

From the moment someone obtains a realisation of emptiness they are directly able to see the possibility of overcoming the delusions—the main delusion being the ignorance of grasping at the self. When the root delusion, grasping at the self, can be seen, then the process for abandoning it can definitely be seen. At that instant it is seen that cyclic existence at both a general and a personal level can be severed and completely overcome. Having gained the realisation of emptiness one gains ultimate confidence in one's ability to abandon the causes of cyclic existence. Once causes are identified the results of those causes will naturally be eradicated. The main cause of samsara is the grasping at the self, and when it is seen that it is possible to completely eradicate that self-grasping, then the result is that the experience of samsara will also be overcome.

As it further explains in the commentary:

> In the case of a person for whom they are not assembled, it does not have an end because one cannot determine precisely when the cycle of rebirths will cease.

What is being indicated here is that those beings who do not have the prerequisites of the three supreme rare ones will not have an end to samsara, because they will not be able to engage in eradicating the causes for overcoming samsara. Actually, in other texts that he composed, the author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Je, clearly stated that while there was an end to samsara for the individual, he could not foresee an end to samsara in general, i.e. for all living beings. However other teachings such as *Root Wisdom* indicate there is an end to samsara for all beings. It is a matter of interpretation. In any case what is being presented here is that there is an end to samsara for those who have the intact conditions, whereas for those who lack the conditions there cannot be an end.

In relation to one's own personal practice it is quite irrelevant to try to find an answer as to whether there is an end to samsara in general or not. As indicated in every teaching, what is clear is that there will be no end to one's own samsara unless we acquire the causes to cease existing in samsara, which as mentioned before is gaining the realisations that serve as an antidote for overcoming the delusions. Even if one did conclude that there was an end to samsara in general, there is no possibility for ending one's own samsara unless one applies the causes. That is the understanding that one should gain here.

As the commentary further explains:

> With regard also to its final mode of existence, it is not specified as either having or not having an end in terms of ultimate existence.

What this specifically refers to is the fact that when the question as to whether or not there is an end to samsara was asked of the Buddha he did not give an immediate answer. It is referred to as one of the unanswered questions. It is the same as when the Buddha did not give an answer as to whether there or not there is a self. If the Buddha had said there is a self the person who asked the question may have had the type of mentality that could have led them to a certain extreme, whereas if he had said there was no self they could have been led into another extreme. It is said that there is an implicit understanding to be gained from the fact that the Buddha did not give an answer.

Here it is to be understood that the implicit understanding of the Buddha's reason for not directly answering the question as to of whether or not there is an end to samsara, is that if the conditions are present then there is an end to samsara, but if the conditions are not present then there can be no end to samsara.

If the Buddha were to say that there is no end to samsara then a listener with limited capacity could completely misunderstand and think that there was no end at all, and might even imply that there could be no causes or conditions that would lead to the end of samsara. So in order to protect them from that extreme the Buddha didn't say that there is no end to samsara. If he had said that there is an end to samsara then again the listener of limited capacity might be led to the extreme of thinking that the end of samsara can be achieved without any causes and conditions, and thus not even engage in striving to break free of samsara. So in order to prevent these extreme views the Buddha remained silent.

Those who are wise need to endeavour to accumulate the causes and conditions that will lead to the achievement of the state of being free from samsara.

The main point one must derive from this explanation is that if one were to include oneself as one of the wise, one needs to understand the implications of what an end to samsara means, which is that if the causes and conditions to end samsara are assembled, then one can use those causes and conditions to cease existing in samsara. It would be a wise being who could do that.

1.1.1.2.4.2. Repudiating hope for the future without effort in this life

We can really take this outline as sound personal instruction, as it is a point that has to be considered well in relation to our practice. We must contemplate the fact that we have the perfect conditions right now, such as having met with flawless spiritual teachers, in the sense that they present the unmistaken meaning of the Buddha's teachings in an unbroken lineage. That is really a very fortunate condition that we have. We also have the opportunity to study and practise those teachings and we are surrounded by the Sangha—those who have realisations. We really do have the perfect conditions right now. So one must try to use this fortunate situation for the best purpose, which is to accumulate the causes to overcome samsara.

In this outline Aryadeva is really giving us very personal and sound advice, indicating that if we do not to use the perfect conditions we have now, it will be extremely difficult to find these conditions in the future. So one must strive to take the full opportunity of having met this great and fortunate state.

The next verse shows how it is difficult to obtain these conditions again in the future. It reads:

Most people cling to *156*
An unwholesome direction.
Thus most common beings
Certainly go to bad rebirths.

The verse serves as an answer to the assertion that:

> As long as scriptural texts exist, there will be spiritual friends and oral transmissions of them. One may therefore try to end worldly existence in other rebirths.

Again, this is a seemingly logical assertion. The spiritual texts do exist now and there will be spiritual friends giving the teachings continuously. That being the case why couldn't one continue to study and practice in future lifetimes? However what is explained in the verse is that even though there are teachers who expound the teachings, and the teachings remain, those who listen to the teachings and strive to practise them are very rare.

As it explains in the commentary:

> Though the texts and the other two may exist, it is difficult to be proper listener for the following reasons:…

It clearly mentions here that despite having met the a teacher and listened to the teachings it is very difficult for the following reason:

> …Most people cling to the ten non-virtuous paths of action, which is an unwholesome direction…

Here unwholesome is a reference to the Tibetan word *thumba mepa,* which is the opposite of *thumpa*, which means wholesome. Wholesome deeds refers, for example, to adopting the ten virtues, which is refraining from negative deeds. Those who refrain from the ten non-virtues and thus engage in the ten virtues are engaging in wholesome deeds, while those who adopt the ten non-virtues are following an unwholesome direction. As the commentary reads on:

> …and thus through the power of their actions they are reborn in different states. Since most common beings therefore go to the bad rebirths…

The reality is that most beings don't naturally engage in the ten virtuous deeds and thus follow a wholesome direction, but rather engage regularly and naturally in the ten non-virtuous deeds. Thus they continually create the causes to go to the lower rebirths.

So as a conclusion, the author of the commentary explains that:

> …one should make effort to hear the teaching while the two prerequisites are assembled. Not to strive for liberation as if one's head were on fire…

Although there is another analogy in the text this mention of one's head being on fire serves as an additional analogy. If one notices that one's head is starting to catch fire one would engage in every means to put the fire out immediately. Being in samsara is said to be an even graver situation than that. So to leave things as they are, and not do anything about it will bring disastrous results that will be experienced later. Thus one must strive to put all one's effort into overcoming the causes of samsara and thus be liberated. This is a personal instruction.

It is most meaningful if one takes this instruction as personal advice. When you think about it, one would definitely be wasting the great opportunity that one has now if one were not to put it into use to strive to create the causes to achieve liberation, at the very least. As the teachings mention again and again these conditions will not last and we can lose them. In comparison to many others we are really fortunate. Many don't even recognise that they are in samsara, or don't understand the gravity of their situation, or don't have the means to overcome the causes for samsara, which is a really sad situation. All we can do is feel pity and have compassion for them. As they don't have the means they cannot be blamed for doing nothing. We, however, do have the means, and we have the necessary conditions. If we were not to put them into use then it would be a great waste.

1.1.2. Specifically abandoning attachment to happy rebirths

This is sub-divided into two.

1.1.2.1. Aversion should be cultivated even to happy rebirths
1.1.2.2. Showing that to remain in cyclic existence out of attachment is like insanity

1.1.2.1. AVERSION SHOULD BE CULTIVATED EVEN TO HAPPY REBIRTHS

> Assertion: Although bad rebirths must be avoided because they are states without freedom, full of many kinds of suffering, one need not feel aversion to good rebirths since they are happy states.
>
> Answer: It is proper to feel aversion towards good rebirths just as one does towards bad ones.
>
> *On earth the maturation of ill deeds* 157
> *Is seen to be only deleterious.*
> *Thus to the wise the world appears*
> *Similar to a slaughterhouse.*

The assertion relates to our limited perceptions of the world as ordinary beings. It is quite obvious that we would not want to experience the suffering of, for example, the animal realm at any price. When we think about it, it would be quite unimaginable for us to experience all the limitations that the animals have, thus a wish to not have to experience the suffering state of an animal occurs quite naturally. However it might be more difficult for us to feel aversion towards the state of a wealthy human being. When we think of people who seem to have an abundance of wealth and plentiful possessions and experiences, we do seem to have a sense of longing to achieve such a state. We see value in having wealth, abundance, good status and so forth, and we see these worldly material things as being something that we would like to have.

As the commentary explains:

> The remains of previous contaminated actions are seen only to the debilitated even those in good rebirth—deformed limbs and members, defective senses, poverty and so forth are unwanted maturation of ill deeds of humans beings living on earth. Thus to the wise exalted, worldly existence seems like a slaughterhouse…

What this is indicating is that in comparison with lower rebirths a human rebirth is a desirable, fortunate rebirth. Nevertheless within human existence there are so many types of sufferings such as are mentioned here—having deformed limbs and defective senses and living in poverty and so forth. This is explained in the commentary as being the results of previous karma. It is said that the ripening result of heavy negative karma is experienced in the lower realms, whereas the remaining karma not purified in the lower realms will be experienced in the human realms. Thus these great sufferings are said to be the ripening of previous negative karma. So when we see these plentiful obvious sufferings we can then see how a human rebirth is undesirable as well.

The 'unwanted maturation of ill deeds' also refers to specifically to the fact that sufferings are experienced even though they are not wanted. It is not as though one voluntarily accepts the sufferings experienced by those who are reborn in a state of poverty or with deformed limbs and so forth. There are so many other unwanted sufferings that are experienced by other human beings, as well as ourselves.

These are all what we call the maturation of the ill deeds or negative karma of the past. All these sufferings are prevalent

here in the human existence as well as in other rebirths. That being the case, worldly existence in general seems like a slaughterhouse to the wise and exalted. If we were to enter a slaughterhouse, or a place where there has been a lot of killing, we would feel a kind of energy that is unsettling and uncomfortable. In the slaughterhouses there would definitely be feelings of disgust as well as sadness. Likewise if one were to go to a cemetery there is a sense of unsettledness and sadness in one's mind, because of the feeling of proximity to the dead. Similarly it is said that the exalted beings that we call the noble Bodhisattvas, or those who have the realisations of emptiness, will have a feeling of disgust and sadness towards cyclic existence in its entirety.

The main reference here is to the sadness that is felt within the minds of noble beings when they look at cyclic existence. In relation to our own experience we can definitely get some sense of feeling of sadness when we reflect on the limitations and all the suffering that is experienced in the human realm. When we reflect on the conditions of all the people who are impoverished, struggling for life or in war stricken situations, that can bring an immediate sadness in our minds even at our level. However, in general, what is being explained here is that there is definitely a difference in the attitudes of an ordinary worldly being and a noble bodhisattva towards cyclic existence, or existence in the human realm. The perception of a noble bodhisattva is completely different to that of an ordinary being.

1.1.2.2. SHOWING THAT TO REMAIN IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE OUT OF ATTACHMENT IS LIKE INSANITY

> Question: If the wise see worldly existence like a slaughterhouse, why do ordinary people feel no horror?
>
> Answer: They are as insane as a mad elephant
>
> Question: Insane in what way?

This means how could one see ordinary beings as being insane like an elephant.

> Answer:
>
> *If "insane" means* *158*
> *That one's mind is unstable,*
> *What wise person would say that those*
> *In worldly existence are not insane.*
>
> In the world someone whose mind that does not function with normal stability due to an imbalance of physical constituents is called insane.

When there is imbalance in the physical constituents, which refers to the nerves and stems in the brain, a person starts to utter things that are meaningless or quite absurd, and they may also act in absurd ways. These signs are an indication of insanity in the worldly sense.

As the commentary further explains:

> If that is insanity, what intelligent person would claim that those in the worldly existence are not insane? Ordinary people who want many outrageous things and speak impulsively do not have sound minds.

What is being clearly indicated here is that the description of insanity actually fits the actions and deeds of worldly beings talking about and striving to achieve things that are really quite meaningless. The actions and deeds of a worldly being would definitely be called an act of insanity according to the perception of the exalted, wise beings. Therefore, 'what intelligent person would claim that those in worldly existence are not insane?' is a rhetorical question, which implies that worldly beings would be considered as insane by the wise and exalted.

From the exalted wise beings' point of view the indications of insanity include not having a stable mind, having an agitated mind, and not being focussed. When we refer to that description to ourselves we find that it is very true that we find it very hard to keep our mind focused even for a few moments, and that it is constantly moving about in every direction.

Thus a wise being clearly seeing this will definitely exert themselves to overcoming this act of insanity of being in cyclic existence, and in every way apply the antidotes for overcoming what we call samsara, or cyclic existence.

1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth there

This has three subheadings

1.2.1. Advice to abandon actions projecting rebirth there
1.2.2. Why it is necessary to abandon them
1.2.3. Actual way to abandon them

The explanations for these headings that can be presented in our next session.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 May 2007

As usual we shall set a good motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put into practice whatever I hear'.

1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth in cyclic existence[1]

This is subdivided into three:

1.2.1. Advice to abandon actions projecting rebirth in cyclic existence
1.2.2. Why it is necessary to abandon them
1.2.3. Actual way to abandon them

This section explains how to abandon that which leads to rebirth into cyclic existence again and again. It is also good to derive an understanding from the outline itself. Here the sequence is first, advice on how to abandon the causes that lead to rebirth in cyclic existence; second is why it is necessary to abandon those causes and the third is the actual way to abandon the causes for rebirth in cyclic existence. Keeping that sequence in mind can help us to remember the main points.

1.2.1. Advice to abandon actions projecting rebirth in cyclic existence

> The wise rid themselves of rebirth in cyclic existence which is governed by the force of contaminated actions; moreover they do so by stopping the process of contaminated action.
>
> *The pain of walking, one sees,* 159
> *Decreases when doing the opposite.*
> *Thus the intelligent generate*
> *The intention to end all action*

What is being indicated here is how the wise seek the means to overcome the actions that lead to rebirth in cyclic existence. Seeing delusions and karma as the cause to be reborn in the cyclic existence, the wise thus seek to overcome delusions and karma as a result of their sound understanding of the Dharma, the cause and effect sequences of karma and so forth. What is being indicated here is how to overcome rebirth in samsara as a result of the influence of delusions and karma. This does not refer to the bodhisattvas' rebirth into samsara, which is out of their intention to benefit sentient beings. Rather it is rebirth in samsara as a result of the influence of delusions and karma that is to be overcome, or abandoned.

The result, which is samsara, is overcome by abandoning the causes, which are identified as being the delusions and karma. What is being indicated is that those who do not desire the result, which is the experience of being reborn in cyclic existence, need to overcome the cause. Therefore what is being indicated here specifically is how to overcome the result, which is the rebirth in cyclic existence, by overcoming the causes.

The very causes that lead one into cyclic existence have to be overcome. This is a profound way of explaining how, if one does not wish to experience the result, one must tackle what causes that result. To claim that one doesn't want to be reborn in samsara, and to then willingly engage in the actions that lead one into samsara would be hypocritical, because one definitely cannot achieve the result without tackling the causes. The very actions that we engage in on a daily basis are the sorts of actions that lead one into samsara.

As the commentary explains:

> One sees that the pain caused by actions like walking, strolling, lying down and so forth decreases and gradually loses its former intensity when doing the opposite kind of action such as sitting.

The normal activities of walking or strolling or even lying down, are used as an analogy. These sorts of activities require some sort of exertion and because there is exertion, there is eventually discomfort. By walking for too long, one can feel tired and feel aches and pains in one's body. Likewise there can also be the discomfort caused by strolling around, or even in some cases, lying down. What is being indicated here is that the discomfort or pain from walking and so forth is decreased when we stop the action that causes the pain.

As the commentary further explains:

> By breaking the continuity of all contaminated actions, all suffering stops.

This is of course very true. If we stop the continuity of the action that brings about the suffering, then naturally the suffering itself will subside.

> Thus the intelligent expand their minds to encompass the means to attain the state of nirvana in which all contaminated actions projecting worldly existence have ceased.

Here the commentary is explaining that the main point being made in the verse is that the intelligent strive to expand their minds so that they are able to develop the means to achieve the state of nirvana, which is the state where all the contaminated actions that project one into cyclic existence are completely severed and overcome. The main point being explained here is that those intelligent beings, who wish to achieve nirvana, have such a very sincere determination that will seek out the causes that prevent one from reaching liberation, or in other words, the causes that lead one into cyclic existence. By analysing and thinking about the main causes, or actions that lead one into rebirth in cyclic existence again and again, wise beings first attempt to minimise, and then eventually stop the actions that lead one into cyclic existence. They clearly see that without stopping those actions, one can never stop that cycle of being reborn into cyclic existence again and again.

Having identified and recognised the causes, or actions that lead one into cyclic existence, the wise attempt to minimise those actions. Completely stopping those actions, will then lead to creating the causes to achieve liberation. As the understanding and knowledge of how to achieve liberation is expanded, one comes to understand that without severing the main cause, which is the karma and delusions, by completely overcoming them in their entirety, one can never achieve liberation. Having understood that, the wise attempt

[1] The sequence given on 10 April 2007 was '1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth there' and '1.2.1. Advice to abandon actions projecting rebirth there', where 'there' referred to cyclic existence. The headings have been made a little more self explanatory here.

to completely sever and overcome delusions and karma. Thus in brief, unless and until the delusions and karma completely cease, rebirth in cyclic existence will continue.

1.2.2. Why it is necessary to abandon actions leading to rebirth in cyclic existence

Seeing the reasons why it is necessary to abandon the cyclic existence will provide the determination to overcome cyclic existence. Four reasons are given:

1.2.2.1. Since cyclic existence is a source of fear, it should be abandoned by way of its cause, contaminated actions
1.2.2.2. Cultivation of fear considering the effects of contaminated actions
1.2.2.3. Considering the nature of contaminated actions, effort should be made to abandon them
1.2.2.4. Inappropriateness of attachment to contaminated actions on the grounds that they cause pleasure

1.2.2.1. SINCE CYCLIC EXISTENCE IS A SOURCE OF FEAR, IT SHOULD BE ABANDONED BY WAY OF ITS CAUSE, CONTAMINATED ACTIONS

Assertion: The intelligent rid themselves of cyclic existence by stopping the process of contaminated action.

When a single effect's original cause *160*
Is not seen, and one sees the extensiveness
Regarding even a single effect,
Who would not be afraid?

As the commentary reads:

No one can perceive the original cause of even a single effect, such as an element, an elemental derivative, the mind and so forth...

What is being explained here is that the continuity of matter and mind is infinite. This is understood when we talk about a seed: it is the result of a previous seed, which was produced from the maturation and sprouting of a previous seed. That previous seed was also related to its earlier seed as well. In that way when we try to trace the continuity of one single seed, it seems to be endless. Therefore we can see that there are different causes for even one seed, and when we look into different causes of that seed and try to trace it back, it seems to go back infinitely. Thus it is very hard to really comprehend the entirety of the causes and conditions needed to bring about even one seed.

Likewise with mind: the mind is a product of a previous state of mind and that previous state of mind is a product of an earlier state of mind before that. When we try to trace back the continuity of our mind, we cannot come to one point where we can say 'This is where mind begins'. Therefore the continuity of the mind also goes back infinitely. Thus we find that trying to comprehend the causes and conditions of matter or of mind is really quite incomprehensible.

When one realizes that even a single effect has a limitless multitude of causes, what childish person would not be afraid? Therefore one should always feel aversion toward, and strive for the means to gain liberation from, this vast wilderness of cyclic existence, made difficult to cross by the thickets of ignorance failing to comprehend its continuity.

What is being explained in these lines is that having used the analogy of external matter and the continuity of a mind to show how difficult it is to comprehend its continuation, one understands how the continuity of the causes for being reborn in cyclic existence (which are delusions, ignorance and all of the different delusions which are caused by ignorance) also seem limitless.

Thus cyclic existence is analogous to 'thickets of ignorance'. The ignorance within our mind is so thick and intertwined that it seems like a maze from which we cannot possibly escape. The complexities of the delusions that arise from ignorance are so thick and complex that it is almost impossible to try to think how one could possibly escape from them. When one becomes aware of how delusions are so ingrained and deep-rooted in our mind, then that should definitely bring fear, realising how if one were to remain in that state, suffering in cyclic existence will be endless. Understanding that should definitely instil a strong determination and wish to achieve liberation. When the text asks, 'What childish person would not be afraid? that is a rhetorical question indicating that one should indeed be afraid. When one actually realises that the complexities of all the ignorance and the delusions within one's mind and the suffering that they cause, then that should definitely instil a sense of fear and urgency about overcoming samsara and achieving liberation.

On a more practical level, one can contemplate these main points in one's practice. If we reflect on our own contaminated physical body, we come to realise that the shortcomings of our contaminated physical body are endless. We are so vulnerable to sickness, to feeling fatigue and tired as a result of work and so forth. In order to sustain this physical contaminated body, we have to work so hard and exert so much time and energy, and experience so much suffering. When we reflect even further on our contaminated mental states, we can definitely see that there is so much anxiety, frustration, sadness, depression and so forth that we experience because of the contaminated state of mind that we have. This combination of a contaminated physical body and a contaminated state of mind then becomes the cause for us to experience all of the shortcomings that the body and the mind possess.

By thinking about these disadvantages it becomes really appropriate for us to develop a strong determination and wish to be free from this conditioning. If it is possible to free ourselves, then it is most reasonable to contemplate how we can be free from these limitations and this conditioning that we are in, and thus strive to achieve the state of liberation, or freedom. Contemplating in this way will help us to reduce our strong grasping or attachment to our contaminated existence, and also the contaminated objects that we relate to, the sensual pleasures and so forth. We can develop a mind where we don't place complete trust in them and are more detached from our conditioning and the essential pleasures and so forth that sustain us. Reducing our strong attachment and craving for that can bring release in the mind and thus we can experience some sort of pleasure and happiness as a result of that. Contemplating in this way can be very practical, and even beneficial.

We find that there are so many conditions and experiences in our life that lead us to feel unhappy, uncomfortable, depressed and so forth. We establish so many things but then changes occur. No matter how much we plan, there will always some things that will go wrong and changes that will take place. When those changes occur, that becomes a cause for us to feel depressed or frustrated and to lose hope and so forth. If we can think about how that is the nature of samsara, and think along the lines of how, due to karma, certain changes take place and certain experiences come about, then even when there are changes and things don't go

well externally, it will not affect our mind to the degree where we will feel very depressed and sad. If we have that understanding and reflect in that way, it will prevent us from experiencing shock when things happen. This will help the mind to become more relaxed and more peaceful, and in that way can be of benefit.

1.2.2.2. CULTIVATION OF FEAR CONSIDERING THE EFFECTS OF CONTAMINATED ACTIONS

This is in relation to generating fear by thinking about the effects or the results of the contaminated actions.

Since all results will not definitely *161*
Be achieved, and those that are
Will certainly come to an end,
Why exhaust yourself for their sake?

This verse relates to very practical advice that we can definitely use. As the commentary reads:

> Effort would be appropriate if the results of actions for a specific purpose, motivated by attachment, could definitely be achieved.

What is being explained here in a very practical sense is that if we can definitely vouch for the results to be obtained, then one might think that it will be worthwhile to exert ourselves, to be motivated by attachment, and to engage in those actions. However it is:

> ...not certain that you will achieve all the results such as perfect happiness. Moreover whatever is achieved is sure to perish in the end.

What is being implied here is that first of all, it is not certain that one will achieve the desired result that one seeks out of attachment, and thus exerting so much energy and effort to achieve a result based on attachment is questionable. We have many examples of how people put in so much effort and energy and time into an attempt to achieve a particular goal in life, or a certain status, or a certain amount of wealth. Having exerted themselves in this way, they mostly don't end up satisfied with achieving what they had planned to achieve.

For example, farmers put in so much time and energy into ploughing and cultivating the fields and harvesting the crop. Throughout the year they work hard in order to achieve a certain amount of wealth and status, so that they can live happily and contentedly. However there are many things that can go wrong during that process, and they never achieve the goal that they seek. Even if they do achieve a certain amount of wealth it is not stable. It is the same with whatever kind of work that one engages in out of samsaric attachment. It is not as though whatever one achieves and obtains will remain satisfactory for ever. In fact because it is in the nature of impermanence, its very nature is that the very next moment that wealth is obtained, it starts to decrease. Eventually one has to give up and lose everything. That is the nature of samsaric existence.

So what is being indicated here is how there is no real essence in the samsaric pleasures and achievements. On a practical note what one can derive from this explanation is that this understanding can release the strong expectations that we have in our mind. It is these strong expectations of samsaric pleasures that cause us disappointment and thus great suffering. Understanding this can lessen any great expectations and trust in samsaric pleasures, and that reduces disappointment. So if through strong grasping we initially had a grand samsaric goal to achieve e.g. some great wealth or status, an understanding of the nature of samsara can lessen the suffering caused by that grasping. If we cannot achieve our samsaric goals we can reflect on how that is the nature of samsara, cause and effect, and karmic consequences. If one has not previously accumulated appropriate causes, the natural outcome is that our grand goal is not achievable. So in that way understanding this can lessen anxiety.

This understanding that samsara has no essence can help release the strong suffering that may arise when those who have obtained a certain amount of wealth and status lose that, or find that it is decreasing. Understanding that it is the nature of samsara that there is no real essence can help us to deal with change or loss of any wealth and status that we might achieve. So this understanding has a very practical benefit for us.

The commentary then asks another rhetorical question:

> Why exhaust yourself physically, verbally and mentally to achieve mistaken objectives?

We have just explained there is no reason to do so.

> Make effort to give up actions projecting cyclic existence.

Again, the main point here relates to one's own experience. We can see the fear that we have as a result of having obtained this contaminated body and this contaminated state of mind. This fear that is instilled in us is unavoidable; especially fear of the prospect of losing everything: losing our wealth, losing our status and losing our life. These fears come about naturally as a result of having a contaminated body and a contaminated state of mind. Again, with this understanding of how having a contaminated body in cyclic existence it is in the nature of samsara that we experience the shortcomings of the contaminated body and eventually disintegrate.

Having to give up our body is the result of the karma that we have created in the past. If we have that understanding, then again it can help to loosen that strong fear that we have in our mind. Because we see that it is in the nature of samsara, we see that there is no real essence in this contaminated body and contaminated state of mind that we possess. This can instil the wish to really want to stop the causes of this contaminated body and state of mind, which are the delusions and karma. That strong wish to really overcome the suffering of samsara can result in a deeply felt wish to overcome or abandon the delusions and karma. Thus, as it mentions here, one must exert oneself in overcoming the causes for samsara, which are the delusions and karma.

1.2.2.3. CONSIDERING THE NATURE OF CONTAMINATED ACTIONS, EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO ABANDON THEM

> Since actions themselves, like their results, are bound to perish, do not exert yourself for no purpose.

Once it is done, work done with effort *162*
Effortlessly disintegrates.
Though this is so, still you are not
At all free from attachment to actions.

As the commentary explains:

> Work, like building a wall, requires effort, but when it is finished it disintegrates effortlessly.

What the first two lines of the verse indicate is that even though so much effort is put into achieving something, it actually disintegrates without any effort.

The explanation in the commentary can be understood in the light of a different kind of explanation of the analogy. If we saw someone erecting a wall, and soon after it was finished

he took it down again and began to erect it again, and this continued in a seemingly endless process, we would regard such a person as utterly foolish. Our situation of being in cyclic existence is similar to that. Thus as the commentary explains:

> This being so, since you still do such things, your utter lack of freedom from attachment to actions shows how foolish you are.

What this is indicating is that even while one is experiencing all the shortcomings in samsara, all the sufferings, all the disadvantages that come about as a result of having a contaminated physical body and the contaminated state of mind, one still engages in the actions that produce that situation again and again. What is more we are actually attached to those actions! To willingly engage in the actions that bring about this condition of existing in samsara again and again, can similarly be seen as being extremely foolish, and unreasonable. Thus one must understand how behaving in such a way is very foolish, and that one must overcome that situation. We should contemplate this explanation. The analogy and the explanation are quite vivid, so just contemplating these lines is appropriate.

1.2.2.4. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ATTACHMENT TO CONTAMINATED ACTIONS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY CAUSE PLEASURE

> Assertion: Though actions which require exertion do perish, one cannot free oneself from attachment to them, because they are a source of pleasure.
>
> Answer:
>
> *There is no pleasure in relation to* *163*
> *Either the past or the future.*
> *That which occurs now, too, is passing.*
> *Why do you weary yourself?*

This assertion comes from those who say that without attachment, one cannot feel any pleasure i.e. there can be no pleasure without attachment. As an answer to this assertion, the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> There can be no real pleasure in relation to past consciousness, since it has already ceased…

If one were to assert that attachment to the actions that lead one to samsaric existence does bring about a certain pleasure and so it seems appropriate to engage in those actions, then the answer, as explained here is to ask, 'What is the real pleasure?'. There is no real pleasure in relation to the past consciousness; if one has experienced something in the past, there is no pleasure now because it has already happened in the past. The consciousness that experienced that pleasure in the past has already gone, so one cannot assert that there is pleasure now.

> …nor in relation to future consciousness, since it is not yet produced.

One cannot claim to experience the pleasure of the future because it has not yet come.

Where is the pleasure that one wishes to experience? If we relate that pleasure to the experience of the consciousness in the past, then because it is in the past we cannot possibly derive any real pleasure now, because it is already gone. We cannot derive pleasure from a future experience, because it has not even happened yet. What we are left with is the pleasure that we experience now, in this moment. That is the only thing we can relate to. However, even the pleasure that we claim to experience now is very momentary and fleeting.

The commentary continues:

> Moreover consciousness which is occurring now disintegrates moment by moment and passes. Since there is no reliable happiness, why do you weary yourself?

This rhetorical question indicates that there is no point in making yourself weary for momentary pleasurable experiences now, and that striving for a non-existent effect is unreasonable. The happiness or the pleasure that one claims to be attached to and wishes to experience is not reliable, and it is not real happiness, because it disintegrates from moment to moment. Contemplating this fact in relation to our own practical experience would be very effective. The teaching explains that pleasure is not a reliable source of happiness because it does not give us real lasting pleasure and happiness in our mind. All that we experience is a fleeting, momentary pleasure.

Even though we may have a general understanding of impermanence, if we don't relate it to our actual experiences, then it doesn't make much sense. But when we relate this to our own experiences we can see how, for example, we may have had some elated feeling of being content and happy this morning, but after something happens or an incident occurs, the initial happiness is suddenly gone. Even if we experience some sort of sensual pleasure, in the next moment it is gone and replaced with something else. In that way we can see that each moment's pleasure fades away and disintegrates, and thus it is not lasting, and therefore not reliable.

The commentary gives the analogy that it is that it is like building a house on the bank of a river, or on a cliff overlooking the sea. The flow of water or waves will cause a landslide and then the house will collapse. If the house is rebuilt in the same position the same thing will happen, and one will never complete the house because it will keep on collapsing.

1.2.3. Actual way to abandon them

That is divided into two:

1.2.3.1. Repudiating attachment to meritorious actions

What is referred to here as 'meritorious actions' actually refers to the virtuous actions. One should understand here that this is not saying that meritorious action should be abandoned, but that attachment to such actions should be. It does not refer to repudiating the meritorious action itself, but to attachment to the meritorious action.

1.2.3.2. Repudiating accumulation of demeritorious actions

1.2.3.1. REPUDIATING ATTACHMENT TO MERITORIOUS ACTIONS

This is sub-divided into three:

1.2.3.1.1. Generally repudiating accumulation of actions for the sake of high rebirth out of attachment
1.2.3.1.2. Rarity of going from happiness to happiness
1.2.3.1.3. Detailed repudiation of accumulating actions for the sake of high rebirths

1.2.3.1.1. GENERALLY REPUDIATING ACCUMULATION OF ACTIONS FOR THE SAKE OF HIGH REBIRTH OUT OF ATTACHMENT

This is again sub-divided into two:

1.2.3.1.1.1. Appropriateness of fear since the Exalted see even high rebirths as [being] like hells

1.2.3.1.1.2. If ordinary people ever perceived it like this, they would immediately faint

1.2.3.1.1.1. Appropriateness of fear since the Exalted see even high rebirths as [being] like hells

Assertion: One should perform virtuous actions for the sake of a high rebirth.

Answer:

The wise feel the same fear for even *164*
A high rebirth has for the hells.
It is rare indeed for a worldly state
Not to produce fear in them.

The assertion that one should perform virtuous actions for the sake of a higher rebirth may seem a reasonable assertion. However what should be understood here is that engaging in virtuous actions just for the sake of experiencing the pleasures of a higher rebirth, such as in the human or in the god realms, is inappropriate. As the commentary explains:

> Even high rebirths as gods and so forth, ablaze with the fire of rampant disturbing emotions and shrouded in the darkness of ignorance like the hells, produce fear in the wise with direct perception of suchness [or emptiness].

What is being explained here is that for the wise arya beings, who have direct realisation of emptiness, existence as a human or in the god realms is no different to life in the hell realms. This doesn't refer to the extent of the suffering that is being experienced, which are obviously greater in the hell realms, but to the degree of delusions and ignorance found in the higher realms. The ignorance and delusions that we have are so prevalent and so intricate in our minds that it is equivalent to being in the hell realms, because delusions and ignorance are the causes to end up in the hell realms.

For the wise beings existence as a human or in the god realms is not a really desirable and pleasurable state. We can see that even in the human realms some humans experience really extreme degrees of suffering. Other humans, because of their delusions and ignorance live or behave almost like animals. That is something we can relate to. With these sorts of examples we can come to understand what is being explained.

> As it is rare indeed for any worldly state not to inspire the Exalted with fear, the intelligent should consider the disadvantages of cyclic existence. The accumulation of actions out of craving based on seeing a high rebirth as something attractive in itself, without cultivating aversion to worldly existence, is rejected.

What is being explained here is that by seeing the disadvantages and shortcomings of existence even with a high rebirth as a human or in the god realms, the wise ones will shun the causes to be reborn there.

> However, it is completely wrong to prevent and give up the accumulation of causes for life as a god or human for the purpose of liberation.

This clarification is to clear away the doubt that if one should give up craving for a higher rebirth, such as the human or the god realms, one should give up entirely the causes to achieve such a higher rebirth. One should not be led to that misunderstanding.

One should reject the idea that it is appropriate to crave for the pleasures of a high rebirth as a human or god, and then engage in actions to achieve that state. However it is appropriate to work towards such a high rebirth for the purpose of achieving liberation and enlightenment, as one may not be able to achieve that goal in one lifetime and would have to continue to engage in the causes to achieve liberation and enlightenment in further lifetimes. Within cyclic existence the best rebirth is as a human or in some states of the god realms. Therefore as a means for liberation or enlightenment, one need not give up the causes to achieve high rebirth.

This corresponds directly to the explanations given in the Lam Rim teachings in relation to removing the doubts about achieving the highest rebirth. I will clarify that point next week.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 May 2007

As usual it would be good to sit in an appropriate physical posture and make sure that the mind is not distracted, by distancing oneself from any distractions. Set your mind by keeping it focused on the teachings to be received, then generate a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.3.1.1.2. If ordinary people ever perceived it like this, they would immediately faint

If childish people ever perceived 165
The suffering of cyclic existence,
At that moment both their mind
[And body] would completely fail.

As the commentary explains:

> If childish people ever directly perceived the suffering of cyclic existence as do the Exalted, their mind or heart and body would both completely fail…

Here 'Exalted' refers to the arya bodhisattvas who perceive the true nature of worldly existence - the environment and the beings who live within that environment - as a state of complete suffering and misery. That is because aryas directly perceive the actual nature of existence and reality. Thus when we refer to the truth, it is the arya view of truth, and when we talk about the four noble truths, each one is called a noble truth because it is a truth as seen by the noble or arya beings.

This shows that when ordinary beings perceive existence and phenomena they perceive it with a faulty state of mind. For ordinary beings things appear as being contrary to how they actually exist, like an illusion.

As the commentary explains, if childish people were ever to directly perceive the suffering of cyclic existence in the same way as arya noble beings, then their mind (or heart) and body would both completely fail. Ordinary beings would not be able to bear seeing cyclic existence in its entirety with all its sufferings.

And, as the commentary further explains:

> …they continue as if they were happy.

What this is indicating is that ordinary beings remain happy in their state of denial, because they fail to see the actual reality of cyclic existence, or samsara, and because of their contrived way of perceiving samsara as being a pleasurable state.

This point was also explained in another text by Chandrakirti. He said that if ordinary beings were to perceive the reality of cyclic existence and thus understand its suffering nature, then that would instil such a great fear in their mind that there would be no choice but to develop a strong determination to be free from cyclic existence. Thus they would be able to develop a strong determination to become entirely free from cyclic existence by achieving liberation. In this way the process of developing the determination to be free can be clearly understood.

These points have been explained previously, however it is worthwhile refreshing them. For as long as one does not realise the sufferings of cyclic existence and generate a fear of its pitfalls, one will not develop the determination to be free from that situation. It is similar to a prisoner who sees the confinement and sufferings of prison as an undesirable state to be in. The more they reflect on that, the stronger their determination to be free from prison will be. If ordinary beings in cyclic existence do not develop fear and clearly see the disadvantages, and in particular the sufferings, of cyclic existence they will not develop the determination to free themselves from it. Conversely, the stronger the fear that is generated in one's mind the stronger the determination to be free from it.

The analogy in the commentary is that

> It is like Indrabala, who sacrificed his life out of desire to be chief…

Indrabala sacrificed his life to be a chief but then that became a cause to be reborn again as a chief.

1.2.3.1.2. Rarity of going from happiness to happiness

This will be clarified in detail later. Here, happiness refers to the happy state of being continually reborn in higher states, which is very rare.

This heading is subdivided into two

1.2.3.1.2.1. The actual meaning
1.2.3.1.2.2. Repudiating attachment to higher rebirths attained through abstaining from ill deeds

1.2.3.1.2.1. The actual meaning

People without pride are rare, 166
And the proud have no compassion.
Thus it is said to be very rare
To go from light to light.

This verse serves as an explanation to the normal way of thinking which is explained in the statement:

> Though belonging to the best class and having the finest possession is known as happiness…

This refers to the worldly circumstances of having riches, the finest resources and a good sound body, which are considered as a happy state. The general assumption is that those who have riches or power or high status, such as kings or other leaders, must be very happy, as everything is going well for them. When a poor person looks upon a rich person they have the natural assumption that the rich, who have everything, must be the happiest people. However as the commentary explains:

> …aversion even towards that is appropriate.
>
> People of good caste and so forth who are not inflated with pride are rare.

What this indicates is that there are numberless beings who have a good sound body, all the resources, and who have knowledge and so forth, but it is very rare to find

amongst them those who do not have pride in their riches, high status and knowledge. This explanation is giving us very sound advice, so it is good to pay attention and really try to understand the main points.

The reason why such beings have pride is explained in the next few lines:

> Moreover, since those who are conceited think themselves best and out of envy want to crush their equals and betters, they lack compassion.

Those who have riches, resources, knowledge and so forth generate a strong sense of pride and, because of their conceit in thinking that they have everything and are the best, they look down upon those who are inferior to themselves; they also develop a strong sense of competition with those they regard as equals; and they develop a sense of envy and jealousy towards those who are better than themselves. So their pride utterly poisons their mind and they lack any sense of compassion. The sutra called *Topics Of Instruction* explains that because they lack compassion it is very rare for such beings to go from light to light. When the sutra says 'go from light to light' this refers to being reborn from one higher rebirth into the another higher rebirth, and this is rare for beings who are filled with pride.

There is a direct relationship between possessing pride and conceit and a lack of compassion, and this is an obstacle to achieving higher rebirths. As explained earlier, when any being develops a strong sense of pride because of their status, or their wealth, or their knowledge, then due to that pride they develop a sense of superiority. They look down on those beings who are inferior wishing to crush them; they develop a sense of competitiveness towards those who are equal, and a sense of envy and jealousy towards those who are superior to them.

We can see how with an attitude of wanting to crush others there is definitely a sense of wishing them harm, and thus there is a lack of compassion. With equals, a sense of competitiveness means that you want to be better and will do whatever is necessary in order to compete with them. For this purpose one performs actions and deeds that harm them. Developing a sense of jealousy and envy towards superiors also means that one has an intention of not being able to bear their success and so forth, and thus one develops a negative intent and a lack of compassion towards them. With a lack of compassion one is not able to practice the basis of the causes for higher rebirth, which is ethical morality.

The very basis of the definition of morality is refraining from harming others, and practising non-violence. With an attitude of wishing to crush others, or be competitive with them, or envy, or jealousy, there is no room for a positive compassionate attitude of benefiting others. Rather one will create negative karma out of that lack of compassion and harm. Thus one destroys the causes for achieving a higher rebirth, and so it is said that it is very rare for such beings to achieve a higher rebirth.

What we take from this as personal advice is that when we enjoy good resources, or knowledge, or high status we must guard ourself against falling into these categories of developing negative states of mind conceived by pride and conceit. One must constantly guard oneself against looking down on others, or competitiveness, or being jealous, and appreciate what one has. One must guard oneself from falling into these negative states at all costs.

When we consider how having the very favourable conditions of good resources, wealth, knowledge or high status actually serve as a means to develop pride and conceit, then that is definitely a situation one would feel disgusted with, because these conditions are the cause to be reborn in the lower states rather than higher rebirths. Rather than these fortunate conditions being a source of envy and ambition, they can generate a sense of disgust because they destroy one's good rebirth. With such a result why would one want to achieve that state? Also, as mentioned earlier, beings in cyclic existence are constantly in the state of suffering, which can be summarised as physical sufferings and mental sufferings. Although those of high status in cyclic existence have good physical conditions they have a lot of mental suffering, whereas those who live in an impoverished state experience sufferings on the physical level, because of lacking nourishment and so forth. Whether existing in a high state or in a lowly state there is constant suffering. By reflecting on this we see that neither is a desirable state to be in.

Mental suffering in particular is very much related to the superstitious conceptual thoughts that we have in our mind, which create a lot of unwanted unnecessary sufferings for many sentient beings.

1.2.3.1.2.2. Repudiating attachment to higher rebirths attained through abstaining from ill deeds

One must remind oneself again that these outlines and explanations are all in relation to encouraging beings to strive to achieve liberation, and that they must be understood in that light.

> Assertion: Though the proud are depreciable because they perform ill deeds, it is appropriate for those without pride to strive for high rebirth.
>
> Answer:
>
> *Whoever renounces them now* *167*
> *Will, it is said, obtain sense objects.*
> *For what reason would such perverse*
> *Practice be considered correct?*

The assertion is that if one can understand that the proud are to be looked down upon because they perform ill deeds, it may then be appropriate for those without pride to strive for higher rebirth? The verse answers that such a view is also not appropriate. This assertion is along the lines of, on one hand it seems appropriate to strive for high status, but on another hand it is not appropriate.

As the commentary reads:

> It is said that those who promise to be chaste in this life for the sake of high rebirth in the future and who renounce sense objects, having cultivated antipathy towards them…

Renouncing sense objects refers to renouncing the desirable sense objects of the eye, ear, nose and tongue and tactile senses. Those who see the faults of cyclic existence as a result of contemplating its sufferings and miseries, and who have come to a point of developing a

sense of disgust for cyclic existence. may begin to actually refrain from engaging in sensual objects and desires. As a result of refraining from engaging with sensual objects and practising morality and so forth, they will obtain a higher rebirth in the future life.

So what is being explained here is that having cultivated antipathy towards sensual objects they:

> will, as a result of their practices, have whatever attractive objects they desire when they take a high rebirth. If…out of aversion one gives up the things one has, it is a perverse practice to seek them again.

One obtains a higher rebirth as a natural consequence of having given up sensual pleasures in a previous life. To then develop desire and indulge in that high status, and anticipate its pleasures would be perverse, because you have worked so hard in giving up sensual pleasures to obtain the higher rebirth. That would be seen by wise beings as being a completely absurd and perverse situation, because it is wasting and misusing one's good result for futile gains.

Another point that is being made here is the absurdity of giving away what one already has, and then finding it difficult to obtain it again in the future. This absurd situation can arise if one does not contemplate carefully why one is giving up the sensual pleasures. The example I like to use is that of the people who develop a sense of renunciation that we call an artificial renunciation, as it is not yet very firm. Because of that initial poorly established feeling of renunciation, they may even develop a wish to become ordained. So they give up their boyfriend or girlfriend to become a monk or a nun, but because that renunciation is not well established, it wears off after a while. Then they might again develop a strong longing to have a partner, but by that time they might have a hard time finding a another partner!

If the result of renouncing one's boyfriend or girlfriend is going to end up in it being very hard to find another partner, then it would have been much wiser to have kept one's partner initially, and maintained and enjoyed that relationship. I am not, of course, making jest of western attitudes, as the same is also very true in the east and in other places. There are those who have renounced worldly life after they become ordained, and even gone into solitary retreat for such long periods as ten or twelve years. But after having renounced that life they come back into a completely worldly life. This sort of situation is prevalent throughout the world. The main point is that renunciation must be cultivated gradually, and continually developed on a sound basis, otherwise these faults can occur.

The implication here is that those who have developed a good sound basis of renunciation, cultivating it gradually, and complementing it with a genuine sense of love and compassion towards others, have a sound basis for practising the Dharma continually. We can say such beings will be able see their practise all the way through to their goal.

1.2.3.1.3. A DETAILED REPUDIATION OF ACCUMULATING ACTIONS FOR THE SAKE OF HIGHER REBIRTHS

This is sub-divided into five.

1.2.3.1.3.1. Repudiating accumulation of actions for the sake of possessions
1.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating their accumulation out of attachment to worldly practices
1.2.3.1.3.3. Repudiating their accumulation for the sake of attractive objects
1.2.3.1.3.4. Repudiating their accumulation for the sake of power and wealth
1.2.3.1.3.5. Repudiating accumulation of actions out of attachment to subsequent wealth

1.2.3.1.3.1. Repudiating accumulation of actions for the sake of possessions

> *Wealth, the result of merit,* *168*
> *Must be thoroughly protected from others.*
> *How can that which must be constantly*
> *Protected from others be one's own.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Even those with large resources should not be attached to them...

It is not appropriate for those who have wealth, resources and so forth to develop strong attachment to their wealth and resources.

> …for wealth the result of meritorious actions like giving…

This indicates that the excellent resources one has now are actually a result of having previously engaged in acts of giving. However these resources:

> …must constantly be protected from other factors such as robbers, thieves, fire, water and so forth.

This is very true. For any wealthy person there is a constant fear of losing their wealth. So they need to engage in measures to protect their wealth.

> How can anything needing constant and diligent protection from other factors be one's own exclusive property over which one has control.

One has a notion that any wealth is one's own wealth, however the fact is that one has to protect and constantly guard it. One cannot enjoy wealth that is free from worries and the fear of losing it and so forth. There is nothing that is entirely and exclusively considered to be 'mine' and which is free from worries. The very fact that one needs to protect one's wealth indicates that that others have access to it, which means that it does not exclusively belong to oneself. So what point is there in striving to attain such wealth, which causes such worries and cannot be exclusively owned by oneself anyway? That is the point.

If one were to engage in acts of generosity with the intention of gaining more wealth then that is totally inappropriate, because the wealth that one gains from generosity is just another source of more suffering, fear of losing it, and having to protect it and so forth. It just produces mental strain. So, engaging in acts of generosity with such attachment is totally inappropriate. The fact that one can never be totally satisfied with one's own wealth is result of attachment towards it.

The next outline arises in response to a line of thought that this explanation may produce.

1.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating their accumulation out of attachment to worldly practices

Assertion: If practices like giving are wrong one should follow conventionally accepted practices.

What this is indicating is that if Dharma practice, such as being generous and so forth, brings about the results that have just been explained, we might as well engage in some worldly practices.

Different social customs *169*
Are termed "religious practices".
Thus it seems that society has
More influence that religious practices.

What one needs to understand from the explanation is that on face value it may seem that that the practice of generosity is wrong. Actually what one has to understand implicitly is that this refers to the practice of giving with attachment and the results that one gains from it. If it is imbued with attachment then it is wrong. It would be a misunderstanding if one were to come to the conclusion that since giving with attachment to obtain a result such as good resources, high status, wealth and so forth, which will in turn produce more attachment is wrong, it would be better to follow conventionally accepted practices. As the commentary explains, adherence to these is also improper.

The term "religious practice" is applied to different social customs like giving away and taking a bride.

What is implied here is that in some cultures secular customs such as giving away the bride, or the marriage itself, or wearing certain kinds of ornaments, headdress, or costume and so forth are considered as religious practices.

Such traditions are called religions but they change according to place and time.

This is referring to different types of headdress, costumes and so forth, which are considered as a religious practice in some cultures. However that changes from place to place and time to time.

It is therefore improper to be attached to society which, although it appears more influential than religion does not remain stable.

What is being indicated here is that the norms of a society which, as explained earlier, are sometimes seen as a religious practice, are actually cultural practices which change. There is nothing stable about them, and there are different levels of understanding about the actual customs and traditions. The happiness that one gains from such traditions is not stable either, and that is the main indication here. Though marriages and so on may be considered as firm and stable with mutual commitments and so forth, it is obvious that they are not necessarily stable and that there are many ups and downs. One experiences so much suffering, and so many difficulties in relation to tradition and social standing. In that sense it does not give a stable lasting good quality of happiness and so one cannot rely upon such traditions.

1.2.3.1.3.3. Repudiating their accumulation for the sake of attractive objects

Assertion: Pleasure does not occur without attractive sense objects since these are the results of merit it is permissible to perform meritorious actions out of attachment to attractive objects in order to have pleasure.

Answer:

Through virtue there are attractive objects, *170*
But such objects to are considered bad.
By giving them up one will be happy.
What need is there to acquire them.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse;

Though attractive visual forms, sounds and other objects are obtained through virtues like giving, those who desire liberation disparage and consider even such sense objects bad…

The main point, which is clearly illustrated here, is that even though attractive sense objects are obtained through virtuous activities such as giving and so forth, they are to be discarded by those who aspire to achieve liberation.

As the commentary further explains, this is because:

…they are the root of futility and are constantly affected by suffering and permanence.

The reason why attractive objects are considered as objects to be abandoned, is because:

If one becomes happy and virtuous by giving up a source of faults, what need is there to acquire it?

What is being explained here is that although the pleasures that one obtains from the six sense objects are a result of virtuous actions, they are an obstacle for those who aspire to achieve liberation. That is because it is due to attachment to the sensual object that one creates further attachment, which will then bind one to cyclic existence. Therefore, even though there is some pleasure to be obtained from sensual objects, it is indicated that for those who are seeking liberation, one gives up attachment to the sensual pleasures. One gives up the pleasures that one gets from the sensual objects as a means to obtain one's goal, which is liberation. As it is explained here, one becomes happy and virtuous by giving up the source of faults, which is attachment to the sensual pleasures. If the result of giving up attachment to the sensual pleasures becomes a cause to attain a happy state then what need is there to acquire it? This rhetorical question indicates that one should not feel the need to acquire sensual objects, which are an obstacle to attaining one's ultimate goal of happiness, or liberation.

The main point is that it would be futile and absurd to be attached to sensual objects by thinking that they are a result of previously virtuous actions. In other words, the main doubt that is to be overcome is that it is appropriate to be attached to, and to indulge in, sensual pleasures because they are a result of previous virtuous actions.

Those seeking liberation understand that despite the fact that one has access to sensual objects as a result of previously accumulated virtuous actions, one need not indulge in sensual objects out of attachment, because that indulgence would be an obstacle to achieving one's goal of liberation. Therefore one sees it as meaningful to abstain from indulging in sensual pleasures, and being attachment to them.

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 May 2007

As always it is appropriate to find a comfortable posture. While sitting comfortably, generate a good motivation by bringing the mind inward, distancing it from distractions and keeping it focussed on the teachings to be received. Then generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.3.1.3.4. Repudiating their accumulation for the sake of power and wealth

> Assertion: Though sense objects should be disparaged, one ought to create merit for the sake of kingship, a source of superlative pleasure.
>
> Answer: It is inappropriate to do so.
>
> *For one not in need of authority,* 171
> *Practices for that [end] are meaningless.*
> *Whoever strives for authority*
> *Is called a fool among men.*

This is indicating that even if one has followed all the previous reasonings of how attachment to sensual pleasures is not appropriate, and has come to accept them in general, there is still a remaining doubt: it might be worthwhile to become a king, because that is a really pleasurable state. After considering the riches and status of a king, ordinary people may definitely have the instinctive thought, 'If I were to be a king then everything will be fine, and I would be really happy'. The answer to this assertion is that it is inappropriate to think in this way.

One should understand that desiring to be a king out of mere attachment to the pleasures and high status associated with that is, as explained here, inappropriate. However if one were to have the motivation of using the high status, great power and influence of king to benefit other beings, then it would be appropriate to strive to achieve kingship. That is a different situation. The commentary explains that the verse relates to desiring the status of a king because of attachment to not only the pleasures of that state, but also the capacity to control others. As the commentary reads:

> For adepts who have gained mental control and can effortlessly accomplish whatever they desire, practices such as giving for the sake of attaining worldly authority are senseless.

The great yogis, who have gained control over their own mind, already have the power to effortlessly accomplish whatever they desire because of their mental control. Therefore, it is senseless for such yogis to engage in the practices of generosity with an intention to obtain worldly authority, because they already have that result now.

As the commentary further explains:

> Whoever strives for the authority of mere verbal domination, [referring to having authority over others] is a fool among men, because he seeks kingship, a source of great futility.

Anyone engaging in practices such as generosity, merely to obtain kingship in order to dominate others is a fool, because of the fact that achieving even the high status of kingship is futile. As mentioned in previous verses such a state is still a source of great suffering, and therefore futile. Thus to engage in practices to obtain such a state would be foolish.

The main point that one should derive from this explanation is that as one attains more mental control through one's practices, one reaches a significant level of being able to control one's mind. A natural consequence of that will be to effortlessly obtain what one wishes for. One can also say that this is a by-product of being able to control the mind.

To focus on a temporary goal like kingship, where one will again be creating the causes for more suffering and so forth, rather than on a goal from which one gains so much more benefit, would be foolish. To take it a little further, the main point being made here is that gaining mental control is achieved by obtaining the states of liberation and enlightenment. If, instead of that one were to strive to obtain a futile, temporary goal such as the high status of kingship in cyclic existence, then that would be futile and foolish. That is the main point that one should understand.

1.2.3.1.3.5. Repudiating the accumulation of actions out of attachment to subsequent wealth

> Assertion: One should do meritorious actions, since one wants their effects (such as wealth) in future lives.
>
> Answer:
>
> *With a view to future effects* 172
> *You grasp at practices out of greed.*
> *When you see the future outcome*
> *Why are you not afraid?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> If, on realizing that there will be future effects such as wealth, one grasps at practices like giving, out of greed and attachment, one will have to experience many bad rebirths as a result of that attachment. When you see that the future outcome of such attachment is a bad rebirth, aren't you afraid?

While the good effects of practising generosity and morality (which are obtaining a good rebirth i.e. a sound body and wealth) in the future are acknowledged, if one were to practice generosity and moral ethics out of attachment to those effects, then the result of that attachment will the creation of the negative karma to take a lower rebirth. And shouldn't one be afraid of being reborn in the lower rebirths? Thus, what is being implied here is that attachment to the goals of pleasurable experiences in the future will in fact produce the causes to be reborn in lower rebirths. One should be afraid of that and thus abandon attachment.

1.2.3.2. REPUDIATING THE ACCUMULATION OF UNMERITORIOUS ACTIONS[1]

> *Merit is in every way* 173
> *Just like a wage for a wage earner.*
> *How could those who do not want*
> *[Even] virtue do what is non-virtuous?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Just like a wage earned by a worker, merit will come to resemble a payment. Therefore the wise do not do even meritorious actions motivated by attachment.

[1] This was given on 1 May 2007 as Repudiating accumulation of demeritorious actions

Experiencing the results of merit resembles the payment of a wage for work that has been done. It is the temporary gain that one receives from the hard work that one has done. Using that analogy, it would be futile to waste one's energy by then spending that money on meaningless things. That's one way that one can understand this explanation.

Another way to understand the explanation is that others could give us presents out of ulterior motives – they may want something back in return, or they may want a favour. If we are very gullible and naïve and don't understand their ulterior motive, we might fall into their trap, and thus have to do a lot for them in return. Indulging in the pleasures that one receives from one's own merit is like that. If one uses up that merit in that way, it is as if you are being fooled by the merit. One has worked so hard for the merit, but then uses it in a futile way. Thus, as the commentary further explains:

> When the wise do not want even the virtue that produces worldly existence, because of seeing it as a cause for the cycle of rebirths, how could they do demeritorious actions which are non-virtuous?

What is being explained here is that the wise understand that creating merit out of attachment to sensual goals and pleasures is a temporary goal and only a further cause to be re-born in cyclic existence, and they do not engage in meritorious actions just to be reborn in cyclic existence. So there is no question that they refrain from non-virtuous actions. To illustrate this further, the wise ones should be understood as being those beings who have gained the realisation of emptiness. These beings clearly understand that engaging in virtuous actions out of attachment would only be a cause to be re-born again in cyclic existence. Thus they completely refrain from engaging in virtuous actions out of attachment. That being the case there is no question that the wise would also avoid non-virtuous actions, which are a cause for suffering in cyclic existence.

What we can extract as personal instruction for ourselves, is to understand that engaging in virtuous actions out of attachment will be only a cause to further one's existence in samsara. When we engage in virtue out of a wish to be free from cyclic existence, to be liberated, and to ultimately achieve enlightenment for the sake of other beings, we should be mindful that we do not have strong attachment towards our practice and the results of our practice.

A good way of ensuring that we are detached about our practice and its results is to establish good motivation in the beginning and in our dedication at the end. If our motivation is imbued with renunciation and a bodhicitta attitude, then whatever practice we do and whatever merit we gain will become the sole cause for achieving liberation and becoming free from the delusions, and ultimately achieving enlightenment for the sake of other beings.

We need not worry about our own well-being. As mentioned earlier, when we gain control over our mind, the things that we wish for normally will appear spontaneously as a by-product of our mental control. If we focus on the ultimate goal, we do not even have to think about the temporary goals; we don't even have to wish for them as they will manifest spontaneously. It is much more worthwhile to aim to make sure that from the very beginning we are focussed on our main goal and not allow ourselves to become attached to temporary goals.

One can also relate these explanations to the mind-training practices, where the main advice is to engage in mind-training until one reaches a point where one can exchange worldly attitudes for Dharma attitudes. What is specifically mentioned is changing the worldly attitude in relation to gain and loss, where one has a natural tendency to strive towards gain (or whatever is profitable) which we relate to well-being and pleasures. We strive towards that, and thus we have a very strong attachment to worldly gains and the pleasures one derives from that.

Conversely, we have a very strong aversion towards anything that is unpleasant, or suffering; we have an immediate inclination to completely avoid it, and see it as being completely negative. We need to develop our mental training so that we get to the point where we can welcome sufferings, seeing them as a means to enhance our practice, and where we avoid attachment to gains. When our attitude is changed in this way, then we have reached a significant level in mind-training. So, one should understand the main points that are made here, along with the points that are made in the mind-training practices.

Changing our attitude to the worldly dharmas into a positive frame of mind is not meant to indicate that we should abandon all happiness and only suffer. That is not the proper understanding. What it is saying is that the cause of our suffering is attachment to the worldly gains. When one neutralises even the temporary sufferings that one has to experience anyway, then that can become a means for enhancing one's practice to point of gaining ultimate happiness. Actually, when we refer to our practices, we can see how the eight worldly concerns[2] influence our attitudes, and how they affect the purity of our practice. The main obstacles that arise in our practices really seem to be the worldly concerns. It is because our practices are stained with these worldly concerns, that we are not able to become true practitioners. Thus if we wish for our practice to be pure, we must definitely overcome the worldly concerns.

1.3. Explaining the need to abandon contaminated actions

This category is further sub-divided into two:

1.3.1. The wise, who understand reality, abandon attachment and reach liberation
1.3.2. When the wise do not enjoy even a high rebirth out of attachment, their enjoyment of states consistent with aversion is impossible

1.3.1. The wise, who understand reality, abandon attachment and reach liberation

Whoever sees phenomena as like *174*
A collection of mechanical devices
And like illusory beings,
Most clearly reaches the excellent state

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Only childish people like cyclic existence. The wise who directly perceive dependent arising as lacking inherent existence see external and internal phenomena as like a collection of mechanical devices made of wood that look like men and women. Those who see phenomena as empty of inherent existence, yet appearing like illusory people, traverse cyclic existence and most clearly reach the excellent states of liberation and omniscience.

[2] On 27 September 2005 these were listed as: a liking for gain and a dislike of loss; a liking for praise and dislike of criticism; a liking for being spoken to pleasantly and a dislike of being spoken to unpleasantly; a liking for happiness and a dislike of unhappiness.

What is being indicated here is that childish people are beings who are attached to the sensory or worldly pleasures. Attachment to the causes of the cyclic existence is the equivalent of liking cyclic existence. Thus the childish, meaning those who purposely engage in the causes of cyclic existence, are the ones who are attached to the sensual pleasures of the cyclic existence. This is in contrast to the wise, who are defined in the commentary as those who directly perceive dependent arising as lacking inherent existence.

The wise have a direct understanding and realisation of emptiness, which affects their perception and view of the world and the beings within the world. This means that they see men and women as 'mechanical devices made out of wood'. The analogy is that mechanical devices made to look like men and women might appear to be real if one didn't know that they were made out of inanimate substances. But once one knows that they are mechanical devices, then even though they appear to be like men and women, one does not believe that they are. One knows that it is not a reality.

To wise beings who have the direct understanding of emptiness, the world and the beings within that world appear to be illusory. Because they see things as being dependent arisings, they know that even though they appear to be inherently existent, that is not the case, as there is no real inherent existence. Thus they see phenomena as being illusory because they see things as dependent arisings. Even though things appear as inherently existent, they know that this is not the case. As a result they are detached about the objects within the cyclic existence. This detachment and their further practices leads them to the ultimate states. As mentioned here, they

> ...traverse cyclic existence and most clearly reach the excellent states of liberation and omniscience [meaning enlightenment].

Thus the understanding they have, and their view of the world leads them to the ultimate state of liberation and enlightenment. What is being indicated here is that one should not follow the attitudes of the childish, who are attached to cyclic existence and continuously remain in cyclic existence. Rather, one should adopt the view of the wise beings, which is to strive towards achieving the wisdom of understanding emptiness, which leads us to the ultimate goals.

The earlier chapters explained how one should not be attached to the sensual pleasures. They were a preliminary to the main point that is being made here. The attempt to initially reduce attachment to sensual pleasures is to ultimately to overcome actual attachment to the sensual pleasures, i.e. to completely uproot the delusions of attachment, anger and ignorance. This is done by gaining the realisation of emptiness, which is necessary to free oneself from cyclic existence. The realisation of emptiness is the main tool to completely uproot the delusions, leading one to reach liberation and enlightenment.

1.3.2. When the wise do not enjoy even a high rebirth out of attachment, their enjoyment of states consistent with aversion is impossible

What is being reiterated here is that the wise do not enjoy a high rebirth in cyclic existence out of attachment.

> *For those who do not enjoy* *175*
> *Any objects in cyclic existence*
> *It is altogether impossible*
> *To take pleasure in this [world].*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> When those who are wise with regard to the meaning of reality do not enjoy or crave even those objects in cyclic existence which are normally enjoyable, how could they enjoy the source of birth, aging and so forth which normally cause aversion? Thus for them there is never any joy out of attachment to cyclic existence.

There is not much one won't understand from that explanation, which is elucidated very clearly. So I will not elaborate further.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche's summarising stanza is:

> Thinking thoroughly about impermanence and suffering
> Give up craving for objects such as visual form,
> The cause for this bottomless boundless ocean of suffering,
> And strive to attain unsurpassable enlightenment.

'Thinking thoroughly about impermanence and suffering' refers to the explanations given earlier about impermanence and suffering. One contemplates thoroughly about how things are in the nature of impermanence and how contaminated objects are in the nature of suffering. One should give up craving for objects such as the visual forms, because craving or attachment to sensual objects such as the visual forms is the cause for the bottomless, boundless ocean of suffering in cyclic existence. So one should give up the attachment or craving for these objects, and thus strive towards attaining the unsurpassable state of enlightenment.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the seventh chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing the means to give up clinging to objects of enjoyment which humans desire.*

That completes the seventh chapter.

CHAPTER VIII: SHOWING THE METHODS OF FULLY TRAINING THE STUDENT'S MINDSTREAM MAKING IT RECEPTIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL PATHS

The chapter is divided into two parts:

1. The explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. The explanation of the material in the chapter

From the sequence of material in the earlier chapters, specifically the seventh chapter, we understand that they were a preparation for receiving the teaching on emptiness. The explanation of overcoming delusions was mainly in reference to the manifest delusions, and here, in the eighth chapter we find explanations about how to overcome the root of the delusions, and in accordance with this it actually gives the teachings on emptiness. One should try to derive this meaning and understanding from the outlines.

The explanation of the material in the chapter is sub-divided into three:

1.1. Why disturbing emotions can be abandoned

Before actually explaining the antidote for overcoming the delusions, the chapter explains by explaining how disturbing emotions can be abandoned, and gives reasons why they can be abandoned.

1.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon disturbing emotions

Having explained how it is possible to abandon disturbing emotions this section explains how to actually engage in abandoning them.

1.3. Showing by analogy that though birth connecting one with the next existence is beginningless, it has an end

This is indicating that though there was no beginning to one's samsaric rebirths, there is an end, and this is shown with an analogy.

1.1. Why disturbing emotions can be abandoned

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.1.2. Showing how it is possible to abandon disturbing emotions

> Question: How do we escape from the bondage of desire to which we have been accustomed since beginningless time?
>
> Answer:
>
> *Just as friendship between people* *176*
> *Who disagree does not last long,*
> *Desire does not last long*
> *When the faults of all things are recognised?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

> A friendship motivated by desire between people who are not amicable and who disagree does not last long. Similarly desire does not last long for an adept who recognizes the faults in all external and internal things which give rise to many unwanted consequences. When properly investigated, its root is found to be unstable and thus one can get rid of it. A friendship motivated by desire between people who are not amicable and who disagree does not last long.

This is a vivid analogy. When friendship is based on a mere attachment, it does not last long. One can understand this in relation to for example, the passage in the commentary on the Bodhicitta mind. In this text, it explains how one very object, such as a beautiful figure of a woman can appear as an object of desire for some, whereas for others it can appear as being like a corpse, and yet others see it as edible food. What is being explained here is that when someone with a longing for a beautiful figure comes into contact with the beautiful figure of a woman, and sees the object, they experience desire. Whereas when a meditator who is meditating on the faults of the body, reflects on a beautiful figure of a woman, because of their detailed analysis that body may appear as being equivalent to viewing a corpse. Wild animals however will see that body as food. So depending on one's perception one figure can appear in different ways.

An object can be either an object of desire, or an object of aversion that causes anger to arise, or an object inducing ignorance or stupor in the mind. That same object can be the causes of these different emotions of attachment, anger or ignorance. What this indicates is that when an object is viewed with a deluded mind, there is no stability. Thus with a friendship based on attachment, because the very basis of that friendship comes from a deluded mind of attachment, it is natural that it will not last. As long as that deluded state of mind of attachment is present, it is liable to change at any time.

The reason why a friendship that is based on attachment does not last long is because the initial attraction to the object is obscured by attachment. So, one may not initially see the faults of the other. When the faults become apparent, then the strong attachment one has toward the friend or partner slowly fades away, and as they start seeing the faults, then aversion may arise. That is what causes the friendship not to last. We see many examples of that in our relationships. We don't have to really go further into this, because it is very apparent.

Using the fact that friendship does not last when faults are seen in the object as an analogy, we see that it is the same with delusions. As mentioned here, adepts or the yogis recognise the faults in all external things. They see the faults of the delusions and how they give rise to unwanted consequences. When properly investigated, the root of delusions is found to be unstable and thus delusions can be overcome.

The analogy that is given here in the text is a very vivid one that we can all relate to. The main point of the analogy is that just as the friendship that is based on attachment does not last long when you see faults in the friend, likewise when you see faults of attachment and other delusions, then you can get rid of them, because you will be able to see that they are not stable.

The analogy is a vivid one, because we definitely see it happening a lot in relationships. Initially, due to very strong attachment the faults may not be apparent. We can see that initially there may be strong attachment from both sides, therefore the relationship seems to be soaring and is really very good. But eventually when one begins to see faults in the other, then the attachment might reduce and then aversion starts to arise. Because of seeing faults in the other, then they may try to distance themselves. If that were to happen simultaneously, there may be less of a problem. But where the problem arises is that while one partner sees fault in the other, the other may be still holding on with attachment and seeing everything as still being attractive. So the suffering arises in the one who is still holding on to the exaggerated attractiveness of the other, while the other is seeing faults and distancing themselves.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 May 2007

Without allowing the mind to be distracted externally, find a good and comfortable posture that is appropriate for setting a motivation for receiving the teachings. Then generate a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1 Why disturbing emotions can be abandoned (cont.)

1.1.2. Showing how it is possible to abandon disturbing emotions, or delusions

This is subdivided into four.
1.1.2.1. Disturbing emotions can be abandoned because their focal basis is not definitive
1.1.2.2. Causes giving rise to the disturbing emotions do not exist truly
1.1.2.3. Refuting proof that disturbing emotions cannot be abandoned
1.1.2.4. Lack of contradiction in seeing many who have not abandoned disturbing emotions

1.1.2.1. DISTURBING EMOTIONS CAN BE ABANDONED BECAUSE THEIR FOCAL BASIS IS NOT DEFINITIVE

Some are attracted to it, 177
Some are averse to it,
Some feel confused by it:
Thus desire has no object.

The text has already explained how desire itself can be reduced by seeing the faults of the object in quite a bit of detail. However here it shows more specifically how seeing the object of desire as lacking inherent existence will help to overcome actual attachment to the object.

As the commentary explains:

> Desire depends on and operates in relation to the desired thing which, moreover, does not exist by way of its own entity…

What is being explained here is that because the object of desire exists in the first place it serves as a basis for one's desire to arise. As explained in an earlier session there are three main conditions for desire to arise: first, there is an object of desire; secondly, the person who is viewing or perceiving the object has not abandoned desire; and thirdly, that they have an incorrect mental approach. Due to these three conditions desire arises.

Due to an incorrect mental approach, the object of desire is perceived as being inherently existent. If an object were to be inherently attractive, the qualities of attractiveness would exist inherently within the object. If that were the case, it would be feasible to say that one could not overcome desire for the object because of its inherently existing attractiveness. However that is not the case: one reason why one can overcome desire is because the object does not exist inherently.

Furthermore:

> …for some are attracted to that object, some have aversion to it and some are confused by it. If the desired object existed by way of its own entity, only desire should arise towards it.

This is in accordance with the earlier explanation in the text: the same object can be an object of attachment for some, an object of aversion for others while for a third group ignorance will be increased. The converse is that if an object were an entirely attractive object, causing only desire to arise, then whoever perceived that object would have to experience desire, which could not be stopped. However that is not the case.

As the commentary further explains:

> Since this is not inevitable, focal objects are only imputed by conceptuality, and that which is desired does not exist by way of its own entity. Therefore, from the point of view of the basis too, disturbing emotions can be abandoned.

Everything in relation to the object, its attributes and so forth, is merely conceptually imputed. It is merely conceptualised, meaning that the objects do not exist from their own side, but are merely labelled by the mind. That being the case, it is also possible to overcome desire and other delusions in relation to the object itself, because of the very nature of the object.

The analogy given in the commentary describes how one object can be viewed differently. A man has two wives: when the one who is a mother sees her daughter, due to attachment, she feels love and concern for her daughter. Whereas when the other wife, who doesn't have a daughter, sees the daughter of the first wife she actually feels aversion towards the girl, because it is not her own child. A servant in the house would view the daughter with indifference i.e. with neither strong attachment nor aversion. The reason why the younger wife feels aversion towards the daughter of the older wife is because there is a bit of jealousy there, and because of that mind of jealousy aversion can arise in the mind.

The main point of the analogy is to illustrate that any given object is not inherently existent, and thus it is possible to overcome misconceptions in relation to the object. If the object of desire were to be inherently existent, then one couldn't overcome any misconception in relation to it, because it and its attributes would actually exist in that way. However, because it does not exist in the way that it appears to exist, one can overcome misconceptions about it.

It is also good to understand how the object and the subject, meaning the conceptual mind that perceives the object and the object itself, are interdependent. The attributes of an object depend on the conceptual mind that conceives it, and the conceptual mind that perceives an object depends on the object in order to be able to attribute any qualities or demerits to it. Therefore the object and the subject (or the mind that perceives the object) are interdependent and interrelated. Thus neither of them exist inherently, and conceptions that arise in relation to them can be altered.

1.1.2.2. CAUSES GIVING RISES TO DISTURBING EMOTIONS OR DELUSIONS DO NOT EXIST TRULY

> Not only can disturbing emotions be abandoned because their focal objects lack true existence, but also because their causes do not have true existence.

Apart from conceptuality, 178
Desire and so forth have no existence.

Who with intelligence would hold [that there are]
Real things imputed by conceptuality?

At this point the commentary quotes from another text:

Desire, anger and confusion are explained
To arise through conceptuality.

Here conceptuality refers particularly to an incorrect mental approach, which is a wrong conceptual mind or a faulty conceptual mind that exaggerates either the qualities or faults attributed to an object. It is due to an incorrect mental approach that the mind sees inherent existence itself. That is explained further on in the text.

However here the text is describing the function of the incorrect mental approach, which is a wrong conceptual mind that exaggerates the attributes of the object. It sees it as being either attractive or repulsive, and as a result desire and attachment and aversion arise respectively. So different emotions arise in the mind in relation to the object. The main point is that strong desire and strong anger are dependent on an incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the qualities and attributes of the object.

As the commentary explains:

> The existence of disturbing emotions such as desire cannot be found apart from the conceptualizations of an incorrect mental approach and imputation by conceptuality, as a snake is imputed to a mottled rope.

This relates to the verse about desire, anger and confusion arising through conceptuality that was quoted above. The text calls that conceptuality an incorrect mental approach. In relation to an object, there can be an incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the positive qualities of an object, which then causes desire to arise. There is also the incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the faults of the object, which then causes anger or aversion to arise. An incorrect mental approach of indifference towards the object causes ignorance or stupidity to arise in the mind. Thus the three types of delusions arise in the mind in relation to three types of incorrect mental approach. The main point is that the qualities or faults of the object, or any aspect of indifference to it, are only due to a misconception, which is an incorrect mental approach of a conceptual mind.

As it further explains in the commentary it is like the analogy of a mind imputing a snake upon a rope. Even though the mind imputing the snake on the rope will totally believe that there is a snake there, you cannot find a real snake on the rope in any way. There is not a single atom of reality of a snake on the rope, as it is only the faulty mind that perceives the snake.

The commentary explains:

> Their existence is simply reliant existence and they do not exist by way of their own entity. If they did, who with intelligence would hold they are imputed by conceptuality, which means the opposite in existence in terms of their own reality? Imputation by conceptuality and existence by way of a thing's own entity are contradictory.

That which appears to exist upon the object is merely imputed by an incorrect mental approach, and thus does not exist from its own side, by its own entity. As a counter measure the commentary explains that if that which appears to exist upon the object actually did exist, then the intelligent would hold the same view. Here 'the intelligent' means those who have understood reality and who see it as being mentally imputed rather than inherently existent. That is how those who have an intelligent mind perceive reality or emptiness. It would be contrary to the actual reality, if they didn't perceive things in that way.

As the commentary further explains:

> When the snake is imputed to a rope, neither the parts of the rope, that which possesses its parts, its continuum, nor that which possesses the continuum appropriately illustrate a snake. Similarly neither do the collection of the aggregates, that which makes up the collection, its continuum, nor that which possesses the continuum is appropriate as the person.

The main point is that a true snake does not exist in any part in any way upon a rope; it is only perceived as a snake by a wrong conceptual mind. Similarly a person is merely imputed upon the aggregates and within the aggregates you cannot find a person, nor does a person inherently exist in any one of the five aggregates. So the conclusion is that a person is merely imputed on the basis of the five aggregates.

The main point is that the root text is identifying the causes of the disturbing emotions or delusions as being an incorrect mental approach, or the conceptualising mind. These points were also explained in chapter 7, but this chapter is being more specific about those causes. Gyaltsab-je also quotes Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning:*

The world is caused by ignorance—
The Fully Enlightened One said so.
Therefore why is it not feasible
To say the world is conceptuality.

The main point is that everything is imputed by the conceptual mind.

1.1.2.3. REFUTING PROOF THAT DISTURBING EMOTIONS CANNOT BE ABANDONED

Some may doubt whether, even though we know they are bad, disturbing emotions can be abandoned. This section refutes such thoughts.

> Assertion: Since men and women are bound together by mutual desire, one cannot give up women and thus cannot give up desire.

This is definitely a common worldly view.

Answer:

None is, as it were, *179*
Bound to another.
It is unfeasible to separate
That which is bound together.

As the commentary explains:

> No man is intrinsically bound to a woman. Since anything inherent is irrevocable, whatever is intrinsically bound together should not be separable. Yet the case of that which should not be separable, separation is seen.

The point is elucidated very well here. Neither the man nor the woman is inherently existent therefore there cannot be any inherently existent bond between the two. If the bond between a man and a woman were to be inherently existent then that would imply that it is irrevocable and that they cannot be separated. However separation does take place—we all know of instances of it.

With a clear understanding of emptiness, and having meditated on it, we can see how it can really benefit the mind if we are able see the real nature of things and how they exist in reality. A person who is acquainted with viewing actual reality, and the actual nature of things, will not experience strong emotions of desire and anger in relation to changes in objects and so forth, because they have that understanding. The main point here is that bonds are

not inherently existent bonds to begin with. In this case the bond between a man and a woman is not itself inherently existent, nor are the factors that bind the man and the woman together inherently existent. Thus there cannot be an everlasting non-separable relationship, because the possibility of separation is always there, which is obvious.

We don't have to use much logic as we see separation all around us. The fact that there is separation is because there was never an inherently existent bond to begin with. Of course when one fails to see that, strong attachment arises for each other. Then later other emotions such as aversion and sadness and depression may arise if there is separation. If one were to have that understanding to begin with and contemplate it, then that can help to avoid such extreme emotions. This is a really important point for us to consider and contemplate. As the text explains 'that which should not be separable, separation is seen'. Even though the separation from a loved one is not desired, separation takes place, which of course no one likes.

The analogy given in the commentary is that it is like using one black and one white ox for ploughing. They are seen as being bound together because of the yoke and the harness that they share. But in reality the oxen are not bound together. Similarly, with relationships it appears that the couple are bound together. However the binding factor is only attachment and desire, and there is no truly or inherently existent bond there.

1.1.2.4. LACK OF CONTRADICTION IN SEEING MANY WHO HAVE NOT ABANDONED DISTURBING EMOTIONS.

> Assertion: If the disturbing emotions are stopped by analysing in this way, why do most people appear not to have abandoned them.

A doubt may arise in some minds that as there are so many who have not abandoned disturbing emotions or delusions, then that might be a reason why disturbing emotions or delusions cannot be abandoned. This outline shows that there is no contradiction there.

A common doubt that some may have is in relation to a person who has been practising and studying the Dharma for a long time, but who still gets angry and seems to have attachment in their mind. Seeing such a person one may think that maybe it is not possible to overcome anger at all. These are all reasonable doubts, and the text explains how to overcome them in relation to our way of thinking. It is very good to ponder and pay attention to the points that are made here, as they help to pave the way to the understanding of emptiness—as they make the mind ready for understanding emptiness.

> Answer: It is because they lack a strong belief in the profound teaching, [which refers to the teaching on emptiness].

The answer is the essence of the following verse.

> *Those with little merit* *180*
> *Do not even doubt this teaching.*
> *Entertaining just a doubt*
> *Tears to tatters worldly existence.*

This verse points out that until and unless one gains an actual realisation of emptiness one cannot possibly overcome and uproot the delusions in the mind.

As the commentary explains:

> Those with little merit do not even have a doubt regarding the two truths as asserted by Nagarjuna: that while dependent arising is empty of inherent existence, actions and agents are feasible. Since they do not wonder whether this is so or not, how can they attain the liberation of having abandoned all disturbing attitudes and emotions?

'Those with little merit' refers to ordinary beings in cyclic existence, who from beginningless time have been acquainted with the wrong conceptual mind of grasping at the self. Being entirely dependent on that misconception, they don't even have a doubt about emptiness as illustrated by Nagarjuna, which as mentioned here is that while dependent arising is empty of inherent existence, actions and agents are feasible. What is being explained here is that while things are dependent arisings they are empty of inherent existence. Beings of little merit, as explained earlier, will not even begin to doubt whether that is the case or not. If they do not even have a doubt about that, then the possibility of being liberated from samsara is out of the question.

As the commentary further explains:

> When emptiness is taught, simply entertaining the positive doubt that it might be so tears worldly existence to tatters…

One may have a strong misconception that person, things and phenomena exist inherently, and that they do have an inherently existent self. When the teachings of emptiness are first heard and then analysed, one many develop the doubt, 'Oh maybe they are inherently existent, but then again they may not be inherently existent'. That is an even-handed doubt that leans to both sides. That equal doubt leads on to a correctly assuming doubt, which is that persons and other phenomena don't seem to be inherently existent. There is still no certainty yet, but when one comes to that correctly assuming doubt, it is said that one has a conceptual understanding of emptiness. That correctly assuming doubt then leads on to an actual understanding that things do not exist inherently. What is called a positive doubt in the text is a correctly assuming doubt, that things may not be inherently existent. Even that doubt, as mentioned here, will shatter cyclic existence. It is referred to as the tattering of cyclic existence because it shatters the misconception in one's mind that grasps at the self. So it is that ignorance which is being shattered, and thus it is a means of shattering cyclic existence.

The commentary further explains that:

> …since to some extent the fundamental nature of the existence has become the mind's object.

This refers to the correctly assuming doubt or conceptual understanding of emptiness, or selflessness. The fundamental nature of existence of person and other phenomena has not entirely become the object of the mind, to the point that it is seen clearly and directly perceived, but the acquaintance the mind has with this understanding serves as a means to tear to tatters, or shatter, worldly existence.

As the commentary further explains:

> Someone who has such a positive doubt will seek certainty, and by ascertaining the correct view through scriptural citations and reasoning, will attain liberation when disturbing attitudes and emotions come to an end.

The whole process is explained here. From a state of not even having a doubt through to accepting the fact that things may not be inherently existent, through to developing an equal doubt, which then further leads to a correctly assuming doubt (called a positive doubt here in the commentary), which can also be referred to as a conceptual understanding of emptiness.

We gain further understanding through the scriptural citations (meaning what is being explained in the scriptures), receiving teachings on emptiness, and then reflecting on them using the logical reasons as explained in the teachings. By using these logical reasons to understand emptiness a true seeker will find certainty, and having found certainty that all existence lacks inherent existence and is thus empty of inherent existence, one comes to the correct view of emptiness. Through that one will attain liberation, when all the disturbing emotions or delusions have been completely abandoned. 'When it comes to an end' means when it is completely abandoned. To reiterate, they 'will attain liberation when disturbing attitudes come to an end', refers to how liberation is actually attained.

1.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon disturbing emotions

This is sub-divided into four.

1.2.1. Advice to understand the meaning of emptiness
1.2.2. Advice to strive for liberation
1.2.3. Stages leading to the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence
1.2.4. Advice that disturbing attitudes and emotions can certainly be brought to an end

1.2.1. Advice to understanding the meaning of emptiness

This has five sub-divisions.

1.2.1.1. Advice to take an interest in the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence
1.2.1.2. Showing the need to understand emptiness in order to attain liberation
1.2.1.3. Showing the means to turn away from cyclic existence
1.2.1.4. Giving up fear of emptiness
1.2.1.5. Giving up strong attachment to ones position

1.2.1.1. ADVICE TO TAKE INTEREST IN THE MEANING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MODE OF EXISTENCE

According to the Tibetan text the heading refers more to 'having respect for' rather than 'taking an interest in'.

> *The Subduer says of this teaching* *181*
> *There will be increase until liberation.*
> *Anyone who lacks interest in it*
> *Clearly has no sense.*

As the commentary reads:

> The Subduer said that from the first moment on the path of seeing until liberation there will be no decline, only increase in the direct perception of emptiness, concerning which even a doubt tears worldly existence to tatters

The second part of this is explained first in the Tibetan version of the commentary. It refers to the earlier point that even having a doubt about emptiness will tear worldly existence to tatters, and says that this was explained by the Subduer, or the Buddha.

The first part of the quotation from the commentary says that from the first moment of the path of seeing until liberation there will be no decline. This refers to the earlier point that from the first moment of generating a positive doubt, until the moment of gaining the direct realisation of emptiness (which is gained on the path of seeing) the understanding of emptiness will only increase further.

Furthermore as the commentary explains:

> The practices of giving and so forth, conjoined with it will only increase.

The realisation of emptiness itself as well as the practices that are conjoined with that understanding, such as the practices of generosity and so forth, will only increase from that time onwards until liberation is reached.

> Anyone who lacks interest in [or, as indicated in the Tibetan version, respect or veneration for] the meaning of emptiness clearly has no sense, and shows how very foolish he or she is.

This is also referred to in earlier parts of the text, and here it says that there could be no one more foolish than the person does not pay attention to, or respect, such a profound and worthy realisation as the understanding of emptiness, which will lead to the freedom from all bondage, and sufferings, and thus liberation. That is the definition of being wise.

It is further explained that:

> Worldly practices come to an end once they have yielded their fruit…

This means that worldly practices bring only temporary results to be experienced here in cyclic existence.

> …but an understanding of emptiness leads to the practice of giving and so forth to the city of omniscience.

This means that practices done with an understanding of emptiness, will lead one to complete enlightenment.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

29 May 2007

As always, we will sit in an appropriate comfortable and relaxed posture, and then allow our mind to be free from external distractions. We then set our mind to focus on the teachings, and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1.2. Showing the need to understand emptiness in order to attain liberation

As we go through the text outlines, it is good to reflect on the actual meaning of each. Try to use whatever understanding you have gained so far to refer to the points in the text. For example, this outline refers to showing the need to understand emptiness. At that point, one reflects on whatever understanding one has of emptiness. The heading then refers to showing the need to understand emptiness in order to attain liberation. Again, one reflects on whatever one has understood about what liberation means. Reflecting on the actual meaning of what is presented in the text helps us to gain further understanding for our personal practice.

> Question: Does one meditate on emptiness, although things are not empty, to free oneself from desire, or does one view them that way because they actually are empty of true existence?
>
> Answer:
>
> *One does not regard that which is not empty* 182
> *As empty, thinking [thereby] to gain nirvana.*
> *Tathagatas say that nirvana*
> *Will not be attained through wrong views.*

The verse shows the need for gaining a really sound understanding of emptiness, which should be a really deep understanding and not be just a vague understanding. It was explained in the Madhyamika or the Middle Way text, which we have studied, that the view of the inherent existence of phenomena is like believing that an illusory woman conjured by a magician is an actual being. We view things as being inherently existent in a similar way. What is being implied is that phenomena are entirely free from inherent existence, but because they appear as being inherently existent, that is what we actually believe to be the case.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Once one has an understanding of that which is empty as empty, one familiarizes oneself with it.

Emptiness here refers to the emptiness of inherent existence. Therefore as a means to obtain liberation, one meditates on the emptiness of inherent existence. So negating inherent existence, and thus seeing things as being empty of inherent existence is the means to obtain liberation. As the commentary says:

> One who holds this view does not understand the emptiness of the person and aggregates but thinks of them as truly existent.

Meditating on emptiness by simply thinking that things are just empty will not achieve liberation. To hold the view that persons and aggregates are truly existent while at the same time implying emptiness is not a means of gaining liberation. As the commentary continues:

> Tathagatas say one will not reach nirvana by means of wrong views misconceiving the fundamental nature of existence. The Teacher [the Buddha] said [in a sutra], "All phenomena are empty in that they do not exist inherently."

All phenomena can be categorised into living beings and other phenomena. Holding that phenomena (beings and the environment) are truly existent, while at the same time asserting that they are empty, is missing the point. If one holds to the view that things are truly existent, and also implies that they are empty, then one can come to the extreme and wrong conclusion that they might be empty of any existence.

The word 'empty' does not really get to the heart of the meaning of what it is empty of. To come to the actual understanding of emptiness, one needs to completely negate phenomena as being truly existent. One needs to understand that phenomena are empty of inherent existence. What things are empty of is inherent or true existence, and that is the understanding that one needs to gain with the explanation of emptiness. If one were to hold that things are truly existent, then, as the Buddha said, 'One will not reach nirvana with those wrong views'. As mentioned in the commentary the Teacher said that all things are empty of inherent existence. As the commentary concludes:

> No matter which of the three states of nirvana one enters, one must become learned [skilled] in the meaning of emptiness.

As has been clearly explained, emptiness must be completely understood, and one must be skilled in understanding emptiness if one wishes to achieve one of the three states of nirvana.

1.2.1.3. Showing the means to turn away from cyclic existence

> Question: If things are empty of inherent existence, it is appropriate to teach suchness. What is the use of teaching how the world of sentient beings and environments comes into existence?

This question clearly asks why, if the main understanding one needs to gain to achieve liberation is emptiness, did the Buddha not teach just on emptiness? Why did he teach about the environment and so forth? As the commentary explains the answer is that:

> Emptiness cannot be understood without an explanation of how the world comes into being. Therefore explaining it is essential as a means for understanding suchness.

'Explaining it', refers to the explanation of how the world comes into being, but when the text mentions the world, the environment and so forth, it is specifically referring to

the relative truth (there being two truths, relative truth and ultimate truth). What is being explained here is that in order to understand ultimate truth, one first needs to have a good understanding of relative truth.

Whatever contains teaching *183*
About the world speaks of engagement.
Whatever contains elucidation
Of the ultimate speaks of disengagement.

As the commentary explains:

> Scriptures teaching about action caused by ignorance and so forth, the world of sentient beings and environments describe the stages by which one engages in cyclic existence. Their purpose is to refute belief in causeless production or production from incompatible causes, which is based on conceptions of true existence.

The Buddha's teachings on the environment, the world system and so forth are specifically to explain how things are not causeless, but are produced from compatible causes. Things are produced from causes but not incompatible causes. Thus the explanation of the twelve interdependent links is that from ignorance (which is the cause), actions or karma results. From this beginning the links are explained in sequence, and they show how things come into existence through compatible causes and conditions. Thus the Buddha explained clearly how the process of engaging in samsara takes place.

Through the explanation of the twelve interdependent links he showed how engagement in samsara is not without cause or from incompatible causes, but rather through the specific causes that bring about specific results. The first link of the twelve interdependent links, ignorance, is the cause of actions, and the actions that are produced from that leave imprints upon the consciousness, which is the third link and so forth. As the commentary explains:

> They are thus a means for understanding suchness [or emptiness]. Those scriptures elucidating the ultimate, the emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena, describe the stages by which one disengages from cyclic existence.

It is explained clearly here that without understanding the basis, one cannot jump to the next step of understanding emptiness. Through the explanations given in the text, one comes to understand that we engage in samsara through the cause and effect sequence, which is basically an understanding of karma. Based on that understanding of the cause and effect sequence, one then further searches for how to be free from samsara, which is through the understanding of emptiness.

The next point that one gets from this explanation is how emptiness is the key to freeing oneself from samsara: without an understanding of emptiness, one cannot obtain liberation. That is the main point that one should derive from this explanation, which should be used in one's analytical meditation to further clarity one's understanding. There is a verse further on in the text that explains clearly how, for an understanding of emptiness, one needs to have a thorough understanding of relative truth, which serves as a basis to understand ultimate truth. By following this process, one can obtain ultimate cessation.

As the teachings explain, an intelligent person gains an understanding of the teachings and progresses along the path by thoroughly analysing and investigating the process of how one comes into samsara. Then they know how to reverse that process and be free from samsara. That whole process must be thoroughly analysed. If an intelligent person, for example, was to experience unease and suffering from a headache, they would analyse in this way: 'Why do I experience a headache? There must be a cause for me to suffer in this way. So what is the cause of the suffering?'. By analysing in that way, and using the teachings as a means to analyse the process, they gain an understanding that, 'The underlying cause of the suffering that I experience from a headache is a result of the delusions and karma that have been created in the past'.

What is the main delusion which influences one to engage in the karma that brings about such suffering? As they investigate further, they come to understand and realise that it is the grasping one's self and other phenomena as being truly existent that is the main culprit. Then as the intelligent being investigates further, they check and analyse whether it is possible to overcome grasping at self and other phenomena.

Then, they come to the realisation that grasping at self is a misconception, and as such it has no sound basis. So there is no solid foundation for that mind-set to remain firm, because it is based on a faulty state of mind. As it is a misconception it is based on faulty states of mind and thus it can be overcome. There are reasons, techniques and methods to overcome that faulty state of mind and thus overcome that misconception.

Then they see that it is possible to gain the ultimate cessation of liberation, and the elimination of the causes of one's suffering, by completely eradicating and eliminating that misconception. That is how an intelligent being investigates and studies.

It is good to also follow on that line of reasoning and use it as much as possible in one's analytical meditation and investigation.

1.2.1.4. GIVING UP FEAR OF EMPTINESS

> Objection: If all things are empty there are many unwanted consequences, since by denying the existence of objects, actions and agents, even liberation will not exist.
>
> Answer:

Thinking, "Nothing exists, what is the use?" *184*
You may be afraid.
But if actions did exist,
This teaching would not be a prevention.

This verse is the presentation of the unique point of the Prasangika Madhyamika or Consequentialists, which is that there is not even an atom of inherent existence in phenomena, and therefore phenomena is completely empty of inherent existence.

All other schools below the Prasangika present reality as having some inherent existence, or some existence from its own side. For example the school immediately below, the Svatantrika Madhyamika, present that there is some

inherent existence from the phenomena's side, as well as some conceptualisation or imputation from the mind. The schools below the Prasangika Madhyamika school assert that when one searches for a phenomenon, there should be some findability on the basis, and that one can find that there is some existence from its own side. If there was no inherent existence from its own side, they say, then things would not exist at all. 'How could one posit things to be existing?' they ask, 'because the doer, the actions and the results would not exist'.

It is only the Prasangika who say that there is not an atom of inherent existence, and that things are merely labelled by the mind. This is said to be a very fine point. Because it is such a subtle point, it is a very difficult point to grasp and understand. Thus it is only the highest Buddhist school which presents that point, and it can be understood only by intelligent beings who reach that fine point.

The Prasangika Madhyamika school asserts that there is not even an atom of inherent existence. Yet, even though there is no inherent existence, it does not contradict the existence of phenomena, it does not contradict that there is a doer, the action and the result. The schools below the Prasangika would say that if you search for something and cannot find something upon the basis, then that means that it cannot exist. Whereas the Prasangika Madhyamika school asserts that the very fact that you cannot find something when you search for it upon the basis shows that there is no true existence or inherent existence. The very fact that you don't find anything when you search upon the basis, means that there is no inherent existence.

The lower Buddhist schools would say that when you search on the aggregates of a person, you will find a person there. Whereas the Prasangika Madhyamika school say, that if you search for a person upon the basis, you will not find a person there, because neither the individual parts nor the combination of the aggregates is a person.

As the commentary explains the verse:

> You who fear emptiness, may be frightened by thinking, "What is the use of striving for liberation, since things do not exist if they are empty of inherent existence?" But if actions existed ultimately, it would not be possible for anyone to prevent cyclic existence by understanding the teaching of emptiness, since actions and agents are not feasible in a context of inherent existence.

As explained here, one may imply that there is a fear of things being empty of inherent existence. However if things were to be ultimately existent, then one could not possibly overcome cyclic existence with the understanding of emptiness.

> ... since actions and agents are not feasible in a context of inherent existence.

This means that if the doer, the action itself and the results were to be inherently existent, then the teachings of emptiness and so forth could not overcome cyclic existence and allow the attainment of liberation.

> Thinking the aggregates are truly existent is like thinking a mirage is water.

Believing a mirage to be water is the analogy used to illustrate how believing the aggregates to be truly existent is a total fabrication of the mind.

1.2.1.5. GIVING UP STRONG ATTACHMENT TO ONE'S OWN POSITION

This is an important point to keep in mind.

> *While attached to your own position* *185*
> *And disliking others' positions*
> *You will not approach nirvana.*
> *Neither [kind of] conduct will bring peace.*

The main point being elucidated here is how it is extremely important to overcome a strong attachment to one's own view as being a superior view. It refers to those who are following a school of Madhyamika or Middle Way thought developing a strong attachment to the explanation of emptiness that is presented by that school. By holding that explanation as being superior and developing attachment towards it, one may develop an aversion toward the views that are presented in the lower Buddhist schools, as well as any other school that presents a view of true existence. Doing this will prevent any progress in one's spiritual development towards, achieving liberation as it will only becomes a cause to keep one longer in cyclic existence.

The main causes for keeping us in cyclic existence are attachment and aversion. These delusions keep us in cyclic existence, and thus developing attachment to one's own position, or to feel superior, and developing aversion towards other views, can only serve as a means to prolong one's existence in samsara.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Thinking the thesis of emptiness which stops cyclic existence is supreme and others are wrong, you may be strongly attached to your own position and antagonistic to others'. You will not approach the liberation of nirvana until you discard this strong attachment to your own thesis, emptiness, and your dislike for an antagonism toward others' theses. Peace can never be attained through conduct based on the idea that both adopting and discarding are truly existent.

This clearly illustrates that having a strong attachment to one's own thesis, in this case a thesis that is presenting emptiness clearly, considering it to be supreme, and having an aversion towards others' views, will prevent one from achieving liberation. The main advice here, which we can take as personal advice, is that for as long as you hold onto your own view as supreme and develop attachment towards it, and condemn others' views with aversion, you can never obtain liberation. So one must overcome such attitudes.

1.2.2. Advice to strive for liberation

This has seven sub-divisions:

1.2.2.1. With effort liberation is easy to attain

1.2.2.2. Impossibility of attaining liberation without cultivating aversion to cyclic existence

1.2.2.3. Appropriateness of striving for liberation because of the very great disadvantages of cyclic existence

1.2.2.4. Meaning of the fundamental mode of existence should not be taught from the outset

1.2.2.5. Stages by which to lead [a disciple]

1.2.2.6. Indistinguishability in entity with regard to the final mode of existence of things

1.2.2.7. Lack of contradiction in teaching the necessity of accumulating merit through giving and so forth

1.2.2.1. WITH EFFORT LIBERATION IS EASY TO ATTAIN

We can reflect on the main point of this sub-division, which is that while it is easy to obtain liberation, we won't do so unless we make an effort.

> Assertion: We cannot attain the perfect happiness of nirvana, because it is extremely difficult to do so, but we enter cyclic existence because it is easy to acquire without effort.
>
> Answer:
>
> *Not acting brings about nirvana;* *186*
> *Acting again brings worldly existence.*
> *Thus, without complication, nirvana*
> *Is easy to attain, but not the latter.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Understanding about not doing actions, whether they are virtuous or non-virtuous activities, brings about nirvana. Worldly existence is brought about by doing various virtuous and non-virtuous actions.

What one derives from the explanation from the commentary is that the process of acquiring the causes to achieve liberation is unlike worldly activities. One does not require needless physical and verbal exertion to acquire liberation, as it is mainly a mental task.

After gaining a certain understanding of emptiness, one goes into secluded retreat and meditates upon the understanding of emptiness. By first achieving the meditative state of calm abiding and developing that to acquire special insight, and then combining calm abiding with special insight, one further meditates on emptiness. That then becomes the cause for achieving liberation. In secluded retreat one completely refrains from worldly activities, such as engaging in the physical exertion in acquiring worldly things and so forth, or verbal activities. In contrast to the worldly activities, that is much less taxing on one's physical body and speech. It only requires mental stabilisation and completely removing oneself from all other activities.

'Worldly existence or existence in samsara is brought about by doing various virtuous and non-virtuous actions'. Any worldly activity, whether it be virtuous or non-virtuous, becomes a cause for us to be re-born in samsara. The virtuous activities that we engage in become causes for us to take a higher rebirth in cyclic existence. The non-virtuous activities that we engage in become the causes for rebirth in the lower realms. With a worldly motivation, when one engages in any virtuous or non-virtuous activity, it only becomes a cause to remain in samsara.

Going into seclusion to develop calm abiding followed by special insight and combining the two in contemplating emptiness is a means of refraining from any kind of worldly activity – virtuous or non-virtuous. One bases one's practice in seclusion on the three trainings. In an ethical sense the very fact that one is in seclusion, is the training in morality. Meditating on calm abiding and special insight is the training of concentration and developing the wisdom of emptiness is the training of wisdom.

By refraining from any activity, virtuous or non-virtuous, and meditating upon emptiness based on the three trainings, liberation is easy to obtain. As mentioned in the text:

> Thus by giving up the performance of all actions, nirvana is easy to attain without complication.

The Tibetan word that has been literally translated here as 'complication' could also mean 'without doubt'. So without complication or without doubt implies with ease.

> On the other hand, the pleasures of cyclic existence are not easy to gain.

In contrast to being in seclusion and refraining from all activities, the pleasure of cyclic existence is not easy to gain. This implies that one has to exert a lot of effort to gain the pleasures in samsara.

The commentary summarises the main point in this way:

> Therefore it is unreasonable for the wise to give up striving for nirvana, which is attained without the need for tiring exertion, and instead strive for cyclic existence, which is acquired through all kinds of tiring exertion.

As explained earlier, the causes for obtaining liberation require much less exertion, as they require being in seclusion and refraining from all physical and verbal activities and just engaging in peaceful meditation. In comparison this is much less work than having to engage in the causes to gain the pleasures of cyclic existence. So a wise person, someone who is intelligent, should not give up striving for nirvana which has so much profit, and so much gain. The very process of gaining nirvana is much easier and less tiring.

Whereas the results from the pleasures of samsara are not stable, and one has to exert oneself much more to obtain that result. It is much more tiring. What wise person would engage in that? The question implies that one should not. We can use ourselves as an example, reflecting on how tiring it is when we have to think about gaining worldly status, wealth and so forth. We have to go through so much effort and worry, thinking how best we can achieve our worldly goals.

The next session on 5th June, will be the discussion. There will be no teachings on 12 June and on 19 June it is the exam.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 June 2007

It would be good to sit in a comfortable and relaxed position. Likewise it is good to establish a good motivation in one's mind, such as 'In order to benefit sentient beings, I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.2. Advice to strive for liberation (cont.)

1.2.2.2. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ATTAINING LIBERATION WITHOUT CULTIVATING AVERSION TO CYCLIC EXISTENCE

As this outline mentions, it is impossible to attain liberation without cultivating aversion to cyclic existence. Aversion can be also understood as feeling disgust for, or being repulsed by, cyclic existence. By repeatedly thinking about and contemplating the many sufferings and contaminated pleasures of cyclic existence, one can then develop a sense of distaste for, or be repulsed by, cyclic existence. It is only then that one can develop an authentic wish to achieve liberation. Without developing that sense of distaste or repulsion one cannot develop the aspiration to achieve liberation. It is similar to someone who is thirsty: when someone feels the discomfort or suffering of thirst then the wish to quench their thirst comes about naturally.

> *Question*: If not doing any action at all in a context of ultimate existence brings about nirvana, why are impermanent suffering and so forth taught in the treatises.
>
> *Answer*: It is done to produce aversion to the cycle of birth and death so that one will attain nirvana free from all activities of cyclic existence.

How can anyone who has no aversion 187
To this take an interest in pacification?
Like [leaving home], it is also hard
To leave worldly existence behind.

It is good to bring the explanations contained in the verse and the commentary to a personal level, and remind ourselves of the importance, and indeed the necessity, of contemplating the disadvantages of cyclic existence or samsara, and the contaminated pleasures that are the causes for the sufferings of samsara. In that way we develop the distaste or disgust for cyclic existence that it is necessary for us to develop.

In worldly terms, we can use the analogy of living in a nice comfortable place, in a nice environment with many good companions: the wish to leave that place would not occur because everything is comfortable. The pleasures of cyclic existence are similar to the worldly pleasures of being attached to a good home, good companions and so forth. For as long as one does not see the disadvantages and the faults of cyclic existence the authentic determination to free oneself from samsara cannot occur, because one has attachment to it. One sees samsara as being pleasurable, so therefore in order to develop repulsion or distaste for samsara one must contemplate the reality of suffering in samsara, which is having a contaminated body and a contaminated state of mind.

When we investigate and analyse the situation from every angle we come to the sound conclusion that there is no real lasting or stable happiness as long as we have a contaminated body that is subject to pain, beginning with birth, then sickness, aging and finally death. Also the external factors relating to our physical situation such as food and so forth are unstable. There are always problems with friends, and disputes arise, so there is no real lasting and stable companionship that is completely satisfactory.

Likewise internally there are also the sufferings that we experience in our mind, such as dissatisfaction, discontent, frustration, and the ups and downs that always occur in our mind. We experience this because of our contaminated physical aggregates. So it is good to remind ourselves that for as long as we have a contaminated body, the dissatisfaction and discontentment that we experience will be continuous. Wouldn't it be nice if it was possible to attain physical and mental aggregates such that we do not have to experience these shortcomings of sickness, disappointment in companionship and so forth? Wouldn't that be incredible? It is worthwhile to think along those lines.

There is in fact an immediate practical benefit from contemplating the disadvantages and sufferings of cyclic existence in particular. If we remind ourselves of the nature of cyclic existence, we realise that for as long as we have a contaminated body and state of mind then whatever we engage in will be unsatisfactory, and there is no real lasting satisfaction to be found.

If we remind ourselves constantly of the nature of samsara then we won't be too surprised whenever we face difficulties in relation to companionship, work, or any situation that brings us distress. We won't become too distressed or experience too much suffering because we will remember that this is the nature of samsara, and being in samsara means experiencing these different types of sufferings from time to time. Reminding ourselves of that fact helps our mind to lessen the suffering, or the immediate shock, that one would otherwise experience. It seems to really benefit our mind if we think along those lines.

Likewise reminding ourselves of the disadvantages of samsara and the sufferings that occur also helps to lessen our attachment to the pleasures of cyclic existence. Because we see the faults, attachment to the pleasures of samsara will be lessened naturally, and a sense of detachment can then arise in our mind.

One should also remind oneself of the quote from the sutras where the Buddha said that the nature of all gathering is that there will be a parting, and that that all meeting will result in separation.

As the commentary explains, the main point of the verse is the reason why it is necessary to develop a distaste for cyclic existence, and how to develop that.

> How could anyone who has no aversion to cyclic existence take an interest in liberation or like an aspiration for liberation, which is the path that the pacification of suffering entails?

In explanation of the previous rhetorical question, the commentary continues:

> If one isn't suffering from thirst, one will not feel a strong urge to drink in order to relieve their discomfort.

Until one experiences the great suffering of thirst the wish to quench that thirst will not naturally arise. The wish to quench one's thirst can arise so strongly that if two very thirsty people were to simultaneously see a glass of water, they may even fight over it. Or it can become a race to see who is the fastest to reach it. If the person who reaches the

water first happened to be a kind person, then he might drink some and leave one third for the next person. Situations like this are like tests to see how kind a person can be under desperate circumstances, as they show how much they are willing to spare for others.

Sharing food is another analogy that shows how kind or how mean someone is. If someone were to be given a portion of food to share with others, a person who is normally quite kind would take the portion of the food that is not so nice and leave the better part for another. However a selfish person would take the best part for themselves first, and leave the part that is not so nice for others.

The person who saves the better portion for someone else and takes the not-so-nice portion themselves is just basically showing their nature: they have established a mind of kindness, seeing others as being more important than themselves. Someone who has cultivated the thought of cherishing others would naturally want to give the better part no matter what it is to someone else, because they cherish others more than themselves.

The analogy in the commentary is:

> Though one's home may contain little of worth, one cannot completely give up attachment to it. Similarly, it is difficult for those of limited intelligence completely to leave worldly existence behind because they are bound by attachment…

What this clearly indicates is that being attached to one's home even though it is not very worthy is really a very insignificant attachment compared to the desire or attachment one has for cyclic existence in general. Likewise those with limited intelligence who are engulfed by ignorance cannot develop a sense of detachment towards cyclic existence.

This brings to light the reason why some find it very difficult to overcome attachment or desire, even when they have meditated on the faults of the object. There are those who claim that they have meditated on the faults of an object of desire, but who still seem to experience desire in relation to that object. The fault is clearly that only the surface faults of the object have been seen, and the object of desire itself is still held dear to the heart. If one holds an object of desire as being something dear and then tries to see the surface faults, then of course one cannot develop a sense of real detachment towards the object. That is where the fault will arise. Holding the object itself dear to one's heart, while trying to meditate superficially on the faults of the object, simply does not work.

1.2.2.3. APPROPRIATENESS OF STRIVING FOR LIBERATION BECAUSE OF THE GREAT DISADVANTAGES OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

> The rich and powerful, who are attached to the pleasure they derive from things, may not be able to give up their homes and strive in seclusion to attain liberation. However, it is surely fitting for those who are afflicted by sickness and poverty to give up their attachment to cyclic existence.

One sees that some who are overwhelmed *188*
By suffering long for death,
Yet entirely due to their confusion
They will not reach the excellent state.

As the commentary explains:

> Some people who are overwhelmed by the suffering of poverty, of being separated from what is dear to them and the like, long to die by leaping into fire, water, or into an abyss and so forth in order to gain release.

Due to the immense suffering poverty, or being separated, people become so distressed that they don't see any point in continuing to live. Many would have experienced the suffering of separation when one is separated from loved ones, which is quite intense. At that time one can also lose a sense of the meaning of life, thinking, 'What purpose is there to life?' and so forth. Likewise with the other types of sufferings. As mentioned here, these are reasons for one to feel disgusted with, and a distaste for, the sufferings of cyclic existence. However due to ignorance, some cannot develop the wish for liberation, and thus they end their life by jumping into water and so forth.

As the commentary continues:

> In exactly the same way, by gaining certainty concerning the suffering of cyclic existence and abandoning attachment to the self, they could quickly attain the happiness of liberation…

The main point here is that even if one is not able to develop a very sound renunciation leading to the adoption of a life of seclusion and retreat and complete abandonment of worldly life, seeing the reality of the sufferings of cyclic existence should definitely kindle a strong wish to be free from samsara. At the very least one will develop the wish to not entirely depend on samsara, seeing it as being entirely pleasurable.

Rather, based on the reality of sufferings that one experiences and sees in others one develops a sense for the wish to be free from samsara. In fact this sort of advice is given specifically to those who are feeling quite content with their worldly pleasures, because they are wealthy and feel they have everything they desire. Such people may feel content with their worldly life and think they don't have to rely on anything else. However that contentment is an illusion, and so what is being described here is that one should meditate on the disadvantages of cyclic existence, because no matter how good the situation may seem, it is in fact in the nature of suffering.

The commentary says:

> …entirely due to their extreme confusion about what to adopt and discard they will not reach the excellent state of nirvana

This points out that one may clearly experience and recognise the sufferings of samsara, and wish to be free from that, but has not yet developed the strong determination to achieve liberation, which is based on renunciation. That is because they still have not removed their ignorance of what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. The commentary explains the point with the following analogy:

> Without taking the medicine a patient will not be cured of his illness. Similarly, even if one suppresses manifest disturbing emotions to some extent, one will not gain liberation from cyclic existence except by employing the antidote which completely eradicates them.

Just as a patient clearly cannot be cured from an illness if they do not take a prescribed medication, similarly manifest disturbing emotions or delusions, although they may temporarily suppressed, will not be completely removed until and unless one completely eradicates the delusions at their root with the antidote, which is the realisation of emptiness. Without that wisdom of realising emptiness directly, one cannot overcome or eradicate the root of the delusions and thus one cannot achieve liberation.

These points were also clearly mentioned in previous chapters, and it is good to remind oneself that these chapters relate to what is being explained here. Also, on a personal level one should use these points as a reminder that one

needs to slowly develop that determination or longing to be free from samsara by contemplating the disadvantages of samsara again and again.

1.2.2.4. MEANING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MODE OF EXISTENCE SHOULD NOT BE TAUGHT FROM THE OUTSET

Question: If one is to strive for liberation which ends cyclic existence, advice on about meditation on suchness would be appropriate. Why did the Teacher [indicating the Buddha] also give advice on giving and ethics?

Answer: There is no fault in this.

Giving is taught to the lowest 189
And ethics to the middling.
Pacification is taught to the best
Therefore always do The best!

As the initial question clearly states, meditation on emptiness serves as an antidote to overcoming the delusions from their very root. So the question asks why the Buddha did not just teach emptiness, which serves as the antidote to all our suffering. Why did the Buddha have to teach on other practices such as generosity and moral ethics and so forth?

The explanation in the commentary is:

> One must lead others gradually, distinguishing between those of least, intermediate and best ability.

This ability can be either in relation to one particular being at different periods of time or the analogy of three different types of beings. There is the initial state where one has the least capacity, or the person of least intelligence, the intermediate state and the best state of intelligence or ability.

As the commentary continues in relation to three types of beings, or in relation to one person at the initial stage and with the least capacity:

> Advice about giving is for those who at first are capable only of generosity but cannot give up killing and so forth.

The practices themselves have different levels of difficulty. For example, the later perfections are harder than the earlier practices, relatively speaking. So the advice on giving is directed to those of the least ability who, for the time being, are not ready to practise ethics and meditation. Those who may not be able to give up the negative deeds such as killing and so forth have the capacity to be generous, and for such beings the Buddha skilfully gave the practices of generosity.

The commentary continues:

> Those of intermediate ability already practising generosity are taught about ethics, since they are ready to take birth as gods or humans.

Once someone has mastered the practice of generosity with no problem they will develop an interest in a good result for their future life. When the causes for a good rebirth are explained, they will begin to realise that one can attain a good rebirth such as a human being or in the god realms. When that wish to achieve such a good rebirth is developed then they become a suitable vessel for an explanation of the causes for achieving that state, which is ethics. Then they are ready to be given the teachings on ethics.

> Those with the best ability are principally instructed in the meditation on emptiness or suchness, the means to pacify cyclic existence.

When one reaches a high level of intelligence or ability to practise, then instruction on meditation on suchness or emptiness is explained, which is the ultimate means to reach liberation from cyclic existence.

The commentary summarises the main point as:

> Thus one should always endeavour to do the best and think, "Why shouldn't I attain liberation?"

1.2.2.5. STAGES BY WHICH TO LEAD ONE TO LIBERATION

If reality is explained to someone as yet unready for such an explanation, that person will deny actions and agents, thinking there is no difference between virtue and ill deeds, and they will go to bad rebirths.

First prevent the demeritorious, 190
Next prevent [ideas of a coarse] self.
Later prevent views of all kinds.
Whoever knows of this is wise.

This is also the verse that was explained in the recent teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As mentioned previously a profound teaching such as emptiness can cause confusion for someone who is not ready to understand it. For example, if we were to take the *Heart Sutra* literally, without the capacity to understand the meaning behind it, then when it says, 'There is no eye, no ear, no smell, no taste no tactile feeling' and so forth, someone without an understanding of the implicit meaning might come to the profound misunderstanding that the teaching seems to defy actual experience. We do experience forms, we do see sights and we do smell things and we do feel things. Someone who takes the *Heart Sutra* literally might think, 'What a contradiction! How can the Buddha teach that these things do not exist? How could he say that there is no eye, no forms, no tastes, no tactile feelings and so forth?' Actually, what the *Heart Sutra* is explaining is that there are no inherently existent forms, and no inherently existent sounds and so forth. But a person without that understanding would hear it as being no form, and no sound at all, and so come to the wrong conclusions.

With such a great misunderstanding they might feel, 'Well that must mean that there is no karma as well. There is no virtue, so there is nothing then to strive for, because everything is just empty'. If a person develops such a misunderstanding then they will see no difference between virtue and ill deeds. Thus there will be nothing to stop them from committing ill deeds, and that will result in them going to lower rebirths.

As the commentary explains:

> Initially, therefore, they should be taught about virtuous and non-virtuous actions and about cause and effect since that is easy to understand. As it is the proper time, they should thus be prevented from engaging in demeritorous misdeeds.

If a teaching on emptiness were to be given to a person who is liable to completely misinterpret and misunderstand it, then, in fact, rather than being of benefit for them it can become a cause to engage in unmeritorious deeds. Thus

> …they should be prevented from engaging in demeritorious misdeeds.

This relates to general misdeeds, but in particular to the misunderstanding of emptiness. If one were to misunderstand the explanation of emptiness then that could lead them to believe there is no difference between virtue and non-virtue and thus give them the permission to engage in non-virtuous deeds willingly and intentionally. Thus rather than benefiting them it would harm them. So for beings who are liable to misunderstand or misinterpret the teachings on emptiness, the teachings on virtuous and non-virtuous actions in general, and on cause and effect should be given, as they are easy to understand and can be of benefit to them at that time.

> Next the coarse self should be repudiated by refuting the referent object of twenty views of the transitory

collections by means of the five-fold analysis of the aggregates.

Once the disciple has been led into engaging in virtue and the teachings on cause and effect and so forth, then they come to a point where their intelligence has developed to the point where they can understand and accept the teachings on emptiness. Grasping at the self is divided into grasping at the coarse self and grasping at the a subtle self. One first teaches them how to overcome grasping at the coarse self through the teachings on the twenty views of the transitory collections and the five-fold analysis of the aggregates.

'Later', as the commentary reads:

> when the mindstream has become receptive, selflessness of persons is taught…

Here 'selflessness of person' refers to subtle selflessness By showing that even selflessness itself does not exist truly, all views conceiving extremes are prevented.

> Whoever knows these stages of teaching is wise regarding the sequence in which trainees are led. It is like a skilled physician who prescribes a bland or oily diet to specific patients.

A skilled physician or doctor will prescribe a diet in relation to the patient's symptoms. According to the Tibetan medical treatises a bland diet should be prescribed for someone who is suffering from the bile element, but that same patient may later suffer from heightened wind elements called *lung,* for which an oily or fatty diet should be prescribed.

1.2.2.6. INDISTINGUISHABILTY IN ENTITY WITH REGARD TO THE FINAL MODE OF EXISTENCE OF THINGS

> *Question*: By what path is liberation attained?
>
> *Answer*: By understanding that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence.
>
> *Qualm*: Since there are limitless things, their realities are also limitless. Who could know them all? Moreover, it is said that one cannot attain liberation whilst there is a single phenomenon that one does not know and has not abandoned.

This is of course a reasonable doubt that some of us may have actually come up with. When we hear that in order to achieve liberation one has to see the non-inherent existence or emptiness of all phenomena, then one may naturally begin to think, 'If there are limitless phenomena, universes and so forth, and I have to see the non-inherent existence of them all, then how could I ever possibly attain liberation?' Furthermore when the teaching explains that unless one abandons the misconceptions in relation to all phenomena one cannot attain liberation, then again, since there are limitless phenomena how can one possibly overcome the misconceptions of all phenomena? This is a reasonable doubt.

> *Answer*: There is no fault.
>
> *Whoever sees one thing* *191*
> *Is said to see all.*
> *That which is the emptiness of one*
> *Is the emptiness of all.*

The meaning of this verse has also been explained many times.

> Whoever sees one things' fundamental mode of existence
> Which is its emptiness of inherent existence is said to see the reality of all things.

This explanation could lead to another misunderstanding, so it is important to understand the point being made here. One should not misunderstand this point to mean that if one understands the emptiness of one phenomenon then one will naturally see and understand the emptiness of all phenomena. This is best understood with the example of a vase. The classic syllogism is: a vase is empty, because of being an interdependent origination. Using the reason of interdependent origination one comes to realise the empty nature of the vase, meaning that one sees the lack of inherent existence of the vase. One can apply that same logical reason to any other phenomena, to understand that any phenomena that one focuses on, also lack inherent existence. The commentary refers to the sutra called the *King of Meditative Stabilisation* which says:

> Through one all are known
> And through one all are seen

Here again one must understand the context. It does not mean that by knowing one phenomena one will naturally know all. What it does refer to is that when one knows the non-inherent existence of one phenomenon, then one is able to know the non-inherent existence of any other phenomena that one may focus on. One can use the understanding of the non-inherent existence of one phenomenon to understand the non-inherent existence of any other phenomena that one might focus on.

Then there is reference to another sutra called the *Meditative Stabilisation of Gaganaganja* which says:

> Whoever through one phenomenon knows
> All phenomena are like illusions, mirages and are inapprehensible.

The commentary says:

> It is like the following analogy: by drinking one drop of sea water you know the rest is salty. "That which is the emptiness of one thing is the emptiness of all".

The statement, 'The emptiness of one thing is the emptiness of all', could again lead to a misinterpretation. It is not saying that the emptiness of one object such as a vase is the emptiness of another, such as a pillar. It does not mean that that the emptiness within pillar and the emptiness within the vase is one and the same thing. Rather it is referring to the nature of all emptiness. The emptiness of a vase, for example, is that it is a mere negation of true existence. Likewise the emptiness of a pillar is the mere negation of true existence. So as far as their entity or nature is concerned, there is no difference in the mere negation of the inherent existence or true existence of both objects.

The analogy that is used is that 'It is like the space in different receptacles [or vessels]'. There are many different vessels and the space within each of the vessels is defined as the mere negation of obstruction. As far as its entity is concerned the space in all the many different vessels is the same in as much as it is the mere negation of obstructiveness. So in that way the space is the same. Again, going back to the pillar and the vase, it is not saying that the emptiness within the vase is also the emptiness within the pillar. As far as the objects are concerned they are separate, and thus the emptiness within each are based on the separate objects. However the entity of emptiness itself is the same.

The commentary also mentions that when we view phenomena there are many different aspects that appear to us, such as different colours, for example blue and yellow and so forth. These different colours or different aspects of phenomena are separate entities, and each phenomenon is separate and distinct. However as far as the entity or the nature of the emptiness within these phenomena is concerned, they are all the same, in that the emptiness is the mere negation of true existence. So to that extent it is the same entity.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 July 2007

As always we will sit in a comfortable and relaxed position, We should also make sure that our motivation for receiving the teaching is not one that is focussed merely on personal benefit, but we should also generate a motivation with the intention to listen to the teachings and practise, as best as one can, to benefit all beings.

It is essential that we train our mind from the very outset to make sure that we are free from intentions that focus solely on personal benefit. That then helps to overcome the self-cherishing mind. If, from the very outset, we can familiarise our mind with seeing the faults of just cherishing ourself, then that will help us to overcome that attitude and generate a stronger and stronger attitude of wishing to benefit other sentient beings. This is also true for any practice in which we engage.

1.2.2.7. Lack of contradiction in teaching the necessity of accumulating merit through giving and so forth

> Question: If everything is to be given up because of being empty, why does sutra say that one should show respect and create merit?

This question indicates that some sutras explain that one should give up attachment to everything, because of the view that everything is merely empty. However there are other sutras which explain that engaging in such practices as showing respect to ordained Sangha and holy objects creates merit. The question indicates that there seems to be some contradiction there.

> Answer: There is no contradiction.

Tathagatas speak of attachment to practices 192
To those who want a high rebirth.
That is disparaged for those who want freedom –
What need to mention other [attachments]?

To give a very literal explanation of the verse, what is indicated in the first two lines is that the tathagatas, or the buddhas, explain that practices involving attachment to certain goals are for those who wish to obtain a higher rebirth in the next lifetime. Here, attachment to practices refers to the practices that accumulate merit specifically to obtain a higher rebirth in the next lifetime. These practices are prescribed for those who have such an attachment.

The third line of the verse refers to these practices involving accumulating merit for a higher rebirth being disparaged by those who wish to obtain self-liberation. The last line says that if practices involving the accumulation of merit for higher rebirths are disparaged for those who wish for self-liberation, then there is no need to mention that they will be disparaged by those who wish to achieve enlightenment. As the commentary further explains:

> To those who fear bad rebirths and want a high rebirth, and who are incapable of meditating on subtle production, disintegration and so forth, Tathagatas speak of attachment to practices like giving and [so forth]…

Some beings have the capacity of wishing for a higher rebirth but are incapable of meditating on 'subtle production, disintegration and so forth', which refers to subtle impermanence and emptiness. These people are not ready to hear about the immense sufferings of the lower realms, but when they hear of the results of a good rebirth in the next lifetime, they have a strong desire or wish to achieve that. For beings with such capacity, the practices such as giving and so forth are explained.

> If such an aspiration for merely a high rebirth is disparaged in those who seek liberation ...

As mentioned earlier, there are beings of lower level capacity, who do not yet have the capacity to contemplate subtle phenomena such as emptiness and also the sufferings of the lower realms, but who do have the wish to achieve a good rebirth in the next lifetime. They believe in future lives and thus wish to achieve a good rebirth in the next lifetime. For such beings the practices involving giving generously and so forth are explained. However these practices are disparaged by those who seek liberation. That being the case, what need is there to mention attachment to wrong-doing. If even good meritorious actions are disparaged, then there is no need to mention actual negative deeds.

1.2.3. Stages leading to the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence

This is sub-divided into five:

1.2.3.1. Suchness should not be taught to the unreceptive
1.2.3.2. Means to understand suchness
1.2.3.3. Necessity of teaching it through various approaches
1.2.3.4. Advice to strive to understand suchness
1.2.3.5. Through familiarisation in this way, nirvana can definitely be attained

1.2.3.1. Suchness should not be taught to the unreceptive [or the unripe]

> *Assertion:* If all suffering is stopped by understanding emptiness, it would be appropriate to teach only suchness [or emptiness].
> *Answer:* That is not so [as] it depends upon differences in receptivity.

Those who want merit should not 193
Always speak of emptiness.
Doesn't a medicinal compound
Turn to poison in the wrong case?

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> If emptiness is explained to those who are not receptive, it will cause misfortune [or downfall].

One of the misfortunes or faults would be that they would reject emptiness. Another misfortune or fault would be that by misunderstanding emptiness to mean that everything is non-existent, they would go to bad transmigrations. As the commentary continues:

> Therefore those with compassion who want the merit of caring for others should never speak about emptiness without first examining the recipient.

Those who have compassion for other sentient beings, and who wish to lead them to the right goals, should not be explaining emptiness at the very outset, when listeners are not suitable vessels or recipients, and would be liable to fall into the faults of either rejecting emptiness entirely, or misunderstand it, and come to the conclusion that everything is non-existent.

> Doesn't even an appetizing and potent medicinal compound turn to poison when given to the wrong

patient? It is like giving someone who has not been poisoned an antidote to poison and thereby killing them.

Emptiness should not be taught to those who are unreceptive. Rather the practices that help to cultivate an understanding of emptiness should be presented first. As mentioned earlier, these are the practices of engaging generosity and so forth. The commentary also quotes from the text by Matrceta, which says:

[Only] unstained cloth [is good for] dyeing.
[Likewise] the mind must be properly developed
By first speaking of giving and so forth,
Then one should meditate on the teaching.

Matrceta is also known by his Tibetan name, Lopon Tayang. Initially, he was a non-Buddhist and was referred to as the great master with the melodious sound, as he had very elegant and melodious speech, and thus could really influence and convert others. Later, when he converted himself to Buddhism he was also known by other names. Even before he became Buddhist, he was known as Matrceta, which means one who is very reverent to his mother. He also had other names which referred to being very reverent to his father. So apparently he was known to be very respectful towards his parents. After he became a Buddhist, he was known as Lopon Pawo—the great courageous Pandit. He has since been revered as a great master and scholar, and he composed many texts.

As the verse from Matrceta indicates, only unstained cloth is good for dyeing. This relates to the procedure for removing stains from a cloth in order to make it suitable for dyeing. First one needs to remove the dirt from the cloth which, if its stained quite badly would involve washing it many times, and rinsing it and so forth until the very subtle stains are removed. Only then would it be suitable for dyeing.

Using that as an analogy, it is explained that the mind must be properly developed with the practices of generosity and so forth, before it is suitable to receive teachings on emptiness. According to the analogy of removing the stains from the cloth, the very gross stains are removed in the first washing, and only in the second and third attempt at washing can the stubborn stains be removed. Likewise in developing the mind, the very gross level of the delusions or faults of the mind, have to be dealt with first. When the gross levels of the delusions and so forth have been removed, one can then deal with the subtle delusions and faults of the mind. That is how the analogy is understood to be the meaning of how one engages in the practice.

One must examine the recipient.

In a very practical sense the main point being made here is that one must be skilled in speaking to others. One should not talk about profound or difficult things initially, and then scare people away. Rather, one should talk gently, about sensible things that they can understand and relate to. When you gain their confidence on practical and realistic things, then you can come to more difficult points, which they then would be able to accept.

1.2.3.2. MEANS TO UNDERSTAND SUCHNESS

At the outset one should teach in accordance with how ordinary people accept that things exist.

Just as a barbarian cannot be *194*
Guided in a foreign language,
Ordinary people cannot be guided
Except by way of the ordinary.

This explains that the teaching on conventional phenomena should be presented first, because ordinary beings can relate to phenomena in accord with their normal perceptions. From there ultimate phenomena can be introduced. That is how one should guide and lead others.

This will be explained further on in the commentary, however we can take a vase as an example. In order to introduce the ultimate phenomena within a vase, first the vase itself should be established in a conventional way. That is done, as the scriptures indicate, by first giving a definition of what a vase is and then establishing the attributes of a vase, how it is a functional phenomena, has a spout and so forth. When the phenomenon called vase is completely understood on a conventional level, then one goes into further explaining the non-inherent existence of a vase, showing that it does not exist inherently. Because the existence of a vase on a conventional level has been already established and understood, its non-inherent existence can be understood better.

The first two lines of the verse use the analogy of a barbarian, who can be defined as a person who comes from a remote, uncivilised place in relation to the arts, poetry and all of the normal studies that are done in a civilised city; people from remote areas, for example, have not mastered those skills. If you try to speak to them using civilised language, they will not be able to understand you. So in order to speak with people who come from uncivilised areas, one must use whatever language and norms they have in order to communicate with them. Thus the meaning here is that initial teachings should be in keeping with conventionally accepted things like generosity and so forth. As the commentary says:

Ordinary people cannot be guided to an understanding of ultimate truth unless they understand the ordinary, namely the explanation of how conventional things exist.

Prior to teaching the ultimate nature of things, one must first convey explanations of the conventional existence of phenomena, and based on that understanding, one can then guide them to understanding the ultimate nature of things. The reason for explaining conventional phenomena first is because an understanding of conventional phenomena serves as a basis for understanding the ultimate nature of phenomena. Thus conventional phenomena becomes the method for understanding the ultimate. Aryadeva then quotes Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*, which says:

Conventional truth is the means;
Ultimate truth, the outcome of the means

I've given an explanation of these lines many times before. Their main point is that, as the commentary mentions:

One should teach ultimate truth based on an acceptance of conventional existence in one's own system.

The analogy presented in the commentary is:

One cannot make a child understand in a foreign language.

1.2.3.3. NECESSITY OF TEACHING IT THROUGH VARIOUS APPROACHES

This heading indicates the reasons why the Buddha gave teachings in many different ways.

Teaching existence, non-existence, *195*
Both existence and non-existence, and neither
Surely are medicines for all
That are influenced by the sickness.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

> As a means of guiding the world [or worldly beings], to eliminate views of non-existence, the Teacher [or the Buddha] told trainees that everything exists ...

As the commentary explains, the Buddha taught that things do exist, in order to eliminate the wrong view that things do not exist.

> ... and to eliminate conceptions of true existence, he taught that there is no true existence.

The Buddha did this to remove another extreme view, which is that if things were to exist then they must be truly existent. In order to eliminate this wrong conclusion, the Buddha taught that there is no true existence.

> In relation to conventional awareness and analytical awareness he taught existence and non-existence ...

What this refers to, as explained in the Madhyamaka text, is that the existence of things is established by conventional awareness. Thus conventional awareness establishes the existence of phenomena. However it is analytical awareness, (also refered as wisdom) that establishes non-existence, which refers to non-inherent existence or non-true existence. This establishes the ultimate nature of phenomena, which is emptiness. In other words analytical awareness or wisdom establishes emptiness.

When viewing the existence of phenomena in a conventional way, then things exist because they are established by conventional awareness. Thus things do exist, and that is what we call existence. With regard to non-existence, in the state of complete absorption on emptiness such as the meditative equipoise of an arya who is on the path of seeing, for example, nothing but emptiness appears. Conventional phenomena do not appear to an arya who is in single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness. Thus for a higher being it is as if external things do not exist, because the only thing that appears to that higher being is emptiness. The non-appearance of any other conventional phenomena is the establishment of emptiness for such a being. That is how it should be understood.

The text then continues:

> ...and to eliminate the two extreme views of existence and non-existence, he taught that both things and non-things are not truly existent. Surely these are simply medicines to remove all views influenced by the sickness of wrong thinking. Therefore everything the Teacher [or the Buddha] said is a means to attain nirvana, taking into consideration individual trainees.

As explained here clearly, in every instance whatever the Buddha taught is an ultimate means to guide a particular trainee to a certain level of attainment.

1.2.3.4. ADVICE TO STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND SUCHNESS

> Showing how things are free from the extremes of existence and non-existence by teaching that they exist, do not exist and so forth is teaching on the ultimate. Correctly perceiving the ultimate with supramundane wisdom leads to the attainment of the supreme state of liberation.

Correct perception [leads to] the supreme state, 196
Some [slight] perception to good rebirths.
The wise thus always expand their intelligence
To think about the inner nature.

The main point of the first line, as explained in the commentary, is that it is by correctly perceiving the ultimate with supramundane wisdom (which is the analytical wisdom that is gained on the path of seeing,) the direct perception of emptiness leads the trainee to achieve the state of liberation.

The explanation of the second line of the verse is:

> Perceiving it to some extent with the mundane wisdom arising from meditation or from hearing and thinking leads to good rebirths.

To what extent does the understanding of the ultimate or emptiness benefit the trainee? Those who realise emptiness directly have supramundane wisdom, which refers here to the wisdom of those who have obtained the arya path. Therefore those who have obtained the arya path and who have the realisation of the direct perception (or understanding) of emptiness have the wisdom of the ultimate, and can therefore be led to achieving the ultimate or supreme state of liberation.

Whereas mundane refers to those below the path of seeing, who perceive emptiness to some extent. This means that they have a slight understanding of emptiness, conceptual or otherwise, that arises from meditation, or from hearing or thinking about emptiness. Such an understanding will lead the trainee, to at least achieve a good rebirth in the next lifetime.

As explained in other teachings as well, the benefits of studying and hearing about emptiness, and then thinking and contemplating and meditating on emptiness will, at the very least, definitely protect oneself from lower rebirths. Not only does it protect one from unfortunate or lower rebirths in the next lifetime, but an understanding of emptiness can help one gain (at the very least) a good and higher rebirth in the next life time.

As the commentary continues:

> Thus the wise constantly expand their intelligence to think about the inner nature - emptiness.

For the reasons explained earlier, someone who contemplates and thinks about those benefits of understanding emptiness will constantly expand their intelligence to think about inner nature, which here means emptiness. Thus thinking about how things lack inherent existence, or lack true existence, or lack a truly existent self, one gains liberation and enlightenment as the ultimate result. At the very least, one will be free from lower rebirths and obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime.

1.2.3.5. THROUGH FAMILIARISATION IN THIS WAY, NIRVANA CAN DEFINITELY BE ATTAINED

This is sub-divided into two:

1.2.3.5.1. Actual meaning
1.2.3.5.2. Why some do not gain release although release is gained by understanding suchness

1.2.3.5.1. ACTUAL MEANING

Through knowing reality, even if now 197
One does not attain nirvana,
One will certainly gain it effortlessly
In a later life, as it is with actions.

As the commentary explains:

> Even if one does not attain nirvana in this life by knowing the reality of dependent arising free from extremes of elaboration, through familiarity with the understanding of suchness, one will certainly attain it effortlessly in a later life merely by virtue of remaining in seclusion.

The analogy is:

> It is like an action performed out of ignorance, the effect of which will be experienced upon taking rebirth.

What the analogy is referring to is that as we study the workings of karma, we come to realise that the results of some actions that are performed now don't necessarily have to be experienced right away, or even later in this life. Rather, the results of some actions will be experienced, or will ripen, in a future life.

Just as that is true for general actions and their results, so too the practices concerned with training one's mind to understand emptiness and familiarising oneself with those practices, are a cause to achieve liberation. Even if one does not gain liberation in this lifetime as a result of one's training and practice, that effort will not go to waste. Rather the merit or the positive influence from that meditation, thinking, contemplating and so forth, will accumulate to result in obtaining liberation in future lifetimes.

As the commentary concludes:

> What intelligent person would not strive to understand suchness?

This rhetorical question indicates that they would. The commentary then uses this analogy:

> After eating a ripe mango, if you plant its stone, you'll get fruit later.

So you enjoy the mango now and then you engage in the action of planting the seed (or stone), and you will be able to enjoy the fruit again later in the future. Practising in this life is similar to that.

Then the commentary quotes from the *Fundamental Treatise Called Wisdom*, or *Root Wisdom.* Those who studied the *Madhyamakavatara* will remember that at the very beginning of the text it says that hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas. At that point a doubt is raised, and that same point is also raised there.

The *Fundamental Treatise Called Wisdom says:*

> When consummate Buddhas do not appear
> And Hearers too have come to an end,
> The wisdom of Solitary Realizers
> Manifests independently.

As explained at the beginning of the Madhyamaka text, after hearing the Buddha's teachings his disciples, who are in the category of disciples known as hearers and solitary realisers go into seclusion or practise realising what has been taught. Saying that the hearers and the solitary realisers are born from the buddhas indicates that their realisations and achievements are obtained as a result of the Buddha's teachings. The doubt that is raised is why is it that the hearers on receiving the teachings of the Buddha, go on to practise and then obtain their goal of liberation in their own lifetime, while the solitary realisers seem to take much longer. They are reborn again and again, and take much longer to obtain the goal of liberation.

The response is that it is not as if the solitary realisers do not obtain their goal of liberation. Even if they do not obtain the goal of liberation in that very lifetime, having received the teachings and going off in seclusion and practising, they will be reborn again and in a future lifetime will obtain their goal of liberation. That explanation in *Fundamental Treatise Called Wisdom* is backed up with a quotation of verse 197 from *Four Hundred Verses.* Those students who studied the Madhyamaka can refer back to those notes.[1]

The conclusion is that the purpose of the Buddha's teaching is of course to obtain liberation as a result of hearing the teachings and practicing them. The ultimate goal or intention is to lead the disciples to liberation, but that does not necessarily mean that the disciples have to obtain liberation within that single lifetime. If liberation is obtained in future lifetimes, that is also a suitable reason for the Buddha to give the teachings on suchness.

What we take away from this explanation as personal advice is that by reflecting on the explanations given in the text, one understands importance of familiarising oneself with the explanations of emptiness, as part of the process of gaining a full understanding and realisation of emptiness. Any continuous effort that we put in now will definitely lead to positive results, if not liberation in this lifetime then definitely a better rebirth in our next life time, and will stop unfortunate rebirths in the future lifetimes. Ultimately, it will lead to achieving liberation.

What is the benefit of making any attempt to understanding suchness or emptiness? It is the ultimate or the supreme goal that one can attain, which is liberation. If that is not obtained immediately then the next best result that one can certainly obtain is a good rebirth. One will obtain liberation, if not this lifetime then in future lifetimes, as a result of the continuous effort that we put into understanding emptiness. This is backed up with the quotes from the *Fundamental Treatise Called Wisdom*, as well as verse 197 from *Four Hundred Verses*.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

[1] See teachings of 12 March 2002 and 19 March 2002.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 July 2007

1.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon disturbing emotions

1.2.3. Stages leading to the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence

1.2.3.5. THROUGH FAMILIARISATION IN THIS WAY, NIRVANA CAN DEFINITELY BE ATTAINED

1.2.3.5.2. WHY SOME DO NOT GAIN RELEASE ALTHOUGH RELEASE IS GAINED BY UNDERSTANDING SUCHNESS

> *Question:* If there are many who understand suchness [or emptiness] why does one not see people who are released from worldly existence?

This question is in relation to the doubt that if it is true that one obtains liberation by realising emptiness, then why do we not see many who are liberated?

> *Answer:* Though one does see some, mere intention does not create results. The coming together of causes and conditions does, yet this is very rare.

What this indicates (which is also the main point of the following verse) is that even though there may be many who wish to achieve liberation, that mere wish in itself cannot serve as a cause to bring about the result of liberation. There are many causes and conditions that have to come together to achieve that end.

> *Accomplishment of all intended* 198
> *Actions is extremely uncommon.*
> *It is not that nirvana is absent here*
> *But conjunction and the released are rare.*

The first two lines of the verse explicitly state that it is very uncommon to obtain goals just by merely wishing to achieve them. This is actually a very important point that we should take as personal advice. We all have grand wishes and we want to achieve high realisations and so forth. However, as indicated here, merely having a wish without acquiring the appropriate causes and conditions to achieve that goal, doesn't bring those results. This is something that one has to keep in mind; if one wishes to achieve a goal, one must acquire the causes and conditions.

As indicated here in commentary the coming together of causes and conditions will bring about the result of realisation and ultimately liberation, however this is very rare. What is being indicated here is that although the results can be obtained by the accumulation of causes and conditions, being able to accumulate all the necessary causes and conditions is very rare or, according to the literal meaning of the Tibetan term, very difficult.

As the commentary further explains:

> The accomplishment, merely through intention, of actions that result as intended is extremely uncommon not only in the case of liberation but in all cases.

It is clearly explained here how it is also very difficult to obtain all the causes and conditions for a desired worldly result, let alone achieving the causes and conditions for liberation. With normal mundane wishes such as the wish to obtain wealth, if we don't actually engage in the causes and conditions to obtain money, we will never gain any. The necessary causes and conditions to obtain money are to get a good job! If one merely has a wish for a good job but does not do anything about finding that job, that again will not bring about the result of having a good job. Thus to obtain money there are many causes and conditions involved in obtaining that result. One cannot obtain something just with a mere wish. This is actually very sound and practical advice.

As the commentary continues:

> It is not that no one aspires to attain nirvana in the Buddha's teaching, but that causes and conditions – external conditions such as a spiritual friend, and internal ones such as the correct mental approach – very seldom combine and come together, which is why the released are rare.

What is being clearly explained here is that by hearing the Buddha's teaching and by studying it, the wish or aspiration to achieve liberation will definitely occur. The reason why liberation is difficult to obtain isn't because no one aspires to achieve liberation, but because it is difficult to meet with the necessary external and internal conditions, either because they are rare or because it is hard for them to come together.

As explained here, the external conditions rely on a spiritual friend or a spiritual teacher and the internal conditions involve having the correct mental approach. With regard to the internal conditions, we may wish for liberation, yet we normally engage in incorrect mental approaches on a daily basis. This refers to all the delusions and so forth with which we are most familiar. Thus the internal conditions of a correct mental approach are very difficult for us to gather.

The reason, according to the commentary is 'why the released are rare', which means that those who are to obtain liberation are very rare.

One of the correct mental approaches in relation to achieving liberation is cultivating detachment. When we look into how much we engage in the correct mental approach, which is detachment, we may find that that is very seldom, whereas the opposite, which is attachment, occurs rapidly, and continuously. Thus rather than acquiring the causes and conditions for liberation, we are acquiring the causes and conditions to further ourselves from that goal.

In relation to the external condition of finding 'spiritual friend', an authentic spiritual friend is one with all the characteristics intact, i.e. a spiritual friend who has a realisation of emptiness. So when we look into the qualities required to be an authentic spiritual friend, we see that, actually, that also can be very difficult to find.

1.2.4. Advice that disturbing attitudes and emotions can certainly be brought to an end

> *Question:* How can one be sure there is an end to this multitude of disturbing attitudes and emotions which

have continued to occur for so long, since beginningless time?

Answer:

On hearing that the body lacks good qualities, 199
Attachment does not last long.
Will not all disturbing attitudes
End by means of this very path?

In relation to the first line in the Tibetan version, the commentary explains:

> ... the body lacks good qualities in that its nature is to disintegrate non matter how long it is cared for with all kinds of things, that it is ungrateful and difficult to nurture, ...

This translation says 'difficult to nurture', but the Tibetan says, 'difficult to understand the nature of the body'. Even though it is difficult to understand the nature of the body, when this is explained to the intelligent, who know how to think analytically, then their attachment to their body will not last long. As explained in the commentary it is the nature of our body that although it has all these faults, ordinary beings only see its attractiveness and contemplate that.

This obscures the reality of the body, which is that it lacks good qualities and that it is in its nature to disintegrate and so forth. Here 'the intelligent' refers to those who have an understanding of emptiness. When the nature of the body is described to such intelligent beings, they are immediately able to overcome attachment to their body, because of their intelligence and ability to use analytical wisdom.

> Similarly why should it not be possible to end all disturbing attitudes and emotions through the path that consists of meditating on dependent arising free from extremes of elaboration?

Here, the commentary explains that just as it is possible to overcome long-standing attachment to the body, other attachments or delusions can also be overcome. When the text refers to 'the path that consists of meditating on dependent arising' this refers to the path of seeing. In other words, through the direct realisation of emptiness, one can definitely overcome all other disturbing emotions.

1.3. Showing by analogy that though birth connecting one with the next existence is beginningless, it has an end

As the outline explains, our life in samsara is said to be beginningless. There is no one point that we can say is the beginning of our life. However even though that is the case, there can be an end to samsaric life. That is explained with an analogy that we have also referred to in the past.

> *Question:* How can the continuity of rebirths occurring since beginningless time come to an end?
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *Just as the end of a seed is seen* 200
> *Though it has no beginning,*
> *When the causes are incomplete*
> *Birth, too, will not occur.*

As the commentary explains:

> Although a seed, such as a barley seed, has no beginning, its end is seen when it is burnt by fire and the like.

This is quite an explicit analogy which refers to the continuum of a seed. A seed is the result of a previous seed. Likewise, that seed will have had a previous seed. In this way, when we go back to trying to find the first seed, the beginning of any continuum of a seed, we find that we cannot possibly trace it back, and be able to say 'This seed is the beginning of the continuum of a seed'. However there can be an end to the continuum of a particular seed when, for example, it is burnt by fire, so that it doesn't have any potential to sprout anymore. As the commentary reads:

> Similarly the causes for birth in worldly existence are made incomplete by eliminating all conceptions of a personal self. Thus though the strength of the antidote, rebirth in worldly existence due to contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions will not occur again.

As clearly explained here, just as with the earlier analogy of the cessation of a seed, cessation of worldly or samsaric existence (even though there is no beginning) can be achieved by eliminating all conceptions of a personal self. When grasping at the self, which is the main or root cause of cyclic existence is overcome, then as explained here, cyclic existence ceases. As the commentary also explains:

> Thus though the strength of the antidote, rebirth in worldly existence due to contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions will not occur again.

A further analogy is:

> Once a butterlamp's fuel is exhausted it will not burn.

When the fuel of a butter lamp is exhausted it cannot burn any longer. It is similar with worldly existence. Involuntary rebirth in worldly existence or samsara under the influence of delusions and contaminated actions will cease when the root cause of self-grasping is overcome. That can be clearly understood with the earlier analogy. So it is good for us to use that analogy to reflect on how we can view samsara.

The commentary also quotes from the works from the master Buddhapalita:

> Though seeing transmigrators as empty,
> Since you wish to remove their suffering
> You have toiled for a long time.
> This is most amazing!

Master Buddhapalita was renowned as a most skilled scholar, particularly of the Madhyamika or Middle Way. Even hearing or uttering the name 'Buddhapalita', is said to remove a lot of negative karma from our mind. This quote from Buddhapalita explicitly refers to the great deeds of a bodhisattva. It explains that even though for them involuntary samsaric rebirth has ceased through the wisdom realising emptiness, like a fire that destroys the seeds of delusions and karma, bodhisattvas (who have achieved that wisdom) out of their great love and compassion for sentient beings, voluntarily take rebirth into cyclic existence over and over again, in order to

benefit sentient beings. So in order to work for the benefit of sentient beings, bodhisattvas voluntarily come back into cyclic existence. That is said to be because of their great prayers and aspirations to benefit sentient beings. As it says, 'This is most amazing!'

Gyaltsab Je explains that:

> The deeds of Bodhisattvas, who are concerned with the welfare of sentient beings though they see that transmigrators do not exist inherently, are most amazing.

Even though only a short explanation is given here, it refers to the most amazing fact that even though all the causes and conditions to come into cyclic existence have ceased through having developed the wisdom realising emptiness, and using that to completely overcome the root causes, the fact that bodhisattvas voluntarily come back into cyclic existence is most amazing.

As is also mentioned in other teachings, bodhisattvas cannot bear the suffering of sentient beings and come back into cyclic existence to benefit sentient beings, through their prayers and aspiration. This shows the power of the prayers and aspirations that we make now. So if we make strong prayers and aspirations to benefit sentient beings then, when we gain realisations of emptiness, we will not become immersed in the bliss of those realisations. Rather, we are constantly reminded to come back again to continue to benefit sentient beings. Thus the power of prayers and aspirations are illustrated here. The personal advice is, as mentioned in the commentary:

> Therefore, one should emulate them.

These points have been explained earlier in other teachings, however it is good to reflect on the main points again. A bodhisattva, who has gained direct realisations of emptiness, could not be involuntarily reborn into cyclic existence, because the causes to be reborn into cyclic existence have completely ceased. Yet they do choose to be reborn again due to their prayers and aspirations to benefit sentient beings. That is why, as it is as explained here, 'This is most amazing'!

The summarising stanza by Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is:

> Develop recognition that through contaminated action,
> Even to attain the best states as gods and humans is imprisonment.
> Though familiarity with meditation on dependent arising free from extremes,
> Make yourself a suitable vessel for the Great Vehicle.

What is being indicated here is that the mind has been made suitable to receive the teachings of emptiness through the earlier explanations and the teachings on emptiness contained in this chapter.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> ***This is the eighth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, on training the student.***

It is good to put everything into the context of how the whole text is a presentation leading an individual being to enlightenment by presenting the **basis**, which is the Two Truths; the **method** which is the paths of the accumulation of merit and wisdom; and the **results**, which are the two types of enlightened buddha bodies to be obtained. Thus in the context of the whole path leading to enlightenment, we can see how the basis, which is the Two Truths (conventional truth and ultimate truth) is being presented.

Now we go more specifically into presenting ultimate truth which then leads into the accumulation of merit and wisdom, which in turn leads to the ultimate result.

3.2.2. EXPLAINING THE STAGES OF THE PATHS DEPENDENT ON ULTIMATE TRUTH[1]

This is sub-divided into two:

3.2.2.1. Extensively explaining ultimate truth
3.2.2.2. Showing how to meditate on settling [the procedure between] spiritual guides and students by way of [explaining] the purpose of the chapters and eliminating remaining counter-arguments by misguided opponents

3.2.2.1. EXTENSIVELY EXPLAINING ULTIMATE TRUTH

As the definition explains, that which is in accordance to the actual mode of existence, or how things actually exist, is ultimate truth. Whereas, that which appears to be reality, but which contradicts the actual mode of it's existence is what is called a conventional truth.

This section is sub-divided into three categories:

3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena
3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena: Refuting the self
3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

[1] The numbering of this heading refers back to the initial structure of the text outlined on 7 March 2006 and 14 March 2006. The numbering of each chapter starts anew to keep the number of digits under control.

The text has four subdivisions:
1. Meaning of the title
2. Translators prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion
Section 3 'Meaning of the text' has two subdivisions:
3.1 An overview of the text
3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters
The specific explanation of the different chapters has two outlines:
3.2.1. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on illusory conventional truth
3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth

CHAPTER IX: GENERAL REFUTATION OF TRUE EXISTENCE BY REFUTING PERMANENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA[2]

The chapter is sub-divided into two main categories:

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

This heading is sub-divided into three main sub-divisions:

1.1. Refuting permanent functional phenomena in general
1.2. Refuting them individually
1.3. Arguing the unsuitability of refuting true existence

1.1. Refuting permanent functional phenomena in general

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

1.1.1. Actual meaning

> By cleansing the mindstream with the flowing water of means by which to understand suchness, the previous chapters have made it a vessel fit for the nectar of suchness.

The earlier chapters dealt mainly with conventional reality or conventional truth. In order to understand ultimate truth, one must first establish what conventional truth is, as it is only with a sound understanding of conventional truth that one attempt to understand ultimate truth.

> The remaining chapters will explain how products which arise and disintegrate do not have even the slightest essence of inherent existence.

> *All are produced for their effect* *201*
> *Thus none are permanent.*
> *There are no Tathagatas other than*
> *Subduers [who know] things as they are.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

> In the world it is accepted that when a laborer works hard for his wage, it is for the result and not because it is his nature to do so.

Even though the work someone engages in might be difficult, hard and so forth, and therefore not something that he would naturally engage in, he does the work because of the result that he obtains, which is the wage. It is not as if he is addicted to work and just wants to work without any reason! He works in order to gain a wage. That is what is widely accepted. I think that the analogy is to be understood as meaning that receiving wages is not something that occurs naturally, but only as a result of work that is carried out.

As the commentary further explains:

> Similarly all external and internal functional phenomena do not arise of their own accord. Since they are produced solely through a multifarious aggregation of factors consisting of interrelated causes and effects, functional things are produced for their effects.

The main thing being refuted here is inherent existence, or the permanent existence of functional things. Of course, functional things are not permanent, and here, when inherent existence is refuted, it is refuted as a consequence of seeing that if functional things were to be inherently existent, then that would be similar to seeing them as permanently existent. That is what is being refuted.

Within the schools of Buddhist tenets, those who accept inherent existence are the lower Buddhist schools below the Svatantrika. The Sautrantika, Vaibashika and Cittamatrin (or Mind Only) schools are the Buddhist tenets who accept inherent existence. The Middle Way school does not accept inherent existence. So according to the Madhyamaka school, accepting inherent existence would be similar to accepting permanent existence, meaning that functional things would also be permanent. So, just as receiving a wage is an effect of having engaged in the work to achieve that result, similarly, all functional phenomena come about as a result of many factors coming together.

As mentioned in the commentary:

> ...factors consisting of interrelated causes and effects, functional things are produced for their effects....

Just as with the analogy, all functional phenomena are products or effects of their causes. They arise because of their causes and cannot arise from their own side or inherently. What is also being explained here is the fact that 'interrelated causes' has a deeper meaning. Not only do the causes themselves have to depend on the effects but the effects depend on the causes. What this connotes is that the causes, which are the causes of the effects that are produced, are not inherently existent, and also the effects themselves are not inherently existent. Rather, they are inter-dependent. Thus the effects and their causes all arise because of an interdependent relationship. That again rules out any possibility of either the causes or the effects having inherent existence.

> ...functional things are produced for their effects...

This means that that functional things are produced to bring about their effects, which shows their inter-relationship.

> Thus they are not permanent, inherently produced or truly existent. They do not have an essence able to sustain analysis, nor do they exist as things in and of themselves.

Then the commentary explains the second part of the verse:

> Only Subduers because they have the abilities of perfected body, speech and mind, directly know impermanence, emptiness and all things without exception as they are. Since no one else does, there are no other Tathagatas.

What is being explained clearly here is that only someone who has the complete ability to know is suitable to be called a tathagata.

> Moreover the Teacher said [referring to the Buddha], "Whatever is produced inevitably ceases, for aging

[2] For ease of reference each chapter starts the numbering anew.

> and death are conditioned by birth." Thus, since production is for the sake of disintegration, nothing endures by way of its own entity.

This points out the very nature of production is that it will disintegrate, and that disintegration is also dependent on the production, so therefore:

> ... nothing endures by way of its own entity.

This means that there is nothing which is inherently sustaining from its own side.

As the commentary further reads:

> Some refute permanence and true existence by virtue of autonomous reasons. The unfeasibility of this is explained in Candrakirti's commentary.

What is being explained here is that even though permanence and true existence are refuted by the Prasangika, they cannot be refuted with autonomous reasons. This refers to the structure of a syllogism, where there is a subject, a predicate, and a reason. The lower Buddhist schools, the schools below the Prasangika, use a reasoning known as autonomous reasons to prove impermanence or the lack of true existence and so forth. However according to the Prasangika, one does not use autonomous reasons.

As the commentary further explains:

> There is no commonly appearing subject, such as a sprout, posited by tenets, in relation to which a direct valid cognition perceiving it is valid, since all except Prasangikas assert that it is valid in relation to a sprout existing by way of its own character. Prasangikas assert this is impossible.

What is being explained here is that there is no commonly appearing subject. For example, if we take the syllogism, 'a sprout is impermanent, because it is produced' then the subject is the sprout. According to the lower Buddhist schools, it has to be a valid cognition perceiving it as valid. In other words, the validity of the sprout is established as it appears to the valid cognition. Thus it is said to be valid.

Whereas the Prasangika 'assert that it is valid in relation to a sprout existing by way of its own character'. What this means is that according to the Prasangika, the validity of the sprout is not established solely by how it appears: it appears to be inherently existent (or to exist by its own characteristics), and that cannot be established as valid. Thus the manner of how to establish the subject (which is a sprout), is different in the lower Buddhist schools compared to how the Prasangika assert it. These points have been explained earlier, so is good to revise the notes from previous teachings.[3]

The main point here is that according to the Prasangika, when a valid cognition establishes a sprout, for example, when the eye perception establishes the validity of a sprout, it establishes it by seeing the characteristics as existing from their own side, however the validity of the sprout as existing does not have to be a wrong consciousness. The validity is just in seeing the sprout, and it doesn't have to be correct in every way, in that it doesn't have to establish the correctness of it not existing from its own side.

For the lower Buddhist schools, the sprout is established as valid and unmistaken, as it appears to the consciousness. Thus when a sprout appears, it appears unmistakably to exist from its own side, and is thus established as being valid. According to the lower schools, validity is established when one establishes the validity of a sprout and the consciousness perceives the sprout as being unmistaken.

However according to the Prasangika, in that case one would have to then accept that the sprout does exist from its own side (or with its own characteristics), which cannot be the case.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

[3] This material was covered extensively between 18 May 2004 and 21 September 2004.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 July 2007

1.1. Refuting permanent functional phenomena

1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

Having established that functional things are impermanent and that there cannot be permanent functional phenomena, the text then specifically refutes the non-Buddhist schools through the use of assertions.

> *Vaisheshika Assertion:* Although things that are produced for their effect are not permanent, functional things—from space to the mind, which lack both the feature of being produced and that of being producers; and the smallest particles, which, though they are producers, are not produced—are permanent and truly existent,
>
> *There is not anywhere anything* 202
> *That ever exists without depending.*
> *Thus never is there anywhere*
> *Anything that is permanent.*

We agree with the Vaisheshika that things that are produced for their effect are not permanent. However they also assert that all functional things from space to mind are permanent phenomena.

The Vaisheshika basically assert that all phenomena are included within the following categories of existence: substance, quality, activity, generality and particularity. Substance is further sub-divided into nine: which are the four elements - earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind. Among the category of substance, the last five, from space to mind, are asserted as being both a substance as well as permanent phenomena. The Vaisheshika state that space, time, direction, self and mind are pervasive substances because they pervade everywhere, while the four elements are only partial because they do not pervade all existence. Furthermore, these five substances are considered as permanent phenomena because they 'lack both the feature of being produced and that of being producers'. They establish that substances arise independently, serve as a basis of other phenomena, and so have some functional features. Yet are permanent phenomenon, according to the Vaisheshika.

So, these phenomena - space, time, direction, self and mind - are said to be substance but to lack both the features of being produced and being producers. Whereas the four elements - earth, water, fire, and air - are producers and are produced. However all asserted as functional permanent phenomena.

The smallest particle is also asserted as being a permanent functional phenomenon. Because it is the smallest particle it does not produce any further. The smallest particle is a functional permanent phenomenon; it is not produced, and truly existent. So, they not only assert that it is permanent, but also that it is a truly existent phenomenon. In fact all five categories of substantial existences are asserted as being permanent phenomena, and furthermore truly existent phenomena. As stated in the assertion, all 'are permanent and truly existent'.

The verse refutes that view. As the commentary explains:

> Never, at any time or at any place, is there any chance of finding a functional thing that does not depend on relatedness [or dependentness].

This is explaining that there is no time or place where a functional thing does not depend on relatedness, or does not depend on causes. In other words a functional thing is always dependent on its cause and there can never be a time when the functional thing is not dependent on its causes. Therefore. as the commentary reads:

> Thus never is there anywhere a permanent functional phenomenon.

This is because a functional thing, by its very nature, is dependent on a cause and therefore cannot be a permanent phenomenon.

Functional phenomena are established as being impermanent phenomena for the reason that they have relativeness. As explained earlier. this means that any functional phenomena has to relate to its causes for it to be produced, and therefore for it to exist.

They are also called functional phenomena because they have a function. Establishing them as being a functional phenomenon negates functional phenomena as being permanent, as well as being truly existent phenomena. If it was a truly existent phenomenon then that would mean it is a phenomenon that does not depend on anything, and which exists from its own side, or which has inherent existence. If we were to assert a truly existent phenomena, we would have to assert a functional phenomenon that does not depend on anything. Thus negating functional phenomenon as being permanent phenomenon is at the same time negating functional phenomena as being truly existent phenomena.

The negation of a functional phenomenon as being a permanent phenomenon should be understood thus: if a functional phenomenon were to be a permanent phenomenon then it would have to be a phenomenon which never changed from moment to moment. However a functional phenomena does change from moment to moment - there are grosser and subtle levels of change that take place all the time. Thus it cannot be a permanent phenomenon.

Likewise the reason why a functional phenomenon is negated in being a truly existent phenomenon is because of the fact, if it were to be a truly existent phenomenon then it would have to be a phenomenon that did not depend on its causes and its conditions for it to be produced. And since a functional phenomenon does depend upon causes and conditions, it cannot be an independent phenomenon and it cannot be a truly existent or inherently existent phenomenon that does not depend on anything. That is how it is negated and that's what we need to understand.

By thinking along these lines one comes to the actual understanding of what is being explained and that will be useful for us. Rather than leaving this as a dry explanation from the text, if we can actually use it in our practice to meditate upon this meaning then we have derived a practice from hearing the teaching. As explained in the teachings we use what we hear in the teaching for analysing, and the wisdom that we gain from analysing for meditation. That is the process of how we should use this material to practice.

What we hear from the teaching on this point is that functional things are not permanent and are not truly

existent phenomenon. Rather than just leaving it at that, one uses it in one's analysis. One thinks, 'That is what I have heard. Is it so or not? Is functional phenomena permanent or impermanent? How could it be impermanent? Why is it not a permanent phenomena?'

One thinks along the lines of the explanation and tries to relate it to one's own logic. The very definition of functional phenomenon is that which is produced and changes from moment to moment. So if something is changing from moment to moment then it could not be permanent. That very fact negates that thing as being a permanent phenomena, which does not change from moment to moment. Thus we can understand how the functional object is not permanent, and thus one gains a further understanding of impermanence.

As the teaching further explains, furthermore a functional phenomenon cannot be a truly existent phenomenon. So, one contemplates the reason why it is not a truly existent phenomenon. The reasons that are given are that if it were to be truly existent phenomenon then it would have to be an existent phenomenon that exists independently, and not related to anything else.

When we investigate a functional phenomenon like a vase we use our own analytical wisdom and logic to realise that a functional phenomenon such as a vase could not exist from its own side, existing in and of itself, without having to relate to anything else. It could not exist independently in that way because we see that there are so many obvious causes and conditions that come together in producing a vase. So in that way we can realise how the vase lacks inherent existence or true existence, and in that way enhance our understanding of the emptiness of the vase.

1.2. Refuting them individually

This refers to individually refuting permanent functional phenomena as being permanent, and it has five categories.

1.2.1. Refuting a personal self
1.2.2. Refuting three substantially existent and compounded phenomena
1.2.3. Refuting permanent time
1.2.4. Refuting permanent particles
1.2.5. Refuting substantially established liberation

1.2.1. Refuting a personal self

What is being refuted is a personal self, which is asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. In Buddhism there is no self of a person that is defined as permanent, single and self-sufficient.

The non-Buddhist schools have different assertions about how a personal self exists, but there is a common trend. Five main features are asserted by the non-Buddhist schools called the Vaisheshika and the Samkya, although they differ in their details. The non-Buddhist Vaisheshikas say the features of a self are:

- It is a consumer of food and so forth,
- It is a functional permanent phenomenon
- It does not have knowledgeable qualities
- The self is the creator[1]
- The self has no action

This was all explained earlier when we were doing the Madhyamaka text. Therefore you will have it in your notes, and you should refer to them. When you combine these features then basically all the non-Buddhist schools assert the self to be a permanent, single and self-sufficient phenomena.[2]

There is also a non-Buddhist school which asserts that the self is actually just one entity which has many bodies. The analogy they use is that just as there is one sky that can be reflected on many lakes, so one soul is personified in many different beings, but there is actually only one entity.

A Buddhist point of view asserts that there is a self, but there is no self that exists as a single, permanent independent entity as asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. If there were to be a personal self then that is how the self would have to exist, but it does not exist in that way.

So when this outline refers to refuting a personal self then one needs to understand the self that is being refuted is a self that is permanent single and independent.

Refuting a permanent single and independent self is actually refuting a grosser level of self. There are much more subtle levels of self that are also refuted in Buddhism, but here it is a self on a gross level that is being refuted.

Refuting a personal self is sub-divided into two:

1.2.1.1. Actual meaning
1.2.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

1.2.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

Assertion: Dependently arising phenomena like pleasure and so forth exist, and the self is the cause that attracts them [or combines them together]. Thus the self exists and, moreover, it is permanent.

Answer:

There is no functional thing without a cause, *203*
Nor anything permanent which has a cause.
Thus the one who knows suchness said what has
Come about causelessly does not exist.

The main point of the assertion is establishing a permanent self and that is what is being refuted by the verse. The commentary says:

> There is no personal self since that which has no producing cause is not a functional thing nor is there anything permanent which has a cause.

If you establish a self that is a permanent functional phenomenon, then you would have to agree that there is no self, because of the fact that there cannot be a permanent functional phenomenon to begin with. It is absurd to assert the self is a permanent phenomenon, because by establishing it as a functional permanent phenomenon you could end up saying that the self does not exist. That is how a self is established in the assertion.

As the commentary further explains:

> [The Buddha, the omniscient] one who knows suchness, said phenomena that come into being causelessly do not exist.

This explains the two last lines of the verse. The one who knows suchness said that what has come about causelessly does not exist. So in another words if it does exist as a functional phenomenon then it has to have a cause, as something without a cause could not exist.

[1] incorporated from notes of 18 May 2004.

[2] See notes of 18 May 2004 and 25 May 2004.

Then the commentary mentions these two lines from a sutra:

> Phenomenon with causes and conditions are known.
> Phenomena without causes and conditions do not exist.

1.2.1.2. REFUTING THE REJOINDER

If the unproduced is permanent *204*
Because impermanent [things] are seen to be products,
Seeing that the produced exists
Would make the permanent non existent.

What is being further refuted here is the absurdity of the assertions. The commentary begins the refutation in this way:

> If on seeing that a pot and pleasure are impermanent and produced…

This relates to the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools that a partless particle is a permanent phenomenon. As mentioned before according to these schools all substances are permanent phenomena, so therefore a partless particle is a permanent phenomenon. They would establish that a vase is a an accumulation of many partless particles. An accumulation of partless particles into one thing, such as a vase is an impermanent phenomenon, because they see functional things such as a part and pleasure as being impermanent, and produced by seeing. They also assert, as it reads here:

> …one asserts that the self and so forth are by implication permanent…

That is how they assert the self to be permanent. Because things such as parts and pleasures are impermanent phenomenon they establish by implication that the self is a permanent phenomena, which is an absurd statement.

The following lines of the commentary point out this absurdity and thus refute the non-Buddhist schools.

> …it would follow that because of seeing that pot and so forth are produced and exist, whatever is permanent like the self should be non existent like a sky-flower.

This is refuting the non-Buddhist schools by pointing out the absurdity saying that that if you were to establish the earlier part then by implication one would also have to establish that a self is non-existent phenomenon like a sky-flower.

1.2.2. Refuting three uncompounded phenomena as substantially existent[3]

This is sub-divided into two:

1.2.2.1. General refutation
1.2.2.2. Specifically refuting permanent omnipresent space

1.2.2.1. GENERAL REFUTATION

> Assertion: The treatises of knowledge say space, individual analytical cessations, and non-analytical cessations are permanent and substantially existent. Any refutation of this is invalidated by your own assertions.
>
> Answer: That is not so.

That space and so forth are permanent *205*
Is a conception of common beings.
For the wise they are not objects perceived
Even by conventional [valid cognition].

The verse is refuting the assertion by initially making a point against the Buddhist view. The Buddhist schools say that there are no functional phenomena, and the non-Buddhist schools respond by quoting from the sutra *The treatises of knowledge* which says that three things, space, individual analytical cessations and non-analytical cessations are permanent and also substantially existent. 'So', they argue, 'If you say that these things are not functional permanent phenomena, does that not go against the sutra saying that they are?'

The Buddhist school says, 'That is not so, and it does not harm our assertions'. To explain this the commentary reads:

> Not understanding the significance of applying the term "space" to mere absence of obstructive contact and so forth, common people think that uncompounded space and so forth are permanent [functional phenomena].

Although it is true that in the sutras there is a reference to space as well as analytical cessation and non-analytical cessation being permanent phenomenon, that is an explanation for common beings who can only accept a limited explanation of those entities.

Space is a mere absence of obstructiveness. The definition of space is the mere absence of obstructive contact.

Analytical cessation is the cessation that is gained from applying the appropriate antidotes. Through the constant application of antidotes one overcomes particular delusions within one's mental continuum, and then obtains analytical cessation.

Non-analytical cessation refers to those things that are abandoned not because of an antidote, but because of the mere absence of the conditions for that thing to arise. So certain delusions or instances are overcome due to the lack of conditions at that time, but if the conditions were right they might arise.

These three are explained in the topic of suchness in the *Treasure of Knowledge*, as being functional permanent phenomena, and this is accepted by the lowest Buddhist school, the Vaibashikas. Being the lowest Buddhist school implies that the intelligence of the Vaibashika is of a limited level. Thus some, although not all, of the Vaibashika school assert that space, for example, is a permanent phenomenon as well as a functional phenomenon. They assert that it is a functional phenomenon because the text says it has the function of allowing things to move about in space. As that is a function of space, therefore space is a functional phenomenon.

Although they assert space as being a permanent phenomenon there are also other phenomena such as a vase that they accept as impermanent phenomena. So they do accept impermanent phenomena. In other words, permanent phenomena is not synonymous with functional phenomena, as there are impermanent phenomena which are also functional phenomena. As explained here, it is because of their limited intelligence and their lack of capacity to understand fully what is being explained to them at that level, that the Vaibashika accept this point. That is why they are referred to here as 'common people'.

The Vaibashika Buddhist schools also assert that functional permanent phenomena such as space are substantially existent phenomena. That is what has to be refuted by the highest Buddhist schools. Therefore as the commentary explains:

> Those who are wise concerning the suchness of functional phenomena, far from thinking they exist ultimately, do not regard permanent functional phenomena even as objects perceived by conventional valid cognition.

[3] The published text says 'Refuting three substantially existent uncompounded phenomena'

What is being explained here is that beings who have an understanding of suchness or emptiness would not see functional phenomena as being permanent as well as existing ultimately. Asserting functional permanent phenomena is also establishing phenomena as being truly existent, or as existing ultimately. That is what has to be refuted.

As explained here, a being who has an understanding of emptiness or suchness will not view functional phenomena as being permanent. Nor would they view them as being ultimately existent phenomena. So, as the text states:

> Only that which does not change is termed permanent.

What is really established as being permanent is that which does not change from moment to moment.

> What sutra says is not primarily stated to establish [a substantial existence but to refute an existence of permanent functional things].

What is being explained in that specific quote in the sutra about space, analytical cessation and non-analytical cessation as being a functional permanent phenomenon is uttered only to specific beings who have a limited intelligence. Because of their limited intelligence, they would not understand higher teachings on non-true existence or the non-inherent existence of phenomena. To such beings permanent phenomena such as space and so forth are explained as being functional permanent phenomena, but they are not explained as the ultimate object to establish for themselves in their meditation. Rather, because of their general limited knowledge and intelligence, it is explained in this way as a means to later guide and lead them on to further stages of understanding.

1.2.2.2. SPECIFICALLY REFUTING PERMANENT OMNIPRESENT SPACE

> Assertion: Space is permanent, because it is omnipresent. Whatever is impermanent like a pot is not omnipresent.

Perhaps a literal translation from the Tibetan word translated here as 'omnipresent' would be 'pervade'. Space is permanent because it pervades throughout all directions.

> Answer: The following refutes permanence by refuting omnipresence. It is contradictory to assert that space is omnipresent but partless.

A single direction is not present *206*
Wherever there is that which has directions.
That with directions clearly
Also has other directional parts.

The assertion that space is permanent is an assertion of the non-Buddhist schools. Actually this assertion seems quite logical, because space, particularly uncompounded space, is a permanent phenomena, which is accepted even by the Buddhist schools in our own system. Uncompounded space is omnipresent in the sense that it is pervasive, whereas a functional phenomena like a pot, an impermanent phenomenon, is not pervasive. That is obvious, and of course, seems logical.

However while they assert that space is omnipresent or pervasive, at the same time they accept that space is what they call directionless (or partless), and that is what has to be refuted. Even though the non-Buddhist schools assert that space is permanent that is also accepted in our own system. However what is being refuted specifically is that space is partless. As commentary explains:

> The part of space contiguous to an eastern pot is not present wherever there is space which has directions, such as where there is a western pot. If it were, the western pot would be in the east and the eastern pot in the west.

If there is a pot in the east and a pot in the west then if one were to say there is no pots in space you would have to assume and thus imply that the space in the eastern pot also pervades the space in the western pot and *vice versa.* Thus there would be no difference in the space in those two opposite directions. It would be similar to saying that the pot in the west is also in the east and the pot in the east is in the west, which is an absurd statement.

The non-Buddhists come to understand the refutation, and want to counter that point. Thus, as the commentary reads:

> If to guard against such a fallacy [they assert] that the part of space which is in the east is not in the west, Then directional space very clearly must have other parts.

This clearly connotes that there must be parts to space. So if you were to accept that space does have parts then one should not accept permanent functional things. So as the Buddhist system says, by default you cannot then accept functional permanent phenomena.

Then the commentary summarises the point with a quote from a sutra:

> "Kasyapa permanence is one extreme, so-called impermanence is another extreme". The belief that ultimate truths are permanent functional phenomena is foreign [or contrary] to this teaching [meaning the Dharma].

Thus as this sutra explains, believing that ultimate truths are permanent functional phenomena is completely contrary to the main point of the teachings.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 August 2007

As usual it is appropriate to set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings, such as generating the thought, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

As you know, the importance of generating a positive motivation is normally stressed. The reason for that is, when one develops a good motivation, there definitely seems to be a difference in the approach to whatever activity one engages in, whether it is a teaching or a practice. For example, with a teaching, it seems that when one generates a positive motivation (both from the teacher's side as well as from the listener's side), then whatever is covered in the teaching becomes less dry. Somehow the teaching material becomes a little bit more effective in bringing about some transformation in the mind. Conversely if the teaching is approached in a very casual way, then it might be taken only as an academic study. One may gain some intellectual understanding and knowledge from studying the text, but because one lacked a proper motivation in the beginning, whatever one learns doesn't really seem to bring about a transformation in the mind.

Because it seems to make a real difference when we have a positive motivation, it is really important to ensure that we have a good motivation. Developing a positive motivation also serves as a means to further familiarise our mind with generating a kind attitude. Basically having a positive motivation is generating a kind attitude. So, reminding ourselves to have a kind attitude again and again helps to maintain such a kind attitude, which is most essential in our life. It is something that we need to protect all the time, as it would be a really great loss if we were to lose a kind attitude. Whatever activity we engage in, it is really essential that our mind is imbued with a kind attitude.

There is another practical note about the importance of a kind attitude. When we are living with someone, the ups and downs of life are weathered as long as both sides try to maintain a kind attitude towards each other. Somehow that mutual respect, understanding, support and concern is maintained, because of the kind attitude that one has for the other. The real strain on the relationship comes about when that kind attitude diminishes or is lost. Even if one lives alone, if we maintain a kind attitude, somehow that permeates one's life, and one's associations with others becomes much more fruitful.

Whereas, if we lose a kind attitude, that will really bring a sense of loneliness, and an empty feeling. When we lose that kind attitude, we feel burdened and wherever we go we feel uncomfortable. When we begin to notice that, then we also begin to recognise that a real sense of well-being, happiness and contentment is something that has to be cultivated within ourselves.

The conditions for having a happy life, come from within oneself. When one recognises that it has to come from within, then one can begin to see the significance of practice and the need to maintain a good attitude and so forth. If one is constantly focussing outward in the belief that the conditions for a happy life comes from external means, then for as long as one has that attitude one will experience disappointment over and over again.

1.2.3. Refuting permanent time

This is subdivided into five categories:
1.2.3.1. If permanent time is accepted as a cause, it should also be accepted as an effect
1.2.3.2. Reason for this
1.2.3.3. The contradiction between undergoing change and being permanent
1.2.3.4. The contradiction between something coming into existence of its own accord yet depending on causes
1.2.3.5. The contradiction between arising from something permanent yet being impermanent

1.2.3.1. IF PERMANENT TIME IS ACCEPTED AS A CAUSE, IT SHOULD ALSO BE ACCEPTED AS AN EFFECT

Assertion of Vaidantikas and others:

Since time exists, functional things 207
Are seen to start and stop.
It is governed by other factors;
Thus it is also an effect.

The non-Buddhist Vaidantikas and others schools assert that time is permanent. The text explains their reasons thus:

> Since permanent time exists the beginning and growth of things like a sprout are seen, while in winter and so forth, although other conditions are present, this is seen to stop.

The Vaidantikas assert that there are certain plants which sprout in the summer, but which do not sprout in the winter. Because there is difference in time between the time of sprouting and the time of not sprouting, they say that time itself serves as a cause for the seed to sprout. Thus:

> One can thereby infer the existence of time which, moreover, is permanent because of not depending on a cause.

So the Vaidantikas assert time as a cause, and furthermore they assert that time is permanent. The Buddhist definitions of 'permanent' and 'impermanent' are as follows. That which is a phenomena that changes from moment to moment, therefore which is subject to momentary change, is an **impermanent phenomenon**. Whereas something that doesn't change from moment to moment, i.e. not subject to momentary changes, is a **permanent phenomenon**. These definitions of permanence and impermanence are also asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. However here, they assert that as time does not depend on a cause, it is therefore a permanent phenomenon, while it also serves as a cause for the sprouting of seeds and so forth.

The answer that the Buddhists give to this assertion is:

> *Answer:* Then it follows that sprouts and so forth are constantly produced and there is never a time when they are not produced, because of being produced by a permanent cause.

Is this explanation in the text something that you can relate to? Is it something that you understand?

The non-Buddhist school asserts that time is the cause for seeds and so forth to sprout, and that time itself is permanent. The counter-argument is that if time is considered as a permanent cause, and if it is a cause of something which produces, then it must produce all the time.

To that the Vaidantikas further assert:

Assertion: Their production depends on other factors.

When the Buddhist school advances their counter-argument that if you assert that time is a cause, and furthermore that it is permanent, then it would have to produce all the time, this goes against the original assertion of the non-Buddhists, which is that there are certain times when seeds don't sprout, such as in the winter. So the non-Buddhists cannot accept that time produces all the time. Therefore in order to counter the Buddhists counter-argument the Vaidantikas assert that production depends on other factors. This means that in winter sprouts are not produced because time has to depend on other factors or conditions in order for sprouts to be produced.

The Buddhists respond by saying:

> Then it follows that time, too, is an effect, for the intermittent production of sprouts is governed by other factors, being dependent on conditions like heat and moisture.

If you assert that though time is a cause, it is permanent, then the first counter-argument of the Buddhists is, 'If it is permanent, then would it produce all the time which goes against your own earlier assertion'.

Then the non-Buddhist schools say, 'Well, the reason why it doesn't produce all the time is because it has to depend on other factors'.

The Buddhists counter that with, 'Then in that case, is time an effect as well, because it depends on other factors for the seed to sprout?' Thus', the Buddhists conclude, 'you can not assert that time is non-existent either, as it does exist'. To support this assertion the text quotes from a sutra:

> The actions of the embodied do not
> Go to waste even in a hundred aeons.
> When conditions assemble and the time is ripe
> Their fruit will mature.

This passage is often quoted in the Lam Rim teachings to provide an authentic backing from a sutra to explain how once created, karma will not dissipate, and its effects will come to fruition at an appropriate time. As the sutra says, the actions, or the karma of the embodied (meaning sentient beings) do not go to waste, even in a hundred aeons.

This means that if other factors such as anger do not destroy the imprints of positive karma, then the fruition of that positive karma, will definitely come about, even after a hundred aeons. Similarly once a negative karma is created, if other factors such as purification do not take place to alter the imprints, then its fruition will definitely take place even after a hundred aeons. As the sutra says, when conditions assemble and the time is ripe, their fruit will definitely mature.

What one should derive from this passage as personal advice is that when one creates any positive karma such as practice, or whatever positive deed one engages in, one must try to secure that by dedicating it at the end to secure the imprints of that positive deed. Whereas with whatever negative karma one may find oneself creating or engaged in, one should purify it as soon as one notices it. So as one recites these lines, it is good to reflect on this main meaning and then try to engage in one's practice with it in mind.

1.2.3.2. REASON FOR THIS

> If proponents of time as a cause accept it as such, they should also accept it as an effect.
>
> *Any cause without an effect* *208*
> *Has no existence as a cause.*
> *Therefore it follows that*
> *Causes must be effects.*

As the commentary explains:

> Without the effect it produces, a cause lacks that which establishes it as a cause, for the establishment of a cause depends on its effect.

What makes a cause? The very fact that it produces an effect. A **definition of a cause** is a facilitating factor. A **definition of an effect** is a factor that is produced, or a production. Therefore cause and effect are inter-dependent. As the text further explains:

> Thus since it follows that all causes must be effects, one should not accept causes that lack effects.

This indicates the interdependent nature of a cause and an effect. If something produces something, then it must also be a production itself. If something is a production then it must also have the inherent nature of being a producer as well. That interdependent nature of cause and effect is true for all causes and effects. The *dura* text, which is the elementary Buddhist text that is studied in Buddhist philosophy, states that cause and effect are synonymous. That is what this line refers to.

In general, cause and effect are synonymous, which means that if it is an effect there has to be a cause, and if it is a cause there has to be an effect. But when you refer to a particular object, then cause and effect are not synonymous; one has to come after the other. It is good to train in understanding how this logic works.

1.2.3.3. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN UNDERGOING CHANGE AND BEING PERMANENT

> Anything accepted as a cause should be accepted as facilitating an effect.
>
> *When a cause undergoes change* *209*
> *It becomes the cause of something else.*
> *Anything that undergoes change*
> *Should not be called permanent.*

This verse refers to causes. There is also another definition of cause, which is that which assists the effect, which is what is being explained here.

As the commentary explains:

> A cause such as a seed acts as the cause of something else such as a sprout, through a change from before in its potency.

This explains how from the moment a seed is sown in the ground, it begins to germinate, causing the sprout to slowly grow after the seed breaks up, and it begins to emerge from the soil. Thus from very early on, the seed assists the growth of the sprout.

The commentary further explains:

> Any functional thing which changes so that its former and later moments are unalike should not be called permanent.

Here, in explanation of the verse, the commentary explains that anything accepted as a cause should be accepted as facilitating an effect. As mentioned earlier, that which facilitates an effect is one of the definitions of a cause. The manner of how it facilitates an effect, as explained later in the commentary, is that the seed always carries the potential to facilitate its cause.

Its actual facilitation is seen from the moment the seed is sown in the ground, from that very first moment, carrying onto the next moments, all the way until the sprout grows

up to a healthy plant and gives fruit. From the first moment until its very end, the seed continues to facilitate the later moments. Each change that takes place helps to facilitate the next change, the next moment and so on, until the fruition of the ultimate effect. Each second moment is the effect of the earlier moment, and the earlier moment facilitates the next moment to change and give effect. Change where the cause produces an effect is seen only in functional phenomena, which are impermanent phenomena. Because there is an obvious change that we see, we call it impermanent and thus cannot say it is a permanent phenomenon.

The conclusion is:

> Thus one should not accept permanent time and so forth as causes.

If we refer back to the outline heading, The contradiction between undergoing change and being permanent, we see that it suggests what is being explained. The verse and the commentary have negated that time and so forth are permanent by indicating the contradiction between something undergoing change yet being permanent. In other words something cannot be both permanent and undergo change.

1.2.3.4. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN SOMETHING COMING INTO EXISTENCE OF ITS OWN ACCORD YET DEPENDING ON CAUSES

A thing with a permanent cause is produced *210*
By that which has not come into being.
Whatever happens by itself
Cannot have a cause.

As the commentary explains:

> If one does not accept that time, too, changes, it follows that a functional thing, such as a sprout whose cause in unchanging permanent time, has come about of its own accord because of being produced by a cause that has not come into being.

This is an argument that the Buddhist school uses to counter the assertions of the non-Buddhist school.

'If one does not accept that time, too, changes' (referring back to the original assertion that time does not change, and is permanent), then 'it follows that a functional thing, such as a sprout whose cause in unchanging permanent time', as has been asserted earlier, 'has come about of its own accord'.

If you assert that time is the cause of the sprout and that time itself is unchanging and permanent, then you have to assert, by default, that sprouts and so forth come about of their own accord. The phrase 'by its own accord' means that it does not depend on anything else. The Buddhist point here, is showing the absurdity of the assertion that time is permanent while it is also a cause for sprouts. If time is asserted as permanent, and therefore unchanging, then a functional phenomenon such as a sprout would, by default, have to be asserted as having been produced of its own accord. And that cannot be accepted. Furthermore:

> Whatever happens by itself cannot have a producing cause, since its dependence on a cause is inadmissible.

1.2.3.5. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN ARISING FROM SOMETHING PERMANENT YET BEING IMPERMANENT

How can that which is produced *211*
By a permanent thing be impermanent?
Never are the two, cause and effect,
Seen to have incongruent characteristics.

As the commentary explains:

> How can functional things such as sprouts be impermanent? It follows that they are not, because of being produced by that which is permanent. This entailment follows because cause and effect are never seen to have incongruent characteristics in that one is permanent and the other impermanent.

What the Buddhist school is pointing out, is that if you were to accept that the cause is permanent then by default you would have to assert that the effect is permanent.

However the non-Buddhist schools don't assert that. They assert that while the cause, which is time, is permanent, the effect such as a sprout, is a functional phenomena. That is the absurdity which the Buddhist school is pointing out: cause and effect have to have concurrent characteristics. Thus if the cause is permanent then it must follow that the effect is also permanent. However, it is proven that, because it changes, the effect is a functional phenomena and thus impermanent. So the cause must also be impermanent.

Actually, this line of reasoning should be quite logical and not be too much trouble for you to understand and accept. What is being pointed out here implicitly is that if the effect is accepted as being impermanent, changing from moment to moment, while the cause is considered as being a permanent phenomenon, not changing from moment to moment, then that would be absurd. The Buddhist point of view is showing the absurdity of having an unchanging, stagnant cause that produces an effect which changes.

We can also use the analogy of seeds and their sprouts to show this absurdity. If you plant seeds of grain and wish for peas as a result, that will never come about, because the cause and the effect are incongruent. In order to have an effect of a particular type, that effect has to be congruent with the cause. Thus if you sow a grain like wheat, the effect will be wheat; You cannot have peas. It would be absurd to think, 'I'll plant grain and pray for peas to grow'. It doesn't work that way! As much as you pray and make your wishes, you will not get peas as a harvest if you have planted grain.

To take this further into the broader perspective of our practice, the real meaning of this explanation and line of reasoning is when we use it with karma. If we wish for pleasant, good results, and good experiences in our life, we must create the causes, which is virtuous karma. The causes would have to be congruent with virtuous karma. If we constantly engage in non-virtuous karmas and then wish and pray for good results, and good experiences and so forth, we will never have those pleasant experiences, because of the incongruence between the cause and effect.

There are two different categories of causes. **Substantial causes** are where the very substance from the cause transforms, or is passed on to the effect. **Indirect causes** facilitate a result, such as the conditions for an event to occur.

The seed is said to be the substantial cause of the sprout, because the substance of the seed is transformed into the sprout. It becomes a direct cause because the very substance of the cause is passed on and then the transformation into an effect, which is the sprout, takes place.

Whereas the indirect causes are the fertilisers, the soil, the water, the warmth and so forth. These are not the direct causes. They are not the substantial causes because it is not as if the water, or the earth itself or the warmth transforms in the sprout. These factors do serve as conditions for the sprout to grow, but the actual substance is from the seed.

It works in the same way with virtue and pleasant results and non-virtuous actions and unpleasant results. From the next moment that we engage in virtuous karma, the actual action will pass away because it has already been performed. However what is left behind is the imprint; and the imprint

of this virtuous karma remains on our mental continuum. Of course it will undergo continuous change within itself. However the continuation of that imprint remains in one's mental continuum. Then, when the conditions are right, that imprint will result in an effect, which is a pleasurable result.

Similarly with negative karma, once a negative karma is created, the action is gone. But what is left after that negative action is the imprint, which is left upon the mental continuum. That negative imprint is what remains and the continuation of the negative imprint will go on and when the time is right, it will mature into a negative result. Thus you can see here the congruent characteristics in the cause and the effect. Because the congruent characteristics remain, they have to have an effect. Thus you can not expect a positive result if you engage in negative karmas and *vice versa*.

It shouldn't be too difficult to understand this line of logical reasoning to see how the cause and effect process works. However what is difficult to grasp, is exactly when those effects take place. Once karma has been created, there is no certainty as to when the effects will take place. Because there is no certainty, one cannot predict when a result will occur. Thus one cannot see the obvious process of the effect taking place at a certain time. That is something which is hard for us to grasp. It is hard for anyone ordinary being to pinpoint, except for the Buddha.

Only an omniscient mind can specify in detail when a particular karma was created, how it was created, when the effects will take place, how they will take effect and in what manner they will take effect. All of these specific details are said to be known only by an omniscient mind, but not by the minds of ordinary beings. To give an example of how difficult it is for our mind to perceive the causes of certain things, let us take our own present life as an example. Our present precious human life is definitely an effect of virtuous causes that were created in the past. That is something we can definitely assert and understand through logical reasoning. However what we cannot understand and discern is when exactly we may have created those causes, at what time, and what kind of individual being in the past life created the particular causes to obtain such a precious life now.

1.2.4. Refuting permanent particles

This section refers to earlier assertions of the non-Buddhist schools, where they accept permanent particles. The three sub-divisions under this category are:

1.2.4.1. Refuting permanent particles
1.2.4.2. Unfeasibility of yogic awareness perceiving partless particles
1.2.4.3. Why Buddhas do not mention the existence of permanent particles

1.2.4.1. REFUTING PERMANENT PARTICLES

This is sub-divided into three:

1.2.4.1.1. Unsuitability of that which has parts as a permanent functional thing
1.2.4.1.2. Unfeasibility of an accretion which is a separate substantial entity forming through the coalescence of homogeneous particles
1.2.4.1.3. Refuting that particles are partless prior to the formation of a composite

1.2.4.1.1. UNSUITABILITY OF THAT WHICH HAS PARTS AS A PERMANENT FUNCTIONAL THING

> *Vaisesika assertion:* Permanent particles of the four elements activated…

The Vaisesika assertion is basically that particles are permanent and partless. Furthermore, they are not perceived by the sense faculties, but they multiply due to previous karmas of beings, and are composite. They become a mass due to the coming together of previous karma and thus produce the environment, the world and so forth. As indicated in the text:

> … by the force of karma form the substantial entity of a composite, producing the environmental world and so forth.

What is being explained here is that how, as explained earlier, even though the particles are not something that can be perceived by the sense faculties, nevertheless they do exist and due to the previous karma of sentient beings, they start to form by gathering together thus producing a composite. As the mass is produced, it becomes the environment and so forth.

> *Answer:* That is incorrect, for it follows that when particles coalesce and form a composite, an increase in size is impossible if there is total interpenetration. If some parts coalesce, those that do are causes while those that do not are not the causes.
>
> *That of which some sides are causes* *212*
> *While other sides are not is thereby*
> *Multifarious. How can that*
> *Which is multifarious be permanent?*

The Buddhist school refutes the Vaisesika assertion that 'an increase in size is impossible if there is total interpenetration'. According to the Vaisesikas if the particles are totally merged, there cannot be an increase of size.

However the Buddhists say that some parts do coalesce and serve as a cause, and there are also certain parts which do not coalesce, and those are not causes. 'This again', say the Buddhists, 'is an absurdity because you are basically asserting that some particles serve as a cause to form a mass or composite and some don't. That is an absurdity, and cannot be the case. Basically then, by default you assert that there are'partless particles which is an absurdity'. From the Buddhist schools' point of view particles do have parts, thus there is not a total interpenetration and thus the masses are produced. As explained here:

> It therefore follows that the smallest particle has parts, because some of its sides are causes while others are not. Being multifarious, it follows that it cannot be a permanent functional thing because of having diverse parts.

When it says, 'that it cannot be a permanent functional thing because of having diverse parts' this means that it has many parts to it. Thus particles are not partless, but have parts.

Basically the main point being made here is the absurdity of the non-Buddhist school asserting that particles are partless and permanent. The Buddhist schools assert, 'If you say that when the particles come together certain parts coalesce, or meet, and form into a mass, or a composite, but others do not, then you would be implying that certain parts meet and certain parts don't meet. That would be absurd. Saying that certain particles serve as cause, while others don't is an absurdity'. From the Buddhist point of view when particles meet, they are diverse and they do have parts and so thus they are not permanent. Then when they meet, the coming together of the particles serves as a means to produce a composite, a mass which is called an impermanent phenomenon. Of course, there will be further detailed explanation of this in the later verses.

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 August 2007

As we do normally, it would be good to generate a positive motivation to receive the teaching, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.'

1.2.4.1.2. HAVING AN ACCRETION THAT IS A SEPARATE SUBSTANTIAL ENTITY FORMING THROUGH THE COALESCENCE OF HOMOGENEOUS PARTICLES IS NOT FEASIBLE

The non-Buddhists assert that a composite is formed by the coalescence of homogeneous particles. So an ox cart, for example, is a composite resulting from the'coalescence of homogeneous particles. That is how they assert that the composite of a cart comes into existence. Further explanation on this will be given later on, but in essence the non-Buddhist schools assert that a composite comes about from the coalescence of partless particles.

The partless particles themselves cannot be perceived by the sense consciousnesses, for example, the visual consciousness. It is the divine eye of a yogic being that asserts the existence of partless particles. This divine eye is very subtle and is similar to a clairvoyant state of mind. Due to this divine eye, a yogic being can assert the existence of the partless particles.

What ordinary beings can see, however, is a composite formed by the coalescence or coming together of these partless particles, which is then called 'gross matter'. It is this gross matter that can be perceived by ordinary faculties. If we take the clock as an example, we can see it is a result of the coalescence of many atomic particles, which form the composite to bring about this clock. The particles are asserted by the non-Buddhists to be partless, and permanent, and not able to be perceived by ordinary perception. Furthermore the non-Buddhists assert that partless particles are truly existent phenomena.

Now, let us compare that assertion with the Buddhist perception of how particles exist. Firstly, are dust particles of earth permanent or impermanent?

Students: Impermanent.

Are they a truly existent phenomenon?

Students: No.

Is it a particle which has parts or is it a partless particle?

Students: It has parts.

Having distinguished clearly between the assertions of the non-Buddhist school and the Buddhist school, we have to now distinguish between the different assertions of the four Buddhist schools. All four Buddhist schools assert that there are no partless particles. However the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika Buddhist schools assert that even though there are no partless particles, there are certain particles that have no parts. The coalescence of particles that have no parts produces composite forms. Although there is a deeper explanation than that, that is the way the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika Buddhist schools assert particles.

The Vaibhashika, Sautrantika as well as the Cittamatrin schools assert that particles are truly existent phenomena. Thus they accept that things do truly exist; that there are truly existent phenomena. This is where they differ from the Middle Way schools. The Prasangika-Madhyamaka school does not assert truly existent phenomena, so particles cannot be truly existent phenomena according to them.

Why do the Sautrantika Buddhist schools assert that particles are truly existent?

Student: So the less gifted students have a chance of understanding.

Of course the general explanation is that the teachings are given in accordance with the mental capacity of the students. Truly existent phenomena are explained on that level, as a means to slowly bring them to an understanding that phenomena do not have true existence. That is true. But there is a specific reason why they have to assert truly existent phenomena.

Student: By virtue of it being truly existent it has to be partless, i.e. one justifies the other.

As explained when we covered the tenets, the Vaibhashikas particularly assert both general characteristics and inherent natural characteristics of phenomena. All phenomena have both general characteristics and their own particular characteristics.

The Mind Only (or Cittamatrin) have another classification of phenomena into imputed phenomena (wholly labelled phenomena or conceptual fabrications), other powered phenomena, and thoroughly established phenomena.[1] Within these three types of phenomena, the Cittamatrins assert that other powered phenomena, which are impermanent phenomena, and thoroughly established phenomena, which is emptiness are truly existent, and that all imputed phenomena are not truly existent.

Higher up than the Cittamatrin school is the Madhyamaka school. A proponent of the Madhyamaka does not accept any true existence, not even nominally. So not even nominally asserting that there is any true existence is the definition of a proponent of the Madhyamaka. The Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools differ from the higher schools because they assert that the coalescence of particles which do not have parts forms a composite.

This section is sub-divided into two:
1.2.4.1.2.1. Actual meaning
1.2.4.1.2.2. The contradiction in asserting that particles do not interpenetrate completely

1.2.4.1.2.1. Actual meaning

As Buddhists it is appropriate that we actually study this

[1] Taught 12 April 2005 and 17 July 2001. In 2001 the term 'wholly labelled', while in 2005 'conceptual fabrications' was used for imputed phenomena.

material about particles, not only because it is a Buddhist teaching, but also because in a general sense it seems that from a scientific point of view there is a lot of investigation into particles and atoms and so forth. Non-Buddhist schools like scientists really investigate particles in a lot of detail. I don't know if the scientists would conclude that particles are partless as such. What seems to be the case, however, is that in their investigation, they have come to a point where they seem to assert that when you further analyse and try to separate particles, you come to a point where you cannot separate any further. Thus it seems that it is just an imputation and that you are labelling something or imputing something that you cannot find when you try to search and analyse further.

This section explains how it is not feasible for there to be an accretion that is a separate substantial entity formed through the coalescence of homogeneous particles. The result is a composite, and what the non-Buddhists say is that a composite forms from particles that are partless. That being the case, what is being pointed out here, is the contradiction in a composite being formed from partless particles.

> *Assertion:* Although particles interpenetrate completely because they are partless, a separate accretion of coalesced particles forms, which produces the composite.

> *The cause which is spherical* *213*
> *Is not present in the effect.*
> *Thus complete interpenetration*
> *Of particles is not feasible.*

To explain the literal meaning of the verse, 'The cause which is spherical' refers to the partless particles themselves, which are asserted as the cause. The second line, 'Is not present in the effect', refers to the coalescence of the partless particles bringing about the effect, but not being seen in the effect, which is the composite. 'Thus complete interpenetration of particles is not feasible', points out the contradiction from the Buddhist point of view.

What the non-Buddhists are asserting is that the particles interpenetrate, which means that when they come together, the particles merge, or in other words, touch on every side. That word 'interpenetrate' means that they come together and integrate completely, and the reason for that is that they are partless. Because they are partless, they will merge naturally when they come together, and thus as mentioned here they interpenetrate. However 'a separate accretion of coalesced particles forms'.

This is where they explain that even though particles are partless and interpenetrate, what produces the composite is 'a separate accretion of coalesced particles'. So the non-Buddhist schools assert that even though the particles themselves are partless and interpenetrate, there is a separate accretion of coalesced particles, which then produces a composite.

> *Answer:* It follows that it is not feasible for particles to interpenetrate completely when composites form. If they merge completely there will be no gradual increase in size from the first to the second composite and so forth.

The refutation of the non-Buddhists' assertion is that if the particles themselves are partless and interpenetrate when they coalesce, then they would merge completely. Because they merge completely, there could not be a gradual increase in size, as we would see in a composite. In the gradual process of being made things become larger: a seed sprouting, for example, grows to become larger and bigger. However that could not occur if the particles themselves completely merged: in fact if they did merge then the result would have to be similar to the original. Thus there could not be an increase in the size.

What is being pointed out is that the result of partless particles coalescing together would have to be similar in nature to the cause. Just as they assert that the partless particles cannot be perceived by ordinary perception and can only be seen by the divine eye of yogic perception, the result, which is the composite, should be similar, and that is an absurdity.

Furthermore as the commentary reads:

> Also the causative sphere with the characteristic of appearing to the mind as partless and spherical is not present in the resultant substantial entity, the composite.

What is being further emphasised here is that the non-Buddhist assertion that the causative sphere (which is the partless particles) has the characteristics of appearing to the mind (meaning the divine eye of the yogic perception) as partless and spherical

> ... is not present in the resultant substantial entity, [which is] the composite.

Taking the ox cart as an example again, it is the composite of the coalescence of particles. The absurdity being pointed out here is that if you assert that the particles that coalesce to bring about the composite of an ox cart are partless and interpenetrate, then the result (which is the ox cart) would also have to be of that nature, because the particles completely merge. As mentioned earlier, the result, the composite itself, would have to be something which is so obscure and subtle, that is could not be seen by ordinary perception. But that goes against our normal experience, because we can see an ox cart. Therefore the absurdity of seeing what could not be seen earlier is pointed out. That is the contradiction.

1.2.4.1.2.2. The contradiction in asserting that particles do not interpenetrate completely

> *One particle's position is not* *214*
> *Asserted as also that of another.*
> *Thus it is not asserted that*
> *Cause and effect are the same size.*

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary:

> Where complete interpenetration does not occur, one particle's position will not be asserted as also that of another.

This is explaining that how, whenever one particle takes a position in a space, no other particle, such as the particles of a composite, can take the place of that one particle. That being a fact:

> Thus since the causal particles and resultant composite are not asserted to be equal in size, the absurd consequence that the composite is not an object of the senses is avoided.

What is being explained here is the obvious point that the causal particles and resultant composite are not asserted to be equal in size, which has to be accepted on an obvious level.

The result is a composite, which is formed by the coalescence of partless particles, and the partless particles are only the object of the divine eye and not an object of the senses, as asserted earlier. So the resultant composite would have to be like that. By pointing out the obvious, which is that the resultant composite is not the same in size as the causal particles, that consequence is avoided here.

> Nevertheless since particles have parts, their consequent unfeasibility as permanent functional things remains.

What is being pointed out here is that you are accepting the particles as being permanent functional things. However that is not feasible.

1.2.4.1.3. REFUTING THAT PARTICLES ARE PARTLESS PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF A COMPOSITE

Again the non-Buddhist schools say, 'We assert that particles are partless, not all the time, only prior to the formation of a composite'. This is the assertion that is being negated here.

This section is again sub-divided into two:
1.2.4.1.3.1. Actual meaning
1.2.4.1.3.2. The contradiction in particles forming composites when movement from one position to another is not feasible for partless particles

1.2.4.1.3.1. Actual meaning

> *Assertion:* The problem of their having parts occurs when the resultant substantial entity is forming, but prior to that the smallest particles do not have parts.
>
> *Answer:* That is incorrect. If a particle has no sides, it cannot be surrounded by [partless] particles on its four sides.

> *Whatever has an eastern side* *215*
> *Also has an eastern part.*
> *Those whose particles have sides admit*
> *That they are not [partless] particles.*

What is being pointed out here is the obvious logical assumption that if a particle has no sides, then it cannot be surrounded by particles on its four sides, because it does not have sides to begin with. So it cannot be surrounded by particles.

The commentary explains that:

> If [the particle does have sides], such as an eastern one, it definitely must have parts ...

What is being explained here is that if a particle does have sides, an eastern, western, northern and southern side, then it must also have parts to those sides, i.e. if they have a directional side, then they must also have parts. So the refutation commences by asking the non-Buddhists whether they would accept whether particles have directions or not.

> ... since any particle with an eastern side must also have an eastern part. For that reason any opponent who holds that particles have sides prior to the formation of a composite admits those particles are not partless ones, because of accepting that they are located within the ten boundless directions.

The main point here is that having sides means 'accepting that they are located within the ten boundless directions'. The counter-argument from the Buddhist side is that if you accept that there are sides to a particle, then it must have parts as well. Thus there cannot be partless particles because the particles are located within the ten boundless directions. This means that any composite or particle will have sides. Because each side will have its own four sides, there will be boundless sides to each particle. Thus you cannot say that they do not have parts, because each particle has its sides and each other particle that connects to it will also have its sides. Thus it will form boundless directions, and there is no room for it to be partless. So one cannot find a partless particle.

1.2.4.1.3.2. The contradiction in particles forming composites when movement from one position to another is not feasible for partless particles

> *The front takes up, the back relinquishes –* *216*
> *Whatever does not have*
> *Both of these [motions]*
> *Is not something which moves.*

Basically this is explaining that if there are partless particles, then we cannot say that anything moves. As explained in the commentary:

> It follows that such particles would not move from one place to another. When a thing moves from one place to another, its front takes up a position ahead while its rear relinquishes the rearward position, but partless particles neither take up nor relinquish a position. If it is asserted that they do not move, it is contradictory for partless particles to form the substantial entity of a composite.

The conclusion from the Buddhist point of view is:

> Thus truly existent particles should never be accepted.

Having pointed out the absurdities that would follow if there were to be a partless particle, the Buddhist then concludes, 'Thus truly existent particles should never be accepted'.

Whereas if one were to follow the non-Buddhist schools, which assert that they are partless particles, which in turn indicates that they are particles that do not rely upon anything else, that they are directionless and partless and permanent, then that implies that a composite (which is a coalescence of such particles) would be an independent particle - a composite which exists from its own side. That would then imply that things can never exist independently from their own side. From the Buddhist point of view that is what is being ultimately refuted.

Also what is being pointed out in relation to this verse is that if one were to assert partless particles, then that would negate a possibility of a composite that moves from one place to another. When a movement takes place there is an action of taking space in front and leaving a space behind. That sort of action could not take place if particles were partless and interpenetrated.

1.2.4.2. IT IS NOT FEASIBLE TO POSIT A YOGIC AWARENESS PERCEIVING PARTLESS PARTICLES

This section is sub-divided into two:
1.2.4.2.1. Actual meaning
1.2.4.2.2. Refuting belief in the existence of permanent particles because there are coarse things

1.2.4.2.1. ACTUAL MEANING

Assertion [by the non Buddhists]: Permanent particles do exist because adepts perceive them by virtue of the divine eye.

Answer: What adept [or yogi] sees such a permanent particle? [implying that there is none]

That which does not have a front, 217
Nor any middle,
And which does not have a rear,
Being invisible, who will see it?

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> [Seeing such a partless particle, as they assert] is not feasible because such a form [as it is asserted as being a phenomenon, which is a form]—a particle which firstly has no front, nor any middle, and finally does not have a rear portion—is not evident to any kind of perception.

Let alone such a particle being a perception of the divine eye, no one could see such a particle because they do not even exist. What is there to be seen in a particle that does not have any front, nor any middle, nor any rear? No one can see that!

1.2.4.2.2. REFUTING BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF PERMANENT PARTICLES BECAUSE THERE ARE COARSE THINGS

What is being explained is that we can perceive coarse things such as a composite. So this section is showing the contradiction between accepting coarse things, which are functional phenomena, and not accepting the cause, which is permanent particles.

We begin with the assertion of the non-Buddhists.

Assertion: Since course things would have no cause if particles did not exist, particles do exist and, moreover, are permanent because of being causeless functional things.

Answer:

The effect destroys the cause; 218
Therefore the cause is not permanent.
Alternatively, where the cause
Exists the effect does not.

The logical assumption of the assertion of the non-Buddhists, which is seen as an absurdity by the Buddhist school, is that:

> Since course things would have no cause if particles did not exist, particles do exist ...

They assert that particles do exist because of the obvious result of a coalescence of particles which is a composite, or a coarse thing. However:

> ... moreover, [they] are permanent because of being causeless functional things.

So they assert the absurdity of the composite being permanent while at the same time being a causeless, functional phenomena. In order to refute the assertion that particles are permanent, the commentary explains:

> It follows that causal particles are not permanent, for just as the seed changes and disintegrates when the sprout is produced, the causal particles are destroyed by the production of the resultant composite.

The Buddhist school answers using the analogy of a seed: you can see that the seed changes when it begins to germinate. The seed breaks up and as it germinates it begins to sprout. So a transformation takes place and the earlier seed does not exist as it did earlier. There has definitely been an obvious change that we can see and relate to. This proves that the seed was not permanent, because if the seed was permanent then it could not change. However we do see the obvious change.

Likewise with particles in the composite. When particles coalesce and thus form a composite, they change to form the composite and therefore just as the seed disintegrates the particles also disintegrate. Thus particles cannot be permanent.

Then the non-Buddhist school raises the following:

> *Objection*: This is not established, for they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity.

Of course this seems to be contradicting their own view at an obvious level, because they are saying that the earlier cause disintegrates, and is thus impermanent. However the non-Buddhist school is also saying that, 'they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity'. So they are saying that the causal identity does not lose its identity when it brings about the result.

The second two lines of the verse serve to explain the response to that objection:

> Alternatively, since the presence of the causal particles in a place precludes that of the resultant composite, it follows that they are not cause and effect because of being simultaneous and occupying individual positions, like a pot and a woollen cloth in their respective places.

In their objection the non-Buddhist school posits or asserts that, 'they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity'. This is suggesting that the cause does not lose its identity and that it produces a separate effect. What this assertion implies is that there is a cause which, because it does not lose its identity, does not transform and change, and thus a separate sort of effect is produced. If that is the case, then the effect and the cause would be unrelated and separate.

One fault of this argument is that cause and effect would exist simultaneously, which is absurd. A cause and effect cannot exist simultaneously, and saying that such is the case fails the test of the interrelationship of cause and effect.

Furthermore, the cause and effect would occupy individual positions. The example in the text is that it is like a pot and a woollen cloth, which are completely separate objects. Thus a pot and a woollen cloth have their own identity; they have their own space that they occupy completely separately and they are unrelated. It is absurd for a cause and effect to be separate and unrelated.

© Tara Institute

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 August 2007

As usual it is appropriate to set the correct motivation.

1.2.4.3. WHY BUDDHAS DO NOT MENTION THE EXISTENCE OF PERMANENT PARTICLES

For the following reason, too, particles are not permanent: particles are obstructive in that they cannot be penetrated completely by other particles. That which is obstructive cannot be permanent.

A permanent thing that is obstructive 219
Is not seen anywhere.
Therefore Buddhas never say
That particles are permanent.

What is being explained here is that particles cannot be called permanent because of the reason that they are obstructive. Here the word 'obstructive' has the connotation of that which is tangible. It also has the connotation of that which has friction, and also obstructing something from being perceived, e.g. if we hold our hand in front of an object we cannot see the object, because our hand obstructs our view. To give another analogy if we hold a book in front of us it obstructs our vision, and we cannot see beyond it. It hinders our vision because it is an obstructive thing.

Space is not obstructive because it expands everywhere, and there is nothing that can hinder its existence as nothing can destroy space, thus it is a permanent phenomenon. Whereas clouds in the sky are obstructive, which is something we can notice when we are flying in an aeroplane that goes through the clouds. There is a turbulence, which indicates that clouds are obstructive phenomena and impermanent. The verse indicates that the reason that particles cannot be permanent is because they are obstructive. Thus, the Buddha has said, 'that which is obstructive can not be permanent'. This is also a reason why the Vaibhashika school assert that the sense faculty is actually a valid cognition. They say that it's a valid cognition when something is seen directly, and not a valid cognition when it cannot be perceived directly

For the time being we'll skip the Cittamatrin assertions that are mentioned in the text.

1.2.5. Refuting substantially established liberation

This is sub-divided into two:
1.2.5.1. Refuting the substantially established liberation of our own sectarians
1.2.5.2. Refuting the other sectarians liberation identified with the self

1.2.5.1. REFUTING THE SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED LIBERATION OF OUR OWN SECTARIANS

Here 'our own sectarians' refers to the Vaibhashika Buddhist school. As explained previously, this school asserts that everything which is established to be existent is substantially existent, and thus things are also truly existent. They also further assert that all things are functional phenomena. Functional phenomena are divided into two, permanent functional phenomena and impermanent functional phenomena. Thus, the Vaibhashika schools assert, liberation or cessation is a permanent functional phenomenon.

This heading is sub-divided into two:
1.2.5.1.1. Substantially established cessation is not feasible[1]
1.2.5.1.2. It contradicts the explanation that all suffering is abandoned in the sphere of nirvana

1.2.5.1.1. SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED CESSATION IS NOT FEASIBLE

Assertions of our own sectarians who do not understand uncompounded phenomena as merely nominal:

This is indicating the nature of the assertions that the Vaibhashika abide by, which is that they do not understand compounded phenomena as being merely nominal.

Although it is true that Buddhas do not mention permanent particles, they say uncompounded phenomena are permanent. Thus there is substantially existent cessation, which is like a dam. If this were not so it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth.

If liberation, which is other than 220
What binds, is bound and the means existed,
It should not be called liberation
Since nothing is produced from it.

The Vaibhashika's are asserting that just as the truth of suffering, the truth of origination and the truth of the path are all substantially existent, so, too, cessation (being one of the Four Noble Truths) also has to be substantially existent. Thus they are asserting that all of the Four Noble Truths have to be of similar type.

As indicated in the commentary, the Vaibhashikas assert that cessation is a substantially existent phenomenon. They use the analogy of the truth of cessation as being like a dam. They explain that the function of cessation is that just as a dam keeps the water at bay and prevents it from flowing down into the valley below, cessation functions to prevent delusions from arising again once they have been overcome. Cessation is an entity with the function of preventing delusions from arising again in the mind. That is how the Vaibhashikas explain cessation, and for them it is also a substantially existent phenomenon.

As mentioned previously the Vaibhashika assertion is that cessation is an entity which prevents the ever-afflicted phenomena (all delusions) from reoccurring again. This explanation of cessation implicitly seems to suggest that there is a danger of the delusions arising again. They explain cessation with the analogy of a dam, and their assertion as to the nature of cessation is that it is that which prevents delusions from arising in the future.

The last assertion of the Vaibhashikas is, 'If this were not

[1] Given in the text as Unfeasibility of substantially established cessation.

so it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth'. They claim that if the function of the truth of cessation was not as explained earlier, then it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth. In other words they are saying that the third noble truth is basically to prevent delusions from arising, i.e. cessation is both the cause and the effect preventing the various delusions from arising in the mind.

As the commentary explains:

> True sources bind to cyclic existence, true sufferings are that which is bound, and true paths are the means [or method] which liberate one from sufferings and their sources.

'True sources bind to cyclic existence', refers to the second noble truth which is the truth of origination. So true origins, which are basically delusions and karma, is that which binds sentient beings to cyclic existence. 'True sufferings are that which is bound' refers to the first noble truth, which is that sufferings which are a result of true originations, is what sentient beings are bound by in cyclic existence. 'True paths are the means which liberate one from suffering and their sources' refers to the third noble truth, true paths, which is the method that liberates one from suffering and its sources.

Having explained the entities of these three truths, true cessation is explained thus: true paths lead you to be free from the true sources and true sufferings and that entity of being free from the delusions is true cessation. As the commentary further explains:

> If liberation which is other than these were a functional phenomenon it should facilitate an effect, but it does not produce any effect and not the slightest facilitation occurs. Thus it is inappropriate to call such a substantially existent cessation, "liberation".

In order to understand the refutation of the Vaibhashika's assertions, one must first of all understand their assertions. The Vaibhashikas explicitly assert a substantially existent cessation. However with the analogy that cessation is like a dam they are implicitly implying that there is a possibility that the delusions could reoccur again.

The assertion of the Vaibhashikas is refuted by explaining the actual entities of the four noble truths. By explaining the three noble truths, the fourth truth, which is cessation, is understood. As explained here in the commentary, true sources are that which bind one to cyclic existence, true sufferings are that which is bound, and true paths are that which liberate one from suffering and its sources. Thus liberation is a state of having completely overcome the true sources. The result is that suffering is completely overcome so that it cannot reoccur ever again. There could not be another kind of liberation besides that mere negation, or the mere overcoming, of the true sources and the sufferings. 'Thus there cannot be a substantially existent cessation where the delusions reoccur again, as you have asserted'.

As it further mentions, the refutation is that the very establishment of the true paths implicitly establishes true cessation. The true paths are established as a means to overcome true sources, and true sufferings. Thus by engaging in the path one eventually completely overcomes the true sources and true sufferings. When that state has been obtained then that is liberation: there is no other liberation other than obtaining that cessation of true sources and true sufferings.

Thus cessation cannot be asserted as being substantially existent, because if it were to be a substantially existent phenomena, one would also have to imply that it produces an effect. But there is no effect as such, as true cessation is a state of a mere absence of true source and true sufferings and nothing more than that. Thus as it says here in the commentary, 'One should therefore accept liberation as a mere term, a mere imputation, and not as substantially existent'. 'Mere term' and 'mere imputation' implies that the cessation is a mere imputation. As such it is a mere overcoming or cessation of true sources and the true sufferings.

To quote from the commentary:

> It contradicts what the Teacher [Buddha] said: "Monks, these five are only names, past time, future time, space, nirvana and the person". One should therefore accept liberation as a mere term, a mere imputation and not substantially existent.

As this sutra explicitly states, cessation, or nirvana, is a mere imputation and a mere term. This means that there is no substantial or true existence in them, and that they are mere imputations.

1.2.5.1.2. IT CONTRADICTS THE EXPLANATION THAT ALL SUFFERING IS ABANDONED IN THE SPHERE OF NIRVANA

> ***In nirvana there are no aggregates*** ***221***
> ***And there cannot be a person.***
> ***What nirvana is there for one***
> ***Who is not seen in nirvana?***

The text says

> The Subduer said [referring to the Buddha], "That which is the complete abandonment, removal and extinction of this suffering … the abandonment of all the aggregates, the end of worldly existence and separation from attachment, is cessation and nirvana".
>
> According to proponents of functional things as truly existent, this citation means the aggregates are entirely non-existent in the sphere of nirvana. Nor can there be a person imputed on dependence upon them, for neither the reliance nor reliant exist.

The Vaibhashikas say that when a person reaches nirvana the aggregates become totally non-existent. So if the aggregates become totally non-existent then the person who is dependent on or related to the aggregates would also become non-existent.

Thus, according to this interpretation, there cannot be a person imputed in dependence upon the aggregates, for neither the reliance (meaning the aggregates) nor the reliant (meaning the person, the one who relies upon the aggregates) can then exist in nirvana.

As the commentary further reads:

> Neither the aggregates nor the person are seen as a truly existent reliance which reaches nirvana through the ending of disturbing attitudes and rebirth. What truly existent nirvana reliant upon that is there? Not

> the slightest, thus one should accept liberation, too, as a mere imputation.

The Vaibhashika assert that when nirvana with remainder is obtained, the being who obtains that nirvana still possesses the physical aggregates, which are in the nature of suffering. Thus the physical aggregate, their body, is still within the nature of suffering. Thus, the Vaibhashikas assert, Buddha Shakyamuni's body is in the nature of suffering. It is only when an arhat attains the liberation nirvana of non-remainder that they discard that body (which is the product of delusions and karma). Then they attain a state of cessation or nirvana where their continuum ceases to exist. Their aggregates cease to exist and the person ceases to exist. That is how the Vaibhashika assert the state of nirvana of non-remainder.

The way this is refuted is that if there are no aggregates, then how can there be a person who is reliant upon those aggregates. So how could there ever be a cessation if there is no one to attain that cessation? How could you ever establish that there is cessation? How could you establish nirvana? This is pointing out the absurdity, of asserting that the continuum of the aggregates completely cease when nirvana is obtained.

Thus as the commentary concludes:

> What truly existent nirvana reliant upon that is there? Not the slightest, thus one should accept liberation, too, as a mere imputation.

1.2.5.2. REFUTING OTHER SECTARIANS LIBERATION IDENTIFIED WITH THE SELF

This is sub-divided into three:
1.2.5.2.1. Refuting the permanent liberation consisting of a consciousness imputed by the Samkyas
1.2.5.2.2. Refuting permanent liberation consisting of the potential for the existence of consciousness
1.2.5.2.3. Suitability of the complete abandonment of conceptions of a selfless liberation

1.2.5.2.1. REFUTING THE PERMANENT LIBERATION CONSISTING OF A CONSCIOUSNESS IMPUTED BY THE SAMKYAS

> *Samkya assertion:* According to us there is no flaw that nirvana is not liberation because of lacking a reliance. When an adept understands that the principal and the person are different the process of involvement in cyclic existence such as the great one and so forth stops. When everything subsides into the latent state of the principle the conscious person remains alone. Thus there is a liberated self.
>
> *When free from attachment at [the time of] liberation* 222
>
> *What good is the existence of consciousness?*
> *Also to exist without consciousness*
> *Is clearly the same as not existing.*

The earlier assertion of the Vaibhashikas was that if you assert that the aggregates do not exist, then there would not be a reliant person at the time of attaining nirvana. Thus you cannot assert nirvana.

However the Samkyas say that there is no flaw in nirvana not being liberation because of lacking reliance. What is being asserted by the Samkyas here is that what is left at the time of obtaining nirvana is the primary nature. There are no aggregates or anything else left when nirvana is attained, only the primary or principal nature, which is the conscious person.

The Samkya assertion is that everything in cyclic existence is a mere manifestation of what is called the primary principle. So once the adept, or the practitioner, realises that everything is just a manifestation of this principle of the primary cause then everything fades away.

According to the Samkyas the process of obtaining liberation is when, through the instructions of their masters or teachers, an adept (or practitioner) engages in a meditative practice of seeing how everything is just a manifestation of the principle cause, which is just a manifestation of nature. In meditation that understanding becomes clearer and clearer.

Having obtained certain levels of concentration they obtain clairvoyance, and as a result they overcome manifest desires. With their realisation of how all existence is a mere manifestation of that principle cause, then it is as if the primary cause flushes with embarrassment, just as a naked woman would if she were to be seen. The principle cause flushes with embarrassment, so to speak, and for to the adept everything is seen to subside back into the latent state of the principle, which is nature. What remains is only the consciousness. So, they assert, what remains of the person is the mere consciousness.

The Samkyas assert that the state of liberation is, 'when everything subsides into the latency of the principle, the conscious person remains alone'. The Samkyas, through their meditative practices, obtain a certain level of meditative concentration, through which they also obtain certain level of clairvoyance. As a result of that they overcome the manifest levels of delusions, particularly in relation to the desire realms.

Thus they are able to attain a state of meditative concentration that is actually calm abiding. Because they can obtain a single-pointed state of concentration we state in our Buddhist texts that the attainment of the state of calm abiding is not unique to the Buddhist practice, as even non-Buddhists can obtain those states of concentration. The Samkyas assert that reaching that state in itself is the subsiding of the delusions, which they assert as being liberation.

As an answer to that. it says in the commentary:

> It follows that it is illogical to accept existence of a conscious person at that time of liberation when there is freedom from attachment to objects, because you assert that that intellect makes known to the person objects to which there is an attraction.

The main point of the Samkyas assertion is refuted by pointing out the absurdity of establishing that everything subsides into the latent state of the principle, leaving only the conscious person. However that goes against their own assertion which, as mentioned earlier, establishes that there are five different features of a person: that which possesses things, that which consumes food, and also that which has a consciousness able to cognise things. According to the Samkya assertion, when the state of liberation is obtained, everything subsides into the

latent state, which means that no external phenomena remains. So how could there be a person who possesses, if there is nothing to possess? How can there be a possessor? That is one absurdity.

Also, there is nothing to cognise as there is nothing that remains, because everything has subsided into a latent state. It is as if all existent phenomena go into that latent state, and that nothing is existent anymore. Thus how can a consciousness perceive anything if there is nothing to be perceived. These are the two main points that refute the Samkya assertion.

> What is the value of accepting the existence of consciousness during liberation? There is not the slightest value, because while accepting the conscious person as the experiencer of objects, the transformations which are experienced no longer exist, having subsided into latent state.

The answer to the question, 'What if the person remains without consciousness at liberation?', is explained in the last two lines of verse 222. Accepting the existence of a liberated person without consciousness clearly amounts to accepting the non-existence of the person. That is because of accepting that the person with the consciousness is of one nature with being either equally existent or non-existent. The analogy given in the commentary, but which has been left out of the translation is that it is like fire and heat. Since fire and heat are of one nature, if there is fire there has to be heat, and if there is heat there has to be the element of fire; they are mutually inclusive. Similarly a person and its consciousness are mutually inclusive — if one doesn't exist then you cannot expect the other to exist.

Thus the absurdity of the assertion is pointed out: they say that a person possesses certain qualities including a consciousness, but on attaining liberation only a consciousness exists. That is an absurdity because how can there be a consciousness without the person who possesses that consciousness?

Asserting that on obtaining liberation what remains is a consciousness of a person is absurd, because they say that there is no other existence at that time. The absurdity is that if there is only a consciousness there is no person to possess that consciousness. So how can a consciousness exist by itself? Furthermore because the very function of a consciousness is to perceive things, if there is nothing to perceive how can that consciousness be established? This leads to the point of where it becomes difficult for the Samkya to assert a person at all, or a consciousness by itself.

1.2.5.2.2. REFUTING PERMANENT LIBERATION CONSISTING OF A POTENTIAL FOR THE EXISTENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

If you remember, at the beginning the Samkya assertion is that they don't have a problem with there being no person, because they can establish that only a consciousness remains at the time of liberation. We have refuted that by pointing out the absurdity of having only a consciousness remaining. As they realise that they may be left without anything suitable to establish as a person, they now attempt to establish as follows:

> *Assertion:* There is a self during liberation, for though there is no actual consciousness, the potential to be conscious of objects exists.
>
> *Answer:* That too is illogical.
>
> *If at liberation a self existed* *223*
> *There could be a seed of consciousness.*
> *Without it there is no such speculation*
> *With regard to worldly existence.*

Because the Samkyas are having a hard time trying to establish a person, they have to establish something that obtains liberation. It is hard for them to pinpoint this, because each time they assert something that obtains liberation, it is being refuted.

Actually, as far as the non-Buddhist schools are concerned, the Samkyas are said to have the most advanced system of tenets. They have seemingly reasonable assertions about the nature of a person. The case is that if liberation is attained, then who is attaining the liberation? That a person does so, has been refuted. Then they asserted that consciousness remained, but that too has been refuted. Now they are asserting that there is no consciousness but the potential of consciousness, the potential to cognise things. That too is illogical.

> If at liberation a self existed, there could be such a potential seed of consciousness, but at that time there is no consciousness.

They try to establish that there is a potential consciousness, but if there is no liberated self there is no liberation. What is being pointed out here is that for there to be a potential consciousness there has to be a consciousness to begin with. But if there is no consciousness to begin with, how can you state that there is a potential or seed or consciousness. So the Samkya raise this objection:

> *Objection*: If there is no liberated self, there is no liberation and thus cyclic existence is indestructible. Many such unwanted entailments arise.

The response to this is:

> It is irrelevant to speculate whether, because there is consciousness, [people would or would not enter liberation] or whether, because the seed is truly existent, people would or would not enter worldly existence. It would be relevant if a self as reliance existed, but there is no liberated self.

In order to understand the assertions from the non-Buddhist schools and the different assertions within the Buddhist schools it would be good to read texts on tenets, and particularly *The Precious Garland*, which is quite easy to follow. When I taught the tenets earlier it was actually in relation to *The Precious Garland,* so that would be a good text for you, as you are already familiar with it.

Some of these non-Buddhist schools are actually quite advanced thinkers, so it is not so easy to refute them.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 August 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as possible'.

1.2.5.2.3. SUITABILITY OF THE COMPLETE ABANDONMENT OF CONCEPTIONS OF A SELF AS LIBERATION

It is certain that those liberated 224
From suffering have no other [self].
Therefore the end of the self
Should always be affirmed as good.

As the commentary explains:

> It is certain that in a state of nirvana, people who have gained liberation from suffering by completely abandoning the contaminated aggregates through the total elimination of disturbing attitudes and emotions have no other causeless permanent self which does not depend on aggregates.

When someone gains liberation it is the liberation from suffering by completely abandoning the contaminated aggregates through the total elimination of disturbing attitudes. So the total elimination of disturbing attitudes together with the abandonment of the contaminated aggregates is liberation. However there is no other causeless permanent self that does not depend on the aggregates. That being the case when a person attains liberation they abandon the contaminated aggregates.

What is implied here is that a person still depends on the aggregates. In other words, no person can attain nirvana or liberation without depending on aggregates. Even though the contaminated aggregates are abandoned because disturbing attitudes are completely abandoned, one cannot then conclude that there is a causeless permanent self at that time. That is not the case. Rather there is a self that is dependent on the aggregates, and it is this self which attains liberation.

> Therefore people who aspire to become free should always affirm that the complete ending forever of conceptions of a self is good and should never assert existence of such a useless liberated self.

'Useless liberated self' refers to a permanent self. Thus one should not assert that there is a permanent liberated self, but rather a self which is dependent on the aggregates. Not only is this explicitly stating that one cannot assert a permanent self, but it also implies that one cannot assert a self that is independently existent or inherently existent, because a self that does not rely on anything else would be an inherently existent self or a truly existent self.

1.3. Arguing the unsuitability of refuting true existence

Having from our own side, (the Prasangika viewpoint) established a non-inherently existent self, the next verse raises a debate with that assertion.

The conventional is preferable 225
But the ultimate never is.
Ordinary people have some [belief in this]
But none in the ultimate.

As the commentary reads:

> If during liberation there is no liberated self, and nirvana which is termed the ultimate is said to be the mere ending of conceptions of a self through the non-recurrence of that which is composite, what is the purpose of striving for such an ultimate? It is preferable for those interested in their own good to accept conventionalities like eyes, sprouts and so forth but not to assert any ultimate, for ordinary people have some belief in virtuous and non-virtuous actions…

This verse doesn't seem to be an original root text verse. It has been added to posit the principle question that will be refuted by the verses in chapter 10. The assertion is that if there is no liberated self at the time of liberation then this is in accordance with the assertions of the non-buddhist schools. If there is no self at the time of liberation then there is no point in reaching that state of nirvana as the self will cease to exist. So it is much more preferable to abide by the conventionalities of ordinary beings, who at least have the understandings of virtue and so forth. That seems to be preferable to achieving the state of nirvana where everything becomes nothing because there is no self existence at that time.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche reads:

> Discovering that external and internal dependently arising
> Phenomena exist in reliance, and understanding
> Their emptiness of existence by way of their own entities,
> Grow wise in the meaning of the middle way free from extremes.

The main point being emphasised here is that gaining an understanding of dependently arising phenomena will help to establish the understanding of emptiness. 'Discovering that external and internal dependent arising phenomena exist in reliance' means that everything that exists (both internal and external) is a dependent arising phenomena. This means that the very existence of internal and external phenomena is dependent on causes and conditions. For them to exist at all, they have to depend on causes and conditions, thus they are known to be interdependent phenomena.

Establishing things as being interdependent, or dependent on causes and conditions in itself, shows how things do not exist independently, or from their own side. 'Their emptiness of existence by way of their own entities', explains that one can understand their existence by way of their own entity. This means that the very entities of phenomena, which is that they are dependently arisen phenomena, will in themselves help

to establish the understanding of how things are empty of inherent existence. Thus 'grow wise in the meaning of the middle way free from extremes'; What is being established here is the profound understanding of emptiness - the middle way.

Thus the understanding of interdependent origination should complement the understanding of emptiness, which means the emptiness of inherent existence. If things were to independently exist in and of themselves then they would be inherently existent, and exist from their own side. However, because things are not independent and do not exist in and of themselves from their own side, they are empty. Thus they are in the nature of emptiness.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the ninth chapter from the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds** *showing how to meditate on the refutation of permanent functional phenomena.*

3.2.2.1.2. INDIVIDUAL REFUTATION OF TRULY EXISTENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA[1]

Here again it is good for one to understand the synonyms of truly existent phenomena. From the Prasangika point of view truly existent phenomena, inherently existent phenomena, and independently existent phenomena all mean the same thing. True existence or inherent existence or existing from its own side all mean the same thing and this is what is being refuted; that things or phenomena exist from their own side or are truly existent.

The individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena is sub-divided into five:

3.2.2.1.2.1. Refuting the self
3.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting truly existent time
3.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting true existence of that which is viewed
3.2.2.1.2.4. Refuting true existence of sense objects and organs
3.2.2.1.2.5. Refuting extreme conceptions

CHAPTER X: REFUTING THE SELF[2]

This chapter has two main sections.

1. Explanation of the material of the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter.

1. Explanation of the material of the chapter

The material in this chapter is divided into three main categories:

1.1. Individual refutations of the self
1.2. General refutation
1.3. Eliminating any fault of annihilation with regard to selflessness

1.1. Individual refutations of the self

The individual refutations of the self has four subdivisions:

1.1.1. Refuting the Vaisesika self
1.1.2. Refuting the self imputed by the Samkyas
1.1.3. Refuting the self imputed by the Naiyayikas
1.1.4. Explaining other refutations like that of the attributes and so forth

1.1.1. Refuting the Vaisesika self

It is good to remember the five main features of a self that the Vaisesika asserted which were explained earlier.[3]

One must understand that the refutation here is against the self that the non-buddhist Vaisesikas assert. It is not refuting the self entirely because, of course, all Buddhist schools assert a self. Furthermore a self, a person and a being are synonymous. So when we talk about a person or a being. they are synonymous with self. What is being refuted is the misinterpreted self of the non-buddhist schools.

As mentioned previously there are certain attributes of a self that all non-buddhist schools assert in common, and that is what is being negated: a self is permanent as it does not change from moment to moment; it does not depend on parts, and it is independent. We should keep the three main features of being permanent, partless and independent in mind, because those are the main features that are being refuted.

The Buddhist schools assert that there is a self but not a self of person, whereas the non-buddhist schools assert that there is a self of a person that is either a substantially existent self or a permanently existent self. Within the Buddhist schools there are some which assert that there is a substantially existent self but no Buddhist school asserts a permanent self.

Refuting the Vaisesika self is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.1. Refuting the nature of the self
1.1.1.2. Refuting the proofs

1.1.1.1. REFUTING THE NATURE OF THE SELF

This heading is then sub-divided into three:

1.1.1.1.1. The actual meaning
1.1.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder
1.1.1.1.3. [Unwanted or unfeasible] conclusion that generating the thought 'I' when observing another's self is reasonable

1.1.1.1.1. THE ACTUAL MEANING

What is being established here is how the Vaisesika assert the self.

> If the so-called self existed by way of its own entity [it should be seen in the state of nirvana]. Fearing its discontinuation because it is not seen during nirvana,

[1] This heading and numbering comes from the full heading structure of the text as outlined on 7 March 2006, 14 March 2006, and 10 July 2007.
3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth
3.2.2.1. Extensively explaining ultimate truth
3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena
The 5 subheadings of this heading form the content of chapters 10 to 14.

[2] The numbering of each chapter starts anew to keep the number of digits under control.

[3] The nine features of a self according to the Vaisesika can be found in footnote four of chapter 10, page 360.

they say, "The conventional is preferable," and so forth. However the self does not exist by way of its own entity, for if it did it should be male, female or neuter, but that is inappropriate.

When the inner self is not 226
Female, male or neuter,
It is only out of ignorance
That you think your own self male.

This is refuting the assertion that there is a self which exists independently, a truly existent self that is without causes and conditions. The commentary states, 'However the self does not exist by way of its own entity' where 'own entity' means existing from its own side. If the self were to exist by way of its own entity then it should be either male or female or neuter, but we cannot assert the self to be either of the three.

It explicitly says here that the self should be male, female or neuter. This indicates that if a self were to exist of its own entity then it would have to exist either as an entirely male entity, or an entirely female entity or an entirely neuter entity by itself, and that is obviously not the case. The existence of a male entity is a dependent arising because it relates to certain features that that are called male. Likewise because of the dependent arising features of a female entity you can call certain beings female. The Tibetan word for female *bume* has the connotation of a non-protruding organ, so that which does not have a protruding organ is a female. This shows that male or female or neuter is dependent on the features that characterise the entity. The Tibetan word *ma-ning* which is translated in the text as neuter, actually means having both organs. Apparently there are beings who have both organs in these times.

If the self were to exist permanently one would have to always exist as a male, or always as a female or always as a neuter. That, however, is not the case.

As the commentary further explains

> The Forders [which refers to this non-buddhist school] assert two selves an inner self and an outer self. The first is inside the body, and this inner agent which makes the very sense organs engage with objects is the focus of the conception "I".

It is explicitly explained here that what they assert as the inner self is the agent within the body, which makes the various sense organs engage with the objects, and which is the focus of the conception of 'I'.

> The second [external self] is a combination of the body and sense organs which assists the first [self].

The following quote refutes that inner and outer self, which this non-buddhist school asserts is a self that exists by way of its own entity:

> It follows that the inner self does not exist by way of its own entity. If it did a woman should in future lives too only ever be a woman, yet change is observed. Femaleness and so forth are also not attributes of the self. Thus it follows that the inner agential person does not exist by way of its own entity…

What is being explained here is that if the self were to exist by way of its own entity, then a female, for example, because of existing by way of its own entity, meaning that it exists from its own side, would have to always exist in that way. This means that a female would always have to be a female. However that goes against what we notice in lifetimes of definite change.

The commentary continues:

> … for when the inner self is neither female, male or neuter, it is just out ignorant confusion that you imagine your own self male. It is a fabrication like mistaking a mottled rope for a snake.

The refutation is, 'If a self were to exist by way of its own entity, a self of a male or female would always have to exist as that entity - a female always as a female, and a male always as a male. Otherwise you could not distinguish between male, female or neuter. Thus you are asserting a self to exist in that way only out of ignorant confusion'. The analogy that they give here is that mistakenly perceiving a mottled rope as a snake would only happen to someone who is ignorant of the fact that it is a rope. For someone who understands that it is a rope, that mistaken perception of a snake would not be there, and the person understands it as a rope.

1.1.1.1.2. REFUTING THE REJOINDER

> *Assertion*: Male gender, female gender and so forth are marks of the outer self. Through its connection with this the inner self is male and so forth.
>
> *Answer:* It follows that because of their connection with the outer self, the four great external elements would also be a male self and so forth. If that were so, all the elements would be the person, since for truly existent functional things there can be no differences between what is and is not male and so forth.
>
> *When all the elements are not* 227
> *Male female or neuter,*
> *How is it that which depends on them*
> *Male, female or neuter?*

As the commentary continues:

> When all elements do not have male, female or neuter gender, how can the inner self which relies upon the outer self—those elements—feasibly be male, female or neuter? It cannot. If all elements were male, female or neuter, it would follow that even during the early stages of the foetus, maleness and so forth should be observable.

If you say that the features of a male and female are because of the connection that the inner self has with the external self, then we would have to say that all external elements would have those features, because of the connection of the self with the external elements and so forth. However we do not see that all external elements have those features. Furthermore, if that were the case then if you were to say, in connection to the inner self, that the features exist by their own nature, or by their own side. This means that if those features were to exist in and of themselves without having to depend on other conditions they would already be distinguished by their nature from the beginning, and this would be so even at the early foetal stage.

The teachings describe all the stages from conception. In the beginning the foetus is like a creamy substance and then it becomes hardened a bit, like yoghurt, and so forth. So at these early stages just after conception we would

have to be able to distinguish the foetus as a male, female or neuter. But we can't distinguish between male, female or neuter at that time, which shows that the external conditions are required in order to establish the gender characteristics, and they do not exist by themselves, or from their own side.

The refutation of the non-buddhist school is based on their assertion of a self existing by way of its own nature or an inherently existing self. Thus, as mentioned earlier, they assert that there is an inner self and an outer self, and that the outer self assists the inner self. It is because the external self has the features of male, female or neuter that you can call the inner self male, female or neuter. That is how the external self assists the internal self, and that is how you can distinguish between the different sexes.

However if the refutation is based on the assertion of an inherently existent self, a self which exists in and of itself, then the external self would also have to exist in that way. It would also have to exist as either an inherently existent male or an inherently existent female. 'If you claim that which distinguishes the sexes is the inner nature, then you would also have to claim that the external elements would have to be able to be distinguished in that way. Furthermore if the internal self is inherently existent then the external self also has to exist in that way.'

Then the non-buddhist schools raise an objection saying that:

> The same error is entailed for you.

'You also talk about a dependently arising self who is dependent on aggregates'; (which is how the Buddhists establish the self.) So the non-buddhist school throws the question back to the Buddhists and raises an objection by saying, 'The same error is entailed to you', meaning, 'If you establish that the self is dependent on aggregates then just as you refute me when I say that external self assists in the internal self, that same error entails to you too.

However the Buddhist school says, 'That does not entail to us:

> Since we impute gender in dependence upon elements which lack inherent existence, there is no error.

This means that the self is a dependent arising which relies upon the aggregates, which are also dependently arisen. 'Thus we don't have that fault', say the Buddhists.

1.1.1.1.3. [UNWANTED] CONCLUSION GENERATING THE THOUGHT 'I' WHEN OBSERVING ANOTHER'S SELF IS REASONABLE

> It follows that the personal self is not established by way of its own entity. If it were, just as the thought "blue" arises universally in relation to blue, the thought "I" should arise in Yajna [the name of a person] when he observes Devadatta's self, but it does not.
>
> *Your self is not myself and thus there is* 228
> *No such self, since it is not ascertained.*
> *Does the conception not arise*
> *In relation to impermanent things?*

Remembering that non-buddhist school asserts that the self exists by way of its own entity, the main point here is that if the self were to exist by way of its own entity, then when you saw someone else's self, you would, by default, have to generate the feeling of 'I'. However that is not the case. When you see someone else's basis of a self you do not instinctively simply feel 'me' or 'I' based on their aggregates. If a self were to exist by way of its own entity, then by default that would have to be the case, and obviously that is not the case.

As the commentary reads:

> Since that which is yourself is not my own self, it follows that the object of your conception of "I" is not a self existing by way of its own entity, because it is not ascertained as an object of my conception of "I" or my attachment to the self.

The analogy being used here to emphasise the point is, 'just as the thought "blue" arises universally in relation to blue', similarly the conception of 'I' should arise whenever you view another person.

What is being explained here is that if the self were to be inherently existent self, or an entity existing in and of itself, then whoever views that self would instinctively have to feel 'me' just as like the analogy, where everyone who sees blue commonly perceives it as being blue. There is be no distinction in the perception of the blue object, so whoever sees blue would immediately think, 'I am seeing blue'.

Likewise if the self were to be an entity existing by way of itself then whoever views the self would have to think 'me'. This means that if you view someone else's self normally you would not think, 'This is me', because obviously it is a separate entity. However it is not like viewing blue, where everyone thinks, 'I am seeing blue' at the same time, as everyone has their own distinctive self.

Then as the commentary concludes:

> Therefore doesn't the thought "I" arise in relation to impermanent things called form and so forth? The self is only imputed.

'The thought "I" arise[s] in relation to impermanent things called form and so forth' means that the thought 'I' arises in relation to both physical and mental aggregates. The conception of 'I' arises in dependence upon the aggregates, and the causes and conditions to bring about the aggregates and so forth. Thus the self is only a merely imputed phenomenon; it is not a phenomenon which arises by itself, or which is an independently existent phenomena. Rather it is an imputed phenomenon.

Putting it another way to make clearer, the conception of 'I' is dependent on causes and conditions, and if the causes and conditions are not present then the conception of 'I' cannot arise. That is the main point. Thus the reason why you do not have the conception 'I' when you see someone else's aggregates and so forth is because the causes and conditions for the conception of 'I' do not come together. The causes and conditions for 'I' to arise in relation to one's self are the dependently arisen aggregates related to oneself. The 'I' is imputed in dependence on those causes and conditions of the

aggregates coming together, and thus the conception of 'I' arises in relation to that.

1.1.1.2. REFUTING THE PROOFS

This refers to refuting the proofs or assertions that the Vaisesikas make to show the existence of the self.

This heading has three sub-divisions:
1.1.1.2.1. Refuting that a permanent self is the cause of entering and leaving cyclic existence.
1.1.1.2.2. Refuting it as the activator of the body
1.1.1.2.3. Refuting proof of a permanent self

1.1.1.2.1. REFUTING THAT THE PERMANENT SELF IS THE CAUSE OF ENTERING AND LEAVING CYCLIC EXISTENCE

Assertion: The self is permanent because of being the one that enters and leaves cyclic existence. If there were no self, who would be in cyclic existence because of accumulating actions? Who would gain freedom from cyclic existence? Thus the self exists.

Answer:

From one rebirth to another 229
The person changes like the body.
It is illogical for yours to be
Separate from the body and permanent.

What the Vaisesika are asserting is that the self exists, and that it is a permanent self.

The answer to the assertion is:

It follows that it is illogical for the self you assert to be permanent and a separate entity from the body, because the person, like the body, changes from one rebirth as a god, human and so forth to another.

The manner of refuting the assertion is established by pointing out that the non-buddhist schools accept that a human can be reborn in the god realms, because they assert rebirth, and believe in rebirth in the divine god realms due to certain causes and conditions. What is being pointed out here is that when a person dies and is reborn in the divine god realms then their physical features change. That change obviously has to be accepted, so in that case, has the person changed or not? If they were to assert that it is only the body that has changed, then is the body the self or not? If they assert that the body is related to the self, then just as the body has changed, the self has to change too. Thus it is not permanent. We can obviously see the change of the body, so the self has changed and thus the self cannot be permanent. But if they assert that only the body has changed and that the self has not changed, then the absurdity would be that when a human is reborn as a god, they are only called a god but actually they are still a human, because they have not changed.

1.1.1.2.2. REFUTING IT AS THE ACTIVATOR OF THE BODY

The Vaisesika assert the self as being permanent. If they say that a permanent self is activating the body, then that is an absurdity. This sub-division is sub-divided into two.

1.1.1.2.2.1. Actual meaning
1.1.1.2.2.2. Showing what invalidates belief in a permanent self

1.1.1.2.2.1. Actual meaning

Assertion: Without a self there would be no physical movements such as stretching or flexing because the body would lack an activator. Thus an inner agential person exists who activates the body just as Devadatta drives his chariot.

Answer: That is illogical. It follows that your life force or self is not the instigator of physical movement because a self is not tangible.

Intangible things do not 230
Produce so called motility.
Thus the life force is not
Agent of the body's movements.

In relation to their asserting the self as being a permanent self the commentary says:

It is so because, just as a chariot can only be moved by something tangible and not by anything intangible, an intangible functional thing cannot actually move that which has form from one place to another. Though Vaisesikas assert that the self has form, they do not accept that it has an external tangibility and so forth.

The actual objection is not mentioned here in the text but there is actually an implied objection from the non-buddhist schools in that refutation. What is being refuted here is that if the agent is intangible how could it activate tangible things? If a chariot needs a person, which is a tangible thing, to activate it, similarly whenever an action is done by a person, like movement and so forth, it has to be tangible.

Then the objection raised by the non-buddhist school to the Buddhists is, 'Wouldn't you say then that the mind activates things?' According to the Buddhist school there is no error here. The Buddha points out in the following verse that there is no error because when we say the mind activates things, it is basically referring to motivation. There is not really a tangible activator, as it is the motivation which counts. Even when we accept the mind as being an activator it is not as if there is no contact with the mind at all. In fact when anything is absorbed by the mind there are the five ever-present mental factors. Within the five there is the mental factor called contact, which is the contact between the consciousness and the object that is being perceived. All of those factors coming together makes the contact between the consciousness and the object. So there is a contact there.

1.1.1.2.2.2. Showing what invalidates belief in a permanent self

Why [teach] non-violence and wonder about 231
Conditions for a permanent self
A diamond never has to be
Protected against woodworm.

Here again there is a refutation of the assertion of a permanent self, which the Buddhist school is refuting. As the commentary explains:

It follows that if the self is permanent, it is contradictory to teach non-violence as a practice to protect it from dangers such as bad rebirth or to wonder what conditions are not unfavourable to it, because nothing can harm a permanent functional thing, just as a diamond which is not in danger of harm is never protected from a woodworm, not does it need to be.

The non-buddhist schools commonly teach the acts of non-violence as ways of avoiding harm to others, in order

to not create negative karma. They also believe that if you engage in actions to harm others, then you are creating the causes for unfortunate rebirths. Thus you are harming yourself. What is being pointed out here is there is no point in teaching about non-violence and writing treatises about non-violence, because who is being harmed? If the self is a permanent phenomena it cannot be harmed, so what is the point of teaching non-violence when there is nothing to be harmed? The analogy given here is that a diamond does not need to be protected from a woodworm since a woodworm cannot possible destroy a diamond. It would be absurd to try to protect a diamond from a woodworm when the woodworm could not harm or destroy the diamond in any way. If the self was permanent then teaching about non-violence would be similar to that.

1.1.1.2.3. REFUTING PROOF OF A PERMANENT SELF

We can actually conclude here for the evening and explain this outline in the next session.

What is being established here in the text, before establishing one's own point of view, is a description of all the different assertions about the self that come from different schools of thought. In fact these are different tenets, meaning different systems of view. Each of these systems of view has been established with a lot of thought, reasoning and investigation. Our own Buddhist system is also established through a lot of investigation, logical reasons and so forth. It is not out of contempt that the Buddhist school refute the non-buddhist schools, but rather to establish one's own point of view by logically refuting the other kind of views.

The actual word for tenet in Tibetan is *drup ta* which incorporates a connotation of that which is the final assertion. So the actual meaning of tenet is final assertion. For the Buddhist school the final assertion is established by referring to what the Buddha said, along with one's own reasoning. By combining both citations from the Buddha and logical reasons, one comes to the point of being able to comfortably assert that this is how the nature of phenomena is established. When one can comfortably, through logical reasons as well as the citations from the Buddha's teachings combine these and come to the final conclusion, then that is when we call one's own final assertion, one's tenet.

Tenets are based on different views of reality. Thus tenets are established is in relation to views. Understanding the distinction between the view or tenets and the vehicle helps to understand how the path is established. Within the Mahayana vehicle there is a distinction between the Prajnaparamita or sutra vehicle, and the Vajrayana or tantra vehicle. However there is no distinction between the views of these two vehicles, even though the vehicles are different. You don't talk about a sutra or Prajnaparamita view and a tantra view, nor do you have a Sutrayana tenet or a Tantrayana tenet.

We will not have discussion for the next session, because I feel that it's better to continue on with the text.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཨ། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 September 2007

Sitting comfortably and distancing our mind from external distractions, we generate a positive motivation to receive the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best I can'.

1.1.1.2.3. REFUTING PROOF OF A PERMANENT SELF

Refuting proof of a permanent self is subdivided into three:

1.1.1.2.3.1. Seeing memory of past rebirths is unsuitable as proof of a permanent self
1.1.1.2.3.2. Unfeasibility of mindless matter remembering past rebirths
1.1.1.2.3.3. Entailment of permanence, if that which has attributes such as intelligence remembers past rebirths

1.1.1.2.3.1. Seeing memory of past rebirths is unsuitable as proof of a permanent self

The point being refuted is that remembrance of past lives shows that the self is permanent.

It is not the remembrance of past lives that is being refuted here, because according to our system there is remembrance of past lives. What is being refuted is that, according to the Vaisesika, the remembrance of past lives is proof that the self is a permanent entity.

> *Assertion:* The self is permanent because there is memory of previous rebirths. Memory of other lives is not feasible for composite things whose nature is to disintegrate as soon as it is produced.

This is the reason they give to indicate that the self is permanent.

> Answer:
>
> *If your self is permanent* 232
> *Because of remembering other lives*
> *How can your body be impermanent*
> *When you see a scar previously formed?*
>
> You may consider the self permanent because there is memory of past lives, like thinking, 'I was human in my last rebirth'. Then how could your body be impermanent? It should be permanent . . . .

There is remembrance of past lives: if one has been a human then the memory, 'I was a human in past lives', can occur for those who have memory of past lives.

The reason that the Vaisesikas give for the self being permanent is that for those who remember their past lives, such as human beings, that remembrance of a past life as a human being proves that the self that exists now, and has existed in the past, and thus the self is a permanent entity. The refutation to that assertion is:

> Then how could your body be impermanent? It should be permanent because in a past life you saw the scar of a wound inflicted on the body and now, when you see a birthmark which resembles that previously inflicted wound you say 'That is a scar of a wound inflicted in the past'.

The refutation is that if you were to assert that remembering a past life indicates that the self is a permanent phenomenon then would not the body also be a permanent phenomenon? There are certain marks, birthmarks in this life which are indications of having received wounds in the past. For example, if one has died in a battle, in the area of the body where one was wounded by weapons such as knives, one could be born with a birthmark. As one remembers one's past life and how one died from those wounds, these marks that one has on one's body now can be an indication of how one died. Carrying those birthmarks in this life would indicate that the body is also permanent.

Having refuted the Vaisesikas by pointing out the absurdity of their assertion, the Prasangikas present their view:

> According to us the object of the thought 'I' is co-extensive with both the self of the past and of this life. Since it is merely imputed, memory of past rebirths is feasible.

According to the Prasangika point of view, the existence of the memory of past lives is of course acceptable. What is established as the 'I' is the continuity of the past 'I', so even though the 'I' of this rebirth is not exactly the same 'I' of the past, the continuity of the 'I' is the same. Thus because the continuum is similar, you can establish a memory of a past life. The main point is that the 'I' of this life is a continuum of the 'I' of previous lifetimes.

That is also why it is mentioned in the teachings that the Buddha's 'I' consists of the continuum of the 'I' of a sentient being, because the Buddha was once a sentient being. Thus the Buddha can recall all the past memories as a sentient being, and this proves that the continuum of the 'I' is the same.

Thus the memory of past lives is established through the continuum of the previous 'I'. However the 'I' or the self is not a permanent entity: it cannot be established as being a permanent entity, or a truly existent entity, but rather it is an entity that is, as mentioned here, a merely imputed phenomenon. So the 'I' is a merely imputed phenomenon rather than being a truly existent phenomenon.

The analogy that is presented here in the commentary is that of a bowl of curd. The translation seems to miss out on the point of the explanation, which is that if a bowl of yoghurt is covered with a certain sort of grass and then a bird, such as a pigeon, lands on it, even though the feet or claws don't touch the yoghurt directly, an imprint in the shape of the feet is made through the grass. This refers to the fact that:

> all actions and agents are feasible for that which arises dependently

This means that even though things do not arise independently, in and of themselves, but are merely imputed, there is still a conventional existence of phenomena.

Because things are interdependently arisen, they lack inherent existence or true existence, yet they are able to function conventionally.

1.1.1.2.3.2. Unfeasibility of mindless matter remembering past rebirths

It follows that the self cannot remember past rebirths because it is asserted as mindless matter. It is also unreasonable to assert that it remembers past lives by virtue of having mind, because by first lacking memory and later possessing memory, it has given up its entity.

If the self when possessing that 233
Which has mind is a knower,
By that [same argument] that which has a mind would be
Mindless and the person permanent.

According to this reasoning that which does not have memory in the past, because of being a permanent entity, later transforms into an entity which has memory. This is pointing out the absurdity of the assertion that the self is permanent, because its whole entity has changed from the past to the present.

As the commentary reads:

If the self, despite being matter, is a knower of the past because of possessing that which has mind, by that [same argument] the attribute, that which has mind, should be mindless and matter because of possessing a self which is classified as matter? It follows that the self is not permanent because first it does not remember but later newly develops memory of past lives.

1.1.1.2.3.3. Entailment of permanence, if that which has attributes such as intelligence remembers past rebirths

A life force which has pleasure and so forth 234
Appears as various as pleasure and so forth
Thus like pleasure it is not
Suitable as something permanent.

The assertion in relation to this verse is a counter-question asking if the life force or self has mind because of having attributes like intelligence:

... because of having attributes like pleasure and pain, it should appear as different as pleasure and so forth while experiencing satisfaction and affliction. Thus like pleasure and so forth it cannot be permanent either.

This is pointing out the absurdity of asserting that the self is permanent. You have to accept the self as being impermanent, just as you accept the pleasure and pain experienced by the self as changing. There are times where pleasure is experienced and other times where pain is experienced, and afflictions and so forth come and go. Likewise the 'I' who experiences those changes should also go through change. Thus, the 'I' or the self cannot be permanent.

From our own experience, we make statements in relation to our experience of pleasure and pain, wellbeing and feeling unwell such as, 'I felt very well yesterday, but today I don't feel so well'. The one who experiences different kinds of feelings such as being well or unwell, or who experiences a sense of change occurring is related to the self, which also experiences change and pleasure and unpleasantness. If the self were permanent, that experience of change could not occur, and one could not refer to oneself as feeling one way or another at different times.

1.1.2. Refuting the self imputed by Samkhyas

This is subdivided into three

1.1.2.1. Unacceptability of asserting a permanent conscious person
1.1.2.2. Entailment that [the activity of experiencing] cannot stop until the conscious person, the substance, has disintegrated
1.1.2.3. Unacceptability of asserting that the person's nature [changes] from actual consciousness first to potential consciousness

1.1.2.1. UNACCEPTABILITY OF ASSERTING A PERMANENT CONSCIOUS PERSON

Samkhya assertion: If the self is asserted as matter these inconsistencies apply but since, according to us, the person's nature is to be conscious, there is not the least unwanted entailment.

If consciousness is permanent 235
An agent is superfluous
If fire is permanent
Fuel is unnecessary.

The Samkhya assertion is that the definition of a person is that which is consciousness. Thus the Samkhyas assert that person, consciousness, knowledge or cognition are synonymous. The Samkhyas actually define twenty-five categories of phenomena of which twenty-four are matter and the twenty-fifth is asserted as the knower, person and self.

As mentioned previously, the Samkhyas assert that everything is a product of the primary source, which is nature. When the individual realises that everything is a manifestation of the primary source, then they merge into the primary source and attain liberation.

According to our own system, all phenomena are divided into three categories: form or matter, consciousness and non-associated composites. The third category, which is non-composite phenomena, is divided into two: that which has life or mind, and that which does not have life. The instance of non-associated phenomena that has life is the person. The instance of non-associated phenomena that does not have life is imprints, the general impermanence and functionality of things and so forth.

The refutation of the Samkhya's assertion is as follows:

If the conscious person is asserted as permanent, it follows that agents such as the eyes and so forth which permit experience of objects are superfluous and useless because the person that experiences objects exists as a permanent functional thing. Fuel is needed to make a fire but if fire is permanent, fuel is unnecessary.

The Samkhyas assert, as mentioned earlier, that a person is basically consciousness and the consciousness that they assert is one primary consciousness, which functions through the sense faculties such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and body sense faculties. What is functioning through these faculties is the one consciousness, which is the primary consciousness. The analogy they use is that if there is one person in a house with six windows, then it would be the same person looking out of the house whatever window they choose to view things from.

Similarly there is only one main consciousness within oneself functioning through the five sense faculties that perceive external phenomena and the mental sense faculty that perceives internal phenomena (making six in total).

The refutation being made here is that if the consciousness which you assert as being a person is permanent, then you would not have to rely on the sense faculties in order to perceive objects. They would normally assert, just as we do, that three conditions need to take place in order for an object to be observed: the object itself, the sense faculty and the consciousness. It is through the contact of these three factors that things are observed.

'So according to your assertions', the Buddhists say, 'If the consciousness is permanent then it would not need to rely on the sense faculties, which would be useless because the consciousness could always perceive things, regardless of needing to rely on other factors'. The analogy is, if fire was permanent then it would constantly be burning and not require extra fuel for its continuity, but that is, of course, not the case. We all observe that fire obviously needs fuel for its continuity. A consciousness not needing to rely on the sense faculties because it was permanent would be similar to the fire being permanent and not needing fuel.

To recap the main point: if the self, or the consciousness, is permanent, then it would not have to rely on the sense faculties in order to function, just as fire would not have to rely on fuel for its continuity or function if it was permanent.

1.1.2.2. ENTAILMENT THAT [THE ACTIVITY OF EXPERIENCING] CANNOT STOP UNTIL THE CONSCIOUS PERSON, THE SUBSTANCE, HAS DISINTEGRATED

> *Assertion:* The person whose nature is potential consciousness is the experiencer of objects, and being conscious is the activity of experiencing. Since this depends on agents like the eye, there is no flaw.
>
> *Answer:* Movement does not occur unless, for instance, a tree is agitated by the wind, but those fallacies would entail movement until the substantial entity disintegrates. The phenomenon of activity depends on the substantial entity and is motion.

A substantial entity, unlike an action, 236
Does not alter until it disintegrates,
Thus it is improper to claim
The person exists but consciousness does not.

Following the earlier refutation of the assertion, the Samkhyas counter by asserting that the person, whose nature is potential consciousness, and who is the experiencer of objects, is still a permanent phenomenon, and can depend on other things. 'Being conscious is the experiencer' means that being conscious is the activity of the experiencing, which depends on agents like the eye, ear and so forth. 'Thus there is no flaw' means that even though it is permanent, the consciousness has a functional activity that is dependent on the eyes and so forth.

> The activity of moving depends on the substantial entity and may cease even though the substantial entity has not disintegrated. The nature of the substantial entity does not likewise change between its production and its disintegration. By contrast consciousness and the person are an indifferentiable permanent entity. Thus it is improper to claim that the person but not consciousness exists prior to experiencing an object.

The point being made here is that the Samkhyas' assertion implies that prior to an activity there is consciousness but not a person, and when an activity occurs there is a person but the consciousness does not exist. So they make a distinction between the consciousness and the actual person, the one who does the activity, thus implying there is a gap between the consciousness, which happens prior to the action, and the person who actually engages in the action.

The Samkhyas however have to accept that consciousness and person are an undifferentiated entity, meaning that consciousness and person cannot be separated, and are of one nature. By being of one nature, one could not possibly exist without the other at any time. Thus it is improper to claim that the person but not the consciousness exists prior to the experiencing of the object. This is the absurdity that is being pointed out in refutation of their assertions.

1.1.2.3. UNACCEPTABILITY OF ASSERTING THAT THE PERSON'S NATURE [CHANGES] FROM ACTUAL CONSCIOUSNESS FIRST TO POTENTIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Prior to the person engaging in an activity there is the assertion that:

> Although there is no consciousness prior to experiencing objects, it's potential and thus the person exists.
>
> Answer

At times one sees potential consciousness, 237
At others consciousness itself.
Because of being like molten iron
The person undergoes change.

The absurdity of their assertion is that prior to experiencing objects there is no consciousness. The fallacy arises because if there is no consciousness then how could a person exist? So in order to avoid that absurdity, what they state here is that even though there is no consciousness, there is the potential of consciousness. Thus there is the person because of the potential consciousness.

The Samkhyas first of all assert that prior to experiencing objects there is no actual consciousness. That might cause them to posit the absurdity that there is no person, so to avoid that they say even though there is no consciousness one can still posit a person existing, because there is the potential of consciousness. That is how they try to avoid that absurdity.

As the commentary reads:

> On occasion other than when objects are being experienced one sees potential consciousness, and when objects are being experienced, consciousness itself.

This is basically the assertion. The main refutation to their assertion is made with this analogy:

> In that case, like molten iron which later becomes solid mass, former potential consciousness later becomes actual consciousness. It therefore follows that the person

undergoes change because consciousness and the person are accepted as one entity.

Molten iron later becomes a solid mass, and even though its form changes, the continuity of iron stays. There is the obvious change from a liquid form into a solid mass, but the continuity is the same. Similarly if you assert that there is potential consciousness prior to the experience and later the actual consciousness then, by default, you are accepting the fact that something that was something else earlier changes into a different instance in the future. This means that if you accept that the potential consciousness transforms into consciousness, then you would have to accept that the person undergoes change. Thus because the Samkhyas assert consciousness as being the person, the person cannot be a permanent phenomenon, because it undergoes change.

The refutation of the assertion is made by pointing out the absurdity of their assertions by building on what they have already accepted. First, they assert that a person is consciousness, then they assert that prior to the experience there is no consciousness. Yet they assert that there is a person, so there has to be a person. But because they assert that there is no consciousness prior to the experience, when the absurdity of there not being a person is pointed out, they say that even though there is no consciousness, there is potential consciousness before the experience.

What is being pointed out here is that, just as molten iron later turns into a solid mass, likewise potential consciousness has to later turn into consciousness. Even though there is continuity, it goes through change. So if you are to accept that, you also have to accept that because the person and the consciousness are of one entity (because the Samkhyas assert the person to be consciousness), the earlier person, which is the potential consciousness, goes through change when it turns into consciousness. Thus by default the person changes and thus could not be a permanent phenomenon.

What one should understand from these assertions, debates and refutations is that what is being refuted is a permanent self i.e. the 'I', the person, or the self being a permanent phenomenon. What is being pointed out is the absurdity that if the person or the self were to be permanent, then there is no connection between the agent, the action, and the experiencer. So there is no interdependency between the person, the experience, and what is being experienced. If the self were permanent, it would have to be a constant thing, and there could not be any changes. However according to our system and our own experience too, there is change that is experienced, such as pleasure and pain. That indicates that the person is interdependent and goes through changes, and thus it is not a permanent phenomenon, a truly existent, or inherently existent phenomenon.

From these explanations, one should come to the conclusion that what we refer to as the self is devoid of a permanent entity, devoid of a truly existent entity or an inherently existent entity. What that means is that what we refer to as a self goes through changes in relation to the experiences one has: sometimes the self experiences pleasure, at other times unpleasant feelings. Not only do we have these experiences now, but they also go on to future lifetimes. What we refer to as the self is the one who creates the causes to experience pleasure or pain now and in the future. Thus there is a continuity which goes through constant change from this life on to the next life.

What goes on from this life to the next lifetime is not a self that is a permanent unchanging entity. Rather it is a constantly changing entity that continues on to future lifetimes. One must conclude in one's meditation and practice that the self is in constant fluctuation from moment to moment, and that it continues to exist in the next moment and on to future lifetimes. The causes created by the self now, will be experienced in the future, and that is how the self is established.

1.1.3. Refuting the self imputed by Naiyãyikas

The Naiyayikas are another non-Buddhist school, and they assert that the self is a single entity that is omnipresent and as vast as space. Space pervades throughout the universe and there is no distinction between different spaces as such. There is one space that pervades everywhere, and just as we have reflections of the one sky on many different lakes, similarly the single omnipresent entity of the self manifests in different forms, in different bodies. So what we see as different bodies are actually basically manifestations of that one and single omnipresent self. The Naiyayikas assert that omnipresent self as being a permanent self. There are two subdivisions within this category.

1.1.3.1. Refuting that a part of the self possessing a mere particle of mind perceives object
1.1.3.2. Refuting belief in a permanent omnipresent self

1.1.3.1. REFUTING THE PART OF THE SELF POSSESSING A MERE PARTICLE OF MIND PERCEIVES OBJECT

Naiyayika Assertion: Our person is not a conscious entity. Since a part of the self the mere size of a particle has mind, there is consciousness of objects. It depends on just this part with mind. A person that is conscious and not separate from mind is produced through this association. The person is permanent and very extensive like space.

> *Merely [a small part with] mind is conscious* 238
> *But the person is as vast as space.*
> *Therefore it would seem as though*
> *Its nature is not to be conscious.*

The assertions of the Naiyayikas are different from the Samkhyas, and they assert that the person is basically just a consciousness. So, within the non-Buddhist schools there are different assertions and different viewpoints too.

To refute the assertion of the Naiyayikas, the commentary explains:

> Since except for a part as small as a particle the rest of this permanent and extensive self is not associated with consciousness...

The absurdity of their assertion is pointed with the following analogy:

> ...that self's nature does not seem to have consciousness of objects.

The main point here is that if only a mere particle is considered as being the consciousness and the rest is permanent, then this self does not seem to have objects of consciousness. Basically what is being pointed out here is that a part of the consciousness as small as a particle would not be sufficient for a person to be able to be conscious of objects. This is pointed out with the following analogy:

> Just as it cannot be said that the water of the Ganges is salty because of contact with a grain of salt, it is inappropriate to assert that which is not conscious as the person.

This vivid analogy points out that placing a small grain of salt into the Ganges River couldn't possibly turn the whole Ganges River into salty water. Obviously everyone would be able to accept that this is not possible. The person is stated as being as vast as space, so a small 'particle of consciousness' could not possibly be sufficient for the person to be conscious of all objects. That is just absurd.

1.1.3.2. REFUTING BELIEF IN A PERMANENT OMNIPRESENT SELF

If the self is in everyone then why *239*
Does another not think of this one as 'I'?
It is unacceptable to say that
It is obscured by itself.

As the commentary explains:

> If there is a part-less permanent self which is omnipresent like space in each individual sentient being, why would another person not think 'I' in relation to my own self? It follows that they should think of it as 'I' because the two selves are one. It cannot be omnipresent if the object of someone else's conception of self is not my own self.

The refutation is of the Naiyayika assertion that the self is one omnipresent entity as vast as space. This omnipresent entity is in each individual sentient being. Basically what they are saying is that it is as if there is only one self that is distributed, so to speak, in different individuals.

According to their assertion, there couldn't be a difference between individuals, because they are part of the one omnipresent self. That would then mean that when you view someone else, you are actually viewing yourself. When you think about someone else, you would then have to think about yourself. However that is absurd because we have distinctive individual selves.

'If there is a distinction between the other's self and one's own self then your assertion of it being omnipresent does not stand. That could not be the case.' That is how the Naiyayika assertion is being refuted.

According to their assertion, one would have to have a sense of feeling 'I' when referring to others, and the experiences of others would have to relate to one's own experiences. Similarly if one were to remember someone else's past lives, then one would have to identify that memory as being one's own past lives too. However that is not the case. If one could remember the past lives of others, it would be in relation to their past lives. But one does not have the distinctive experience of their past lives being one's own past lives. According to the Naiyayika assertion, the entity of all beings is one, so remembering past lives of others would be equal to remembering one's own past lives and vice versa. However there is definitely a distinction because of the separate entities of oneself and the selves of others.

When one remembers the past lives of oneself in different aspects, such as in human or animal forms, one has the distinctive memory of it being oneself in the past, because of being of the same continuity in the previous lifetimes, regardless of the aspect or form as an animal or as a human. Whereas if one remembers or sees the past lives of others, one does not feel that connection. One is not associated with the memory of it as being one's own past lives. This indicates that that is a separate entity, a separate continuum from oneself. So when one sees the past lives of others, one does not relate to them as being oneself. In relation to the past, there is a distinction between sentient beings of the past lives of others and sentient beings of one's own past lives, which are of one's own continuity.

Similarly the innate grasping at the self is in relation to one's own self. One does not have that distinctive innate grasping at the self in relation to someone else's self. Again that is because of the fact that it is a separate continuum to oneself. Innate grasping within oneself arises only in relation to oneself and the continuum of oneself in the past. We refer to the self of others as being a person or a self or an 'I' but even though the term is used, the reason one does not generate that innate self-grasping in relation to other selves is because of being in a separate continuum.

Furthermore, when you see specific people, you refer to them as being 'my' friends, 'my' mother, 'my' father, 'my' family and relatives, and so forth. They are connected to the self and related to the self, but one does not experience them as being the self. The reason why one does not experience the entity of others' self as being oneself is because there is a separate continuum.

I will try to cover the following verses in Chapters 10 and 11 quickly, and we can spend more time on Chapter 12.

Perhaps in two more sessions we might finish this chapter. So I think that we might finish chapters 10 and 11 by the end of October.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett and Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 September 2007

As usual it would be most appropriate to set a motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1.4. Explaining other refutations like that of the attributes and so forth

This section is subdivided into three:
1.1.4.1. Asserting that though the principal is matter it is the creator of everything, amounts to madness
1.1.4.2. Contradiction of asserting that it creates virtue and non-virtue but does not experience their maturation
1.1.4.3. Refuting that a permanent self is the agent of actions and experiencer of their maturation

1.1.4.1. ASSERTING THAT THOUGH THE PRINCIPAL IS MATTER IT IS THE CREATOR OF EVERYTHING, AMOUNTS TO MADNESS

> *Samkhya assertion*: The great one, a synonym for the intellect, evolves from the principal which is matter and a balance of pleasure, pain and equanimity. The three I-principles evolve from the great one. Eleven faculties evolve from the I-principle associated with lightness: five mental faculties, five faculties for action and the speculative faculty. From the I-principle associated with motility come the five mere objects from which the five elements evolve. The I-principle of darkness acts as the basis for the other two I-principles.
>
> *There is no difference between* 240
> *The insane and those for whom*
> *The attributes are the creator*
> *But are never conscious.*

The non-Buddhist Samkhyas assert twenty five categories of phenomena. Except for the person, the rest of the twenty four categories of phenomena are asserted to be aggregates of particles and therefore matter.[1]

The twenty five categories of phenomena are:

The *principal*. The Samkhya assert that the principal, generality and nature are synonymous.

This principal has six attributes that are brought about causelessly. These are:

- It is permanent
- It is single and so without parts
- It is a creator of actions
- It is pervasive
- It is a mere object, i.e. it is not a consciousness that perceives things
- It is stabilised, with an equilibrium of the three qualities.

The Samkhya assert that the principal is not an effect, but is a cause for everything else to be produced. It is a cause but not an effect.

There are *seven mere objects* consisting of:

- The *five sense objects*
- The *great one*, which is synonymous with *intellect*
- The *I-principle,* (the Tibetan term *nga-gyal* is also translated as ego, the sense of 'me' or 'I')

These seven mere objects are both causes and effects.

The *person,* is neither a cause nor an effect.

The *eleven faculties* consisting of:

- The *five physical* or *action faculties*, which are speech, hands, feet, anus, and genitalia
- *The five sense faculties,* which are eye sense faculty, nose sense faculty, ear sense faculty, taste sense faculty and body or skin faculty
- *The mental or speculative faculty*

The *five elements,* which are earth, water, fire and wind plus space element.

These eleven faculties and five elements are said to be effects only and not causes.

Thus there are twenty five categories of phenomena, the primary cause which is the principal or the nature, and twenty four remaining phenomena that are caused by the principal.

This assertion of phenomena is considered as being like an assertion by an insane person, in that it doesn't make any sense at all.

There is a listing of 'pain, pleasure, and equanimity' in the assertion. In some texts equanimity refers specifically to ignorance, pain to anger, and pleasure to attachment, thus it can also refer to the three delusions as well.

'The three I-principles evolve from the great one'.

- The I-principle of lightness, which also has a literal translation of courage or bravery, is associated with the eleven faculties.
- The I-principle associated with motility gives rise to the five faculties for action, the five mere objects, and the speculative or mental faculty.
- The I-principle of darkness acts as the basis for the other two I-principles.

As the commentary further reads in explanation:

> It follows that it is contradictory to assert, as do the Samkhyas, that the principal which is a balance of the three attributes is the creator of all manifestations but is never conscious. There is not the least difference between those who assert the like and the insane whose perception is distorted.

The Samkhyas assert that the principal is the one who manifests everything, and that one of its attributes is that it is never conscious. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out. Thus, as the text says, 'There is not the least difference between those who assert the like and the insane whose perception is distorted'. This is indicating that only a person who does not have a clear understanding of reality would assert phenomena to exist in this way.

[1] A more detailed exposition of the Samkya tenets can be found in *Precious Garland of Tenets*, as translated in *Cutting Through Appearances*, pages 158-167.

1.1.4.2. CONTRADICTION OF ASSERTING THAT IT CREATES VIRTUE AND NON-VIRTUE BUT DOES NOT EXPERIENCE THEIR MATURATION

What is more illogical *241*
Than that the attributes should always
Know how to construct homes and so forth
But not know how to experience them?

As the commentary explains:

> Since such a contention contradicts reason and conflicts with worldly convention, it is utterly incorrect. What is more illogical than to claim that the attributes whose nature is pleasure, pain and equanimity know how to construct homes and so forth but do not know how to experience these amenities? It contradicts both reason and convention.

This quite vividly and clearly explains the absurdity of the Samkya assertion. They assert that it is the motility I-principle that allows the person associated with the I-principle to be able to stretch out, to sit down and to feel heaviness in the body and so forth. This I-principle that provides the motility allowing the person to for example sleep and relax lay back and so forth is due to the attributes of darkness. However they also assert that the I-principle doesn't experience the actions. Thus what is being asserted here is an absurdity that goes against not only logic but also conventional perception. So their assertion is contradicted even on a conventional level.

1.1.4.3. REFUTING THAT A PERMANENT SELF IS THE AGENT OF ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCER OF THEIR MATURATION

This relates to an assertion by the Vaisesika non-Buddhist school that there is a self, who is the one who initiates actions, but there are actions where there is no doer of the action.

> *Vaisesika assertion*: The self alone is the doer of actions and the experiencer of their maturation.
>
> *Answer:* If that is so, the self cannot be permanent.
>
> *The active is not permanent.* *242*
> *The ubiquitous is actionless.*
> *The actionless is like the non-existent.*
> *Why do you not prefer selflessness?*

Here the Vaisesika assert that the self is a doer of actions. But they also assert the self as being permanent. So if they accept the assertion that the self is a doer then they cannot also assert the self as being permanent.

If the self is an agent it must be accepted as causing action. If it does not perform actions it is unsuitable as an agent. If they assert the self to be the doer of an agent, then it could not be permanent. If it does not perform the action then it cannot be called an agent. If it is an agent then because it performs action, 'You could not assert it as being permanent'.

Furthermore:

> That which performs actions like coming and going is not permanent since one must admit that it differs from before.

This is pointing out how it cannot be permanent if there are actions of coming and going, as that indicates that there is a change taking place.

When an action is performed then there has to be a change due to that action. There should be a difference between the latter part of an action and the earlier part, because that is the very notion of an action - what was not done earlier is done later. 'That indicates that there is a change from the earlier to the later, thus you cannot claim it to be permanent', is the refutation.

As the commentary states:

> Something the whole of which is everywhere all the time does not perform activities such as coming and going, since there is no place or time it does not occupy.

That is how the earlier assertion is refuted. Then Vaisesikas reply:

> *Assertion:* Well then, an actionless self exists.

With this assertion that there is a self which is actionless this further refutation is presented:

> Since an actionless self is as non-existent as a sky flower, why do you not prefer selflessness? It is worth doing so, for understanding it frees one from all fears.

Following the earlier refutations of their assertion the Vaisesika come to a point of saying that a self exists and that it is an actionless self.

From the Prasangika point of view there is no such thing as an actionless self - it is the same as a sky flower. The analogy of a sky flower is that no flower grows in the sky, so it is a non-existent phenomena. It is far better to assert, as we do, that there is the selflessness of a person rather than asserting that there is a self that is actionless. While asserting an actionless self is meaningless, the assertion of selflessness will free one from all fears and lead one to liberation.

1.2. General refutation

This is sub-divided into four:
1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists
1.2.2. Impossibility of liberation from cyclic existence for a permanent self
1.2.3. Inappropriateness of asserting the existence of a self during liberation
1.2.4. Refuting a substantially established liberated [person] without a self

1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists

The implied assertion is:

> It follows that the conception of a personal self is erroneous. Since the self, if it existed, would do so by way of its own entity, it should appear without differences.
>
> *Some see it as ubiquitous and for some* *243*
> *The person is the mere [size of the] body.*
> *Some see it as a mere particle.*
> *The wise see it as non-existent.*

If a self exists in of itself, or was inherently existent, or truly existent, then whoever sees it would have to see it in that way. It would have to appear exactly in the same way to who ever saw it. However that is not the case.

As the commentary explains:

> Some such as Vaisesikas and Samkhyas see the self as existing in each body and as being ubiquitous like space.

As explained earlier these two non-Buddhist schools assert a self that is all pervasive, and pervasive means as expansive as space.

> Others such as Nirgranthas see that which has a body as proportionate to the size of that body, such as an ant's or an elephant's.

This non-Buddhist school asserts that the self is related to body size: those of small size like an ant have a small self and those as large as an elephant have a large self. If a body is as small as a particle or an atom then the self will be that small as well.

Thus, the commentary reads:

> Others, unable to accept this, see it as a mere particle.

These assertions are made because of the misconception of the self. If the self were to exist in and of itself then these different misconceptions would not arise in relation to it. That there are these different kinds of perceptions of the self indicates that the perception of an inherently existent self that exists in and of itself is a distorted point of view, which is a misconception. Thus the conclusion is:

> Those with the wisdom that perceives the suchness of functional things without distortion see the self as non-existent. Indeed, if the self existed by way of its own entity, the Forders' views would not differ.

The non-Buddhists share a common view of the self as being inherently existent, or existing in and of itself, so if the self were to actually exist in that way, all the misconceptions in relation to the self would have to be the same. But as mentioned previously there are different misconceptions about the self.

1.2.2. Impossibility of liberation from cyclic existence for a permanent self

> *How can what is permanent be harmed, 244*
> *Or the unharmed be liberated?*
> *Liberation is irrelevant*
> *For one whose self is permanent.*

As the commentary explains:

> For an opponent who asserts a permanent self, attaining liberation is irrelevant. How can that which is permanent be harmed by dangers and so forth in cyclic existence, and how can that which is unharmed in cyclic existence be liberated by subsequent meditation on the paths? It cannot for these very reasons.

This explains clearly that if a self is asserted to be a permanent entity then because of its very definition of permanence it cannot be changed. A permanent entity would be devoid of being harmed, and if something cannot be harmed then how can one say that they experience any suffering If no suffering is experienced then the wish to be free from that suffering will not occur. Thus liberation is not sought. The conclusion is that if a self is permanent then there could never be a liberated self and so the absurdity being presented here is that there would be no point in engaging in meditation on the path and so forth, because liberation would not be sought.

1.2.3. Inappropriateness of asserting the existence of a self during liberation

> *If the self exists it is inappropriate 245*
> *To think there is no self*
> *And false to claim one attains nirvana*
> *Through certain knowledge of reality.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> If the self exists by way of its own entity, it follows that thinking there is no self is inappropriate and that attainment of liberation is not feasible…

This line of reasoning should be quite obvious just by reading it.

> …since the basis for conceptions of a self is intact.

We recall that the attainment of liberation is not feasible since the basis of conception of the self is intact. As the text continues:

> Moreover the contention of these amazing people [which can be also read as weird or strange people] [who assert that the self exists but claim] that through ascertaining knowledge of suchness one abandons conceptions of a self and thereby attains nirvana would be false. Therefore those who seek liberation should accept selflessness

The main point here is that if one were to assert a personal self that exists in and of itself, then by adhering to that conception one could not obtain liberation. If one wishes to attain liberation one must acquire the realisation of selflessness.

1.2.4. Refuting a substantially established liberated [person] without a self

The point of this heading can be clearly understood from the following explanation:

> Fearing the absurd consequence that conceptions of a self would occur in the liberated state if the self exists, one might assert that though there is no self, there is a truly existent liberated person.

> *If it exists at liberation 246*
> *It should not be non-existent before.*
> *It is explained that what is seen*
> *Without anything is its nature.*

The refutation of the view expressed above is:

> It follows that there must be such a truly existent liberated person previously too during cyclic existence, because its entity, isolated from any associated factors, as perceived by unmistaken awareness, is said to be its nature. If there is no self during liberation, it should not be asserted as existing during the cycle of rebirths either.

A self is an interdependently arisen entity associated with many other factors for its existence. Basically the nature of a self is that it exists in relation to, or is dependent on, other factors or aggregates and so forth. That is how the self exists. The summary here is that if there is no self during liberation, then it should not be asserted as existing during the cycle of rebirths either. It would be absurd to assert that there is no self during liberation, while at the same time asserting that there is a self during

cyclic existence, because during liberation the liberated self is basically a continuity of the self of cyclic existence.

1.3. Eliminating any fault of annihilation with regard to selflessness

In our system we assert selflessness the objection might arise that if there is selflessness then there will be annihilation. The refutation of annihilation in regard to selflessness is sub-divided into four:

1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing

1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]

1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things

1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing

This point was brought up earlier. If we assert selflessness then the doubt may arise that there is a discontinuation of the transitory collection, which is the aggregates and the self. However there is no such fault as that.

> *Assertion:* If there is no self, composite things whose nature is to disintegrate moment by moment would discontinue because of disintegrating as soon as they are produced.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *If the impermanent discontinues* 247
> *How could there be grass at present?*
> *If, indeed, this were true,*
> *No one would have ignorance either.*

The non-Buddhist schools assert that the self is permanent. Their contention is that if we were to assert the self as being impermanent then it would have to discontinue, because the moment that it is produced it changes and disintegrates. The refutation to that assertion is:

> Understanding impermanence to mean discontinuation is unacceptable. If it did, how could there today be fields and grass whose continuity is beginningless? There should not be any, for if impermanence meant discontinuation, then whatever is impermanent would have the defect of discontinuing. If the view that whatever is impermanent discontinues were true, it follows that no one would have ignorance because it is impermanent. It also follows that pleasure and desire would not occur either.

1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]

> *Even if the self exists* 248
> *Form is seen to arise from other [causes],*
> *To continue by virtue of others*
> *And to disintegrate through others.*

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary thus:

> It follows that even if the self exists, it is not acceptable as the initiating cause of things which are seen to arise exclusively from other causes. Fire arises from the contact between sunlight and a fire-crystal, water from the contact between moonlight and a water-crystal, the sprout from the seed, and forms such as the sense organs from an earlier stage of the fetus. They continue because of other factors: fire keeps burning because of fuel and so forth and just as it does not burn when there is insufficient fuel, they disintegrate through other factors. The self cannot exist for if it did, it alone should produce all effects.

1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things

> *Just as the sprout which is a product* 249
> *Is produced from a product, the seed,*
> *Similarly all that is impermanent*
> *Comes from the impermanent.*
>
> An effect cannot arise from something permanent and thus, just as the sprout, a product, arises from the seed which is a products all that is impermanent comes from impermanent causes. Therefore composite things, undergoing production and disintegration moment by moment, can never be permanent nor discontinue.

The main point here is that if something was permanent then it could not produce anything, nothing could arise, and no effects could be produced. The interdependent relationship between a cause and an effect exists only within impermanent phenomena and cannot exist within permanent phenomena.

1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

> The thunderbolts of permanence and annihilation which strike and destroy the relationship of cause and effect between composite things are driven off to a distance by the wise with the mantra of dependent arising.
>
> *Since functional things arise* 250
> *There is no discontinuation*
> *And because they cease*
> *There is no permanence.*
>
> Since resultant things like sprouts arise and are produced, the cause's continuum is not in danger of being annihilated. Since the seed ceases once the sprout has been produced, the cause is not in danger of being permanent.

There is no danger of either annihilation or permanence in instances of a cause and effect sequence.

This is of course a refutation of the non-Buddhist assertion that the reason why they assert a person to be permanent is because they fear the annihilation of the person. Thus they assert a person as being permanent. However according to the Buddhist school there is no danger of annihilation. With the external cause and effect of the seed and the sprout the first moment of the seed remains in the continuation. We can obviously see that with external phenomena. Likewise establishing the person as being permanent phenomena will not bring about the fault of the person or the self discontinuing or being annihilated.

The Fundamental [Treatise Called] Wisdom says:
Whatever has arisen depending on something
Is firstly not [one with] it

and so forth.

In brief this shows how permanence and annihilation are avoided in relation to the conventional.

The summarising stanza from Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

Through familiarity with meditating on
The impermanence suffering and uncleanness of cyclic existence,
Abandon the limitless views of the self,
Both innate and those imputed by tenets.

The meaning of this verse is quite clear. Through familiarity with meditating on impermanence, suffering and the uncleanliness of cyclic existence as explained earlier, one abandons the limitless views of the self. 'Limitless views of the self' indicates the innate views and those views imputed by tenets. The 'views imputed by tenets' relates to the distorted views of the self that were presented earlier with the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools. 'Innate views' refers to the innate grasping at the self that we have had from beginningless times, and our ignorance of the innate grasping at the self that we have. So both innate grasping at the self, as well as the self that is imputed by tenets are overcome through meditation.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the tenth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on refuting the self.

I think we can cover chapter 11 in about two sessions and then we can spend more time on chapter 12.

The practical benefit that we can derive from studying texts like this is that their complexity shows how the Buddha taught the true path by firstly overcoming all the different misconceptions. Studying and trying to gain an understanding of these texts is worthwhile, because they will help to generate strong faith in the Buddha. The Buddha taught the right view by negating the many other distorted views. In this way he established the right view, which once established becomes very firm and stable, and can lead us to our ultimate goals. So it is very useful for us to really gain some understanding of how the Buddha's teachings are presented and thus gain a strong faith in the skilful means the Buddha used in leading us disciples onto the virtuous and righteous path.

In that way it is good for us to make strong aspirational prayers such as, 'While striving for the right view in following the righteous path, may I never encounter the wrong views of the mistaken path, and may I never be influenced by these wrong views'.

We can also make the strong aspiration, 'May I never separated from such a perfect unmistaken path such as the Buddha's teachings. It is amazing that I have this opportunity now to be able to study and practice such a pure path, and it is definitely the result of numerous previous merits that I have created in the past'. While one appreciates the great opportunity one has now, one makes strong aspirations to never be separated in the future from this pure path, and to be continuously able to engage in practice and further study, and gain more and more understanding and knowledge of the unmistaken pure path leading to liberation and enlightenment. It will definitely benefit us, if we make such aspirational prayers.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 September 2007

As normal we set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice as best as I can'.

CHAPTER XI: INDIVIDUAL REFUTATION OF TRULY EXISTENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA: REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT TIME

This chapter establishes that time is neither truly existent nor inherently existent. To establish that, one needs to see the faults that would arise from the various assertions about the way time exists. Keep that in mind as we study this chapter.

The two main headings of this chapter are:

1. Explaining the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter.

1. Explaining the material in the chapter

Explaining the material of the chapter has two main sections:
1.1. Refuting that time is substantially established by nature
1.2. Refuting the proof [of substantially established time]

1.1. Refuting that time is substantially established by nature

This section is sub-divided into three:

1.1.1. Refuting the past and the future
1.1.2. Refutation by examining whether the effect exists or not
1.1.3. Refuting a truly existent present

1.1.1. Refuting the past and the future

Refuting the past and the future has three sub-divisions:

1.1.1.1. Refuting a substantially established future
1.1.1.2. Refuting a substantially established past
1.1.1.3. Detailed refutation of the future

1.1.1.1. REFUTING A SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED FUTURE

This heading has four sub-headings:

1.1.1.1.1. Showing the fallacies if the future is truly existent
1.1.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder
1.1.1.1.3. Consequence that it is present if substantially established
1.1.1.1.4. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if all three times are substantially existent

1.1.1.1.1. SHOWING THE FALLACIES IF THE FUTURE IS TRULY EXISTENT

> *Assertion of Vaidantikas and other proponents of permanent time* [including the Vaibhasikas]*:* Though it is correct to admit that a permanent self does not exist since it is not established by either direct or inferential cognition, permanent functional things are not non-existent since there is permanent time. Though water, manure, seeds and so forth are present, one observes that sprouts, flowers and the like are not produced at certain times but are produced at others. From this one can infer the presence of another cause which is time. Though it is a permanent entity different from the functional things which exist in the three times, it is revealed in terms of instants, moments, brief spans, and so forth.

'Though it is correct to admit that a permanent self does not exist' indicates that the Vaidantikas, and other proponents of permanent time, agree that there could not be a permanent self, and the reason they give is that a permanent self cannot be 'established by either direct or inferential cognition'. Things that can be directly observed refers to things we observe with our direct sense perception, such as seeing a pot or cup directly with our eyes. Inferential cognition refers to things that we can perceive only through inference, which means through reason, such as establishing that form is impermanent. The impermanence of form cannot be perceived directly by our sense perceptions, but only through inference.

Thus, as the Vaidantikas explain, they agree that the self is not permanent because it cannot be perceived as permanent either directly or by inference. They say, however, that there are permanent functional things like time. Their reason is that when a seed sprouts it needs manure and water and so forth, but even when all the conditions are present it is not certain whether the seed will sprout. There has to be another condition for the seed to sprout and this other condition or factor is time. So, they assert, time is a permanent functional thing, and all three times (referring to the past, present and future) are asserted as being permanent.

They say that time is a permanent entity different from normal functional things and it reveals itself in terms of instances. In relation to a seed and its sprout, from the moment the seed is planted in the fertile ground one begins to see change occurring. Through instants, moments, and brief spans of time one can see the seed transforming slowly into a sprout. That is what indicates that time is also a cause.

In our system we accept that the effect, which is a sprout coming from a seed, is dependent on time. However, unlike the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools the sprouting of the seed is not a dependent time that is permanent, or a time that is truly existent. That is where our system differs in explaining how time exists and that the production of sprouts from seeds and so forth depends on time. It does not however depend on a truly existent, or permanent time, or a substantial entity that is completely separate from time.

Thus we establish our own understanding from the Buddhist point of view. Of course time does exist,

however when refuting the non-Buddhist schools and establishing that time is impermanent, one must try to understand what impermanence means, how things are impermanent, and furthermore how time is established as being not truly existent. What one should derive from that understanding is how time is empty of true existence, and empty of inherent existence and thus gain an understanding of emptiness. The main point of refuting the non-Buddhist schools is to establish our own point of view that everything is empty of inherent existence. The main thing we establish here is an understanding of emptiness, which is something one needs to develop as we go through the text.

> *Answer:* This is unacceptable, for if time were an entity different from functional things it should be perceived but it is not perceived. That has already been refuted.

This was mentioned in one of the earlier verses.

> *The present pot and the past one* 251
> *Do not exist in the future pot.*
> *Since both would be future,*
> *The future would not exist.*

The refutation is made by taking a future pot to represent future time, as well as the other two times.

> It follows that the present pot does not exist in the future pot, nor does the past pot exist at that time, for if they both existed at that time, time would be disrupted, since things which are to occur later would already exist at an earlier time.

As the commentary points out, the main refutation is in reference to time being disrupted, in the sense that you could not establish time. As well as refuting the non-Buddhist schools, this refutation relates to the assertion of one of the four schools within the Buddhist Vaibhasika school, which is that time and so forth is substantially existent phenomena.

We will leave out the assertions of the other Vaibhasika schools for the time being. Here we are only concerned with the Vaibhasika school that asserts that time exists in the past, the present and the future. The analogy that they use to establish their assertion is that if, for example, someone is attached to a particular woman, it would not be the case that he does not have any attachment to other women. That woman is his primary object of attachment and it may seem as if he is only attached to that one woman. But in fact he does have attachment to other women as well.

Just as this man has a primary focus of attachment, so too time exists at all three times, but with different intensity. In the present the stronger and more established of the three times is the present, while in the past the more strongly established time would be the past, and similarly with the future. That is how this Vaibhasika sub-school asserts time.

The non-Buddhist schools and this particular Vaibhasika sub-school assert that as this is the case, time exists in all the three times. The refutation of the disruption of time is that you would have to assert that the past and present pots exist in the future pot. If that were the case then it would be an absurdity. The reason time is disrupted, is because according to their assertion the future pot would already exist. How could we say the past and present pots already exist in the future, or that the future pot already exists now in the present? As it mentions in the commentary:

> Also at any one time another cannot exist. For these reasons, since both the past and present would be future if they existed at the time of the future pot, they do not already exist at that time.

If a past and present pot existed in the future, the past and present pot would already exist before the future occurs - the future pot would already exist before it was the future. If the past and present were to exist in the future, then the past and present would have to be the future. So:

> If the future of the future existed by way of its own entity, it should be future. In that case since all three times would have to be future…

If the past and present were the future, then all three times would have to be the future. Then by default,

> …there could not be any past or present.

If past and present were to be the future then all three times would have to be the future, but in that case there couldn't be a future, because what we call the future depends on the past and present. The future itself is reliant on the past and present, so if past and present were the future then, by default, you couldn't have the future as well.

As the commentary concludes:

> If that were so, the future itself would not exist, since it could not be posited as future in relation to anything.

1.1.1.1.2. REFUTING THE REJOINDER

> *Assertion:* The past pot is not altogether non-existent in the future pot. Since there is a part of it which has not yet come into existence as an entity that has occurred, there is no error.

This is saying that there is a pot which is in the future, and there is a pot of the past, so it is not as if the pot doesn't exist at all.

> *Answer:*
> *If a disintegrated thing exists as* 252
> *A future entity in the future,*
> *How can what is future in nature*
> *Become that which is past?*
>
> If at the time of the future pot, [the term 'vase' could also be used, but this translation uses 'pot'], the disintegrated pot existed in the future as an entity which had not yet come into existence, it would follow that the past pot was future because of being, by way of its own entity…

This is all in relation to true existence. Therefore if you assert that, 'at the time of the future pot the disintegrated pot existed in the future as an entity, which has not yet come into existence, it would follow that a past pot was future, because of being by way of its own entity',

> …that which had not yet occurred at the time of the future pot.

The refutation is that if there is a disintegrated pot that you say is the future pot, then that is its own entity, and it exists in that way in the present. The main point here is that if the disintegration of the pot is established in the future, then what is actually being established as a pot in the future is the past pot, because the disintegration of the pot is the past of the pot. The very term 'disintegration' indicates the past, so if it is established that the disintegration of the pot is in the future, then by default you are saying that the past of the pot is in the future.

The commentary concludes:

> If this is accepted, it follows that there would be no past. This would necessarily be so, for how could anything that truly existed as future in nature become past? It is contradictory. Moreover by virtue of this reasoning, if the future in relation to the pot is asserted as truly existent it must be accepted as being only future, which undermines the contention.

1.1.1.1.3. CONSEQUENCE THAT IT IS PRESENT IF SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED

Because of being future in nature 253
A future functional thing
Is thus present
And cannot be future.

The commentary explains the verse thus:

> If, according to proponents of permanent time, future things exist, it follows that the future pot is present because of already being in the nature of a future substantially existent thing. If something exists as a substantially established entity, it must be present since it has been produced and has not disintegrated. If this is accepted, it follows that it cannot be future.

The way the assertion is being refuted is that if you establish that the future is existent, then it would have to exist in the present, which by default means that as the future is in the present, the future could not be established.

As the commentary says, 'If something exists as substantially established entity, it must be present since it has been produced and has not disintegrated. If this is accepted it follows that it cannot be future'. According to the reasons given earlier, if that is established, 'it follows that it cannot be the future', which means then you cannot establish the future, and thus the future cannot exist.

This is in relation to the present, and according to the assertion if the future is established as being in existence now, then the contradiction is that a future could not exist.

1.1.1.1.4. CONSEQUENCE THAT IMPERMANENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE IF ALL THREE TIMES ARE SUBSTANTIALLY EXISTENT

If the future, past and present exist, 254
What does not exist?
How can there be impermanence
For one for whom all times exist?

As the commentary explains:

> If, as asserted by Vaisesikas, Vaibhasikas and so forth, things existent by way of their own character exist in the future, exist in the past and exist in the present, what part of a thing could ever not exist? How can there be impermanence for a proponent of substantially existent time?

This is in relation to a substantially existent past, present and future at any time.

> It follows that there cannot be any impermanent things, for if all three times are substantially existent, whatever exists at an earlier time must be accepted as existing later and whatever exists at a later time must be accepted as existing earlier.

In other words, what is being refuted is that if all three times were to be substantially existent, then that would mean that what we call the past would have to exist in the present as well as in the future, and the future would also have to exist in the present and in the past. In that case there could not be any change from the past to the present to the future, and thus nothing could be established as being impermanent.

The main point being refuted here is that if time was to be established as being substantially existent or truly existent, then time could not be established as impermanent phenomena.

If all three times were asserted as being substantially existent, and furthermore if they were established as being truly existent, then there would be no past, present or future. They would be only mere terms. What we call the past would also exist in the present, and as mentioned previously the future and the present would not have to depend on each other, because they would be truly existent in their own right. Thus there would be no interdependent relationship between the past, present and future. In reality the very establishment of past, present and future indicates that there is a dependence between past phenomena, and the present, which exists at this time, and from the present to the future.

1.1.1.2. REFUTING A SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED PAST

> The future is not substantially existent since future time cannot exist in the future. Similarly has the past passed beyond its own nature as the past or not?

If it has passed beyond the past 255
Why is it the past?
If it has not passed beyond the past
Why is it the past?

We have refuted the future as being substantially existent so, the question then is whether the past is also substantially existent or not? Has it passed beyond its own nature as the past, whether it exists as substantially existent or not?

As the commentary explains:

> In the first case, why is it the past? It follows that it is not the past because of having passed beyond and gone from the past…

If it is in the past time then it has already passed, so how could it exist if it already has passed in the past.

> In the second case, for what reason is it the past? It follows that it is not the past for it has not passed beyond being a past substantial entity but continues to exist as a substantial entity performing a function.

1.1.1.3. DETAILED REFUTATION OF THE FUTURE

This is subdivided into two sections:
1.1.1.3.1. Refuting the assertions of Vaibhasikas and so forth
1.1.1.3.2. Refuting the assertions of Sautrantikas and so forth

1.1.1.3.1. REFUTING THE ASSERTIONS OF VAIBHASIKAS AND SO FORTH

This has four sub-headings:
1.1.1.3.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the future is produced or unproduced
1.1.1.3.1.2. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if the two times are substantially established
1.1.1.3.1.3. Showing that the existence of future functional things is absurd;
1.1.1.3.1.4. Consequence that things already produced are produced again
1.1.1.3.1.5. Refuting that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things.

1.1.1.3.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the future is produced or unproduced

This is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.3.1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.1.1.3.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

1.1.1.3.1.1.1. Actual meaning

Regarding Vaibhasikas and so forth who assert that there is a common locus of a pot and the future:

If the future is produced *256*
Why is it not present?
If it is unproduced
Is the future permanent or what?

If a produced future pot exists, why is it not present? It follows that it should be, because it has been produced and has not ceased. If it is not produced, is the future pot permanent or what? It follows that it should be permanent because of being an unproduced thing.

This is refuting the assertion of the non-Buddhist school establishing an existent future pot. According to our system if a pot exists it has to exist right now in the present, and a future pot does not exist right now. However the non-Buddhists system establishes a future existent pot. Thus the question asked of them is that if the future pot exists then is it a produced pot or not? If it is a produced pot then it has to be present, because it has already been produced.

'If it is a produced pot then it has to be present, "because it is produced and has not ceased". Where else could it be but in the present? Therefore what is termed here as being future pot by you is in fact actually the present.

'If you establish that the future pot is not produced then the line of reasoning would follow that because it is an unproduced pot then it would have to be permanent pot.'

1.1.1.3.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

Refuting the rejoinder means refuting the rejoinder made by the non-Buddhists in response to the earlier refutation of a produced future pot. If it is produced then it has to be present, but if it is not produced then it has to be permanent. To that they assert:

Assertion: Although the future is unproduced, causes and conditions make it become the present, thus it is not permanent.

Answer:

If the future is impermanent because *257*
Though not produced it disintegrates,
Since the past does not disintegrate
Why not consider it permanent?

If even though the future is not produced, the future pot is impermanent because it subsequently disintegrates, why not consider the past pot permanent since it does not disintegrate? It follows that it is permanent because of being a thing which does not disintegrate.

1.1.1.3.1.2. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if the two times are substantially established

Alternatively, what is impermanent according to you?

If the past and present *258*
Are not impermanent,
The third which is different
From these is also not.

The past and present are not impermanent because the past cannot disintegrate. If the present is impermanent by way of its own entity, through its subsequent connection with disintegration it follows that disintegration, too, is impermanent.

This is in relation to the earlier assertion that the future does not disintegrate. As mentioned here, 'Through its subsequent connection with disintegration, it follows that disintegration too is impermanent'. The refutation, as presented here, is that the past and present are not impermanent, because the past cannot disintegrate. If the present is impermanent by way of its own entity (as asserted), then through its subsequent connection with disintegration it follows that disintegration too is impermanent…

Since the third which is different from both the past and present, namely the future, also is not impermanent, there is nothing impermanent for proponents of inherently existent things. Thus it is inappropriate for them to assert the existence of time.

The non-Buddhist school and some Vaibhasika divisions assert time as being either substantially existent or truly existent. If that is asserted, then the main refutation is that time could not be established as an impermanent phenomena.

Their first assertion, that the past and present are substantially existent has been refuted, which also refutes the future as being substantially existent as well. If they were to assert that the past, present and future are substantially existent, then they could not be impermanent phenomena.

1.1.1.3.1.3. Showing that the existence of future functional things is absurd

Assertion: Future things exist because they are produced later when the conditions obtain. That which is previously non-existent, like a barren woman's child, will not be produced later.

Answer:

> *If a thing which will be produced* 259
> *Later exists beforehand,*
> *The contention of Niyativãdins*
> *Is not erroneous.*
>
> If a thing to be produced later is substantially existent prior to its production, the contention that things are inherently established as causeless held by Niyativadins and those asserting that things are not created by peoples' activity and are without cause is not erroneous. Yet their assertions are wrong for they contradict everything that is both seen and unseen.

If a thing to be produced later is substantially existent prior to its production, then that is basically saying that there is a substantial existent prior to its production. This is similar to the contention of the non-Buddhist school called the Niyativadins, who assert that things are not created by the activity of people, and are without cause. 'These non-Buddhist schools' assertions would not be erroneous according to your assertions. Do you agree with that or not?' If they agree then, 'Their assertions are wrong for they contradict everything that is both seen and unseen'. This is basically mentioning that these non-Buddhist assertions do not accord with the conventional reality of things being produced, and thus have causes and effects.

The main refutation is made along the lines that if a substantially existent or truly existent phenomenon is produced later, then it is produced prior to its production, i.e. prior to its cause. Thus it could not cause an effect because it is truly existent prior to its production.

The assertion of the non-Buddhist schools that things are causeless goes against what can be perceived directly by the sense perceptions and through inference. Through sense perception we can directly see a sprout being produced from a seed. The sprout does not exist at the time of the seed, but is produced as a product of the seed, and that can be established by direct perception.

1.1.1.3.1.4. Consequence that things already produced are produced again

> *To say something which will be made to occur* 260
> *Already exists is unreasonable.*
> *If that which exists is produced,*
> *What has been produced will arise again.*
>
> Moreover even if the future were substantially existent, it would be unreasonable to say that a thing which will be made to occur later is substantially existent prior to its production. If that which already exists is produced later, what has already been produced will come into existence again, which is purposeless. As a consequence the effect would find no opportunity for production, since the cause must reproduce itself until the end.

The absurdity being pointed out here is that if that which already exists is produced later, then what has already been produced will come into existence again. According to the assertion if the present were to already exist in the future then it is as if that thing which is already produced will be produced again when the future time comes. However that would be purposeless, because it is already been produced. Why would it have to be produced again? 'As a consequence the effect would not find opportunity for production' means that the effect would find no opportunity for production; 'since the cause must reproduce itself until the end', means that if the cause itself has to be reproduced again then there would be no end to that cycle. The cause would have to be reproduced again and again, which will prevent the effect from ever being produced, because the cause has to keep producing itself over and over again.

1.1.1.3.1.5. Refuting that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things

This is subdivided into three:
1.1.1.3.1.5.1. Actual meaning;
1.1.1.3.1.5.2. Consequence that fresh restraint from non-virtue and so forth are unnecessary if the future is substantially existent
1.1.1.3.1.5.3. If impermanent it is contradictory for something to exist prior to its production

1.1.1.3.1.5.1. Actual meaning

> *Assertion*: The future exists because there is yogic perception of wished-for objects [referring to clairvoyance] which focuses on future things, and because predictions concerning the future are later seen to turn out just as predicted. This is impossible in relation to a barren woman's child.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> > *If future things are seen,* 261
> > *Why is the non-existent not seen?*
> > *For one for whom the future exists*
> > *There can be no distant [time].*

What is being implied here is that those who have a clairvoyant mind are able to predict things that will occur in the future, and that they will occur as has been predicted. This means that it exists; you couldn't predict a barren woman's child, because it does not exist. So in other words you couldn't predict something which does not exist, and if you were to predict something that does occur, then that, by default, means that it does exist.

As the commentary explains:

> If future things are directly perceived by way of their own entity in the period before their production, why are non-existent things not seen? It follows that they would be seen, for it is not feasible to make distinctions between what is seen and not seen with regard to the non-existent

The assertion made earlier is that the future does exist because it can be predicted, and it can be seen. If it was not existent then it would not be able to be seen, just like a barren woman's child. From the Buddhist side this is refuted with this question: if future things are directly perceived by way of their own entity in the period before their production, why are non-existent things not seen? What is being pointed out here is that establishing things as existing from their own entity from their own side in the future is like establishing that a barren woman's child can be seen. If you were to say that you can directly perceive things that exist from their own entity, then that would be similar to saying, 'Why couldn't you see a barren woman's child as well, because they are equally

non-existent?' That is the main point: future things existing of their own entity do not exist according to the Buddhist point of view. 'Thus', say the Buddhists, 'It would be similar to your assertion'.

As the commentary further reads:

> Such fallacies arise for those who assert that the past and future exist by way of their own entity, but no fallacies accrue to us who assert the three times as arising dependently without inherent existence.
>
> Buddhas directly perceive in the present even those things which will occur after ten million aeons. Though they are future at the time of the consciousness perceiving them, they are neither non-functional nor permanent for they will not remain for a second moment after their formation.

What is being explained here is that it is true that a buddha who has unlimited clairvoyance will be able to perceive things that will occur ten million eons later. However the fact that those things are seen does not indicate that they are permanent or non-functional. Once those things that are seen to occur do occur they will change. They are in the nature of being momentary, and thus a change will occur, and thus they are impermanent phenomena.

As the commentary further explains:

> There is no need for a Buddha to cognise the present explicitly and the past and future implicitly, for though the latter do not exist at that time, they are in general directly perceived.

A buddha's mind or consciousness can perceive the past, present and future simultaneously, but that does not indicate that the past, present and future are produced or exist simultaneously. Although they can be seen by a buddhas eye or mind simultaneously, they occur sequentially when they do occur.

> Similarly it is not contradictory for objects of aspiration, though they do not exist at that time, to appear clearly to yogic perception of that which is wished for, just as a dream appears to be real.

According to the assertion it is true that yogic perception can see things occur in the future just as they wish, however that does not contradict the fact that what they see does not exist now. They appear clearly, or vividly to the yogic practitioner, but just as a dream appears to be real, but does not actually exist, what is seen through clairvoyance does not have to exist now.

As commentary further reads:

> Even though the barley seed exists, the sprout which has not come into existence may be called future but the sprout itself must not be called future. An understanding of the other two times should be inferred from this. In our own system we accept that Buddhas perceive all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so.
>
> An understanding of the other two times should be inferred from this. In our own system we accept that Buddhas perceive all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so.

The ability for a buddha to perceive all three times directly is to be taken literally. It is not as if this ability is asserted just for trainees. In other words, it is established that the Buddha knows the three times and it is not the case that this is asserted just for trainees or disciples. This assertion of the Buddha being able to perceive all the three times directly should is taken literally.

Furthermore:

> Moreover there cannot be a distant time for a protagonist for whom the future exists by way of its own entity because the future exists in terms of its own entity.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཱརྱ་དེ་ཝས་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 September 2007

While sitting in a relaxed posture, we set a motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

At the very least developing a contrived bodhicitta motivation with some effort is very beneficial, as it can definitely help one to overcome the self-cherishing mind, and that positive motivation will pervade our practice.

In order to overcome our wrong view of life as being permanent, it is good to meditate on death and impermanence. This will overcome the strong sense of grasping at this lifetime and thus overcome clinging to this life. Meditating on the short-comings of cyclic existence helps one to overcome clinging to cyclic existence in future lifetimes as well as this one, and in particular it helps to overcome clinging to our self-cherishing mind. In summary, these are the main practices that we need to engage in.

These wrong views, which consist of clinging to different circumstances, are the main obstacles to any practice that we engage in. The wrong view of clinging to the permanence of this life generates a strong attachment to this lifetime, and thus prevents our practice from becoming a cause for a good rebirth in our next lifetime. Clinging to this lifetime with strong attachment is the obstacle to creating causes for a good rebirth, while clinging to the pleasures of a future lifetime, such as the pleasures of higher rebirth as human or in the god realms, prevents our practice from becoming a cause to obtain liberation. And the clinging to the self-cherishing mind is an obstacle to our practice of creating a cause to achieve enlightenment. Whatever our practice, if we cling to any one of these three circumstances, it becomes an obstacle for our practice to be an authentic pure practice. Thus it is good for us to try to challenge these wrong views in our mind, and slowly begin to work at overcoming them.

Generating positive attitudes as a means to overcome these wrong views and attitudes leaves a strong positive potential in our mind. When a practice is done with the right attitude and motivation, then it leaves a very strong positive potential or impression on our mind, which then becomes the basis for our further development. Thus when we reflect on their results, we can definitely see the significance of generating these positive motivations in our mind.

It is good to reflect on how our thoughts are mostly influenced by negative attitudes that influence our actions and our mannerism, and that then has a negative affect as our daily life unfolds. It also seems that even with the slightest condition, the negative attitudes in our mind arise very easily and spontaneously without any effort. Whereas, it is still very difficult for the virtuous mind to arise, even when the conditions are present, which are hard to come by. From our own experience we can see that developing a positive attitude does not come about naturally and that we have to make much effort in cultivating it. However once the effort is made, a positive mind can be developed. Thus it is definitely worthwhile if we put some effort in developing positive attitudes.

The outcome of our practice from the practical point of view is that even though liberation and enlightenment in this lifetime might be far beyond our reach, having the right motivation and attitudes when we engage in a practice can definitely leave a strong imprint or potential in our mind. That then becomes a cause for us to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime. If we are born again as a human being, then we will be reborn with that strong potential, or imprint that can serve as a cause to engage further in practice and thus slowly proceed on the path to achieving liberation and enlightenment. That is something which is definitely possible in the future.

1.1.1.3.1.5.2. Consequence that fresh restraint from non-virtue and so forth are unnecessary if the future is substantially existent

This fault arises if the future is established as being substantially existent. The main point being raised in this outline is that if the future is substantially existent, then there would be no point in accumulating virtue now.

> *If virtue exists though nothing is done,* *262*
> *Resolute restraint is meaningless.*
> *If even a little is done*
> *The effect cannot exist.*

As the commentary explains the meaning:

> If, because the future is substantially existent, virtue exists without actions such as safeguarding one's ethical conduct once one's faculties have become mature through meeting a spiritual friend and listening to teaching, resolute restraint from unethical conduct and so forth for the sake of future results [such as a high rebirth] is meaningless, for virtue will exist even if that has not been done.

According to the non-Buddhist assertion the future is a substantially existent phenomenon. That of course implies that the future is an inherently existent phenomenon existing from its own side, and not having to depend on anything else. If that were the case, then regardless of what one does now the results of ethics such as obtaining a good rebirth with a good sound body and so forth will definitely be obtained in the future, because that which is to be experienced in the future is substantially existent or inherently existent. What is being implied here is that if that result is going to come about regardless of what one does, then there is no point in engaging in ethical behaviour now.

The refutation is that if the future body as well as its resources, wealth and so forth, were to be substantially existent in the future, then it would not have to depend on anything else for its existence. This implies that it would not have to depend on the virtue and morals that one accumulates now through observing moral ethics.

As the commentary further reads:

> If even the slightest thing is done to enhance one's capability, future effects cannot be substantially existent. It is impossible!

What is being established here is that future effects cannot be substantially existent. because of the absurdity that was mentioned earlier.

1.1.1.3.1.5.3. If impermanent it is contradictory for something to exist prior to its production

> In accordance with the assertion that all composite things are impermanent, all functional things are impermanent.

If they are impermanent *263*
How can it be said effects exist?
That which has a beginning and end
Is called impermanent in the world.

As the commentary reads:

> How can it be said then that an effect exists prior to its production? It is unreasonable since impermanence and existence prior to production are contradictory. Anything which has a beginning, in that it is newly produced, and an end, in that it does not last for a second moment after the time of its formation, is called impermanent in the world.

This refers to the way that impermanence is established: from the moment that it is produced it does not last for a second moment after it is formed. That it does not last for a second moment implies that it is impermanent. The two attributes of impermanence are that it is newly produced and that it doesn't last for a second moment. The implication of being 'newly produced' is that it did not exist in the previous moment, and the implication of 'it doesn't last for a second moment' is that it begins to disintegrate from the second moment of its production, i.e. it changes.

A further analogy of impermanence is the person who walks into the gompa through the door. The moment that they step into the gompa they have changed in relation to the person who was about to walk into the gompa. As they take that one step they have gone through a change, and the moment they step into the gompa it is as if they are a new person.

Another analogy is time itself. What we call a second remains for only a short moment. Whenever the time comes to a particular point it is a new point at that moment, but in the next moment it has changed, and gone to the next moment. If we relate it to, for example, a particular hour, when the time reaches one o'clock it is one o'clock for just a brief moment. The moment after the dial reaches one o'clock it is past one o'clock. Prior to reaching one o'clock it was part of the hour of twelve o'clock, but at one o'clock it is no longer part of the hour of twelve o'clock, which is different from one o'clock. However the moment after it reaches one o'clock, it passes on to being past one o'clock. When we relate this to instances in life or other objects, then we can begin to understand the subtleties of impermanence that occur at every instance of all functional phenomena.

All products have that nature of changing from one moment to the next. We must look into the subtleties of change to understand their subtle impermanence. When we refer to objects such as the person, we see the person of yesterday and the person of today as being the same person. That is because of our habit of perceiving it as the same person, which comes from our own wrong conception of seeing things as being permanent. However, the reality is that all products change from moment. For those who want to meditate on impermanence, it is actually very helpful for their understanding of impermanence if they watch their clock. When you hear the clock ticking and see the dial changing second by second, you can also reflect on how everything around you is changing from moment to moment as well.

1.1.1.3.2. REFUTING THE ASSERTIONS OF SAUTRANTIKAS AND SO FORTH

Liberation will occur without exertion *264*
For the liberated there is no future,
Or otherwise, if this were so,
Desire would arise without attachment.

The Sautrantikas assert that of the three times, the past and the future are permanent while the present is impermanent. Thus when they establish a vase, they establish that the past and future of the vase are permanent, while the present vase is impermanent. That is because they are not able to establish an existent vase of the past or the future, and thus they feel that they cannot assert an existence of a past or future vase now. So for them that implies that the past and the future are permanent. That is what is being refuted.

> According to Sautrantikas and so forth who assert that future functional things do not have the slightest existence, liberation will occur without any exertion to generate the paths of the Exalted in order to prevent future disturbing emotions and suffering' because future things do not exist.
>
> This would be like liberated Foe Destroyers for whom there are no future disturbing emotions and so forth and who thus do not need to exert themselves because of them.

If the future were to be non-existent, then the future disturbing emotions and so forth would also be non-existent. Taking the particular instance of a foe destroyer, if the disturbing emotions and so forth were non-existent in the future for someone who is to become a foe destroyer, then there would be no need for them to exert themselves in overcoming the delusions, because delusions would be naturally non-existent in the future.

The line of reasoning in refuting the Sautrantika assertion should be understood that if the future is permanent, as they assert, then that implies that all incidences in the future will permanent. That would then imply that the future delusions, afflictions and so forth will be permanent. If they are permanent, then that means then that they will not generate because they are causeless. If they cannot be generated, then the absurdity is that if delusions were permanent then there would be no such thing as an arising or forming of delusions, because they are permanent.

If delusions are permanent they do not arise, so there would be no point in trying to overcome delusions. However arhats are striving to become a foe destroyer in order to overcome the delusions. Engaging in the practices of overcoming delusions is done in order to overcome them in the future. If delusions were permanent then there would be no purpose in doing that.

What is being implied here is that because we do exert ourselves to overcome the delusions in the future, they are impermanent and so they arise, and are functioning. Thus we exert ourselves to overcome them.

As the commentary further explains the verse:

> If the future were non-existent and desire were to arise without there being a person, consciousness and so forth or predispositions for attachment as a basis, it follows that desire would arise in a Foe Destroyer too.

If the future were non-existent then that implies that desire would 'arise without there being a person, consciousness and so forth or predispositions for attachment as a basis'. 'It follows that desire would arise in a Foe Destroyer too', which implies that there would be the absurdity of desire arising in foe destroyers. It is an absurdity because desire cannot arise in foe destroyers.

Referring back to the verse, the commentary mentions that:

> The words "or otherwise" imply "or otherwise the future is not non-existent."

1.1.2. Refutation by examining whether the effect exists or not

For those who assert effects exist, 265
And for those who assert they do not exist,
Adornments like pillars and so forth
For a home are purposeless.

As the commentary explains:

> Samkhyas say that since what is non-existent cannot be produced, and since the effect is present in the cause in a potential form, the fallacy that anything arises from anything does not occur.
>
> The Samkhyas assert that the fallacy that anything arises from anything means that it does not depend on particular causes, which does not occur for the Samkhyas, because they assert that prior to the effect, there is a potential in the cause. Furthermore: Some Vaibhasikas assert that the three times are substantially existent and that effects exist prior to their production.
>
> [The] Sautrãntikas and so forth assert that although things are truly existent, future effects are non-existent.

The refutation to these assertions is:

> It follows that for all of these, adornments such as pillars for a resultant home are purposeless, since according to some it exists from the outset [referring to the Samkhyas assertion], while according to others the future home is non-existent [some of the Vaibhasikas assertions], like a barren woman's child.

According to this assertion, adornments like pillars and so forth for a future home are meaningless. This absurdity is posited to counter the assertions of the Samkhyas and the Vaibhasikas and so forth.

The Samkhyas say that the effect or result already exists in the cause, e.g. the curd, which is an effect of milk, exists as a potential within milk. They assert that the effect already exists as a potential within the cause. The absurdity which is presented here is that if the effect already exists in the cause, then there would be no purpose in erecting pillars and so forth for a future house, because the house already exists.

The Vaibhasika school asserts that all three times are substantially existent. The absurdity is that if they are substantially existent, then they exist from their own side and there would be no purpose in establishing something for the future as the future would already be substantially existent. The Vaibhasika school also asserts that although the three times do not occur simultaneously in general, there are certain causes and effects which do occur simultaneously. The example that they give is mind and mental factors, which are said to be cause and effect, but which also occur simultaneously. They give this example to show how causes and effects do occur simultaneously, even though the three times do not necessarily occur simultaneously. We translate *sem jung* as mental factor, but the literal meaning of the Tibetan has a connotation that it arises or comes from mind. Thus the very connotation of mental factors asserts that it is something that comes from mind, but the Vaibhasikas also assert that it occurs simultaneously with the mind. The schools above the Vaibhasika, however, do not assert mind and mental factors to be a cause and effect sequence.

As the commentary further reads:

> For proponents of dependent arising free from inherent existence, [referring to the Prasangika Buddhist school] there is no possibility of error and thus everything is properly established.

So there is no possibility that the absurdity that was presented earlier will occur to the proponents of the Prasangika school.

As the commentary further reads:

> In meditative equipoise the Exalted who are still learning do not Perceive dependently arising phenomena as existent. Failure to distinguish between this non-perception and the perception of phenomena as non-existent, as well as inability to posit conventional valid cognition in one's own system, seems to give rise to numerous errors.

What is being explained here is that in meditative equipoise, as mentioned here and as explained in other texts, arya beings do not perceive conventional phenomena. Thus, for the arya being who is in meditative equipoise on emptiness, it is said that the conventional phenomena do not exist, and not perceiving the conventional phenomena itself is seeing ultimate phenomena or ultimate reality, which is emptiness. There are those who are not able to differentiate between conventional and ultimate reality which leads to many errors or misunderstandings.

> [Since this can give rise to numerous errors one] must therefore master the meaning of the establishment of the two truths by valid cognition in our own system.

The definitions of the two truths were presented earlier, so you can refer to the definition of the two truths there.[1] Again it is good to point out the relevance of having studied the Madhyamaka, which is related to many other topics as well as the two truths. That's why I remind you to refer back to those teachings, as they are very relevant. We also covered the distinction between the three times in the Madhyamaka as well.[2]

1.1.3. Refuting a truly existent present

> *Assertion*: Although existence of the past and future are being refuted, the present exists. Since it does, the future exists too, for the principal, giving up its state of futurity, assumes the state of present curd. Thus the present exists.
> *Answer*:
>
> *The transformation of things also* 266
> *Is not perceived even by the mind.*
> *Those who lack wisdom nevertheless*
> *Think that the present exists.*

The verse serves as a refutation for the Samkhya assertions in particular.

> It is not feasible for the principal, which is matter and permanent by nature, also to undergo temporary changes into things like milk and curd.

The Samkhya assert that the principal is matter and is permanent by nature, but that it undergoes the temporary changes of impermanence. The absurdity of that assertion is that:

> Such transformations are not perceived even by mental consciousness that engages with extremely subtle objects, let alone observed by the five kinds of sense consciousness.

If it were the case that the principal is permanent by nature, but that it undergoes change then it would have to be perceived, either by the five sense consciousnesses or by the subtle mental consciousness. But if it is not perceived even by the subtle mental consciousness let alone by the five sense

[1] See transcript for 10 July 2007.
[2] See transcripts of 2 September 2003, 21 October 2003, and 11 November 2003.

consciousnesses, then how else can you prove that the assertion holds? Who else can perceive that?

> Although transformation with respect to the present and its causes is not observed, those who lack wisdom and are ignorant about the meaning of suchness consider the present truly existent.

What is being established here is that the transformation from permanent into impermanent phenomena such as milk and curd is not observed.

> '...with respect to the present and its causes is not observed, those who lack wisdom and are ignorant about the meaning of suchness consider the present truly existent.'

So only those who lack wisdom, and who do not have the wisdom to perceive that the transformation from permanent to impermanent does not occur assume that it does, and consider the present as being truly existent. But in reality, that is not the case.

1.2. Refuting the proof [of substantially established time]

There are two sub-divisions:
1.2.1. Refuting existence of substantially established functional things as a basis for time
1.2.2. Refuting proof based on memory of the past

1.2.1. Refuting existence of substantially established functional things as a basis for time

The five sub-divisions of this category are:
1.2.1.1. Refutation by examining whether or not things have duration
1.2.1.2. Refutation by examining whether or not time has duration
1.2.1.3. Refutation by examining whether things and impermanence are one or different
1.2.1.4. Refutation by examining which is stronger, duration or impermanence
1.2.1.5. Refuting that both exist together

1.2.1.1. Refutation by examining whether or not things have duration

This is divided into two:
1.2.1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.2.1.1.2. Proving that duration is not inherently existent

1.2.1.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

Assertion: Time exists because functional things which act as the basis for imputing time exist. Since time may be investigated by considering functional things but not on its own, time is truly existent.
Answer:

> *How can there be things with no duration?* *267*
> *Being impermanent, how can they endure?*
> *If they had duration first,*
> *They would not grow old in the end.*

As a refutation to that the assertion the verse asks:

> How can functional things, the basis for time, be truly existent? It follows that they are not because of not having inherent duration.
>
> How could they have inherent duration, since they are continually consumed by impermanence?
>
> Moreover, if they had inherent duration at the start, they would not grow old in the end, because that which is inherently existent cannot cease.

What is being established is that if it is said that duration started off as being inherently existent, but then later it changed and ceased to be inherently existent, then that is absurd. If something is inherently existent then by default, it would have to maintain the characteristics of being inherently existent and thus can neither change, nor cease. You are asserting that it was first inherently existent and then it later changes, which is absurd.

1.2.1.1.2. PROVING THAT DURATION IS NOT INHERENTLY EXISTENT

> *Just as a single consciousness* *268*
> *Cannot apprehend two objects,*
> *Similarly two consciousnesses*
> *Cannot apprehend one object.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Furthermore there is no inherent duration, for just as a single moment of consciousness does not apprehend two consecutive objects actually presenting their own likenesses, two consecutive moments of consciousness do not apprehend a single object simultaneously, for they undergo momentary production and disintegration.

The main point here is that if duration itself was inherently existent, then it could not change into the second moment. It could not undergo any change because it is inherently existent. Again by default, that would then imply that it cannot undergo any change at all, because of being inherently existent. If duration itself was inherently existent then there would be no such thing as the second moment that comes after the first.

According to the commentary, if duration itself was to be inherently existent, then that would also imply that the first moment of consciousness and the second moment of consciousness perceiving the same object would be the same. However that could not be the case: when a consciousness perceives something, at the second moment of perception of the object the first moment of consciousness has already disintegrated. Thus when the consciousness perceives an object in the second moment, there cannot also be the first moment of consciousness, because it has undergone change.

The fact that it has changed and ceased is because the first moment of consciousness cannot perceive an object simultaneously with the second moment of consciousness perceiving an object. However if duration were to be inherently existent, then that would imply that the first moment exists at the same time as the second moment of consciousness; the first moment of consciousness would not have ceased, because having an inherently existent duration implies that it does not cease. Thus, by default, the first moment of consciousness would then perceive an object in the second moment of consciousness, and thus the two consciousnesses would perceive an object simultaneously. But that is absurd, because there is cessation and production from moment to moment.

Then there is this objection:

> Well, that contradicts the assertion in the sütras of knowledge that the five objects such as visual form are each apprehended by two kinds of consciousness.

As an answer to that the commentary reads:

> If one does not accept momentary disintegration, one is not a Buddhist. [However] if one does, the object of observation of a visual consciousness cannot act as object of observation for a subsequently arising consciousness. The sütra passage means that the visual consciousness cognizes the form clearly and the mental consciousness which is produced subsequently cognizes it in an unclear way.

As the commentary explains, the objection goes against the explanation in the sutras. The interpretation of what the sutra means is:

> The sütra passage means that the visual consciousness cognizes the form clearly and the mental consciousness which is produced subsequently cognizes it in an unclear way.

When an object is perceived, the eye consciousness sees the object directly and thus clearly. After perceiving it directly with the eye consciousness there is a subsequent mental consciousness that perceives the image of that object, which is what we call a conceptual perception. So the conceptual perception is a subsequent perception by the mental consciousness, which sees the object in an unclear or indirect way. The term 'unclear way' means that it is not perceived directly but through the generic image that arises in the mind. We can relate this to our own experience. When we see any kind of form or object, we first see it directly with our eye consciousness, and then if we close our eyes and recall the object that we have seen, we have a mental image in our mind which is called the generic image, but that mental image is not as clear as seeing the object directly with our eye consciousness. Thus we perceive the image of that object with our mental consciousness, but not clearly.

1.2.1.2. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING WHETHER OR NOT TIME HAS DURATION

> *Assertion*: Duration has inherent existence because of being the characteristic of present time.

The answer to that is:

> If time and duration are different and have an inherently established relationship, they must act as basis and that which is based upon it.

And furthermore:

> If duration relies on time as something separate, duration is not time because they are mutually exclusive.
>
> *If time has duration* *269*
> *Duration is not time.*
> *If it has not, without duration*
> *There will also be no end.*

What is being refuted here is an inherently established relationship between time and duration. If their relationship was inherently established, then they would have to be both a basis and that which is based upon. However time is established as a basis, and duration is that which is based upon it.

Furthermore:

> If time does not have duration, then without duration there cannot finally be disintegration. Therefore since time does not have inherent duration, the latter is unsuitable as the present's characteristic.

It is actually quite clearly established here. The main thing which is being refuted is an inherently existent relationship between time and duration.

The remainder of the chapter is quite easily understood as it is not very subtle, so we will just go through the text quickly without much further explanation.

1.2.1.3. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING WHETHER THINGS AND IMPERMANENCE ARE ONE OR DIFFERENT

> *Assertion:* Duration exists because there are impermanent things that have duration.
> *Answer:*
>
> *If impermanence and things are separate* *270*
> *Things are not impermanent.*
> *If they are one, since things are precisely that which is*
> *Impermanent, how can they have duration?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> If impermanence and functional things are separate in nature, it follows that things are not impermanent. If this is accepted, they must be permanent.

Then furthermore:

> If things and impermanence are one, since precisely that which is impermanent is a functional thing, how can they have inherent duration? Duration is impossible.

If things and impermanence are one, then they cannot have inherent duration, thus duration itself would be impossible.

1.2.1.4. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING WHICH IS STRONGER, DURATION OR IMPERMANENCE

This section is sub-divided into three:
1.2.1.4.1. Consequence that subsequent reversal is unfeasible if impermanence is weaker
1.2.1.4.2. Consequence that nothing will have duration if impermanence is stronger
1.2.1.4.3. Consequence that what was permanent will later be impermanent if duration is stronger

1.2.1.4.1. CONSEQUENCE THAT SUBSEQUENT REVERSAL IS UNFEASIBLE IF IMPERMANENCE IS WEAKER

> *Assertion:* While things continue to exist, duration is stronger and impermanence weaker, but it is not impossible for the weak to overcome the strong.
> *Answer*:
>
> *If duration is not weak* *271*
> *Because impermanence is weak,*
> *Why should a reversal*
> *Afterwards be seen?*

The explanation of the verse is presented thus:

> How can such a reversal be seen when things later finally become impermanent? It follows that it is unfeasible. If duration is not weaker because impermanence is weaker while things continue to exist, nothing can harm what has inherent strength.

The main refutation here is based on the assertion that duration is stronger and permanence is weaker, because duration at that time is predominant while impermanence takes place only as an eventual change. The main refutation here is that if you establish duration as being stronger and impermanence as weaker, and if that is inherently established, then nothing which is inherently established or inherently existent can have any effect in relation to any other object. So it is irrelevant to say that the duration is stronger and impermanence is weaker, as that would be an absurdity if they were to be inherently established.

1.2.1.4.2. CONSEQUENCE THAT NOTHING WILL HAVE DURATION IF IMPERMANENCE IS STRONGER

> *If impermanence is not weaker* *272*
> *And is present in all things,*
> *None of them will have duration*
> *Or not all are impermanent.*
>
> If impermanence is not weaker and is present in functional things at all times, it follows that all functional things do not have inherent duration, for impermanence, which overrides it, is always present.
>
> Alternatively, if not all things are impermanent, it follows that those which are not are permanent, because impermanence is weaker and duration has inherent strength.

Basically what is being established here is that if things were to be inherently existent and permanent, then the fault presented here follows.

1.2.1.4.3. CONSEQUENCE THAT WHAT WAS PERMANENT WILL LATER BE IMPERMANENT IF DURATION IS STRONGER

Furthermore, does impermanence arise together with the products it characterizes or does it arise later?

If there is always impermanence 273
There cannot always be duration,
Or else that which was permanent
Later becomes impermanent.

As the commentary explains:

If there is always impermanence because that which is characterized and its characteristic are inevitably concomitant, it follows that duration is not inherently existent.

Alternatively, having been permanent, a thing would later become impermanent, and if it remained for a second moment, it would be permanent. Yet one thing cannot be both permanent and impermanent.

That is the absurdity.

1.2.1.5. REFUTING THAT BOTH EXIST TOGETHER

If things have duration 274
And impermanence together,
Either it is wrong that things are impermanent,
Or duration is a fallacy.

As the commentary explains:

The characteristics of products are concomitant with one another. Thus if one accepts that the duration of a thing's existence and the impermanence of its existence are simultaneously of one nature with a thing, either it is wrong that things are impermanent or else inherent duration is a fallacy.

If 'the characteristics of products are concomitant with one another' then 'the duration of a thing's existence and the impermanence of its existence are simultaneously of one nature with a thing' then, 'it is wrong that things are impermanent' i.e. we cannot say that things are impermanent. Alternatively what you can say is that establishing such an inherent duration would be a fallacy that cannot be established.

As the commentary further reads:

These two can exist together in false products [which do not exist as they appear] but cannot have a common locus in truly existent functional things.

'These two cannot exist together in false products' indicates that having impermanence and duration existing at the same time in the one thing is not be possible.

1.2.2. Refuting proof based on memory of the past

Assertion: Time exists because there is past time depending on past products. If that were not so, it would be impossible to remember past rebirths, thinking that one was this or that in the past.

Answer: This proof of time's true existence is also without the slightest substance.

Things seen do not reappear, 275
Nor does awareness arise again.
Thus memory is in fact deceived
With regard to a deceptive object.

In addition to the answer above the commentary adds:

Memory focuses on an object which one has experienced.

Though things seen previously do not reappear later and though awareness observing objects belonging to a past rebirth does not occur again, memory arises with a sense of seeing as one sees present objects.

Memory which is in fact mistaken and deceived arises in relation to a so-called remembered object which is false and deceptive like an optical illusion. However, we do not deny that memory focusing on past objects arises dependently. This is certainly accepted in our own system.

Establishing that things exist inherently because there is memory of the past is absurd, because memory itself is a fault.

Memory which is in fact mistaken and deceived arises in relation to a so-called remembered object which is false and deceptive like an optical illusion.

Memory itself as well as the object being remembered are both like an illusion, and thus false. It cannot be established that memory and the object being remembered are inherently or truly existent, because memory and the object being remembered are like an optical illusion in both nature and reality. However our system does not deny memory of past objects, which arises dependently rather than inherently or as truly existent. So memory itself, as well as the objects that are remembered are dependently arisen phenomena. Thus there is memory, but both the memory itself as well as the objects that are being remembered arise dependently, not independently and inherently. That is something which is accepted in our system.

The summarising stanza by Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is:

Not knowing how to posit continuity and transitoriness,
They say time is permanent and the three times exist substantially.
Having understood that phenomena are like optical illusions,
Learn how the three times are perceived.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the eleventh chapter from the *Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds*, showing how to meditate on refuting time.

The first verse from Chapter Twelve is a very significant verse that indicates how we listen to the teachings:

An unprejudiced, intelligent and interested 276
Listener is called a vessel.
Neither the teacher's nor the student's
Good qualities will be taken as faults.

The explanation of this verse and the other verses in Chapter Twelve will be covered in our future sessions. It is now an appropriate time to have some discussion so next week will be a discussion session, and the following Tuesday will be the exam.

The relevant points in relation to these topics, particularly relating to how the self is asserted, refuting the false self and so forth. can be found in the Madhyamaka text. It is good to relate what we are doing now to the topics in that text.[3]

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

[3] See the teachings from 11 May 2004 to 24 August 2004.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 October 2007

As usual we set a good motivation for listening to the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all mother sentient beings and liberate them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

CHAPTER XII REFUTING THE TRUE EXISTENCE OF THAT WHICH IS VIEWED

The chapter has two main subdivisions:
1. Explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

This is subdivided into three main categories:
1.1. Why most ordinary people do not follow this teaching
1.2. Exposition of good explanations in brief
1.3. Advising those who seek emancipation to adopt good explanations

1.1. Why most ordinary people do not follow this teaching

This heading is subdivided into four:
1.1.1. Difficulty of finding a listener with the prerequisite qualities
1.1.2. Difficulty of understanding the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence
1.1.3. The profound is not taught for the sake of argument
1.1.4. Showing the comparative subtlety and coarseness of our own and others' teaching

1.1.1. Difficulty of finding a listener with the prerequisite qualities

This heading refers to finding a listener with the prerequisite qualities for listening, in particular to the subtle teaching of emptiness.

The three subdivisions of this category are:
1.1.1.1. Prerequisite qualities of the listener
1.1.1.2. Disadvantages of not possessing the prerequisite qualities
1.1.1.3. Eliminating arguments

1.1.1.1. PREREQUISITE QUALITIES OF THE LISTENER

Whether or not we are able to grasp and gain a deep understanding of emptiness is of course up to individual propensities. However at the very least we can feel fortunate about the fact that we have definitely heard unmistaken teachings describing emptiness. That is something we can rejoice in and feel happy about.

> *Question:* Even though you have explained selflessness very clearly and extensively and the Tathagata fully understood and gave instruction on it, why do most people not follow this teaching?
>
> *Answer:* Although the one who formulated it and those who elucidate it may be the perfect embodiment of greatness, a listener with great qualities is extremely hard to find.

It is rare indeed for someone to have a profound understanding of emptiness and then be able to explain it, but what is even rarer is a listener who has the qualities of being able to listen to such a teaching.

> *Question:* What qualities does one need?
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *An unprejudiced, intelligent and interested* 276
> *Listener is called a vessel.*
> *Neither the teacher's nor the student's*
> *Good qualities will be taken as faults.*

The first verse of the chapter covers the qualities that a listener of the profound view of emptiness needs. It also refers to a listener of any Dharma teachings. There are five qualities that a listener should have, and it is important that we pay attention to these qualities and check to see if we posses them, and, if not try to acquire them.

When people wish to go and listen to teachings from different sources, my main advice is that it is fine if you listen to teachings from other teachers. However it is important that you maintain whatever Dharma teachings you have already understood, and use them to gauge the validity of what one hears from other sources. The most important thing is not to lose whatever wisdom one has gained from the teachings one has already received, and to use them as the basis for receiving other teachings. If one goes to different teachers to further one's understanding, and if they are authentic sources then that is great, as it adds onto one's understanding and knowledge. One must be careful, however, not to lose what one has already obtained and achieved. That is very important.

If one does not have a sound basis and goes to different teachings, then the fault that could occur is that one may have doubts and uncertainty about what one has already heard before, while not acquiring any real new knowledge and clarity. As that may confuse one's mind, one must be very careful.

To return to the specific qualities needed by a listener, the text says:

> One should be unprejudiced, without attachment to one's own position or aversion to others' positions.

1. A mind free of prejudice: One of the very important points is having a mind free of prejudice. That means, as explained here, not being strongly attached to ones' own position (meaning one's own doctrine or one's own teachings) while generating aversion towards the positions of others. This is explained very clearly here. What we can explicitly understand for our personal practice is that we should be free from attachment to our own position, and aversion to the doctrine of others. What this also implies indirectly is that whatever teaching one listens to, one should use it as a practise to overcome attachment and aversion within oneself.

> *Heart of the Middle Way* says:
> One will never know peace

While prejudice afflicts the mind.

As the text explains in these two lines, one will never know peace while prejudice afflicts the mind. One can relate the peace referred to here as the general peace of mind, or the peace of nirvana, the state of liberation. However it can also apply to the understanding of emptiness, as naturally abiding nirvana or peace is said to be emptiness. Therefore what is being implied here is that for as long as one holds prejudice in one's mind the realisation of emptiness cannot be obtained. Thus one must free one's mind from prejudice in order to gain the profound understanding of emptiness. Furthermore, whatever teaching one listens to has to serve the purpose of combating and overcoming the delusions in one's mind.

As the great masters have mentioned over and over again, when a teaching serves to subdue the mind by serving as an opponent to the delusions in one's mind, then the teachings have worked for oneself.

As the commentary says:

> If one is not unprejudiced one will fail to understand a good explanation [so one must have an unprejudiced mind] because of thinking it is someone else's.

If one is prejudiced towards the teacher then that element of prejudice comes with the delusion of aversion. If one has an aversion towards a teacher then one will never be able to really gain knowledge from them, because there will always be the blockage of not being open to receiving the qualities of the teaching. Thus by being prejudiced, which results in aversion towards the expounder of the teaching, one will not derive the benefits of their knowledge.

2. Intelligence: Furthermore one has to have a keen interest, and intelligence.

> One must have the intelligence to distinguish between good and bad explanations, otherwise one may reject correct explanations and adopt incorrect ones.

This is in line with what I mentioned earlier about the personal advice I give to people who want to go and listen to other teachers. As I mentioned there, it is fine to go off and listen to different teachers, but one has to have a good foundation within oneself, otherwise the fault mentioned here would arise.

3. Having interest: As the commentary explains:

> A keen interest in good explanations is needed, for without that one will make no effort and simply be like the lifeless picture of a human being.

A portrait of a person will always remain a portrait, and if one does not have a keen interest in good explanations, or go out of one's way to gain any qualities or so forth one would be like a lifeless picture of a person.

4 and 5. Being appreciative and attentive to the teacher and the teaching: As the text says:

> One should appreciate and be attentive to the teaching and the teacher.

In the Tibetan word for 'appreciate' there is an element of respect. So appreciation can also refer to respect.

> A listener with these five qualities is said to be a vessel for the teaching. Someone with all these attributes will recognize the teacher's good qualities and fully understand the clarity and orderliness of the teaching, as well as the good intentions of other listeners. The teacher's lack of self-interest and the like will not be seen as faults and other than as they are, but only as virtues. Nor will the good qualities of the listeners be construed as faults.

When a listener has these five qualities then they will be able to anticipate the good qualities of the teacher and thus be fully able to understand the clarity, the orderliness, and the sequence of the teachings. Thus they will be able to relate to the teaching in a clear way. Without the five qualities one would not be able to derive the essence of the teaching from the teacher. If the teacher has the right qualities, but the listeners lack the five qualities then even the teacher's good qualities will be seen as faults, rather than as being able to benefit others. Whereas if the listener has these five qualities then even what are seeming faults can be seen as qualities. Thus there would only be of benefit for the listeners.

At this point one can also relate these five qualities of the listener to the qualities of the disciple that are mentioned in the Lam Rim teachings, such being free from the three faults and acquiring the six mental intentions. As mentioned earlier with other topics what is explained here in the *Four Hundred Verses* is related to the Lam Rim topics. It is very useful if we can see that relationship and then try to practice them hand in hand.

1.1.1.2. DISADVANTAGES OF NOT POSSESSING THE PREREQUISITE QUALITIES

> Although the teacher may be perfect, if the listeners lack the prerequisite qualities, they will not recognize their own faults but will consider faults as virtues and virtues as faults.
>
> *He explained existence and its causes,* 277
> *The means to peace and peace itself.*
> *What people do not understand*
> *Is seen as the Subduer's [fault].*

The specific explanation of the faults, of the listeners not possessing the prerequisite qualities are explained in this section. For example, if I were to explain the faults of attachment and desire it would be hard for some to accept, and they wouldn't be really happy about it. But if they were to hear about the qualities of desire and attachment then that's something that would be very interesting, and they would be really happy to take that as being good advice.

> The Subduer taught about worldly existence in the form of the five contaminated and suffering aggregates and about true sources, the cause of worldly existence.

This quote from the text relates to the first line of the verse. For us human beings worldly existence is the five contaminated and suffering aggregates, and the true sources are the causes for those who dwell in the worldly existence. Thus this first line covers the first two of the four noble truths, true suffering and true origination. True suffering in relation to living beings is the suffering that is experienced in relation to the contaminated

aggregates, which are in the nature of suffering and are thus called true suffering. The causes for the contaminated aggregates are delusions and karma, which are true originations.

> He taught about true paths, the means to peace, such as the eightfold path of the Exalted, and also about peace liberation and nirvana.

The list of the eightfold path of the Exalted is 1) correct view, 2) correct thought, 3) correct speech, 4) correct action, 5) correct livelihood, 6) correct effort, 7) correct mindfulness and 8) correct meditative stabilisation. The noble eightfold path includes the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. The causes for peace or liberation, and the path leading to that is, as explained here, the eightfold path and so forth.

The main cause to achieve liberation is the three trainings, which are, as mentioned earlier, the training of morality, the training of meditative concentration and the training of wisdom. It is very important that we relate to these to our practice. In thinking about morality, one needs to find out what it is. How can one practise morality? What is meditative concentration? In this way we try to understand morality, meditative concentration and wisdom, and try to apply the understanding to our practice. It is said that wisdom leads us to gaining liberation. Contemplating how to obtain wisdom is crucial for our practice, for without wisdom it would be very hard for us to gain the further qualities and intelligence that are the causes for obtaining liberation.

Just by simply focusing on an object like the breath and being in a quiet meditative state, cannot in itself increase qualities in the mind. The three trainings refer particularly to the three higher trainings, or the three extra trainings. The higher training of wisdom relates to the wisdom of gaining special insight, the higher training of concentration relates to obtaining calm abiding and the higher training of morality refers to taking vows such as the self liberation vows and other vows based on that. Thus engaging in these three trainings becomes the ultimate means for obtaining the highest goals of liberation and enlightenment.

All three higher trainings are dependent on each other, and the later trainings are all related to the earlier trainings. In order to obtain special insight in relation to selflessness or emptiness one must first obtain the state of calm abiding, because without attaining calm abiding there is no possibility of attaining special insight. In order to achieve calm abiding one must first train in meditative concentration, so as to be able to concentrate, and thus further develop meditative concentration. To obtain calm abiding, one must first train in morality because without a moral basis one cannot attain calm abiding.

With a lack of morality a person is completely distracted and immersed in indulging themselves in the sensual pleasures. When one is completely immersed in the sensual pleasures, the mind is constantly busy with excitement. Thus, without morality there is no possibility for the mind to withdraw and concentrate, because it is always influenced by the excitement of sensual pleasures. To be able to sit and meditate one needs a solid foundation on which to be able to concentrate; one must refrain from the very gross levels of sensual pleasures that distract the mind, and this is done by observing certain vows, and abiding by ethical codes. When we refrain from actively indulging physically, then we are mentally withdrawing from those pleasures, and thus the mind is able to concentrate.

When one engages in concentration, one must first of all deal with the gross level of excitement within meditative concentration. Being able to distinguish and overcome the gross levels of distraction can be done by developing calm abiding. Single-pointed concentration is being able to focus on an object single-pointedly for as long as one wishes. However there are still very subtle levels of distraction or excitement within oneself which can be overcome only by obtaining special insight. These subtle distractions are basically the two types of grasping, which are grasping at the self and grasping at phenomena. These two graspings are only overcome by acquiring special insight. That is how the three higher trainings subdue the mind so that one can achieve liberation.

> He taught the four noble truths for those who seek liberation, but ordinary people who make no effort to hear, think and meditate are unaware that they do not possess all the qualities of a suitable vessel. Whatever they fail to understand correctly, they see as the Subduer's fault, saying he did not explain it in sufficient detail.

One must really pay attention to this, and reflect and see how a lack of understanding of the teaching is not the Buddha's fault. This does not relate solely to the time of the Buddha. When we look into our present day situation we hear many people making critical comments about a teacher. These people may go to a teaching given by scholarly geshes who have studied a lot, and who really know their subject. When they listen to the teacher these people complain that the teacher does not know how to teach, implying that the teacher lacks knowledge of the subject. One must understand that those who make these comments and complaints about real scholars are actually showing that what is really lacking is the ability from the listener's side to clearly understand what is being taught. Because they don't see that as a fault the blame goes to the teacher who, they say, doesn't have the skill or the knowledge to teach.

> However, merely that does not mean the Teacher is to blame. A blind person's inability to see is not the sun's fault.

Explicitly, the Teacher being referred to here is the Buddha, and as he has an omniscient mind, he has the capacity, the skilful means, and the knowledge to propound the teaching exactly in accordance with the listener's capacity. Thus the Teacher, the Subduer, or the Buddha has full knowledge and understanding. However listeners who have not even the slightest qualities to reflect upon and grasp the teaching, might see it as the Subduer or the Buddha lacking the knowledge or skill of teaching.

As the analogy clearly illustrates, a blind person's inability to see is not the sun's fault. If a blind person cannot see in broad daylight they cannot say that there is not enough light to see. The fault lies in the blind person

not being able to see and not the fault of the sun not shining forth with enough light. The analogy is to be understood thus: those who are blind with ignorance lack the wisdom, and their lack of understanding is not the fault of the teacher who has the full qualities.

1.1.1.3. ELIMINATING ARGUMENTS

This is subdivided into two:
1.1.1.3.1. Proving the Subduer's omniscience
1.1.1.3.2. Showing that others' teachers are not authentic

1.1.1.3.1. PROVING THE SUBDUER'S OMNISCIENCE

This heading has three subdivisions
1.1.1.3.1.1. Appropriateness of being glad about the teaching of emptiness which annihilates suffering and its sources
1.1.1.3.1.2. Why there is no liberation in any teaching other than the Teacher's
1.1.1.3.1.3. Means to gain certainty regarding extremely hidden matters taught by the Teacher

1.1.1.3.1.1. Appropriateness of being glad about the teaching of emptiness which annihilates suffering and its sources

Even from the outline one can derive the meaning that the teaching of emptiness relates to gaining an understanding of the wisdom of emptiness. Once gained, this understanding annihilates suffering and its sources, and that relates to the first two noble truths.

> *Assertion:* Although the Subduer's discussion of high rebirth is extremely clear, we do not understand or approve of his discussion of definite goodness, since the teaching that everything is without inherent existence refutes the very nature of things.

> *Answer:*
>
> *These strange people all agree that by* 278
> *Giving up everything one attains nirvana.*
> *For what reason do they dislike*
> *That which puts an end to all?*

The assertion is from the non-Buddhist schools who appreciate one part of the Buddha's teachings. However when it comes to the explanation of emptiness, and how things lack inherent existence, they are not able to understand that.

It is of course is extremely clear that even the non-Buddhist schools assert higher rebirth in god realms and so forth, and that they also have a particular means to achieve these higher rebirths. However even though they talk about liberation, the non-Buddhist schools do not present a clear method that leads to liberation. Also the liberation that they actually talk about does not even approach the liberation that is explained in the Buddhist teachings.

The Buddha explains clearly the method for obtaining liberation, which is gaining the realisation of emptiness. Through gaining the realisation of emptiness then the main cause of samsara, which is samsara itself as well as the causes for samsara, (which are the first two noble truths, the true sufferings and true originations) is overcome. True origination, in particular, is completely annihilated by the wisdom realising emptiness, and without the wisdom realising emptiness there is no possibility of removing true originations.

> These strange Samkhyas, Vaisesikas and the like, who believe in liberation, all agree that one attains nirvana by giving up attachment to everything associated with disturbing emotions, such as pleasure, pain and so forth.

The non-Buddhist schools such as the Samkhyas and the Vaisesikas do believe in liberation and they also believe that one must give up attachment and all the disturbing emotions in order to attain liberation. So, they agree with us as far as accepting liberation, and that one must overcome disturbing emotions to obtain liberation, are concerned. Where we differ is explained in the following.

The second part of the explanation given in the text points out the absurdity of not liking the explanation of emptiness:

> Why do they dislike it when the person and aggregates are said to be empty of existence by way of their own entities? The understanding of this destroys all that is associated with disturbing emotions. Therefore they should be glad.

This is pointing out the absurdity of, on the one hand, accepting liberation and that one must overcome all the disturbing emotions to achieve liberation, but not accepting a specific method of overcoming or annihilating the disturbing emotions or delusions. What they don't accept is the lack of inherent existence in relation to persons and phenomena. For as long as the grasping at the self of person and phenomena remain the delusions that are the obstacle to obtaining liberation will remain in the mental continuum. Thus liberation cannot be obtained.

What is being pointed out here is that if one wishes to achieve liberation then why wouldn't one naturally want to adopt the ultimate method for gaining liberation, which is the ultimate method for eliminating the disturbing emotions and delusions within one's mind? As the teachings explain, grasping at the inherent existence of a person is grasping at the self, and grasping at the inherent existence of phenomena, such as the aggregates and so forth, is grasping at phenomena. For as long as that grasping is there the delusions will remain in the mind. And in order to overcome that one must gain an understanding of the lack of inherent existence in relation to both the person and phenomena. That understanding of the lack of inherent existence then becomes the wisdom, the knowledge that is the direct antidote for overcoming the subtle obscurations in the mind and thus obtaining liberation.

As the commentary quotes from the sutra;

> Sutra says:
>
> In nirvana there are no phenomena.
> Whatever does not exist then never existed.
> The suffering of those with ideas of existence and non-existence
> Who act accordingly will not be pacified.
>
> Since only the Buddha's words contain undistorted statements about suchness, and Samkhyas and so forth do not make even the slightest mention of it, one should recognize it [the Buddhas words] as a unique teaching.

1.1.1.3.1.2. Why there is no liberation in any teaching other than the Teacher's

Question: If these strange people all agree that one attains nirvana by giving up everything, what difference is there between you and the Forders?

Answer: They are different in that they merely have the wish to give everything up but do not know how to do so.

How will one who does not know *279*
The means to give it up, do so?
Certainly, therefore, the Subduer said
There is no peace in any other [teaching].

How can those belonging to other systems give up cyclic existence while they cling to the wrong methods? They do not know that the means to give it up is to understand that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. Therefore certainly with this in mind the Subduer said, "The first practitioner of virtue has come about thus. The second and third have come about thus. The fourth has come about thus. Others' doctrines lack such practitioners of virtue." On account of this he said, "There is no peace in any teaching other than this."

This is referring to the stages of realising emptiness that are gained along the path. In essence, what is being explained here is how the Buddha's teaching clearly explains the method of gaining the realisation of emptiness. His clear explanation of how things are empty of inherent existence is the ultimate method for attaining liberation. This, in summary, is what is being explained here. As the great master Nagarjuna explained, without gaining the realisation of emptiness there is no possibility of gaining liberation.

Because the non-Buddhist schools do not have any explanations of emptiness there could not be any realisations gained from an understanding of emptiness, and thus liberation cannot be obtained. The uniqueness of the Buddha's teaching is in the explanation of voidness or emptiness, which is the ultimate means for gaining liberation, and the only way to gain liberation is explained clearly in the Buddha's teachings.

To understand further of how the realisation of emptiness serves as the ultimate technique for attaining liberation: the main obstacle to attaining liberation is the subtle delusion of grasping at a self. For as long as there is a grasping at the self all the faults of samsara of cyclic existence will ensue from that grasping at the self. Thus in order overcome the grasping at the self one must develop the wisdom that completely contradicts the wrong view of the grasping at the self. The only thing that can completely annihilate grasping at the self is that which completely contradicts that view of grasping at a self. Without overcoming the wrong conception of grasping at the self one cannot overcome the actual grasping at the self itself. Thus to completely overcome the grasping at the self one must have an understanding of selflessness, which is the direct opponent of the wrong view. Thus gaining that realisation of selflessness becomes the ultimate means and technique for completely eradicating the delusions of grasping at a self at the very subtlest level. That then becomes a cause to attain liberation.

1.1.1.3.1.3. Means to gain certainty regarding extremely hidden matters taught by the Teacher

Whoever doubts what the Buddha said *280*
About that which is hidden
Should rely on emptiness
And gain conviction in him alone.

Phenomena can be categorised into three types: obvious phenomena, which can be perceived directly, slightly hidden phenomena, and hidden phenomena.

An example of obvious phenomena is a vase, which is called an obvious phenomena because one does not have to rely on any inference or reasoning in order to perceive it. One basically perceives a vase with the direct perception of the eye-consciousness, and one does not need more than this direct perception to prove the existence of a vase.

However the nature of the vase such as its impermanence or its empty nature cannot be perceived directly with the eye-sense perceptions, or any other direct perceptions. These aspects of the vase are not obvious phenomena, as they can be only perceived through inference or reasoning. Thus they are called slightly hidden phenomena.

The subtleties of karma, which is the subtleties of the cause and effect sequence that takes over many lifetimes is said to be very hidden phenomena. We cannot perceive them through general inference, reasoning or logic. Rather one must refer to the Buddha's teachings and accept the Buddha as an omniscient mind. We can then gauge the authenticity of the Buddha's teachings and accept the workings of the subtleties of karma on that basis.

I will leave the explanation of this for our next session. I covered this particular topic when I taught the tenets.[1] From my side I felt that I gave quite a good explanation, and soon after that His Holiness visited and he referred exactly to the points that we had covered earlier in our sessions. It would be good if you could refer to this section of the tenets notes and then maybe in the next session when we come to the explanation of the points it will be easier.

The three types of phenomena, how one perceives these different levels of phenomena, how they relate to the citations of the Buddha's teachings, how it is free from the three types of reasonings and the three types of investigations are actually very important points which come up in many other parts of the teachings. So it is very useful and important that we can have a good understanding of this.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

[1] On 19 June 2001.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 October 2007

As usual we sit in a proper, comfortable position and set an appropriate motivation in our mind such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice'.

1.1. Why most ordinary people do not follow this teaching

1.1.1. Difficulty of finding a listener with the prerequisite qualities

1.1.1.3. ELIMINATING ARGUMENTS

1.1.1.3.1. PROVING THE SUBDUER'S OMNISCIENCE (CONT.)

1.1.1.3.1.3. Means to gain certainty regarding extremely hidden matters taught by the Teacher

This heading explains how to gain a certainty about extremely hidden phenomena. As explained last week, extremely hidden phenomena are phenomena or objects that cannot be seen directly with our senses or understood through inference. So, to establish their existence we have to rely upon the speech of valid beings such as an enlightened being, e.g. citations from the Buddha. Thus 'extremely hidden matters' refers to very subtle phenomena.

> *Question*: If he is omniscient he must have super-knowledge of hidden things such as the size of Mount Meru and the continents, but how can one be sure of that?
>
> *Answer*: One can ascertain it with the help of inference.
>
> *Whoever doubts what the Buddha said* 280
> *About that which is hidden*
> *Should rely on emptiness*
> *And gain conviction in him alone.*

The word 'omniscient' at the beginning of the question refers to the Buddha's omniscient mind. This means that the Buddha is able to see all existence even in its subtlest aspects. For example when we look at an object such as a vase, we see it as a concrete object, but our cognition fails to see the subtle atoms within the object. Whereas when the Buddha looks at any object, he sees it in its entirety, even to the subtlest level of the smallest atoms.

In order for an object to exist as a concrete object, it has to gather all the causes and conditions. Seeing things at their subtlest level refers not only to seeing the subtlest atoms, but also to seeing where each atom may have been gathered from, and at what time and from which place it was gathered. All of these subtleties are seen simultaneously when an object is viewed by an omniscient mind. That is because there are no obstructions whatsoever in the Buddha's mind. That is what 'omniscient mind' refers to. Whereas an ordinary sentient being's mind is filled with obstructions, either to liberation or to omniscience, and having those obstructions prevents ordinary beings from seeing the subtlest level of phenomena.

Establishing the validity of extremely hidden phenomena

In the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this heading, 'inference' refers to understanding hidden phenomena. We can see the physical aspect of a clock directly with our eyes, with our visual perception. However, we cannot see the impermanence of the clock directly with our eyes. For that we have to rely on another factor, which is inference. Inference refers to cognising an object by depending on logical reasoning. Therefore that which can be perceived through logical reasons is perceived through inference. Those students who have been coming to classes for some time will recall that we covered mind and cognition when we studied *lo rig,* which is basically about mind and awareness, while the explanations according to the Prasangika point of view of awareness and cognition were covered when we studied the Middle-Way text, the *Madhyamakavatara*.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> One might wonder whether what the Buddha has said is true or not regarding the size of the abodes, bodies and lifespans of the six kinds of gods of the Desire Realm and so forth from whom one is separated by time and place, and regarding the size of the human physical world and so on, all of which are hidden to common beings.

We might doubt whether things that are not directly seen by human beings are true or not. Thus one may doubt whether the Buddha's explanations of different realms e.g. the god realms, the size of the world, the different universes and so forth are in fact actually true. So:

> To dispel such doubts one should take as example the fact that the features of the two truths which are very subtle and difficult to understand—the teaching that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence together with the feasibility of all actions and agents—are actually as he explained.

One must try to really pay attention and get to the nitty-gritty of that explanation to understand it.

> Understanding through this that the extremely hidden things he taught are just as he described, one should gain conviction that he alone is omniscient.

The Buddha explained the two truths, which are slightly hidden phenomena, comprehensively and with great clarity, and we can ascertain the validity of what he said with our own reasoning. As he taught about slightly hidden phenomena with such accuracy and clarity we can therefore accept what taught about extremely hidden phenomena.

As the commentary further explain:

> Having ascertained dependent arising free from fabricated extremes through correct reasoning without relying on scriptural citations as proof, one should ascertain extremely hidden things relying on the Buddha's words as reason.

Dharmakirti said that one uses citations from the Buddha's teachings as a reasoning to understand other hidden phenomena. One can cite the Buddha's explanations of how all products are impermanent, and all phenomena are selfless as a means of gauging the validity of other parts of his teachings. One can assert the validity of all products being impermanent and all phenomena being selfless through one's own reasoning, e.g. we can give a valid reason why products are impermanent. Thus what Dharmakirti is explaining is that by establishing the validity of slightly hidden phenomena, one can validate extremely hidden phenomena. That is Dharmakirti's main point.

Establishing the validity of slightly hidden phenomena

How can we validate slightly hidden phenomena through our own reasoning?

Do you think that products being impermanent and phenomena being selfless can be validated through reasoning? What do you think? Why are products impermanent? What would the reason be?

Student: Because they are causes.

Being a cause and being impermanent are equally subtle, so how can you use having a cause as a reason to prove that products are impermanent? You have to give a reason such as, sounds are impermanent, because they are a functional phenomenon, for someone who has understood products to be something, but who has not yet realised that they are impermanent.

Why is it important to establish a reason?

One should be able to readily assert a logical reasoning as cited in the teachings to prove, for example, that products are impermanent. Without being able to establish those reasons, one could not then be able to understand emptiness, because emptiness itself is understood by establishing a reasoning.

When a logical reason is given to establish that products are impermanent, then the wrong conception of products being permanent is removed. Likewise when the reasons for phenomena being selfless are established, then the wrong conception of viewing phenomena as having a self is removed. In other words, when you prove that products are not permanent, and that phenomena do not have a self then you prove that such conceptions are wrong conceptions.

Thus when the correct reason for products being impermanent is established, the wrong conception of grasping at permanence is harmed. That grasping at permanence is harmed with the correct reasoning of products being impermanent. Likewise, when the correct reason for phenomena being selfless is established, then the wrong conception in relation to that grasping to a self is harmed. It is harmed by establishing the correct reasons for phenomena to be selfless, which by its very establishment contradicts the perception of grasping at a self. It is by removing that wrong conception that one gains the correct view establishing selflessness and emptiness.

What that further establishes is that if these wrong conceptions such as grasping at permanence and grasping at an inherently existent self, are harmed, then through the appropriate antidote such a wrong conception can be eradicated from one's mind.

Applying this logic to specific examples

When the possibility of abandoning the wrong conception of grasping at the self is seen, then it is possible to establish the possibility of obtaining liberation. This is said to be the sound reasoning that establishes liberation, or nirvana. In establishing that possibility one first has to see that it is possible to eradicate the wrong conception of grasping at the self, which obstructs the attainment of liberation or nirvana. In order for that to be established one must first establish that the conception of grasping at a self is a wrong conception.

The validity of nirvana or liberation is established through sound logical reasoning that eradicates the wrong conception of grasping at the self. Furthermore, when the two types of grasping at an inherent extent self, i.e. grasping at the self of person and grasping at the self of phenomena, have been eradicated then what still remains is a residue of their imprints. These imprints cause the faulty appearance of phenomena appearing as inherently existent even though one doesn't believe that to be the case. Even though the two types of grasping at the self have already been eradicated, that faulty appearance of inherent existence is still there because of the imprints that have been left in the mind. That obstruction is the obstruction to omniscience, and the faulty appearance can be removed through further development of wisdom, together with perfecting the accumulation of merit. With those two combined, one can completely eradicate the faulty appearance, and obtain the state of omniscience. That is how the state of omniscience or enlightenment can be established through sound reasoning.

When one uses sound and logical reasoning to establish that products are impermanent and that phenomena are selfless, then the attainment of the realisation of impermanence and selflessness proves the validity or incontrovertibility of the Buddha's words. In other words, the Buddha's words are proven to be incontrovertible by gaining the realisations and understanding for oneself. When one gains that understanding for oneself then that automatically proves the Buddha's words to be incontrovertible.

When the Buddha's words in relation to the impermanence of products and the lack of an inherently existent self of phenomena are established well, then one can very easily establish the validity of obtaining a high status in future lives, such as obtaining rebirth as a god or a human. As far as our perception goes, those mundane attainments in cyclic existence are extremely hidden phenomena, because of the fact that it takes many causes and conditions to obtain the high status of being reborn in the god realms or the human realm. Many specific karmic causes and conditions have to take be acquired, such as training in morality and generosity and so forth, in order to attain the goal of a high status rebirth. Because of those subtleties the causes for a good rebirth are extremely hidden phenomena, even though it is a mundane attainment.

When citations from the Buddha in relation to the ultimate goals of liberation and enlightenment are established through sound logical reasoning, then other extremely hidden phenomena can be established automatically, because of the fact that when a very high level of attainment is established through sound reasoning, then mundane goals are easily understood as being valid.

This ultimately proves through logical reasons that the Buddha, is incontrovertibly a valid being; meaning a being who is able to perceive all levels of phenomena directly and who, with compassion, is solely devoted to benefit all sentient beings. That is what valid being means.

Thus:

> Having ascertained dependent arising free from fabricated extremes through correct reasoning without relying on scriptural citations as proof, one should ascertain extremely hidden things relying on the Buddha's words as reason.

Here are the logical reasons that establish the validity of citations from the Buddha's teachings. In the syllogism, 'The citation "through generosity one accrues wealth and through morality one obtains high status" is incontrovertible in its meaning, because the meaning of these words cannot be invalidated by any of the three kinds of cognitions used to investigate them', the predicate is that the citations are valid

or 'incontrovertible', and the reason is 'because it can not be invalidated when investigated using the three kinds of cognitions'. Thus the Buddha's statements can be established as being incontrovertible with those reasons and in that way one generates strong faith in the Buddha.[1]

As the commentary further reads:

> Regarding the general presentation of this, the explanations of Dignaga and his spiritual son are like those of the great trailblazers [some other translations use 'charioteers']. In this context objects can be understood through the presentation of four kinds of valid cognition

Dignaga and his spiritual son established two types of cognition: direct cognition and cognition through inference. However the explanation here is based on a text called *Tsiksel* (another teaching on valid cognition) in which four types of valid cognition are established.

These four kinds of valid cognition (which are listed in footnote 9 on page 366) are direct valid cognition, inferential valid cognition, valid cognition through appraisal and valid cognition through scripture. Valid cognition through appraisal refers to establishing or proving that something is valid through the use of examples or analogies. Valid cognition through scripture is what we have been referring to earlier; that citations from the Buddha are valid or incontrovertible. However valid cognition through appraisal and valid cognition through scripture is said to be subsumed into inferential cognition.

1.1.1.3.2. SHOWING THAT OTHERS' TEACHERS ARE NOT AUTHENTIC

> *Those who find it hard to see* *281*
> *This world are ignorant of others.*
> *Those who follow them will be*
> *Misled for a very long time.*

While the Buddha is established as being a valid being, because he is able to perceive directly all levels of phenomena (obvious phenomena, hidden phenomena, slightly hidden phenomena and extremely hidden phenomena) with his omniscient mind, teachers or expounders of other doctrines are unable perceive very hidden phenomena. What is being established here is how other beings lack that omniscient ability.

As the commentary reads in explanation of the verse:

> Non-Buddhist teachers who have difficulty in discerning even the way coarse cause and effects operate in relation to the physical environment and inhabitants of this world are ignorant regarding other subtle matters.

Here, we can refer to the earlier chapters that went into great detail refuting the non-Buddhist schools' assertions, such as the absurd assertion that certain impermanent phenomena are permanent, the different citations of time, and assertions about a self, partless atoms and so forth. Their assertions show that even coarse phenomena, not to mention the subtleties of reality, are obscured for the expounders of the non-Buddhist theses.

Coarse phenomena, like the physical environment and so forth are mentioned in the commentary as 'physical environment and inhabitants'. So if even the very coarse reality of phenomena is obscured from their view then there is no need to mention not being able to properly establish the subtleties of phenomena. As the commentary further reads:

> People who follow them will thus come under the influence of innate and intellectually formed attitudes which must be given up, and they will be misled for a very long time. Those interested in their own good should leave false teachers.

The term 'innate and intellectually formed attitudes' is in relation to wrong conceptions of the ultimate nature of phenomena. These misconceptions are either innate or intellectually-acquired, and if people cannot give them up, these wrong conceptions will be further reinforced, and thus 'they will be misled for a very long time.'

Innate and intellectually acquired attitudes, specifically refers to the innate and intellectually acquired misconceptions of grasping at the self. These misconceptions have been explained earlier[2], however to reiterate the main points: Innate grasping means the grasping at a self that we have had from beginningless time as an ordinary person. We didn't acquire it intellectually as we have it naturally within us. Whereas intellectually acquired means that which is acquired through other external sources i.e. doctrines, philosophies and so forth.

One must remember that all of the explanations given here should be taken as personal advice. Even though 'people who follow them', may sound like it is referring to other beings and that we are talking about someone else, in fact, we should take this as personal advice, and not be influenced by innate and intellectually acquired attitudes. As followers of a correct tenet of Buddhism, we do not have intellectually-acquired or intellectually formed wrong conceptions. They would have been removed by adhering to the correct explanations of selflessness, however we still have the innate grasping at a self, and if we allow our attitudes to be influenced by that innate grasping at a self, then we will be misled and liberation and enlightenment will be out of reach for a long time. Thus we who strive to achieve the goals of liberation and enlightenment must be constantly conscientious, and beware of being misled by the wrong conception of, specifically in our case, innate self-grasping.

The last line of the explanation in the commentary is:

> They should trust and value the true one.

Again we should take that as personal advice and relate it to our personal practice. Being aware of our situation and our conditions right now, we should rejoice and feel very fortunate that we have come into contact with the unmistaken teachings, and teachers who propound the teachings. It is indeed rare to find teachings that explain how products are impermanent and that all phenomena are selfless. These teachings, being valid, incontrovertible and unmistaken, lead us to the ultimate goals. We must realise that we are extremely fortunate to come into contact with the teachings and the teachers who propound them and feel happy about that. Being aware of that, we must take advantage and try to use our time and energy to understand them, and then put them into practice. On a daily basis we should also make strong aspirational prayers such as, 'In this life and in all future lives may I never be separated from the true sources of the teachings and the teachers who propound these teachings'.

[1] This is covered at greater length in the teaching of 19 June 2001. Also see footnote 8 on page 366 of the text.

[2] See *Madhyamakavatara*, 25 March 2003

While we are extremely fortunate to have these conditions of having the unmistaken teachings and the teachers who explain them in an unmistaken way, it could be easy for us to just take it for granted and not do much with these perfect conditions. What a waste if we were to just let the opportunity go! Rather, we should seize this opportunity to really try and gain an understanding, and then reflect again and again on the teachings that explain selflessness and emptiness. Think about the reasonings the teachings give: why things lack an inherently existent self, establishing how things are selfless and lack a permanent nature. Then, the more we familiarise our mind with the reasonings that are given in the teachings, and reflect upon them and their validity, the stronger the imprint on our mind, and on that basis one day we may be able to gain the actual realisations of selflessness and emptiness. In this way it can be useful for us.

It is very meaningful for us to relate to these teachings while we have the resources and the means to do so and try to really reflect upon them and use them in our daily practice. When we use it for our practice then we can begin to see a shift in our mind and we begin to really have some sort of warm feeling from reflecting on these teachings. The mere fact of reflecting on these teachings can give a confirmation, felt in one's heart, which then becomes very meaningful. Whatever validity we gain in our mind becomes a good experience for us at our level. In order for our practice to be pure and authentic, particularly at our level, it is very important to reflect on the impermanent nature of phenomena, particularly the impermanence of our life.

As we all recall from the Lam Rim teachings, not reflecting on impermanence is one of the main faults of becoming complacent in our Dharma practice, as not reflecting on impermanence will initially make us not even think about the Dharma. Even if were to think about the Dharma, we might not engage in it. Furthermore, even if we engage in the practice of Dharma, we may not be able to keep its continuity if we don't reflect on impermanence again and again. Continuity and pure Dharma practice do not come about if we don't reflect on impermanence. Thus, to encourage us in our practice initially, and then to secure our practice, and to keep the continuity of our practice, we must all reflect on impermanence again and again.

By reflecting on the teachings and trying to put them into practice, we are able to subdue our delusions. Even on a gross level, if we are able to subdue the manifest level of our delusions, it brings a great relief to our mind. We can immediately experience the positive effect of reducing the intensity of the delusions in our mind, even on a manifest level. That is something which really seems to help our mind; we can see a change and a shift take place in our life. That is something you should be able to experience from your practice.

1.1.2. Difficulty of understanding the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence

This heading which is sub-divided into five:
1.1.2.1. Why emptiness is feared
1.1.2.2. Faults of impeding others' understanding of emptiness
1.1.2.3. Taking care not to lapse from the view of suchness
1.1.2.4. Stages leading towards suchness
1.1.2.5. Recognising suchness

1.1.2.1. WHY EMPTINESS IS FEARED

This heading has three sub-divisions:
1.1.2.1.1. Why some, although seeking liberation, follow the Forders
1.1.2.1.2. Recognising a person who fears emptiness
1.1.2.1.3. Why childish people fear emptiness

1.1.2.1.1. WHY SOME, ALTHOUGH SEEKING LIBERATION, FOLLOW THE FORDERS

Question: Why do those who seek liberation follow the Forders? [which refers to non-Buddhist schools, such as the Samkyas]

Answer: Because they are afraid to listen to teaching on emptiness.

The unwise take no de1ight in letting *282*
Their mind follow a guide
Who has done that which is
Most difficult-attained nirvana.

As mentioned previously, those who are not prepared to hear the teachings on emptiness can easily misinterpret what emptiness means, believing that nothing exists. So when the *Heart Sutra* says that there is 'no form' and so forth, they misinterpret that as saying that no form exists at all, and likewise no other phenomena exist at all. Thinking that nothing exists, and losing all sense of reality, believing that they are losing everything, they develop fear in the mind.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> To be taken care of by a spiritual friend and go to the city of Nirvana, having rid oneself of the stains of conceiving things as truly existent, is very difficult. Though one with great compassion who did what was difficult to do has come to guide them, unwise people take no delight in letting their minds follow this guide because they fear emptiness.

That is all quite clearly illustrated` and can be understood without further comment.

1.1.2.1.2. RECOGNISING A PERSON WHO FEARS EMPTINESS

This identifies the type of people would be afraid of emptiness.

Question: Who is afraid? [of emptiness]

Answer:

When it is not seen, fear does not begin. *283*
When seen, it stops completely.
Thus one can say with certainty:
Those who know a little are afraid.

As the commentary explains:

> People like cowherds, who see neither virtues nor faults in it, can hear about emptiness a hundred times without beginning to feel afraid, because they do not regard it as either beneficial or harmful.

This is very vividly explaining that people who have no concern about whether it is beneficial or not can hear, for example, 'form is empty...' and so forth from the *Heart Sutra* many times, but it doesn't really have any effect on their mind, because they take no personal interest in it and thus don't see any benefit or fault.

As the commentary further reads:

> When one perceives emptiness directly through a gradual process of hearing, thinking and meditating,...

This refers to the gradual process of acquiring the realisation of emptiness, which is by first hearing about it through teachings, and then thinking, contemplating and analysing it, and then meditating on it. Through that gradual process one then perceives emptiness directly.

Then:

> …fear stops completely because one is free from conceptions of a self which are the cause of fear.

This is really a very important point that one should keep in mind. What causes the fear and where does it come from? It is very explicitly mentioned here that the conception of a truly existent self is the cause of fear. When that is removed all fear naturally subsides. It is the misconception of the self that brings that natural grasping at the self, which promotes that notion of 'me' being very important. The self-interest is always saying, 'me', 'what should I do for myself?' 'What will happen to me?' Thus all the fears come about through having a very strong concern about the 'me' or the 'I'.

As the commentary states:

> Thus one can say with certainty that fear arises in people who have only a little knowledge of emptiness.

It is also explained in other teachings that those who are beginning to gain some understanding of emptiness, will initially be fearful. That fear is, in fact, initially seen as a good sign because it means that the explanation of emptiness is doing something to one's mind, that it is beginning to alter one's strong view of an independent and inherently existent self. The initial fear that occurs is said to be from a sense of losing everything. It is said that when Lama Tsong Khapa was giving teachings, one of his disciples started to develop that fear and started to hold on to his monk's shirt. When Lama Tsong Khapa saw this he pointed it out saying, 'That's a good sign', meaning that the disciple is getting something. Of course we cannot relate our meagre understanding of emptiness to the high level of understanding that a direct disciple of Lama Tsong Khapa would have gained. However that sort of external analogy proves that gaining some understanding of emptiness can bring fear to the mind.

The commentary then provides an analogy to illustrate the point:

> A well-trained person is not afraid to mount a mad elephant…

The term 'mad elephant' can also refer to a wild elephant. Someone who is trained and is skilled in mounting a mad or a wild elephant, would have no fear because they have mastered the mad elephant mounting technique. Likewise trainees who engage in the gradual process of understanding emptiness by hearing it again and again, reading it, then further analysing the teachings on emptiness, and then using that understanding to contemplate and meditate on it will become skilled in the meaning of selflessness or emptiness, and then all fears in relation to understanding emptiness will cease. Otherwise there might be the fault of not being able to identify the object of negation. When the self is negated, the existing self is completely negated; it is the object of negation – an inherently existent person, and not the person itself – that has to be removed in order to understand emptiness. If the person itself is completely negated, that is an extreme view and thus then those fears and misunderstandings will arise.

> …nor is an extremely stupid person.

This refers to a person who does not know the dangers of mad or wild elephants, and who doesn't have the skills of mounting a mad elephant. Such a stupid person would have no fear, but that is dangerous, because there is no knowledge of the risks at all.

Finally:

> Yet someone who knows a little about the dangers and benefits involved feels frightened.

Someone who knows about the dangers, who has some skills but is not really skilled yet, would fear mounting a mad elephant. This illustrates that with someone who is in the process of understanding emptiness, and who has had not yet realised emptiness directly, but has some conceptual understanding, may initially have some fear.

The earlier points made in the teaching about valid cognition, and how to prove the Buddha to be a valid being and how to establish the reasoning of obvious, slightly hidden and extremely hidden phenomena were explained in the teachings on *lo rig* (mind and mental factors) and *drup ta* (tenets). It is good to refer to those teachings again to freshen the mind with those explanations.

It is really hard at our level, to validate the possibility of obtaining a good rebirth in a future lifetime. In order to validate and establish that in our mind, and also for others, but especially for oneself in our practice, we need to rely on citations from the Buddha's teachings. Then when we gain an understanding of the Buddha as being a valid being, we can accept his sayings as being valid as well, thus proving to our mind that it is possible to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 October 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set a proper motivation, such as the bodhicitta motivation.

If, when one hears the word bodhicitta one feels emotional to the point of uncontrollable tears, then that would be a good sign of progress. If the mere word 'bodhicitta' alone can instil such a deep emotional feeling within oneself, then the benefit of actually developing bodhicitta can surely be seen.

1.1.2.1. WHY EMPTINESS IS FEARED (CONT.)

1.1.2.1.3. WHY CHILDISH PEOPLE FEAR EMPTINESS

Question: Why do they fear emptiness?

Answer: Because of a lack of familiarity.

This preamble indicates that a lack of familiarity with meditating on emptiness brings about fear.

Childish beings are certainly only 284
Familiar with that which involves them.
Because of unfamiliarity
They fear that which extricates them.

It is good to further develop the question in the preamble to relate it to one's understanding and practice. If as indicated here, ordinary beings fear emptiness, because of lack of familiarity with it, then what does it mean to be familiar? How does one become familiar with emptiness? Thinking like this makes it a personal quest.

As the commentary explains:

> Childish beings are certainly only familiar with innate and intellectually formed conceptions of a self which involve them in cyclic existence.

Innate and intellectually acquired misconceptions of a self have been explained earlier. Ordinary beings are already very familiar with the innate misconception of an inherently existent self, which is further strengthened by the intellectually acquired misconception; it is these mistaken concepts that lead an individual into the cyclic existence. And:

> Since such childish beings have no previous familiarity with a teaching that extricates one from the cycle of birth and death, they fear emptiness.

Childish beings are led into cyclic existence because of their familiarity with innate and intellectually acquired misconceptions of a self. As childish beings are constantly engaged and immersed in cyclic existence, they find it difficult when they come up against something that opposes cyclic existence. They will naturally be fearful of losing what they have been familiar with over countless life times.

When one is familiar with something over a long time, then anything opposing that familiarity is difficult to accept. It brings fear because it is difficult to let go of an object that one is very familiar with. To give a contemporary example, for someone who has a drinking habit, the more they drink, the more familiar they become with that habit, and the more familiar with it they are, the more addicted they become. Trying to overcome the drinking habit then is very difficult, and it is the same with addictions to any other kind of substances. Similarly, at a broader level, as explained in the text, childish or ordinary beings are familiar with cyclic existence, and that which opposes cyclic existence brings about fear, because it is difficult to accept change. As emptiness opposes the root cause of cyclic existence, they therefore fear emptiness.

From our own experience we come to realise that we are very familiar with the pleasures of cyclic existence. When the shortcomings and disadvantages of cyclic existence are explained, and even when we accept the fact that indulging in, and being immersed in the pleasures of cyclic existence keeps us in cyclic existence, it is still very hard to feel a sense of disenchantment with cyclic existence. Even though we know and understand the faults of cyclic existence intellectually, whenever we meet a desirable object we are drawn towards it. We might acknowledge the faults of samsara, and try to distance ourselves from the causes, but still we find it very difficult to avoid it.

It is very important to apply the understanding we get from this explanation to one's daily practice. There are many who claim to have meditated for many years yet don't see much change in their mind, or they may have done other practices for many years, but somehow there is no change. As a consequence, such people may come to the wrong conclusion that the fault lies in the technique of the teaching. What one should come to realise after reflecting on our deeply rooted attachment to samsara, is that it's not the fault of the teachings, but rather the fault lies in not being able apply the teachings properly. That is what we should identify as being the main fault, not the teaching or the practice itself.

One should derive the main essence of the commentary, which is how the doctrine of emptiness instils fear, why it instils fear, and how the explanation of emptiness is a means to oppose cyclic existence. The wisdom realising emptiness, is the realisation that phenomena don't have an inherently existent self, and that wisdom directly opposes the grasping at an inherently existent self. Emptiness is the direct opposite of the misconception which grasps onto an inherently existing self.

As explained previously, grasping at an inherently existent self is what keeps beings in samsara from lifetime to lifetime. For as long as they grasp at a self they will remain in cyclic existence. That which opposes grasping at the self is the understanding of selflessness. Thus, directly opposing that misconception of an inherently existing self, opposes all the associated misconceptions of cyclic existence. When we understand this, then we come to understand how the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness is the ultimate technique to free one from cyclic existence.

As to why emptiness instils fear, one must understand that it is because it opposes the misconception of grasping at the self that we are so familiar with, that we so completely are immersed in and hold onto so tightly. At the same time we have no familiarity with the teachings on emptiness. When there is a suggestion that grasping at the self does not exist then that naturally brings fear, as we have a sense of losing what we have. Basically we're not familiar with emptiness, and we are very familiar with grasping at an inherently existing self. So when the teachings on emptiness are presented, that brings about fear.

One should therefore give up doctrines that are wrong and unwholesome.

This refers to those doctrines that oppose the realisation of selflessness. This line also indicates that realised beings will not give teachings on emptiness or selflessness to those who are not receptive to them. Thus one should not give teachings on emptiness to beings that are not receptive to them

1.1.2.2. FAULTS OF IMPEDING OTHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF EMPTINESS

This subdivision refers to the faults that exist if one obstructs others from meditating on emptiness. The previous outline explained how it is a fault to explain emptiness to those who are not ready for it, as it can bring about fears and so forth, and a misunderstanding of the whole teaching. This heading asks if it is a fault to obstruct those who are ready to receive teachings on emptiness, or who are meditating on emptiness.

Emptiness should be taught to those who, because they feel grateful to the Tathagata, are suitable vessels, but who, because of their great fear, are tempted to reject it.

If someone who is shrouded in *285*
Complete ignorance and impedes suchness
Will not even attain good fortune,
What need to mention liberation?

The verse indicates that the suitable vessels to receive teachings on emptiness are those who appreciate and respect the Tathagata (meaning the Buddha) making salutations and offerings, but who still have a strong fear of the pitfalls of cyclic existence. Suitable vessels are those who wish to overcome samsara, and who also have the intelligence to be able to adopt the teachings on emptiness.

More specifically it can relate to the specific realisation one needs to have to enter the path, which is renunciation, i.e. a strong and deeply spontaneous wish to overcome the sufferings of the lower realms and entirely abandon cyclic existence. Such beings are suitable vessels because, they have an intense wish to be free of cyclic existence, thus they are ready to hear the teachings on selflessness, which are the main means to overcome cyclic existence. It is good to understand and relate to that. As we are all engaged in society, and we have to coexist with others it is good to remember their limitations, and not explain too much.

Someone who not only has a total disregard for emptiness but is completely shrouded in ignorance and impedes teaching, hearing and thinking about suchness out of jealousy, meanness and the like will not even attain the good fortune of a high rebirth. This being so, what chance is there of such a person attaining liberation, since such actions are grave ill deeds?

This is a vivid illustration of a person who does not accept emptiness and who has a mind that is engulfed with ignorance, which prevents them from seeing the incredible value of emptiness. Rather than seeing that value they impede the teaching, which can mean when others give teachings, or are hearing and thinking about emptiness, they feel upset out of jealousy or just because they are mean. Such negative emotions arise in relation to the ignorance of emptiness. Such beings will not obtain good fortune, meaning a higher rebirth, and if they cannot obtain a higher rebirth because of their state of mind and attitudes, then there is no chance whatsoever for them to obtain liberation.

Rejecting dependent arising free from fabricated extremes [which relates to emptiness] is a more serious ill deed than killing a hundred million people, so one must take care in this matter to avoid deceiving oneself.

This graphically illustrates that rejecting emptiness or criticising it out of jealousy, miserliness and so forth is a great misdeed. As the commentary says, one must avoid deceiving oneself, meaning that one must be careful not to fall into the category of criticising those who are practising and meditating on emptiness, or teaching emptiness. As we all have faith in the teachings on emptiness we may not have that danger. Nevertheless it is possible, and we must always be alert to a critical mind arising in ourselves. There is a great danger especially in relation to criticising others out of jealousy. That sort of critical mind can very easily arise within ourselves, and it is something me must be wary of and not deceive ourselves about, meaning that we must protect ourselves from that great danger.

If we can relate being shrouded in the ignorance to ourselves then, as indicated here in the teachings, it is because of that very fact of being engulfed in ignorance that all of the faults, such as criticising others out of jealousy and miserliness, come about. If we can identify that ignorance within ourselves, then we can see how we are in danger. Therefore we must always protect ourselves.

1.1.2.3. TAKING CARE NOT TO LAPSE FROM THE VIEW OF SUCHNESS

Whatever understanding one may gain, intellectually or otherwise, one must be very careful not to let that decline or lapse.

Lapsing from ethics is preferable *286*
To lapsing from the view.
Through ethics one gains a high rebirth;
The supreme state is reached by means of the view.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

Since denying emptiness is most detrimental to oneself and others, a lapse in ethical conduct is preferable.

Denying emptiness can bring very great danger and harm to oneself and others. The Tibetan word fault *la-i* has the connotation of being easier. What is being indicated here is that lapsing from ethical conduct is relatively less serious than denying emptiness. The reason the commentary gives is:

…for while the result of ethical conduct is a high rebirth, the view that understands emptiness takes one to the supreme states of liberation and enlightenment.

For someone practising moral ethics, even very well, the highest goal they can reach is a higher rebirth in the next lifetime; one can not achieve a higher status than that. Whereas, the realisation of emptiness will take one to the supreme state of liberation and ultimately enlightenment. Compared with the temporary goal of higher rebirth, the supreme goals of liberation and enlightenment are much more valuable. So the main point is that realising emptiness is much more valuable compared to following moral ethics.

Sutra says:

A lapse in ethics is preferable;
A lapse in view is not.

1.1.2.4. STAGES LEADING TOWARDS SUCHNESS

The wise only teach the view of suchness after carefully examining the vessel. It is also said:

Taught to fools, it confuses them
And does not further peace.
When snakes drink milk
Their poison only increases.

The first two lines of this verse relate to emptiness and the last pair of lines are the analogy. When poisonous snakes drink milk it only increases their poison rather than decreasing it. The analogy illustrates the fact that when emptiness is taught to those who are not intelligent, then rather than benefiting them and bringing peace, it just brings more confusion.

For the unreceptive, conceptions of a self are best; 287
To teach them selflessness is not.
They would go to bad rebirths,
While the extraordinary attain peace.

The commentary states:

> It is best to teach the uneducated and unreceptive that there is a self in accordance with their conceptions of a self…

For those who are uneducated, meaning those who don't have much intelligence and who are unreceptive to the teachings on selflessness, teaching that there is a self, in accordance with their conception of a self, is much better. The reason for that is:

> …for their attachment to the self will cause them to give up harmful behaviour, making it easier for them to find a happy rebirth.

When there is a very strong misconception of grasping at the self then that can produce attachment to the self, which naturally brings attachment to what is conducive to the self. Because of this, that which is immediately conducive to the self is having good status, i.e. a good rebirth and the good conditions associated with that rebirth. For such people, teachings on obtaining higher rebirth are very attractive, and will be readily accepted, because that is conducive to their strong attachment to the self. Such beings are receptive to teachings that explain the causes to obtain a higher rebirth (such as a human or god rebirth) and are likely to engage in practices such as keeping morality and so forth, basically abiding by the law of karma, and creating virtuous karma. You are already aware that virtuous meritorious karma leads to a good rebirth in the next lifetime and non-meritorious negative karma leads to unfortunate rebirths. These teachings on karma, which present the causes to obtain higher rebirth, are very suitable for a person with a tendency to have a strong attachment to the self. If we are inclined to create virtue because of attachment to the self, and wishing for happiness, we may engage in good deeds to acquire those results. Thus, some good temporary results can be obtained from grasping at the self.

Having explained why such beings are suitable to receive teachings on an existent self, the commentary next shows the faults of explaining emptiness and selflessness to such beings.

> It is not good to teach them emptiness, for they will ruin their three doors by rejecting or misunderstanding it. Thus teaching emptiness has a disadvantageous as well as an advantageous aspect. On the one hand, rejecting it through lack of appreciation or denying cause and effect because of taking non-existence to be the meaning of emptiness leads to a bad rebirth.

If teachings on emptiness are given to those who are not suitable, their misunderstanding could result in extremes. It might lead them to the misunderstanding that nothing exists, and that cause and effect, or karma, doesn't exist, and thus lead them to the grave misdeed of completely denying karma, creating the negative karma to be reborn in the lower realms. That is an ill effect!

> On the other hand, the extraordinary who have mastered suchness attain peace.

This line indicates the advantageous aspects of teaching on emptiness: those who are receptive to teachings on emptiness will be able, by gaining full understanding of emptiness, to gain the realisations that lead them to the ultimate state of peace, liberation or enlightenment.

I suppose we would put ourselves in the category of those who are receptive to teachings on emptiness!? If we do, then we must make sure that we live up to that position, and make an effort to gain an understanding of emptiness. Not only that but we should make the effort to put it into practice. Whenever there is a category to choose from, we naturally choose to be in the better category, don't we!? That is of course an ideal.

1.1.2.5. RECOGNISING SUCHNESS

This heading has two sub-divisions
1.1.2.5.1. Recognising the fundamental mode of existence
1.1.2.5.2. Why fear arises in the weak

1.1.2.5.1. RECOGNISING THE FUNDAMENTAL MODE OF EXISTENCE

> One must definitely understand suchness to reach enlightenment in any of the three vehicles.

There is no other door to peace, 288
And it destroys wrong views.
That which is the object of
All Buddhas is called selflessness.

As the commentary explains:

> Since the root of worldly existence cannot be cut without understanding emptiness, there is no other door to peace.

This is a point where we incorporate the understanding we gained from our studies of the Madhyamika, which explained very elaborately that there is only one door to peace or liberation, as is indicated here.

> …there is no other door to peace. Dependent arising's lack of inherent existence is called the fundamental mode of existence,

'There is no other door to peace', means that there is only one door to peace, and this refers to the realisation of emptiness, which is the one door leading to the peace of the nirvana or enlightenment. More specifically, one must definitely understand suchness to realise enlightenment in any of the three vehicles. That is the main point that was explained so elaborately in the Madhyamika teachings - the realisation of emptiness is the one technique which leads to the goals of all the three vehicles, the hearer, solitary realiser and bodhisattva vehicles.

Other teachings show how the realisation of emptiness is referred to as the mother, and bodhicitta is like the father. So wisdom is the mother and method is the father. To explain that further, in the caste system in India, if the father is of Brahmin caste then naturally his child is a Brahmin. Likewise if the father is a king, then his child is also naturally from the royal caste.

Whatever the caste of the father the son is of the same caste as his father, whereas the mother can produce children belonging to different castes. For example, a mother can have three children by three different fathers, and the nationality of the father determines the nationality of the child. If one of the children is fathered by a Tibetan the child would be Tibetan, although nowadays, of course, some would say, 'I am half and half'. In India, for example, a mother could have a son of the royal caste, a son of the

Brahmin caste, and a son of the warrior caste. However the father can father only a child of one caste.

The meaning we derive from this analogy is that practising the method side, which in the great vehicle is bodhicitta, produces the ultimate goal of enlightenment. In the lower vehicle the method produces only liberation. Whereas the realisation of emptiness can produce three different types goals, which is liberation for the hearer and solitary realisers, and enlightenment for the bodhisattvas. When one develops renunciation, and along with that the strong wish for personal peace, to be freed from cyclic existence, and that strong determination is infused by the realisation of emptiness, then that brings about the goal of self liberation. Within the great vehicle, one first develops a sense of great love, wishing all beings to be free from samsara and ultimately free from cyclic existence, and when that attitude is infused with the realisation of emptiness, then that brings about the goal of enlightenment.

The main point from this explanation is that whatever goal one intends to achieve from the three vehicles, the only cause to achieve any of these goals is the realisation of selflessness. Without that one cannot attain the goals of either self liberation or enlightenment. The one door to the achievement of that ultimate goal is the realisation of suchness or emptiness.

Having explained that there is no other door to peace, the commentary continues:

> Dependent arising's lack of inherent existence is called the fundamental mode of existence, ultimate truth, emptiness and selflessness, and is the object of Hearer and Solitary Realizer Exalted ones and of all Exalted Buddhas. Understanding it destroys wrong views holding to extremes.

Here 'holding to extremes' refers to grasping at a truly existent self.

1.1.2.5.2. WHY FEAR ARISES IN THE WEAK

The unreceptive are terrified *289*
Just by its very name.
What so-called strong man is seen
Who does not frighten the weak?

As the commentary explains:

> Selflessness must not be taught to the weak-minded for the very word "emptiness" terrifies the unreceptive. Does one see any so-called strong man who does not frighten the weak? For instance, just the sight of a lion or tiger frightens small animals.

The very word 'emptiness' terrifies those who are very strongly attached to the self, other phenomena, worldly existence, and cyclic existence.

For such beings with very strong attachment, who believe one hundred percent in that reality, the mere word 'empty' brings a strong fear to their mind, because it immediately distances them from what they perceive as being reality. The reason it instils fear in the unreceptive is because the power of the word 'emptiness' is so great, because of what it stands for. Let alone the actual realisations, even the name of emptiness is very powerful. To illustrate that, we use the example of the fearsome beast. When animals or humans hear the word 'lion' that brings about fear because of what lions stand for. When animals have an indication that there is a lion around they immediately have fear in their mind because of the power that lions have, but they would not have fear of animals of their own kind. Even with humans, if we feel we are equal we have no fear, but we fear the more powerful.

1.1.3. The profound is not taught for the sake of argument

This section has three subdivisions:
1.1.3.1. Although not taught for the sake of debate this very teaching burns up wrong contentions
1.1.3.2. Why this is so
1.1.3.3. Appropriateness of compassion for those following the wrong path

1.1.3.1. ALTHOUGH NOT TAUGHT FOR THE SAKE OF DEBATE THIS VERY TEACHING BURNS UP WRONG CONTENTIONS

The Buddha did not teach emptiness for the sake of argument or debate, but the explanation of emptiness, by its very nature, eliminates wrong contentions or wrong views.

> *Assertion:* Since this teaching destroys all wrong views, it should be taught to the unreceptive in order to defeat its opponents.
>
> *Answer:*

This principle is not taught *290*
By Tathagatas for the sake of debate,
Yet it burns up others' contentions
As a fire does its fuel.

The actual question in relation to the assertion is that if teaching on emptiness destroys all wrong views it shouldn't be taught to the unreceptive.

> Tathagatas do not teach this principle only to outshine opponents in debate but as the door to liberation.

The purpose of the Buddha teaching suchness is to show the door to liberation.

> Nonetheless this teaching of emptiness burns up others' wrong contentions…

Even though not intended to defeat others through debate, explaining emptiness naturally burns up the wrong contentions of others by its very nature. The analogy is that:

> …just as fire consumes its fuel without formulating the intention to burn.

The analogy is quite vivid. It is not as if the fire has an intention to burn up timber and so forth, but by its very nature when fire burns it consumes and burns up fuel. The commentary gives another quote from the sutras:

> The Master also says:
>
> Like the dew on the tip of the grass
> When it meets with the rays of the sun,

Here the analogy is that the dew on the tip of the grass will naturally evaporate when it meets with the sun. Even though the sun has no intention of drying up the dew it naturally does so.

> Opponents' arguments and errors
> Evaporate when they meet you."

Here the 'you' refers to explanations of emptiness.

We will conclude here. There are not many verses left in this chapter. It would be good to reflect on the explanations given so far in this chapter, because as you would have noticed, there are many profound explanations that will be helpful for our own practice.

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 November 2007

By withdrawing our mind from external distractions and focussing on the subject of the teachings, we generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice'.

The benefit of generating a bodhicitta motivation is not only limited to fulfilling an immediate purpose to benefit from listening to the teachings, but it also leaves a very strong imprint to actualise that promise in the future.

1.1.3. The profound is not taught for the sake of argument (cont.)

1.1.3.2. Why this is so

This is sub-divided in two sections:

1.1.3.2.1. Actual meaning

1.1.3.2.2. Why the exalted do not experience fear

1.1.3.2.1. ACTUAL MEANING

> *Question:* How does this teaching burn up others' contentions, when understanding of it arises in the mind of someone with interest in it?
> *Answer:*
>
> *Whoever knows this teaching* 291
> *Will not relish others.*
> *Thus to me this teaching seems*
> *Like the door to destruction.*

The answer to the opening question is something that we must reflect on for our own practice. Gaining the realisation of emptiness will definitely remove all misconceptions and, as the commentary says, 'burn up others' contentions'. We actually have extreme wrong views, because grasping at the self is the cause for all other wrong views to arise in the mind. That which destroys grasping at the self is the realisation of emptiness, so once one gains a realisation of emptiness, which is a direct opponent to the grasping at the self, then naturally all wrong conceptions and contentions will be completely removed. Reflecting on this will generate the determination to develop the realisation of emptiness for the purpose of combating grasping at the self.

As the commentary explains:

> Whoever comes to know the nectar-like taste of this teaching, the emptiness of inherent existence, through hearing, thinking and meditating will not relish views adhering to the true existence of things.

As clearly mentioned here, 'to know' means realising the teaching on emptiness, which is seeing that phenomena lack inherent existence. The process of gaining the realisations of emptiness and the lack of inherent existence is through hearing, thinking and contemplation. Through hearing the teachings and explanations one gains a certain level of understanding. Then one uses one's own intelligence and analytical wisdom to investigate further and analyse the meaning of what one has heard. Through this analysis one investigates whether that understanding actually corresponds to the facts or not. When one gains a level of confirmation through that analysis, one uses that as the object of meditation, and meditates on the meaning that one has gained from analysis. That is how, as one's meditation progresses, one gradually gains the realisations and ultimately attains primordial wisdom.

Without first hearing and then contemplating the meaning, one cannot possibly meditate on the meaning. The great Kadampa masters as well as Lama Tsong Khapa said that the more one hears the teachings, the more one is able to analyse the teachings, and the more one is able to analyse the teachings the more meaning one has to meditate upon. Thus the result of meditation, which is to gain realisations, increases. In this way one gains the ultimate realisations. By following that tradition we come to understand that the process of gaining realisations begins with hearing the teachings.

After having heard the teachings, not just once or twice but again and again, we gain a conceptual understanding through hearing. Then we use what we have understood from hearing as a basis to analyse the teachings. As we analyse the teachings more profoundly we gain an understanding from ultimate analysis, and we then meditate upon the meaning that we get from our ultimate analysis. We may have faith in the teaching and think, 'Yes, everything is empty', but if we try to meditate just with those words, we wouldn't know what we are supposed to focus on. Not knowing where to begin we may end up quite confused, and start to develop doubts because we are not clear about what being empty means.

So after hearing the explanations about emptiness, and how things are empty of inherent existence, we begin by contemplating the faults of perceiving things as inherently existent. If things were inherently existent, then what sort of faults would arise from that? In this way we need to first identify and then contemplate the object of negation i.e. inherent existence. Once one comes to clearly see the faults of inherent existence, then one begins to see how things are empty of inherent existence, or empty of true existence. Once we gain an affirmation of how things are empty of inherent existence, then we can meditate upon that meaning. When we begin to understand the process of how things lack inherent existence, then we will know what to meditate on.

It is good for us to really consider the process of study and practice and relate to these explanations personally. Then we gain some sort of certainty about the tradition we are following, which is to gain realisations that are the combination of analytical meditation and contemplative meditation. We also gain a greater understanding about why these two forms of meditation should be combined, as that is said to be essential.

Then the commentary mentions that through that process of

> ... hearing, thinking and meditating [one] will not relish views adhering to the true existence of things.

The 'views adhering to true existence' are the wrong views that are propounded by the non-Buddhist schools. One 'will not relish it' means that one will not hold these views as being true and important.

As the commentary further mentions:

> The Master Aryadeva therefore says that this teaching of emptiness seems to him like the door and means to the destruction of wrong views.

This relates to the last two lines of verse 291. There Aryadeva is making a personal comment about how the process of understanding the emptiness of inherent existence (which is thinking, hearing and meditating) is the ultimate means to abstain from adhering to or relishing wrong views. As indicated in other teachings by the great masters, the noble or superior beings, experience great joy when they relate to the Buddha's words. Aryadeva himself makes a personal comment about how this is really the ultimate method and how the explanation on emptiness gives him great personal satisfaction and joy.

As the commentary further reads:

> Alternatively he says it with texts on emptiness in mind, in that the words of the Buddha that teach emptiness also seem like this to the Master.

An alternative way to explain the above statement is that Aryadeva is affirming the Buddha's teaching on emptiness, which explains the true nature of all existence exactly as it is. Aryadeva says this with conviction, as a result of his own analysis.

1.1.3.2.2. WHY THE EXALTED DO NOT EXPERIENCE FEAR

> *Question:* Why does emptiness not cause the Exalted fear?
> *Answer:* Because they have destroyed the seed of attachment to the self.
>
> *For those who think there is* *292*
> *In reality no self and abide in this thought,*
> *How will existence cause pleasure*
> *Or non-existence cause fear?*

The term 'the Exalted' in the preliminary question refers to the aryas who have realised emptiness directly. As explained previously, aryas are called exalted or superior because they are superior in their level of realisation. Compared with the understanding of emptiness by ordinary bodhisattvas, (i.e. those on the path of accumulation and preparation) and of those ordinary beings on the path of the lower vehicle, the aryas have a much more profound realization of emptiness. Having a superior realisation means having the direct realisation or perception of emptiness. Whereas the ordinary beings on the path only have a conceptual understanding and have not yet attained the direct realisation of emptiness.

Another interpretation of superior or exalted is having surpassed the grip of grasping at the self or true existence. Ordinary beings are still in the grip of grasping at true existence, whereas once one reaches the superior state, the grip, which is grasping at true existence, is loosened. How? Through the realisation of emptiness. Why? Ultimately because the realisation of emptiness, directly opposes the grasping at true existence, and thus the grip is released.

Although it may not be the case that all aryas 'have destroyed the seed of attachment to the self yet', that can also imply that they are sure to destroy the seed of attachment in the future. This indicates that they will definitely destroy the seed of attachment.

Because they have destroyed the seed of attachment to the self, then:

> Since they have no attachment to views of a self or hostility toward selflessness …

You can interpret destroying the seed of attachment to mean that the continuum of the realisation that supreme arya beings have gained will now be the ultimate opponent to completely overcome the seed of attachment (which can also mean a subtle imprint). That's one way you could answer this in debate. Even though not all aryas have actually overcome the seed of attachment, it can be applied to those who are still on the path, because of that certainty of overcoming the seed of attachment.

If we were to take it literally as explained here in the teaching, then we can relate the seed to mean the intellectually acquired misconception of inherent existence, which is definitely overcome by all aryas. Furthermore, one can also relate it to overcoming fear. Prior to gaining the realisation of emptiness directly, there is a lot of fear in relation to the attachment to the self. Higher beings however will definitely have no fear.

Referring again to the commentary:

> … how will those who think that external and internal phenomena are in reality selfless and who abide in a direct understanding of this be pleased by the existence of the self or frightened by selflessness?

Again this is referring to exalted beings or superior beings. This rhetorical question implies that such beings would have no fear in relation to the existence of a self, nor would they be frightened by selflessness. 'Pleased by the existence of the self', refers to an inherently existent self. Superior beings are not pleased and they do not adhere to the existence of a truly existent self. Thus they are not frightened of selflessness. That is the main point.

The reason is then given:

> Fear therefore does not arise in those who have direct understanding of selflessness because they have eliminated the cause of fear.

Fear in relation to either the lack of an inherently existing self or to selflessness is completely eliminated through the understanding of selflessness or emptiness. What we can derive from this explanation is that the real cause of fear is a strong grasping at the self. The stronger the grasping at the self, the more fear we will experience in relation to the self. Whether things are going well or not, it is all in relation to the self that we adhere to as being inherently existent. Thus the real cause of all our fears is the grasping at the self. So if we wonder why others have so much fear, or why we have so much fear, then that is the answer. It is because we have the cause of fear within us—grasping at an inherently existent self.

As the commentary explains, superior beings have no fear because they have overcome the causes of fear by gaining the direct understanding or realisation of selflessness.

1.1.3.3. APPROPRIATENESS OF COMPASSION FOR THOSE FOLLOWING WRONG PATHS

Seeing the many Forders *293*
Who are seeds of futility,
Who would not feel pity
For people who long for a teaching?

As the commentary explains the verse:

> The Forders' many venomous snakes drive their students into thorny thickets of wrong views holding things to be truly existent, the seed of uninterrupted futile suffering in cyclic existence...

According to the explanations in the teachings, the main cause of being in cyclic existence is grasping at a truly existent self. As long as the grasping at a truly existent self is there, the continuum of that grasping will keep us in cyclic existence for aeons and aeons. What keeps us in this seemingly endless cycle is grasping at a truly existent self and that which we call the continuum. In other words the grasping at a truly existing self serves as a cause for an exactly similar continuum to continue into the next instant. And for as long as those instants occur as a consequence of grasping at the truly existent self, samsara remains. As the Forders expound wrong views, the seed of an uninterrupted futile suffering in cyclic existence continues.

> ...daily killing their life force of virtue consistent with liberation.

If you take 'their life force of virtue consistent with liberation' literally, it applies to the virtue that we create in relation to the right views, and which thus become a cause for liberation. However it also refers specifically to the first path, which is the path of accumulation. The first path is referred to as the life force of virtue consistent with liberation, because the path of accumulation is the beginning of the main cause to be developed, which will ultimately result in liberation. The definition of the path of accumulation indicates that it is the life force of virtue consistent with liberation. However we can also take this literally as referring to all the virtues consistent with the right view that leads to liberation.

So as the commentary further explains:

> Seeing this and knowing the nature of these teachings, who with a Bodhisattva's disposition would not feel pity for those who long for a teaching that will liberate them from cyclic existence?

This is yet an another rhetorical question, indicating that the bodhisattvas will definitely have great pity or compassion for those who, because they naturally long for true peace and liberation, yearn for a teaching that will liberate them from cyclic existence. As individuals wanting true peace they seek liberation so that they will be free from cyclic existence. But through the misfortune of having met teachers who expound wrong views that increase their misconceptions, they are led further into cyclic existence rather than being liberated. Seeing that reality, a bodhisattva will have immense compassion and love, because on one hand, these beings long for liberation and to be free from cyclic existence, but on the other hand they are kept in cyclic existence because of the misfortune of meeting with expounders of wrong views.

As the commentary concludes:

> Therefore one must show sentient beings the path of non-inherent existence so that they will not be ravaged by the Forders' snakes.

When we read these texts, it is really very useful for us to take the time to read them over and over again, and try to derive the real meaning of what has been explained, and not to just skim over it. When one skims over a text, one will miss the points and not derive the real meaning. Even someone who is considered to be quite skilled in the understanding of teachings and so forth, may still lack the intense derivation of the meaning of the text if they do not read it carefully. This particular text is of course a complex one, but if we use our time and energy in trying to derive its meaning, even where the meaning is quite deep, then through our practice and familiarity with trying to understand a teaching like this we will find the rest of the teachings with simpler explanations really very easy to read and understand. When we take the time, we can find the deep meaning of the words in this teaching.

If we take the time, to read each line of the text and derive its meaning, we will then naturally go into a very contemplative state, where our mind will be very focussed. Thus the more we concentrate and focus on deriving the meaning from the text, the more understanding we will get from it. In fact, there will be no difficulty in us spending time in reading texts because we will be so engrossed in them. To give a mundane example, it is like someone who is watching an interesting show or their favourite show on TV, or a movie. They seem to be so engrossed and are completely focussed, and if someone distracts them, they say, 'Please leave me alone, I want to concentrate on the show so that I don't miss anything'. They don't appreciate being disturbed because they are so engrossed. Similarly with the teaching and text, once we can derive some meaning from reading the text, we will be quite engrossed and will thus be able to focus on the teaching.

1.1.4. Showing the comparative subtlety and coarseness of our own and others' teaching

This heading has two sub-divisions:
1.1.4.1. General explanation of why those of inferior intelligence value others' teaching but not the Buddha's
1.1.4.2. Specific explanation

1.1.4.1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF WHY THOSE OF INFERIOR INTELLIGENCE VALUE OTHERS' TEACHING BUT NOT THE BUDDHA'S

As the outline indicates, this is a question as to why some value the teachings of other teachers, or the expounding of other views, but do not value the teachings of the Buddha. What is the reason? The text will answer those questions.

> *Question:* Why, despite their inclination toward virtue, do people mostly follow Forders' systems and not the Buddha's teaching?
> *Answer:* Because it is subtle and hard to understand.

The teaching of the Sakyas, *294*
Nirgranthas and Brahmins are perceived
By the mind, the eyes and the ears.
Thus the Subduer's teaching is subtle.

Even though the commentary will explain it further a general overview of the verse is that the teaching of the Sakyas refers to the Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, while the Nirgranthas and the Brahmins are non-Buddhist schools. Being perceived by the mind, means that Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings are understood or perceived by analysing them with the mind, in particular with wisdom. Thus mind refers to the primordial wisdom within one's mind, through which one perceives the Shakyamuni's teachings. Whereas the teachings of the non-Buddhist Nirgranthas are perceived by visual perception, and the Brahmins' teachings are mainly perceived by the ears. Because of these differences in how the teachings are perceived, the Shakyamuni's teachings are indicated here as being more profound and subtle.

It is not as if these followers of other non-Buddhist schools do not have an inclination to virtue, as they do in fact engage in a lot of virtuous activities. But although they favour accumulating virtue they follow other non-Buddhist teachings. Why is that so? The immediate and direct answer is 'because it is subtle and hard to understand'.

As the commentary explains:

> Since the teaching of the Sakyas, the Nirgranthas and Brahmins is understood by the mind, the eyes and the ears respectively...

The Subduer's textual system is more subtle and thus most people do not follow it.

> The sun-like view, the understanding of non-inherent existence, is said to illuminate one's mindstream. It destroys all the thickets of unwholesome views. Seeing all products as being like dreams makes one's mindstream stainless. All this must be understood through meditative equipoise, and thus the Sakyas' teaching is subtle.

'The sun-like view' is an analogy. Just as the sun's rays are able to illuminate everything and eliminate darkness, the understanding of non-inherent existence, or the wisdom realising emptiness eliminates the darkness of ignorance within oneself. It illuminates one's mindstream so that one is able to understand the ultimate nature of one's own mind. Thus, 'it destroys all the thickets of unwholesome views' or wrong views. As the text explains, 'Seeing all products as being like dreams makes one's mindstream stainless'.

As that realisation is gained only through meditative equipoise, one has to make an effort because, as mentioned earlier, it is only through the proper process, ultimately through meditative equipoise, that one gains the realisation of emptiness. Thus the Sakyas' teaching is subtle.

Why are the Buddha's teachings more subtle and profound? It is because that which eliminates the darkness of ignorance, which is grasping at true existence and grasping at a self, is eliminated through gaining the realisation of emptiness. Thus the teaching of emptiness illuminates the true nature of our mind by destroying the darkness within one's mind. That is not achieved instantaneously, but rather through the gradual process, as mentioned earlier, of hearing, thinking and then ultimately meditating on it. Because of this gradual process and the continuous exertion of effort needed to gain that realisation it is much more subtle. Thus the ultimate result of the realisation one gains from these teachings, is much more subtle.

Moreover the ultimate means of purifying our negative karma is through that process of hearing, studying, contemplating, analysing and meditating and thus gaining the ultimate realisation of emptiness. The non-Buddhist schools are quite different to that.

> Since the practices of Nirgranthas consist of a lack of hygiene and physical pain caused by the sun and wind, they can be understood by merely seeing them...

For the non-Buddhist school called Nirgranthas the means of purifying negative karma is to endure a lot of physical pain and suffering, such as by exposing themselves to the heat of the sun or to the wind. They believe that the mere enduring of physical hardships is the means to purify one's negative karma. The endurance of physical pain is something you can see, and thus much easier to understand, compared to the Buddha's teachings.

Since Brahmins take recitation of the Vedas alone as the essence of their practice and their means of purification, they can be understood by hearing and are therefore easier to comprehend. This will be further explained in the following section.

1.1.4.2. SPECIFIC EXPLANATION

This explanation has three sub-divisions:
1.1.4.2.1. Those seeking liberation should not try these systems
1.1.4.2.2. How those of inferior intelligence develop respect
1.1.4.2.3. Why those systems are not excellent teaching

1.1.4.2.1. THOSE SEEKING LIBERATION SHOULD NOT TRY THESE SYSTEMS

> *Assertion:* If ordinary people engage in outsiders' practices because they may be perceived by coarse forms of awareness, it is right for you to do so too.
> *Answer:* It is not right.

> *Brahmin practices are said* *295*
> *Mainly to be an outward show.*
> *The practices of Nirgranthas*
> *Are said to be mainly stultifying.*

The meaning of the verse is explained thus:

> Since most Brahmin practices such as recitation, burnt offerings, auspicious incantation, repentance, confession and so forth are mainly an outward show for the sake of reward and respect...

Brahmin practices mainly involve recitation of certain verses from their texts. They indicate that the mere recitation of these scriptures and the hearing of this recitation is sufficient to rid one of all negativities and so forth. Then they engage in burning offerings similar to fire pujas, and making offerings to the deities. So 'auspicious incantation' refers to reciting auspicious verses. Repentance and confession are mainly outward show because of their immediate goal for performing the reading and making the offerings is the mundane reward of a payment from those who seek that service. So

Brahmins do their practice mainly as a service for a reward. Outwardly they may seem very pompous and very religious, but in fact their practice is done only for mundane goals.

As the commentary then further explains:

> ...it is said that they should not be performed by those who seek liberation.

Here the personal advice that we need to derive is that even though the non-Buddhist Brahmins are used as an immediate example of those who perform activities, rituals and so forth for the sake of temporary gain of respect and reward, that is not something those seeking liberation should follow. We really need to take this as personal instruction and advice for ourselves, and make sure that our own practices do not become similar to that. Whatever we do, meditating or practising a ritual, or puja or whatever, if we regard ourselves highly because of being able to do these practices or meditations and so forth well, and if we are not careful to check our motivation, there could be a worldly concern mixed in with our practices. When our practices are mixed with the worldly concerns, then it becomes similar to the practices of the non-Buddhist schools. As people who are interested in seeking liberation and enlightenment that is not what we should seek. As the commentary further explains:

> Similarly it is said that most of the Nirgranthas' practices, such as allowing their hair to become matted and employing the five fires, are stultifying. Therefore those who seek liberation should avoid them completely.

That is quite explicit and clear.

1.1.4.2.2. How those of inferior intelligence develop respect

Brahmins are revered *296*
Because they adopt the orthodox.
Nirgranthas are pitied
Because they adopt the deluded.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Brahmin practices are mainly for outward show. Thus some unintelligent people revere Brahmins because they adopt orthodox practices such as reciting the Vedas and so forth. They revere and pity Nirgranthas because they adopt painful and deluded forms of behavior such as mortifying the body through sun and wind.

This is as explained previously.

1.1.4.2.3. Why those systems are not excellent teaching

This outline indicates the main point of this section, by explaining why the teachings of other schools are not excellent, or not the right teachings.

Suffering is a maturation *297*
And thus is not virtuous.
Similarly, birth too is not virtuous,
Being a maturation of actions.

As indicated previously, the practices that the Nirgranthas follow are the severe mortification of the body by enduring the suffering and pain from extreme heat and cold and the wind. They even light fires between their fingers in order to endure the pain of having their fingers and so forth burnt. They see these practices of mortification as being the ultimate practice of purification.

The Brahmins propound that if one pays respect to the Brahmin and make offerings, one will be born as a Brahmin. That very fact of being born as a Brahmin is a result of a practise of revering and respecting the Brahmins. That is their practice.

With respect to the Nirgranthas the commentary explains:

> Painful sensations such as mortification of the body are not virtuous but are instead, like the suffering in the hells, the maturation of non-virtuous actions.

What is being clearly explained here is that the painful experiences received from mortifying the body cannot in themselves be a virtuous practice. In fact the pain that one experiences from this extreme practice is nothing more than the maturation of non-virtuous actions that one has created in the past. Just as experiencing the sufferings of the hell realms is the maturation of past non-virtuous actions, so too the pain that one experiences under these circumstances are also the maturation of non-virtue.

With respect to the Brahmins the commentary states:

> Similarly, because it is a maturation of past actions as are eyes and so forth, birth as a Brahmin is not something virtuous enabling the attainment of liberation.

The Brahmins believe that by revering Brahmins one will take birth as a Brahmin, and is then virtuous. Moreover that virtuous act of revering Brahmins and so forth, is the way to obtain liberation. That is refuted here with the argument that being born as a Brahmin is nothing more than the maturation of past actions—it is the maturation or the ripening result of past actions. The five sense faculties that we have with our contaminated body, is a maturation or a ripening result of past actions. The Brahmins' rebirth is exactly like that and thus not a cause for liberation.

The remaining verses of the chapter establish what the right 'excellent' teaching is. Having refuted the view of the non-Buddhist schools that their practices lead to high status and liberation or enlightenment, it has to be established what the right practice or the 'excellent teachings' are that will lead to the goals of liberation and enlightenment. The following verses are quite profound and we will leave them for the next session.

Normally we have a discussion after four sessions, followed by a test. The discussion seems to be useful because you can share ideas and get a clear understanding through discussion. So we will leave the next session for discussion, and maybe the exam can done later on after further sessions. So we will continue with the teachings the week after the discussion.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute
Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 November 2007

As usual, you may set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise them well'.

1.2. Exposition of good explanations in brief

This heading has two sub-divisions.
1.2.1. Actual meaning
1.2.2. Why outsiders do not appreciate the Teacher's doctrine

1.2.1. Actual meaning

> Question: If birth and suffering are not virtuous, what is?

This question arises in relation to non-virtuous views that were explained in the previous teaching. Having refuted that merely taking rebirth and merely enduring physical suffering are not virtues that lead to liberation, then what is virtuous?

> Answer: Harmful thoughts toward others as well as physical and verbal actions thus motivated constitute violence toward others [which includes the ten non-virtuous actions]. Non-violence is the opposite of this, namely the ten virtuous paths of action.

So this question and answer explains what should be abandoned and what should be adopted.

> *In brief Tathagatas explain* 298
> *Virtue as non-violence*
> *And emptiness as nirvana-*
> *Here there are only these two.*

This presentation of the nature of the Buddha's teaching is a response to the non-Buddhist schools such as the Nirgranthas and Brahmins. The Nirgranthas viewed the experience of physical pain and mutilation as part of a practice that achieves nirvana, whereas the Brahmin's view was that by revering Brahmins one will take rebirth as a Brahmin, which will be the way to liberation. Having refuted these views previously the Buddha's doctrine is now presented.

When we look into the Buddhist presentation including both the refutations of all the misconceptions and wrong views, as well as the Buddhist own view, we can begin to realise how extremely kind the Buddha had been in protecting us from misguided wrong views and conceptions. In that way we can really begin to see the great kindness of the Buddha and his skilful way of teaching.

What is being identified very clearly here as the essence of the Buddha's teaching is on one hand, abandoning non-virtue which means adopting a life of non-violence, and on the other hand engaging in virtuous deeds such as generosity and so forth. This then becomes the cause for achieving the good qualities in a higher rebirth, which allows one to further create causes to obtain liberation. This is actually very sound advice for us to take to heart.

We can all relate to abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions and adopting the ten virtues as the practise of Dharma. All of us who have studied Buddhism for a while will be able to identify the ten non-virtuous deeds and the ten virtuous deeds. And what is being advised here is that avoiding the ten non-virtuous deeds and adopting the ten virtuous deeds is the practice of Dharma. The basis of the lam rim teachings is starting with the practice of the small scope, which as we learn in the lam rim teachings, becomes the cause for us to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime, which in turn becomes a further basis for us to practice and accumulate the causes for obtaining liberation and enlightenment. Also the Buddha said in the *Pratimoksha sutras*:

> Anyone who engages in violence
> Do not call yourself a follower of my doctrine.

Here the Buddha clearly indicates that anyone who considers themself as a follower of the Buddha's teaching has at the very least to adopt a life of non-violence. That becomes the core of our practice and something that we really need to reflect upon and take to heart. The first of the Pratimoksha or self liberation vows is avoiding killing. So we can see from that very fact that the very first vow is the direct avoidance of harming others by avoiding killing. This is how the Buddha has very skilfully led beings into the practice of Dharma.

Aryadeva's text also emphasises that practising the Buddha's teachings means avoiding non-virtue and adopting the virtues. It is really essential that we reflect upon these practices: sometimes we might take it quite lightly, but it is good to do a self analysis of our daily life, looking into how many of the virtues we actually adopt, and how many of the ten non-virtues we actually avoid in our daily life.

As the teachings indicate, at the very best one should avoid even the thought of engaging in the ten non-virtues. The first of the ten virtues is avoiding killing, which is probably relatively easy for us, as we may not find ourselves in situations where we have to intentionally kill, and even the thought of killing may be relatively easy for us to avoid. Then comes stealing, which could be a little bit tricky, as we might find ourselves in situations where even though we may not engage in an actual act of stealing, the thought of misappropriating something may occur in our mind, and that is a dangerous thought. Next comes sexual misconduct, which can also be tricky and we need to pay a lot of attention in order to avoid it.

As we go through the ten non-virtues one by one, we will find that we might actually engage in some of them, and, even if we don't directly engage in them we might find that the thought of them definitely occurs in our mind. If we don't pay attention in really trying to put an effort into avoiding the ten non-virtues as a basis, then it is quite difficult to keep intact all of the other vows that one may have taken. As the great masters have said, the rest

of our moral vows such as the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows will be easier to maintain when there is the sound basis of avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtuous deeds. If someone is not able to avoid the ten non-virtues, then it is almost impossible to observe the rest of the vows, thus the bodhisattva vows and tantric vows will be very hard to keep. This is really a very essential practice at our level, and we must pay attention to it.

If we look into adopting the ten virtuous deeds and avoiding the ten non-virtuous deeds we will come to see that this is a means of directly adopting a life of non-violence, refraining from harming others. We can see that adopting the ten virtuous deeds really restrains us from harming others. If we adopt avoiding killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, then that subsumes avoiding any physical harm to others. Likewise with the virtues of speech; if we adopt refraining from lying, harsh words and so forth then again we will notice that we will be refraining from harming others through speech. Similarly with the three virtues of the mind; if we adopt them, we will find that we are avoiding mental harm towards others. In this way, just by adopting these ten virtuous deeds, we naturally will be a well-respected, well-behaved and subdued person.

This practice is very practical practice for us. Even if we are not able to do other extensive and elaborate practices, it is good that we make sure that whatever practice we engage in now, becomes a complete practice. In that way it will become a fruitful practice, definitely gaining positive results. That would be good. As there is an immediate obvious benefit as well that we can experience from the practice of the ten virtues, it is essential that we pay attention to this.

The two essential points of the Buddha's teaching are, not harming others which is avoiding non-Dharma, and benefiting others which is virtue and adopting the Dharma. A person with some intelligence and wisdom will find that referring to these lines as a summary of the Buddha's practice really helps their intelligence and wisdom to increase.

This piece of advice from the Buddha's teaching is indeed very sound advice that anyone would be able to appreciate and accept. Thus we can see the skilful means in the Buddha's teachings. None of us wish harm to fall upon ourselves, whereas we all want and welcome all good things. That is also the case for everyone else. No being would want to experience any kind of harm and they would all want to experience every kind of benefit and help there is. Thus we can see the very skilful means of the Buddha's teaching, and how the very presentation of his teaching is something that anyone would welcome, relate to and appreciate.

These two lines also indicate what we are striving for, as well as what we wish to avoid. So our goals, both temporary and ultimate, are all presented in these two lines

This presentation subsumes the basic structure of one element of the Buddha's teachings, which is non-violence. Anyone who follows the Buddha's teaching is to adopt a non-violent approach, and the view that one adopts is the view of interdependent origination. Even though interdependent origination is not explicitly mentioned here in these lines it is something that we can derive from the meaning of the lines. Later on it will be explained that the cause for obtaining liberation is developing the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness, which is obtained through the view of interdependent origination. What is explicitly mentioned here is that adopting a life of non-violence becomes the cause for high status, while the view of dependent origination as the cause for obtaining liberation.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> In brief Tathagatas say that the principle through which one attains a high rebirth is non-violence. The principle through which liberation is attained is natural nirvana,…

The meaning of the first line of the verse was explained earlier, and here the principal through which liberation is attained is explained as natural nirvana, which is:

> …the emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena.

What is being explained is that natural nirvana refers to the actual emptiness of existence of all phenomena.

As the commentary further explains:

> By directly experiencing this and recognizing that suffering will never arise again, there is separation from adventitious stains-the nirvana of separation from adventitious stains.

This is explaining the actualising of nirvana. The Prasangika presentation of natural nirvana is the actual realisation of emptiness. Those who have followed the Madhyamika teachings would remember that it included explanations of nirvana with remainder, and nirvana without remainder. According to other schools the nirvana with remainder refers to the nirvana attained by an arhat who has overcome the delusions, but who still possesses the physical aggregates. Whereas, they obtain the nirvana without remainder when the five aggregates have ceased.

The Prasangika presentation is that nirvana without remainder is obtained first. When an arya obtains the direct realisation of emptiness and is in meditative equipoise on emptiness, there is nothing but emptiness that appears to that arya's mind. Thus there are no stains, and no delusions that are in that arya's mind at that time. So, the mind is separated from adventitious stains, which are basically the stains of the delusions in the mind. They are called adventitious because the mind itself is not one with the stains, and can be separated from them. Because the nature of the mind can be separated from them, the stains or delusions are called adventitious. Thus when an arya being is in single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness the delusions do not affect their mind at that time and thus they have actualised natural nirvana, which is the direct realisation of emptiness. Whereas when they come out of meditative equipoise into the post-meditative state then they are said to be in the stage of nirvana with remainder. That is what distinguishes the unique Prasangika presentation of how natural nirvana is attained.

To back up that explanation the commentary quotes from the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* which says:

> When reality is seen
> Nirvana is attained; the task is accomplished.

As the commentary further explains:

> It is posited that having reached the path of seeing one attains mere nirvana. To attain this, all the aggregates do not have to cease.

In relation to the manner of engaging in the practice of the four noble truths, it is mentioned that the suffering is to be recognised, the cause or origination of suffering is to be abandoned, cessation is to be actualised, and the path is to be meditated upon. Here actualised means gaining that realisation, so in this case actualising cessation means realising emptiness.

Finally, the commentary concludes:

> The reason for explaining this here is to show that one definitely needs to understand emptiness to attain liberation.

1.2.2. Why outsiders [i.e. non-Buddhists] do not appreciate the Teacher's doctrine

Having explained that the Buddha's teaching is very meaningful, profound and appropriate why then do non-Buddhists not appreciate, or not follow that teaching?

> *Question:* When outsiders are aware of the Subduer's teaching, why do they not appreciate these two principles?

The two principles refers to non-violence, which is a cause for high status, and the realisation of selflessness or emptiness as the cause of nirvana. So why do non-Buddhists not appreciate those principles?

> *Answer:* Because they are attached to their own mistaken positions.

> *To ordinary people their own position,* *299*
> *Like their birthplace, is attractive.*
> *Why would you find attractive*
> *That which precludes it?*

As the commentary clearly explains:

> Attachment to their own position is something ordinary people have been accustomed to since beginningless time. Like their birthplace they find it attractive and do not want to give it up because of their attachment. Why would you outsiders find attractive these two principles which preclude and are contrary to your own position?

As mentioned here clearly, when someone is already accustomed to certain ways of thinking, certain patterns, certain habituations that they are attached to, anything opposing that is uncomfortable. They would not appreciate it and they wouldn't want to accept something that opposes what they are already familiar with and very attached to. That is the reason why they do not appreciate the Buddha's teachings.

As it mentions clearly here, 'You do not follow the Buddha's teaching because you cling to your own wrong views'. They are very attached to their own wrong views and because they are attached to their own wrong views they cannot give them up. Moreover, the Buddha's teaching is something that actually opposes their wrong views. Because it opposes them, it challenges them and so they cling onto to their wrong views, and that's why they cannot accept, or do not appreciate, the Buddha's teaching.

We can really relate to being acquainted with, or accustomed to something that we cannot give up. We can see how for anyone who is really attached to a wrong view, it can be very hard to be receptive and appreciate the Buddha's teachings. We should feel very fortunate that we are not attached to and clinging onto wrong views, and so are able to be receptive to the Buddha's teachings. That is something that we should rejoice in, and we should make every possible effort to not engage in wrong views further on.

To see the strong impact of clinging onto one's own views we can look into the present situation in Australia with the elections. You will find out when election day comes, that some who have been supporting the Liberal Party for all these years might appreciate the good values the Labor Party have. However when election time comes, watch and see, they will still vote Liberal. Why? Because of their own very strong attachment to the Liberal Party; having been so acquainted with their doctrine and views and being so attached to their own party, even when they see good values in Labor, they will still vote for the Liberal Party. We can see that happening.

Basically what this all comes down to is attachment to one's own ways. What one is acquainted with is very hard to give up, and we cling onto it. If we relate it to our normal behaviour, sometimes we see that some kinds of behaviours, and ways of thinking are not appropriate and we don't like it. However it is very hard to give it up because of our acquaintance with it, and our attachment and clinging to our ways of thinking and behaviour. This is what it really comes down to: strong attachment makes for clinging.

The Buddha actually gave a very vivid analogy of how it is very difficult to give up something you are attached to. The Buddha said that it is like an alcoholic trying to give up drinking. Because they are so attached to the drinking it is very difficult for them to give it up, and even though they see the fault they cannot give it up.

What we derive from this as personal advice is that is it all comes down to acquaintance, which makes it difficult to give it up. We must try to make every effort to acquaint ourselves with virtue, with good deeds, good behaviour, and good conduct. Even though it is initially difficult we should try to do it again and again so that it becomes a good habit that we can adopt naturally. When we identify a certain behaviour or deed as being negative we should try to avoid it at any cost, so that we don't become acquainted with it.

1.3. Advising those who seek emancipation to adopt good explanations

> *The intelligent who seek what is good* *300*
> *Adopt what is worthwhile even from others.*
> *Does the sun not belong to all*
> *On earth who have sight?*

As the commentary explains:

> Wise people, who see their birthplace as a reason for

> their difficulties, leave and settle in a prosperous place. Likewise, intelligent people seek what is good and therefore adopt those points which facilitate the attainment of a high rebirth or liberation once familiarity with them has been gained, even though they are from others' texts.

If one has an aversion to the sayings and explanations of others then one cannot adopt those sayings and explanations. Whereas if one has an open mind to appreciating and seeing the qualities in the explanations of others, then one can adopt those explanations and use them for one's benefit.

The commentary explains that meaning with an analogy:

> The sun is unbiased and thus provides light for all on earth who have sight. Does it not belong equally to all?

The significance of the analogy is that:

> Similarly, the practice of these two principles can only be of benefit to everyone. Thus it is fitting to practise them with a sense of appreciation.

What is being indicated here is the two principles, which were referred to earlier, are really a sound practice. We can interpret this in two ways.

Firstly, they are a practice for anyone who has a keen interest and a wish to practice it. There will only be benefit for anyone who would practises in that way. This is an explanation which anyone can use. Just as the sun's rays can be used by anyone who has sight, likewise anyone who has the wisdom to see the qualities of these teachings can benefit from them. It is a teaching that can be shared by anyone who wants to use it for their own benefit.

Another way to understand this could be from the practice side of an individual. When an individual practises the two principles with the proper attitude and motivation of not being partial, but with the attitude of wishing to benefit others, then what one gains from these practices will naturally benefit anyone who one comes into contact with. As one practises to benefit oneself it will also benefit others. Someone who is only concerned with benefiting their own immediate circle of friends or relatives has only a partial concern. An unconditional concern for all is lacking. However if one has a proper attitude, then through the practice of these two principles one can benefit all equally.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche himself is:

> Become a proper vessel for good explanation
> And learned in the non-inherent existence of dependent arising,
> The final object of the path that severs worldly existence,
> The understanding of which frees from attachment to extreme views.

The verse starts with the line that one must become a vessel for good explanation, which means the understanding that frees one from attachment to extreme views. That is the indication of a good explanation. One becomes a proper vessel by becoming learned in it the specific view, which is the non-inherent existence of dependent arising. That is the final object of the path that severs worldly existence, leading to the final goals. So that is how one understands the meaning of this verse.

More specifically 'severs worldly existence' clearly indicates that one must be acquainted with the final object of the path, which is the understanding of the non-inherent existence of dependent arising. This shows the direct relationship between non-inherent existence and dependent arising. Thus, by becoming learned and understanding that, one acquaints oneself with the final object of the path, which means the final antidote that severs worldly existence. That which overcomes worldly existence is basically the understanding of dependent arising, and through that the non-inherent existence of dependent arising phenomena.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the twelfth chapter from the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds***, showing how to meditate on refuting views.*
>
> This concludes the commentary on the twelfth chapter, showing how to meditate on refuting views, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas"*.

CHAPTER XIII REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT SENSE ORGANS AND OBJECTS

This is the fourth subdivision of heading 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena.[1]

There are two main sections to the chapter:
1. Explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

This has two subdivisions:
1.1. Extensively explaining the reasoning that refutes true existence
1.2. Showing that emptiness of true existence is like magical illusions and so forth

1.1. Extensively explaining the reasoning that refutes true existence

This is further subdivided into three sections:
1.1.1. Refuting true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects
1.1.2. Refuting true existence of that which perceives objects
1.1.3. Showing that lack of true existence is, like magic, a cause for amazement

1.1.1. Refuting true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects

This heading refers to what is apprehended by the five senses: the eye sense visual objects, the ear senses apprehends sound, the nose apprehends smell, and the body apprehends tangible objects. The mind sense is not

[1] The numbering of each chapter begins anew for ease of reference. In fact chapter 13 is heading 3.2.2.1.2.4. in the overall heading structure, while Chapters 9 to 12 form the previous three subdivisions of 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena. See 10 July 2007 for a more complete outline of the full structure.

indicated here, and it apprehends phenomena, the dharmadatu of phenomena.

What is being refuted here is true existence, which will be explained later. Basically it refers to true existence, or inherent existence, which is independent existence, meaning that it exists without depending on anything else, existing from its own side, by its own right. This heading has two subdivisions:

1.1.1.1. General refutation
1.1.1.2. Individual refutations

1.1.1.1. GENERAL REFUTATION

This is subdivided into two:
1.1.1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.1.1.1.2. Showing other lines of reasoning

1.1.1.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

This is subdivided into five:
1.1.1.1.1.1. Refuting that a sense consciousness directly perceives a pot existing by way of its own character
1.1.1.1.1.2. Applying this reasoning to other instances
1.1.1.1.1.3. Absurdity of positing that other parts are seen because visible form existent by way of its own character is seen
1.1.1.1.1.4. Refuting direct perception of just visible form existent by way of its own character
1.1.1.1.1.5. Showing that the proof and what is to be proved are alike

1.1.1.1.1.1. Refuting that a sense consciousness directly perceives a pot existing by way of its own character

First of all a vase is apprehended by the eye consciousness isn't it? That's something we can all relate to. The doubt being raised here is whether the true existence of a vase is apprehended by the eye consciousness or not. What is being refuted here is that the true existence of the vase can be apprehended.

> *Question:* When it says [in the earlier stanza 300]:
>
> > The intelligent who seek what is good
> > Adopt what is worthwhile even from others,
>
> what is this good explanation?
>
> *Answer:* It is about seeing that all phenomena have no inherent existence.

Having explained that, then this assertion or doubt is raised:

> *Assertion:* It is impossible to cognize that all phenomena have no inherent existence, for if they did they would be totally non-existent like the horns of a donkey and so forth, and would not be directly perceptible.

Here the horns of a donkey are mentioned but in other texts the example is the horns of a rabbit, which are basically non-existent.

The assertion raised by the non-Buddhist school is that saying that all phenomena have no existence is absurd. Claiming that all phenomena have no inherent existence is similar, they say, to saying that they are non-existent, just like the horns of a rabbit. The reason you wouldn't see the horns of a rabbit is because they are non existent, so you won't see them. Similarly, they say, if a vase was not inherently existent then you wouldn't see the vase. The very fact that you see a vase is because it is inherently existent, and the fact that you see it is proof that it inherently exists, that it exists by its own characteristics or exists truly or inherently, and that is a fact. That is what the non-Buddhist schools' objection is.

The assertion continues:

> However, since a pot and blue are directly perceptible, all functional things are in fact inherently existent.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *When seeing its form, one does not in fact* *301*
> *See the whole pot. Who that knows*
> *Reality would claim that the pot*
> *Is directly perceptible also?*

The view of the non-Buddhists is refuted by the verse, which is explained in this way:

> It follows that direct perception of a pot which exists by way of its own entity is not feasible. If it were, the awareness perceiving the visible form of the pot should perceive all its parts. Yet when visual consciousness perceives the pot's form, it does not in fact perceive every single part of the pot.

First of all the correct meaning of the Tibetan word *pum pa,* is vase rather than pot. Basically a vase is a label placed upon an object that is an accumulation of the eight substances. Similarly a person is a label placed upon the accumulation of the five aggregates.

The eight substances forming the accumulation on which the vase is labelled are the four elements and the four substances derived from the four elements. The four elements are earth, water, fire and wind. The four substances derived from the elements are atoms of visual form, taste, smell and tangible objects. Sometimes the sound element and the space element are added to these. When the combination of the eight substances come together, you label this combination 'vase', so that is what a vase is. What we have to understand is that a vase is not something which arises from its own side, but it is labelled upon a suitable base, which is the combination of these eight substances.

So the very fact that the vase is labelled upon the substances, in itself, indicates that the vase does not exist from its own side, because you have labelled it from the subject's side. When the vase is seen you don't see every part of it, you don't see the tangible part and all of that, you only see the visual aspect, i.e. of the sight substances you see only one of the parts.

The line of reasoning here is that if the vase were to be inherently existent to begin with, then that means that everything in relation to the vase would have to arise from its own side independently, without having to depend on anything else. If the vase were to exist independently then when you perceive the vase you would also have to perceive the vase independently, with all its characteristics, because everything would exist from its own side. That would have to be the case. The logical reasoning given here is that the very fact that you cannot perceive every aspect of the vase is an indication that it does not exist inherently from its own side or independently.

As the commentary further explains:

> Who that knows the reality of things would claim that the pot is directly perceptible? "Also" refers to also blue existent by way of its own character.'
>
> The pot is imputed in dependence on eight substances and therefore cannot exist byway of its own character, nor by seeing one part can one see all its parts. Similarly, if fire existed by way of its own entity, the fallacy that it should always keep burning would arise, since it would not require fuel.

This line of reasoning is also presented in the Madhyamika text. The analogy, which is quite vivid, is that if fire existed independently from its own side then it would not depend on fuel. But for fire to burn, the fact that it has to depend on fuel for its very existence indicates that fire does not exist independently or inherently.

As the commentary concludes:

> Dialecticians contradict both reasoning and common knowledge when they call awareness arising in dependence upon individual sense organs direct perception, and assert that awareness free from conceptuality in which a sound image and a generic image may be apprehended as merged is direct perception. Each individual moment of consciousness cannot be a direct perceiver. Objects like the waxing moon, which are directly perceived by many people, are commonly held to be directly perceptible, whereas that which perceives these objects is not. Furthermore since they assert that sense consciousness is a direct perceiver, it is inconsistent to think that it is also a valid perceiver. An extensive explanation of this may be found in Candrakirti's commentary. It has not been included here for fear that it would be too long.

1.1.1.1.1.2. Applying this reasoning to other instances

The reasoning that one should understand here is the reasoning that was given earlier. The vase is dependent on its basis which is the accumulation of the eight substances, and on this basis the vase is labelled 'vase'. The vase does not exist from the object's (vase's) side, but rather the subject labels it upon the basis of the eight substances. Thus the vase does not exist inherently or independently. That is the main reasoning that was given earlier, so we can use that same logical reasoning in other instances.

> *By means of this very analysis* *302*
> *Those with superior intelligence*
> *Should refute individually*
> *All that is fragrant, sweet and soft.*

As the commentary explains:

> By means of this very analysis using the reasoning which refutes the assertion that sense consciousness is a direct perceiver in relation to a pot, blue and so forth [as explained earlier], existent by way of their own entity, the wise with superior intelligence [using that earlier reasoning] refute separately in each case the contention that sense consciousnesses are direct perceivers in relation to fragrances such as the fragrance of jasmine flowers, sweet tastes and that which is soft to touch, all existent by way of their own entity.

What is being explained here is that when an object is perceived by the senses, only one aspect of that object is perceived by any one sense consciousness. So the shape of the vase is seen by the eye consciousness but not the smell or the taste (if there is a taste) or the feeling or the tangibleness of the vase. Likewise the smell of a vase is perceived only by the nose sense but not by the eye or the ear or the tongue senses. Thus every sense perceives only one aspect of the particular corresponding object but not others. That is something which has to be understood.

As the commentary further reads:

> Since one cannot make distinctions such as seeing one part but not seeing others, or distinctions with regard to what touches and what does not, or with regard to closeness and distance in relation to truly existent functional things, such fallacies ensue.

If the vase were to be truly and inherently existent, which means existing from its own side independently, then when any one sense perceives the vase it would have to perceive the vase completely in its full aspect. That is, if the vase were to be independently, inherently existent the eye consciousness perceiving a vase would have to perceive the taste, the smell and everything of the vase. It is similar with everything else that is dependent rather than inherently existent. As mentioned in the text what is close or distant, something we touch or not, is dependent on other factors. For example, closeness does not inherently exist. If it did, then close would have to always be close, but in fact when you move away what was close earlier becomes distant, and what was distant earlier becomes close when you go up to it. That is also an indication that it does not exist inherently from its own side, but rather is dependent on many other factors.

It is the same with touching and separation, and long and short. If touching were to be inherently touching then they would always have to be inherently touching, and then there could be no separation. But things that touch, or are close can be separated. It is the same with long and short. If long was inherently long then it would have to be long in all circumstances, but we all know that whatever we consider long is considered long only in relation to something else that is shorter. So that very thing that we consider long in relation to something shorter, becomes short when it is related to something that is even longer. If things were to be inherently existent then the fallacies of always having to be long and always having to be short, or always having to be touching and never separated, or that which is close always being close, and that which is distant always having to be distant would arise. What is mentioned here in the text is that those fallacies would arise if things were to be inherently existent.

Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 November 2007

As usual, let us sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation in our mind. First of all it is important to withdraw our mind from external distractions and bring it inward to focus on the teachings to be received. Then we generate the bodhicitta motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.1.1.1.3. Absurdity of positing that other parts are seen because visible form existent by way of its own character is seen

The earlier contention was that a vase, for example, exists from its own side and is inherently existent, and this is what is being refuted.

> *Assertion:* All parts of the pot are seen when its visual form is seen, for the pot is not a separate entity from its visual form.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *If because the form is seen* 303
> *Everything is seen,*
> *Why because of what is not seen*
> *Would the form not be unseen?*

The assertion indicates that when a vase is seen, then all its parts are seen, and thus a part of a vase is not a separate entity from its visual form.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> If on the grounds that visual consciousness sees the pot's form one can posit that all parts of the pot are seen, why on the grounds that visual consciousness does not perceive the pot's smell would even the visible form, which is accepted as seen, not be unseen?

The refutation of the non-Buddhists' contention is that if you claim that all the parts of the pot are seen when you see the form of a pot, then if you don't see one part, could you then say you don't see all of the parts? What is being asserted is that when the pot's form is seen, all parts of the pot are seen, and because the pot's form is seen as being inherently existent, then the vase or pot must be inherently existent.

According to our system, of course, the pot cannot be seen as being inherently existent because it does not exist inherently. However if it were to be an inherently existent pot, then just seeing one part of the pot or the vase as being inherently existent cannot imply that the rest of the pot or the vase also has to be inherently existent. Can one assume that by seeing one part of a vase, or pot, that we are seeing the entirety of the pot?

Student: Yes, if we have an omniscient mind.

Other students: No.

A vase is made up of an accumulation of eight substances, including the smell and tactile senses and so forth and the four elements. So does seeing, for example, the visual form of the vase imply that one can also perceive the smell and the tactile and so forth?

Students: No.

If you close your eyes you could feel the vase with your hands or any other part of your body, and you could smell the vase with your nose, but you wouldn't be able to see it. In other words, if you close your eyes you wouldn't be able to see the form of the vase, or its shape or colour. Whereas if you look at a vase you won't be able to perceive the smell, and without touching it, you won't feel the vase. That is because, as mentioned in the text on cognition, a sentient being's sense perception can only perceive one object at a time, and no more. That means that the eye perception can only perceive visual objects, while the ear consciousness can only perceive audible objects and the nose can only perceive smells and so forth. There is an exception, of course, for enlightened beings like a buddha. The main question here is whether the eye consciousness can perceive the inherent existence of a vase. If it perceive form then why doesn't the eye consciousness perceive inherently existent form?

Students: Because inherently existent form doesn't exist.

Does form appear or not?

Students: Yes form does appear.

So the distinction between the appearance of inherent existence and the actual perception of inherent existence has to be understood. As the teachings state, a sentient being's eye consciousness perceives form, which appears as being inherently existence to the sentient being's eye consciousness. Thus the Prasangika say that a sentient being's sense consciousness is a mistaken consciousness, because what is perceived always has the appearance of inherent existence. Returning to the argument being posited here, if one sees one part of the vase, does that imply that all parts of the vase are seen?

Students: No.

In this argument what is being established is that the inherent existence of form and so forth cannot be perceived by the eye consciousness.

For those Buddhist schools below the Svatantrika, if it is valid cognition in relation to form it has to be valid in relation to an inherently existent form, i.e. to perceiving it as being inherently existent. These distinctions between perceptions have been explained earlier in the Madhyamika text.

1.1.1.1.1.4. Refuting direct perception of just visible form existent by way of its own character

> *Assertion:* Though the pot is not a directly perceptible object of comprehension its visible form is established by direct perception and thus, indirectly, the pot existing by way of its own entity is also directly perceptible.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *There is no direct perception* 304
> *Of just the form alone,*
> *Because it has a close and distant*
> *As well as a central part.*

The commentary explains the refutation further:

> It follows that there is no direct perception of just the visible form alone existent by way of its own entity because the visible form too has many parts, such as close, distant and central parts, and is thus imputed in dependence upon many parts.

Here, close distant and central refers to the front, back and middle parts respectively of a vase. Any tangible object has different parts to it and is dependent on those different parts. When you look at the front of a clock, for example, you don't see the back, because the back is a different part, which is not obvious to you right now. Then if you turn it around and look at the back of the clock then you won't see the front, and there is also the middle part. This indicates that any given object is dependent on different parts, and is a composite of the different parts that make it up. So, as all visible forms have different parts to them, they are dependent on those different parts and thus any given visible form is imputed on the different parts that it has. As the commentary concludes:

> There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness.

There is no visible form existent anywhere that exists by the way of its own entity or inherently, or by its own characteristics, and it is this inherent existence that is being refuted. i.e. there is no inherent existence or existence by way of its own entity.

Thus from the Prasangika point of view all existent phenomena are imputed and are merely nominal. We can take another example, such as the Prime Minister. The label is merely imputed upon the person who has the characteristic of being nominated as a prime minister, which is determined by how many votes he has. When the required number of votes is reached, then the label of 'prime minister' is conferred, and from that day on, he is referred to as Prime Minister. This is an indication that a prime minister does not exist by way of its own entity or inherently. If that were to be the case then regardless of the number of votes there would have to be a prime minister. Thus as indicated in the text, 'There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness'.

1.1.1.1.1.5. Showing that the proof and what is to be proved are alike

This also applies when one examines *305*
Whether particles have parts or not.
Thus to prove a thesis by that
Which must be proved is not feasible.

As the commentary explains:

> When all the parts are separated, that form is finally reduced to the smallest particles. An investigation of whether particles have parts or not applies to those particles too.

This is basically a refutation of those who assert that there are partless particles. The implication is that the same reasoning refuting whether visible forms have parts or not applies to those who assert that there are partless particles. If you go down to the smallest particle, then when you investigate and analyse further, you will find that it has parts as well. As it mentions in the text:

> If they have parts like a front and a back, they are, like the pot, imputed in dependence upon many parts...

Using a coarser object such as the visible form of a pot, it was explained that a pot or a vase has parts to it – a front part, a back part and a middle part. Similarly, even the subtlest particle also has to have a front part and a back part, and directional points such as east and north and so forth. This logical reasoning then implies that there cannot be a partless particle. What is being established here is that even the smallest particle is nominal and an imputed phenomena, just like all other phenomena.

In establishing that the smallest particle also has parts, such as the front, and back, and the eastern, southern, northern and western directional parts, it is shown that the smallest particle is dependent on its directional parts for its existence, and thus it is imputed and nominated in dependence of those parts. Thus, unlike those who assert the tiniest particle is partless, suggesting an inherent existence or existence from its own entity, from our Buddhist point of view, specifically the Prasangika point of view, the tiniest part cannot be inherently existent, because it is dependent on its parts. If it didn't have parts, you could not establish it to be existent, so it would be non-existent. But even though it is the tiniest particle it does have parts, and it is dependent on those parts. Thus, the conclusion is that there cannot be a partless particle, and thus an inherently existent particle.

What is mainly being established here is that all existence down to the tiniest particle is imputed upon the basis, which is a dependent arising. In other words all existence is dependent on its parts.

As the commentary concludes:

> If they do not have parts, they cannot exist because of being inapprehensible. Thus it is not feasible to prove that the pot exists by way of its entity as a directly perceptible object of comprehension by means of that which must be proved, for things do not exist by way of their own character.

1.1.1.1.2. Showing other lines of reasoning

Everything too is a component *306*
As well as being a composite.
Thus even a spoken syllable
Does not have existence here.

As the commentary explains the verse:

> Moreover when objects apprehended by the physical sense organs are examined, all are components in relation to their composites as well as composites in relation to their components and are therefore merely imputed in dependence upon their parts.

This is yet another way of looking at an interdependent relationship. Any given object is a composite that is made up of components. The components and the composite are interdependently related: the composite is dependent on its components, because without its components it cannot be a composite. Likewise, the components are dependent on the composite, because without a composite there would not be components of that object. Thus they are interdependently related, and are merely imputed in dependence upon their parts. Another way of understanding this is that the composite is dependent on the components, and the components themselves are dependent on the parts that make up the components, i.e. every part is further related to something else. Another way of understanding it is, for example, that the pot or vase is dependent on its components, which are the eight substances that make up the vase. Then each of the substances are further dependent on their components, which are the parts and so forth that make up each of the eight substances.

> As with the analysis of the smallest particle, names, which are ultimately reduced to spoken syllables such as "a," are also just conventions in this world and do not exist by way of their own entity.

Just as is the case with visible forms, when we talk about the actual names of things, then what makes up our speech are

sounds. These too can be reduced to one syllable such as 'a', and that also does not exist by way of its own entity. It is also dependent on other factors for its existence and thus it is merely imputed upon its parts. So, as it mentions in the commentary:

> Thus you must recognize all dependently arising phenomena as mere names and terms.

Here the 'mere' in 'mere names and terms' connotes that things do not exist independently, without depending on any other parts and so forth, and that they do not exist from their own entity. That is what is being negated here when you say 'mere'. Thus, when the Prasangika view relates to everything as being mere names and terms, merely nominated by the conceptual mind; that 'mere' negates phenomena as being truly existent or inherently existent, or existing by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.2. INDIVIDUAL REFUTATIONS

This is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.2.1. Refuting that sense organs apprehend objects existing by way of their own entity
1.1.1.2.2. Refuting apprehension by mental consciousness

1.1.1.2.1. REFUTING THAT SENSE ORGANS APPREHEND OBJECTS EXISTING BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITY

This is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects
1.1.1.2.1.2. Refuting truly existent auditory objects

1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects

This is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects
1.1.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting that which perceives objects

1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects

This heading is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions (which refers to the Vaibashikas)
1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions

This is divided into three:
1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different
1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both
1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different

> *Assertion:* The pot is directly perceptible since visual consciousness sees the pot's visible form existent by way of its own character, consisting of color and shape.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *If shape is distinct from color* *307*
> *How is shape apprehended?*
> *If not distinct, why would the body*
> *Not also apprehend color?*

What the Vaibashika assert, as we also assert, is that visual forms consist of shapes and colours. That being the case, what they are saying is that because the colour and the shape are perceived as existing by way of their own character, then as a consequence the vase itself has to be established as being existing by way of its own character, or by way of its own entity.

This is refuted in the following manner. First of all what has to be accepted by both sides is that if anything exists it has to exist either as one or as separate or distinct. Nothing can exist outside of the two categories of being either one or distinct. That being the case, the counter-question to their assertion is:

> Are color and shape inherently one or distinct?

If colour and shape are distinct:

> If shape such as length and so forth is inherently distinct from color, how can a visual consciousness take shape as its object of apprehension? It follows that it cannot because shape is an entity distinct from color.

If colour and shape are one then:

> Alternatively, if they are not distinct but inherently one, why does touch not apprehend color in the dark just as it apprehends shape? It follows that it should because they are one.

What is being implied here is that if the colour and shape of a vase, for example, are inherently one, then when you perceive the shape you would have to also perceive the colour of the vase. However if you were in a dark room and you touched the vase, you would be able to distinguish its shape, but you would not be able to perceive its colour. If the shape and the colour were inherently one then, by default, by perceiving either colour or shape, one would be have to simultaneously perceive the other. When it has been refuted that colour and shape are neither inherently one nor distinct, then we have also refuted the inherent existence of the vase itself.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both

> *Assertion:* The visible form source exists because the four great elements which are causal forms exist.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *Only the form is visible* *308*
> *But the form's causes are not seen*
> *If indeed it is thus,*
> *Why are both not also*
> *Perceived by just the eyes?'*

What they are asserting is that since the four elements are existent by way of their own entity, then that which arises from the four elements are also inherently existent. As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Only the resultant form is visible but the form's causes such as the earth element are not seen. Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different. If they are inherently one, they must be one. In that case why does just visual consciousness itself not apprehend both the causal and resultant forms? It follows that it should because they are one.

This is using the same logical reasoning of one and many that was used earlier, but here the example is that because the causes are seen as being existent by way of their own entity, then the result which is a visible form will also be inherently existent or existent by way of its own entity. If that was the case then, as mentioned in the commentary:

> Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different.

Since cause and effect have an interdependent relationship they cannot be inherently different, but if they are inherently one then they have to be one and the same. However the elements and the resultant form cannot be one because they are perceived by separate consciousnesses. While the form is perceived by visual consciousness, the elements are not. The main point being establishment here is that the cause and effect are dependently arising phenomena. This means that the cause (the elements) is dependent on the effect (the visual form) for its existence. The cause is thus imputed in dependence on the result. Likewise the result is also imputed upon the dependence of a cause. Thus they are not inherently different because they have the mutual relationship of depending on each other.

If they were inherently distinct or separate, then that would imply that there is no relationship between the two and that they would have to exist without having to relate to each other. Whereas the fact is that a cause has to be dependent on an effect for it to be a cause, and an effect is also dependent on a cause for it to be an effect. That mutual relationship indicates that they are not inherently distinct or separate.

Neither can cause and effect be inherently one. If they were to be inherently one, then when either consciousness apprehends one, they would also have to apprehend the other. That which apprehends the effect (visual form) is apprehended by visual consciousness, but the causes (the elements) are not apprehended by visual consciousness. This indicates that they are not inherently one.

If cause and effect were inherently distinct then the fault that would arise is that cause and effect would not be mutually related. Rather they would be mutually exclusive, and not depend on each other, which is absurd. Whereas if they were actually inherently one, then the perception of one would have to automatically mean that the other is also perceived. But that also goes against our experience.

Thus the conclusion is that cause and effect are neither inherently distinct nor inherently one but are mutually dependent. What the other schools are attempting to do is to establish the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character and then proving that the result, is by default, also existent by way of its own character. However that cannot be established.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

Earth is seen as firm and stable *309*
And is apprehended by the body.
Only that which is tangible
Is referred to as earth.

This verse relates to the four elements, in particular the earth element. As the commentary explains:

> Earth is seen as firm and stable and furthermore is apprehended by tactile consciousness. Thus only that which is tangible is referred to as earth. Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different. If one accepts them as truly existent, they are unrelated. It would thereby follow that visible form is causeless.

This is in relation to the earlier contention that by establishing the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character, the effect would also be established as existing by way of its own character or entity. That is being refuted again here, by saying that the earth, which is part of the causes is a tactile object that is apprehended by the tactile consciousness, and not by the visual consciousness, because of its entity being firm and stable and so forth. Thus as mentioned here 'that which is tangible is referred to as earth'.

> Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different.

What is being further established here is that the consciousnesses that perceive form and the elements are different, thus they cannot be established as being exactly the same or one. The Vaibashika said that by establishing the cause as being truly existent you can establish the effect as being truly existent, so what is being refuted here is that by establishing one you can establish the other. To begin with, they are separate and because they are separate you cannot establish one as being truly existent and thus establish the other as being truly existent.

As stated above the four elements are said to be perceived by the tactile consciousness but not by the visual consciousness. For beginning debate classes in the monastery young monks address this debate: Is the earth perceived by visual consciousness or not? Even though you are not beginners we can use that same formula. So does the visual consciousness perceive the earth element?

Some students say yes. Other students say no.

Does the visual consciousness perceive water or not?

Students: Yes.

Visual consciousness perceives fire doesn't it?

Students: Yes.

But the texts assert that the elements cannot be perceived by the visual consciousness. The implication then is that visual consciousness only perceives the colour of water, or fire, or the earth, but does not perceive earth, water or fire itself. That is what comes up in the debates. Of course saying that you don't see the earth or that you don't see water seems to go against normal conventions. The way to understand this, is rather tricky. According to the explanation here, earth is perceived by the tactile consciousness. We would accept that someone who is blind still perceives the firmness and so forth of the ground. When we move about in the dark, we can use our feeling sense of touch to try to find our way around. That is because we actually perceive what we feel. So that is how the ground or earth is asserted as being tactile consciousness. Yet if we say that we don't see the food that we eat or the water that we drink, then that also seems quite strange! However, according to the explanation in the teachings, food is actually perceived by the taste consciousness.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

> *Vaisesika assertion:* A pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity but neither is it not a visible object since it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

Since it was produced as something visible, *310*
It is of no use at all to the pot.
As with the production of visibility,
It lacks even the entity of existence.

The Vaisesika assertion is basically that a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but neither is it not a visible object. Their reasoning is that it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

They assert that a separate generality is the mere entity of that object such as a mere vase, or a mere form, or a mere existence. The mere existence of any given object is called a separate generality. It is that 'mereness' of a mere vase or a mere pot that is directly perceptible. Although it is not a visible object, its entity is basically perceived through its mere existence or 'mereness'. What they seem to be implying is that initially a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but then through the 'mere existence' called the separate generality, then it becomes an object that is directly perceptible. What they seem to imply is that initially it is not a visual object by way of its own entity, but then it then transforms into something that is directly perceptible. As the commentary further explains, this too is unacceptable.

> Has the pot come into existence as something visible through its own causes or not?

They distinguish between a pot not being a visible object by way of its own entity, but say that it is directly perceived later, by virtue of possessing a visibility which is a separate generality. The refutation is in the form of a question and a counter question: Has a pot come into existence as something visible by its own cause, or not?

> In the first case it would follow that an association with the separate generality of visibility is of no use in making the pot directly perceptible, because it has come into existence as something visible through its own causes.

This is showing the absurdity of their second assertion.

> For this reason the generality of visibility is not produced in relation to the pot.

Then furthermore as the commentary reads:

> Further, a pot that has no connection with visibility and is not something visible lacks any inherently established entity of existence. Therefore the pot could not be either actually or imputedly directly perceptible as you contend.

Next Tuesday falls on the anniversary of Lama Tsong Khapa's passing away. Because of the significance of the day we won't have class that evening but a puja, which it would be good to attend.

As that day is a very auspicious day for making aspirations, many monks and nuns, in particular great teachers and beings, make special prayers on that day. So too do lay followers of this tradition.

Coming into contact with Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings, let alone understanding them is very rare, so we can consider ourselves fortunate to have met with the perfect teachings and the perfect teachers who expound the teachings. However it is essential that we make prayers to be able to continuously meet with these perfect conditions in lifetime after lifetime so that we can progress along the path. That's something that I personally do, and from my side I would advise you to follow suit.

In the old days this was one of two auspicious days celebrated in China. The other auspicious day called *shim-ju,* which is the anniversary of the passing away of the founder of the Sera Monastery, who was also a renowned teacher in China.

Lama Tsong Khapa was a very renowned teacher, and the Emperor of China sent letters written in gold requesting that Lama Tsong Khapa come and teach in China. Lama Tsong Khapa ignored the first one, but when the second one arrived, Lama Tsong Khapa sent one of his disciples Jamchen Choje who was the founder of the Sera Monastery. Nowadays historians would say that by ignoring the Emperor's command Lama Tsong Khapa showed that he didn't have to abide by the commands of the Emperor, which is also an indication that Tibet was sovereign country.

In the old days there was hardly anyone within China who didn't know the name of Lama Tsong Khapa, because of the great contribution he made through his teachings and translations and so forth. It was traditional to offer butter lamps and light on that day, and at the Emperor's command the people had to offer a lamp on that day. But of course these days that tradition is not sustained any more.

There is a general belief that an ancient Emperor of China was actually a manifestation of Manjushri, so in Tibet it was taken as a bad omen when the last Emperor was not enthroned, and it was believed that a lot of disasters and calamities would befall China. In fact from that time on, many bad things did happen in China and also Mongolia and so forth.

Practitioners and followers of Buddhism, among others, found it difficult to stay in China and escaped to Taiwan. Many scholars and wealthy people came from Shanghai. They maintained the teachings and doctrines of Lama Tsong Khapa and to this day they have the translations of the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, the graduated path of enlightenment. Thus it seems that that worldly wealth as well as the teachings and so forth were able to be preserved in Taiwan. Even though there was some decline, nevertheless a lot has been preserved and to this day there are many who still have strong faith and engage in practice.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཱརྱ་དེ་ཝ་ཡི་བརྩི་བཀའ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 December 2007

As usual, sitting in an appropriate posture, it would be good to set the proper motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by freeing them from suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So I will listen to teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1.1.2.1.1. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT OBJECTS (CONT.)

1.1.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting that which perceives objects

This has five subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.1. Refuting that the eye is by way of its own entity an instrument of looking at form
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.2. Refuting consciousness as agent
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3. Refuting the eye as agent
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.4. Consequence that the eye is an instrument of looking in relation to the eye (which refers to the consequences of the eye being able to see itself and refuting that)
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.5. Refuting a combination of three factors as the instrument of looking at visible form

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.1. Refuting that the eye is by way of its own entity an instrument of looking at form

The function of an eye is to look at forms, and what is being explicitly refuted here is that the eye is an agent that looks at forms by way of its own entity, or inherently. This becomes an issue for our system to refute, because of the earlier contention that the object (in this case form) as well as the object perceiver (the eye consciousness) are both existent by way of their own nature, or inherently existent. That is what is being refuted.

What also has to be understood is the relationship between the object and the object possessor. The other schools assert, as do we in our own system, that the object and the object perceiver are mutually dependent on each other. In order to establish an object there has to be an object possessor and in order to establish an object possessor, there has to be an object to be perceived. So object and object possessor are interdependent.

Of course as followers of the Prasangika view, we would agree with the refutation of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools' assertions of the inherent existence of object perceivers and so forth. However for our personal practice, we need to first of all investigate how we ourselves perceive things. Do we perceive things as existing from their own side? Does an object appear to us as existing by way of its own entity? Do we believe in the way that it appears or not?

In fact, for ordinary beings, things appear to have inherent existence or to exist by way of their own nature. What has to be investigated is whether they actually exist in that way or not. This text, which adopts the stance of the Prasangika view point, refutes that objects have inherent existence, or that they exist by way of their own nature. There are some Buddhist schools that assert true existence, and some that don't. However true existence is refuted in our system and so we, as individuals studying this text, would be on the side of not accepting that objects and object perceivers are truly existent, or inherently existent, or existent by way of their own nature. Since we are on that side it is important for us to really bring it home, and investigate for ourselves whether this is true or not.

The Madhyamika text asserts that for ordinary beings the object of negation is the object that appears to the consciousnesses. What is being implied is that when an object appears to us, it appears as existing by way of its own nature, as existing independently, and not dependent on anything else but existing by way of its own entity. That very appearance is the object to be negated. It does not exist in the way that it appears, and so the object is empty of inherent existence. That is what we have to realise.

> *Assertion:* Because sense organs exist—such as the eyes, which are instruments of perception—directly perceptible objects such as visible form exist.

In Tibetan the assertion reads, 'Directly perceptible objects such as visible form exist because sense organs exist. That is how it is'. So the assertion is that because sense organs such as the eye exist,and are instruments of perception, then it follows that objects such as visible form exist.

> *Answer:*
>
> *The eye, like the ear, is an outcome of* *311*
> *The elements. The eyes see while the others do not.*
> *Certainly therefore the Subduer said*
> *The fruition of actions is inconceivable.*

The Vaibashika Buddhist school asserts that the sense organs, or faculties, perceive objects such as forms and so forth. Their reasoning is that form, for example, has to be perceived by the eye sense organ because if the organ did not perceive the form then the consciousness couldn't perceive it, as the organ itself would obstruct the consciousness from seeing the object. According to their reasoning, one has to establish that the organ itself couldn't see form.

These points were of course explained earlier. However the main point is that the Vaibashikas assert that the sense organ itself would be an obstruction, just like putting up a book in front of ourselves. If there was an object behind the book we wouldn't be able to see the object, because it would be obstructed by the book. Similarly, they assert that as it is form, if the organ does not to perceive the object then the consciousness couldn't perceive the object, because there would be an obstruction between the consciousness and the object.

Of course if we were to debate this using normal conventions, we would have to say that by wearing glasses we wouldn't we be able to see an object because the glass itself is a form, and thus an obstructive object. But we all know we can see things more clearly through glasses.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the first two lines:

> Regarding the subject, the eye organ: since the eye perceives visual stimuli while other senses do not, it does not perceive visible form by way of its own entity, for like the nose sense organ it is an outcome of the elements. A demonstration of the valid reasons which invalidate the entailment is given below.

As explained here the assertion being refuted is that the eye sense does not perceive visual form by way of its own entity, for like the nose sense organ it is an outcome of the elements. The eye perceives visual stimuli while the other senses do

not. That is something that is accepted by both sides. Even conventionally we all accept that the eye sense does not perceive other stimuli such as smells or taste and so forth. What is mainly being negated here is that the eye perceiving its objects by way of its own entity. The reasoning given here is that the eye does not perceive visible form by way of its own entity for, like the nose sense organ, it is an outcome of the elements, i.e. derived from elements. So it cannot perceive the object as being by way of its own entity. That the eye is an outcome of the elements is accepted by the Vaibashika as well. As explained earlier, being an outcome of the elements means that the object itself is made up of a combination of the eight substances. So because it is made up of the eight substances it has its own unique way of production, dependent on many factors. Therefore it cannot be perceived as existing by way of its own entity.

The reasoning here is that if, for example, the eye were to perceive visual stimuli by way of its own entity then that would imply that the object would exist independently without having to depend on anything else for existence. However, as mentioned previously, the visual stimuli itself is an outcome of the elements, which means it is a collaboration of the eight substances (which are the four elements plus visual forms, touch, taste and smell).

> Objection: If the eye and so forth do not exist it contradicts explanations concerning the maturation of actions.

The objection is that if eye and so forth do not exist, then that contradicts the explanation concerning the maturation of actions, meaning that it will contradict the sutra that says if you do not accept eye and so forth then you will go against the sutras.

> *Answer:* But even we do not refute that.

The answer from our system to refute the earlier objection is that we do not refute the eye and so forth as not existing.

> *Question:* Why is that not refuted?
>
> *Answer:* We refute that things exist by way of their own entity but far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we affirm it in our own system.

The reason why we do not refute that is because we only refute that things exist by way of their own entity. Far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we affirm it in our own system. What is being established is that when the eye and so forth are negated the eye sense and so forth are not being negated. What is being negated, is existing by way of its own nature, or existing inherently.

Therefore far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we are firm in our own system that everything is dependent arising.

> Although it cannot sustain investigation by the reasoning which analyzes suchness and though it is not established by way of its own entity, it is undeniable that the eye sees visible form and does not hear sound.
>
> Thus recognizing that the maturation of actions is inconceivable, one should accept it without applying analysis by reasoning.

That which is perceived and conventionally established is something that has to be accepted as existing. The analysis asserts that it exists without applying analysis and reasoning as to the nature of how it exists.

> Certainly therefore the Subduer said that the fruition of actions is inconceivable. Sütra says:
>
> The maturation of sentient beings' actions is inconceivable.
> Thus this whole world comes into existence through causes.

The sutra cited here says that the maturation of sentient beings' actions is inconceivable. Thus this whole world comes into existence through causes. There is actually much more to this citation, but this is what is relevant here.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.2. Refuting consciousness as agent

Having refuted that the eye exists by way of its own entity, this second heading concerns refuting consciousness as an agent existing by way of its own entity.

> *Assertion:* The eye and so forth [meaning the rest of the consciousnesses] are inherently existent because one experiences consciousness, their effect.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *Because the conditions are incomplete* *312*
> *There is no awareness before looking,*
> *While afterwards awareness is of no use.*
> *The instrument is of no use in the third case.*

By using the effect as reasoning they establish that the causes, the eye and so forth, are also inherently existent. Thus they are saying that because of the eye organ there is an eye consciousness, and because there is an eye organ they exist inherently, because one experiences the consciousness as the effect. So they are establishing that because there is an effect that one experiences, then the cause itself must also be inherently existent.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> A visual consciousness does not exist before looking at a form, for prior to that the conditions which produce it are incomplete. Alternatively if it exists after looking at the form, it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use in looking at the form, because looking takes place before it exists.

The main point here is that visual consciousness does not exist before looking at form. What is being implied here is that a visual consciousness does not exist by way of its own entity before looking at form, for prior to that the conditions that produce it are incomplete. According to their assertion if it exists after looking at form, then it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use looking at the form, because looking at it takes place before it exists. Again, this has to be related to inherently existence, or existence by way of its own entity. What is being established then is that a visual consciousness could not exist inherently, or by way of its own entity, before looking at form, nor could it exist as being inherently existent after looking at something.

The main point being discussed here is that if visual consciousness were to exist by way of its own entity then, does it exist prior to looking at form or after looking at form? If it exists prior to looking at form then there is the absurdity that a visual consciousness could not exist before looking at the form, because before looking at the form its conditions to be produced are not complete. Alternatively if it exists after looking at the form, it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use in looking at the form, because looking at it takes place before it exists. So there would be no need for an eye consciousness. That is the absurdity which would arise if visual consciousness were to exist inherently, or by way of its own nature.

To make it simpler, does the eye consciousness see prior to the eye seeing form or afterwards? If it exists prior to seeing

form then it could not be established as seeing form because the very conditions necessary for seeing form have not been completed. So you could not say you could see prior to the eye seeing form. But if the visual consciousness perceives the visual form after it has been seen by the eye then what extra use would there be for an eye consciousness if the form has already been perceived?

The refutation is made by counter argument: if the eye consciousness were to exist inherently or by way of its own entity, then does it exist prior to the eye perceiving or afterwards? In both cases an absurdity arises. There is a third possibility. As the commentary reads:

> As a third possibility one might think that that which looks and consciousness are simultaneous.
>
> In that case: It would then follow that the instrument of looking would be of no use in the production of that visual consciousness because the two would exist simultaneously and would be unrelated.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3. Refuting the eye as agent

This is sub-divided into three:

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.1. Absurdity if the eye travels to look at visible form
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.2. Purposelessness if it travels to look at the form after it is seen
1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.3. Consequence that all objects would be seen if the eye by way of its own entity perceived form without travelling

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.1. Absurdity if the eye travels to look at visible form

Assertion: The eye is the instrument of looking.

Again this is implying that the eye is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity.

Answer:

If the eye travels, that which is *313*
Distant would take long to see.
Why are extremely close
And very distant forms not clear?

In answer to the assertion and to explain the meaning of the verse two counter questions are posited:

> When the eye looks at a form, does it look after travelling to the object or without doing so? In the first case, if when the eye looked at a form there were motion of travelling toward the object, it should take longer to see distant objects.

The assertion is that it should take longer to see distant objects because if the eye actually has to travel over distance, then it would take a long time to see distant objects.

The commentary continues:

> If the eye perceived through contact, why would the eye ointment and spatula, which are extremely close, and very distant forms not be equally clear? It follows that they would be because of being perceived through contact.

What is being explained is that if the eye needs to have actual contact with an object in order to see it, then very distant objects could not be seen because you couldn't have contact with very distant objects. However from our experience, we know that we can see very distant things, although not clearly.

The main point that is being refuted is that the eye is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity. If it is established that the eye is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity, then the two main counter-questions which are raised are, does the eye look at form after travelling to the object or without having to travel.

In the first case, as mentioned here, if the eye had to travel a distance in order to see an object then the absurdity is that it would take a longer to see distant objects because of the time involved in the eye having to travel to the site of the object.

Alternatively if there had to be direct contact with they eye like eye ointment and the spatula which applies the eye ointment, in order to perceive things, then the absurdity would be that one would not perceive things which are at a distance, such as stars and the moon. However again from own experience, we know that we don't have to come into direct contact with an object in order to perceive it.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.2. Purposelessness if it travels to look at the form after it is seen

This section refutes the case where the eye travels to look at the object after having seen it.

If the eye travels when the form is seen *314*
Its movement is of no benefit.
Alternatively it is false to say
What it intends to view is ascertained.

As the commentary explains the verse:

> If the eye travelled to the form after seeing it [i.e. if that is what is being asserted], its movement would be of no benefit [or no use], for though it does so to view the form, that form has already been seen.

The point here is that if the eye were to travel to perceive form after seeing it, then the movement would be of no benefit because the form has already been seen, so what is the purpose of travelling to it?

The commentary continues:

> Alternatively, if it approached without seeing the form which it intended to view, it would be false to say it had definitely been seen, for it approaches what is to be viewed without seeing it, like a blind man.

The analogy is that if a blind person said, 'I am going to see something' then that would be false. Even though he may say that he is going to see something, he will not actually be able to see it because of being blind. Similarly it would be false to say that something had been seen by an eye that travelled to see it.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.3. Consequence that all objects would be seen if the eye by way of its own entity perceived form without travelling

If the eye perceives without travelling *315*
It would see all these phenomena.
For that which does not travel there is
Neither distance nor obscuration.

> To avoid these errors [as mentioned previously in relation to the eye travelling to an object to see it] one might assert that it perceives form by way of its own entity without travelling. In that case the eye which stays here would see all of these phenomena: the close and distant, as well as the obscured and unobscured. For an eye which does not approach the object there should be no difference between close or distant, obscured or unobscured objects.

If objects were to be seen by the eye by way of its own entity then these absurdities or faults relating to whether it sees it prior to travelling, or by travelling to the object, or without travelling to the object would arise. These are the faults that

arise if you posit that the eye perceives things by way of its own entity.

The main point being made here is that if the eye were to perceive objects by way of is own entity then regardless of the object the eye would have to perceive the thing. It wouldn't make any difference whether the object was close or distant or obscured or unobscured. If the eye was to perceive things by way of its own entity then regardless of the object the eye would have to be able to perceive it. The conclusion is that the eye does perceive things, but in relation to many conditions, and not by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.4. Consequence that the eye is an instrument of looking in relation to the eye

If the nature of all things *316*
First appears in themselves,
Why would the eye not
Be perceived by the eye itself?

If the eye were to perceive things by way of its own entity then these further absurdities are being pointed out. The commentary explains the verse thus:

> Just as the fragrance of the magnolia or blue lotus is first found at its source and afterwards, through contact, on a sesame seed and so forth…

This analogy relates to the general conventional understanding of where fragrances come from. When objects have a fragrance we know its main source from our own perceptions. Through coming into contact with another object such as sesame seed, the fragrance of a blue lotus will transfer onto that secondary object.

> …it is the way of all things that their nature first appears in themselves. Since it cannot relinquish its nature even in relation to itself, if it is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity, why does the eye not perceive itself?
>
> It follows that it should since the eye organ even with the eye as its object cannot give up its nature as an instrument of looking. Yet valid cognition negates that the eye perceives itself. Thus the subject, the eye, is not an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity, because it does not look at itself.

What is being established is that conventionally we accept that things have their own nature. What is being refuted here is that the eye is an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity. The absurdity being pointed out here is that if the eye were to look at form by way of its own entity, then that would imply that the eye would have to perceive itself because of having its own nature. However that goes against our observations. We cannot perceive our own eye without relying on something else. However if the eye itself was an instrument to perceive things by way of its own entity then we would have to be able to see our own eye. Not being able see our own eye is yet another conventional reason proving that the eye does not perceive things by way of its own entity.

The syllogism in relation to this is: The subject the eye, is not an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity, because it does not look at itself.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.5. Refuting a combination of three factors as the instrument of looking at visible form

Assertion: The eye alone does not have the ability to view form. The form is seen in dependence upon a combination of three factors.

Answer:

The eye does not have consciousness *317*
And consciousness lacks that which looks.
If form has neither of these,
How can they see form?

The Sautrantika Buddhist school asserts that the eye cannot perceive or see things just by itself as other factors have to be present. The two other conditions which have to be present are the object and the eye consciousness. The eye can perceive only when all three conditions come into contact.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Since the eye is matter it is not conscious of the object. Consciousness is not that which looks at the object. The form, the objective condition, is neither that which looks nor consciousness. How can form be seen by way of its own entity through a combination of these three factors? It follows that it is not feasible because visible form which is one of them has no ability to see.

The main assertion here is that form can be seen by way of its own entity through a combination of these three factors. It follows that this is not feasible, because visible form which is one of the three factors has no ability to see.

The absurdity being pointed out is that they assert that form is seen in dependence on the combination of three factors, again implying that form is seen by way of its own entity. What is being pointed out here is that if one of the three factors does not have the ability to perceive at all, which is the object itself (form), then it cannot serve as a factor to actually perceive. Since you say that a combination of the three allows the eye to see, if one of them does not have the actual intrinsic ability to see at all, then one of the conditions does not serve its purpose. It is the general rule that if one of the factors of a combination does not stand, then the whole combination does not stand. So the assertion is thus is being refuted by pointing out this absurdity.

1.1.1.2.1.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT AUDITORY OBJECTS

We will continue with this in the next session.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 December 2007

As usual it is appropriate to sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture. Withdrawing our mind from distractions we set our mind by generating a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by freeing them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.1.2.1.2. Refuting truly existent auditory objects

The three subdivisions of this heading are:
1.1.1.2.1.2.1. Refutation by examining whether sound is a maker of noise
1.1.1.2.1.2.2. Refutation by examining whether or not sound is apprehended through contact
1.1.1.2.1.2.3. Showing the flaws in this contention

1.1.1.2.1.2.1. Refutation by examining whether sound is a maker of noise

This outline has to be put into the appropriate context. What is being refuted is sound as being inherently existent sound, i.e. as a maker of either inherently existent noise, or noise that is existent by way of its own entity, or truly existent noise. Sound itself does exist, however what is being refuted is sound as an inherently existent phenomenon.

Texts such as this one give a detailed refutation of sound as being inherently existent, truly existent, or existent by way of its own nature and so forth. With a good understanding gained through the analytical process that is described in this text, then when one refers to the Buddha's teachings such as the *Heart Sutra* (where it says there is no sound) one would immediately be able to understand that what that really means is that there is no sound that exists inherently, or independently, or from its own side. That is something that one will be able to reflect upon immediately, as a result of having studied texts similar to this.

It would be a good result if one were to apply one's understanding of emptiness to any text that explains emptiness. Having studied these texts, and reflected upon them, the positive outcome that we should try achieve is spending some time every day in reflecting on the meaning of emptiness. It would be best of course to do this for a few hours every day, but if not then a few minutes reflecting on what emptiness means, and what bodhicitta means, and the actual meaning behind those words. For example, reflecting on emptiness means reminding oneself that things appear as being inherently existent - they appear to exist independently by way of their own entity, or by way of their own nature. In reality that's not how things are. In fact they exist in the opposite way to how they appear to one's consciousnesses. Then, what does bodhicitta mean? Try to simulate the feeling of bodhicitta in one's mind to go beyond the words: try to feel what bodhicitta means. If we reflect like this even for a few minutes every day then that practice would place very strong imprints on our minds.

The whole purpose of studying is so that we can use what we learn in our daily life. As mentioned in the teachings, the whole purpose of reflecting upon selflessness is so that we can loosen the grip of grasping at the self. Then the practice becomes worthwhile. At our level the manner of practice is to reflect upon emptiness again and again. It is not as if the realisation of emptiness will suddenly come upon us, or that some day some great being will grant us the realisation of emptiness. That is not going to happen. We have got to put in an effort from our own side, and that is why we are studying texts such as this one.

As mentioned previously, it is worthwhile to spend some time reflecting upon how the two types of grasping arise within oneself. Having identified the two types of grasping, one goes further and examines the faults and disadvantages that arise as a consequence of that grasping. Having reflected upon that, and clearly identified how all our problems and difficulties and sufferings arise because of the two types of grasping, the determination to overcome self-grasping slowly becomes stronger in our mind.

Then we will develop a keen interest in developing the two types of selflessness, which serve as an opponent to the two types of grasping within oneself. Even though we may not be able to gain an actual realisation of selflessness, whatever time we do spend in reflecting on selflessness to that extent it will begin to harm the grasping within ourselves. So there is definitely a purpose in reflecting on selflessness.

As we reflect on bodhicitta, we again see how grasping at the self serves as the master, and the self-cherishing mind becomes the slave to that master. Whatever self-cherishing we have is due to grasping at the self. Thus as we contemplate bodhicitta, we reflect on the relevance of overcoming grasping at the self in order to overcome the self-cherishing mind. In that way the whole structure of the teaching on bodhicitta and emptiness becomes relevant to our daily practice and that is how we progress. There is no other way.

With respect to the heading the text reads:

> Just as form cannot be looked at in terms of its own suchness, sound too cannot be listened to in this way.
>
> *If sound makes a noise as it travels* 318
> *Why should it not be a speaker?*
> *Yet if it travels noiselessly, how could*
> *Awareness arise in relation to it?*

The earlier verses refuted form as existing in its own way, or by its own entity. Sound is the next object to be discussed. Just as the refutation of form as existing by way of its own entity has been refuted, now sound as being inherently existent is being refuted.

What is being presented here first is the object of negation. In order to be able to establish the emptiness of any object, what is being negated has to be clearly identified first. What is being negated here, (the object of

negation) is sound existing by way of its own entity, meaning existing without having to depend on anything else, without depending on any causes and conditions, i.e. sound existing by its own nature or inherently. Once one identifies that as the object of negation, then the meaning becomes much clearer. So the text presents the faults that arise if sound were to exist inherently.

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

> When sound is heard, does hearing occur because it approaches as an object of that which listens or not?

In order to refute the contention that sound is inherently existent, the counter question being asked here is that if sound were to be inherently existent then does the hearing of the sound occur because it approaches the object that listens, or not? In other words does the hearing itself travel towards the consciousness, or not?

> In the first case, if it [i.e. sound] approaches as an object of auditory consciousness, does it do so emitting sound or silently?

More simply, if the sound does travel to the consciousness, becoming an object of the auditory consciousness, then does it travel so by making a sound or does it travel silently?

In relation to the first question:

> If it travels toward auditory consciousness making a noise as it travels, why is it not a speaker…

The absurdity being pointed out is that if sound travels to the auditory consciousness while emitting a sound, then the sound itself would be the one that produces sound,

> …since like Devadatta it travels, emitting sounds? If this is accepted, it follows that it would not be sound.

What is being explained is that if the sound itself is emitting sound as it travels to the auditory consciousness, then it would be like the speaker and so it would not be sound. By default, something that produces sound couldn't be sound itself, just as when Devadatta speaks or makes any sound he is the one who produces the sound, and is not sound itself. Similarly, if sound were to emit sound by itself from its own side as it travelled, then it would be the speaker and not sound itself.

In relation to the second counter question:

> Alternatively, if it travels toward auditory consciousness noiselessly, how could awareness focusing on the sound be produced, since no sound is emitted?

If sound travels noiselessly then what is being perceived? How could it be perceived as sound if it doesn't make any sound? That is the absurdity in the second case.

1.1.1.2.1.2.2. Refutation by examining whether or not sound is apprehended through contact

> *If sound is apprehended through contact,* 319
> *What apprehends the beginning of sound?*
> *If sound does not come alone,*
> *How can it be apprehended in isolation?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Furthermore, if sound is apprehended through contact with the ear organ, what apprehends the beginning of sound before contact occurs?

Here 'beginning' refers to the first moment of sound. Like any substance, every product has its first, second and third moments and so forth. So when a sound is produced, that first moment of sound is what is referred to here as the beginning. At the first moment of sound there wouldn't be time for contact. Who could perceive the first moment of sound as being sound, because there is no contact at that time?

> It follows that there is nothing with which to apprehend it, since neither the ear organ nor any other does so. If this is accepted, it follows that it would not be sound. Sound consists of nine substances and thus since it does not come alone, how can sound in isolation be apprehended?

As mentioned previously, sound is made up of the nine substances, which are the four elements, the four that are derived from the elements plus sound. Because it is made up of nine substances sound cannot be said to be apprehended or perceived in isolation by itself.

As the commentary further reads:

> It follows that smell and so forth which are inseparably combined with it would also be apprehended, for according to you they must, like the sound, have contact with the ear organ.

The absurdity being pointed out is that as sound is made up of nine substances, then when sound is perceived it is not as if sound can be isolated, and only the substance that is sound perceived. The very composition of sound is a combination of the nine substances, so sound cannot be separated and perceived in isolation. It has to be perceived as a combination of all the substances. That being so, then it follows, 'that smell and so forth which are inseparably combined with it would also be apprehended, for according to you they must, like the sound, have contact with the ear organ'. The absurdity being pointed out is that if sound is perceived through contact with the ear organ, then because the ear organ comes into contact with all the substances, smell and so forth would also have to be perceived. But that is an absurdity.

1.1.1.2.1.2.3. Showing the flaws in this contention [which was mentioned earlier]

> *Question:* What is wrong if the beginning [or the first moment] of sound is not apprehended?
>
> *Answer:* It would fail to be sound.
>
> *While sound is not heard, it is not sound.* 320
> *It is impossible*
> *For that which is not sound*
> *Finally to turn into sound.*

If the first moment of sound is not apprehended then, by default, it would fail to be sound because, according to the explanation in the text, the definition of sound is that which is perceived by the ear consciousness. So if the first moment of sound is not perceived by the ear consciousness then by default it would have to fail to be sound, as it does not fit with the definition of sound.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains:

> Until it is heard it is not sound because, like smell, it is not the ear's object.

Their contention is that, 'It becomes sound when it is heard'. The objection to that from our system is that:

> If initially it was not sound but later became sound, it would follow that smell and so forth could do so too, but this is unacceptable with regard to permanent functional things.

If the first moment of sound is not sound, but later becomes sound then the other substances such as smell could also become sound. If what was first not sound can later become sound, then likewise smell could also turn into sound. That would be the absurdity that would follow.

Other schools could not accept that because they accept sound as being a permanent functional thing, and so it is not possible for one entity to change into another entity. The very fact that something is permanent means that its nature, or entity, always remains the same, and can not change. The sutra that is quoted here explains how sound, and so forth, does not arise independently without relating to anything else. Rather, sound arises in dependence on causes and conditions, and not independently without causes and conditions.

Sütra says:

> For instance, in dependence upon the strings and wood
> And the hand's effort-through these three together
> Sound is produced and issues from
> Instruments like the vina and flute.

This explains how sound is not an independently existing entity, but rather a conventionally dependent arising phenomenon. It does so by using the analogy of a vina and a flute. A vina, which is like a small lute, is dependent upon the string and the wood and the effort of hands. In order for sound to be emitted from a vina, or violin, there has to be the wood structure, and the strings upon it, in addition to the function of the hand striking it. For a violin or vina the production of sound is dependent on these three conditions. Likewise, this true for a flute too.

The sutra continues:

> When the wise investigate and think
> From where it has come and where it has gone,
> Searching in the main and intermediate directions,
> They find no coming nor going of sound.

Here 'wise' refers to those who have mastered the understanding of interdependent origination and emptiness. When these wise beings investigate sound, they can establish conventionally existent sound. But when an inherently or independently existent sound is searched for it cannot be found anywhere. So the lines, 'From where it has come and where it has gone, Searching in the main and intermediate directions, they find no coming nor going of sound' relate to inherent or independently existent sound. Not finding an inherently existing sound is establishing the emptiness of sound.

I had intended to finish chapter thirteen in this session, but there are five more verses to cover, plus some other analogies that are explained in detail. So, we might as well leave it for our next session, which will be next year.

We have had a very good year in covering the text. From my own side I feel very fortunate to have been able to present the explanation of this teaching without any obstacles of illness and so forth. So I feel very fortunate.

We can consider ourselves fortunate, in contrast to the beings who are not fortunate enough to grasp the meaning of this teaching, because *400 Verses* is a text that is quite difficult to understand and comprehend. Those who don't have much interest in the topic want to give up and not come to the teaching at all, especially when it sounds complicated or doesn't seem to make much sense to them. But even though the text is quite complicated and difficult to follow, you have kept coming to the sessions, regardless of being able to understand it or not. That means you have the keen interest in the subject itself, so in that way you are fortunate.

When we initially started the study group, I was advised against it by some. They said that previously Geshe Dawa had taught some difficult topics and the group ended up being reduced to only a few people coming; not many lasted. So I was advised against teaching difficult topics, because people might not be able to understand and give up. I started it anyway with the intention to see how far I could go. And it seems that we have got a good result!

The first topic that I taught the study group was the twelve interdependent links, which is quite a difficult topic. However people appreciated it and it went well. The next topic I taught was tenets, again a difficult topic, but nevertheless that seemed to be really taken well. Those who came appreciated it and said that it really seemed to open their minds to further understanding of the Dharma. I felt fortunate that I chose that topic, as it was successful.

Having put energy and time in studying the text zealously throughout the year, it is now an appropriate time to make a strong dedication, which means making strong aspirational prayers. We can make the strong prayer or wish to continuously be able to meet the great masters who propound these teachings, such as the great masters Aryadeva, Asanga, Maitreya, Manjushri, Nagarjuna and so forth. The basic structure of the teachings that they propounded so clearly is of conventional reality as well as ultimate reality, and they structured the whole path around these two realities or truths, i.e. conventional and ultimate truth. These teachings were propounded with great clarity by the great masters throughout the centuries, and later on other great teachers explained these teachings to us very clearly. So we can dedicate thus, 'Having met with a teacher who explain these teachings to us at this time, may I and other like-minded students continuously be able to meet with great teachers, with all the characteristics intact, and who explain the teachings faultlessly'.

Now of course I am not implying in any way that I am a teacher with all the characteristics intact, especially in relation to profound teachings like the ones that we have been covering. I am in no way qualified to be able to give detailed explanations of such a profound teaching.

However, what I can assure you is that I have given whatever explanations as best as I can, with a good intention, with a mind wishing to benefit others. However it is important to make strong prayers and dedications to continuously be with qualified teachers, meaning qualified teachers who have all the characteristics of a perfect teacher intact, continuously in this lifetime and in all future lifetimes.

I always have the attitude that I don't understand much. As a practical benefit of that, I don't seem to develop much pride in thinking that I have grand knowledge. Because of the general attitude I have as being on the lower side of understanding, it is my normal way of conduct to take a lower place. At teachings and so forth I like to go behind and sit at the side, where I am not noticed but more comfortable. However there are others who try to push me ahead saying, 'You should be sitting up at the front'. But I always feel uncomfortable there so I sit at the side. Recently in the teachings at Varanasi, I was sitting somewhat behind as usual, and there happened to be nun seated up at the front, She is from our organisation and knows me, and at one point she looked back, and when she saw me she was very startled to see me seated way behind. Nevertheless, adopting that sort of attitude seems to bring some sort of joy to the mind. I find that it is a more comfortable attitude.

At another teaching in Bodhgaya by His Holiness, organised at Lama Zopa's request, I was sitting below the platform, and at one point Roger Kunsang, (Lama Zopa's attendant) noticed where I was sitting, so he sent a message to someone else to bring me up. She said, 'Please come up and sit on the platform', but I explained that I felt comfortable where I was seated and wish to remain there. So she left me alone, but then another monk, Tenzin Sopa from Kopan, came over and said, 'Please Geshe-la', and again I tried to reason with him that I felt comfortable where I was. Then he said, 'It may be comfortable for you, but it is not for us!'

So, it is my general conduct to adopt a place where I have a bit more freedom for myself. If I am at the side then I am not noticed much and I have a bit more freedom. There are times and occasions where I enjoy having a bit more freedom and really being open to the generosity of others. It would be a really good thing to go out in the street and survive by taking alms, but that is impractical here - it wouldn't work out.

Besides the nice feeling that one gets by seeking alms, and allowing others to be generous, it is also a way to remember the Buddha's conduct, as he advised bikkhus and bikkshunis to adopt a life of depending on alms. That is why it occurred to me that it would be nice to adopt that custom sometimes. In fact, one time in Kushinagar in India I borrowed the begging bowl of another bikkhu and went around for alms with some others. I did that for the sake of remembering the Buddha and his tradition. Whatever I received then I offered back to the bikkhu, so by lending me his bowl he got quite a few offerings himself.

The main point of these stories is that it is important for all of us to recognise the value of modesty, and try to overcome pride within ourselves, especially in relation to our Dharma brothers and sisters. We are all Dharma brothers and sisters with the same goal. In order to reach our goal we all need to practise and study together. We are here to help each other, not to compete with each other. It is natural that humans have different mental capacities - some may have a sharper intellect, others less and so a little bit slower in learning. Rather than ridiculing and shunning someone who is not very good at learning, or who seems to get it wrong, or who has questions and forth, one must try to help them, to nourish their understanding, and encourage them to go forward. That is how we must use whatever intelligence and knowledge we may have to help and support others, not to generate pride and particularly jealousy between each other. That is something we should try to avoid at all costs.

As advised in the teachings, one must try to adopt the practice of using whatever wisdom one gains from hearing the teachings to contemplate and analyse the teachings, and then using whatever wisdom one has gained from that for meditation. Then the meditation practice becomes a sound firm practice, because we will not be just meditating on some vague understanding or knowledge that we have. Having heard authentic teachings and gained wisdom from that, then analysing using the techniques that are presented in the teachings by using one's own intelligence and wisdom becomes a basis for one's object of meditation. Then meditation becomes really firm and stable. That is the process that we should endeavour to apply.

If one depends on a faith that is derived from merely hearing the qualities and benefits of the practice, then that faith is not a very stable faith. Rather, if we try to cultivate a faith that comes through having heard the teachings, analysed them and thought about them, and then further analysed them with one's own thinking process, then that is what is called a convinced faith. Such a faith is a very firm and stable faith, and it is something that we need to cultivate and develop within ourselves.

Finally I would like to thank you by putting my palms together, because you are all very generous and kind to me. As mentioned in the teachings there is great benefit by giving teachings, but that benefit is dependent upon having listeners. If the listeners have been good listeners then there will definitely be a benefit from the teachings that one gives. Likewise it is mentioned that when we listen to the teachings we will benefit, and that is dependent on the teacher. So there is clearly an interdependent relationship between the one who is giving the teachings and the one who is listening to the teachings. When I thank people for listening to the teachings some say 'That is not appropriate, how could you thank us?' but I know that I am not wrong!

Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Aryadeva's
Four Hundred Verses

༄༅། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2008 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, a network of Buddhist Centres in Australia and worldwide.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 February 2008

I am very glad that we have gathered again to begin Study Group for the year. The name Study Group implies that it is a group that is inclined to study. The equivalent is what our sister centre in Queensland, Chenrezig Institute, calls the BSB or Basic Study Programme. Geshe Tashi Tsering seems to be quite fond of that name, and says 'Our BSB is quite good'. I thought BSB meant Basic Study Group but when I asked someone else they said it stands for Buddhist Study Programme.

Why come to study group?

In any case our Tuesday evening group is called the Study Group. So it is appropriate to consider what type of study we are doing. Generally study means learning things that you previously hadn't known about, and further increasing one's knowledge so that it becomes even more profound. The connotation of 'study' in Tibetan has those two elements - learning something that one has not previously understood or known, and then increasing what one has already learned.

Having given that definition there may be some who feel, 'I have already studied whatever there is to be studied, and there is no need for me to increase my knowledge'. Our Study Group however is always relevant as it is the study of the different methods and techniques that subdue the mind, in particular how to overcome the delusions in the mind, and then increasing both that knowledge and the qualities in one' mind.

Why do we need to subdue our mind by overcoming the delusions, in particular the three root delusions of attachment, anger and ignorance? To answer that question we just need to reflect on our own life, and see that when delusions are prevalent in our mind they harm us on a continuous basis. We need to see how much suffering, disturbance and destruction delusions bring to our life whenever they dominate our mind.

The worldly knowledge that one acquires with normal study does not serve as a means of subduing the mind and overcoming the delusions. In fact, in many cases, if it is not put to good use worldly knowledge can be a cause to increase the delusions in one's mind.

To see the importance of the particular study that we do here, one can reflect on the fact that if one has not been able to subdue one's mind by overcoming the three root delusions, then no matter what kind of worldly or any other knowledge that one might have acquired, it will not be of much use to us if it has not served to overcome the delusions in one's mind. It will not be of real benefit as it has not brought real happiness and peace to our mind.

The conclusion that we need to come to is that one must definitely work to overcome the three delusions in one's mind. That begins by first of all identifying the delusions, and then slowly trying to engage in the practice of applying the different antidotes that are the techniques to overcome particular delusions. Therefore when we consider the purpose of our study here we should always remind ourselves of that basic main purpose, which is to identify the delusions and then gradually overcome them.

As we progress in our study, the knowledge that we gain serves to establish any virtue that we gain from overcoming attachment, any virtue that we gain from overcoming anger, and any root virtues that we may gain from overcoming ignorance. These virtues then serve as a basis on which to increase those virtues within one's mind. That is the twofold purpose of our study.

Integrating Dharma and worldly life

The real purpose of the study we do here is to recognise and subdue the mind by not allowing the delusions, in particular the three poisons, to arise in the mind, and to increase any virtues that we develop. If we then abide by that conduct in our daily life then whatever worldly knowledge and virtues we may have gained in our earlier studies will actually serve as a purpose for our own benefit. So we can see that there is an incredible benefit from doing Dharma study. Not only do we gain qualities and virtues that lead to ultimate goals, but the very process of gaining the qualities of the virtues of Dharma study helps us to utilise our worldly knowledge on a practical level. Thus it helps to provide the basic necessities that we need to sustain ourselves, in addition to the benefit of bringing some peace and happiness in our mind.

Without Dharma practice and study, just having mere worldly knowledge can actually harm us by contributing to negative states of mind. For example, in relation to those who are better or superior to us in any way, we develop jealousy, to those who are inferior or less privileged than us we develop contempt and pride, and we develop a sense of competitiveness towards those who are considered as being equal to us, for instance colleagues at work. When these delusions arise in our mind they bring so much discomfort for us, and others. If mere worldly knowledge is not utilised with the Dharma then it can serve as a means for delusions to increase, thus harming oneself and others.

Because we are not free from samsara we all need to rely on worldly material things to sustain ourselves. So we do need worldly knowledge. But merely having worldly knowledge can serve to harm us by increasing the delusions whereas when worldly knowledge is utilised with a Dharma practice it can benefit us. When we integrate worldly studies with Dharma practice, then in addition to the great benefits from the Dharma practice, we can use whatever worldly knowledge we have for our real benefit and happiness.

An example of a beneficial practice

If we take one delusion, anger for example, we can see the negative consequences when anger arises in our mind, as well as the positive consequences when anger decreases as a result of applying the antidote. We have both those mental states within ourselves, - anger as well as patience. That is because we have the seeds or imprints of anger as well as the seeds of patience within our own mind. It is now a matter for us to recognise both of them, and completely understand how they work within our mind, and then to apply the positive and try to decrease the negative. It can be done in quite a simple practice: when one has a moment to oneself sit quietly somewhere and for the sake of understanding how anger works, try to imagine becoming angry in an unpleasant situation. You can create the scenario in your mind of someone criticising you for example, which makes you feel very angry, then imagine what the consequences would be. How would you react physically, mentally and

verbally? How would you normally react with anger? Then try to analyse the consequences. Is the outcome a beneficial effect for oneself and others or is it an unpleasant one?

Then practice the opposite: imagine applying the antidote of patience when anger starts to arise in one's mind. Imagine not retaliating, and not reacting out of that angry state of mind, but rather trying to subdue the mind of anger. Imagine the consequences and effects when one replaces anger with patience and tolerance. Would that bring calmness and peace to one's mind? What would the effect be for others? Would they feel much more at ease and peaceful too, or not? Analyse within oneself in this way, by generating the delusion and seeing the consequences. There is a particular Tibetan word *gyu-tag* which means to investigate and check one's mind; to see what kind of mental states one may have and what kind of effects one experiences as a result of those mental states. In this way if we apply the practice in our daily life, we can then slowly begin to apply the antidotes to the negative states of mind.

The importance of applying practice

Having analysed and understood the positive consequences of non-attachment, non-anger, non-hatred and so forth and the negative consequences of anger and attachment, it is not sufficient to just leave it at that. Just knowing that anger, for example, is destructive and harmful and that patience is beneficial will not really be of much benefit to oneself, if one doesn't engage in the practice of overcoming anger.

What then needs to be done is to put one's knowledge into practice. As one great master has said, 'It is not the fault of not knowing. We all seem to know quite well. The fault lies in not applying the practice'. In Study Group we can safely assume that everyone knows and agrees that anger is destructive, and that patience is a virtue. The negative consequences of anger are understood quite well, and the positive effect of patience is something we can all acknowledge and accept. It is the same with attachment. We can safely assume that most people definitely understand the negative consequences of attachment, as well as ignorance, and the positive effects of non-attachment are also understood.

If just knowing this doesn't seem to bring much change, then that indicates that we have not been able to apply our knowledge in our daily life. To explain this there is an analogy of a doctor diagnosing a patient's illness and prescribing the proper medication. If the doctor has properly diagnosed the illness and prescribes the proper medication, then there will be no fault from the doctor's side, and because it is correct medication there will be no fault from the side of the medication. Now if the patient does not take the medication and starts complaining that he is not cured, then is quite obvious where the fault lies!

It is the same in our situation - it is not as if we don't have the perfect teachings. The teaching itself is definitely valid, and there is no fault there. Nor is there any fault in the teacher who, using their knowledge of the scripture, presents the faultless teachings in a proper way. If the teaching doesn't seem to benefit one, then it can only mean that one has not applied the teachings in one's actual practice. It is good for us to know where the fault lies, because it seems that some people are confused about this. They may wonder why, if it is so correct and pure, doesn't the Dharma help to solve all of one's problems.

It is important to understand and keep in mind that even though the Dharma itself is pure, and the instructions are pure, if we are not careful in utilising it in our practice then the very knowledge that we gain from the Dharma can actually turn into a cause for the delusions to increase. Here one must understand the fault does not lie in the instruction itself, but it lies in not applying the instructions in a proper way.

The focus of our study

The particular study topic we are covering now, which was indicated even before we actually engaged studying in this text, is the antidote to overcome delusions, in particular the root delusion of grasping at an inherently existent self, or the grasping at the self. These teachings describe the antidotes for overcoming that root delusion. Teachings that describe the various antidotes for overcoming delusions are generally classified into the extensive teachings and the profound teachings. Also the whole path of the teaching can be presented as that which deals with the conventional phenomena and that which deals with ultimate phenomena. The teaching in this text is a teaching that presents the profound teachings on emptiness. Within the Two Truths it presents the ultimate truth, which is emptiness.

It is good to be studying a profound teaching, but why is it profound? How is the profundity of the teaching utilised in overcoming the delusions within our mind? Again we go back to identifying the root delusion, which is the ignorance of grasping at the self. It is called the root delusion because grasping at the self is the main delusion that is the cause for us to cycle in samsara over and over again. In order to overcome that root delusion one needs to meditate on emptiness or selflessness, but without first identifying that actual root delusion within oneself and understanding that it is the main culprit, trying to meditate on emptiness wouldn't really have much effect. Therefore, as prescribed in the teachings, it is essential to clearly recognise and understand what that grasping at the self is, in order to overcome it.

It is also good for us to reflect and ponder again and again on why the ignorance grasping at the self is identified as being a root delusion. The way to identify self-grasping is to really check within oneself to see how the self-grasping comes about. When we think about it, we really do have that instinctive notion of a self, don't we? There's this really strong feeling of self identity, which is always there spontaneously. We don't even have to think about it, that notion of me, or the self, is always with us wherever we go, in whatever we do. There is nothing really wrong with a notion of a self, but the problem is that we have a misperception of how that self exists, and as a result there is the strong grasping or attachment to the self.

With an initial strong attachment to the self, what follows naturally is a strong attachment to the belongings of the self. The possessor is the self and the possessions are everything that belongs to, or which is related to, the self. We classify those who are beneficial to the self as friends, and we classify as foes or enemies those who seem to harm us. So as a result, attachment to friends and aversion or anger towards enemies arises. When we investigate how these delusions arise in our mind it becomes very obvious to us that they start from that misperceived notion of 'I' and 'me'. The importance of 'me' leads to attachment to those who are favourable to oneself, and aversion or anger to those who are not favourable to oneself.

When we have a good understanding of this root delusion - the ignorance grasping at the self - then we can apply that understanding directly to the twelve interdependent links. The first link is the link of ignorance which is identified as

the root delusion of all samsara, and that ignorance leads to the second link, which is karmic formations.

Also in the explanations of karma in the Four Noble Truths, the primary cause for samsara is said to be delusions. It is ignorance of grasping at the self that is the primary delusion within one's mind, which leads on to all the other delusions. When we begin to understand that, then we understand that we create karma as a result of the delusions.

The result of practice

You already have all this knowledge, so I am presenting it now just a reminder. In a way it is a recipe that brings out the flavour of the actual practice, which shows how we can apply that practice, derived from our understanding of the teachings, to our daily life. I mention this as a reminder of the main topic of our studies here. In fact reflecting on this, and on the importance of practice, it is in our best interest if we can actually apply the practice to our life, primarily to bring about a more subdued and kinder mind. That is the main purpose. If by coming to the teachings, studying the texts and so forth can help to induce a more subdued and kinder mind, particularly towards others, then that will serve as the purpose of our study.

If having applied the teachings to our practice in our daily life, then we can begin to see the result of having a kinder mind. That will then naturally result in having an even happier and more joyful mind, which will be a good result. When others see us being kinder than before, and genuinely more happy and jolly, then that will be the hallmark of the benefit of the teachings. Trying to convince others that Buddhism is good or that coming to teachings is good while one remains as agitated as before, or as short tempered and angry as before, will not be a good advertisement. Basically the best way to give others the message that the teachings work, that Buddhism works, is to show it through the positive transformation that one goes through oneself. Then others will speak up loudly about the benefit and real worthiness of the Dharma to others. Then one needn't say much to others to try to convince them, as they will be interested from their own side, because looking back they will say, 'This person used to be so irritable and agitated before, but having practised Buddhism they have become much kinder and happier, so there must be something to this'.

Once when I was teaching in Bendigo two students overheard others whispering among themselves saying, 'Those two used to be quite disagreeable people in the past but it must be the Buddhist path or whatever that they are following, as they seem to be much calmer and more subdued nowadays'.

The importance of motivation and dedication

Normally one needs to develop a positive motivation for engaging in the teachings. So the positive motivation that we can develop is, 'The purpose for engaging in the teachings and study is not merely for my own sake, but rather for the benefit other sentient beings. By putting the teachings into practice may I be able to attain the ultimate state of enlightenment so that I can benefit all sentient beings, by eliminating every suffering and bringing them to ultimate happiness'.

To stress the importance of motivation and dedication we can quote from a teaching by Lama Tsong Khapa that is in prayer form. The meaning of a particular stanza is:

> In the beginning I spent a long time listening to the teachings,
> In the middle part all the teachings that I heard and studied appeared as personal instructions,
> At the end I put all these instructions into practice,
> I dedicate all the merits to the flourishing of the Buddhist doctrine.

Here he basically explains his whole life in one verse, showing how he conducted his life in practice. The dedication to the flourishing of the Buddhist doctrine is the equivalent of saying, 'I dedicate for the happiness of all beings', because Buddhist doctrine is an unmistaken method of bringing happiness to sentient beings. If those techniques were to prevail then it will naturally bring about happiness as a result for whoever practises in that way. Therefore one should understand that dedicating for the welfare of all sentient beings is the equivalent to dedicating for the teachings to flourish. Likewise dedicating for the teachings to flourish is equivalent to dedicating to the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings.

I have spent quite a lot of time on what may seem like a sidetrack from our text. Even though it is quite warm and it seems like you are already quite overwhelmed by the heat, we will spend a few more minutes going into the text. If you can just endure that extra bit of suffering then it might be for a worthwhile cause. As the saying goes, that which is difficult to obtain, once obtained will be priceless. The literal meaning of 'priceless' is like a precious jewel; it is quite difficult for treasure hunters to find a precious gem and they have to endure all sorts of the hardships in their search for such a gem. However when they find it, that precious jewel will have great benefits, and all the hardships endured earlier will not have been in vain. Rather the hardships will have led to great gain. We can use that analogy for our study and practice. Regardless of a bit of heat and difficulty now, we will use it wisely to derive great benefit from the teachings.

1.1.1.2.2. REFUTING APPREHENSION BY MENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS[1]

> *Without the sense organs what will mind* 321
> *Do after it has gone?*
> *If it were so, why would that which lives*
> *Not always be without mind?*

It is good to try to develop an understanding of what the heading means. It refers to refuting apprehension or perception by mental consciousness. So can mental consciousness actually apprehend an object? How does it apprehend an object?

Student: Through the senses?

Why should we refute apprehension of mental consciousness when mental consciousness does actually apprehend objects? What is wrong with the notion of mental consciousness apprehending objects? Why should we refute that? In other words why are we refuting apprehension by mental consciousness?

Student: We are refuting the mode of apprehension; that things exist inherently.

My interpretation is that it is not actually refuting the manner of how the mental consciousness apprehends, but rather the apprehension of mental consciousness itself. It might become clearer as we go through it.

The lower Buddhist schools posit that mental consciousness exists from its own side. whereas the higher Madhyamika

[1] This heading is the second part of 1.1.1.2, Individual refutations, which is in turn the second part of 1.1.1. Refuting the true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects.

school refutes that mental consciousness is truly existent or that it exists from its own side. So, my view is that what is being refuted is that mental consciousness itself is inherently existent, or as the text states, existing by way of its own identity.

If it were just relating to the apprehension of objects by the mental consciousness, then it is commonly known that there are many modes of how mental consciousness apprehends objects, some in the right way and some in a faulty way. There are valid cognitions and invalid cognitions, which we dealt with earlier. Even though there are certain invalid apprehensions by mind that doesn't need to imply that we have to refute apprehension of the consciousness itself. Here we are referring to mental consciousness in general, and my interpretation would be that it refers to refuting the apprehension of mental consciousness as being truly existent or inherently existent.

Whereas a more literal explanation of the verse implies that the mental consciousness itself does not have the ability to apprehend things as being inherently existent.

Referring to mental consciousness, what is the difference between mind and mental factors, and what is the difference between mind and primary mind? This is a quiz for those who have studied mind and mental factors or *lo rig*. You should know this.

Student: Mind identifies the object and mental factors identifies the aspects.

Now the difference between mind and mental consciousness?

Student: Inaudible.

We talk about the mind as the primary mind when it views an object as a whole, without any detailed characteristics. Whereas the mental factors perceive the specific characteristics of the object. The analogy usually given in the teachings is of a king and the ministers or generals who work under the king. A more contemporary example would be a prime minister and his cabinet ministers. The prime minister is the overall political leader and the ministers have specific jobs to carry out the overall mission of the prime minister. Mind and mental factors operate in a similar way to perceive objects.

If you who wish to refresh your mind it would be good to go back to the notes of the teachings on Mind and Mental Factors. We did not have time to complete the six root delusions and the twenty secondary delusions at that time, but all of the earlier mental factors were covered, so it would be good to refer to your notes[2]. I remember that we allocated a specific time of eight weeks to teach the topic Mind and Mental Factors and about seventy five people came, who were very eager and determined to study, and they stuck with it all the way through the eight weeks. If you put in such an effort, with interest and attention at that time, it would be unfortunate now to relapse and forget.

To explain the meaning of the verse the commentary posits this assertion:

> *Assertion:* The mind apprehends objects after travelling to them.

Even though it is not specifically mentioned in the commentary this assertion implies the following question: when the mind apprehends objects does it travel to the object or not? The assertion is given as an answer to the question, stating that the mind apprehends objects by travelling to the object. What this basically implies in relation to the main meaning of the verse is that although the mind has the ability to apprehend objects, that ability is not inherently existent within the mind.

In order to present an answer to the question above, we can speculate that there are two further questions: If the mind apprehends objects after travelling to the object then does it travel with the organ or without the organ? The answer relates to the assertion that the mind travels to the object with the organ. If that is the case then:

> *Answer:* That is incorrect. Auditory consciousness does not travel to the object along with the ear organ, for the organs always remain in the body.

The commentary then explains:

> Even if mind, such as an auditory consciousness, approached its object without the sense organs, how could it perform the functions of listening, looking and so forth, since like a blind person it would lack the ability to perceive its object?

What is being presented here is the absurdity of the mind apprehending an object without the sense organs. If it travelled without the sense organs then how could the mind perceive the object? How could it perform the function of listening and so forth if the organ is missing? The analogy that is given is that of a blind person: even though they have the features of the eye and so forth the reason why they cannot see is because there is damage to the organ. This shows that objects cannot be perceived without the organ.

As the commentary further reads:

> If it were so, why would that which lives, i.e. the self, not always be without mind?

The word Tibetan word *sog* translated here as 'the self' also has the connotation of 'that which lives' or life-force in general. There are many different terms used in the sutras for 'the self'. In this instance 'that which lives' actually relates to the self so 'why would that which lives, i.e. the self not always be without mind?' This is a rhetorical question indicating that a self always has to have a mind. It would be an absurdity if the self did not have a mind.

> When one investigates in this way by means of reasoning, neither sense organs nor consciousnesses have by way of their own entity the ability to apprehend objects.

What this explains is that, as explained in the teachings on Mind and Cognition, for the apprehension of an object to take place three factors must be present: mental consciousness, the sense organ or faculty, and the object itself. When these three conditions are present then an object is perceived. When one investigates one comes to realise that even though these three factors must be present when an object is perceived, none of them could apprehend it independently, and thus inherently perceive or apprehend an object. The mental consciousness by itself could not inherently apprehend an object; the sense organ could not independently or inherently apprehend an object; likewise the object does not present itself as an object to be perceived inherently or independently. That is the conclusion, which is the meaning of the verse.

The main point of this verse is, as explained here in the commentary, that 'neither organs nor consciousnesses have by way of their own entity the ability to apprehend objects'. Thus what is being refuted clearly is not that the mental consciousness does not have the ability to apprehend

[2] Available on the 2007 edition of the CD of transcripts of teachings.

objects, because it does, but that it does not apprehend objects by way of its entity or inherently.

If the mental consciousness were to apprehend objects by way of its own entity, or inherently, or independently then, as explained here in the commentary, since it is agreed on both sides that the organ serves as a necessary factor to apprehend objects, there would be the absurdity of asking whether it apprehends the object with or without the organ ?

If the consciousness travels to the object without the organ then the absurdity is that it would be like a self without a mind. If it travels with the organ then the absurdity is that the organ actually leaves the body. These are obvious absurdities.

The absurdities described above exhaust all the possibilities of how an object could be apprehended by a mental consciousness by way of its own entity or independently. The conclusion is that the mental consciousness does have the ability to apprehend objects, just as every organ has the ability to apprehend objects, and the object has the ability to be apprehended by the consciousness and the organ. However none of them, have that ability by way of their own entity or independently. Rather they do so interdependently by relating to each other. That is what is being refuted in this outline 'Refuting apprehension by mental consciousness'.

Although we were not able to cover much material from the text this evening, there is no big rush. We will do it slowly in our next sessions. When I was escaping from Tibet the first area of India we came into was Arunachal Pradesh. The people from Arunachal Pradesh are actually quite Tibetan, as their script is Tibetan, so they also speak a bit of Tibetan as many of their words are similar. We would ask them how much further we had to go, how many more mountains we have to cross before we actually get down to the main part of India. They set up camps which we had to reach each evening. When we asked how much further before we reached that evening's camp they replied, 'If we go slowly we will reach there quickly'.

That very simple saying has a deep meaning, and there is actually a good personal instruction in there. When we think about our experiences in life we notice that when we are in a great rush, then although we might be moving quickly our mind is full of anxiety, and wherever we have to go seems to take a long time - the buses seem to take longer to reach their destination. Whereas if you actually relax a bit and take it easy, time seems to go by quite quickly, and we enjoy it much more. So therefore there is practical advice in that saying.

As children in Tibet we would really look forward to Tibetan New Year because that was the biggest holiday of the year, with a lot of good things happening. As children it seemed to take such a long time to reach New Year, but now having grown up it seems that a year goes quite fast. Of course here the children wait for Christmas to come round.

If we go slowly we will reach the end quickly but of course we have to be careful that we do not lose out by going too slowly. I would like to relate to you an incident which occurred in Varanasi when I was there. It was part of the University's activities to have races for which awards were given. Apparently there were two students, one of whom, Urgyen, was normally referred to as the simpleton and the other was called Pema Gyalpo. In the race these two were left behind. With about five miles to go Urgyen said to Pema Gyalpo that as they were way behind anyway they might as well just relax and take it a bit easier. Urgyen actually had something to eat and he shared it with Pema Gyalpo, so Pema Gyalpo relaxed quite a bit.

Students were given marks based on their finishing position right up to the last person. So when they came to the finishing line Urgyen suddenly put in a lot of effort in and overtook Pema Gyalpo and left him behind. Therefore Urgyen got a few more marks than Pema Gyalpo. Later the other students would tease Pema Gyalpo saying, 'Oh the simpleton Urgyen actually made a fool of you'. Normally Urgyen was called a simpleton, but he was actually quite clever, and not at all foolish.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 February 2008

As we normally do, it is good to set a motivation for the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings and to liberate them from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

Setting a motivation can also serve as a pledge. When we generate the motivation of listening to the Dharma and putting it into practice in order to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all mother sentient beings, the part where one commits to putting the teachings into practice is in fact making a pledge to oneself.

1.1.2. Refuting true existence of that which perceives objects

This has two subheadings:

1.1.2.1. Defining the aggregate of recognition

1.1.2.2. Refuting its true existence

1.1.2.1. Defining the aggregate of recognition

One needs to understand from the outline that what is being refuted is the aggregate of recognition as being truly existent, or existent by way of its own entity. Earlier, consciousness existing by way of its own entity was refuted, so there might be yet another doubt that the mental factor of recognition or discrimination may be inherently existent. In order to remove any doubts that mental factors also exist by way of their own entity, the specific mental factor translated here as recognition is refuted as being inherently existent.

For the consciousness to perceive things, all three factors of consciousness, the organ and the object must be present. When the consciousness perceives the object the five omnipresent mental factors also function together in apprehending or perceiving the object. These five ever-present or ever-functioning mental factors are feeling, recognition, intention, contact and attention.

With respect to the ever-present mental factor of **feeling**, we can assert from our own experience that whenever we have a conscious mind apprehending an object, there is always a feeling that accompanies that apprehension. Either you feel pleasant by coming into contact with that object, or you may have an unpleasant feeling, and there might be times when you have neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, but just a neutral feeling. From our own experience we can definitely assert that there are these three types of feelings - pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Recognition or, as sometimes translated discrimination, is defined as the mental factor that sees the aspect of the object. For example, in order to perceive the colour 'blue', the two factors of the consciousness apprehending blue, the eye faculty or eye sense organ, and the object itself, the colour blue, have to be present. With these conditions being intact, then when the consciousness in the act of apprehending the object, recognises the aspect as being blue, then that factor determining it as 'blue' is the mental factor of recognition or discrimination.

The function of the mental factor of **intention** is to move the mind towards the object. Indeed the definition of karma is normally defined as intention, which is an appropriate definition of karma. Going back to the example of perceiving an object such as blue, the factor that naturally and spontaneously moves the mind towards the object without any control, is called the mental factor of intention.

The mental factor of **contact** is said to be the mental factor that serves as the basis for feeling to arise when any object is perceived. It serves as a basis is when the consciousness, the sense organ and the object come into contact. So, that combination of the three conditions for an object to be perceived, which is what contact is, serves as a basis for the mental factor of feeling to arise.

The mental factor of **attention** is that which holds on to a particular object allowing the consciousness to focus on it. This is the function of the mental factor of attention. The ability to identify a particular object is basically because the mental factor of attention keeps the mind focused on the object for a certain duration, which can be very short.

The mental factor of recognition and the aggregate of recognition are actually one and the same - they are synonymous.

> *An object already seen* 322
> *Is perceived by mind like a mirage.*
> *That which posits all phenomena*
> *Is called the aggregate of recognition.*

The objection that is raised to which this verse serves as an answer is:

> *Objection:* If sense organs and their objects do not exist inherently, the aggregate of recognition which discerns what is exclusive to them will be non-existent.

Of course the aggregate of recognition is present whenever any one of the five senses perceives an object. For example when we hear something, that which discerns what we are hearing is the function of the mental factor of recognition, which is concurrent with the hearing consciousness. Likewise recognition is always present when we smell, taste or touch something. So the objection here is that the aggregate of recognition could not exist if it doesn't exit inherently.

> *Answer:* Although they do not exist when analysed by reasoning, they are not conventionally non-existent, for mental consciousness apprehends the exclusive aspects of an object such as a visible form which has already been perceived.

What this is saying is that although things do not exist ultimately when analysed by reasoning, they do exist conventionally. This differs from the lower Buddhist schools which assert that if things exist conventionally they also exist ultimately. What is being stated in this answer is that if things exist conventionally that does not mean that they have to exist ultimately, or by way of their own entity.

The answer states that things do exist conventionally 'for mental consciousness apprehends the exclusive aspects of an object such as a visible form which has already been perceived'. What is being indicated here is that when we perceive an object, the fact that we are able to remember what we saw for example the colour 'blue' or that we heard a certain sound etc., is because of the recognition that takes place at that time.

Even though things do not exist inherently when analysed conventionally, they are perceived and they are not non-existent. The commentary gives this analogy:

For instance, though a mirage does not contain even a drop of water, recognition of water occurs.

We all know that even conventionally a mirage does not contain any water. However for someone who perceives a mirage, the recognition of water being there still occurs. Even though there is not even a drop of water there, that does not hinder the recognition of water being generated in the person who perceives the mirage. Using that as an analogy, we can understand that although the objects of the five senses appear as being inherently existent, there is not even an atom of inherent existence there. However the lack of inherent existence does not prevent the recognition of the perceived object from occurring, so even though things do not exist inherently, recognition of those objects can still be present and valid. There is no fault in the recognition being present, but that doesn't mean they have to be inherently existent.

As the commentary explains:

Likewise that which perceives the exclusive aspects of an object, a mental factor positing the exclusive signs of all phenomena, is called the aggregate of recognition.

Here the commentary establishes what I explained earlier: that which perceives the exclusive aspects of an object, such as the colour blue, which then allows us to recognise and say this is 'blue', this is 'red' and so forth, or particular aspects of sound (and likewise with all the other sense objects) is posited as being the aggregate of recognition.

As the commentary concludes:

Phenomena are simply posited by recognition and do not exist by way of their own entity.

From the Prasangika Madhyamika point of view, positing recognition does not validate that things exist by way of their own entity. One can still posit recognition even though things do not exist by way of their own entity. Whereas the lower Buddhist schools posit that the recognition of objects occurs in relation to seeing objects as being inherently existent, and that, they say, is why things are inherently existent. It is that view that is being negated here in our system.

When things are posited by recognition, it is positing the existence of the object but it does not validate the inherent existence or 'existence by way of its own entity' of the object. That should be clear and understood well.

1.1.2.2. REFUTING ITS TRUE EXISTENCE

This refers to refuting the true existence of the aggregate of recognition. Again, one should refresh one's memory about how the different schools posit the existence of phenomena. The schools below the Madhyamika posit things as being inherently existent, as well as existent by way of their own characteristics, and as well as being truly existent. The Svatantrika Madhyamika school however posits inherently existent phenomena but not truly existent phenomena while the Prasangika Madhyamika school refutes all true existence, as well as inherent existence, and existence by way of its own entity or characteristics.

Objection: If the aggregate of recognition does not exist inherently, it is impossible to posit phenomena.

Answer: There is no such error.

In dependence upon the eye and form 323
Mind arises like an illusion.
It is not reasonable to call
Illusory that which has existence.

The lower Buddhist schools assert that if the aggregate of recognition is not inherently existent then it is impossible to actually establish phenomena? However in our system there is no error if recognition is not inherently existent.

As an answer to the earlier objection, the main point being explained in the verse is then further clarified in the commentary.

Even though it does not exist by way of its own entity,

Here one must remember all of the synonyms such as not existing inherently, or not existing by its own characteristics, or not existing truly, are implied. Reading on the commentary continues:

…mind arises like a magical illusion in dependence upon the eye and visible form.

What we also can derive from this explanation is the fact that the Prasangika Madhyamika assert that all phenomena are merely labelled, or imputed, by the mind. As described earlier, the aggregate or mental factor of recognition functions, for example, to perceive the aspect of an object such as the colour 'blue'. So, the recognition of the object as 'blue' is from the mental side. It is not as if the object itself appears and calls out saying, 'I am blue'. Rather it is the mind that labels the object, 'This is blue', or 'This is red'. From that we can understand how, as the Prasangika explain, everything is labelled by the mind. That very process of perceiving an object, whatever the object may be, involves the mind saying 'This is blue' or 'This is big or small' and so forth. So that very function of recognition also shows how it is the mind that actually labels objects.

The analogy that is used here is a magical illusion. When a magician conjures things, the classic example being a horse, or here in the west a rabbit, that illusory rabbit or horse does not actually exist, yet the mind perceives a rabbit or horse. The conjured horse or rabbit is a mere illusion, which means that it does not actually exist, but this does not negate the fact that there is the perception of a horse or rabbit. Using the analogy that even though the mind perceives an illusion, it does not negate the existence of mind, we can understand that even though phenomena do not exist inherently or by way of their own entity, the mind that perceives the inherent existence of phenomena can still arise.

As the commentary explains, the mind rises like a magical illusion in dependence upon the eye and visible form. All three conditions arise in dependence upon each other, though none of the conditions are inherently existent. This means that the mind itself lacks inherent existence, the eye or the sense organ lacks inherent existence, and visible form, or the object, also lacks inherent existence. All are equally like an illusion insofar as they lack inherent existence, yet they appear as being inherently existent. They are described as being an illusion because of the fact that they appear as being inherently existent.

As the commentary continues:

Any phenomenon whose existence is existence by way of its own entity cannot be called illusory, just as women who exist in the world are not called illusory.

What is being explained here is that if phenomena were to exist by way of their own entity then you couldn't call it illusory. The example given is 'just as women who exist in the world are not called illusory'. Women who actually exist, who are alive and living would not be called illusory as opposed to women who might be conjured up by magicians or seen through hallucinations and so forth. Similarly if phenomena were inherently existent or existent by way of

their own entity, then you couldn't call them illusory. So the fact that they are called illusory means that phenomena don't exist as they appear to ordinary perceptions.

1.1.3. Showing that lack of true existence is, like magic, a cause for amazement

In explaining the following next verse the assertion in the commentary reads:

> *Assertion:* It is amazing to claim that the sense organs can in no way whatever apprehend objects and that visual consciousness is produced in dependence upon the eye and visible form.

This assertion comes from the lower Buddhist schools. As has been proved earlier, the eye-consciousness, for example, does not have the ability to apprehend objects by way of its own entity or by way of its own side. Having that ability has been refuted by our system. Things are perceived in fact by way of the three conditions of consciousness, the sense organ and the object. The lower schools say that it is very peculiar and amazing that the sense organs cannot apprehend objects (inherently).

The response to that is:

> *Answer:* That alone is no cause for amazement.
>
> *When there is nothing on earth* *324*
> *That does not amaze the wise,*
> *Why think cognition by the senses*
> *And suchlike are amazing.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Although when analysed by reasoning a sprout and so forth neither comes into existence from a seed which has ceased nor from one which has not ceased, [sprouts are produced in dependence upon seeds].

This analysis has been presented in the earlier parts of the teaching and in other texts as well. When analysing how the sprout comes about, does it occur at the time of the seed or when the seed has already ceased to exist? The answer to that is that it neither comes into existence from a seed when the seed is present (meaning an inherently existent seed), nor does it come from a seed that has inherently ceased. As the text further reads:

> When to the wise there is nothing on earth which is not as amazing as magic, why should one think that cognition of objects by sense consciousnesses which do not have true existence and such-like are amazing, for this applies equally to everything.

What is to be understood as the meaning of, 'when there is nothing on earth that does not amaze the wise' is the understanding of the fact that things are dependent originations while at the same time they lack inherent existence. Thus from a non-inherently existent seed a non-inherently existent sprout is produced. They function to exist interdependently, as a dependent origination. Understanding and seeing that fact is most amazing for the wise. The recognition of the cause (the sense organs), the sense consciousness and the object coming together is not a cause of amazement for the wise, when much greater reasons for amazement are already in place.

1.2. Showing that emptiness of true existence is like magical illusions and so forth

> *The firebrand's ring and magical creations,* *325*
> *Dreams, illusions, and the moon in water,*
> *Mists, echoes, mirages, clouds*
> *And worldly existence are alike.*

As the commentary explains:

> Thus all dependently arising phenomena are like the ring formed by a firebrand which is whirled quickly.

We are all familiar with this effect. A fire or incense stick when whirled around very quickly looks like a firebrand and from a distance one sees it as a ring of fire, when in fact no ring of fire exists. This is the first of many analogies in the verse. Even though no ring of fire actually exists it is perceived as such by the eye and believed to be so. Using that analogy, though all phenomena do not have even an atom of inherent existence they appear as being inherently existent.

> Though the woman created through meditative stabilization and the dream body do not have true existence, they act as causes for erroneous attachment to the self.

'A woman created through meditative stabilization' is a literal translation of a woman who is basically a mere illusion. Although such a woman, or a woman who appears in a dream, does not actually exist, it will still be a cause for attachment to arise for someone who is attached to that form. This analogy is used to show that even though phenomena do not exist inherently, they appear to be inherently existent, and we engage with such objects in the belief that they are actually inherently existent.

We should personalise all of these analogies in our practice to affirm how all of our misconceptions arise from our own mind. For example with the analogy of the firebrand, even though we know theoretically that there is no firebrand, we see it and momentarily we believe in it. From a distance we might believe there is a ring of fire, however when we analyse and find out what is causing it, we realise that there is no firebrand, and it is just one spark of fire that is being turned quickly. To personalise that analogy one must remind oneself that even though things do not exist inherently, not even oneself, still one perceives oneself as being inherently existent and thus the grasping at the self and other phenomena arises because of that misconception.

Another point that is good for us to take note of is that just because something appears as existing in a particular way, and we perceive it that way, that does not negate the fact that the perception itself is valid conventionally. We have to say that the consciousness is still valid in perceiving the thing, even though the object itself does not exist in that way. In relation to the firebrand there is nothing wrong in the perception; it is not as though we have a faulty mind. It is a valid mind which perceives that ring of fire, and there is nothing wrong with our senses - anyone would perceive it as a firebrand. But the fact is that it does not actually exist in that way. There is no real firebrand and it is the same with all the other analogies - there are certain things that may not exist in the way that we perceive them. That is good to understand.

Knowing that something does not exist in the way that it appears conventionally would help to overcome our fear, wouldn't it? When things appear to be dark or spooky, if we remind ourselves that that what we are seeing appears like that, but it doesn't really exist in that way, then that helps us to overcome the fear of whatever seems to be threatening. Similarly that will be true with the real understanding of emptiness. Once we develop a genuine understanding of emptiness which leads to the realisation of emptiness, then strong attachment and all the other delusions can be overcome, and fear can actually be overcome with the genuine realisation of emptiness.

When objects of attachment appear to us, we might notice from our own experience that for as long as the attributes of the object appear attractive and we really believe in that, then to that extent our attachment to the object increases. But as soon as we remind ourselves that even though it appears very attractive and beautiful it does not really exist in that way, our attachment is reduced. Just going through that process of analysis helps to reduce the attachment to the object.

Likewise with an object of anger: for as long as we exaggerate the negative qualities of that object we seem to experience strong anger or hatred. Whereas if we remind ourselves that the negative aspects that appear to us do not really exist in that way, then we will notice that the anger reduces a bit. Our limited experience of how anger and attachment can be reduced through our analysis should be a good sound affirmation of how, if we were to actually realise emptiness, that realisation would serve as an antidote to completely uproot the delusions from their source.

> Although the illusory maiden conjured by a magician does not have true existence, she confuses the mind.

It is quite clear that even though things appear as being inherently existent, then just as an illusory maiden does not really exist so too things do not exist inherently.

> Similarly the moon in the water,

The analogy of a reflection of the moon on a lake or still water is vivid and it may appear to be the moon that we see in the sky but, as we know logically, it is not the moon. Likewise even though things appear to be inherently existent, in fact in reality they are not inherently existent.

> ...mists and echoes resounding from mountain clefts and caves give rise to a distorted perception of them as they appear to be. A mirage causes mistaken perception, and clouds in the distance seem like mountains. Worldly existence consisting of environments and living beings, while empty of inherent existence, is able to function. Understand that it is like these analogies.

What is being summarised here is that, as with all the earlier analogies, things do not exist in the way that they appear to the perceptions.

> Worldly existence consisting of environments and living beings,

The whole universe can be divided into the two categories of the environment and the living beings in the environment. So all existence, the environment i.e. those things used by living beings, as well as the living beings who live in the environment, are all equally empty of inherent existence:

> ...while empty of inherent existence, is able to function. Understand that it is like these analogies.

Like the analogies of things that do not exist and yet still appear to function, while the environment and living beings are empty of inherent existence and lack any true existence they still function. Then the commentary concludes:

> Understand that it is like these analogies.

Then the commentary quotes from the sutras. Although it is quite straightforward we will read through the verses.

> Sutra says:
>
> 1. In a young girl's dream she sees
> A youth arrive then die, and feels
> Happy when he arrives, unhappy when he dies.
> Understand all phenomena are like this.

The sutra can be understood quite literally. In a young girl's dream she sees a youth arrive. Even though there is no handsome young man, in her dream she believes that the young man arrives and then dies. She is happy when she sees the youth arriving but then feels very sad when he dies. All of these emotions occur yet they are just a dream. As in earlier examples the final line reminds us to 'Understand that all phenomena are like this'.

> 2. Those who conjure illusions create forms
> Of various kinds-horses, elephants and chariots.
> They are not at all as they appear.
> Understand all phenomena are like this.

This verse is using the analogy of a magician conjuring objects like elephants and horses and so forth. While they appear to be very real, they do not exist in reality, so one should understand that all phenomena are like that.

> 3. The reflection of the moon, shining
> In the sky appears in a clear pool,
> Yet the moon does not enter the water.
> Understand the nature of all phenomena is like this.

As explained in the verse when the reflection of the moon is seen on still, clear water, then it appears like the moon. However it is not as if the moon has travelled from the sky to enter the water, even though the moon appears vividly and clearly there. Thus one should understand that all phenomena are like that.

> 4. Echoes arise in dependence upon
> Caves, mountains, forts and river gorges.
> Understand all products are like this.
> Phenomena are all like illusions and mirages.

One can relate this analogy to how things do exist. Echoes arise in dependence upon caves and mountains, fords and gorges, so when an echo is produced it is in relation to either caves, the sides of caves or mountains and so forth. Likewise one understands all phenomena to be like this, existent merely in dependence upon causes and conditions.

> 5. A person who is tormented by thirst
> In summer at noon-that transmigrator
> Sees mirages as a body of water.
> Understand all phenomena are like this.

One could go into quite a lot of detail with this analogy. One of the conditions is a person tormented by thirst. It is noon on a hot, summer day. At such a time and in such conditions the transmigrator, or person, sees mirages of a body of water. Under those particular conditions they believe that there is water there. So using that analogy one could explain much more profoundly how we see things as being inherently existent under certain conditions. We won't go into detail but the main point is that one must understand that all phenomena are similar to this - even though they lack true existence they appear as being truly existent or inherently existent.

> 6. Although a mirage contains no water
> Confused beings want to drink it.
> Unreal water cannot be drunk.
> Understand all phenomena are like this.

Using this analogy in relation to ourselves, ordinary beings things do not exist inherently or truly by way of their own entity. They appear to us as being truly existent and we totally believe in that. We engage with objects and so forth with that false notion that they do truly exist or exist inherently. But unreal water cannot be drunk even though confused beings want to drink it. Likewise understand that all phenomena are like this for us ordinary beings - even though phenomena or objects do not exist inherently, that is how it appear to us and we totally believe in that appearance.

7. Instantaneously in a cloudless sky
A circle of clouds appears,
But try to find from where they came
Understand all phenomena are like this.

In a seemingly cloudless sky clouds can suddenly appear as if they had existed there all the time. In fact, earlier on there were no clouds, but when the clouds are there they appear to be very solid and realistic. The analogy as used here is that if you were to look for their causes and conditions you could not find where they came from. Yet they did appear there. Understanding this analogy we see that things appear as being truly existent, and really seem to be true and real. But if we were to look to see if they exist in that way, then we would find that they are not truly existent. One should understand all phenomena are like that.

Like mirages and smell-eaters' cities,
Like magical illusions and like dreams,
Objects of meditation are empty of a real entity.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsen Rinpoche is:

Thus in the illusory city of the three false worlds
Manipulated by the puppeteer of karmic action
The smell-eater maiden performs her illusory dance.
Amazing that desire should chase a mirage!

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the thirteenth chapter of the* Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, *showing how to meditate on the refutation of sense organs and objects.

This concludes the commentary on the thirteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on the refutation of sense organs and objects, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas.*

We will begin the next chapter in the next session.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 March 2008

As usual, let us begin by developing a positive motivation such as, in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

CHAPTER XIV REFUTING EXTREME CONCEPTIONS[1]

It is good to understand the meaning of the outline. In general, extreme conceptions refers to the two extremes of the nihilistic view and the view of eternalism. However in this heading particularly it refers to refuting the view of eternalism, which is viewing phenomena as being truly established, truly existent, existent by way of its own entity or existing by way of its own characteristics. The extreme view of nihilism is where one has the view that if things were to lack inherent existence or true existence, then things could not exist at all.

Here one must understand that refuting extreme conceptions does not mean refuting the existence of the prevalent wrong view itself, but rather it means refuting the mode of apprehension of that wrong view.

The two main subdivisions of the chapter are:
1. Presenting the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

This section is subdivided into four main categories:
1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence
1.2. Showing the cause for mistaking functional things as permanent and truly existent
1.3. Briefly showing the reasoning that establishes absence of true existence
1.4. Showing the need to understand absence of true existence

[1] In the overall structure of the text this is actually 3.2.2.1.2.5., but for the sake of clarity numbering starts anew with each chapter.
The text has four subdivisions:
1. Meaning of the title
2. Translator's prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion
Section 3 **Meaning of the text** has two subdivisions:
3.1 An overview of the text
3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters, which has two outlines:
3.2.1. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on illusory conventional truth
3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth, the first section of which is:
3.2.2.1 Extensively explaining ultimate truth, which in turn has three sub-headings:
3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena
3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena, to which this chapter belongs
3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence

Again, this heading is subdivided into two:
1.1.1. Brief exposition
1.1.2. Extensive explanation

1.1.1. Brief exposition

> *Question:* If, like the ring formed by a firebrand and so forth, worldly existence, because of being a dependent arising, does not exist inherently, what has inherent existence?

This question relates to the analogies that were given earlier, which showed that the lack of true existence, or inherent existence, is like a firebrand; even though there appears to be a firebrand it is actually an illusion that does not exist. Worldly existence is similar to that.

> *Answer:* Not the slightest thing has inherent existence.
>
> *If a thing did not depend* 326
> *On anything else at all*
> *It would be self-established,*
> *But such a thing exists nowhere.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Anything existing by way of its own entity would not rely on anything else at all, but not the least thing is independent or exists without relying on something else.

This explains that things do not exist by way of their own entity, but are interdependent.

> If anything existed inherently, independence would be established as its nature when examined by the reasoning which investigates the ultimate, yet this does not exist anywhere.

The commentary explains that there are many different types of reasonings that prove the lack of inherent existence. One of the supreme reasons establishing the lack of inherent existence is that because things are interdependent or dependent originations they cannot exist inherently, and it is this reasoning that is being established here.

> A mode of existence of phenomena not merely posited by nominal convention is known as independent existence, existence by way of their entity, existence by way of their character, inherent existence and true existence.

This is establishing the different terminologies that are used for the object of negation.

> This clearly indicates the object of negation through whose refutation there is no focus for conceptions of true existence.

What is being established here is that the object of apprehension of the misconception that perceives true existence, or independent existence, or inherent existence, does not exist as perceived.

> Since Candrakirti's commentary repeatedly mentions qualifying the object of negation when refuting fabrications of true existence, one should not deprecate the Madhyamika view.

When the object of negation is presented in the teachings, there are instances where it may appear that the actual existence of phenomena is being negated. But that is clearly not the case, as it is stated clearly in earlier and later parts of the text that the non-existence of any phenomena refers to the non-existence of inherent existence, or independent existence. So what is being negated is the inherent existence or the independent existence of phenomena, and not the

actual existence of phenomena. If this is not understood clearly then there is the danger of deprecating the Madhyamika system.

This is also clearly explained in other texts as well. For example, in the beginning of the *Heart Sutra*, it mentions that things are empty of inherent existence, and then goes on to state that there is no form, no sound and so forth. The qualifying object of negation (empty of inherent existence) is established earlier in the sutra, so one needs to understand that the actual meaning of no form etc., implies that there is no form existing inherently, or by way of its own characteristic.

This needs to be clearly understood not only in mere words, but with a deeper understanding of what the object of negation means. Otherwise when the object of negation is presented, there is the danger of developing a wrong view about the Madhyamika view. For example, there are some who feel that the Madhyamikas are extremists, because they negate existence altogether. If one does not have a deeper understanding of what is presented in the teachings then there is the danger that we, too, may develop the wrong view when the object of negation is presented, thinking that things are being presented as being entirely empty of existence. So, it is important to understand that what is being negated is not the actual existence of the particular object, or phenomena in general, but the inherent or true existence of any phenomenon.

Thus the object of negation should be clearly understood as presented in this text and other commentaries. The selflessness of any phenomenon is the negation of that phenomenon existing independently from its own side, i.e. by way of not having to rely on anything else for its existence. Selflessness is classified into two types—selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the object of negation one must first develop a clear understanding of what is being negated. If we were to take a vase or a pot, for example, try to imagine how the vase would exist if it were truly existent, or inherently existent. What would such an existence mean? When one investigates further into the possibility of it existing truly, or inherently, or independently, then one comes to understand that that would mean that the vase would have to exist from its own side—independently. This means that the pot does not have to rely on any other causes and conditions for its existence, and exists in its own right, from its own side, without depending on anything else. Through that investigation, one reasons whether a vase or any other phenomena could exist in that way in reality. One will then come to the correct conclusion and understanding, which is that nothing can exist independently from its own side.

1.1.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into four:
1.1.2.1. Refuting a truly existent composite by examining the four possibilities
1.1.2.2. Refuting truly existent components
1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining for singleness or plurality
1.1.2.4. Applying reasoning which negates the four possibilities in other cases

1.1.2.1. REFUTING A TRULY EXISTENT COMPOSITE BY EXAMINING THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES

This has two subdivisions:
1.1.2.1.1. Exposition
1.1.2.1.2. Explanation

1.1.2.1.1. EXPOSITION

If the composite known as "pot" exists by way of its own entity, are the visible form and the pot one or different?

"The form is a pot" they are not one. *327*
The pot that has form is not separate.
The pot does not have form,
Nor does the form have a pot.

The pot is a composite because, as explained earlier, it is a compilation of the eight substances. So 'if the pot itself were to exist by way of its own entity or inherently', then 'are the visible form and the pot one or different' i.e. separate?

If they are inherently one then:

> In the first case it follows that the form and the pot in the statement "The form is a pot" are not inherently one, otherwise there would be a pot wherever there was a visible form.

If the pot and its form were inherently one then the absurdity that would arise is that wherever there is form, there would have to also be pot. Thus the absurdity that arises would be that there would be a pot wherever form exists.

In order to refute that, this counter-statement is presented:

> One might think that the pot which is something distinct from visible form possessed form the way Devadatta possesses a cow, as something separate.

The counter argument that if the pot and form were to be inherently one, then wherever there is form there is a pot, cannot be accepted. It is an absurdity that obviously goes against reality. The pot is distinct from visible form and thus possesses form, just as in the example given: Devadatta possesses a cow and thus he and the cow are separate.

In order to refute this the commentary explains:

> However it follows that the pot which has form is not inherently separate from the form, otherwise it would be apprehensible independently of its form.

What is being established here in refutation of that counter statement is, if you say that the pot is inherently separate from the form, then it 'is not inherently separate from the form', because if it were to be separate from its form then it could be apprehended independently of its form. This means that you could apprehend the pot without its form but that also defies obvious reality. You cannot apprehend a pot without its form, thus pot and form could not be inherently separate.

If there were to be a pot that is inherently separate from form then that would mean that there is no correlation between pot and form whatsoever—they would be completely separate entities. If that were the case then you would have to be able to perceive a pot or vase without depending on the form.

As the commentary further explains:

> The pot does not have form as something apart which depends upon it, nor does the form have a pot dependent upon it, like a dish and its contents, because neither exists inherently.

If pot and form were to be inherently separate then the pot and its form could not be a base. Every object has the characteristics of being a base and something that is dependent or based upon it. A table serves as a base for the objects placed upon it, such as a plate and the contents of the plate. So if pot and form were to be inherently separate then one could not establish them as being the base and what is

dependent upon it. The reason that is given here is that this is because neither pot nor form exists inherently.

1.1.2.1.2. Explanation

This heading is subdivided into two:
1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians
1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians

Refuting other sectarians is also subdivided into two:
1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics
1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterized

1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics

This heading is has five subdivisions:
1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality
1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality

Vaisesika assertion: Though the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, existence and the pot are.

The Vaisheshikas assert that the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, but that existence and pot are different. So the Vaisesika have different ways of establishing different entities.

The pot is a substantial entity and is said to exist through its connection with the great generality "existence," which is something separate from it.

The pot is a substantial entity and it has a connection with what is called a great generality, asserted by the Vaisheshikas as being existence. Existence itself as a whole is referred to as the 'great generality', and it is separate from the pot.

Answer:

Since the two are seen to have dissimilar *328*
Characteristics, if the pot is separate
From existence, why would existence
Not also be separate from the pot?

Nine substances, as explained earlier, are established by the Vaisheshikas.[2] These are the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind.

As the commentary explains:

Existence and the pot are seen to have the dissimilar characteristics of a generality and of a specific. It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence,

Existence is called a generality whereas the pot is specific, so existence and the pot have the dissimilar characteristics of generality and specific. It is first established that generality and specific have dissimilar characteristics, and that existence is a generality whereas the pot is specific. So as the commentary explains, 'It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence':

…for if it were, why would existence not be a separate entity from the pot? It follows that it would be. If this is accepted, the pot is nonexistent.

In order to refute their assertion, what is being established is that if existence were to be a separate entity from the pot then the pot would cease to have any entity or existence, and so it would cease to be a thing. If the pot ceased to be a thing then the pot would be non-existent, as a pot could not exist if it ceases to be a thing.

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning
1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning

Assertion: The substantial entity, the pot, exists because it acts as a basis for attributes, such as one and two, which are distinct from it.

A substantial entity is a composite of the nine substances of the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind, and it is said the very fact that the pot is a composite of the nine substances establishes it as being an existence.

As with all other existence, there are many attributes to the substances that make up a pot. For example the attributes of the four elements are said to be taste, form, smell and touch, whereas sound is said to be the attributes of space. Then there are the many attributes of the self such as different emotions and mental states like anger, pride and so forth. According to the Vaisheshikas there are six different attributes of the self which you can look up[3]. The attributes of each substance are said to be distinct from the actual entity, such as a pot.

Answer: "Attribute" and "substantial entity" are different words and have different meanings.

The attributes mentioned earlier in the above assertion are numerate attributes, such 'one' or 'two'. That which is able to differentiate between one and two pots and so forth is an attribute of a pot. So attribute and substantial entity are different words and have different meanings. That is what is being established.

If one is not accepted as the pot *329ab*
The pot also is not one.

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines thus:

If the number one is not accepted as the pot, the pot is not one either because, like two and so forth, these are different words and have different meanings. If this is accepted, the term and thought "one" do not validly apply to the pot.

Basically this is establishing that 'one' and 'two' and so forth have completely different meanings.

Assertion: The pot is one by virtue of possessing the attribute one, but one is not the pot.

The main assertion here is that what is being refuted is that 'one', which is an attribute of vase, could not be entirely inherently one with the vase. If, for example, the number one, or the sound one, or the meaning 'one', was inherently one with the vase then vase and 'one' would have to be exactly the same, meaning that when you said 'one' you would have to understand that it meant vase and when you said vase it would immediately imply that you are speaking about 'one'. However we can see that there is obviously a difference, even in the very pronunciation of the words 'one' and 'vase'. They are obviously distinct even in their sound. That in itself shows that there is a distinction. Besides there

[2] See, for example, 17 July 2007.
[3] See 18 May 2004.

is the distinction in the meaning in that 'one' refers to a particular number of something, whereas vase has another meaning. In refuting the Vaisheshika opponents, what is being established is that if 'one' and vase were to be inherently one and not distinct then they would have to be the same in every aspect; the very utterance of vase and 'one' would have to have the same meaning and so forth. But there are obvious differences between the two.

The commentary gives this answer to the above assertion:

Answer:

Moreover possession is not reciprocal, 329cd
Therefore also it is not one.

And goes on to explain:

Possession occurs between two similar things, as in the case of consciousness, and not between dissimilar things. Moreover there is no reciprocal possession between the pot and one, since the pot possesses one, but one does not possess the pot. The pot is also not one because of being a separate entity from one.

What is being established here is that the pot and 'one' could not be inherently one and the same. The pot is also not one, because it is a separate entity from one.

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

The establishing statement is:

Furthermore, your contention that attributes qualify substantial entities but that one attribute does not qualify another is contradictory.

If the form is the size of the substance, 330
Why is the form not large?

As the commentary explains:

If the size of the substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, why is the attribute form not large just as the substantial entity is large?

If the size of a substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, then the absurdity that will be obvious to us is that there are, of course, different pots, which naturally implies that pots have different sizes and shapes and so forth, i.e. there are different attributes to the pots. What is being argued here is that the size of substantiality of the pot and the size of the form is the same, which is an absurdity. Therefore:

One must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large."

If the substantial entity, which is the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, i.e. if the substantial entity and its attributes are the same, then, as explained here 'one must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large".'

Basically this is establishing that the fault that would arise is that one would have to 'accept that form has a separate attribute "large"', which means that if the attributes themselves also have attributes, then second attributes have to be established to the first attributes. Then that would mean that there would be no end to subsequent attributes, which would be a fault. To further explain, if form itself is an attribute of vase, and if you say that form itself would have to have attributes such as large, small or big and so forth, then one has to establish further attributes to attributes.

The absurdity pointed out to the opponent is that if one has to establish second attributes to the attributes then that is contrary to your own assertions.

Objection: Small and large cannot qualify form, for according to our textual system, one attribute does not qualify another.

The Vaisheshika opponents say, 'According to our textual system we cannot establish that', and:

If the opponent were not different 330cd
Scriptural sources could be cited.

To that the answer is:

If your opponents were not from a school other than your own, you could cite your textual system to fault their argument, but it is inappropriate here, since we are engaged in rejecting these very tenets.

The Vaisheshikas cite their own scriptures to establish what they believe. What our own system is saying is, 'Such a practice is inappropriate here, because you are refuting our system. If you were presenting this to those who follow your system then that would be fine, but it is inappropriate to cite your scriptures to us, as these are the very tenets that we are rejecting. Rather you must either use logical reasons or conventional realities and terms to refute us'.

1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterised

Assertion: Even if distinct attributes like separateness are refuted, the pot which they characterize is not refuted and thus exists by way of its own entity.

Answer:

By virtue of its characteristic 331
The characterized does not exist.
Such a thing has no existence
As something different from number and so forth.

The attributes such as separateness and so forth were clearly refuted earlier, but the pot that the attributes characterise has not yet been specifically refuted as being inherently existent. Thus they come up with the doubt that maybe the pot exists by way of its own entity.

As the commentary explains:

If one contends that existence and so forth have the characteristic of accompanying things while the pot has the opposite characteristic, then by virtue of this opposite characteristic, the pot it characterizes does not exist anywhere by way of its own entity. Such a thing, distinct from numbers like one, two and so forth, has no existence as pot established by way of its own entity. In brief, something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found.

The conclusion that is presented here is that, 'something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found'. This means that both the object which is characterised, and the characteristics of that object such as the attributes, equally lack inherent existence, or existence by way of its own entity.

Having completed refuting other sectarians, we will continue with refuting our own sectarians in our next session.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 March 2008

As usual, sitting in a comfortable and appropriate position one sets one's motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and practise it well.'

One must understand the meaning behind the words, 'having listened to the teachings, I will practise it well'. The connotation of these words is that practice or meditation has to be preceded by contemplation or analysis, which in turn has to be preceded by hearing the teachings. That should be a reminder of the intricate process of first listening to the teachings, which are then analysed and finally put into practice.

1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

It is good to remember that the essential point in this chapter is contained in the first verse. It is good to keep the meaning of that verse in mind and contemplate it again and again, as it actually summarises the very profound meaning of the entire text.

This section of the chapter has two sub-divisions:
1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit
1.1.2.1.2.2.2. Briefly refuting that though there are many components, the composite is a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit

It is useful to remind ourselves of the essential points of the headings themselves. When this heading says 'Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit', it is good to ask, 'What does that mean?'. If things were truly existent, how would they exist? This brings to mind what the actual object of refutation is.

This section has five sub-divisions:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference, where difference also refers to being one or separate
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference

The ideas in this section were also covered in earlier sections.

> *Sautrantika assertion:* The pot and its eight substantial particles are one truly existent entity.
>
> *Because the pot is not separate* *332ab*
> *From its characteristics, it is not one.*

The assertion of the Sautrantika is that that the pot and its eight substantial particles are one, and are a truly existent entity.

A pot or vase is an entity that is an accumulation of the eight substantial particles. As mentioned previously, these are the four elements along with form, smell, taste and touch, which are tangible, and the accumulation of these eight substantial particles is what makes up a vase or pot. The refutation of partless particles was mentioned earlier in the text[1]. Our own system accepts that a vase is an entity that is made up of the eight substantial particles. What the Sautrantika assertion is basically saying is that the eight substantial particles that make up a vase or pot, as well as the pot itself, are truly existent; that is what is being refuted in this section.

The refutation is presented in the first two lines of the verse, and explained thus in the commentary:

> It follows that the pot would not be a truly single unit, because it is, by way of its own entity, one with and not separate from its eight substantial particles which have diverse characteristics.

What is being refuted is that the pot is a truly existent single unit. If that were to be the case, then the text implies that the pot could not be a truly existent single unit, because it is made up of eight different substantial particles, each of which has diverse characteristics. That in itself shows the falsity of a vase or pot being a single independent unit.

Even though it is not explicitly mentioned here in the commentary, what is implied from earlier and later refutations of this point is that since both the Sautrantika and the Prasangika accept that the vase is an entity that is made up of eight substantial particles, then what the Prasangika are refuting is that the pot is a truly existent single entity or unit. If the pot were to be a single entity, or a single unit, then either there would have to be eight pots, because there are eight diverse substantial particles that make up the pot, or all of those eight particles would have to be one and the same, not having diverse characteristics. Both of these options are absurdities. That is what is implied in the refutation presented here.

> *If there is not a pot for each,* *332cd*
> *Plurality is not feasible.*

If it is stated that the pot is a plurality, meaning that there are many pots, because there are many separate characteristics of the particles that make up the pot, then, as the commentary suggests, there should be a pot for each of the eight substantial particles. Since there is no pot for each, it is not feasible to describe the pot as a plurality.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents

This is sub-divided into two:
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation
1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation

> *Assertion:* The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

This heading explains how the vase itself is referred to as a composite, while the eight particles are the components that make up the entity to become a vase. Thus the components (like branches of a tree) are the different characteristics of different particles that make up the composite vase. Thus that what we call a vase is, in reality, a composite that is made up of its constituents or components, which are the eight particles.

[1] See Chapter 9, specifically the teachings of 7 and 14 August 2007

Assertion: The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

What is being further asserted is that the pot is a single unit. Even though it has eight substantial particles, those eight substantial particles come together to make a single unit.

The tangible and the intangible *333*
Cannot be said to coalesce.
Thus it is in no way feasible
For these forms to coalesce.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> The pot's composite can in no way be a truly existent single unit due to the coalescence of the eight substantial particles such as visible form and so forth, because the four elements which are tangible, and visible form, smell and so forth which are intangible cannot touch and coalesce.

This is not refuting that the eight substantial particles are the constituents that make up the composite. Rather, what is being refuted is the pot's composite as being a truly existent single unit. The refutation explains that if you assert that the coalescence of the eight particles makes a single unit, then the assertion that the eight particles coalesce is, in itself, not feasible. This is because within the eight substantial particles, the four elements of water, fire, air and earth are tangible because we can touch and feel them, whereas the remaining four substances of form, smell, taste and touch are intangible. For example smell, taste and touch itself is not tangible, as we cannot feel it through our sensation of touch. Thus it is not feasible for tangible and intangible substances to be united into the one single entity or unit. That is how the assertion is refuted.

One should understand from the verse and the explanation given in the commentary that what is being refuted is that a composite is a truly existent single unit. What it seems to imply is that, as it says here, there cannot be a complete coalescence of the eight substances in itself. That is because you would have to be able to establish there being a single truly existent unit, which there isn't.

Here we can also refer to the analogies and examples that are given in other texts such as the *Madhyamikavatara* or the *Middle Way* text where there are seven refutations of such an interdependent, inherently existent composite such as a chariot[2]. Other schools consider a chariot as independently or inherently existent, since when its parts are put together they make up a cart or a chariot. This implies to them that it is an inherently existent chariot that you can find. That is refuted in the *Madhyamikavatara*. The same sort of refutation is presented here, which is that the parts of the composite (here, the pot) come together, implying the existence of an inherently existent, or as specifically mentioned here, a truly existent unit, or single unit, or entity. That is not feasible.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

Assertion: Even though there is no mutual contact, their combination is the "truly existent" pot.

This is related to the earlier refutation that it is not possible for the tangible and intangible to touch and thus coalesce, and form a single unit.

Form is a component of the pot *334*
And thus, for a start, is not the pot.
Since the compound does not exist,
Neither do the components.

In other words this is saying 'I agree that they cannot touch, but not being in mutual contact does not negate substantial particles coming together to form a truly existent pot'.

The first half of the verse is a refutation of this assertion. As the text explains:

> The pot's visible form is a component or part of the pot and thus, for a start, is not the pot, just as smell and so forth are not.

What is mutually accepted is that there are components that make up the pot, and that visible form is one of the components of the pot. Thus to assert that the components coming together in combination forms a truly existent pot, implies that each of the components are also truly existent components that make up a truly existent pot. What this further implies is that the components that make up the pot would have to be a pot as they are truly existent, and one with the pot. However the component form, for example, is not a pot to begin with, just like smell and so forth. In other words each of the components is not a pot, so you cannot assert that their combination forms a unity of a pot.

A further assertion is that since a compound reliant upon its components exists, then that is the pot. The second half of the verse is the refutation of this assertion, and is explained in the commentary thus:

> Since visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. The components, too, therefore do not exist by way of their own entity, because they have parts.

What they are asserting is that a compound is reliant upon its components, which in this case is called a pot, and that pot, they assert, is a truly existent pot. The refutation is that as visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. What is being presented is that as each of the components is not a pot, therefore the compound pot itself does not exist by way of its own entity. Similarly the components too, have to rely on other components. So they do not exist by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. That is how the refutation to the assertion is made.

To understand this refutation, one must take it a little further, with an understanding of how it is presented in other teachings. What is being refuted is a truly existent pot that consists of components called substantial particles. It is the accumulation of substantial particles that make up a unity to form the pot, which they say is truly existent.

What one should understand as the implication of the refutation made here is that if the coming together of the components establishes a truly existent pot, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot either in the composite or in its components, which are the eight substantial particles. If you were to search in either of the eight particles, you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot within each of the particles, which include form. What is being explained here is that form is not a pot. But if a pot was truly existent, then since form is a component of the pot then you would have to find a truly existent pot in the form.

This same reasoning and logic is used again when one refers to other teachings and other instances such as the self. What we call the self is the accumulation of the five aggregates. If the self were to be a truly existent self, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent self either in the composite of the five aggregates, the 'I', or in the components which are the individual aggregates. Thus with analytical and logical

[2] There are seven refutations in the teaching of 13 July 2004.

reasoning one asks, 'Does a truly existent self exist in the form aggregate, or the feeling aggregate, and so forth?' When you exhaust the possibility of finding a truly existent self either in the accumulation of the five aggregates or in the individual aggregates, then that exhausts all possibilities of there being a truly existent self. That is how a truly existent self is refuted. The same line of logic and reasoning is used here in refuting a pot as being a truly existent pot.

Thus the refutation in the commentary is that just as the component (the pot itself) is not truly existent, i.e. does not exist by way of its own entity, the components too do not exist by way of their own entity, and the reason given is because they have parts. One must understand how the logical reasoning is used here. If there were to be a truly existent pot then that would mean that the pot would have to exist without depending on any other factors, constituents, or components for its existence. It would have to be an entity that exists from its own side inherently, without depending on any other factors. So a pot cannot be truly existent because it has parts, or constituents, which in itself is very logical. Similarly the constituents such as the four elements, along with form, smell and so forth, in themselves cannot be truly existent or existent by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. So what is being established is, anything that has parts cannot be truly existent and independent because it is dependent on other factors for its existence.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

This means that if the pot has true existence then the consequence would be that everything is a pot, as all of the substantial particles would have to be a pot as well.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

This refers to the consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot would have to be one if the composite were truly existent.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

> Why are some things that have form pots, and other things that have form not pots?

This is a hypothetical question referring to the consequences if there were to be a truly existent pot.

Answer:

If the definition of form *335*
Applies without incongruity
To all forms, for what reason
Is one a pot and not all others?

The initial question is explained by the commentary as:

> It follows that all should equally be pots [referring to all that has form], for if the definition that (form is simply that which is appropriate as form) applies without any incongruity to all forms such as smell, taste and so forth as well as pots and woollen cloth, truly existent things with form should be the same in all respects.

Even though this seems a little bit ambiguous, this is again refuting that there is a truly existent pot. The manner of refuting it in this instance is by showing the absurd consequence that would occur if a pot were to be truly existent. What is being implied here is that if there is a truly existent pot then the components of the pot would also truly existent, which would mean that the component form, would be truly existent. Now, if form, which is a component of the pot, were to be truly existent then the truly existent form and the truly existent pot would have to be one and the same—they would be indistinguishable. As mentioned here in the commentary, the definition of form is that which is appropriate as form, and that definition of form applies to everything else that has the substance of form, such as the pot itself, woollen cloth and so forth. Since all other substances also have form as one of their components, then it form were to be indistinguishable from a pot, the absurd consequence would be that everything else that has the component of form would also be a pot.

It is commonly accepted that all substantially existent phenomena are made up of their components, in particular the eight substantial categories. Thus, for example, a pot is made up of the eight substantial constituents or components, one of which is form. However the constituents that make up the composite pot are not truly existent constituents of the composite. If they were to be truly existent then the absurdity is that because the attribute or constituent form is inherently or truly one with the pot, then there would have to be a pot wherever there is form.

Another example, is a pillar, which is also made up of its own unique eight substantial particles, however that doesn't mean that they are truly existent. Just as a pot is comprised of its own unique or uncommon eight substantial particles, so too a pillar is composed of its own uncommon eight substantial particles. However the uncommon substantial particles are not inherently one with their composite. Thus the absurd consequence is that if the composite is inherently one, then the components will naturally have to be inherently or truly one with composite as well.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

If you assert that form is distinct from *336*
Taste and so forth but not from the pot,
How can that which does not exist
Without these not be distinct from form?

Again, what needs to be understood here is if the eight substances were to be inherently existent or inherently one with the pot, then the substances would have to be the same entity as the pot. Other texts explain that there are certain things which are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they have to be one. For example, products and impermanence are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one and the same entity. They have the same nature, but they are not one. Generally, when the texts say that two things have the same nature, it doesn't imply that they have to be one and the same entity. Here, the assertion is that the composite is truly existent, so if the composite is truly existent then the constituents have to also be truly existent. If that was the case then pot and its constituents would have to be one and the same entity. That is the absurd consequence presented here—that the constituents of the pot and the pot itself are actually one entity.

If two things were to be inherently one, then that would mean that they would have to be independently one, as being inherently one means that they do not depend on any other factors. Being one from its own side would imply that they are completely indistinguishable, i.e. one and the same in every aspect. They would not be separable at all because of being one entity. That's how it would have to be if it were

to be truly existent, existent by way of its own entity, or inherently existent. The absurd consequence of this is mentioned here:

> It follows that form, smell and so forth would also be one, because of being one with the pot.
>
> *Objection:* Form, smell and so forth are different.

The very fact that the sound 'form' and 'smell' are different indicates that they are different. Form, smell, taste and so forth have different terms, which also shows that there is a difference, and that they are not inherently one.

Furthermore, they also have specific and different functions. Form is perceived by visual consciousness, while smell is perceived by the nose consciousness and so forth. Thus they are perceived and experienced in different ways. That also indicates the difference between the substances. If they were to be one with the pot, then the substances would also have to be completely one and exactly the same; being one entity with the pot would imply that they are not different from one another. To return to the earlier example of products and impermanence: they are of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one. One is called impermanence, and the other is called product and so forth. So being of one nature doesn't necessarily mean that they are one and entirely the same in every aspect. The fact that the very term is different indicates that they are different. There are many different ways of differentiating between the different characteristics, and if they were to be truly one or inherently one, then they would have to be one in every aspect, which is absurd.

Then the explanation presented in the commentary is:

> You assert that smell, taste, and so forth are distinct from visible form because they are objects apprehended by different senses, but that visible form is not distinct from the pot. Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form? it follows that it should be, because the pot is different from form, smell and so forth by way of its own entity.

This is presenting the absurd consequence of their assertion. You assert that smell, taste and so forth are distinct from visible form because their objects are distinguished by different senses. The implication that was presented earlier is that visible form is not distinct from the pot. If visible form, which is an attribute or a constituent of the pot, is not distinct from the pot, then that would imply that the other constituents would also have to be the same.

> Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form?

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

The pot has no causes *337*
And is itself not an effect.
Thus there is no pot at all
Apart from form and so forth.

This is something that we have covered in earlier sections[3] as well as in other texts and other explanations, so it should be quite straightforward. As the commentary explains:

> Since form and so forth are not the pot's causes by way of their own entity, the pot is not an effect existent by way of its own entity.

Refuting the cause as being truly existent implies that the effect also lacks true existence.

> Thus there is nowhere a pot that exists by way of its own entity apart from its components like visible form and so forth.

Because of the reasons given earlier, there is no possibility of a pot existing by way of its own entity, not relating to its components. A pot cannot exist by way of its own entity and separate from its components, like visible form and so forth.

Since a pot cannot be isolated from its components, a pot that is a different entity from them does not exist. That is how a truly existent pot or a pot that exists by way of its own entity is negated.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

> *Assertion:* The pot is the effect of its components, such as clay, and they are its causes.

This assertion is, of course, is accepted by our own system as a general statement.

> *Answer:*
>
> *If the pot exists by virtue of its causes* *338*
> *And those causes by virtue of others,*
> *How can that which does not exist*
> *By virtue of itself produce something disparate?*

The commentary presents the meaning of the verse thus:

> If the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes exist by virtue of other causes, [which is accepted in our own system, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity [implying that because the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes also exist by virtue of other causes, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity produce a disparate effect?

What is being established here is that that what is produced from causes and conditions cannot be an independent, truly existent entity. Thus:

> Anything, therefore, that needs to rely on causes does not exist by way of its own entity. If it existed by way of its own entity, it follows that it would be causeless.

As the commentary explains:

> This reasoning which refutes the existence of a pot by way of its own entity should be applied to all effects [meaning all other products].

What one should understand here is that even though both sides accept that a pot is produced by causes, the difference lies in the interpretation of that. For the Sautrantika it means that because a pot is produced by causes, it is truly existent. Whereas for the Prasangika, the very fact that it is produced by causes serves as a reason for it to be not truly existent. Because it is dependent on other causes and conditions it cannot be truly existent, and by implication it cannot be inherently existent.

Following the normal tradition of our Study Group classes, you would be aware that our next session is the discussion session, and the following week will be the exam. That of course should not imply that you need not come to those sessions. As I don't come to the discussion, I am not fully aware of how many attend the discussion sessions, but I do come to the exam session, and I noticed last year that the attendance at the exam is much less than at the normal

[3] See, for example, 17 July 2007.

teaching sessions. So I would like to request that as those who come to these Study Group sessions are dedicated students, meaning that you want to study from your own side and thus you have committed yourselves to do the study, then coming to the exam is part of the study program. So taking it as a personal responsibility, it would be in one's best interest to come to the discussion, which will further enhance one's understanding of the teachings, while doing the exam is a way to help to formulate one's understanding by recapitulation and so forth. Thus my request is not to be lax about this, and to take it upon yourselves as a responsibility to come to the discussion and exam sessions as well.

Unlike any other discussion, the Study Group discussion is about the topics in the text, which are all topics about how to gain an understanding of emptiness. The mere formulation of a doubt about emptiness is said to be incredibly meritorious. A mere doubt about emptiness, and any attempt to try to remove doubts and to further enhance one's understanding of emptiness, is said to be incredibly powerful in purifying one's negative karma and accumulating merit.

It is said that any time and energy we spend in enhancing our understanding of emptiness is incredibly meritorious and powerful. Every attempt we make to enhance our understanding by raising questions and doubts, and trying to clear away those questions and doubts establishes a very strong imprint of that in our mind. That is the relevance of doing reading in general, and discussions on the teachings.

Just as the teaching is relevant, likewise the discussions and the exams and any attempt to enhance one's understanding are all relevant. One must understand that that is as much as we can do in our present capacity and circumstances. For us ordinary beings to be able to try to really develop renunciation, let alone understand emptiness and bodhicitta, is incredibly difficult. For it to occur in this lifetime is a mere possibility, and for it to actually happen is very, very difficult.

Without developing renunciation it is said that gaining an understanding of emptiness is quite impossible, and without an understanding of emptiness, it is also very difficult to develop bodhicitta, and vice versa. Bodhicitta and emptiness go hand in hand, and without the basis of renunciation, they are very difficult to obtain. But what *is* possible is to gain an understanding and leave an imprint on our mind. That is something that we have the capacity to do. It is within our capacity to leave as many imprints on our mind as possible, by receiving the teachings, doing the discussion and so forth. That is the relevance of the time that we spend together in the teaching itself, and also the discussions and so forth.

As mentioned in sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, reading, contemplating, and expounding even one word on emptiness is so incredibly meritorious that it cannot be really measured. As many of you would be voluntarily reading the sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, you would be aware of that. If we take advice at face value, then we can see the relevance of spending any time and energy in furthering our understanding on emptiness.

As further mentioned in the sutras, either reading, understanding, or propounding even a mere stanza on emptiness, not only purifies very heavy negative karmas that one has created from the past, but also becomes a cause to accumulate a sense of great merit that becomes a cause for one's enlightenment.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Sitting in a comfortable position, you can generate a positive motivation in your mind such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.2.1.2.2.2. Briefly refuting that though there are many components, the composite is a truly existent single unit

Assertion: Though it has many components, the pot is a truly existent single unit.

As clearly explained in the outline itself, what is being refuted is that when many components come together they form an inherently single unit.

Answer:

Though they meet and come together *339*
Form cannot be smell.
Therefore like the pot
The composite cannot be one.

As explained previously, both sides accept that the pot is a composite that is made up of the eight substances. What is being asserted is that when these eight substances come together they form a truly existent single unit. To explain the meaning of the verse the commentary says:

> Though visible form, smell and so forth meet and combine, form cannot be smell, for the things that create the composite do not give up their different characteristics.

When different components such as form and smell and so forth come together to make a composite, such as a pot, each component retains its particular characteristics. That which is to be perceived by the eye consciousness is form, that which is perceived by the nose consciousness is smell, and that which is perceived by the tongue consciousness is taste and so on. Each of the substances has its own characteristics, which remain as separate characteristics even when they combine to make a composite such as a pot.

Thus, the absurdity that is being pointed out here is that if the composite, the pot, is inherently existent, or truly existent, then all the components that make up the composite would also, by default, have to be truly or inherently existent. The pot would have to be one with its components and all of the components would have to be inherently one with each other. That means that they would have to combine and become a single unit with undifferentiated characteristics, which is an absurdity.

> Though form, smell and so forth combine they do not have one nature. Thus just as the pot as a truly existent single unit was refuted by the words [in stanza 332],
>
> > Because the pot is not separate from
> > Its characteristics, it is not one,
>
> the composite too cannot be a truly existent single unit.

Even though the components, the eight substances, do combine to make a unit or composite, which is the pot, they do not become one in nature. As explained earlier, this is because their particular characteristics remain. If you assert an inherently existent pot or truly existent pot, then the absurdity is that by default everything that is related to the pot would also have to be truly existent or inherently existent, and thus they would have to become one in nature. Just as the components were refuted as being truly existent earlier, so too, the composite cannot be truly existent.

How one should understand the conclusion to be asserted from one's own side is that while the pot or the vase is a single unit, it is not a truly existent single unit. If the pot were to be truly existent single unit, then the eight substances that make up the pot would also have to be truly existent. Then the pot would have to be one with the components, which, because they are truly existent, would have to be one with each other. Being a truly existent one or a single unit with all the other components means that the composite and components would lose their individual characteristics. And that is an absurdity, as the eight substances each have their own particular characteristics and do not combine to become one. Likewise when the components combine to make a pot they do not combine to make a pot that is an inherently existent single unit; rather they combine to make just a pot.

As mentioned previously in the text, if the pot were to be an inherently or truly existent single unit or one, then it would have to exist independently without relying on any other factors or components. That point also has to be understood in this context as well.

As one analyses the content here one should bring to mind immediately earlier explanations that gave reasons as to why the pot or the vase is not a truly existent, or an inherently existent one, or a single unit. The reason, as mentioned previously, is because it is a dependent origination. If a pot were to be an inherently or truly existent single unit then that implies that the pot would have to exist independently of all its components, i.e. it would have to exist without depending on, or relating to its components. That would be absurd because the pot is a dependent origination.

Thus one must understand that the vase or pot cannot exist independently, or cannot exist from its own side, because its existence depends on its components. It cannot exist otherwise. Because it depends on its components to come into existence it cannot exist from its own side.

1.1.2.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT COMPONENTS

This has four subdivisions:
1.1.2.2.1. Just as a composite does not exist truly apart from visible form, smell and so forth, there are no truly existent elemental derivatives that do not rely on the elements
1.1.2.2.2. Refuting truly existent elements
1.1.2.2.3. Refuting the rejoinder
1.1.2.2.4. Refuting a fire particle as truly existent fire

1.1.2.2.1. JUST AS A COMPOSITE DOES NOT EXIST TRULY APART FROM VISIBLE FORM, SMELL AND SO FORTH, THERE ARE NO TRULY EXISTENT ELEMENTAL DERIVATIVES THAT DO NOT RELY ON THE ELEMENTS

Just as the pot does not exist *340*
Apart from form and so forth,
Likewise form does not exist
Apart from air and so forth.

> Just as the previously explained reasoning shows that there is no truly existent pot apart from form, smell and so forth, there is no truly existent component visible form apart from the great elements such as air, for it is imputed in dependence upon these.

Basically what is being explained here follows on from the earlier refutation of a truly existent pot on the grounds that there are no truly existent components. Using the same logical reasoning, if there is no truly existent composite then that by default, also proves that there are no truly existent components. So on the one hand, showing that there are no truly existent components proves that there is no truly existent composite. While on the other hand there is no truly existent composite, so there cannot be truly existent components.

The phrase 'for it is imputed in dependence upon these' means that a composite has to be established in dependence upon its components—without its components a composite cannot be established. Likewise components depend on a composite because if there is no composite one cannot talk about its components. That logical conclusion applies to both the composite as well as its components. In other words, it should be understood that in refuting a truly existent composite, then by default the same logic is applicable to its components. Just as there is no truly existent composite, so there cannot be truly existent components. Likewise in establishing that there are no truly existent components then by default one should understand that there is no truly existent composite.

To explain it a little bit further, if the components were to be truly existent then that implies that the components do not depend on a composite. In and of themselves they would have to exist independently of the composite, and could not depend on the composite. But the reality is that the very fact that something is posited as a composite means that it is dependent upon its components. The establishment of component means that it is related, or dependent upon, a composite. Likewise establishing a composite means that it has to depend on its components. Both the composite and its components are dependent originations and so cannot be truly existent. One can relate this line of reasoning to understand all other phenomena.

1.1.2.2.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT ELEMENTS

> Just as visible form, smell and the like cannot exist without air and so forth, the great elements too do not exist by way of their own entity without relying on each other. Thus fire is that which burns and the other three elements that which is burnt.

This is the same line of reasoning that was explained earlier. Visible form, smell and so forth are that which comes from the four elements. That which derives from the elements cannot exist without the elements, so the elements themselves are dependent on each other. Here the relationship between the four elements is related to the example of fire as that which burns, and the remaining elements as that which will burn as a cause, in dependence on the fire.

> *That which is hot is fire but how* *341*
> *Can that burn which is not hot?*
> *Thus so-called fuel does not exist,*
> *And without it fire too does not.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Fire burns only fuel whose nature is the other three elements, yet hot fuel is fire and no longer fuel to be burnt. If it is not hot, since it is unrelated to fire how will it burn?

What is being explained here is the interdependence of fire and the other elements. The definition of fire is that which is hot and burns. However in order for fire to burn there has to be fuel, for without fuel there could not be fire that is hot and burning. The fuel is a combination of the other three elements. So none of the four elements in general, and in particular the fire element, exists inherently or independently. If fire were to exist independently or inherently then it would have to have the nature of hot and burning without having to depend on the fuel, which is the composite of the other elements. Obviously there could not be fire without fuel, so fire clearly depends on fuel, or the other elements, in order to have the nature of hot and burning. Thus fire cannot exist independently or inherently from its own side.

> Thus fuel independent of fire does not exist by way of its own entity and because of this, fire independent of fuel does not exist by way of its own entity either.

In summary what is being explained is the interdependence between fuel and fire. In order for fuel to be perceived as fuel, i.e. to function as fuel, it has to depend on fire. If fuel were to function as fuel without depending on fire then there would have to be independently or inherently existent fuel without any fire. If the fuel did not depend on fire it would burn by itself without a fire having to be lit. Clearly, however, in order for fuel to be called fuel it has to depend on fire so that it does become fuel. Likewise fire itself has to depend on fuel for it to burn, for without fuel there could be no fire and would not burn. Thus one should come to the clear conclusion that fuel and fire are dependent on each other, and thus that they are co-existent, and do not exist independently from their own side.

If you treat the analysis of the material presented here as an intellectual game of mere words, then it may seem quite shallow, and you will not gain the understanding of the real meaning behind it. Even by just hearing the words, 'fire does not exist from its own side independently', and 'fuel does not exist independently from its own side', one should be able to understand that this is a presentation of the emptiness of fire and fuel.

Likewise, hearing that 'fire depends on fuel to be in the nature of hot and burning', and that 'fuel depends on fire for it to be called fuel', one should then be able to understand the profound meaning of interdependent origination. If, in the explanation of this, one can derive the subtle meaning of emptiness and interdependent origination, then one has made the analysis and study of this text worthwhile. By slowly referring to this analysis and the presentations here, one further strengthens one's understanding of emptiness and interdependent origination, which will be incredibly beneficial.

One should use the meaning of these verses to benefit one's practice of both analytical and contemplative meditation. In relation to the example used here, analytical meditation is the process of analysing how fire is not inherently existent, and by analysing further, reasoning what it would mean if fire were to be independently or inherently existent from its own side. It means that fire would have to exist as the nature of being hot and burning without depending on anything else, which means without depending on fuel. So, one contemplates whether fire can exist in that way. Can fire exist without depending on fuel for it to burn?

When through such analysis one comes to the profound conclusion that it would be absurd for fire to exist independently and inherently, and then one places one's mind on that conviction, and remains focussed on that for some time, then that is contemplative meditation on emptiness.

It is instructed in the teachings that it is initially much more important to use analytical meditation, analysing and further analysing, and then to use contemplative meditation later on. Do not spend too much time on contemplative meditation in the beginning, because you will not be able to come to the right conclusions. It would be very hard to really progress very far just by sitting rigidly, without much analysis or understanding of what emptiness and dependent origination means, and assuming that one is meditating on emptiness. That sort of meditation on emptiness will not take you very far!

With respect to discerning the emptiness of phenomena, the instruction is that one should not come to the immediate conclusion that things lack inherent existence too soon. Otherwise there would be the fault of simply thinking, 'Oh yes things lack inherent existence, and they don't truly exist', and just leave it as an intellectual understanding. Then one may not really exert oneself to reach more profound understandings, thinking 'Oh yes, yes', and taking the above statement for granted, just on faith, and not really go beyond that. The instruction in the teachings, particularly the teachings on emptiness, is that if one comes to a conclusion too soon in one's thinking about emptiness, then that will be a fault.

However one should not prolong the confirmation that things lack inherent existence for too long either. If one leaves it for too long then one may never come to the conclusion and be in an extreme state all the time. There is a danger of not really reaching the profound conclusion that things lack inherent existence if one does not actually make an attempt to come to that conclusion. So there needs to be the right balance in coming to the conclusion that phenomena lack inherent existence—it should not be reached too soon, nor left for too long either.

Furthermore it needs to be understood that analytical meditation is in fact meditation, in that it is keeping one's mind focused on an object. One may be analysing the nature of things within a certain context, so one is focusing on the particular object and analysing it. Insofar as one's mind is focused on the object it is meditation. However it is not what we call contemplative meditation, because contemplative meditation or single-pointed mental stabilisation is when the mind is focused on a single object. The definition of single-pointed mental stabilisation is to be focused on the object single-pointedly through one's own power. Analytical meditation is when one is focused on an object, which is not a single object, whereas contemplative meditation training one's mind by focusing only on a single object.

Analytical meditation does fit into the definition of mental concentration or stabilisation and so we can definitely assert that analytical meditation is a form of meditation. In fact for us beginners it is a very skilful and practical way of meditating. We all know from our own experience that attempting to focus our mind on one single object is extremely difficult initially, if not impossible. If we are left thinking that meditation means focusing only on one single object we might find meditation so difficult that we do not attempt it very often. Whereas it is relatively easy for us to read the text and analyse the context of what is being explained, and really focus our mind on that.

During the time that we are reading a text and thinking about the meaning of those passages, we are meditating, and that is an essential point to understand and remember. There are many who misinterpret meditation as only being focused on a single object, and there are many who come to the wrong conclusion that if it is meditation it has to be a contemplative meditation, and that analytical meditation is not really meditation. That is a totally wrong conception. So one must understand that and see the value of analytical meditation. In fact, for us beginners, analytical meditation is much more practical and worthwhile.

Furthermore, as explained in the teachings, genuine contemplative meditation must be preceded by analytical meditation. In contemplative meditation one is focusing on an object that has been examined first by a focused mind through one's wisdom. That means one doesn't focus on just any object in contemplative meditation, rather the focus must be on an object that has been asserted with one's wisdom as being a valid object to meditate upon. Where does that wisdom come from? It comes from analysis. One has to first analyse the object in order to assert that it is a suitable object to focus on in one's meditation. So we can see how profound wisdom only arises through analysis, and through thinking about the object.

In order to engage in a focused meditation, such as using the breath as an object, one has to first think about the technique. That process of learning and thinking about the technique itself is part of an analytical meditation. It is only when we have actually understood the instructions properly that we can even attempt to engage in contemplative meditation. This process of analysing first, then contemplating what one has analysed, and then further analysing is called the union of analytical and contemplative meditation. Within the Lam Rim teachings the early sections are primarily analytical meditation, whereas when it comes to the topic of how to achieve calm abiding then the practice becomes primarily contemplative meditation. I am emphasising this point to show the great value of analytical meditation. It should not be just brushed aside on the grounds that it is not important.

1.1.2.2.3. REFUTING THE REJOINDER

> *Assertion:* Fuel is hard and so forth but not hot by nature. When it is overpowered by fire, it grows hot and is that which is burnt.

This assertion is presented by the opponents in relation to the earlier refutation which said, 'fire burns only fuel whose nature is the other three elements, yet hot fuel is fire and no longer fuel to be burnt. If it not hot, since it is unrelated to fire how will it burn'? There it was shown that if fuel is in the nature of fire then how it can be considered as fuel, because it is already one with the fire.

What the opponent is presenting is that fuel is not hot so it cannot be one with fire; it is only one with the nature of fire when it is overpowered by fire.

Answer:

Even if it is hot only when *342*
Overpowered, why is it not fire?
Yet if not hot, to say fire contains
Something else is not plausible.

The commentary goes on to explain:

> Even if fuel grows hot only when overpowered by fire, why is it not fire? It follows that it should be fire because it is hot and burns. Yet if fuel is not hot at that time, it is implausible to claim that some thing else which is not hot is present in fire. In that case just heat divorced from the other three elements would be fire, but if one of the great elements does not exist the others cannot exist either Moreover it contradicts the statement, "Things that arise simultaneously are reciprocal effects like the elements."

What is being presented here is that fuel becomes one with fire and is hot and burning at that time, so that is what is existent at that time. Fuel existing as one in the nature of fire implies that it is not dependent on the other elements.

What is being presented here as a refutation is that there cannot be heat that is divorced from the other three elements. If that were the case, one would be able to assert that the fire element can be divorced, or absent, from the other elements. However that cannot be the case. All the elements exist in relation to each other. They cannot exist inherently by themselves or singly at any time. They are always coexistent and that is what is being presented here as the main point.

In relation to the verse, the absurdity that is being pointed out here in the refutation is that if what you assert is true, then the fire element would have to exist independently without relating to the other elements. However as the text says,

> Things that arise simultaneously are reciprocal effects like the elements.

This means that wherever the elements are they coexist together, and that at no time can one element be separated from the others.

1.1.2.2.4. REFUTING A FIRE PARTICLE AS TRULY EXISTENT FIRE

> *Assertion:* Since the other three elements are not present in the smallest substantial fire particle, there is fire even without fuel.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *If the particle has no fuel* *343*
> *Fire without fuel exists.*
> *If even it has fuel, a single-natured*
> *Particle does not exist.*

The commentary explains the meaning thus:

> Fire without fuel exists if the smallest fire particle does not have fuel. Since it therefore would follow that uncaused fire exists, one should not assert a smallest substantial particle as do the Vaisesikas.

The Vaisheshikas assert a substantial partless particle, which one cannot accept. As the text further reads:

> If one admits that even the fire particle has fuel, for fear of the conclusion that it would otherwise be causeless, it follows that there is no single-natured particle since the other elements are certainly present in each particle.

What is being presented basically is that each particle, such as an earth particle, incorporates the other three particles, wind and water and fire particles as well. Likewise with the other element particles—each possesses all the other element particles.

1.1.2.3. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING FOR SINGLENESS OR PLURALITY

This has two sub-headings.
1.1.2.3.1. Refuting truly existent functional phenomena through the reason of being neither one nor many
1.1.2.3.2. This fallacy equally applies to other sectarians

1.1.2.3.1. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA THROUGH THE REASON OF BEING NEITHER ONE NOR MANY

The reason that is presented here is that of being neither one nor many.

> *When different things are examined* *344*
> *None of them have singleness.*
> *Because there is no singleness*
> *There is no plurality either.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> When functional things like pots and woollen cloth are examined as to whether they are or are not truly existent, these various things, because they have parts, do not have truly existent singleness.

This is refuting truly existent singleness. Having asserted that there cannot be truly existent singleness then also by default:

> Nor do they have truly existent plurality for the very reason by which they are not truly single, since plurality comes about through an accumulation of single units. External and internal phenomena are not truly existent because they are neither one nor many. They are like reflections.

This is a summary of what has been explained quite extensively in the earlier part of the chapter. The analogy that is presented here is that phenomena are like reflections. The particular analogy that is related here is seeing a reflection of one's face in a mirror. If one were to investigate whether the reflection were single and one with the face, it does not exist as inherently one with the face nor does it exist as inherently separate from the face. That is the point. Similarly all other phenomena do not exist as either inherently single or inherently separate or many.

Furthermore the reflection of the face in the mirror is also used as an analogy to explain how things do not exist independently or inherently, even though that is how they appear to exist. Even though things appear to us as being independent and inherently existent, in reality things cannot exist in that way.

The analogy again is the reflection of the face. Even though the reflection of the face in the mirror appears to be like the face, in reality it is not the face. It appears in every aspect exactly as the face, however we know conventionally and accept that it is not the face. It is the same with all other phenomena: they lack inherent existence even though they appear to be inherently existent.

We can take the analogy further to explaining how things lack true existence, As explained earlier, things lack inherent existence, or independent existence, or true existence. These terms are all synonymous. In relation to the term 'truly existent' when we see the reflection of our face in the mirror it appears to be truly our face, but it is truly not our face. Reflecting on that analogy can actually help us to understand the actual meaning of the true existence or inherent existence of any phenomena. These analogies provide a very good way for us to reflect upon the lack of inherent or true existence of phenomena. It is very good to think about these analogies and really use them in our practice. If we do that, then through this analysis our practice can become very profound. That is how the analogy serves as a great benefit for our practice.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 April 2008

Sitting in a comfortable position, generate a positive motivation along the lines that we have just recited in the Refuge Prayer, which is a prayer that encompasses both refuge and the bodhicitta motivations. As indicated in the Mahayana teachings, an authentic Mahayana attitude has to consist of refuge as well as the bodhicitta attitude. Thus in addition to the Refuge prayer, we generate this strong motivation, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings may I achieve the state of enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

As mentioned previously, it is worthwhile treating the teaching session as a pledge, where along with actually listening to the Dharma, we re-confirm our pledge to achieve enlightenment. That pledge should also be re-confirmed as we practice.

It is really significant that we begin our practice session with that motivation. Reciting the Refuge Prayer, which encompasses the bodhicitta attitude, is an element that secures our practice as an authentic practice. In terms of the actual elements within the Refuge Prayer, the stronger the refuge that we have in our mind, the stronger the confirmation of being protected from the lower realms in our future life will be. Similarly, the stronger our bodhicitta attitude is, the stronger our determination to dedicate our practice towards enlightenment will become.

This prayer also encompasses generating refuge in order to overcome an improper or incorrect path, while generating bodhicitta in order to overcome the lower vehicles and enter the Mahayana path. I have mentioned this many times previously, but I mention it again so as to remind ourselves of the significance and importance of the bodhicitta motivation.

To further indicate the significance of generating refuge and bodhicitta, you might recollect from earlier explanations that generating refuge is the doorway to entering the Buddhist path, whereas generating bodhicitta is the doorway to entering the Mahayana path. It is essential that we remember these points in our practice.

When the Lam Rim teachings refer to the topic of precious human re-birth, it mentions that there are three levels of taking the essence of a precious human life. The first level, or most basic way of taking essence of a precious human life is to use it so that we can protect ourselves from unfortunate births in future lives. The next best way to take the essence from one's precious human life is for it to become a cause to be free from being reborn into cyclic existence, and thus obtain liberation. While the utmost way to take the essence of one's precious human life is to enable it to become a cause for achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. So we can think of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta along these lines.

One must not underestimate the great significance of taking refuge. Merely taking refuge with a strong convinced mind is, in itself, a means to protect oneself from being re-born in lower realms. So by taking refuge one is taking the essence of one's precious human life. Thus merely taking refuge is, at the very least, a great practice. The reason that I emphasise the significance and importance of taking refuge is because it is the very foundation of any practice we do along the Buddhist path. All our practices on the Buddhist path are based on refuge. Whatever practice we engage in, it starts with taking refuge, and it is important that we don't underestimate the part of taking refuge. It is one of the essential elements of our practice because it secures our practice, so it is a very significant practice.

As we engage in the teachings and practise meditation and so forth, it is good to remind ourselves why we are doing that practice. What is it that we are trying to get out of the practice? What is it that we are trying to achieve? Here we need to reflect back on the Lam Rim, a teaching which presents the entire Buddhist path. You can summarise it by thinking of how refuge plays an important role all along the path. In the practice of the small scope, as we begin to realise that we have a precious human life with these unique conditions as a human being, we come to contemplate how we can use this precious human life in the best way. Also, following the presentation in the Lam Rim, just as we have this precious human life now, we contemplate how easily we can lose it; when we experience death, we lose this precious human life. Then we think about how difficult it would be to achieve such a life again in the future. Thus we must utilise this precious human life that we have now in the utmost way.

Then, one reflects further on how one's karma—positive and negative actions, in particular the negative actions and imprints on one's mind, and the actions that follow—can lead to an unfortunate rebirth in the lower realms. Thus a strong fear of the lower realms and wishing to be free from that is generated, and one develops a determination to obtain a fortunate rebirth, such as a human or in the god realms. Then in order to achieve such a fortunate rebirth one generates a strong conviction that taking refuge has the potential to help one, and so one takes refuge. Thus taking refuge becomes the most essential practice to avoid lower rebirth.

Then as we reflect further, we see that even if one were to be free from the lower realms, and be reborn again as a human being or in the god realms, one will still have to go through sufferings and so forth—there are still a lot of disadvantages in returning to a life in cyclic existence. So again one determines to free oneself from that, to take the essence of one's human life to try to create the causes to be free from the whole of cyclic existence. Thus one engages in depth in the practices of the four noble truths and the three higher trainings. In that way one again takes strong refuge in order to be able to utilise and engage in these practices. Thus in the medium scope, one's practices are also based on taking refuge.

Then, as one contemplates further, one sees that even if one were to be free from suffering and from cyclic existence, which would be a satisfactory personal goal, all other sentient beings would continue to suffer immensely while they remain in cyclic existence. Thus one generates a strong determination to free all other beings from all suffering, for which one needs to train further in order to reach the highest goal of enlightenment, where one reaches one's full potential. Based on taking refuge and seeking the guidance of refuge, one generates a bodhicitta attitude, wish to achieve enlightenment in order to help others, which is based on love and compassion. In that way, we can see how

refuge is the basis all along the path leading up to enlightenment, and so see its value. Of course taking the essence of one's precious human life as explained in the teachings and using it in the best way, doesn't mean sitting back, and relaxing, and making a lot of money. That's obviously not what it means!

It is really important that we contemplate these factors and constantly remind ourselves of them as we engage in the practice of the Dharma. It is particularly important for those of you who have already studied and learned a lot, and actually put quite a lot of effort into your study. One must ensure that the actual study becomes worthwhile, and that one utilises the study that one has done so that it becomes beneficial. The way for it to become really useful is to ensure that whatever study one does serves as a purpose for one's practice. As mentioned previously the practice is really contemplating and generating a strong sense of refuge and the significance of that refuge in one's mind. Based on that, one contemplates the practices of the small scope, incorporating that into the medium scope, and then into the great scope, combining the practices of the three scopes in that way for one's ultimate goal.

Unless we actually make a particular effort to remind ourselves and make sure that our practice is a worthwhile practice, it is so easy for our mind to become completely immersed in, and distracted by, worldly affairs. Normally there are moments of joy and happiness that we experience in the practices that we do. But then that joy or happiness seems to fade away, and it seems so fleeting that we begin to wonder why that happiness and joy doesn't remain. Why is it that even though we seem to get some benefit from the practice, it doesn't secure our happiness? Why is it that we have more problems in our life? Those sorts of doubts and questions may arise in the mind. So one must recognise what is really disturbing us. What are the main causes which interrupt our practice? What is preventing the joy and happiness in our mind from becoming stable?

You will all have noticed for yourselves the simple fact that the stronger our attraction to worldly concerns the more disturbed the mind becomes, and that we find little joy and peace if we allow the mind to be attracted to worldly distractions. Rather than contributing to real happiness, attraction to worldly affairs makes our mind unhappy, and the stronger the attraction we have to worldly affairs, the greater the disturbance. Thus it is very important that we reduce our attraction to the worldly concerns.

Even though we are not able to overcome our attraction to worldly concerns completely, we should make every effort in our practice to make sure that we are attempting to do so. Just for the time when we focus inwardly on our breath, we may feel some relief, and our mind is happy and settled. If we leave our practice at just focussing on our breath for a while, and limit our practice time to just the morning or the evening, and not remember the real practice, which is constant awareness of not allowing ourselves to become completely distracted with the worldly affairs, then we will become completely immersed in those worldly affairs. The main thing is to try to develop a sense of distrust of worldly or samsaric values. Try to develop in one's mind a sense of disgust or disillusionment with samsaric pleasures. If one actually develops that, then the strong belief in and attraction towards worldly pleasures will naturally be reduced. Then, as a result, we will definitely experience a longer lasting sense of contentment and happiness in ourselves, which is really worthwhile.

If we don't pay particular attention to this, then the reverse may actually occur. Rather than achieving a subdued mind our attempt to practice may lead to more distractions in the mind, and stronger desire than before. There is a real danger of that happening, so one must really be careful to prevent that from happening.

One's practice must be utilised in the proper way. Developing a sense of disenchantment with samsara by contemplating the sufferings of samsara is relatively easy for us. Seeing the sufferings of samsara definitely discourages us from of wanting to be in samsara. More difficult is developing a sense of disenchantment with the pleasures of samsara, because it is hard to develop a sense of disillusionment or disenchantment with these pleasures.

Even harder still, is developing disillusionment or disenchantment with the neutral experiences of samsara. This is an essential point that we have to recognise. There are what is called the worldly meditative stabilisations, where one develops disillusionment and disenchantment with the worldly pleasures, accompanied by the development of an attraction to the quietness and the peacefulness of that neutral feeling that one gains from meditative concentration. If one is not able to also identify that as a samsaric fault, then further engaging in that meditative concentration creates the causes to be reborn in a higher rebirth, such as long-life gods and so forth. Thus one is actually just creating the causes to further one's existence in samsara. Therefore it is very important that we really pinpoint and understand what it means to develop disillusionment or disenchantment with samsara. It means disillusionment not only with the sufferings, but also the pleasures and the neutral feelings as well.

If one practises in this way, developing that sense of disillusionment and disenchantment with samsara, and lessening one's attraction towards samsaric pleasures, then one will experience, even in this life, release from the difficulties and problems in life that keep us so entangled. The lessening of those problems will bring about a certain amount of ease and happiness that we can experience even in this life, while at the same time creating the causes for a better future life. Thus by giving up or lessening one's desire for the pleasures and attractions worldly life, one gains an immediate benefit while also creating the causes for a better future life. In that way one gains a two-fold benefit.

Alternatively, if we allow our practice for lessening disillusionment or disenchantment with the worldly pleasures to lapse, we will experience more problems in this life. We won't gain real happiness and joy in this life while at the same time creating more causes for suffering in future lives, so we lose out both ways. Thus I would consider anyone who engages in the practices in order to gain the two-fold benefit – benefit for this life as well as benefit for future lives - to be really wise. What better person could you find than that? But I don't know how you think *[soft laughter]*.

The main obstacle to developing disenchantment with samsara really comes down to attachment. That is the main delusion in the mind that prevents us from developing a sound sense of disenchantment, which then becomes the obstacle to developing renunciation. Without developing renunciation we can't even enter the path, so in order to develop that disenchantment, one must definitely deal with lessening attachment. Shantideva's text, *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life,* explains explicitly and very clearly how attachment serves as a fault that prolongs our existence in

samsara. Shantideva clearly explains, as do many other great teachers, that attachment is the main obstruction to our practice of developing disenchantment and renunciation. That is something that we must really pinpoint and recognise.

There are many who, on hearing about the need to develop disenchantment and disgust for the samsaric pleasures ask, 'How can I experience any joy and pleasure if I give up worldly pleasures?'. That is a strong fear or misconception that many hold on to. But the teachings confirm that in giving up or in overcoming the desire for worldly pleasures, one's sense of real pleasure and joy increases rather than decreases. In fact one experiences real joy and pleasure in one's mind.

1.1.2.3.2. THIS FALLACY EQUALLY APPLIES TO OTHER SECTARIANS

Though they assert that where there are none *345*
Of those things there is singleness,
Singleness does not exist
Since everything is threefold.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> One may think this refutation applies to our own sectarians who assert that the elements and elemental derivatives occur simultaneously, but not to outsiders...

What is being indicated here is that some may feel that the refutation made earlier, which applies to our own sectarians, is not applied to outsiders, indicating non-Buddhists such as the Vaisheshikas, who hold the view of a partless particle. As explained previously the Vaisheshikas assert that there is a permanent partless particle, which is a single unit that exists by itself. So, what is being explained is that assertion by the non-Buddhists is also being negated.

The commentary further explains the assertion of the outsiders as:

> a small permanent earth particle which is a single unit exists,

The next part is an addition in the English translation, which reads:

> ...where there are no functional things apart from the smallest particles such as earth particles and so forth.

As indicated here in the commentary, the non-Buddhist schools such as the Vaisheshikas assert that there are partless particles. A partless particle is the smallest particle, an entity existing by itself, and a single unit. In our own Buddhist system we do not assert a partless particle. As mentioned previously, every particle consists of the eight substances, thus there cannot be a single particle in itself, as there are always other particles or other elements. Yet while the non-Buddhist schools such as the Vaisheshikas assert that there is a partless particle, at the same time they also accept that:

> Yet even in their system the smallest earth particle is three-fold in that it has substantial entity, singleness and existence.

Thus the refutations that were applied earlier in our own system apply to the non-Buddhists as well. There is an absurdity in asserting on the one hand that there is a partless particle, and on the other hand asserting that a partless particle has the entity of being a 'substantial entity, a singleness and existence'. That in itself contradicts the assertion of it being a single unit. As there are three different elements to the partless particle it is cannot be a completely single unit just in itself. Thus the refutations that were made earlier apply to the non-Buddhist schools also.

So, as the commentary concludes:

> Thus precisely the same fallacies apply to them.

1.1.2.4. APPLYING REASONING WHICH NEGATES THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES IN OTHER CASES

The approach of existence, non-existence, *346*
Both existence and non-existence, and neither,
Should always be applied by those
With mastery to oneness and so forth.

The four possibilities are:

1. The Tibetan text of the commentary begins with:

> The Samkhyas claim the effect exists at the time of the causes;

This is a particular assertion of the Samkhyas, which is that the effect, or the result, exists at the same time as the cause.

2. Next are the Sautrãntikas.

> Though they do not assert that the effect exists at the time of the cause, they assert cause and effect as being truly existent.

3. The non-Buddhist Nirgranthas assert that:

> ... both existence and non-existence in that a thing is permanent in nature yet temporarily impermanent

The Nirgranthas also assert that which is produced from self and other at the same time, i.e. they assert self-produced objects as well as objects produced from others. To use the example of an earthen vase: they would say that an earthen vase is both self-produced as well as produced by others. It is self-produced because of the fact of being produced from mud or clay, and it is produced by others, because it is made by the potter.

4. Furthermore there are:

> ...those who assert that though things are substantially existent, they neither exist nor do not exist since they cannot be said to be this nor that.

The Tibetan commentary then reads:

> Those who have mastered the art of employing the meaning of suchness always refute oneness, otherness, both and neither by applying the kinds of reasoning which refute the [earlier] assertions.
>
> They apply the reasons previously explained in [stanza 265]... "For those who assert effects exist" [The reason they apply is either] the reason of dependent arising, the lack of being one or many, the diamond fragments reason and so forth.'

'Diamond fragment' is sometimes translated as 'diamond silver'.

So basically verse 346 is refuting these four possibilities.

The five types of reasoning

There are actually five reasonings indicating the lack of inherent existence.

1. The second reasoning mentioned in the text relates to phenomena having a **lack of being one or many**. That reasoning comes in the form of this syllogism, which refers to the nature of phenomena: a sprout is not truly existent, because it is neither truly existent one nor truly existent many. This reason relates to the *nature* of phenomena

2. The first reason in the text is the reason of *dependent arising*, which is called the **king of reasonings**. As mentioned previously, in relation to the syllogism using the subject of a sprout: the sprout lacks inherent existence, because it is a dependent origination.

3 The next reasoning is the **diamond fragment reasoning**, which was explained extensively in the Madhyamika text[1]. This reasoning relates to the *causes* of phenomena, and the syllogism is: the sprout lacks production from an inherently existent cause, because it is not produced with any of the four possibilities. Thus it lacks the possibility of being inherently self-produced, being produced from an inherently existent other cause, being produced by neither the self nor the other, or being produced by both.

4. Another of the five reasonings, which is not indicated here specifically, is the reasoning that relates to the *effect*, the reasoning of **existence and non-existence of generation and cessation**. Basically, it refers to lacking an inherently produced effect at the time of the cause. So things are not inherently produced at the time of the cause and nor are they inherently not produced at the time of the cause. The actual syllogism is found in the Madhyamika notes[2].

5. The fifth reasoning is established in relation to both *cause and effect*. It refers to **being free from the four mutually exclusive possibilities in relation to the cause and effect**. Thus the syllogism is a sprout lacks inherent generation because a single inherently existent cause cannot generate an inherently existent effect, multiple inherently existent causes cannot generate multiple inherently existent effects, multiple existing causes cannot generate a single effect and a single cause cannot generate multiple effects. So the reasoning covers the four mutually exclusive ways of negating how, from either a single or multiple inherently existent causes, there cannot be single or multiple inherently existent effects.

1.2. Showing the cause for mistaking functional things as permanent and truly existent

> *Question:* If things therefore do not have the slightest inherent existence, for what reason do those opponents hold that they are truly existent?
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *When the continuum is misapprehended,* *347*
> *Things are said to be permanent.*
> *Similarly when composites are*
> *Misapprehended, things are said to exist.*

The initial question indicates that if things do not actually have the slightest inherent existence as we assert, referring to our own views, and as there are so many reasonings showing the lack of inherent existence, then why do others hold the contrary view, which is of true existence?

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Though there is no valid reason [to hold true existence] in the case of a thing which lasts three days, they feel compelled to assert that whatever existed before must exist later. Functional things are said to he permanent when the continuum which is posited through imputation upon former, intermediate and later moments is misapprehended.

This is explaining the reason why others have these misconceptions. First of all the misconception of permanence arises because others see the continuum of an object as being the actual object, and do not recognise and see the momentary changes that occur. In this particular example, something that is seen for three days, which was seen the previous day, the next day and the day after, is seen as being the same thing. For as long as it is considered as the same thing, that misapprehension instils the wrong view of permanence.

We can relate this to our own experience. For example when we see someone that we know, we don't even question whether we are seeing the same person - there are no doubts at all. The fact that we think that there is no change at all and that we are seeing exactly the same person, is the misapprehension of permanence, or seeing the other as being permanent, and it is called grasping at permanence. In reality if the person that we see today is in fact the actual person of yesterday, then that implies that a person will never age, because we are always seeing the same person. How could the same person not age?

To point out the absurdity of thinking things are permanent: if it is the same person, then someone who was twenty-nine yesterday and who has a birthday today (thus turning thirty), would have to be the same person who is twenty-nine. But we don't say that do we? Rather the person is now thirty. The fact is that the person who was twenty-nine yesterday is thirty today, because a change has taken place. If there was no change taking place at all then the person couldn't have become a year older, and turn thirty. You can't have a person who is both twenty-nine and thirty years old today can you?

What is being specifically explained here is how that misapprehension, which results in a grasping at permanence, occurs. This misapprehension, or this faulty state of mind, occurs because of holding on to the continuum of something, such as a person actually staying as the same person. This misapprehension, which is explained here, and which causes the grasping at permanence, is none other than the view that occurs when we see today the person that we saw yesterday. As soon as we think, 'Oh I'm seeing the person that I saw yesterday', then that indicates that there is the misapprehension that is the grasping at permanence. There is nothing else that is really identifiable as being grasping at permanence.

Of course, someone who actually has an understanding of impermanence will not have that notion of seeing exactly the same person and believing that nothing has changed. They would understand that subtle changes have taken place because of their underlying realisation or understanding of impermanence.

As the commentary further explains:

> Similarly when the composite is misapprehended, it is said that there are truly existent functional things.

Just the misapprehension of permanence occurs, so too the composite of a phenomena is misapprehended, because of the misapprehension of the composite establishes the misapprehension of true existence, i.e. that things exist truly, that they are truly existent functional things.

Finally, the commentary states:

> There seem to be even many adherents to the *Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition* who, through not knowing how to posit the composite and the continuum, follow outsiders.

This refers to certain Buddhist schools such as the Mind Only, or Cittamatrin school and so forth. Even though they follow the treatises on valid cognition, they still hold on to the view of true existence, such as is held by the non-Buddhist schools.

[1] See 15 April 2003 for these five reasonings.

[2] The sprout lacks inherent generation, because it isn't inherently generated at the time of its cause, nor is it inherently not generated at the time of its cause.

1.3. Briefly showing the reasoning that establishes absence of true existence

Anything that has dependent arising *348*
Is not independent.
All these are not independent,
Therefore there is no self.

The verse is a very significant verse that is often quoted in other teachings, and so it is worthwhile memorising as a way of reminding oneself of its meaning.

> *Objection:* Even if our view that things exist were wrong, your view is that things do not exist, since you do not accept functional things. It is unreasonable because it contradicts both what is seen and unseen.

The objection raised here is by other systems, which assert truly functional existent phenomena. Because that view is refuted by our own system, they have a counter-objection saying, 'You're claiming that my view, which establishes truly existent functional phenomena, is wrong, however because you say that there are no truly existent functional phenomena, your view is actually an extreme view. You're establishing a nihilistic view in saying that things do not exist. That is unreasonable, because it contradicts what is seen and unseen', i.e. things that are obvious.

> *Answer:* We make no claim that things do not exist for we are proponents of dependent arising.
>
> *Question:* Do you assert that things are truly existent?
>
> *Answer:* No, because we are proponents of dependent arising.

Things exist, but they don't truly exist, and the reasoning that establishes things as not being truly existent is the reasoning of dependent arising. Thus the syllogism is: things are not truly existent, because they are dependent arising.

> *Question:* What does that mean? [i.e. What does saying that things are dependent arising mean?]
>
> *Answer:* It means that while things are empty of inherent existence, like magical creations and mirages, they can produce effects.

The analogy used here is when a magician conjures things such as horses and elephants. Even though they do not exist they have the function of performing tricks. Similarly, even though things do not exist inherently, they still function.

As further explained in the commentary:

> Any relative thing which is found to arise and exist dependently is not found to exist independently. All these phenomena lack an independent mode of existence and thus there is no self of persons or of phenomena.

What is being clearly explained here is that because phenomena lack an inherent mode of existence, there is said to be no self of persons as well as no self of phenomena, referring to an inherently existing self.

Then as the commentary further explains:

> The person [this is the subject of which is the person] and the aggregates do not exist inherently, [Why?] because they arise dependently.

This is presented as a syllogism, in the form of subject, predicate and the reason.

Then a counter-question is raised from the others:

> *Question:* We too accept that effects are not independent, so what is the difference?

They are saying that as they also accept that effects are not independent, therefore what is the difference between your view and our view? The answer points out an essential difference, which is that,

> You do not understand that dependent arising means mutual reliance.

What our system is saying in reply to the question, 'What is the difference between our views if we both accept that effects are not independent?' is that there is a difference because there is a difference in how we interpret dependent arising.

We may have completed this text by June. The next text will be *The Mahamudra*, and it would be good try to acquire the text, because without a text it would be really hard to follow the teaching and maintain its continuity. Apparently the translation is quite good. So while I refer to the root text and the commentary, you can refer to other commentaries, and read them to become familiar with the text.

Even though we may not be able to go into a detailed explanation of the actual text, if you read the commentaries while we go through the explanation, that will become a very good source of inspiration for one's practice. That is why I chose this text - it is a very inspiring for one's practice.

To use an analogy as to how we are going to conduct our study sessions it will be as if I am pointing the way to the door, to indicate that there are valuable things once you open the door. Then it is up to you to open the door and actually find the valuable things. That is how I will present it. Even if we don't have enough the time to go into much detail in the actual sessions here, if you can read the commentaries and study them, you will find great inspiration in the text.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 April 2008

As usual we shall sit in a comfortable sitting posture and generate a positive attitude in our mind, such as, 'in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.4. Showing the need to understand absence of true existence

This has two sub headings.
1.4.1. Inherently existent dependent arising is not seen by the Exalted
1.4.2. Release from worldly existence is gained through understanding emptiness

1.4.1. Inherently existent dependent arising is not seen by the Exalted

Here, 'the Exalted' refers to an Arya who is engaged in meditative equipoise.

> *Things do not assemble* 349
> *Unless there is an effect.*
> *Aggregation for an effect*
> *Is not included for the Exalted.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary says:

> Since nothing is produced by way of its own entity things do not assemble and come together to produce an effect unless there is an effect to produce. Since anything inherently existent would he permanent, it could not rely on an effect.

First of all, 'an effect' relates specifically to products such as compounded phenomena, where there has to be an assembly of things in order for it to be produced. What is being pointed out here is that such an assembly of things is not an inherently existent assembly. If something were to exist inherently then it would not need an assembly of things in order to produce phenomena. The main point is that while there has to be an assembly for compounded phenomena to be produced, that assembly cannot be inherently existent.

If an inherently existent aggregation for the sake of an effect is, in fact, possible then it would have to be perceived by a noble being in a state of meditative equipoise. The fact is, however, that an Arya being in meditative equipoise does not see any aggregation for the sake of an effect taking place.

I have explained this in greater detail earlier. The meaning of the last two lines of the verse was clarified in the teachings on the *Madhyamika*, and in other teachings. For an Arya being in meditative equipoise, there is no appearance of conventional phenomena. In a single-pointed meditative state on emptiness there is no appearance whatsoever of conventional phenomena. So the conclusion, as explained in the teachings, is that not seeing conventional phenomena while in meditative equipoise is ultimate seeing.

What this also implies is that if conventional phenomena were to appear to an Arya being in meditative equipoise, then they would have to be inherently existent. The lines, 'an aggregation for an effect is not included for the Exalted', mean that an Arya being in meditative equipoise does not see the assembly of an aggregation in order to produce an effect. This implies that an aggregation for an effect is not inherently existent. There can be no inherently existent assembly for an effect to take place, because of the fact that it is not seen by Arya beings.

The main point is illustrated in the last part of the explanation in the text, where it says:

> Aggregation for the sake of an effect is not included within the perception of the Exalted during meditative equipoise which sees suchness, because it directly perceives the lack of inherent existence of things.

An Arya being in meditative equipoise does not apprehend conventional phenomena. In relation to a particular phenomenon such as a vase, the non-appearance of the vase to an exalted or noble being in meditative equipoise is the appearance of emptiness of the vase. Such exalted beings don't see conventional phenomena, because they are focused on ultimate phenomena. This further implies that it is not possible for any sentient being's mind to single-pointedly focus on both conventional and ultimate phenomena at the same time. It is only an enlightened mind that is able to do that.

When a sentient being's mind is single-pointedly focused on ultimate phenomena, conventional phenomena cannot appear, and when conventional phenomena are apprehended, then ultimate phenomena cannot be perceived at the same time. A sentient being, even an Arya, cannot engage with conventional phenomena when in a state of meditative equipoise on emptiness. This means, for example, that an arya being in meditative equipoise would not be able to teach the Dharma, and would not be able to listen to the Dharma. Only an enlightened being, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, is able to simultaneously be in meditative equipoise on emptiness while teaching the Dharma.

We see images of the Buddha with the left hand in the mudra of meditative equipoise and the right hand in the mudra of turning the wheel. You must understand that this indicates that only a buddha, an enlightened being, is able to remain in meditative equipoise while simultaneously being able to teach and propound the Dharma.

The conclusion to take note of is that if the question is, 'Does the conventional exist for the wisdom of an Arya being in meditative equipoise?', then you would have to say that the answer is, 'No, conventional phenomena do not exist for the wisdom of an Arya being in meditative equipoise'. Does a conventional phenomenon exist normally? Generally it does exist. But here the point is that it does not exist in the perception of an Arya being's wisdom of meditative equipoise, in which the non-perception of conventional reality is the perception of emptiness.

In debate one could bring up the question: Is the non-existence of vase emptiness or not? Likewise is the non-perception of a vase the perception of emptiness or not? The conclusion is that the non-existence of a vase is of course not emptiness, however the non-existence of a vase in the wisdom of meditative equipoise of an Arya being is the emptiness of a vase. It is good to take note of these points so that one can relate it to other phenomena and the understanding of emptiness.

This sort of investigation enables one to pinpoint the subtleties in understanding the presentation of ultimate reality or emptiness. It is good to work with these sorts of

topics in one's mind and come to the right conclusions. If we have doubts and questions, and are not familiar with these particular analyses, then we might be lost in doubt and not be able to clarify the point. The subtle points and differences explained in this mode of reasoning will help to remove certain doubts from our mind when they arise.

1.4.2. Release from worldly existence is gained through understanding emptiness

This heading implies that without an understanding of emptiness one will not be released from worldly existence or samsara. In basic language what is being said is that if one has gained a realisation of emptiness then one can obtain freedom from samsara, but freedom from samsara will not be possible without that realisation.

> One gains release from cyclic existence when deluded ignorance which conceives things as truly existent ends. This depends on understanding emptiness of inherent existence.
>
> *The awareness that is the seed of existence* *350*
> *Has objects as its sphere of activity.*
> *When selflessness is seen in objects,*
> *The seed of existence is destroyed.*

As mentioned here, the question is whether one will be able to gain release from cyclic existence. The answer is yes, it is definitely possible to gain release from cyclic existence, but that doing so depends on understanding the emptiness of inherent existence. The conclusion is that one can definitely gain release from cyclic existence when the deluded ignorance, which conceives of things as being truly existent, ends. So in order to obtain freedom from cyclic existence one must end that ignorance, which depends on gaining an understanding of the emptiness of inherent existence.

As explained in the commentary, the **first line** of the verse means that:

> The seed of worldly existence is the conception that phenomena are truly existent.

The awareness that is said to be the seed of cyclic existence is the conception that phenomena are truly existent i.e. the misconception of grasping at true existence. It is good to take note, as explained in the commentary, that here *existence* refers not just to any existence but specifically to cyclic existence or samsara, and that *awareness* refers to not just any kind of awareness, but the misconception grasping at true existence. This ignorance of grasping at true existence is referred to as the *seed*.

The commentary explains the meaning of the **second line** as:

> Objects such as form are its sphere of activity.

The seed has been defined as the ignorance grasping at true existence. The *objects* perceived by that ignorance are presented here as *form*, which appears as being truly existent. So the appearance of true existence in relation to form is explained here as the *sphere of activity*, meaning that ignorance engages in perceiving phenomena such as form, as truly existent.

The phrase, 'objects such as form' includes other objects as well. If we relate that to internal phenomena then this would relate to our five aggregates, which are form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness. The five aggregates, referred to here as internal phenomena are the basis of imputation of oneself. So we relate form for example to our physical body, and perceive it as being truly existent, inherently existent or independently existent, which means not relating on anything else, but existing in its own right. So seeing our body in this way and then grasping at it is called grasping at true existence. It is the same for the other aggregates. That is how we perceive them as being truly existent.

As further explained in the commentary:

> The seed of worldly existence is destroyed and one attains liberation by seeing that these objects lack an inherently existent self and by gaining familiarity with this.

Having identified the seed of worldly existence, which as explained previously, is the ignorance of grasping at true existence, this part now explains the **last two lines** in the verse. What is being explained is that one then attains liberation when the seed of worldly existence, which is the ignorance of grasping at true existence, is completely eliminated. How? By 'seeing that these objects lack an inherently existent self'.

After we have understood that perceiving all phenomena as being truly existent is a misapprehension by a faulty state of mind, and that phenomena such as form and the other aggregates lack true existence, we meditate on that - not just once or twice but again and again. In that way we further investigate, and see more and more clearly how they lack true existence. Then through that familiarity one slowly gains a more and more profound understanding of the lack of inherent existence or true existence. Through that familiarity, one will eventually completely destroy the seed or the root of samsara, which is ignorance, and thus obtain liberation.

As further explained in the commentary:

> On becoming a Hearer or Solitary Realizer Foe Destroyer or on reaching the eighth ground, one achieves the complete elimination of conceptions of true existence.

This explanation is in accordance with the view of the Prasangika-Madhyamika. According to this viewpoint, grasping at true existence is the deluded obscuration, while the imprint of grasping at true existence is the obscuration to omniscience. The Prasangikas say that deluded obscuration is abandoned when a Hearer or Solitary Realiser attains the level of foe destroyer or arhat. For the Mahayana who has not entered any of the two lower vehicles first but enters the Mahayana path from the very beginning, the conception of true existence, which is the deluded obscuration, is abandoned on the eighth ground. That is what is being specifically explained here.

These are very profound explanations about the necessity of realising emptiness, because without the realisation of emptiness one cannot overcome cyclic existence and obtain liberation. It is good to relate to these explanations and encourage oneself to try with every means to gain that realisation. The process begins with first recognising what cyclic existence is, and this is gained through understanding, for example, the four noble truths. The first noble truth is the truth of suffering, so one goes over exactly how that truth relates to cyclic existence, and the different levels of the truth of suffering. One particularly focuses on pervasive suffering, understanding how the contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering, and how that is the basis for being in cyclic existence.

Then one reflects on how one actually obtains those contaminated aggregates, thus gaining an understanding of the truth of origination by seeing how through delusions and karma one obtains the contaminated aggregates. Then one goes deeper into the nature of delusions and karma,

specifically identifying the seed, i.e. the ignorance of grasping at true existence. What is that misconception and how does it come about? After having identified ignorance, then one thinks about how to apply the antidotes for overcoming the grasping at an inherently or truly existent self. In this way one gains a further insight, which contributes to the understanding of emptiness or selflessness.

It is also important to relate whatever uncomfortable circumstances one may find oneself in to the understanding of the four noble truths. For example, the experience of just a headache can be used as an opportunity to actually reflect upon all of the four noble truths in great detail, using that as a great analytical meditation, which then helps to generate a very strong Dharma state of mind. For example, when one has a headache thinking immediately: Why do I experience a headache? Where does this pain come from? What is the nature of the pain? What does the pain reflect? By reflecting on the pain like this, one realises that one experiences the pain because of having the contaminated aggregates.

Then one relates that pain to a more subtle level of suffering, thinking about how one's contaminated aggregates serve as the basis to experience the pain of that headache. Then the next question arises. How did one obtain the contaminated aggregates? So one begins to reflect on the truth of origination, thinking about delusions, and how it is delusions and karma that were the cause of those contaminated aggregates, which were not causeless. So the real cause of the headache is the delusions and karma that were the main causes for one to obtain contaminated aggregates. Then, one analyses delusions and karma further, pinpointing as mentioned previously, the main cause of delusions, and the specific delusion of the ignorance of grasping at a truly existent self.

Having identified that, one reflects on how these causes can be removed. It is possible. How? It is when one develops the wisdom that serves as a direct opponent or antidote for overcoming that ignorance, which is the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness. Then one can remove the causes within oneself and that understanding or wisdom is referred to as the true path. When one reflects on that, one realises that through that understanding one can remove the causes and obtain the state of true cessation, which is the complete elimination of all suffering. So in this way, with the experience of a headache one can use the four noble truths generally to serve as a basis for a deeper understanding of the whole structure of the path.

If one can structure one's practice along the basis of the four noble truths then it becomes a really comprehensive, complete practice in itself, and moreover a manageable practice that we can relate to. After the Buddha gave the teaching on the four noble truths he then explained further that the truth of suffering is to be recognised, the truth of origination is to be abandoned, the truth of cessation is to be actualised, and the truth of the path is to be meditated upon. So the incomparably kind Buddha explained the actual manner of how to practise.

One has to fully understand why one is in the nature of suffering. What does that mean? To fully understand that is the first step. Then when one fully understands the nature of suffering, the truth of suffering in relation to oneself, then the wish to abandon the causes of suffering, which is the truth of origination, will arise spontaneously in the mind.

When one sees that it is possible to abandon the original cause of suffering then the wish to actualise the cessation of suffering will spontaneously develop as well. When the strong determination to actualise cessation is developed, then the wish to meditate upon the path, the true path, which is specifically the wisdom realising emptiness or selflessness, will arise. That then becomes the actual true path that is to be meditated upon. Becoming familiar with this, and meditating upon it becomes the antidote. In this way one gets the true essence of the practice while meditating on emptiness.

An assumption that one is meditating on emptiness but lacking a deep basis of understanding of how it relates to the whole structure of the path is quite shallow. While befriending grasping at a self, attempting to meditate on emptiness would just be pretentious. Meditating on that sort of emptiness can never serve as an antidote to self-grasping, because it is in fact befriending that grasping at a self.

The way to practice is to befriend the wisdom realising selflessness, and to see the self-grasping as the real enemy. We are not talking about external enemies here. Meditating on, and befriending the wisdom realising selflessness means gaining a familiarity with meditating on selflessness and emptiness, and that understanding will then lead one to real freedom—overcoming cyclic existence.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

> All who have gained a free and fortunate human body,
> Following the reasoning of Nagarjuna and his son,
> Should understand emptiness to mean dependent arising.
> Who would not make effort to achieve this end?

The meaning of the first line is clear. It refers to those who have obtained this precious human life in order to gain the ultimate freedom from cyclic existence and so forth. According to the second line one then follows the reasoning of Nagarjuna and his sons. Here 'his sons' refers to Aryadeva and Chandrakirti, specifically Aryadeva. The third line refers to the particular reasons establishing emptiness, which were presented earlier and also explained at other times. They are: being free from independent or inherently existent one or many; using dependent arising itself, such as a sprout is not inherently existent because of being dependent origination; being free of the four extremes; lacking the four possibilities of production; and lacking an inherently produced effect at the time of the cause.

By referring to the text you will be able to determine the particular type of reasons used by the great masters as a way to gain a profound understanding of the explanation of emptiness. The last line implies that one should make every effort using these means to achieve the ultimate goals.

We have covered texts that were composed by the masters that have been referred to here. The root text composed by Nagarjuna is *The Root of Wisdom*, and this text, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses,* is a commentary on that text. We have previously studied Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, which is also a commentary on *The Root of Wisdom*. In Study Group we have also covered the ninth chapter of Shantideva's *Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life,* which relates to the teachings on emptiness. So when we reflect upon what we have ventured into and studied, we can rejoice and commit to further expanding our knowledge.

Even though I cannot claim that I have clear understanding of these texts, I rejoice in feeling that I have had great fortune to be able to try to make an attempt to explain them, and in that way I feel that I have made good connection with the

explanations found in the texts. I definitely rejoice on having had that opportunity, and likewise you can rejoice too.

So regardless of whether the teacher has been able to explain it well, and regardless of whether the listeners have been able to understand much of it, the point is that we can definitely rejoice in having made an attempt to try to explain and understand these teachings and texts. Just the attempt has been a great fortune for us. But we should not leave it just as being a great fortune.

We should make the strong aspirational prayer, 'Even though I may not have understood much now, may the imprints that I have gained from having listened to these teachings serve as a cause to be able to gain a clearer understanding of these teachings throughout this life. And particularly in future lifetimes, may I never be separated from the teachings such as these of the great masters, which very clearly and precisely explain the unmistaken ways to liberation and enlightenment. May I be able to continuously, in all my lifetimes, come into contact with such teachings, and never be separated from them'.

In fact the opportunity that we have had to be able to come into contact with the teachings, i.e. the teacher teaching, and the students listening, is in itself definitely a result of having made previous connections, aspirational prayers and so forth. So the fact that we are able to do it now is already a great fortune as a result of previous connections that have been made. Having made the connection now we can use it as an opportunity to further our connection with these teachings, to gain the ultimate understanding of wisdom.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the fourteenth chapter of the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds,** *showing how to meditate on the refutation of extreme conceptions.*

This concludes the commentary on the fourteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on the refutation of extreme conceptions, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas".*

CHAPTER XV: REFUTING THE INHERENT EXISTENCE OF PRODUCTION, DURATION AND DISINTEGRATION, THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRODUCTS[1]

This heading is actually the definition of a product, which is that which has the characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. So this chapter refutes the inherent existence of the specific characteristics of products, which are production, duration and disintegration.

The chapter is divided into two main sections.
1. Explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

The material of the chapter is divided into two sections.
1.1. Extensively establishing dependent arisings which are not inherently produced as existing in the manner of a magician's illusions
1.2. Concluding summary of the refutations of inherent existence

1.1. Extensively establishing dependent arisings which are not inherently produced as existing in the manner of a magician's illusions

This has three subheadings.
1.1.1. Specific refutation of inherent production
1.1.2. General refutation of inherently existent production, duration and disintegration
1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently

1.1.1. Specific refutation of inherent production

This has two subheadings.
1.1.1.1. Extensive explanation
1.1.1.2. Summarized meaning: showing the effects of refuting production

1.1.1.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This has five subdivisions.
1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether that which exists or does not exist is produced
1.1.1.1.2. Refutation by examining the beginning, middle and end
1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining both self and other
1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining sequentiality and simultaneity
1.1.1.1.5. Refutation by examining the three times

---

[1] The correct numbering of this chapter heading is 3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the Inherent Existence of Production, Duration and Disintegration, the characteristics of products, but as, has been the case throughout, numbering starts anew with each chapter for ease of reference.

See 4 March 2008 for a complete of the structure of the text, part of which is
3.1 An overview of the text
3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters, which has two outlines:
3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth, the first section of which is:
3.2.2.1 Extensively explaining ultimate truth, which in turn has three sub-headings:
3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena
3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena
3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

1.1.1.1.1. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING WHETHER THAT WHICH EXISTS OR DOES NOT EXIST IS PRODUCED

There are four subdivisions of this heading.
1.1.1.1.1.1. Reason refuting production of that which exists or does not exist
1.1.1.1.1.2. Establishing its mode [of operation]
1.1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining the time of production
1.1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining the thing itself and another thing

1.1.1.1.1.1. Reason refuting production of that which exists or does not exist

This relates to one of the five reasonings, which is the reasoning concerning whether and effect exists or does not exist inherently.

> *Assertion:* Products exist inherently because their characteristics such as production exist.
>
> *Answer:* Products would exist if their characteristics existed, but these do not exist inherently.
>
> *How can the non-existent be produced,* *351*
> *If what does not exist at the last is produced?*
> *How can that which exists be produced,*
> *If what exists from the outset is produced?*

Some schools say that production is inherently existent, because their characteristics, such as production, exist. That is the assertion that is being refuted. The reason given in the assertion as to why production is inherently existent, is because its characteristics of production, duration and disintegration exist. What is being specifically refuted here is the inherent existence of products as well as their characteristics. 'Products would exist' means that products would exist inherently if the characteristics also existed inherently, but the characteristics do not exist inherently.

The commentary elaborates on the answer to the assertion.

> If production is asserted to produce products,

What should be understood in this explanation is that if production is asserted to produce products is a specific reason for that which exists, or which does not exist, then does the effect exist at the time of the cause or not? There are two possibilities.

If the **effect does exist at the time of the cause**:

> ...then according to those who propound the non-existence of the effect, the sprout which does not exist at the time of the seed is produced after the final moment of a seed for which the necessary causes and conditions are assembled.
>
> A sprout which does not exist during the last moment of the seed cannot be produced by way of its own entity, otherwise it follows that donkeys' horns and so forth would also be produced. Thus how can anything which does not exist at the time of its cause be produced by way of its own entity? It cannot.

If the assumption is that the effect does not exist at the time of the cause then, 'how can anything that does not exist at the time of the cause be produced by way of its own entity? It cannot'.

If the effect does not exist at the time of the cause, implying it does not exist by way of its own entity at the time of the cause, then the refutation was made earlier.

> How can anything which exists at the time of its cause be produced?

If it does exist by way of its own entity, then

> It follows that it will not be produced, since anything existing at the time of its cause was produced from the outset, prior to being itself.

The absurdity that is being pointed out is that if the effect already exists at the time of the cause, then what is the need for producing it if it already exists? There would be no extra need as it already exists at the time of the cause.

Then the actual syllogism follows:

> The subject, a sprout, is not produced by way of its own entity, for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.

The subject is the sprout, the predicate is 'not produced by way of its own entity', and the reason is 'for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཚངས། །བསྟན་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 April 2008

As usual, we sit in a relaxed and comfortable position and generate a positive motivation in our mind, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.'

1.1.1.1.1.2. Establishing its mode [of operation]

This heading establishes the mode of the earlier syllogism, which is:

> The subject, a sprout, is not produced by way of its own entity, for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.

This syllogism refutes both possibilities of an effect being produced by way of its own entity, either the instance of the effect existing at the time of the cause, or the instance that it doesn't exist at the time of the cause.

> *Since the effect destroys the cause,* *352*
> *That which does not exist will not be produced.*
> *Nor will that which exists be produced*
> *Since what is established needs no establisher.*

In relation to the first two lines, the commentary explains:

> Since the sprout cannot be produced unless the seed undergoes change, the process which produces the resultant sprout destroys the causal seed. Thus something which does not exist at the time of the seed will not be produced by way of its own entity.

[1]The Vaisheshikas use the first part of the reasoning (also presented earlier in the text) to assert that the effect exits at the time of the cause. Thus for them the fact that the seed undergoes change and that the resultant sprout destroys the causal seed, is a reason for the sprout to exit at the time of the cause. They state that there is a sprout at the time of the seed, because if not then how could the sprout be produced later through the change of the seed? They conclude that it has to be the case that the sprout already exits at the time of the seed. Their assertion however implies that the sprout exits at the time of the seed by way of its own entity and is thus also produced by way of its own entity. In our system, the fact that the seed undergoes change and that the resultant sprout destroys the seed, does not serve as a reason to establish the existence of the sprout at the time of the seed. Rather it serves has a valid reason to show that there cannot be truly existent production. As the commentary further explains:

> In general, even though a sprout which is non-existent at the time of the seed is produced, it is incorrect to accept truly existent production, for then one must also accept the production of rabbits' horns.

This is refuting the assertion that there is inherent production of a sprout because it exists at the time of the seed. The fact that the seed undergoes change and produces a sprout means that there is no inherently existent sprout at the time of the seed. Thus it is not correct to accept that the sprout is produced by way of its own entity, even though a sprout that is non-existent at the time of the seed is produced.

What is being refuted is, that there is a truly existent production of a sprout. This also implies that the sprout does not exist at the time of the seed, however because of the lack of the sprout at the time of the seed, it doesn't mean then that there is a truly existent production. If there was indeed truly existent production, then anything could be produced from anything and thus the absurdity of having to accept the production of rabbits' horns, which is a non-existent phenomenon.

In relation to the last two lines, the commentary says:

> Since something which is established at the time of its cause does not need anything to establish it, that which exists at the time of its cause will not be produced.

This is refuting that the effect exits at the time of the cause, with the reasoning that something that is already established at the time of the cause does not need to be produced. In our own system the sprout is not established at the time of the seed, and it is thus produced later. Even though the sprout does not exist at the time of the cause, that does not however imply inherent production, as there cannot be production from its own side.

The last part of the commentary says:

> …that which exists at the time of its cause will not be produced.

If the effect does exist at the time of the cause, then there is no need for it to be produced, because that is already established or existent at the time of the cause.

1.1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining the time of production

> *There is no production at that time,* *353*
> *Nor is there production at another.*
> *If not produced at that time nor another,*
> *When will there ever be production?*

As the commentary reads:

> At a time when the sprout itself exists there is no production, since it does not need to be produced.

Again, what is implied is an inherently existent production or production by way of its own entity:

> Other than that, when it does not exist there is no production, since it cannot be produced. If it is not produced at that time nor at the other, when will there ever be production?

The last sentence in the commentary is a rhetorical question, implying that there couldn't be a time of production. What is being explained is that if it is not produced at that time or at any other time, then that exhausts any possibility of it being produced. Again, this refers to being produced by way of its own entity, and that is what is being refuted.

The refutation is of production by way of its own entity. The main point of the verse is presented as a counter question: if something is to be produced by way of its own entity, then is it produced at the time that it exists, or at any other time? If you say that it is produced at the time of its existence, then that is redundant since it already exists. That's an absurdity in itself, for if it already exists then there is no need for it to be produced. If it is not produced at its own time, then the only other option is for it to be produced at another time when it doesn't exist. But how can it be produced at a time when it doesn't exist?

[1] Trans: This section has been revised extensively after discussion with Geshe Doga to clarify the finer points of the argument.

1.1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining the thing itself and another thing

Assertion: Milk turning into something which is curd constitutes production.

Answer: That is incorrect.

Just as there is no production 354
Of that as the thing it is,
Neither is it produced
As something else.

What is being refuted here is that there is inherent production either because things maintain their own entity, or because they transform into something else. The example used is of milk (the cause) and curd (the effect). If milk maintains its own entity then, as the commentary explains, with the meaning of the first two lines:

> Since something which exists as milk does not need to become milk, there is no production.

Thus the absurdity of a production of something that maintains its own entity is being pointed out.

If you (Vaisheshikas and the like) however conclude that things must be produced by transforming into another entity, again implying a production by way of its own entity, then as the commentary further explains:

> Neither is that milk produced as something else, i.e. curd, for the two are different entities.

The main point being made here is that the milk and curd are two different entities. This indicates that milk has its own characteristics, and that curd has its own characteristics. This in turn implies that that those particular characteristics that constitute milk, and those which constitute curd, come about due to certain causes and conditions, which means there cannot be inherently existent milk or curd. Thus milk cannot produce curd as something else by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.2. Refutation by examining the beginning, middle and end

There is no inherent production for the following reason too.

The first, intermediate and last 355
Are not possible prior to production.
How can each begin
Without the other two?

As the commentary explains the verse:

> First production, then duration and lastly disintegration are not possible prior to production, because that which is unproduced cannot have production, duration and disintegration.

What is being refuted is production by way of its own entity. If production were to be by way of its own entity, then the characteristics of whatever is produced, which are production, duration and lastly disintegration would not be possible. If inherently existent production or production by way of its own entity occurs prior to production, then that implies the absurdity of the different instances of production, duration and disintegration becoming one. That is there would be no distinction between production, duration and disintegration. This absurd implication would occur if there was inherent production or production by way of its own entity, and that is what is being refuted.

As it mentions in the text:

> ...because that which is unproduced cannot have production, duration and disintegration.

What is being mainly refuted are these three instances of production, duration and disintegration existing by way of their own entity. If each were to exist by way of its own entity, then they would not be related to each other. But these three phenomena *are* clearly related to each other: because of production there is duration and so duration is related to production. Likewise, because there is duration, then what follows is disintegration and thus it is clearly a fact that disintegration relates to duration. So production, duration and disintegration are interdependently related and thus cannot be inherently existent. Having refuted the possibility of an inherently existent production, duration and disintegration, the counter-assertion is:

> *Assertion:* Production while a thing is being produced, duration while it lasts and disintegration when it disintegrates exist consecutively by way of their own entity.

What is being established in this counter-assertion is that while it is being produced there is production, and while it lasts there is duration, and that there is disintegration when it disintegrates, which implies that each characteristic of production exists by way of its own entity.

First of all, the assertion implies that production, duration and disintegration are all separate entities. Asserting that production, duration and disintegration exist by way of their own entities, implies that these three instances of production, duration and disintegration are completely separate entities, and that there is no relationship with each other, i.e. that they occur at different times and also exist as separate entities. The refutation to that is found in the last two lines of the verse. In explaining that refutation the commentary says:

> How could each at its particular time begin without the other two? Duration and disintegration are impossible without production. The same applies to the other two. Moreover a product is not feasible without any one of these characteristics.

The definition of a product is that which has three instances within one entity, the product. Thus a product has, by its very nature, production as well as duration and disintegration, and all three occur in the one product. Everything that is a product has an instance of production, an instance of duration and an instance of disintegration and all occur in the same product. So there is a relationship between the duration, disintegration and production. The earlier assertion implies that it is completely separate, however how could each particular instance occur without the other two? As explained earlier, each of the instances of a production has to rely upon the earlier moments.

As we go into each of the assertions and refutations, we come to realise that these later assertions relate to the earlier refutations, which were made to the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools. An earlier assertion implied that there is no production, duration and disintegration, but from the point of view of our own system, it was established that production, duration and disintegration occur in every product.

The other system implied that there is no production, duration or disintegration by stating that a product is existent by way of its own entity. That was refuted, by establishing that although there is production, duration and disintegration, they cannot exist by way of their own entity. Having refuted their initial assertion in that way, what they now assert is that there is production, duration and disintegration, but that each exists at its own time.

Production exists at a certain time, then duration exists separately by way of its own entity and then disintegration exists by way of its own entity. This assertion is refuted by asserting that their assertion implies that there is no relationship between production, duration and disintegration.

In other words their assertion implies that at the time of production, there is only production and during the time of duration, there is only duration and during the time of disintegration there is only disintegration. This shows that there is no relationship, and that is what is being refuted here. If you accept their assertion, then the product loses its characteristics, because every product has to have production, duration and disintegration within its own entity.

Let us use a vase as a particular example of a product. As it is a product, a vase has to have all characteristics of a product, which are production, duration and disintegration. If it is asked whether it is a production, then yes, it is a production. Does the vase have the characteristic of duration and disintegration? Yes, that same vase has the characteristics of duration as well as disintegration. So, all three characteristics exist in the one product, the vase. If we don't establish a vase in that way, then it fails to be a product, which is impermanent, because all those characteristics will not be present. That is how a vase is to be established.

In establishing the vase as a product, one is establishing the vase having all three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. Establishing the vase as a production, which is an effect, implies it has to have a cause, as without a cause there cannot be production. That has to be understood. One also has to understand that establishing the vase having duration implies that it is a production. That is because it is a product that has been produced over a period of time, and thus it has duration. Establishing that a vase has the characteristic of disintegration also implies that the vase had duration. Without duration there cannot be disintegration. So establishing the characteristics in this way shows how production, duration and disintegration are interdependently related. Thus, just as the vase cannot exist by way of its own entity, neither can its characteristics exist by way of their own entity.

As one contemplates whether a vase could exist by way of its own entity or not, one can investigate by relating to its characteristics in this way. The characteristic of a vase is that it is impermanent, and that it is a product. What are the reasons of a vase being a product? They are that it is a production, a duration and disintegration. Then one contemplates each of the characteristics, e.g. does the production of the vase exist by way of its own entity? By contemplating in this way one should then come to the conclusion that because it is a production, then that implies that there is a cause. So the production of the vase could not exist by way of its own entity because it depends on a cause. The very fact that it depends on a cause implies that it exists interdependently.

Then one can further contemplate on the duration of a vase. Is the duration of the vase by way of its own entity? In relation to other characteristics one must then come to the understanding that the duration of the vase could not exist by way of its own entity. Why? Because it depends on production, and without production there could not be duration. It is the same with disintegration. By investigating whether the disintegration of the vase exists by way of its own entity, one also comes to the conclusion that disintegration cannot exist by way of its own entity, because it depends on the duration. In this way, by contemplating the basic definition of a product, one gains a further understanding of how the vase is interdependent and thus how it cannot exist by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.3. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING BOTH SELF AND OTHER

For this reason too products cannot be inherently produced [with the following reasons].

The thing itself does not occur *356*
Without other things.
Thus there is no coming into existence
Either from self or from other.

The meaning of the verse as presented in the commentary is:

> The thing itself, such as a clay pot [the clay pot being an example of a thing], does not occur without other things, such as clay, since it depends upon clay.

First of all an earthen vase or clay pot, for example, cannot occur without other things, such as clay. In other words being an earthen vase it has to depend on other factors, the first of which is clay. Furthermore:

> The clay does not exist by way of its own entity either, since it depends on pebbles.

The Tibetan word, *sek,* translated here as pebbles, has two possible meanings. You have to fire any clay pottery in order for it to be produced and *sek* could refer to the firing of the vase. However the English commentary translates *sek* as 'pebbles'. That could also mean that the clay itself is not an inherently existent thing, as it depends on many of its own parts, such as small pebbles and so forth, to become clay. Thus the clay itself is dependent. The commentary further explains:

> Thus the pot does not come into existence either from self or from other, for since neither self nor other exist by way of their own entity, there is no inherent production.

As mentioned previously, one of the schools from the other systems established that the vase is both self-produced as well as produced by others. That very assertion is an absurdity in itself. They assert that a thing, for example a vase, is self-produced because it has its own characteristics. However it is also produced by others because it is produced from other things. In both instances their assertions imply that the vase is an inherently existent self-production as well as an inherently existent production by others.

The refutation from our system is that:

> …since neither self nor other exist by way of their own entity, there is no inherent production.

1.1.1.1.4. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING SEQUENTIALITY AND SIMULTANEITY

That is sub-divided into two:
1.1.1.1.4.1. Actual meaning
1.1.1.1.4.2. Refuting proof of inherent production

1.1.1.1.4.1. Actual meaning

It cannot be said to exist *357*
Before, after or simultaneously.
Therefore production does not occur
Simultaneously with the pot.

The commentary explains the meaning:

> Moreover there is no inherent production, since it is impossible to say that production and so forth exist before, after or simultaneously with the pot.

The production of a vase cannot exist before the vase occurs, neither can it exist simultaneously with the vase.

Furthermore:

> Therefore the pot's production does not occur simultaneously with the pot by way of its own entity. If it did, since the basis and that which is based upon it would be co-existent, it would follow that the pot had been produced, for it must exist even as it is approaching production.

The assertion and its refutation are also related to what was explained earlier, but are from a different perspective. What is asked is that if there was an inherent production of the vase, then would that production exist prior to the production of the vase, or simultaneously with, or after the vase is produced? All instances are absurd. Thus, as the root text says, production 'cannot be said to exist before, after or simultaneously' with the pot.

If it did, then the basis and that which it is based upon would be co-existent. First of all, for the production of the vase to exist prior to its production or after its production is a clear absurdity. The only possibility left is that it is produced simultaneously, and that is what is being refuted here.

If production did occur simultaneously with the vase then the basis and that which it is based upon would be co-existent. It would follow that the vase had already been produced, for it must exist even as it is approaching production. Then as established here, if the basis, and that which is based upon it are co-existent, then one would have to say that the pot has already been produced. Even as it was in the process of being produced you would have to imply that it had already been produced, which is also an absurdity.

1.1.1.1.4.2. Refuting proof of inherent production

> *Assertion:* The pot's production exists, for without it there could be no oldness and so forth, but there is oldness characterized by cessation.
>
> *Answer:* That is incorrect.
>
> *That which was previously produced* *358*
> *Was not old when first produced.*
> *Also that which afterwards has been*
> *Constantly produced is not old.*

'The pot's production exists' implies that the pot's production by way of its own entity exists. They are saying that the pot's production exists (implying existence by way of its own entity) because it could not become old without its production. However you can obviously see that there is an old pot. Of course what has to be understood here is that from our own system we would agree that there is an old pot, however the pot characterised as being old is not existent by way of its own entity. What they are trying to establish is that there is an old pot, and because it is an old pot that implies that there is a production that is existent by way of its own entity.

In relation to the first line of the verse, which refutes their assertion, the commentary states:

> The previously produced pot was not old when first produced because at that time it was new.

What is also implied here is that if a pot were to be produced by way of its own entity then it would always have to remain new. You would call it a new pot soon after it is produced, but if that new pot was produced by way of its own entity, then it would have to always remain as new, and it could never get old. Furthermore as the commentary reads:

> A previously produced thing does not grow old by way of its own entity. Nor is that old which afterwards has constantly been produced, for also at that time it is new. Since afterwards it is newly produced, it will not become old by way of its own entity. Furthermore, by refuting production existent by way of its own entity, oldness existent by way of its own entity is refuted, but mere [conventional] oldness is accepted in our system too.

That clarifies the main part of the refutation, which is that 'by refuting production existent by way of its own entity, oldness existent by way of its own entity is refuted'. However conventionally, even in our own system, oldness is accepted, and one accepts that there is an old pot.

What one must understand as a main point from this verse is that refuting that there is a production by way of its own entity also implies that an old pot existing by way of its own entity is refuted. As mentioned here in the commentary the existence of a conventionally old pot is not being refuted, as that is accepted in our system. What is thus being refuted is that the old pot exists by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.5. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING THE THREE TIMES

> Since there is no inherent production in any of the three times, production does not truly exist.
>
> *A present thing does not* *359*
> *Come into existence from itself,*
> *Nor come into existence from the future,*
> *And also not from the past.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

> Since cause and effect are not simultaneous, a present thing does not come into existence from its present self. Nor does it come into existence from the future, nor from the past. Moreover, since there is no inherent production in any of the three times, one must accept that production is false and like a magician's illusion.

This is asserted quite literally and clearly. What is being established is that cause and effect are not simultaneous. This implies that there is no inherently existent cause or effect in relation to the three times. Of course generally, we would say that the three times are related to each other – the present is related to the past, and the future is related to the present. However if they were to exist inherently then there would be no relationship between the past, present and the future. The main thing is that because there is no inherent production of any of the three times, production itself is like an illusion.

The main point of this verse is in establishing that there is neither production by way of its own entity in the past nor production by way of its own entity in the present, nor in the future. That leaves no room for production by way of its own entity. If there were to be production by way of its own entity, then it would have to be either in relation to the past, or present or future. But having refuted that there is production by way of its own entity in any of the three times, then that exhausts any possibility of a production by way of its own entity.

Following the normal set-up of the study group, the next session will be the discussion session and following that is the exam. As mentioned previously, discussion and the exam are an important element of study and a means of understanding of the material. So one must try to attend those sessions as well.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཚངས་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 May 2008

As usual we sit in a comfortable relaxed position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise well'.

1.1.1.2. Summarized meaning: showing the effects of refuting production

There is no coming of the produced, 360
Likewise no going of that which has ceased.
Since it is thus, why should existence
Not be like a magician's illusions?

In order to understand the meaning of the verse the commentary quotes from a sutra that reads:

> Sutra says: "Monks, it is as follows: when the eye is produced, it does not come from anywhere, and when it ceases, it does not go anywhere."

This relates to production by way of its own entity: that which does not come from anywhere nor does it go anywhere when it ceases. The commentary then explains the meaning of the sutra:

> Thus if there were inherent production, a thing should come from somewhere when it is produced, like the rising moon, and go somewhere when it ceases, like the setting moon. In that case it would be permanent, but since production and cessation are mere nominal imputations, one must accept that they are like magical illusions.

The analogy illustrating the absurdity of production being inherently existent is that it would be like the rising moon that must come from somewhere when it rises and goes somewhere when it sets. The meaning of the phrase, 'In that case it would be permanent' is, first of all when we perceive the moon rising in the evening and setting in the morning, we perceive it as being the same moon. However if the moon that rises and the one that sets were in fact the same moon, then of course it would be permanent. If the question is, 'Is there a moon when it rises?' then the answer is yes. Likewise, is there a moon when it sets? Yes there is a moon. However if the question is whether it is the same moon, then of course it is not the same, because the moon goes through change every single moment from the time that it rises until it sets. So that means while the earlier moments of the rising moon cease, the consequent later moments of the moon continue to come into existence.

Earlier in the teachings, it was shown that a functional thing in the morning ceases to exist by evening. The continuity of a functional thing in the morning will still remain in the evening, however the actual functional thing that one relates to in the morning will cease. This is the case for all functional phenomena; all productions have the nature of ceasing the moment after they are produced.

If production were to be inherently existent, or existent by way of its own entity, then it would be unchanging or unceasing. In that case the moon would be permanent: the setting moon would have to be the same moon that rose earlier in the evening. However that is absurd, as the moon is an impermanent phenomenon.

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

> Since things do not come from anywhere when they are produced nor go anywhere when they cease, why should external and internal existence not be like a magician's illusions? When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child.

What is being explained is that all functional phenomena, while lacking inherent existence, have the nature of being produced and then ceasing, and thus they are like magical illusions. An example of a magical illusion is a conjured horse or rabbit that appears to be a real horse or rabbit, but which in reality is not an actual horse or rabbit. All phenomena are in the same nature in that they appear as being inherently existent but in reality lack even an atom of inherent existence. That is how everything is like a magician's illusion.

When the commentary says, 'Why should external and internal existence not be like a magician's illusions?' that rhetorical question implies that all external and internal phenomena are in fact like a magician's illusions. Further on, when it says, 'When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child', it is differentiating two different analogies. Although all phenomena are like a 'created illusion', they are not like a 'barren woman's child', which is an example of non-existence. There cannot be a child to a barren woman, so that is an example of something that does not exist, whereas magician's illusions, such as conjured horses, do exist. The mistaken perception is to perceive the illusion as an actual phenomena, e.g. to perceive the conjured horse as an actual horse. That is a mistaken view, but actually perceiving the illusion is not mistaken, because there is a conjured horse. So in debate if it is asked whether a conjured horse exists, i.e. a magician's illusion, then the answer would have to be 'yes'. But if the question is whether the conjured horse actually exists as a real horse, then the answer is no. Though the illusion exists, the horse does not actually exist. Likewise, an unenlightened being's view that phenomena are truly existent is a mistaken perception, even though phenomena do exist. That is how the magician's illusion analogy illustrates the existence of all phenomena.

The difference between these two examples should be clearly understood. A barren woman's child is an example of something that does not exist, while a magician's illusion, such as a conjured horse, does exist. Another analogy of something that exists, but which does not exist in the way it appears, is the reflection of our face in the mirror. Although the reflection of our face exists, the reflection in the mirror is not actually our face. So seeing the reflection as being our actual face is mistaken. However the image of the reflection of our face in the mirror does exist. So the conclusion is that the mere reflection of our face in the mirror is existent, while the actual face does not exist in the mirror.

Putting theory into practice

The reflection of our face in the mirror is one of the analogies of how phenomena are like an illusion, and it should be incorporated into our thinking, and used in our daily life. Most of us look in the mirror in the morning, so when you see the reflection of your face, it would be good if that reminded you of how things lack inherent existence. When you see the image of your face in the mirror, you can remind yourself, 'Even though my face appears there, in reality it is

not my face. Likewise all phenomena appear as being inherently existent, or truly existent. However that is not the case, as they lack true existence'. If one can actually bring that to mind, then looking in the mirror would have served a great purpose in accumulating great merit.

The significance of this analogy relates to the syllogism: 'Things lack true existence, because of being interdependent origination'. If one were to actually bring to mind the meaning of that when one looks in the mirror, then there will not be much room for attachment when one looks in the mirror! In fact it can become an immediate antidote for overcoming attachment. As the advice given is to meditate on emptiness from the beginning of the morning, I suppose this would be a good way to start meditating on emptiness.

As the great masters have repeatedly advised we must put into practice whatever we have learned through the teachings. We must try to take that advice in a practical way, but it does not necessarily mean we have to go into solitude. On a daily basis we can use our daily activities, such as looking in the mirror, to remind ourselves of the actual meaning of the teachings. If we can remind ourselves of how the mirror illustrates that phenomena lack inherent existence, or true existence, and bring to mind that just as the reflection in the mirror is not one's face even though it appears to be, we can then go on to recall that all phenomena, though they appear to be truly or inherent existent, in reality they lack any inherent or true existence. Just bringing that to mind is highly significant, and that is how we put into practice the meanings we derive from the teachings. That is how we can familiarise ourselves with the teachings on a daily basis.

The teachings often refer to recalling an image and meditating on it. One often finds that sort of instruction in the teachings. Focusing on an image refers to the meditation object. For example, if we are meditating on the image of Buddha Shakyamuni, it is not the gross outline of the painting or the statue that we are focusing on in our meditation, but the complete image of the Buddha that one recalls in one's mind. Even though bringing the image of the Buddha to one's mind is initially difficult, it becomes clearer and clearer through familiarity, and that is what we focus on in the practice of meditation.

Likewise Lama Tsong Khapa said that focusing on the image means focusing on the aspect of the Buddha, and that is what one brings to mind. The more one becomes familiar with that image as one engages in the practice of meditation, the more vivid the image will become in one's mind. As it becomes clearer and more vivid, then one's practice of meditating on it becomes more and more profound.

The commentary then further refers to Chandrakirti's *Madhyamika* text, which explains that though things appear to be inherently existent or truly existent, in reality they entirely lack inherent existence or true existence in every way. Just like an illusion appears to be real, things appear to be truly existent. An Arya being perceives all phenomena as being like an illusion, and seeing phenomena as an illusion, which leads one to freedom from bondage to samsara. As explained further, until and unless one sees all phenomena as an illusion, yet functioning in the nature of interdependent origination, there is no way to gain freedom from cyclic existence.

1.1.2. General refutation of inherently existent production, duration and disintegration

This has four sub-headings.

1.1.2.1. Refutation of inherently existent characteristics by examining sequentiality and simultaneity

1.1.2.2. Refutation through the consequence of infinite regress of the characteristics

1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining whether they are one or different

1.1.2.4. Refutation by examining whether they are existent or non-existent by way of their own entity

1.1.2.1. Refutation of inherently existent characteristics by examining sequentiality and simultaneity

Here the word 'characteristics' refers to the three characteristics of products mentioned previously, which are production, duration and disintegration. The refutation refers to inherently existent production: if it existed then the characteristics would have to occur either simultaneously or sequentially, as there is no other way they can occur.

> *Production, duration and disintegration* *361*
> *Do not occur simultaneously.*
> *If they are not consecutive either,*
> *When can they ever occur?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

> Since production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products, do not occur simultaneously by way of their own entity nor consecutively by way of their own entity, when do they occur by way of their own entity?

This implies that as the characteristics do not occur simultaneously or consecutively, there is no other way that they can occur. The syllogism in relation to the refutation here is, as quoted in the commentary:

> Subject: Production, duration and disintegration
> Predicate: Do not exist inherently
> Reason: Because of not being inherently simultaneous or consecutive.

Another syllogism in relation to the production, duration and disintegration not existing inherently uses the reason, 'because they are phenomena that have parts'.

Here the syllogism is that production, duration and disintegration, do not exist inherently, because of not being inherently simultaneous or consecutive. In relation to earlier explanations, if they were to be simultaneous then the fault that would arise would be that the three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration would be one and the same, and could not be differentiated.

On the other hand if these three characteristics were produced consecutively, then when there is production, it would lack the other two characteristics, i.e. duration and disintegration would not exist at that time. Likewise when there is duration then that phenomenon would not have production or disintegration, and also when there is disintegration it would lack duration and production. Thus the definition of a product would not apply. Then, as mentioned previously, the fallacy of functional phenomena lacking characteristics of a product, would occur.

So the conclusion is that since the characteristics of a product cannot be inherently simultaneous, nor consecutively existent with the product, there is no way that a product can be inherently existent.

1.1.2.2. Refutation through the consequence of infinite regress of the characteristics

If things were to be inherently existent then another fault would be infinite regress of the characteristics. In this verse inherent production, or inherent existence, is refuted by showing the fallacy of infinite regress of the characteristics.

> *If for production and all the others,* 362
> *All of these occurred again,*
> *Disintegration would seem like production*
> *And duration like disintegration.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Since production, duration and disintegration would all require the production of production and so forth, disintegration like production, would have another disintegration and duration too would seem like disintegration in that one would have to assert that it has another duration. Thus there would be infinite regress. In that case the basic characteristics would not be established. Therefore there is not even an atom of inherent existence.

If production, duration and disintegration existed inherently then the infinite regress would be that production itself would need another production, and duration would need another duration and that duration would also need another duration and in that way there would be infinite regress in all three instances of production, duration and disintegration. Thus there would be no way that one could point out the actual characteristics. As it says here, the characteristics themselves would not be established, because they would all have to depend upon another factor for their existence. If the characteristics cannot be established then that which is characterised also cannot be established. Therefore, that which is characterised cannot be established inherently.

Basically what is to be understood here is that there is continuity in relation to the continuity of production, duration and disintegration. However it is not an inherently existent continuation. When we talk about a phenomenon in terms of being a product, then that phenomenon, whatever it is, has production, duration and disintegration. However it is the continuity of that phenomenon that goes through production, and then duration and disintegration. For example when the seed turns into a sprout it is not as though the seed itself without changing, travels along and becomes a sprout. However the continuation of the seed can be established as existing at the time of the sprout.

It is the same with the individual self: we relate to ourselves as existing in the morning, through the day and in the evening. That existence is based on the continuity of the self of the individual. It is not that the same individual in the morning exists at noon and then exists in the evening as well. Of course conventionally the fact that we wake up in the morning establishes that the individual from last night still exists. However that is because there is the continuation of the self or individual from the previous evening.

During the night when the individual sleeps it is the continuation of that person who went to sleep. Then they wake up in the morning and continue to exist throughout the day and evening. So in reality it is the continuity of the individual or the person. It is because of the continuity of the person can be established that we are able to establish that the person exists. So conventionally we would say that the person from last night still exists now. If we were to ask, does the person from last night still exist this morning? Yes. Does the person from this morning exist at noon? Yes. Do they still exist in the evening? Yes. So, it is because of establishing the continuity of the person that we can conventionally say that the person exists.

Some individuals can use this for their practice to establish the existence of past lives. They relate waking up in the morning seemingly not having been conscious during sleep, to the existence of past lives. Just as one wakes up in the morning and continues to function, so too one was reborn following death in a past life. The continuity of one's existence from past lives can be understood in this way.

In relation to the existence of a self or 'I', what we have to understand is that there is what is called a 'mere self', and it is this mere self that is the self that comes from previous lifetimes into this life, and which will continue on to future lives. In relation to ourselves there is the 'mere self' which is characterised and related to the existence in 'all our lives', and a self that is characterised with the features of 'this life'. The self that is characterised with this life is a self that is imputed upon the aggregates that we have now, and this self will come to an end when we experience death. That is, the self that is characterised in relation to this life will cease to exist.

However the 'mere' self will not cease to exist, as it is that which continues on to future lives. In the teachings of the *Life Stories of the Buddha* we see, for example, that the Buddha mentions that at a certain time he was a certain being, a bodhisattva, a Brahmin and so forth. When it is related to past lives of the Buddha, for example, it is referring to a particular instance of a particular lifetime. It is the same for clairvoyants who can remember their past lives, for example being a Deva being, or celestial god. Their memory of that shows that the self is a continuation of 'the mere self' that existed then which is remembered by the self that is characterised with the features of the life now. Thus one can have a memory of a previous lifetime such as a god.

When that existence of a lifetime of a god is remembered it relates to the individual at that time. It is not remembered as, 'I am now that god who was in the previous lifetime'. Rather it is remembered as an individual at that time, who is related to the self now, who had an existence at that time as a god, that is being remembered. So that is how one should relate to the self, which comes from the past and goes on to future lifetimes.

1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining whether they are one or different

What is being refuted here is a phenomenon existing either as an inherently existent one or single entity, or existing as an inherently different or separate entity in relation to its characteristics.

> *Question:* Are the characteristics and that which they characterize one or different in nature?
> *Assertion:* That which is characterized, namely a product such as a pot, is different in nature from its three characteristics-production, duration and disintegration.
> *Answer:* How can that which is characterized, namely a product such as a pot, be impermanent? It follows that it is not, for impermanence and the pot are inherently different.

The characteristics are production, duration and disintegration and 'that which they characterise'. A vase, for example, would be 'that which is characterised'. So the question here is are the characteristics and that which they characterise one or different or separate in nature?

If that which is characterized is said to be 363
Different from its characteristics,
How can the characterized be impermanent?
Alternatively, existence of all four is unclear.

The assertion relates to the first two lines of the verse. What is being explained here is that if the characteristics and that which is being characterised, i.e. the pot and its characteristics, are inherently different then because there is no relation between the characteristics and that which is being characterised, that would mean that the pot would not have those qualities of production, duration and disintegration. So the pot could not be impermanent.

The absurdity is clearly pointed out. If the pot and its characteristics were inherently separate or different, then that would mean that they are mutually exclusive, i.e. there is no relationship between the pot and its characteristics. If that were the case then because they have no relationship whatsoever, the characteristics of production, duration and disintegration would not apply to the pot because there is no connection, as they are inherently separate. If they are not related in any way then those qualities will not apply to the pot and then the pot would fail to be impermanent. That which makes a pot impermanent is its characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. However if the pot is completely separate from its characteristics then those qualities would not pertain to the pot and it would fail to be impermanent.

As the commentary continues:

> Alternatively, if they are inherently not different, the four, i.e. the three characteristics and that which they characterize, do not clearly have the entity of existing as functional things. It follows that the characteristics are not characteristics because of being one with that which they characterize, and that which they characterize is not what is characterized because of being one with the characteristics. One should therefore not assert that they are inherently one or different.

If that which is being characterised and the characteristics are inherently one then they cannot exist as a functional thing, because that which is characterised and the characteristics will be one and inseparable, and we would not be able to distinguish between them. The commentary says that if they were inherently one then, 'It follows that the characteristics are not characteristics because of being one with that which they characterise'. If they are one with what they characterise then how can there be characteristics? That is the absurdity that would follow if they were inherently one.

The meaning of 'and that which they characterise is not what is characterised because of being one with the characteristics', is that a functional phenomena ceases to serve the entity of being a functional phenomena, because the distinction between the characteristics, and that which is being characterised, cannot be established. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

Thus the commentary concludes that 'one should therefore not assert that they are inherently one or different'. This relates to the earlier syllogism:

> Subject: A phenomena that has the three characteristics, such as a pot
> Predicate: Does not exist inherently
> Reason: Because it is not inherently existent one or inherently existent different.

The conclusion from our own system is: if you were to ask if whether that which is being characterised and the characteristics are separate or not then conventionally, as mentioned earlier in the commentary, we would have to say that they are separate. The very fact that they have a different sound indicates that they are separate. One is 'that which is to be characterised' and the other is 'the characteristics' of that which is to be characterised. So they are clearly separate conventionally. However what is being refuted here is that they cannot be inherently separate. Thus that which is characterised and the characteristics are conventionally separate but not inherently separate.

1.1.2.4. Refutation by examining whether they are existent or non-existent by way of their own entity

That is subdivided into two.
1.1.2.4.1. Refuting that production is truly existent because there are truly existent producing causes
1.1.2.4.2. Production and so forth are neither truly existent things nor non-things

It is good to refer to just the outline to try to get an understanding as to how it relates to the explanation in the text. The outlines can serve as a reminder of the main points that are made in the text.

1.1.2.4.1. Refuting that production is truly existent because there are truly existent producing causes

What is being refuted is that there are truly existent producing causes. Conventionally there are producing causes, and because they are producing causes that lack inherent existence, there also have to be effects. So conventionally we would have to say that there are producing causes and thus there is production. However what is being refuted here is that there is truly existent production because there are truly existent producing causes. There cannot be truly existent producing causes that produce truly existent effects.

> *Assertion:* Production and so forth exist inherently because the agent of production exists inherently.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *A thing is not produced from a thing* 364
> *Nor is a thing produced from a non-thing.*
> *A non-thing is not produced from a non-thing*
> *Nor is a non-thing produced from a thing.*

As the commentary clearly explains:

> The sprout, as an already existing functional thing is not produced again while the seed as a functional thing exists, because a sprout is not produced unless the seed undergoes change. Also a sprout that has already been produced cannot be produced again.

The very fact that a sprout is called a sprout means that it is already produced. That which is already produced is already a functional thing and does not need to be produced again. A sprout will not be produced when the seed as a functional thing exists, means that when the seed exists then the sprout is not produced, because the sprout is produced only when the seed undergoes change. 'Also a sprout that has already been produced cannot be produced again'. In both cases the absurdity that is being pointed out is that a sprout cannot be produced while the seed still exists. If the sprout is already produced then it does not have to be produced again because it has already been produced. That is the fallacy being pointed out.

We can relate the explanation in the commentary to the four possibilities outlined in the verse:

1. 'A thing is not produced from a thing'. This refers to an inherent existent thing. An inherently existent thing is not produced from another inherently existent thing, because an inherently existent thing does not have production, i.e. it cannot produce things. So, an inherently existent thing being produced from another inherently existent thing, is the first absurdity.

2. 'Nor is a thing produced from a non-thing'. A thing cannot be produced from a non-thing because that goes against the law of cause and effect sequence. A non-thing cannot produce anything so it cannot produce a thing. The possibility of that is an absurdity because of not pertaining to the law of cause and effect sequence.

3. 'A non-thing is not produced from a non-thing' i.e. a non-thing cannot produce anything. A non-thing cannot be produced from a non-thing because a non-thing cannot produce anything. Therefore that possibility is also pointed out as an absurdity.

4. 'Nor is a non-thing produced from a thing'. Even though a thing does produce other things it does produce an effect, and the effect that it produces has to be a functional thing, an existing thing. So a thing cannot produce a non-thing. That is the last absurdity of the four possibilities.

The commentary continues:

> The sprout as a functional thing is not produced from a non-functional seed, because a non-functional thing does not have the ability to produce an effect. Furthermore a non-functional effect is not produced from a non-functional cause: a burnt seed does not produce a burnt sprout.

The last part says that 'since inherent production is impossible, causes and conditions giving rise to it are meaningless'. So the conclusion, as it says in the commentary, is that inherent production is impossible and so causes and conditions giving rise to it are meaningless. If there were any possibility, it would have to be one of these four possibilities. However an inherently existent thing produced from an inherently existent thing is not possible. The next possibility is that a thing is produced from a non-thing, however the absurdity is that a non-thing cannot produce anything. Likewise with the third possibility of a non-thing being produced from a non-thing. However that completely forsakes the cause and effect sequence of phenomena that applies to functional things. Non-functional things cannot have the cause and effect sequence, so a non-thing being produced from a non-thing is absurd. The last possibility is that a non-thing is produced from a thing. Though a thing does produce phenomena, what it produces in relation to the law of cause and effect is a functional thing, and it cannot produce a non-functional thing. That is the fourth fallacy. As there is no possibility of an inherently existent production under any circumstances, there cannot be an atom of inherent existence in any phenomena.

So the conclusion is that the law of cause and effect sequence relates conventionally to existing phenomena, being produced and having effects, but cannot relate to inherent existence under any circumstances. By understanding that one should come to the conclusion that there cannot be inherent existence under any circumstances. Though conventional causes produce conventional effects, there cannot at any time be inherently existent causes that produce inherently existent effects.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 May 2008

1.1.2.4.2. PRODUCTION AND SO FORTH ARE NEITHER TRULY EXISTENT THINGS NOR NON-THINGS

In relation to the outline 'things' refers to compounded phenomena. Compounded phenomena are things that are amassed and have causes and effects, so they are impermanent phenomena. Whereas 'non-things' are un-compounded, permanent phenomena. So production and so forth is being refuted as being either truly existent 'things' or truly existent 'non-things'. The verse that presents the refutation is the following verse:

A thing does not become a thing, **365**
Nor does a non-thing become a thing.
A non-thing does not become a non-thing,
Nor does a thing become a non-thing.

The main points being presented here are the refutations of truly existent phenomena. It is good to bring to mind the reasons why things lack true existence or existence by way of their own entity or inherent existence. Why do they lack that? One can first relate to how things appear to us and then question whether they exist in the way they appear to us. In relation to an ordinary being's perception, we can conclude that if things were to exist in the manner that they appear, then that would imply that things are truly existent. That is because to an ordinary being's perception, everything appears as being truly existent or inherently existent. It is good to think about this in relation to one's own perceptions. Do things actually exist in the way that they appear to oneself or not?

In order to investigate and analyse whether things exist in the way that they appear, one must first relate to how things appear to one's own perception. How do they appear? How do external and internal phenomena appear to us when we perceive them? That is something that we need to contemplate and analyse. With this kind of investigation one will get closer and closer to the actual understanding of the lack of true or inherent existence. Otherwise just by relating to these topics and assuming that things do not truly exist, or just saying with mere words that things lack true existence, will not really help one's practice very much. One needs to engage in the actual analysis and investigation oneself.

Investigating and analysing further why things appear as being inherently existent to our consciousness, we can consider for example, how things appear to our eye consciousness. The reason why an eye consciousness perceiving the colour 'blue' is considered a mistaken consciousness is because the eye consciousness itself is stained with, or influenced by, the ignorance of grasping at the self, which is the misconception of grasping at a truly existent self. Thus an ordinary being's eye consciousness is considered to be a mistaken consciousness. Though it is not a wrong consciousness as far as perceiving 'blue' as the colour blue, it is mistaken with regard to perceiving 'blue' as being inherently existent. It should be understood that when the blue colour appears to the eye consciousness it appears as being independently existent, existing by way of its own entity, meaning that the blue colour appears to exist in of itself without depending on causes and conditions. It does not appear as being an interdependent origination but rather a phenomenon that exists from its own side, without depending on causes and conditions. That is how it appears to the eye consciousness and the misconception of grasping at the self influences the eye consciousness to hold on to that appearance and believe in it. The eye consciousness seeing the blue colour as 'blue' is not a wrong consciousness, but it is mistaken in relation to perceiving the colour 'blue' as truly existent. It is this misconception of grasping at true existence or inherent existence that influences us to believe in what appears to the eye consciousness.

To clarify again, the appearance of 'blue' as the colour blue is not wrong but apprehending the colour blue as existing by way of its own entity without depending on causes and conditions, and then grasping and believing that, is the mistaken conception of grasping at true existence. This is how we must identify the ignorance of grasping at true existence that we have within our own mind. It is very important that we understand and realise this point. Then in our investigation we will come to understand that everything that appears to the five sense consciousnesses appears as being truly existent for an ordinary being. Therefore they are mistaken consciousness.

Understanding this will definitely help our practice in reducing and eventually overcoming our misconceptions. Take the example of when something beautiful appears to the eye consciousness. One should immediately question, 'Does it exist in the way that it appears to me or not?' Does the beauty truly exist in the object that one sees, or not? If beauty does exist in the way that it appears to one's eye consciousness, then the conclusion would be that beauty is indeed truly existent – that beauty does exist independently, as that is the criteria for true existence, which is existing in the way that it appears to an ordinary perception.

Likewise, in relation to an object that one feels aversion towards; do the faults that appear to one's perception actually exist in the way that they appear or not? When one does this analysis with the logical reasoning given in the teachings, one can then conclude that neither the beauty nor the faults of the object that one perceives actually exist in the way that they appear to oneself. That will then immediately reduce the attachment and aversion in relation to the object. We will then be able to see the direct connection between the analysis and the effect, true existence or inherent existence, and how that understanding serves as an antidote to reduce strong attachment and anger. So in this way we can see the relevance of the practice.

As the teachings mention, it is really incredible when one begins to see attachment and aversion being reduced in this way. Then one can derive the meaning of the teachings that say, 'Even having a doubt about selflessness or emptiness will shatter the very core of samsaric existence'. Also we can then begin to understand the teachings, which say, 'When one meditates on the antidotes of grasping at true existence, that then becomes an antidote for overcoming all delusions'.

With a detailed investigation and analysis, we then come to the correct conclusion that things do not exist in the way the way they appear to an ordinary perception. To make the main point, as mentioned previously that conclusion, becomes a highly valid conclusion in our thinking. The reason is because when one actually comes to the point where one understands how things do not exist in the way that they appear to an ordinary perception, it is like holding the view of emptiness. It is holding the view associated with

emptiness, because the realisation of emptiness is basically seeing the lack of inherent or true existence in phenomena. Thus, bringing to mind the understanding that things do not exist in the way that they appear is bringing to mind the view of emptiness. In that way it becomes a highly meritorious, highly valuable view with which to familiarise our mind.

To make it simple for oneself, try to understand that perceiving things as truly existent or existing by way of their own entity is a faulty perception, and in this way we can identify the ignorance of grasping at true existence, which is what we need to abandon. The opposite view which is that things do not exist in the way that they appear to an ordinary perception, and therefore lack any kind of true or inherent existence. This is associated with the view of emptiness, which is what we need to adopt.

By recognising these two views as opposites we can familiarise ourselves with the correct view of selflessness or emptiness. It seems that I have side-tracked a bit; however I feel that these are very important points and techniques that we need to use in our daily lives.

We may not have the actual realisation of emptiness yet, but being keen students we wish to know the best way to practise in order to gain an understanding of emptiness. So for us the best way is to constantly remind ourselves of how things lack inherent or true existence. Even though all phenomena appear as being truly and independently existent, that is in fact false; phenomena do not exist in that way. We should constantly remind ourselves of that view and familiarise ourselves with understanding of emptiness. Of course we may not yet have a real conceptual understanding of emptiness derived from a lot of analysis, but constantly reminding and familiarising ourselves with this will lead to the direct realisations of emptiness.

The reason I stress this is because it is important that we use the great opportunities that we have now, such as the leisure of having clear thinking. We have the attribute of having a clear mind now so we must use it in a positive way. This in itself is a great opportunity. If we can use the clarity of our mind, the time and the leisure now to use our thinking process to rationalise and think. If we can use this ability of our mind now in a positive way to become familiar with the essential points of the Dharma such as the understanding of emptiness, then that makes our time now most worthwhile and useful. This is how we put into practice what we have heard from the teachings. We hear the teachings and we are interested in the teachings, but if we don't actually take it further in our daily life by using our intelligence and ability to think about these points now then that would be a wasted opportunity.

The Dharma says that wasting our time never stops, and that from moment to moment our life is fading away. So in each moment we are losing a great opportunity. As the great Kadampa masters have mentioned, 'The more one hears the more it should enhance one's positive way of thinking, that then makes one's life most meaningful and useful'. So this is the way to go about our practice.

In a practical way as the Kadampa masters have stated, and in reality what we need to practise is what we hear in the teachings, which is where we find the means to do the practice. Otherwise we hear some people saying 'I have heard the teachings, but I don't know what to meditate on now. I don't know what practice to do'. That shows the disparity between what is being heard and not utilising it for one's own practice. In fact if one begins to use whatever one hears in the Dharma in one's daily life as a practice, then in fact there will be no lack of practices to do. The more one hears, the more one's practice is enhanced. Rather than being confused about what to practise, we gain more and more ways to practise if we can actually find a practical way to use every bit of information that we get from the teaching in our daily life. That then becomes the practice.

In relation to explaining the verse commentary raises this question:

> Moreover, should one consider that production and disintegration pertain to that which has the nature of a functional thing or a non-functional thing?

What is being asked is do the characteristics of production and disintegration refer to things that have the nature of a functional thing or a non-functional thing? What needs to be understood in relation to the question is whether production and disintegration exist by way of their own entity. Do production and disintegration refer to that which has the nature of a functional thing by way of its own entity or do they refer to a non-functional thing by way of its own entity? The answer is that both views are inappropriate.

Then as the commentary further explains the meaning the first line 'A thing does not become a thing':

> Something already produced does not again become a thing being produced, since it is senseless for it to be produced again.

Because it is produced already, it does not have to be produced again. To continue the explanation of the verse:

> A non-functional thing is not produced again as a thing...

This is in relation to the second line 'Nor does a non-thing become a thing'. The reasoning is:

> ...otherwise it follows that even a barren woman's child could be born.

This points out the absurdity of a non-functional thing being produced again as a thing, because a non-functional thing cannot be produced at all. A non-functional thing does not relate to the cause and effect sequence. A non-functional thing cannot be produced again as a thing, just as there cannot be a barren woman's child. The conclusion is that a thing does not become a thing by way of its own entity, likewise a non-thing cannot become a thing by way of its own entity. In both cases there is a fallacy.

In relation to the first two lines of the verse, the commentary concludes:

> Thus there is no inherent production of either functional or non-functional things.

Then in relation to the third line of the verse 'A non-thing does not become a non-thing' the commentary explains:

> A totally disintegrated non-functional thing does not again become a disintegrating non-functional thing for something non-existent like a barren woman's child does not disintegrate.

In the first two lines, both a thing and a non-thing were refuted as being produced by way of their own entity and then the third line relates to refuting disintegration by way of its own entity. In refuting disintegration by way of its own entity, then the explanation of the third line is given in the commentary:

> A totally disintegrated non-functional thing does not again become a disintegrating non-functional thing for something non-existent like a barren woman's child does not disintegrate.

So again, this shows the absurdity of a disintegrating non-functional thing because something non-existent cannot disintegrate, just like a barren woman's child.

In relation to the fourth line of the verse 'Nor does a thing become a non-thing' we can use the example of a pot. When a pot disintegrates it does not become a non-thing. A pot is a thing, a product, a functional thing. When the pot disintegrates it is not as if the pot then transforms from a functional thing into a non-functional or non-produced phenomenon. However, if the pot were to exist by way of its own entity or be inherently existent, then it could be the case that upon disintegration, it actually became a non-functional thing, a non-functional phenomenon. This is in relation to things lacking true existence or existing by way of their own entity. Even factually, when a pot breaks, on a gross level we could say that the pot disintegrates and ceases to exist as a pot, because it has broken into pieces. However the fact that the pieces remain also shows that the pot has not transformed or turned into a non-thing because there is continuity of the pot. Clearly the continuity of the pot, which is in pieces, is still tangible as we can still see them and so, even on a gross level, we can interpret the absurdity of a thing transforming into a non-thing as not possible.

In relation to the reasoning of the refutation in the commentary, it says:

> A functional thing that is already produced does not become a non-functional thing, because the two are contradictory.

'The two are contradictory' refers to a thing and a non-thing being mutually exclusive as they cannot be both a thing and a non-thing. If it is a thing, a produced phenomenon, it cannot be an non-produced phenomenon, it cannot be a non-thing. Likewise if it is a non-thing, it cannot be a thing. So they are mutually exclusive. But if things were to exist by way of their own entity, then they could be one, a thing and a non-thing. However the fact that a thing and a non-thing are mutually exclusive means that a thing cannot be transformed into a non-thing.

Then the commentary quotes this sutra:

> "All products and non-products are free [from inherent existence]. Those sages who do not have conceptions [of inherent existence] understand that which is a non-product with regard to all phenomena and are free from views of an [inherent] self."

The meaning of the sutra is similar to the explanation that I gave earlier that if one understands that things do not exist in the way that they appear, then one is free from the misconception of inherent existence.

The literal term 'non-product' means permanent phenomena, but here 'non-product' actually refers to the view of emptiness, which is a non-produced and non-obstructing phenomenon. Thus when the sutra says 'Those sages who do not have conceptions [of inherent existence] understand that which is a non-product with regard to all phenomena', then 'non-product with regard to all phenomena' refers to the emptiness of all phenomena and thus they 'are free from views of an inherent [existent] self'.

1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently

That is sub-divided into three:
1.1.3.1. Brief explanation
1.1.3.2. Extensive explanation
1.1.3.3. Summarized meaning

1.1.3.1. BRIEF EXPLANATION

Assertion: Neither that which has been produced nor that which is unproduced is being produced. That which is in the process of production is being produced.

Answer:

A thing in the process of production *366*
Since half-produced, is not being produced.
Alternatively it follows that everything
Is in the process of being produced.

In relation to the earlier refutations, what is now being asserted by the opponent is, "OK, I agree that neither that which has been produced nor that which is not-produced is being produced; rather that 'which is the process of production' is what we will call as 'being produced'". In relation to the assertion the process of production is understood as a thing that is half produced and also half not-produced. That is more or less how we would think of something which is in the process of being produced: it is as if they are half produced but not yet fully produced. When we talk about someone coming, if they are not here yet, but they are already in the process of coming, then we say that they are on their way. They are not in the place where they have started from because they have already left, but they are not yet here. That's where we conventionally use the term 'someone is coming', meaning that we have the idea that someone is on their way.

This assertion is made in relation to a particular refutation that was made earlier in relation to things being produced by way of their own entity. If things are already produced then the production is a thing that has already been produced. The refutation made earlier, is that there is no point in something that has already been produced being produced again, because it has already been produced, and further production is redundant. That refutation was made earlier. Following that refutation, the opponent thinks, 'Well OK, things that are already produced cannot be produced again by way of their own entity, because there is no point'. Then they feel, 'so, I would conclude by asserting that that which is in the process of being produced must then be produced by way of its own entity.'

The refutation being made here, in relation to explaining the meaning of the verse is:

> It follows that a sprout in the process of production is not being produced by way of its own entity, because that which is in the process of production must be posited as half produced and half unproduced.

As they assert the process of production as being that case, the refutation is made in pointing out this absurdity:

> The produced part belongs to what has already been produced and the unproduced part to what is unproduced.

The produced part belongs to what has already been produced, which is already accepted by the opponent i.e. producing what has already been produced by way of its own entity is redundant. The not-produced part has not been produced yet. So if it is not produced you cannot claim that it is produced by way of its own entity. The conclusion is that:

> There is nothing in the process of production with parts other than these existent by way of its own entity.

If something were to exist by way of its own entity, then in the process of production there is no other part than that which is half produced and that which is half not-produced.

So, there are no parts to be found that can be established as being existent by way of their own entity. Furthermore:

> If the produced and the unproduced are both considered to be that which is presently being produced, both past and future are also in the process of being produced.

The further refutation is that, 'If the produced and the unproduced are considered to be that which is being presently produced' i.e. half produced and half not-produced, then the commentary explains:

> Alternatively, it follows that all three times are presently being produced, since all produced and unproduced things are in the process of production.

Because all things are in the process of production, then if it is half produced and half not-produced, this will also apply to past and future being produced in the present, which concludes that all three times are being produced at the same time. So the absurdity being pointed out is that according to this logic all three times exist right now.

1.1.3.2. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

1.1.3.2.1. Refutation by examining that which is in the process of being produced
1.1.3.2.2. Refuting the assertion that a thing existing between past and future is that which is in the process of being produced
1.1.3.2.3. Refuting the assertion that a thing before it is produced is what is in the process of being produced
1.1.3.2.4. Refuting the assertion that the unproduced is what is in the process of being produced

1.1.3.2.1. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING THAT WHICH IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED

As mentioned previously the assertion is that what is being produced is considered to be in the process of being produced. So:

> If that which is presently being produced exists by way of its entity, is it considered to have its own nature or not?

This is pointing out two alternatives; is it considered to have its own nature or not?

> Both are unacceptable. It follows that it could not be in the process of production.

It should be understood that when it says 'considered to have its own nature or not' then these are the only two possibilities. So if

> ...it is considered to have its own nature [then] it follows that it could not be in the process of production.

The question in relation to the verse, refuting the meaning of the verse is:

> *That which has the nature of presently being produced* 367
> *Is not in the process of production,*
> *Nor is that in the process of production*
> *Which lacks the nature of presently being produced.*

The commentary continues:

> It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature of being in the process of production.

What should be understood here is that it is redundant to say that something has the nature of being in the process of production, because its nature is the very process of production. You cannot say that it has that nature when that is its nature. The main point in relation to the two alternatives is does 'that which is presently being produced' exist 'by way of its own entity? Is it considered to have its own nature or not?' It is redundant to say that it is produced with its own nature because its very nature is being produced in the present. Thus to give it an extra characteristic by saying that it is produced with its own nature, is absurd, because its very production (being produced in the present time) is its nature. Thus it is absurd to say that 'it is produced with its own nature.'

Refutation of the first alternative, having its own nature

However it is not produced with its own nature, so the absurdity would clearly be how could something be produced without its nature being present? Something existing without its nature is clearly an absurdity. The commentary is quite clear too:

> It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature of being in the process of production.

It should become clear when one joins this understanding with the understanding that what is being refuted is that it being produced by way its own entity. Thus:

> It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature [by way of its own entity] of being in the process of production.

That is the main point that is being refuted, which should be clear.

Refutation of the second alternative, not having its own nature

> It follows that whatever does not have the nature of presently being produced is also not in the process of production, because that which is not presently being produced is contrary to that which is.

That which lacks the nature of presently being produced cannot be in the process of production, because that which is not presently being produced is contrary to that which is.

If it lacks its own nature then it cannot have that nature. The refutation of the second alternative is clearer than for the first alternative. But in both instances production by way of its own entity is being refuted.

1.1.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT A THING EXISTING BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE IS THAT WHICH IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED

Again, this relates to the earlier refutations showing that it is an absurdity for something to be produced prior to being produced by way of its own entity. Something being produced after it has been produced by way of its own entity has also been refuted. Even the process of being produced by way of its own entity is also an absurdity. Now the opponent is asserting that somewhere between the past and future things must be produced in relation to the three times.

> *Assertion:* That which is in the process of production exists, since it is located between the past and future. These two times may be posited in relation to what is presently being produced.

This assertion is basically re-affirming the process of production.

> *Answer:*
> *For anyone to whom the two are* 368
> *Impossible without an intermediate,*
> *There is nothing in the process of production*
> *For it too would have an intermediate*

In explaining the meaning of the verse, the commentary reads:

> In any opponent's system in which there is definitely an intermediate stage without which the past and future cannot exist, that which is presently being produced could not exist by way of its own entity…

What is being established is that, even in the opponent's system, which asserts that there is an intermediate stage that cannot exist without the past and future: 'that which is presently being produced could not exist by way of its own entity'. The reason for this is that 'there would be infinite regress'.

So if what is being presently produced exists by way of its own entity, then the absurdity or fault would be that:

> …there would be infinite regress, in that anything in the process of production would require another intermediate stage and that one yet another and so on.

Thus this refutation is based on the fault of there being infinite regress.

1.1.3.2.3. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT A THING BEFORE IT IS PRODUCED IS WHAT IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED

The intermediate stage of what is being produced has been refuted, so the opponent is now asserting that a thing is in the process of being produced before it is produced.

Earlier it was refuted that the half-produced and half-not-produced were part of the process of production. Thus the question now is:

> *Question: If the half-produced is not in the process of production, what is?*

In relation to this assertion the commentary reads:

> Since the process of production is, for example, the sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun is said to be in the process of production.

'The sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun' is being established as the 'process of production'. Thus what is presently being produced appears to be a different entity from that which is half-produced and half-not-produced.

Assertion:

Since the process of production is the arising 369
Of the produced through cessation,
That which is presently being produced
Appears to be a different entity.

The commentary explains:

> Since the process of production is, for example, the sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun is said to be in the process of production.

'The sprout being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun' is said to be in the process of production. Thus what is presently being produced appears to be a different entity from that which is half produced and half not-produced. This all refers to the assertion that is made in the verse.

The answer to the assertion made in the verse is:

> *Answer:* If one could point to anything and say, "This thing has been produced from this thing which is in the process of production," one could identify something in the process of production existent by way of its own entity in relation to the thing produced from it.

The verse below serves as an answer to the assertion that has just been made.

When a thing is produced there cannot be 370
Anything in the process of production.
If the produced is in the process
Of production, why is it being produced?

In explaining the first two lines the commentary reads:

> However when a thing has been produced, there cannot be anything in the process of production which exists by way of its own entity, for what was in the process of production has ceased. A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist

The main point in the refutation is where it says 'A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist'.

What was explained earlier is that when an effect is produced, conventionally it is produced when the cause has ceased. That is of course, the conventional reasoning that we use with, for example the syllogism 'There is fire on the hill because we perceive smoke'. Normally we infer that there has been a fire because of the fact that there is smoke, even though the fire may not be seen now because it has already ceased.

Likewise with a seed and a sprout. When the seed undergoes the transformation it ceases and then the sprout is produced. Conventionally the production of an effect can be used to infer that the cause has ceased. Conventionally, that is true. However here when we are relating it to existing by way of its own entity, then the production of an effect cannot serve as an inference for there being a cause ceasing by way of its own entity. That is the main point. Thus as it mentions here:

> A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist.

This is in relation to inherent existence or existence by way of its own entity. 'A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist', which means it cannot be used as an inference or a fact. The inference that with the cessation of production the cause has ceased and an effect takes place, cannot be used as a way to establish that that process has taken place by way of its own entity.

The assertion in relation to the second half of the verse is:

> *Assertion:* The produced is in the process of production.

The answer given in the last two lines of the verse is clearly explained in the commentary:

> If the produced is in the process of production, why is it being produced again? This is unfeasible because it has already been produced.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett and Judy Mayne
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 May 2008

1.1. Extensively establishing dependent arisings which are not inherently produced as existing in the manner of a magician's illusions (cont.)

1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently

1.1.3.2. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

1.1.3.2.4. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT THE UNPRODUCED IS WHAT IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED

This is subdivided into three:
1.1.3.2.4.1. Actual meaning
1.1.3.2.4.2. Refuting the justification
1.1.3.2.4.3. Necessity of accepting that the unproduced is being produced, if that which is in the process of being produced is produced byway of its own entity

1.1.3.2.4.1. Actual meaning

> *A thing in the process of production is said* 371
> *To be the entirely unproduced arising.*
> *Since there is no difference, why should the pot*
> *Not be considered as non-existent?*

As mentioned previously the earlier and following verses are refuting the inherent existence of produced and non-produced phenomena. In relation to products, the conclusion is that conventionally there are phenomena that are in the process of being produced, but they are not in the process of being produced by way of their own entity. Similarly there is cessation of the causes, for example a seed, but the cessation is not by way of its own entity. Likewise there is production but the production is not by way of its own entity.

As I have mentioned earlier during the study of the *Madhyamika,* that text explains very clearly whether cessation occurs at the time of seed. At the time of the seed there is cessation of the seed, but complete cessation of the seed has not yet occurred. If the complete cessation of the seed occurs at the time of the seed, then there would be no seed left. So there can't be complete cessation at the time of the seed. The conclusion indicated in the *Madhyamika* is that there is cessation at the time of the seed, but that complete cessation of the seed has not yet taken place.

Likewise at the time of the seed, there is production of the sprout but not the complete production of the sprout. If there were to be complete production of the sprout at the time of the seed then there couldn't be a seed either, because complete production of the sprout only occurs when the seed has completely ceased to exist. That is how we should understand that there is production, but not complete production.

One must understand that the following assertions are made by those who assert that products, and so forth, exist by way of their own entity. They assert inherent existence or true existence and so are opponents of our own system. The assertion in relation to the verse is,

> *Assertion:* A thing that is presently being produced is said to be produced, for although unproduced, it is approaching production.

Again this relates to the earlier refutations. The assertion here is that a thing that is presently being produced (i.e. in the process of being produced), is a produced effect.

With respect to the refutation in the verse the commentary further explains:

> If a thing that is in the process of being produced is said to be produced because, even though it is entirely unproduced, it is approaching production…

This is rephrasing the assertion: you say that a thing that is in the process of being produced is actually produced, 'because even though it is entirely unproduced it is approaching production'. Then the refutation is made in the following explanation from the commentary:

> [If you assert that is the case then] why should a pot while performing its function not be considered a non-functional thing? It follows that this is a reasonable assertion, since there is no difference between the produced and the unproduced.

Here a counter argument is being used to point out the absurdity. What our system is saying in refutation is that if you can assert that something that is not-produced is being produced then that would be an absurdity. It would be similar to saying that at the same time as a pot is performing its function it is also a non-functional thing. That same logical reasoning also holds for this case as well. So the absurdity is pointed out with the counter-argument, 'it follows that this is a reasonable assertion, since there is no difference between the produced and the unproduced.

'Since you do not make any distinction between what is produced and what is not produced then the same logical reasoning would also make no distinction between a functional thing and a non-functional thing, such as a pot. Now a pot, of course is a functional thing. For as long as it is a pot it is functional in relation to its definition, which is that which holds water, that which is bulbous and has a spout. So a pot is a functional thing but according to your absurd assertions, the pot could also be a non-functional thing.'

The refutation is made with this counter argument: if you assert something that is not produced as being produced, then that would be the same as asserting a functional thing to be a non-functional thing.

1.1.3.2.4.2. Refuting the justification

> *Assertion:* There is a difference between that which is in the process of being produced and the unproduced. That which is in the process of production is said to be associated with the activity of production, whereas the unproduced is not necessarily associated with the activity of production.

This is pointing out the difference between that which is in the process of being produced and that which is not-produced.

Answer:

That which is presently being produced, 372
Though incomplete, is other than unproduced.
Yet also since other than produced,
The unproduced is being produced.

The answer in relation to this verse is, as the commentary explains:

> Since a thing in the process of being produced is associated with the activity of production, you assert that even though it has not completed that activity, it is other than unproduced and future.

The meaning of the verse, as the commentary explains, is that 'you assert that even though it has not completed the activity, it is other than unproduced and future'. This means that at the time of the seed the sprout is actually considered a future sprout because it is not yet produced, i.e. at the time of the seed, which is a cause, the effect, which is a sprout, has not yet been produced. So because it is not produced it is the future of the seed, and not the present. Having the not-produced or the future actually existing in the present would be an absurdity. That is one of the main things being pointed out here: at the time of the seed that which is not-produced and in the future cannot be asserted as being part of the present.

As the commentary further explains:

> Yet in that case, since a thing in the process of being produced is other than something produced, you are saying that the unproduced is being produced.

The absurdity that is being pointed out is that the opponents are asserting that the activity of production is what is produced, and that anything associated with that activity can be asserted as being produced. The refutation to that assertion is pointing out the absurdity of asserting that something is produced because it is associated with the activity of production, when in fact it cannot be produced because it is the future. 'If it is produced then how can something that is yet to be produced, already exist at the time of the cause? How can the sprout exist at the time of the seed if it is the future of the seed? However what you are in fact implying is that the not-produced is being produced, and that is an absurdity.'

1.1.3.2.4.3. Necessity of accepting that the unproduced is being produced, if that which is in the process of being produced is produced byway of its own entity

That which is presently being produced, 373
Though not yet existent, is later said to exist.
The unproduced is thus being produced –
But the non-existent does not arise.

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

> Since that which is presently being produced is other than something produced, you must accept that it is unproduced. You might claim that anything in the process of being produced exists as a thing, because, even though it did not exist previously, it has afterwards become associated with the activity of production. If on this account you say that an entirely unproduced thing associated with the activity of production is being produced, that too is incorrect. An unproduced thing, referred to as non-extent, as not attained its entity. It does not undergo production, because it is not engaged in that activity.

As the commentary explains, 'you might claim that anything in the process of being produced exists as a thing', however that implies 'that an entirely unproduced thing associated with the activity of production is being produced'. That is incorrect as something that is unproduced or not produced is non-existent, so it cannot have an entity; a sprout that has not been produced cannot have the entity of being a sprout because it has not been produced yet. Thus that which is in the process of being produced cannot function as a produced thing. The assertion is indicated in the outline itself - the necessity of accepting that the not-produced is being produced. So, what is being refuted is something that is not produced as being produced. The absurdity that is being pointed out is if that which is in the process of being produced is produced by way of its own entity, then the not-produced is being produced. That is the main point made here.

The reason why the not-produced cannot be asserted as being produced is because of the fact that what is to be produced depends on causes and conditions; it has to depend on something for it to be produced. So if the cause itself, or if the process of being produced exists by way of its own entity, then that implies that it exists without depending on causes and conditions. If that which is being produced doesn't depend on causes and conditions for its existence, then the produced could already exist at the time when it is in the process of being produced, and that is a falsity.

1.1.3.3. SUMMARIZED MEANING

The completed is called existent. 374
The uncompleted is called non-existent.
When there is nothing in the process of production
What is being referred to as such?

As the commentary explains:

> That which has completed the activity of production is said to exist as a thing, and that which has not performed the activity of production is said not to exist as a thing. If neither that which has nor that which has not completed the activity of production is in the process of being produced, what is being referred to as presently being produced? Anything in the process of being produced does not have the least existence by way of its own entity.

This explanation of the verse is quite clear: 'Anything that is in the process of being produced does not have the least existence by way of its own entity'. The refutation is made in relation to how they assert the production of something. Earlier the opponent asserted that that which is considered as being produced is something that is half produced and half not-produced. However those assertions have been refuted by pointing out that the part that is already produced would have to be considered as something that is already produced, and so it is redundant to be produce it again, and the part that has not been produced does not yet exist. So that which is half produced (completed) and half not-produced (uncompleted) can in no way be asserted as existing by way of its own entity.

1.2. Concluding summary of the refutations of inherent existence

Since without a cause *375*
There is no effect,
Both starting and stopping
Are not feasible.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Investigation by reasoning shows that there is no effect without a cause. Since cause and effect, then, do not truly exist and since the bases therefore do not truly exist, the sprout's starting to be produced and the seed's stopping to exist are not feasible by way of their own entity.

In summary, through investigation of the reasoning that was established in earlier verses it is clear that there cannot be an effect without a cause. As cause and effect do not truly exist and as the bases do not truly exist, there cannot be an effect without a cause. Likewise through investigation one finds that there cannot be an effect from a truly existent cause. Here bases refer to that which is the reliant and that which it relies upon, which is cause and effect. The reliant is the effect and that which it relies upon is the cause. A basis that is truly existent does not exist, so there cannot be a truly existent relationship between cause and the effect.

The text refers to 'the sprout's starting to be produced and the seed's stopping to exist are not feasible by way of their own entity'. A sprout starts to be produced and a seed ceases to exist, but even though they exist conventionally they cannot exist by way of their own entity. To support this the commentary refers to a sutra, which reads as follows:

> Sentient beings, humans, those born from power whoever they may be,
> None that were born and died here were born [inherently].
> The nature of all things is empty like magicians illusions,
> But the Forders are unable to recognize it.

The commentary explains this quote from the sutra in the following way:

> For instance, the men and women conjured by an illusionist cause the spectators of the magic, who think of them as men and women, to feel attraction and aversion. [With that analogy of illusory men and women the commentary continues] Though they also appear to the magician, he does not think of them in this way. They do not even appear to those who are unaffected by the spell.

The analogy is of the different circumstances in which a magician conjures men and women; to some the illusion actually appears as real men and woman, and they feel attraction or aversion towards them. The illusion also appears to the magician himself but he does not see them as being real, while nothing appears to those who are not subjected to the spell. In relation to this example, the three different types of persons are:

1. Those on whom the magician has cast a spell who see the illusions and believe in them; they see the men and women.

2. The magician whose spell affects his own eyes; he see the conjured men and women but does not believe that they exist.

3. Those who do not have the spell cast over their eyes; they do not see the illusion - so even the appearance of men and women is not there.

In explaining these examples the commentary further reads:

> You must understand that these analogies apply respectively to the perception of common beings who have not understood dependent arising's emptiness of inherent existence, to the wisdom of subsequent attainment of the Exalted, and to the meditative equipoise of the Exalted.

The three types of persons mentioned earlier in the analogy correspond to these three types of people.

1. The first type of person is the spectator who experiences the magic spell, and who see the illusory men and women and believes in them. This corresponds to an ordinary being who has not understood dependent arising or the emptiness of inherent existence. Without the realisation of emptiness, and due to the strong imprint of grasping at the self, all phenomena appear as inherently existent. Not only do phenomena appear as being inherently existent, but ordinary beings also believe that they exist in the way that they appear.

2. The magician sees the conjured men and women, but does not believe that they exist in that way. This corresponds to 'the wisdom of subsequent attainment of the Exalted'. 'Subsequent attainment' refers the post-meditative state after meditative equipoise. When you come to the post-meditative state then the appearance of inherent existence will still be there, but due to the realisation of emptiness there is no belief in the appearance.

3. For the Exalted, meaning an Arya, who is in meditative equipoise there is neither the appearance nor the belief.

Though this has been explained several times before, I will repeat the essence again: An Arya being who is in meditative equipoise does not have any dualistic appearances, which means that they don't have any of the three dualistic appearances; the appearance of any conventional phenomena, the appearance of inherent existence, and the duality of subject and object appearing as being separate. For an Arya who is in meditative equipoise these three appearances are completely cut off. The only appearance to the meditative equipoise of the Exalted is the appearance of emptiness, so there is no appearance of any discrepancy between subject and object, no appearance of conventional phenomena and no appearance of inherent existence.

For the Exalted who is the post-meditative state, the opposite is true. There is the appearance of conventional phenomena and inherent existence as well as the appearance of subject and object as being separate. Of course the exception is for an enlightened being, so a buddha would not have these appearances at any time.

The commentary explains:

> You should learn how Conventional phenomena are established by Conventional valid cognition and

> Ultimate Truth by conceptual and non-conceptual reasoning consciousness from the presentation in *[Gateway for Conqueror Children], Explanation of [Santideva's] "Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds"* and so forth.

This refers to the definition of conventional phenomena and ultimate phenomena. Conventional truth and ultimate truth were explained earlier when the ninth chapter of Shantideva's text was taught. What is to be noted is that the definition of conventional and ultimate truth given in the *Madhyamika* text and the definition given in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, are presented in different ways. In relation to the *Madhyamika* text, as it mentions here, 'you should learn how Conventional phenomena established by Conventional valid cognition and Ultimate Truth by conceptional and non-conceptual reasoning consciousness'. Whereas in Shantideva's text the explanation is different: that which sees the object with duality is conventional truth, and the consciousness or perception that sees things without duality is ultimate truth. The two definitions come to the same thing but the way each is presented is different.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

> Production and disintegration of composite things
> Are like dreams and like illusion.
> When they are mere terms and mere imputation,
> How could non-products be truly existent?

The meaning of the first two lines was explained earlier. When the stanza says that all appearing phenomena 'are like dreams and illusions, when they are mere terms and mere imputation', this relates to the earlier explanation about how phenomena lack any inherent or true existence and are just mere terms or imputations. Here 'terms' means being merely labelled conceptually and verbally. Finally, 'how could non-products be truly existent?' is a rhetorical question, implying that products could not possibly be truly existent in any way.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> ***This is the fifteenth chapter from the* Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds*, showing how to meditate on the refutation of that which constitutes products.***

> This concludes the commentary on the fifteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on refuting [the inherent existence of that which constitutes products, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas"*.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 June 2008

As usual we sit in a comfortable relaxed position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise well'.

3.2.2.2. SECTION B: SHOWING HOW TO MEDITATE ON SETTLING [THE PROCEDURE BETWEEN] SPIRITUAL GUIDES AND STUDENTS BY WAY OF [EXPLAINING] THE PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTERS AND ELIMINATING REMAINING COUNTER-ARGUMENTS BY MISGUIDED OPPONENTS[1]

This heading is sub-divided into two:
1. Explanation of the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

Explaining the material of the chapter has two main sub-divisions:
1.1. Briefly explaining the purpose of writing these chapters
1.2. Eliminating remaining counter-arguments raised by misguided opponents

1.1. Briefly explaining the purpose of writing these chapters

The commentary reads:

> These chapters were written so that trainees may enter the state of liberation through giving up attachment to cyclic existence.

This relates to the earlier discussion on the purpose of studying this text. The main purpose is explained in the first line, which is to present the material of the previous fifteen chapters in order for a trainee to gain liberation and thus they must give up attachment to cyclic existence. The explanation in the commentary is on how to do that.

> Without ascertaining the meaning of emptiness as it actually is, one cannot develop enthusiasm for omniscience or even for liberation through the giving up of attachment to cyclic existence.

The way to release oneself from samsara is by first of all giving up attachment to cyclic existence. One does that by gaining the realisation of emptiness. Without developing the realisation of emptiness there is no possibility of freeing oneself from attachment to samsara or cyclic existence. One must derive a more detailed understanding of the main cause of cyclic existence or samsara, which is the ignorance of grasping at the self; the ignorance of self-grasping. The ignorance of self-grasping is the main cause which leads one into cyclic existence.

In one's own practice it is good to recall the way the ignorance of self-grasping becomes the cause for leading one into samsara. This can be understood in more detail by reflecting on the twelve links of interdependent origination. Ignorance being the first link then causes karma and so forth. So, through the sequential cause and effect of the twelve links, one then enters into samsara. For as long as one has the main cause of ignorance grasping at the self, one will repeatedly be thrown into samsara. So to free oneself one must overcome the very root cause, and the only way to overcome the ignorance of grasping at the self is by cultivating the direct antidote, which is the realisation of selflessness or emptiness. Consequently emptiness and selflessness are the main antidotes for overcoming the grasping at a self.

> ...one cannot develop enthusiasm for omniscience or even for liberation through the giving up of attachment to cyclic existence. The emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena frightens those who have not heard sufficient teaching and are bound by the noose of clinging to a self. As already described, the path leading to freedom from worldly existence should therefore only be explained after first making the mind ready, in the way that the death of a king's beloved queen was conveyed to him.

So the main cause for overcoming grasping at the self or clinging to the self is the realisation of emptiness. However if emptiness is presented before the trainee is ready, in the sense of having the right mental capacity to absorb the explanation of emptiness, they may become frightened. The text itself is presented in such a way that the first eight chapters deal mainly with conventional reality. The text goes into great detail explaining conventional reality in terms of the suffering and so forth of cyclic existence before the explanation of ultimate reality, which is emptiness.

As we recall, the first chapters deal with impermanence, the nature of suffering, the impurity of the body and so forth. Thus the chapters begin with an explanation of conventional reality first, particularly in relation to how one enters into samsara, the suffering nature of cyclic existence. Then later the teachings on emptiness, ultimate reality, are presented. This is the way to prepare the trainee. The particular Tibetan word they use is to 'ripen' the mind, which means making the mind receptive to the teachings on emptiness. This is presented in the earlier part of the text and then one is lead to ultimate reality.

> ...in the way that the death of a king's beloved queen was conveyed to him.

The analogy refers to the manner in which a king is told of his beloved queen's death. If he were informed in an abrupt manner he would be shocked and have difficulty coming to terms with the disturbing news. A skilled minister conveys the death of the king's beloved queen in a very tactful way by first conveying reports that gradually lead the king to acceptance of the news of the queen's death. The skilful

---

[1] The numbering of this heading refers back to the initial structure the text outlined on 7 March 2006 and 14 March 2006, and on 10 July 2007. The text has four subdivisions:
1. Meaning of the title
2. Translators prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion
Section 3 'Meaning of the text' has two subdivisions:
3.1 An overview of the text
3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters
3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth
This has two subdivisions:
3.2.2.1. Extensively explaining ultimate truth
3.2.2.2. Showing how to meditate on settling [the procedure between] spiritual guides and students by way of [explaining] the purpose of the chapters and eliminating remaining counter-arguments by misguided opponents
As usual, the numbering recommences with the beginning of a new chapter.

minister does not mention the queen's death directly but in a gradual way. Then the king is not so shocked or devastated. In fact a skilled minister relates the sad news in a way that makes it easier for the king to accept without great emotional shock and aversion.

The text employs this analogy in the understanding of emptiness. If emptiness is presented in a sequential way, then when the trainee actually hears the topic of emptiness they should be able to accept it without fear and aversion to the idea. Instead they will experience joy and acceptance. The mind can be further developed in that realisation. A fearful reaction to hearing about emptiness can thus be avoided.

Some students have commented that even though the *Madhyamika* is a difficult text and can be hard to understand, it gives some joy to the mind. This demonstrates receptivity of the mind to the topic of emptiness. Even though it may be hard to fathom and understand the subtleties of the presentation of emptiness if it brings joy to the mind and an eagerness to understand more about it, that definitely shows a receptive mind, one that is ready for that teaching.

For various reasons, that which is empty *376*
Appears nonetheless as if not empty.
These are refuted individually
By all the chapters.

The commentary then explains the meaning of the verse:

> Even though things are empty of inherent existence, they appear not to be empty and are thought of in this way for various reasons, such as considering them truly existent. All of the preceding fifteen chapters refute these reasons individually.

As explained here clearly, even though things lack inherent existence, for an ordinary being they appear as having inherent existence. "For various reasons", means through various different imprints and so forth. However the main reason here is "such as considering them truly existent" Adherence to true existence or the perception of true existence becomes the main cause for things to appear as being inherently existent.

Therefore true existence is refuted in the preceding chapters. "Individually" meaning that in each chapter it has been presented in different ways, either explicitly or implicitly. All the chapters deal with how to overcome the misconception of true existence. One should understand that the cause of the appearance of true existence is the misconception of holding phenomena as being truly existent. "All of the preceding fifteen chapters refute these" meaning the causes for the appearance of inherent existence, and the belief in it. "These reasons" means many different reasons for adhering to the misconception of true existence, and all these reasons have been refuted individually. What should be understood here is that all of the material presented in the text, and every verse within each chapter, are related to overcoming the misconception of inherent existence. When it is understood that they are all presented as techniques for overcoming that misconception, there is no evidence contradicting that.

1.2. Eliminating remaining counter-arguments raised by misguided opponents

That is sub-divided into eight:
1.2.1. Refuting reasoning to negate emptiness
1.2.2. Refuting adherence to theses which fall into extremes
1.2.3. Showing parity of reasoning with regard to true existence or lack of true existence
1.2.4. Refuting non-existence as the thesis
1.2.5. Refuting that things are not empty because analogies and reasons to establish emptiness exist
1.2.6. Explaining the purpose of teaching emptiness
1.2.7. Showing that conceptions of extremes of existence are erroneous
1.2.8. Impossibility of refuting through reasoning that which is free from extremes

1.2.1. Refuting reasoning to negate emptiness

This is in relation to refuting their reasons that negate emptiness.

This is sub-divided into three:
1.2.1.1. Impossibility of refuting the thesis of emptiness
1.2.1.2. Impossibility of proving the thesis of non-emptiness
1.2.1.3. Refuting other reasoning

1.2.1.1. IMPOSSIBILITY OF REFUTING THE THESIS OF EMPTINESS

This is sub-divided into two:
1.2.1.1.1. Actual meaning
1.2.1.1.2. Refutation by virtue of parity

1.2.1.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

When the author and subject also exist *377*
It is incorrect to call them empty.
Also with regard to these three, whatever
Arises in dependence does not exist.

The commentary then explains the meaning of the first two lines, which are the assertion.

Assertion:
When the author and subject also exist *377ab*
It is incorrect to call them empty.

The commentary says:

> If the chapters were written for these purposes...

"The chapters" here are the previous fifteen chapters. "These purposes" indicates the purposes of explaining emptiness. The purpose of explaining the fifteen earlier chapters is to present emptiness. In relation to that the opponent says:

> If the chapters were written for these purposes, things are established as not being empty...

In our own system the chapters were written for the purpose of explaining emptiness. The opponents say, 'in fact, what you are saying actually establishes things as not being empty; it is contrary to things being empty'. The reason they give is:

> ...since the author and the subject matter explained by the fifteen chapters exist.

They say that because the author exists and the subject matter exists then to say 'that they are empty is contrary to what you're presenting. How could they be empty? They could not be empty.' That's what they are trying to establish.

> "Also" indicates the words that express the meaning of emptiness.

They summarise by saying:

> Therefore it is incorrect to speak of the emptiness of inherent existence of things.

Answer:
Also with regard to these three, whatever *377cd*
Arises in dependence does not exist.

Then in relation to the second two lines of the verse which serve as the answer or the refutation to the opponents' assertion:

> According to us, the words, subject matter and author are imputations dependent on one another and do not

exist independently. Whatever arises in dependence does not exist inherently. Since the author, subject matter and words are all dependently imputed, these three also do not have inherent existence. Thus emptiness is well established.

The response is that words are dependent on the subject, the subject is dependent on the author and without the author uttering the words there could not even be a subject. So they are all dependent on each other for their existence. 'Thus we are not negating the existence of words, subject and author, but we say that their existence is interdependent, they are dependent on each other, so they are actually empty of inherent existence.' Contrary to the opponents' understanding of emptiness which for them implies that nothing exists, from our own system what is being established is that things exist in dependence, through dependent origination, particularly in relation here to the words, the subject and the author. They do exist but they do not have inherent existence. So, this in fact establishes the view of emptiness well.

For the opponent the words, subject matter and author are inherently existent. For them if they exist, they have to exist inherently. Whereas in our own system, the words, the subject matter and the author exist not independently but rather in dependence upon each other. They lack inherent existence because of their interdependent co-existence. They exist, but not inherently. This is the way emptiness is established well.

1.2.1.1.2. REFUTATION BY VIRTUE OF PARITY

In the same way as saying that the establishment of emptiness is flawed, claiming that emptiness does not exist is also a flaw.

Assertion: If all of these were empty, the senses and their objects would be like donkeys' horns! But since they exist, things do exist inherently.

Answer:

If through flaws concerning emptiness *378*
[Things] were established as not empty,
Why would emptiness not be established
Through flaws concerning lack of emptiness?

The opponents assert that if everything is empty then phenomena could not exist. The senses and the objects would be like "donkeys' horns" and the existence of donkey horns is analogous to non-existence. So if all phenomena, if everything were empty, then the senses and what the senses perceive, the objects, would all be like donkey horns, implying that they would be non-existent. But since they do exist they have to exist inherently. That is how they establish existent phenomena as being inherently existent.

If on account of the [presumed] flaws concerning proof of emptiness, the words and so forth were not empty because one has to, accept their existence, why would emptiness not be established through flaws concerning your proof that things are not empty?

In refuting their assertion our response is: 'As we present things as being empty you attempt to prove that as a way of saying that things are in fact not empty. If you say that to us then by that same logical reasoning when you prove things to be not empty, why wouldn't that in fact prove things to be empty?' 'It follows that you should certainly accept emptiness because you accept the interdependence of the words and so forth.' As they accept that the author, the subject and words all depend on each other, they are in fact accepting interdependence. 'So since you accept that, you would have to accept emptiness.'

The parity is that 'just as you have refuted us, in fact that same reasoning similarly applies to you.' The opponents say that the words, the subject and the author exist. Their assertion is that because they exist, they couldn't be empty. That's how the opponent refutes the presentation of emptiness from our system. However, we employ the same line of logic to refute them. We state that 'if you're saying that because it exists, things couldn't be empty, in fact, because things do exist interdependently, they should be empty.' This is the unique presentation in our system.

1.2.1.2. IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROVING THE THESIS OF NON-EMPTINESS

This is sub-divided into two:
1.2.1.2.1. Actual meaning
1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the justification

1.2.1.2.1. ACTUAL MEANING

In refuting the thesis of others *379*
And in proving your own thesis,
If on the one hand you like to disprove,
Why do you not like to prove?

This is how our system clarifies the verse:

You cannot establish your own thesis merely by dismissing the proponents of emptiness.

You cannot establish your thesis of a lack of emptiness or that there is inherent existence simply by dismissing the proponents of the view of emptiness.

Opponents asserting that things exist truly must refute the others' thesis of emptiness as well as prove their own thesis that things are truly existent. You, however, are simply engaged in dismissing the proponents of emptiness.

Opponents refute the thesis of emptiness but they do not actually prove their thesis of things being truly existent. If one were to refute someone else's view or thesis, then the proper way to do this is to give logical reasons proving one's own thesis, while refuting the other's thesis. So what our system is saying is 'you are simply just refuting the thesis of emptiness while not giving any sound reasoning to establish your own thesis of true existence.'

If on the one hand you like disproving the thesis of others, why do you not like proving your own? You should! To proponents of emptiness whatever proofs you adduce to validate your own thesis remain as unestablished as that which is to be proved. You should therefore give up adherence to the thesis that things are inherently existent.

The proof or reasons they give should actually prove their thesis, but the reasons given are not sound enough to prove their thesis. So because they can't establish acceptable reasons to prove their thesis they 'should give up adherence to the thesis that things are inherently existent.'

The reasons they give, such as the existence of the author, the words and the subject help to establish our views as well, as in our system we don't negate the existence of the words, subject and author. In fact, we establish them more clearly, as dependent arising. So their reasons, rather than proving their own thesis only serve to help prove and validate our own system's thesis. When they say the author exists, the words exist and the subject exists they are in fact saying exactly what our system claims. They do exist by virtue of being dependent origination, dependent arising. Through establishing phenomena as dependent arising, lack of inherent existence and therefore emptiness is also established.

1.2.1.2.2. REFUTING THE JUSTIFICATION

Assertion:

When thoroughly investigated, 380ab
The non-existent is not a thesis.

The thesis put forward by proponents of emptiness is not feasible since when thoroughly investigated, it is illogical. Something which does not exist as a knowable object is not an assertable thesis. Therefore the thesis put forward by proponents of true existence is established.

Answer: No thesis is feasible when investigated by the reasoning that analyzes the ultimate.

Then all three, such as oneness, 380cd
Also are not theses.

Since negated by this reasoning, truly existent oneness, otherness and ineffability asserted by any opponent are also not theses. Therefore one should not assert even the slightest true existence.

Ultimately under thorough investigation truly existent oneness or otherness cannot be found. The main point here is that after thorough investigation true existence cannot be found anywhere. So therefore one should not assert even the slightest true existence.

I will conclude here for the evening so that you can read on and prepare yourself for next time.

Next Tuesday there will not be a Study Group session because we are going to Sydney for His Holiness' teachings - I presume most of us are going. The following Tuesday, 17 June will be discussion night and 24 June will be the exam night, so keep that in mind. I have told Venerable Carolyn to send out a message to that effect. But before Venerable Carolyn conveys the message to you, I am conveying it personally! *[laughter]*.

It's good for those who are going to Sydney to receive the teachings from His Holiness to be mentally prepared to receive this very valuable teaching. The teaching itself has very sound instructions, so it's very good to attend with a clear mind. Apparently His Holiness will be teaching in English, therefore since you will receive a direct teaching it's good to prepare one's mind. The text has been translated into English as well, so that's something that you will have access to.

In preparation for receiving the teachings it is good to go with the understanding and awareness that the Lama who is giving the teaching is the actual manifestation of Avaloketishvara the buddha of compassion, and the teaching itself is a highly valuable instruction of the text by Kamalashila, the great Indian master. The main subject matter is on how to develop calm abiding and special insight. We have covered the subject matter in our previous lamrim studies, so you will be familiar with it. However, it is good to take note that Kamalashila himself was an adherent of the Svatantrika Middle Way School. However when His Holiness presents the emptiness of selflessness from the text, he might actually relate it to the Prasangika point of view. So it is good for you to go with the understanding that even though it is presented in the Svatantrika view, His Holiness might present it from the Prasangika point of view, in order to leave a stronger imprint on the mind.

So the Lama is Avaloketishvara the subject matter is a supreme subject, and the listeners, you, are all qualified listeners, so in this context all the conditions are perfect. One should take this opportunity and put some effort into trying to gain as much as one can from this teaching, as to get this opportunity again in the future might be very rare and difficult.

The main outline of the *Middle Stages of Meditation* text as I recall is compassion, then bodhicitta and then the method. The outline itself clearly indicates the structural flow of the text and through the outline one can gain an overview of the presentation of the text. The two lower scopes are included in the outline of compassion. The small scope and the medium scope presentation of the teachings will be subsumed into that. So when it is presented through the text itself, you will see how eloquently it is all put together.

As it will be presented in English, I might not be able to participate so much; I will just sit there, and just when I think that I understand something it might just flow onto the next subject! However, I have received the teaching from His Holiness once before in Bodhgaya.

Again, I want to remind those who are going to the teachings to take the utmost advantage of the opportunity to accumulate merit. From the time that you start the journey to receive the teachings, just one step taken is a virtuous act that collects merit. It is good to also reflect on it in this way and to take the utmost advantage of the opportunity.

We can be inspired by the stories of previous masters such as Atisha who travelled all the way to Indonesia to receive teachings on bodhicitta. Of course in those days the journeys took many days on foot and by boat. This is an example of the way an arduous journey for the purpose of receiving the Dharma was, in every aspect, a way to accumulate merit. Of course we will not have to travel for many days, in fact we can take a plane and reach there in a few hours. These days when we go to India it only takes a few hours. Atisha's journey to Indonesia is said to have taken twelve months. For us, taking an aeroplane to India might take only twelve hours. So one hour corresponds to a month! It seems that in the past journeys taken on foot and so forth were less costly; even though now it may be easier to receive the teachings in terms of travel, we have to pay more as it is more expensive. (*laughter*)

The reason why I mention all this is for us to recognise the fact that we are incredibly fortunate in having such valuable teachings so accessible. Of course, the great effort made, and great hardship endured by earlier masters, was performed in the context of a practice itself. Each part of the journey, and all of the difficulties were part of the practice of the accumulation of great merit. However in this time and age, we are able to receive the teachings without having to experience much hardship. That is something that we should also feel grateful for and happy about and in this way we should feel fortunate. It is important to recognise that.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Judy Mayne
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

ཨཱརྱ་དེ་ཝས་བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་ནས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་བཤད་པ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 July 2008

As usual we shall set a positive motivation for the teachings, such as 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to attain enlightenment so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.2.1.3. REFUTING OTHER REASONING.

That is sub-divided into two:
1.2.1.3.1. Invalidity of negating emptiness of true existence by reason of direct perception
1.2.1.3.2. Since emptiness exists, its opposite, true existence, is not feasible

As mentioned previously, by developing a synopsis and understanding from the outline of the teachings we can gain deeper understanding of the presentation of the text. So we should try to obtain some understanding from these headings.

The first sub-heading relates to earlier assertions, in which the opponents asserted that things being validated by direct perception provide proof that things exist truly. In negating that assertion, it is explained how just because things are directly perceptible it doesn't mean that things are truly existent.

Again in the second sub-heading, what the opponents assert is that the establishment of emptiness on one hand means that its opposite has to exist. The opposite is inherent existence or true existence. So if you establish emptiness on one side, then that must mean that the opposite, which is true existence, is established as well. This is what is being refuted.

It is good for us to understand the logic of the opponents. Simply dismissing the opponents and not accepting their view, without really thinking much about how they establish their assertions, could result in a lack of deeper insight. We should aim to understand the opponents' views and their reasoning because their reasoning is also quite explicit in the way they have established their assertions and counter arguments.

As our system establishes interdependence, the opponents use that as a reason to try to refute our system. They use the reason of interdependence to say, 'since you establish interdependence, then that means when you establish emptiness it has to be interdependent with its opposite, which is true existence, or inherent existence. They have to be mutually related as being opposites. One can't exist without being an opposite of the other. So they say, according to you this would imply that phenomena exist truly as well.' But of course in our system rather than implying true existence the opposite, which is lack of true existence, is established.

However they use the reasoning of interdependence as we use it in our system. They take our reasons and throw it back at us saying 'because things are interdependent, then the opposite of emptiness must also exist.' So it is good to realise that if we don't think carefully about their arguments, we might be swayed into thinking that their reasons are valid too.

What is being established in our system is the lack of inherent existence or true existence, and it is being established through logical reasons. We can see throughout the text how logical reasoning is used repeatedly to refute assertions and counter arguments. Through this we should learn how logical reasoning is explained and applied in the teachings; how through the lack of inherent existence, emptiness is established through logical reasoning. In this way we train our mind to gain understanding through logical reasoning.

1.2.1.3.1. INVALIDITY OF NEGATING EMPTINESS OF TRUE EXISTENCE BY REASON OF DIRECT PERCEPTION

As mentioned previously, the opponents negate emptiness using the reason of direct perception. They say that since a vase is directly perceptible, it cannot be empty.

The verse from the root text that presents this is verse 381:

> *Where a pot is directly perceptible,* *381*
> *The argument of emptiness is meaningless.*
> *Here reasons appearing in textual systems*
> *Are not [acceptable]; elsewhere they are.*

The assertion comes in the first two lines of the verse, as the commentary explains:

> The reason proving the pot empty of true existence is meaningless and ineffectual, for wherever there is a directly perceptible pot, that truly existent pot is, according to us, established by direct perception.

The meaning of the second two lines of the verse that serve as the answer is explained in the commentary:

> In relation to the thesis of proponents establishing emptiness of true existence through reasoning, reasons appearing in their opponents' textual systems are unacceptable, because they are engaged in rejecting them.

The main point made here is, what is considered a valid reason in other theses is not accepted in our system because those very theses which are used in those other systems are reasons to establish true existence. Whereas in our system the reasons establishing true existence are unacceptable because that is the object of negation, therefore the very reasons establishing true existence, is rejected. So as it reads here *...because they are engaged in rejecting them* meaning rejecting the very reasons, which for them establishes true existence.

In refuting their assertions, this question is then raised:

> *Question:* Then are reasons from these textual systems inappropriate in all cases?
>
> *Answer:* Elsewhere there is no incompatibility, since they pertain where both protagonists' tenets are similar.

What is being established here is that the reasoning established in some theses are negated in our own system. The question raised is whether the reasons used are inappropriate at all times, in all cases. So what is being established as an answer is that when there is no

incompatibility, when there is a common basis of accepting the reasoning, then it will be accepted. This can be interpreted in two different ways, either it can mean that reasons which pertain to other tenets which have a similar view to our system, are accepted and appropriate; such as the reasoning in the syllogism, a vase lacks true existence, because of being interdependent. Another way of interpreting that, is the reasons that are accepted in our system, as well as the opponents system, are appropriate.

> ...there is no incompatibility, since they pertain where both protagonists' tenets are similar.

This is where the reasons as presented in the text are accepted.

1.2.1.3.2. SINCE EMPTINESS EXISTS, ITS OPPOSITE, TRUE EXISTENCE, IS NOT FEASIBLE

The verse that relates to this outline is the following:

> *When there is nothing that is not empty,* 382
> *How can emptiness be so?*
> *When the one does not exist,*
> *Why should the antidote exist?*

The assertion in relation to this verse is the following:

> *Assertion:* You proponents of emptiness accept the entity of emptiness, and since emptiness is not feasible unless it relies on non-emptiness, things are truly existent.

As mentioned previously, the counter-argument they use basically refers to this fact. According to them 'while you establish emptiness, it has to rely on non-emptiness. It cannot be established unless it relies on non-emptiness.' *Non-emptiness* here refers to true-existence, the opposite of the lack of true existence, is true existence or inherent existence. So this is their counter-argument.

As the commentary presents the answer in relation to the verse:

> *Answer:* It follows that the existence of emptiness does not establish its opposite, that there is true existence.
>
> If emptiness were truly existent, truly existent things as its basis would be feasible, but as there is nothing that is not empty of true existence, how can emptiness be truly existent?

When that which is being characterised is presented as being empty of inherent existence or lacking inherent existence, the doubt arises about the characteristics themselves, whether they could have some inherent existence or not. His Holiness also explained in detail in the recent teachings that just as that which is being characterised is empty of inherent existence, likewise the characteristics are also empty of inherent existence. The equations on both sides have to be thoroughly established to remove that doubt, since the doubt does arise.

Then as the commentary further reads:

> Its basis cannot possibly be truly existent. Why, when the basis does not have true existence, would the antidote negating it be truly existent?

This also relates to the presentation of the assertions and the refutations made earlier in relation to the base and that which is based upon it, or that which is characterised and the characteristics of that which is being characterised.

The basis or that which is based upon it, or that which is being characterised and the characteristics being equally empty, was presented earlier. Here again the text emphasises those points.

Then the commentary quotes from the *Fundamental Wisdom*:

> *If the slightest thing were not empty*
> *Emptiness would have some existence*

Then as well, the *Two Truths* says:

> *Since the object of negation is non-existent,*
> *The negation clearly does not exist as [its own] reality.*

At this point, His Holiness also having quoted from this, raised the question of who the composer of the Two Truths was, whether it was Yeshe Nyingpo or not. His Holiness was checking with the Geshes who said Yeshe Nyingpo was the composer. His Holiness was also referring to Geshe Tashi Tsering and myself. His Holiness also mentioned, in relation to another doubt about the different types of reasoning, establishing the fundamental nature of things and so forth, the different characters and how to explain the nature, karma and so forth. His Holiness was referring to a discussion on this we had last year in New Zealand, and was asking what the conclusion had been. In relation to that discussion we had last year in New Zealand, I was trying to present the conclusion, but His Holiness said, 'okay, lets leave it for now because it might just confuse us more' *[laughter]*

1.2.2. Refuting adherence to theses which fall into extremes

That is sub-divided into two:
1.2.2.1. Actual refutation
1.2.2.2. Refuting the justification

1.2.2.1. ACTUAL REFUTATION

This is sub-divided into three:
1.2.2.1.1. Refuting that the non-thesis is a thesis
1.2.2.1.2. Refuting proof that there are truly existent things
1.2.2.1.3. Showing that everything is equally free from extremes

1.2.2.1.1. REFUTING THAT THE NON-THESIS IS A THESIS

This relates to what is translated here as 'thesis'. The specific Tibetan word 'chog' is more like an in accordance. According to the Tibetan word here 'chog' and 'chog me' relates to 'accordance' and 'discordance'. Basically, it relates to what is translated as 'thesis' and 'non-thesis'. The 'non-thesis' refers to the establishment of lack of inherent existence, lack of true existence, and the 'thesis' here, refers to the bases of negation of true existence. Again it is similar to the earlier counter-argument about when lack of inherent existence is established, the opposite of that which is true existence also has to be established.

> *Answer:*
>
> *If there were a thesis, absence of the thesis* 383
> *Would in entity be a thesis,*
> *But where there is no thesis*
> *What can be the counter-thesis?*

The opponents' assertion is:

> *Assertion:* Since there is not even the slightest emptiness, it cannot constitute one's thesis. Nevertheless by accepting the absence of a system of one's own as one's system, one is asserting a thesis. Since there is no thesis, which does not depend on a counter-thesis, truly existent things—the counter-thesis—exist.

The answer is:

> If we had any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity, the absence of a thesis would in entity be a thesis existent by way of its own entity.

While the thesis of non-inherent existence or lack of true existence is established, that does not mean that that thesis itself is truly existent.

The following explanation makes it clear, as it reads in the commentary:

> However since we do not have any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity, a counter-thesis dependent upon that is also impossible.

The opponent's counter argument is for example, to use an analogy with directional sides of an object; when the eastern directional side of an object is established, the opposite of that side, as not being the eastern directional side is also established. Similarly the opponents use these reasons as a counter-argument, and say *if you were to establish lack of inherent existence or emptiness, then the opposite of that which is true existence, would also have to be established*. However our system clearly states that what is being established lacks any inherent or true existence, so anything counter to that cannot be established in any way as being truly existent either.

> However since we do not have any thesis of existence by way of a thing's own entity...

So there is no thesis which establishes a thing existing by way of its own entity, existing from its own side, so a counter-thesis dependent upon something which exists from its own side, is impossible. That's what is basically being established.

Continuing on:

> Moreover all theses concerning truly existent things have already been refuted above.

Clearly all the previous verses negating true existence have been established.

Furthermore it clarifies the remaining part of the explanation in the commentary:

> Thus if the absence of a thesis does not exist by way of its own entity, what truly existent thing could constitute the counter-thesis?

This being a rhetorical question, it means that it couldn't.

> Neither thesis nor counter-thesis have even an atom of true existence. By this we refute truly existent emptiness as our system, which should not, however, be interpreted as showing that we have no system.

What is being clearly established here is that when the thesis of lack of inherent existence is established, it doesn't mean that nothing exists. It doesn't mean that we are establishing a thesis, which indicates that nothing exists, that there is nothing. In other words emptiness does not imply that there is no thesis, where nothing is being established

1.2.2.1.2. REFUTING PROOF THAT THERE ARE TRULY EXISTENT THINGS

That is sub-divided into three:

1.2.2.1.2.1. It is not feasible that there is true existence on the grounds that specific functional things are truly existent

1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the four extremes by reasoning

1.2.2.1.2.3. Not even the smallest particle of true existence can be observed

1.2.2.1.2.1. It is not feasible that there is true existence on the grounds that specific functional things are truly existent

Answer:

> ***How can fire be hot,*** ***384***
> ***When things do not exist?***
> ***This was refuted above: it was said***
> ***That even hot fire does not exist.***

The opponents use a counter-argument giving examples of what we conventionally call 'the nature' of something. Such as hot being the nature of fire; sweetness being the nature of molasses. These are explained as being in the nature of an entity. Using that as an example the opponents say 'since hot is the nature of fire, then that characteristic or nature should be truly existent'. Similarly sweetness, being the nature of molasses, must be truly existent.

Thus their assertion is the following:

> *Assertion:* There are truly existent things, because specific things like fire and so forth [truly] exist.

The word *truly* is missed out as according to the Tibetan text.

Both us, and the opponents, would agree that hot is the nature of fire, as sweetness is the nature molasses. However that does not indicate that the entity of hot exists from its own side or is inherently existent in fire. Even though we would say that hot is the nature of the fire.

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary:

> How can fire be hot by way of its own entity? It cannot, for there are no truly existent things. Above it was said that even hot fire does not exist inherently. As it says in the stanza 341

The nature of fire being hot and that being dependent on fuel was clearly explained in the earlier verse. So what is being reiterated here is that fire is that which burns, and because fire has the characteristic of burning, it also has the nature of being hot. However having the nature of being hot does not come about independent of anything else, because fire depends on fuel. Without fuel there can't be fire. So just as fire and fuel are interdependent, the nature of fire being hot is also dependent on fuel, as it does not arise independently.

The nature of fire being hot is not such that heat exists independently with fire. Fire itself would then exist independently in the nature of being hot. It does not exist this way as it depends on fuel to burn. It is in combination with fuel that the fire is in the nature of being hot and burning. Without fuel there can't be fire.

Thus the interdependent relationship being established is that the nature of fire being hot is interdependent with fuel, rather then existing independently. Thus as the commentary then quotes the earlier verse 341, as it reads:

> *That which is hot is fire but how*
> *Can that burn which is not hot?*

What is being established is the interdependent nature of fire and fuel.

As further explained in the next two lines:

> *Thus so-called fuel does not exist,*
> *And without it fire too does not.*

So what is being established is that basically, fire is that which burns and is hot, but this nature of being hot and burning is related or dependent upon fuel. Without fuel there can't be fire that burns and is hot on its own. So on a conventional level we can say that the nature of fire is burning and hot. Then even from that conventional definition of fire as burning and hot, we may fail to really recognise the interdependence of the nature of fire as actually dependent on fuel. Without fuel, fire can't be in the nature of being hot and burning; without fuel there could not be a hot and burning fire. Understanding this interdependent relationship then removes the doubt that hot and burning is an independently existing characteristic or nature of fire.

1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the four extremes by reasoning

> *If through seeing things one could refute* *385*
> *The statement that things do not exist,*
> *Who then sees the elimination*
> *Of fallacies regarding all four theses?*

This has already been covered in great detail earlier, but the verses are re-establishing the earlier concepts and reiterating them in a more concise way. However as the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Moreover, even if, on seeing the thing which is fire, it were appropriate to refute the statement that fire does not exist truly, who sees the elimination of fallacies associated with the true existence of oneness and difference [this is in relation to the four extremes] and of all four theses such as existence and non-existence and so forth exposed by the reasoning of dependent arising? Since all four theses are seen to be flawed, one should not accept any thesis of true existence.

The logical reasoning negating the four extremes such as the reasoning using interdependence which is called 'The King of Reasons', and the reasoning which negates the inherent oneness or separateness; the Diamond Sliver Reason and so forth. These five different reasons were explained earlier in the text, and have already been covered.

Recently, His Holiness went into great detail over these reasons in the teachings so we don't really need to go into much more detail now as we have covered that. Even though all of them were not presented, some of the reasons came out explicitly in the text.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Judy Mayne
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 July 2008

As usual we sit with a fresh mind that is free from external distraction, and try to bring it inward. Then from within a focused state of mind we generate a positive motivation such as, 'in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.2.2.1.2.3. Not even the smallest particle of true existence can be observed

What this outline indicates is that let alone big things, even the smallest particle does not have true existence.

> For the following reason, too, it is incorrect to assert true existence:
>
> *When there is nowhere, even in particles,* 386
> *A truly existent entity, how can it occur?*
> *Even for Buddhas, it does not exist.*
> *Thus it is irrelevant.*

The commentary quotes from an earlier stanza:

> As explained in the context of [stanza 305],
> This also applies when one examines
> Whether particles have parts.

As was explained earlier the opponents assert a partless particle as an instance of a truly existent phenomenon. According to our system a particle that has no parts and which is a complete separate entity that does not depend on anything else, is non-existent. There are no such partless particles as even the tiniest particle is dependent on its directional parts. So, as it is a dependent arising, even the tiniest particle cannot be truly existent, or an independently existent phenomenon.

The commentary further explains:

> If there were a truly existent entity, it should be observable even in extremely small things such as particles, but it is not observable. How can truly existent production occur for that which does not exist anywhere?

As explicitly explained here, if there were a truly existent entity, then it would have to be found when searched for. However when investigated, even the tiniest particle cannot be seen as being truly existent. The rhetorical question, "How can truly existent production occur for that which does not exist anywhere?" implies that since truly existent phenomena cannot be found to be existent anywhere, there could not be any instances of a truly existent production.

As the commentary further reads:

> It is totally incorrect to accept as existent that which is non-existent to the perception of Buddhas, the sun-like radiance of whose consummate understanding of the suchness of things dispels all darkness of ignorance.

First of all, the qualities of the Buddha are explained with an analogy of the rays of the sun, and the way they dispel darkness. Just as darkness is immediately dispelled wherever the sun's rays hit the Earth, likewise the radiance of the buddhas, which is the quality of the Buddha's omniscient mind, radiate forth in order to help sentient beings remove their ignorance, which is analogous to darkness. The sun-like radiance of the Buddha, removes all the darkness of ignorance from the minds of sentient beings.

This explanation of the Buddha's quality also relates to the literal meaning of the word *sang gye* in Tibetan. These two syllables connote Buddha, the Enlightened One or Awakened One, but each syllable has a specific connotation. *Sang* has the connotation of completely dispelling, implying dispelling all ignorance and negativity from the mind. *Gye* has the connotation of proliferation, implying the proliferation of all qualities. Thus the two syllables connote an enlightened being who has dispelled all ignorance and proliferated all qualities.

The commentary then relates this explanation of an enlightened being, or a buddha, to the meaning of the verse: even an enlightened being or buddha who has the highest qualities, does not see true existence or inherent existence in any phenomena.

Using the meaning of the verse, it concludes that if there is no instance at all of inherent or true existence of any phenomenon, even for an enlightened mind, then that rules out any possibility of there being an instance of true existence at any other time.

The commentary concludes:

> Asserting true existence is thus unrelated to any feasible thesis.

When it says, 'asserting true existence is thus unrelated to any feasible thesis' this relates to refuting certain views of opponents who assert that 'there is no true existence from the Buddha's perspective, however in general one must accept that there is true existence'. As the commentary explains, true existence cannot be established under any circumstance.

In relation to the meaning of 'buddha' explained earlier, the Sanskrit word 'buddha' literally translates as either 'awakened' or 'blossomed', (sometimes the analogy of a lotus is used) just as a lotus, although born from a muddy pond, blossoms into a beautiful flower, likewise the Buddha's mind blossoms from the darkness of ignorance. However the Tibetan word *sang gye* has a further connotation. It includes the aspect of dispelling all darkness as well as the proliferation or accomplishment of all possible good qualities.

As most of you were at His Holiness' teachings recently, you would remember that His Holiness explicitly pointed out that the Tibetan translations of the text are not only very authentic, but that certain words or terms also carry a very deep meaning. As His Holiness explicitly mentioned, with the word *sang gye*, the Tibetan translators took it a bit further than the meaning of the one syllable in Sanskrit, in order to bring a more profound meaning to the word 'buddha'. So using these two syllables *sang gye* is good for us to get a further understanding of what Buddha means.

As His Holiness also mentioned, the Tibetan translations are such that by following the literal meaning of the words, even an ordinary person can actually develop an understanding of their meaning. So the Tibetan language uses very meaningful terms to explain the Dharma.

His Holiness really emphasised this point, and it seems very true. An old lady came to see me during the teachings, saying that she had been reading sutras but couldn't really understand anything much. In fact trying to read the sutras just made her sleepy because she missed the point. However after coming to the teachings for just two weeks she could understand much of the their meaning. This goes to show that the language itself makes a difference in presenting the meaning of the teachings. Tibetan is really quite unique in that sense of presenting very deep meaning. So this is good news for those who are inspired to learn Tibetan *(laughter)*.

It is appropriate to say that without the Tibetan language and texts, it would be quite hard to really get the subtle meanings of the teachings, because Sanskrit is no longer commonly used. Also many of the original Sanskrit texts have been lost. Whereas there has been a successful Tibetan translation of most Sanskrit texts, not only the texts themselves, but the commentaries, and further commentaries on those texts also exist in Tibetan. Thus the actual root text, and the commentaries of those root texts composed by other Indian masters, as well as Tibetan commentaries are all intact in the Tibetan language. At this time and age, it seems that this is the only means to really gain an understanding of the teachings.

When someone who knows Tibetan and who knows the Dharma a bit is able to literally translate from the Tibetan into English, for example, then that seems to present a good sound teaching.

I have heard from other Tibetan scholars who are in Japan that there are earlier commentaries that were translated into Japanese. However they are in an older style of Japanese script and cannot be translated into modern Japanese without knowing some Chinese. Therefore, those texts cannot possibly be translated from modern Japanese into English or any other language for that matter without knowing Chinese. So these very old and ancient texts cannot be used now as they are not accessible to the common people.

1.2.2.1.3. SHOWING THAT EVERYTHING IS EQUALLY FREE FROM EXTREMES

That is subdivided into two.
1.2.2.1.3.1. Actual meaning
1.2.2.1.3.2. Inappropriateness of asserting differentiations of truly existent and not truly existent with regard to any phenomenon

1.2.2.1.3.1. Actual meaning

If they are not twofold, how can *387*
Anything have an existent entity?
If that is reasonable to you also,
Why raise further arguments?

As the commentary explains:

> If there is no twofold division of phenomena into truly existent and not truly existent, what, such as particles and so forth, could have a truly existent entity…

As mentioned earlier, as even the tiniest particles lack true existence there can be no distinction between phenomena as being truly existent and others as being not truly existent. That is because even the smallest particle and so forth cannot have any true existence.

> …since all forms of true existence have been precluded?

This rhetorical question indicates that nothing can have a truly existent entity. This relates to the verse where it says 'if they are not twofold how can anything have an existent entity?' There is another interpretation: according to some other commentaries 'they are not twofold' can also mean that phenomena can be divided into permanent and impermanent phenomena, and so any true existence of either permanent or impermanent phenomena cannot be seen. However we relate to the explanation that is given here in this text.

In relation to the last two lines of the verse the commentary read:

> If for the very reasons we have explained, it is appropriate for you too to accept the system which has eliminated the two extremes, why do you cling to the thesis of true existence and raise further arguments against us?

Here again our system is pointing out to the opponents 'having heard all the reasons and explanations that eliminate the two extremes that we have given, then why do you still hold on to theses of true existence and raise these arguments to us?' As there are obvious good reasons explaining the absence of true existence, it shows the absurdity of the opponents still holding on to their views and still trying to argue against the Madhyamika view.

1.2.2.1.3.2. Inappropriateness of asserting differentiations of truly existent and not truly existent with regard to any phenomenon

> If any reasoning could disprove the thesis concerning emptiness of true existence, we would be convinced, but since things cannot he proved truly existent, you should accept only our thesis.

Regarding the non-functional [aspect] of all things, 388
Differentiations are inappropriate.
That which is seen in all substantial entities
Is not differentiable.

What our system is pointing out here is that the opponents attempt to disprove our thesis concerning emptiness without any sound reasoning. What our system is basically saying is 'If you were to give some sound reasoning to disapprove the thesis of emptiness then we could accept that, be convinced and there would be no arguments. But besides not being able to provide any good reasons to disprove the thesis of emptiness, you have no good reasons to prove anything to be truly existent'.

'That being the case the only option left is for you to accept our thesis, which is the thesis that explains a lack of inherent or true existence - the thesis of emptiness.'

The commentary further explains the meaning of the verse:

> If the nature of internal and external things were truly existent, they would not depend on causes and conditions.

That things depend on causes and conditions has been proved many times.

> Also differentiations of truly existent and not truly existent are inappropriate with regard to the absence of truly existent things. There are no differences in the entity of space, because it is a mere absence of obstructing form. Similarly regarding emptiness of true existence, the nature seen in all substantial entities,

What is being further explained is that if internal and external things were truly existent then the conclusion would be that they do not depend on causes and conditions. But clearly things do depend on causes and conditions, which indicates that things could not be truly existent. Furthermore a differentiation between truly existent and not truly existent is inappropriate. The analogy that is given is that just as the entity of space as a 'mere absence of obstructing form' pertains to every part of space, likewise emptiness of true existence pervades all existent phenomena.

The essential point that is presented here, as it has been presented earlier, is the point that reads, 'if the nature of internal and external things were truly existent, they would not depend on causes and conditions'. This point is really the crux of the teachings. Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings explicitly state that when one gains an understanding of interdependence it should help one to understand the lack of inherent or true existence, which is emptiness, while thinking about how things lack true existence or inherent existence should enhance the understanding of interdependence.

If we were to take a vase, for example, it is very important that when we gain an understanding of the specific relationship of interdependence and emptiness, we extend that to gain an insight into the crux of the teachings on emptiness. If things were truly existent then one should understand how that implies that things would not be dependent on causes and conditions. The very assertion of true existence implies an entity that is independently existent, where 'independently existent' means existing from its own side, and by its own right. That in turn implies not depending or relating to anything else, which then implies that it does not relate to any causes or conditions for its existence. That is essentially what is being negated.

For example, when one considers how a vase is dependent on causes and conditions, in other words when one thinks about the vase and how it is made, how it comes into existence due to certain causes, then that very understanding should enhance the understanding that the vase is empty of true existence or inherent existence, because it depends on causes and conditions. Likewise permanent phenomena such as space, also dependent on directional parts for its existence, thus they are interdependent originations.

Thus when thinking about the interdependent nature of something, one gains an insight into the emptiness of that phenomenon. Likewise when one contemplates the vase as being empty of inherent or true existence, and uses that as a reason to establish that it lacks independent existence and is therefore dependent on causes and conditions, then that understanding enhances contemplation on the lack of inherent or true existence of the vase. That then enhances the understanding of the vase as being interdependently existent, or establishing interdependent origination of the vase.

When we relate that to all internal and external phenomena, which covers all existence, this is a point that one should keep in mind. As explained in the teachings it is a very important point for gaining insight into the emptiness of all phenomena. So through this training and understanding we gain further insights into emptiness. Let us use a more contemporary example such as this clock to test your own understanding. If someone were to present the clock and say that it is dependent on causes and conditions, then does that help to enhance the notion that the clock must therefore lack true existence or inherent existence? Just mentioning that the clock is dependent on causes and conditions should help to instil the notion that therefore the clock must lack inherent or true existence.

Likewise if the clock is presented as being a phenomenon that lacks inherent or true existence, then that should help to instil the notion that therefore the clock must exist by depending on causes and conditions. In other words its interdependence, or the interdependent origination of the clock must be understood.

If, after thinking about the clock's interdependent existence, one is still doubtful about the clock's lack of inherent existence then one has missed the point. If, after thinking about the lack of inherent existence of the clock, one starts to wonder about the interdependent origination of the clock, then one has also missed the point.

Lama Tsong Khapa clearly and explicitly mentioned in teachings such as the *Three Principals of the Path* that if one does not gain an understanding of emptiness when one thinks about interdependent origination and vice versa then one has not fully understood the Buddha's intent. On the other hand, when one sees that these two understandings enhance each other then one has grasped the full intention of the Buddha. Even though this has been mentioned many times previously I will go over it again now.

The main point, as presented in Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings is that we should understand how emptiness and interdependence enhance each other. If one actually misses that point then the great fault that could arise is that one will not have the right view of emptiness. If one does not have that profound insight into the relationship between interdependence and emptiness then the fault that would arise is that despite claiming that one has a profound understanding of emptiness, one may actually neglect the observance of karma, cause and effect. If the observance of the laws of cause and effect is neglected, then that will be a great danger for oneself and others.

In relation to the specific explanation in the commentary that reads, 'there are no differences in the entity of space, because it is a mere absence of obstructing form', the analogy that is used is space. For example, although a vase, a pot, a glass and other kinds of objects, are all hollow they are clearly different, one being a vase and another being a pot, another being a glass and so forth. However the space within the hollowness of these objects is exactly the same in having the entity of mere absence of obstructing form, which is the definition of space.

One cannot differentiate the entity or nature of space within these different objects. Even though the objects are different, the space within them is the same insofar as it is a mere absence of obstructing form. Likewise, as mentioned here in the commentary, 'regarding emptiness of true existence the nature seen in all substantial entities is the same'. Using that analogy, what is being explained is that even though there may be different entities of phenomena or different existing objects, they all are in the same nature of lacking true existence or inherent existence, regardless of whether they are permanent or impermanent phenomena. So in that way they are exactly the same.

Then the commentary quotes from a stanza that was explained earlier:

> [Stanza 191] says:
>
> Whoever sees one thing,
> Is said to see all.
> That which is the emptiness of one
> Is the emptiness of all.

The explanation of this verse was given earlier, so you should already understand it. As explained previously, one must not misinterpret these lines. They do not indicate that the emptiness of one phenomenon is the emptiness of all other phenomena. That is not what is being indicated. Rather, what is being mentioned here is that when one understands the emptiness of one phenomenon then that understanding of the emptiness of the one phenomenon is the equivalent of seeing the emptiness of all phenomena. That is, by using the same logical reasoning one will also be able to see the lack of inherent existence or true existence in other phenomena as well.

Also, in relation to the previous analogy of space, when one sees the emptiness of certain phenomena one is seeing the mere absence of true existence or inherent existence. Emptiness is a non-affirming negation: what is being negated within that phenomenon is mere true existence, or inherent existence. That mere negation of inherent or true existence is the same for any phenomenon. When one realises emptiness of any phenomenon one is negating the true or inherent existence of that phenomenon. In his recent teachings, His Holiness, quoted from other teachings such as *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna and so forth to explain this point.

In order to further emphasise the point the commentary quotes from a sutra:

> Sutra says, "Whoever has come to know the non-functional with regard to functional things has no attachment to functional things." There are no distinctions of truly existent and not truly existent with regard to any phenomenon whatsoever.

It is good to take note of the nature of this presentation. First logical reasons are used and then to back up those logical reasons a quote from the sutras is used. The citation from a sutra is used to back up the logical reasons that have been given. This is, in fact, the approach to debate in the monasteries: the debate formula is based on logical reasons and when one presents the main logical point in debate it is considered to be very skilful when there is a sound citation to back up that logical reason. If there is an authentic citation from a sutra to back up logical reason then that becomes the complete formula of authentic debate.

1.2.2.2. REFUTING THE JUSTIFICATION

There are two sub-headings:
1.2.2.2.1. Appropriateness of accepting the thesis of emptiness of true existence if it is not accepted the appropriateness of giving a reply but not being able to do so[1]
1.2.2.2.2. Difficulty of finding a thesis refuting emptiness of true existence

1.2.2.2.1. APPROPRIATENESS OF ACCEPTING THE THESIS OF EMPTINESS OF TRUE EXISTENCE IF IT IS NOT ACCEPTED THE APPROPRIATENESS OF GIVING A REPLY BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO DO SO

Basically this outline is saying 'our system has presented sound reasons to accept the thesis of emptiness of true existence. It would be appropriate that you either accept that thesis based on the reasons that we present, or if you don't accept it then it would be appropriate that you give a reply saying why my reasons are not good'.

> *Challenge*: After first analyzing, you should either accept emptiness or make a reply.
>
> *Objection*: It would be appropriate to make a reply if the slightest thing were accepted as truly existent, but since according to you everything is non-existent, how can any reply be made?

What the opponents are saying is, 'if you were to accept something, as being truly existent, then it is appropriate to give a reply to you, but since you accept nothing how can I give you a reply?' What is missing from the translation is 'if you were to say I do not give a reply because you don't accept anything how can any reply be made?'

> *If owing to non-existence you claim* *389*
> *No reply is made to the other's thesis,*
> *Why should you not also prove*
> *Your own thesis which is refuted by reasons?*

The commentary then explains the meaning of the verse, which is an answer to the objection:

> If you claim that no reply is made to the Mãdhyamika thesis because everything is non-existent, why should it not also be proper to prove your own thesis which is refuted by the reasons that prove emptiness? Since one cannot refute another's thesis without proving one's own, yours has become non-existent.

What is being specifically explained here is 'you have not proven your own thesis first. How then can you disprove ours without proving your own thesis? So therefore your

[1] The text does not list the heading in full.

own system becomes non-existent'. That is what our own system is saying.

1.2.2.2.2. DIFFICULTY OF FINDING A THESIS REFUTING EMPTINESS OF TRUE EXISTENCE

What is being explained is that a thesis refuting the emptiness of true existence is actually quite difficult to find. This indicates that the emptiness of true existence cannot really be refuted. The difficulty of finding a thesis implies that it cannot be refuted.

> *Assertion*: Even if one is unable to prove one's thesis, it is said and well known in the world that reasons which refute others' theses are easy to find.
>
> *Answer*:
>
> *Though the world says it is easy* *390*
> *To find reasons with which to refute,*
> *Why can the errors regarding*
> *The others' thesis not be stated?*

What the opponent is saying in the assertion is, 'how can you possibility refute our system without first establishing your own thesis? Actually it is quite easy to refute your thesis. Everyone knows that it is harder to establish one's own views but refuting someone else's views it is actually much easier'.

Basically the counter-argument that the opponents use in relation to the verse is that our own system has said, as mentioned earlier, 'without establishing your own system first, and giving good reasons to establish your own thesis (which establishes true existence), how can you refute our system (which establishes the lack of true existence)? It is unreasonable to refute our system without establishing your own system.'

As a counter argument the opponents say 'your refutations are not so astonishing, because even in a worldly sense it is well known that it is much harder to prove one's own system, and refuting the theses of others is quite easy to do. So, in fact, your claim that I have not established my own thesis through reasons is not unusual. Even in a worldly sense it is accepted that it is much harder to prove one's own thesis. In other words', the opponent is saying, 'it doesn't negate the feasibility of my system if I don't give a good reason to establish my system'.

As a response to the opponent's counter-argument, our system explains the answer, using the meaning of the verse.

> Since in that case you too must be in possession of those easily found reasons with which to refute, why are even you unable to fault the others' thesis, that of the Madhyamikas?

What the opponent has said earlier is that it is easy to refute the systems of others. Conventionally it is known that it is much easier to refute others. 'If that is the case', our system is saying, 'you too must be in possession of those easily found reasons with which to refute our thesis, so why are you unable to fault the thesis of the Madhyamikas? If you have reasons, and if you can easily refute the Madhyamika system, then why aren't you doing so?

'The conclusion is that you are not able to refute our thesis, which is the lack of true existence'. The conclusion, as explained in the commentary is:

> Thus as you are unable to fault the others' thesis, reasons refuting emptiness are not easy to find.

'The fact that you have not provided any sound reasoning to refute the thesis of emptiness proves that it is not easy to find reasons to refute emptiness'. In other words, this is implying that there are no reasons that refute emptiness. If it is difficult to find reasons, then that implies that there are no logically sound reasons that refute the thesis of emptiness, or the lack of true existence.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 July 2008

As usual we set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings we need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put it into practise well'.

1.2.3. Showing parity of reasoning with regard to true existence or lack of true existence

1.2.3.1. Both emptiness of true existence and true existence are either equally established or not established merely by words

1.2.3.2. Mere designation as truly existent will not make it so

1.2.3.3. If there were true existence because ordinary people use the verbal convention that things are truly existent, then being conventionally existent they could not exist as their own suchness

1.2.3.1. Both emptiness of true existence and true existence are either equally established or not established merely by words

This indicates that if things can be established merely by words, then there is no difference between establishing true existence and the lack of true existence.

If just by saying "They exist" 391
Things really did exist,
Why should they not also be non-existent
Just by saying "They do not exist"?

What this verse is basically refuting relates to the earlier assertion by the opponents, where we said, 'Not only do you not have any sound reasons to prove the establishment of true existence, you don't have any good reasons to refute our establishment of the lack of true existence'. The opponents replied that in worldly convention, it is known to be easy to refute others views without giving any reasons. Thus the main point is that the opponents have not given any valid reasons to refute our system's establishment of the lack of inherent existence, nor have they given any valid reasons to establish true existence. This is followed by our system saying, 'If your reasons for true existence were to rely on things being established by mere words, then that is also not feasible'. The commentary explains the verse as follows:

> If even without reasoning, but merely by saying the words "They exist," things existed as their own suchness, why should their emptiness of true existence not also be established merely by our saying the words "They do not exist truly"? The reasoning is the same in all respects. Therefore, rejecting assertions regarding the two extremes, we both should firmly establish the textual system free from all fabrications which asserts non-existence of the two extremes.

The main point being raised here specifically relates to the opponents' lack of reasons that establish true existence. If by mere words 'they exist' you can establish true existence, then would it not be the same in our own case? Why wouldn't merely saying 'they do not exist' also establish the lack of true existence?

Whilst in our system, rather than being mere words, there are many sound reasons that establish the lack of true existence. Therefore, the commentary says, rather than giving baseless reasons it is better that we both establish the textual system that gives sound reasoning free from all fabrications, which asserts the non-existence of the two extremes.

1.2.3.2. Mere designation as truly existent will not make it so

This further refutes the establishment of true existence. The opponents say that true existence is established by convention when one says 'things truly exist', and this is refuted by our system, which points out that mere designation of something as truly existent does not make that thing truly existent, and thus truly existent phenomena are not feasible. What our system is basically saying is neither mere words nor mere designation is sufficient to establish or prove true existence.

There is a story about a discussion between two people. One of them owned a male horse that had a rather big belly, so he claimed that his horse was pregnant. The other person reasoned, 'How could your horse be pregnant? It is a male horse!' To which the horse owner replied, 'Well it may be a male horse, but still it is pregnant'. Besides insisting that his horse was pregnant, he had no good reasons to prove it. Of course we know that it is feasible to refute a male horse being pregnant, but the horse owner was a bit stubborn and wouldn't accept facts. The point of this story is that the reasoning used by the opponents of our system is similar to that—they insist that things are truly existent, but they have no good reasons to prove it.

Our system is pointing out that using mere words or mere designation is not a valid reason to establish true existence. Thus our system is basically saying, 'If you claim that true existence is established, then you must give sound reasons to support your claim. Likewise if you refute our position that there is a lack of true existence, then you have to give good and valid reasons to refute us. Without valid reasons, your refutations are not feasible'.

> *Assertion:* If things do not exist ultimately, the designation "things exist" is incorrect and as unreasonable as terming a barren woman's child existent.
>
> *Answer:*
>
> *If a thing is not non-existent* 392
> *Because the term "existent" is ascribed,*
> *Neither is it existent*
> *Because the term "existent" is applied.*

The opponent's assertion, which is more of a counter argument is if according to your system, things do not exist ultimately, then how can you say 'things exist', it would be the same as 'terming a barren woman's child existent'. In our system however, even though we establish that things do not exist ultimately, that does not negate the existence of phenomena. It does not mean that things do not exist.

Their assertion indicates that the opponents fail to understand the meaning behind our statement, and so therefore their counter argument is, if things do not exist according to you, then that is as unreasonable as saying 'a child of a barren woman exists'.

In explaining the meaning of the verse, the commentary reads:

> If things do not lack true existence because the designation "they are and exist" is ascribed, neither are

they truly existent because the designation "they exist truly" is applied.

The commentary clarifies our view, 'According to your system merely because the designations "they are" and "exist" are ascribed to things, you say things do not lack true existence. With that same line of reasoning, neither could things be truly existent merely because the designation "they exist truly" is applied. So, if you claim that things could not lack true existence merely because the designation that "they exist" is ascribed, then likewise when you say things are truly existent: just because you ascribe the term "truly existent", it does not mean that they become truly existent either. Things cannot exist truly'.

In our system, when we say that things 'lack true existence', we are not denying the actual existence of things. In fact by proving that things 'lack true existence', it establishes the real mode of existence of things, so rather than negating the existence of phenomena, it actually establishes the true nature of things. Whereas when you ascribe 'true existence' to something, it is not as if just designating 'true existence' actually makes things to truly existent'.

The commentary gives this analogy:

> Calling someone with good eyesight blind or someone with a short life long-lived does not make them so.

The analogy explains that when someone actually has good eyesight, just giving the designation 'they are blind' does not make them blind. Likewise just giving someone the designation 'long-lived' does not make them live long. Similarly, when you designated things as 'truly existent', that does not establish things as truly existent.

The commentary further reads:

> Besides, if things could be accomplished by words alone, it would be just as reasonable to accept that they lack true existence as to think they are truly existent.

The main point being made here is that mere designation will not make something to be so. Thus mere designation of true existence upon phenomena, will not establish things to be truly existent. It is similar to describing a person with good sight as being blind: mere designation will not establish that person as blind.

Furthermore, as it explains in the commentary, 'if things could be accomplished just by giving the term or by words alone' then 'it would be just as reasonable to accept that they lack true existence as to think they are truly existent'. So if you establish true existence merely because the term 'things are truly existent' is given, then you would have to also accept the 'lack of true existence' because that can also be established as a term. In that case you would have to face the absurdity of accepting that things are both 'truly existent' as well as 'lacking true existence'.

1.2.3.3. IF THERE WERE TRUE EXISTENCE BECAUSE ORDINARY PEOPLE USE THE VERBAL CONVENTION THAT THINGS ARE TRULY EXISTENT, THEN BEING CONVENTIONALLY EXISTENT THEY COULD NOT EXIST AS THEIR OWN SUCHNESS

The main point of the outline, which is in the meaning of the next verse, is that if things were truly existent because ordinary people use that verbal convention, then that would imply that even ordinary beings would be able to see the true nature of things, which has to be the lack of inherent existence. But that, of course, cannot be the case.

> *Another's assertion:* Words do not reveal an object's entity. If they did, one's mouth would burn when saying "fire" or be full when saying "pot." Therefore we assert that ordinary people all have means of expression and terms for that which is being expressed which do not touch an object's own entity.

This is an assertion that is established by a different opponent. What this opponent is establishing is that words themselves do not actually reveal the actual entity of the objects. If they did, then saying the word 'fire', for example, would cause your mouth to burn. Likewise if you said that a pot was round and big, then your mouth would be full when you say those words.

That opponent concludes, 'Therefore we assert that ordinary people all have means of expression and terms for that which is being expressed which do not touch an object's own entity'.

Answer:

> *If everything is a convention* *393*
> *Because expressed by ordinary people,*
> *How can anything which exists*
> *As [its own] suchness be a convention?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

> Supposedly things all exist inherently and as conventions because ordinary people speak of them by means of words which do not touch their entity. But how can anything that exists inherently, existing as its own suchness, be a convention? It could only be ultimately existent.

The main point being made here is that if, because of convention, things actually existed inherently, i.e. exist as their own suchness, then that would imply that ordinary beings could actually perceive the reality, suchness, or emptiness of things.

If phenomena were to be ultimately existent, then by seeing the ultimate existence of the phenomena an ordinary person would attain liberation. If an ordinary person actually saw the ultimate reality of things, then in fact they would not be an ordinary person. The way to achieve liberation is by realising the ultimate reality of phenomena, and it is only a yogic perception that sees the ultimate reality of phenomena. 'So according to you if ordinary beings were to touch the reality, or see the suchness of phenomena by mere convention then that would imply that ordinary beings have yogic perception, and therefore they could not be ordinary beings.'

Therefore, as it mentions here in the commentary, 'how can anything that exists inherently, existing as its own suchness, be a convention?' A convention is that which is seen or perceived by ordinary beings. This rhetorical question implies that 'anything that exists inherently as it own suchness, could not be a convention'.

1.2.4. Refuting non-existence as the thesis

That is subdivided into two:

1.2.4.1. Refuting that negation of truly existent things makes things utterly non-existent

1.2.4.2. As there are no truly existent things that which is non-functional cannot be truly existent either

1.2.4.1. REFUTING THAT NEGATION OF TRULY EXISTENT THINGS MAKES THINGS UTTERLY NON-EXISTENT

In their counter arguments the opponents have asserted that our system negates 'existence' because we claim that things 'lack true existence'. Therefore what is being established here is that the negation of 'truly existent things' does not make things 'non-existent'.

Assertion: Since you deny that things have true existence, things are non-existent.

That is the opponent's counter argument to the Madhyamika point of view.

Answer:

If things are non-existent because 394
Things all do not exist,
In that case it is incorrect that all theses
Concern the non-existence of things.

The first two lines of the verse are the opponent's assertion. The commentary explains their meaning in this way:

> If even the slightest thing is non-existent because things are not truly existent…

The commentary then explains the last two lines:

> …it is incorrect that all Mãdhyamika theses concern the non existence of things through refutation of previously existent truly established things…

What is being established here is that when the Madhyamika thesis establishes the non-inherent existence of things it is not 'through the refutation of previously existent or truly established things'. That is, it is not as if truly existent phenomena which once existed are now being negated. That is not how our system establishes the lack of true existence.

> …for there has never been any true existence."

In relation to the opponents' assertion or counter argument about our system establishing the lack of true existence, or things lacking true existence, the opponents are saying that if you establish or claim things lack true existence then, in fact, you are implying that things do not exist.

In negating the opponents' point of view, what our Madhyamika system is saying is that when our system establishes the lack of true existence it is not as if an earlier existing truly existent phenomena is being negated. That is not the case. This will become clearer in the next verse, which explains this point with an analogy—it is not like the non-existence of a vase after it has disintegrated. The way that the non-existence of a vase is established, is by the disintegration of an earlier existing vase. But this is not the case when the lack of true existence of phenomena is established. It is not as if an earlier truly existent phenomenon is negated to establish the lack of true existence of that phenomenon.

The commentary concludes by saying 'for there never has been any true existence'. To rephrase this point, when the Madhyamika system establishes the lack of true existence of phenomena by negating truly existent things, it sounds to the opponents as if our system is saying that things do not exist. That is because, they see and believe in things as existing truly. What our system basically is pointing out is, that in establishing the lack of true existence we are not negating existing phenomena.

1.2.4.2. AS THERE ARE NO TRULY EXISTENT THINGS THAT WHICH IS NON-FUNCTIONAL CANNOT BE TRULY EXISTENT EITHER

Since a thing does not exist 395
A non-thing cannot exist.
Without a thing's existence,
How can a non-thing be established?

Earlier assertions by the opponent say that if you establish a thing then the opposite of that, a non-thing, has to be also established. A thing and a non-thing are opposites, so when you establish one the other has to be also established. What our system is pointing out is that this is not the case. It is not as if establishing the lack of true existence of things establishes a non-functional thing as being truly existent.

As the commentary explains the verse:

> Since truly existent functional things, the object of negation, do not exist their non-functional negation cannot be truly existent.

We can relate this to the syllogism, 'A vase is not truly existent, because it is an interdependent origination'. What this establishes is the lack of inherent existence of a vase. The opposite of the thesis is a truly existent vase, and this is what needs to be negated. If we relate this to, for example, a thing, then a thing's lack of inherent existence is established with a similar syllogism. Although the thesis establishes the lack of inherent existence of a thing, the opposite is not established, i.e. the true existence of a thing is not established to be existent. In fact true existence is what is being negated. Our system says, 'When a thing is established as lacking inherent existence or true existence, the opposite is also implied, i.e. a non-thing is also implied to lack inherent or true existence'.

With the syllogism 'a vase does not have true existence, because it is an interdependent origination' the subject is the vase; the predicate is the lack of inherent existence; and the reason is because it is an interdependent origination. So the thesis that is being established is the lack of inherent existence of a vase, and the opposite of that, the inherent existence of a vase, is what is to be negated. Thus establishing that the vase lacks inherent existence does not imply that a non-vase or an opposite of that is something that is truly existent.

> In the world a completely disintegrating thing is said to be non-functional. In keeping with this, a completely disintegrated pot would not be feasible if the pot had never existed.

It was explained earlier that when a disintegrated pot is established, the pot would have had to exist earlier. Without the pot or vase having existed earlier you cannot talk about its disintegration. Likewise how could the non-functional be truly existent when there are no truly existent functional things?'

What is being established in relation to this analogy is:

> Thus how could the non functional be truly existent when there are no truly existent functional things? The existence of a dependent thing is not feasible without that on which it depends.

If there are no truly functional things to begin with, then how could the non-functional exist? Here 'non-functional' relates to actual truly existent things. How can truly existent things be existent, if truly existent phenomena didn't exist in the first place?

The main point in relation to the analogy is that if a pot has never existed previously, then a disintegrated pot could not exist. Likewise if there are no truly existent functional things, then non-functional or truly existent things could not be truly existent, since there have never been any truly existent functional things.

1.2.5. Refuting that things are not empty because analogies and reasons to establish emptiness exist

That is subdivided into two:

1.2.5.1. Showing the invalidity in the form of absurd consequences [of asserting that] there is true existence because there are reasons

This is basically saying that it is absurd to establish true existence on the basis of the reasons that establish emptiness.

1.2.5.2. Showing the invalidity in the form of absurd consequences [of asserting that] things are not empty because there are analogies

This relates to the absurdity of saying that there is true existence because there are analogies that show that things are empty.

1.2.5.1. SHOWING THE INVALIDITY IN THE FORM OF ABSURD CONSEQUENCES [OF ASSERTING THAT] THERE IS TRUE EXISTENCE BECAUSE THERE ARE REASONS

Assertion: In order to prove emptiness you must adduce reasons. Thus since the reasons exist, things are not empty, for like the reasons everything else is also truly existent.

Answer:

If things are not empty because 396
They are empty by virtue of reasons,
The thesis would not be distinct from the reasons,
And thus the reasons would not exist.

The opponents actually use the same syllogism formula to establish their assertions as our system does. A syllogism has a subject, a predicate and a reason, and these three modes establish the syllogism. Although the opponents accept the use of a syllogism to establish something, they differ from us in that the subject, and the predicate, as well as the reason, are all accepted as being truly existent. As all three modes are truly existent for them, then whatever reason they establish has to be established on the basis of things being truly existent. Thus, as they say in the assertion above, 'for like the reasons everything else is also truly existent'.

To rephrase the main point of the opponents' counter-argument in the above assertion, they are basically saying to the Madhyamika system, 'The very fact that you say that there is a reason to establish the lack of inherent existence is proof that there is true existence'. This is because for them the subject, the predicate and the reasons of any syllogism they use to establish something are established as being truly existent. 'So', they say, 'the very fact that you assert that there is a reason to establish emptiness shows the fact that things cannot be empty, and that things are actually truly existent'.

The verse refutes that argument, and its meaning is explained thus:

> If things were not empty because emptiness of true existence is established through reasons, and the thesis and reasons were inherently distinct, they would be unrelated.

What our system is establishing is that if the reasons were truly existent then they would be unrelated to the subject and the predicate. In other words the thesis that is the combination of the subject, the predicate, and the reason, would be unrelated. So, as the commentary continues:

> If the thesis were not inherently distinct from the reason but inherently one with it, they would have to be one and therefore what is to be proved could not be understood by depending on the reason.

If they were inherently distinct then they would be unrelated, which means that the reason could not serve as a sound reason to establish the thesis. If the thesis and the reasons were one then 'what is to be proved could not be understood by depending on the reason'. That is because they are one.

> Then it follows that there are no correct reasons, since the fallacy of there being no reasons arises when one asserts truly existent things.

'Therefore according to your assertions there could not be any valid reasons. The syllogism cannot be used to prove anything. The fallacy is that no reasons can arise when one asserts truly existent things.'

Our system is actually throwing back their own argument, saying, 'If the three modes—the subject, the predicate and the reasons—were actually truly existent, there would be the fault of being either inherently one or inherently separate, and so therefore there could not actually be a sound reason to establish truly existent things. So according to your own assertions you cannot establish truly existent things'. The conclusion, as the commentary reads is:

> Therefore all phenomena are established as lacking inherent existence.

1.2.5.2. SHOWING THE INVALIDITY IN THE FORM OF ABSURD CONSEQUENCES [OF ASSERTING THAT] THINGS ARE NOT EMPTY BECAUSE THERE ARE ANALOGIES

Assertion: Since there are analogies for emptiness of inherent existence, such as the reflection and so forth, everything else, like those analogies, exists and is not empty.

Answer:

397. If things are not empty because 397
There are analogies for emptiness,
Can one say, "Just like the crow,
So too the self is black"?

In refuting the assertion the commentary gives this explanation of the verse.

> Is the analogy related or unrelated to the reason's meaning?

There are two questions here: is the analogy related or unrelated to the meaning of the reason?

> The first has already been precluded by the reasoning which refutes truly existent reasons. In the second case, if the meaning is established through an analogy unrelated to the reason, is one able to say, "Just as the crow is black, so too is the self," because they are alike in being functional things?

What is being explained here is that an analogy is always given to back up any syllogism. So our system is asking the opponent, 'is the analogy related or unrelated to the reasons? If it is related, then the reasoning that refutes truly existent reasons has already precluded it'.

In the second case, one could not establish an analogy that is totally unrelated to the reason. If that were to be the case, then as mentioned here, can one say, 'Just as the crow is black so too is the self'? That is, could one use the analogy that because the crow is black, one is also black? In this analogy the crow and oneself have the commonality of being functional things, but just using that reason cannot establish that 'because the crow is black I am black too'. That does not serve as a sound analogy, because it is totally unrelated to the reason.

> One should be able to do so. Yet an analogy, merely by virtue of its existence, is not suitable as an analogy for true existence.

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྟ་བཅོས་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚིག་ལེའུར་བྱས་པ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 July 2008

We generate the appropriate motivation to receive the teachings such as, 'in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.6. Explaining the purpose of teaching emptiness

> *Question:* If analogies, reasons and all things do not exist, what is the purpose of writing all the chapters of your treatise?
>
> *Answer:* It is for the attainment of liberation and omniscience through understanding the meaning of suchness.
>
> *If things exist inherently* 398
> *What good is it to perceive emptiness?*
> *Perception by way of conceptions binds.*
> *This is refuted here.*

In no way does our own system assert that analogies, reasons and things do not exist at all. However what our system does establish is that analogies, reasons and things do not exist inherently. This is what our opponents fail to grasp: when our system indicates that analogies, reasons and things do not have inherent existence, that seems to imply to them that analogies, reasons and things do not exist at all. Therefore they fail to understand the deeper meaning of our view, and they pose the above question based on their mistaken belief in what they think our system is saying.

The purpose of writing the treatises, specifically on the lack of inherent existence of analogies, reasons and things is, as explained in the answer, 'for the attainment of liberation and omniscience through understanding the meaning of suchness'. It is good for us to understand the profound implication of this answer. What it implies is that without an actual realisation of suchness or emptiness, there is no possibility of obtaining liberation and omniscience. One cannot even hope to achieve liberation or omniscience without gaining the realisation of suchness or emptiness. That is the main point that is being presented here.

The commentary then further explains the meaning of the verse:

> If things existed inherently, what good would there be in perceiving emptiness, since it would be erroneous?

In explaining the meaning of the verses the commentary always includes the actual words used in the verses. Here it begins with 'If things exist inherently', (which is the first line of the verse) 'what good would there be in perceiving emptiness, since it would be erroneous'? This is a hypothetical question, which implies that things do not exist inherently, but if they were to exist inherently then perceiving emptiness would actually be a fault. But rather than perceiving emptiness being a fault, the perception of things as truly existent is the actual fault. What is the nature of that fault?

As the commentary reads:

> Thinking of things as truly existent [the fault is that it] causes one to accumulate actions and thereby wander in cyclic existence...

What is being presented here is that with a faulty perception of true existence or inherent existence in relation to the self, grasping at a truly existent self causes one to accumulate karma, from which follows being re-born in samsara over and over again, or as the commentary reads "thereby wandering in cyclic existence". That is what the fault would be. Then the commentary further explains:

> ...but through fully understanding that all phenomena lack inherent existence, one gains release from worldly existence. Thus as long as one sees things as truly existent, because of conceptions which cling to their true existence, one is bound to cyclic existence. In this treatise, therefore, the truly existent person and aggregates, which are the referent objects of conceptions of true existence, are refuted by an extensive collection of reasoning.

The last sentence relates to all the syllogisms negating inherent existence or true existence that have been presented, specifically those relating that to the person and aggregates. If we were to take, for example, the self of person and the negation of the self of a person, we can use the same syllogism that was presented earlier, but with the subject being the person: Take the subject 'a person', it lacks an inherently existent self, because it is an interdependent origination. With that syllogism, one basically uses the same structure that was used earlier in relation to particular referent objects. Here we use the particular objects of the person and the aggregates, which relate directly to us. The referent objects are the objects of the conception of true existence.

The opposite of the thesis or the predicate in the above syllogism is an inherently existent self of person. That is what is identified as being the object of negation. So when the commentary says 'are refuted by an extensive collection of reasoning' that refers to the object of negation, an inherently existent self and inherently existent aggregates, which are refuted through an extensive collection of reasoning.

As illustrated by the author of the commentary, Aryadeva's main purpose in composing this text was to refute the referent objects of conceptions of true existence. They are refuted using an extensive collection of reasoning. Therefore, as presented here, the main reason for composing the thesis is basically to introduce the correct understanding of emptiness, which is the main subject matter that has been presented in this thesis.

As explained here, the reason for presenting this is that without refuting the referent objects of conception of true existence, one will have to repeatedly wander in cyclic existence. Those of us who actually study the text, and thus try to grasp its main essence, should take this to heart and use it in our personal practice. For us, that becomes the purpose. In terms of one's practice, it is advised that we relate to the specific referent objects of

the person and aggregates, because those objects relate to us on a personal level.

Relating to the referent object in terms of person and aggregates, explains something of who we are. Thus when we read this text and study and contemplate its meaning, we should try to relate to it on a personal level. By reminding oneself that, 'the whole purpose of study, is for me to try to understand the true nature of myself and my aggregates. If we fail to do that, and retain the misconception of holding onto the referent objects of conception of true existence (here the person and the aggregates), then for as long as we hold on to the referent objects of conceptions of true existence, that will be the cause for us to wander in samsara over and over again. There will be no possibility of achieving liberation and ultimately enlightenment, for the sake of other beings. Therefore one must definitely overcome the misconception of having a truly existent self and aggregates'. In that way we relate the study to our main purpose and goal: 'If I'm not able to refute the referent objects of conceptions of true existence, then I will be stuck in samsara for ever, so I must develop the sound understanding of emptiness'.

In order to grasp the lack of inherent existence of person and phenomena (specifically our aggregates), one must first of all identify the actual object of negation. That means really scrutinising the person and thinking about how the person would exist if it did have an inherently existent self. Likewise if phenomena were to have an inherently existent self then how would they exist? By clearly identifying the object of negation, as one begins to see the absurdity of an inherently existent person and phenomena, one will begin to grasp the true meaning of emptiness. When one has understood and perceived that an inherently existent self of person and phenomena are actually not possible, and that they are completely contrary to how they appear to our ordinary senses, then one has actually touched the point about the lack of inherent or true existence.

In order to grasp an understanding of the lack of inherent existence of person and phenomena (in this instance the aggregates), one must first have a sound understanding of how an inherently existing person would have to exist. That is the main point of the teachings.

Another important point to understand is this: As other texts explain, it is the case of focusing on one object, but apprehending it in a completely different manner. What is being pointed out, is that the referent object in both perceptions, that of true existence as well as that of lack of true existence, are the same. But the way the object is apprehended is different. So the difference is not in the focusing or perception of the object but rather in how the object is being apprehended.

To clarify further, based on the same object—a person—the perception of inherent existence apprehends the person as being inherently or independently existent, existing from its own side. Whereas the perception of the lack of inherent existence of the person, apprehends the person as interdependently arisen, rather than being independently or truly existent. So, when one understands that while the perceived object is the same, the apprehension is completely different (i.e. things don't exist truly as apprehended by the wrong conception, but that things do lack true existence as apprehended by the right view), then one has understood the meaning of that phrase, which is an important and crucial point.

Then the commentary quotes this sutra:

> Sutra says, "All phenomena are empty in that they do not exist inherently" and so forth.

The commentary further reads:

> Accordingly, this was written to teach lack of inherent existence, which does not contradict the acceptance in our system of all dependently arising phenomena.

Of course this point has been explained in detail earlier, however the main point relating to the quotation from the sutra is that while things lack inherent existence, the appearance or the conventional existence does not negate the interdependent arising of phenomena and things.

1.2.7. Showing that conceptions of extremes of existence are erroneous

According to some of the Buddhist schools, the consciousness itself is truly existent, while objects do not exist at all. That is what is being referred to as 'erroneous'.

> Among our own sectarians, Vijñaptivãdins [the Sanskrit word for one of the Mind-only schools] and all those who have not understood the actual meaning of the scriptures assert that consciousness is truly existent, and that external objects do not even exist conventionally. This is therefore shown to be wrong for both are alike in existing conventionally but not ultimately.
>
> *To say one exists and the other does not* *399*
> *Is neither reality nor the conventional.*
> *Therefore it cannot be said*
> *That this exists but that does not.*

The main point is that both the consciousness, or the subject, and external objects are alike in existing conventionally. Likewise, both the consciousness and external objects do not exist ultimately. So they are also the same in lacking ultimate existence.

As the commentary further explains:

> To say that one exists and the other does not is not a presentation of reality, since both do not exist ultimately and are not ultimate truths. Nor is it a presentation of the conventional, since both exist conventionally and are conventional truths.

To say that external objects do not exist conventionally is contrary to worldly views. It would be absurd to deny the perceptions of ordinary people, who hold that external objects exist.

Furthermore:

> Therefore all five aggregates exist conventionally but not ultimately, and so it cannot be said that mind and mental factors exist truly while external objects do not even exist conventionally.

One way of defining conventional reality is 'that which exists to ordinary beings without a thorough analysis'. When things are perceived without scrutiny, then that is conventional existence. However the main point being made here is that basically you cannot establish that mind and mental factors exist truly while external objects do not exist conventionally, as that would go against even worldly conventions.

As the commentary concludes:

> Thus Madhyamikas, too, accept both external objects and consciousness as they are known in the world.

Therefore the Madhyamikas too accept external objects and consciousness, as they are known conventionally. Madhyamikas establish conventional existence as things being merely labelled by terms and designation as they appear to worldly beings.

1.2.8. Impossibility of refuting through reasoning that which is free from extremes

> When assertions regarding true existence of things and so forth have been thoroughly refuted in this way, it is impossible to state any refutation of the assertions regarding emptiness.

What is being explained is that the assertions regarding true existence have been thoroughly refuted with many reasons and analogies and so forth. Also, as mentioned previously, for the opponents 'it has been impossible to state any refutation of the assertions regarding emptiness'.

The assertion by the opponents is:

> *Assertion:* Even though we are unable to answer you at present, you will receive an answer-there will be those who make great effort on behalf of the Tathagata's teaching.

The opponents say, 'Even though we are not able to answer it, in the future there will be those who are really earnest in the Buddha's teachings who will challenge and answer you'. In a way they are sort of threatening our own system *[laughter]* by saying, 'I may not have been able to answer you now, but there will be others who will make great effort on behalf of the Tathagata's teaching. So, those who really scrutinise and study the Buddha's teachings will find an answer to present to you'.

> *Answer:* That is a futile hope! If we held a faulty thesis, it could be refuted by proving its converse.

As an answer our system says, 'That is a futile hope', the Tibetan word is more like a false hope. The reason why it is a futile or false hope is that if the thesis on emptiness were to have some error or fault and could be refuted in any way, then it would not be a futile or false hope. If there were some fault, then even though the present opponents are not able to present refutations or counter-arguments to refute the thesis of emptiness, it might be true that later on it could be contradicted. However that is a 'futile hope', because it cannot be refuted.

Thus the last verse in the text says:

> *Against one who holds no thesis that [things] Exist, do not, or do and do not exist,*
> *Counter-arguments cannot be raised*
> *No matter how long [one tries].* *400*

As the commentary states:

> No Mãdhyamikas hold the erroneous theses that things are inherently existent, that even the slightest thing is non-existent, that non-things are inherently both existent and non-existent, or neither.

This rules out all four possibilities of an erroneous belief being held by any Madhyamika, in particular the Prasangika Madhyamika.

> No matter how long one tries, no counter-arguments can be raised.

Since all possible erroneous views in relation to these extremes are not, and will never be, held by the Prasangika Madhyamika, there will be no time in the future when refutations against the thesis of emptiness can be raised.

The commentary then presents this analogy to illustrate the likelihood of a counter-argument raised in the future:

> You should understand that refuting skilled proponents of emptiness [referring to the Prasangika Madhyamika point of view] is as impossible as drawing pictures in space or causing space pain by beating it with an iron bar.

The summarising stanza by Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is:

> The sun's light dispels all darkness.
> Darkness has no power to destroy the sun's light.
> The correct view destroys all extreme conceptions,
> Banishing any opportunity for controversy.

The meaning of this stanza is quite clear. What is being presented with the analogy is that just as 'the sun's light dispels all darkness' and 'darkness has no power to destroy the sun's light', likewise 'a correct view' of emptiness 'destroys all extreme conceptions banishing any opportunity for controversy'. Here 'controversy' means not leaving any opportunity to raise any counter-arguments against that view.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

> *This is the sixteenth chapter from the* **Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds***, showing how to meditate on settling [the procedure between] spiritual guides and students.*

This heading is sub-divided into two:
2.1. Presenting the author who composed the text
2.2. Presenting the translators of the text

2.1. Presenting the author who composed the text

> *This concludes the* **Treatise of Four Hundred Stanzas on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas** *from the mouth of Aryadeva, the spiritual son at the Exalted Naga's feet.*

The commentary explains:

> This concludes the explanation both of the great trailblazer and Bodhisattva, the Master Aryadeva's work Four Hundred Stanzas on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas…

2.2. Presenting the translators of the text

> …and of its commentary by the Master Candrakirti. It was translated from the Indian into the Tibetan language in the temple of Ratnaguptavihãra in the center of the glorious Kasmiri city of Anupamapura by the Indian abbot Süksmajana, son of the Brahmin Sajjana from the paternal line of the Brahmin Ratnavajra and by the Tibetan translator Batsap Nyimadrak…

Then Gyel-tsap Rinpoche concludes with these stanzas:

> May the one predicted by the Conqueror who attained the supreme state,
> As well as Aryadeva and the glorious Candrakirti,
> Who most clearly elucidated Nagarjuna's good system,
> Rest victoriously on the crown of our heads.
>
> May the one predicted by the Conqueror who attained the supreme state,
> As well as Aryadeva and the glorious Candrakirti,
> Who most clearly elucidated Nagarjuna's good system,
> Rest victoriously on the crown of our heads.

Unable to bear misinterpretations of this system
Through the misconceptions of those who follow their own presuppositions,
Who lack the flawless eye of reasoning
And ignore the textual systems of the great trailblazers,

I have explained the words and meaning of this text simply,
Commenting in a clear, unconfused and complete way
On the paths that mature the mind and bring about release
For all people with a Mahayana disposition.

Since Aryadeva's thought is hard to ascertain
And my mind is poor, my acquired knowledge weak,
May my spiritual guides and deities
Forgive whatever errors there may be.

Through any immaculate virtue created by my efforts
To illuminate the good Madhyamika path free from extremes,
May all transmigrators, bound in the prison of worldly existence,
Attain the peerless happiness of liberation.

May I, too, in all future lives never be separated
From a spiritual guide of the supreme vehicle,
And through fully entering this path by listening thinking and meditating,
May I obtain the state of an omniscient Conqueror.

That dedication should be quite clear.

Why Gyel-tsap Rinpoche composed his commentary

In conclusion Gyel-tsap Rinpoche, the author of the commentary, explains:

> This Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred" was written at the insistence of Lama Namkasangbowa who cherishes his precious precepts and holds the three sets of vows, and of Lama Draksengwa exceptionally tireless in bearing the responsibility of spreading the Subduer's teaching, they urged me again and again from Upper DoKam with lavish and repeated flower-like offerings. It was written also at the insistence of Kunga Sengge of Dzaytang, a great holder of the three sets of teachings who has heard the texts of sütra and tantra many times, and at the insistence of numerous other holders of the three sets of teaching.

Later on the commentary mentions:

> This was made possible by the kind explanations received directly from the noble, venerable and holy Rendawa Shonnulodro...

This indicates that Gyel-tsap Je actually received the teachings from his own master Geshe Rendawa Shonnulodro, who was actually a Sakya lama. Geshe Rendawa was one of the main gurus of Lama Tsong Khapa, who considered him to be one of the most kind teachers.

The 'migtsema', which is the four-line praise to Lama Tsong Khapa, was actually composed by Lama Tsong Khapa himself in praise of his teacher Rendawa. The last line originally read: *To Jetsun Rendawa, at your feet I make requests*.

When Lama Tsong Khapa offered this four line praise to his master, Rendawa said, 'This praise doesn't suit me, its best for you' and offered it back, changing the last line into Losang Dragpa which is Lama Tsong Khapa's name. That's why now it reads, *To Losang Dragpa, at your feet I make requests*.

Then, the commentary continues:

> Rendawa Shonnulodro, great follower of the Conqueror, with consummate understanding especially that all external and internal dependently arising things are like the reflection of the moon in water, and from the great omniscient one in this time of degeneration, whose prayer to hold the excellent teaching of the Conquerors is perfectly accomplished, the glorious and good foremost precious Losang-drakba [i.e. Lama Tsong Khapa]. They are the father and son, the dust beneath whose feet I have long and respectfully venerated.

Then it says[1]:

> It was written at Drokriwoche Gandennambar-gyelwayling by the logician and fully ordained monk Darma-rinchen

The place where it was composed was Ganden Monastery.

That concludes the text.

I really appreciate those who have come to the teachings to the end. It has been a great opportunity for me to have read the teachings, and the commentaries, and to present it to the best of my ability. Using Gyel-tsap Darma Rinchen's commentary as a basis, I referred to other commentaries, such those of as Jetsun Rendawa and Chandrakirti. To have been able to read the other commentaries and studied them a bit has actually also been fortunate for me. So in that way it has been of mutual benefit.

Of course, this teaching by Gyal-tsap Rinpoche is a very extensive and clear teaching. It is quite unlike other teachings as it illustrates the points of emptiness very clearly.

Prior to becoming a disciple of Lama Tsong Khapa Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is said to have been a great scholar from the Sakya tradition. When Gyel-tsap Rinpoche first came into the presence of Lama Tsong Khapa, he came with an intention of debating with him, as he saw Lama Tsong Khapa as a peer. He had come a long distance carrying his essential things on his back, and while still carrying his sack he sat on the throne next to Lama Tsong Khapa, indicating that he was on the same level.

But as he started to hear Lama Tsong Khapa teach, he began to develop some understanding of the wisdom of Lama Tsong Khapa. That lessened Gyal-tsap's pride and so he moved down below the seat, and in the end he was actually sitting on the floor *[laughter]*. Even though he came as someone to compete with Lama Tsong Khapa, he later became his disciple and was appointed to be first throne-holder in the Ganden tradition after Lama Tsong Khapa. It is said that having initially sat on Lama Tsong Khapa's throne was in a way an auspicious sign for him to actually become the throne-holder after Lama Tsong Khapa passed away.

Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is known as a great scholar and this is clearly seen throughout his works. He composed only eight commentaries, but those eight are really very clear and precise explanations of particular texts. His commentary on the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* is known as a

[1] This is in accordance with the order of the sentences presented in the original Tibetan.

very clear and precise commentary and it is now widely used. There is his commentary on the *Prajnaparamita,* as well as the Valid Cognition text, which is also used today by the Sakyas as a text to study logic. As well there are other commentaries on *Gyu-lama*, which is the sublime mental continuum—the teachings on Buddha nature. All his commentaries are very clear, and very well illustrated and explained.

Gyel-tsap Rinpoche is accepted as the emanation of Chenrezig. Therefore, of course, all of his texts would understandably be very profound and clear explanations. In fact Lama Tsong Khapa and his two disciples are seen as emanations of the three main lineage deities—Lama Tsong Khapa being the emanation of Manjushri, Gyel-tsap Rinpoche the emanation of Chenrezig, and Kedrub Rinpoche the emanation of Vajrapani. The statues and drawings of Kedrub Rinpoche depict him as having more wrathful form: his eyes are quite wide and he is fierce looking, indicating that he is an emanation of Vajrapani.

Next Tuesday will be Discussion Night and after that there will be the exam as usual. The exam will coincide with my retreat session, and so I will not be able to come to the exam as my schedule is quite strenuous. The following Tuesday, 12 August, I intend to leave for seminar participants to prepare their presentations. We will begin the new subject on 19 August.

It's good for everyone to read the text prior to actually receiving the teaching. If one does some reading in preparation, then there will be some benefit. Whether or not you actually develop a new understanding from my presentation is not as relevant as trying to develop some understanding by reading and preparing by oneself. That is the main way to get the benefit from the teaching.

In the presentation of the text, first there are the preliminaries, and then it talks about the calm abiding and how to achieve it. That is followed by the topic of special insight. Some texts present the object of meditation first and then later how to meditate, i.e. the subject matter of special insight into emptiness is explained first followed by how to achieve calm abiding. The main point is that there is a particular type of presentation used in the text. That is presenting the view first, then how to achieve calm abiding later. The other approach *is* practising how to meditate first and then finding the right view. It is good to understand these two different techniques; if you recall, His Holiness also mentioned these particular points in Sydney.

Everything has gone very well for this study, and I would like to thank everyone again. Most of you have come quite consistently, and of course some have missed a few times due to unforseen circumstances – family matters or whatever. Maybe in some cases there has been laziness, but in any case most of you have come, and I thank you very much.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.