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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavataram*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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14 September 2004

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Please generate a virtuous motivation.

Having established that the self does not exist inherently we now go on to establish that 'that which is mine' does not exist inherently. In order to realise that the 'I' does not exist inherently one can use the syllogism 'take the subject "self" - it follows that it does not exist inherently - because it is a dependant arising, e.g. like the reflection of form'. Having realising this syllogism one can transfer that understanding to the body very easily. Once one has understood that the self does not exist inherently, then one can transfer that understanding to all other objects.

In his *Four-Hundred Verses* Aryadeva makes a statement to the effect that if one sees one then one sees all, and that the emptiness of one is the emptiness of all. Sometimes, by misunderstanding this statement, people make the assertion that by seeing the emptiness of one object one sees the emptiness of all objects, or they conclude that the emptiness of one object is the emptiness of all objects. But that is not exactly what is meant here. What is meant is that after having seen the emptiness of one object, one then can easily realise the emptiness of another object by merely transferring the focus of one's mind to the other object. Through one's strong prior habituation with meditating on emptiness one doesn't need to apply a new extensive logical analysis.

This statement of Aryadeva's doesn't mean that the emptiness of the vase is the emptiness of the pillar, or that one realises the emptiness of the vase when one realises the emptiness of the pillar. What it means is that if, for example, one realises the selflessness of person in dependence on the syllogism 'take the subject "the self" - it lacks true existence - because it is dependant arising - e.g. like the reflection of form', and then hears the reason of dependent arising in the syllogism, 'take the subject "vase" - it follows that it lacks true existence - because it is a dependant arising', one will immediately be able to realise that the vase also lacks true existence. That is the meaning of this quote by Aryadeva.

We have already been through the stages of refuting both 'I' and 'mine' as existing inherently. Having established that neither the 'I' or the 'mine' are findable in the seven ways, yet still exist nominally, one then applies the same logic to other phenomena.

### 3.5.1.2.3. The way of refuting inherent existence of both self and 'mine'

This heading has three sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.1. Relating it to phenomena such as vases, cloth etc.

3.5.1.2.3.2. Relating it to cause and effect

3.5.1.2.3.3. Refuting objections to that

#### 3.5.1.2.3.1. Relating it to phenomena such as vases, cloth etc.

Here it shows that other phenomena such as vases and cloth are the same as 'I' and 'mine' in that they are not findable in the seven ways, but still exist nominally.

*Phenomena such as vases, woollen and coarse materials, forests,*

*Rosaries, trees, houses, chariots, guesthouses and so forth, and*

*Those named likewise by these beings through whatever. Realise them!*

*Because the Mighty Able One doesn't debate with the world.*

*Parts, features, attachment, definition, wood and so forth,*

*Meanings such as possessor of features or parts, the attached, examples, fire etc.*

*When they are analysed with the chariot's logic they don't exist in seven ways,*

*What isn't that exists according to worldly convention.*

How one has to look at this is that all the phenomena that are listed here are not posited upon investigation and analysis, but are posited without investigation and analysis. Here it is encouraging one to realise that all those objects are established without investigation, because the Buddha doesn't debate with the world, but accepts whatever exists in the world.

*Mirror:*

How are these phenomena named by beings?

Take the subject 'the part-*possessor* vase, and clay, its *part*; that *having features*, the vase, and its *features* such as a fire motif, pure blue colour etc.; the sentient being *attached* to the object and *attachment*, the craving for the attractive object; the *example* vase and 'round-bellied', its *definition*; burning *fire* and the *wood* that is being burnt; and so forth' - ...

With respect to the vase being the part-possessor and the clay being the part, of course we can also say here that, for example, the bottom of the vase is also a part of the vase or that the atoms of the vase that possess the eight substances are also a part of the vase and so forth.

Blue colour here can refer to the actual colour blue, 'pure blue colour etc.', but it can also refer to the feature of the vase of holding water, - if the vase holds water then it becomes sort of bluish in colour.

The meaning that one has to take here is that the part-possessor and the part exist in dependence on each other, and that therefore they cannot exist independently from their own side. If something exists independently from its own side then it cannot exist relative to something else. Since the part and the part-possessor only exist relative to each other they cannot exist from their own side.

Then we have the sentient being who is attached to the object, and the attachment, which is craving for the attractive object. If ordinary individuals perceive an attractive object, then they generate attachment for that object. So the attachment is generated relative to the

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attractive object. Here again there is this interdependence - the attachment being generated relative to the attractive object. Therefore the attachment cannot exist from its own side. The person who has attachment, and the attachment also exist relative to each other, and therefore neither can exist from their own side.

The attached person and the attachment also exist interdependently - the person who is attached exists relative to the attachment and doesn't exist from his or her own side. If the attachment were to exist from its own side then the person would have to be attached all the time.

Then we have the example of 'vase and "round-bellied". Here the definiendum is vase and the definition is 'round-bellied' The definiendum and the definition exist relative to each other.

Then there is the example of burning fire and the wood that is being burnt, which again exist relative to each other. The 'so forth' refers to all similar objects that have this mutual interdependence. None of those phenomena should be investigated with logic analysing suchness.

*Mirror:*

...they should not be investigated with logic analysing suchness - because like the name 'chariot', their imputed meaning *doesn't exist when analysed in the seven ways* and *what isn't that* [what is not found] *exists according to worldly convention.*

All of those objects exist according to worldly convention, and are not posited in relation to analysis and investigation. The worldly way of positing objects is without investigation and analysis, and the Buddha doesn't have any argument with the worldly way of positing objects, but the world has plenty of argument with the Buddha's way of explaining existence.

The worldly way of positing objects is to posit them without investigation and analysis regarding their ultimate nature. Positing them with investigation and analysis is contrary to the worldly way of positing objects. We have explained this before.

### 3.5.1.2.3.2. Relating it to cause and effect

*If the cause generates the generated, then it is a cause.*

*If no effect is generated it will be causeless, it won't exist.*

*Because the effect will generate if it has a cause*

*Tell me which will be from what, what will be before which?*

Cause and effect have this mutual interdependency. They exist relative to each other and hence they have to lack inherent existence. Of course, if they were to exist inherently then they could not exist relative to each other.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'both cause and effect' - they exist in dependence upon each other - *because the effect will generate if it has a cause, and if an effect is generated through generation by a cause, then that generator is a cause, and if no effect is born this generation doesn't exist and it, the effect, becomes causeless.*

If cause and effect are inherently existent then *tell me which effect will be generated from what cause and out of these two, cause and effect, what will be established before which?*

Since the effect is generated from a cause and since a cause generates an effect, cause and effect are mutually interdependent. They exist relative to each other, and therefore they lack inherent existence.

What we can understand under **cause** is that it is *that which generates an effect*. If the cause is that which generates an effect then the effect relies upon the cause, or that which generates the effect. Should the cause not generate an effect then the effect would become causeless. The **effect** is *that which is generated from the cause*. So we can understand their interdependence and interrelationship.

This whole argument deals with the principle that **cause and effect** are possible because of the lack of inherent existence. Generally, what we classify as a cause is *that which generates*, and what does the cause generate? It generates an effect. Should the cause not generate an effect, then the effect would become causeless, and would not become *'that which has been generated by the cause'*. I think it is possible to see the interconnectedness between cause and effect, which is possible because both the cause and effect don't exist from their own side, but rely upon each other, exist relative to each other.

If cause and effect are inherently existent then *tell me which effect will be generated from what cause and out of these two, cause and effect, what will be established before which?*

If they were to exist inherently then which precedes which? Does the cause precede the effect or does the effect precede the cause, and which type of effect will be generated from what type of cause?

*Mirror:*

Should cause and effect exist inherently the cause couldn't be preceding the effect because the effect would have to be established at the time of the cause. Likewise the effect couldn't exist earlier because it would become causeless.

Should cause and effect exist inherently the cause couldn't precede the effect because the effect would have to be established at the time of the cause. Likewise, if it exists inherently, the effect couldn't exist before the cause because the effect would become causeless.

*If your cause generates an effect upon contact, since at that time*

*They are of one potential, the generator and effect stop being different;*

*If different then this cause becomes not different from the non-cause.*

*Having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence.*

This next verse is asking the Realists, 'If cause and effect exists inherently, does the cause generate the effect upon contact or is the effect generated without having made contact the cause'. This is an important point to understand should this debate ever arise.

Mirror:

In the first case it follows that *at that time generator and effect stop being different entities* - because *they are of one potential*.

If the inherently existent cause and the inherently existent effect have contact then they stop being different entities, because they are of one potential.

Mirror:

If it is the second case, then it follows that *this cause becomes not different from the non-causes* - because it is inherently *different* from the effect.

If the inherently existent effect is generated from the inherently existent cause without contact then the inherently existent cause is not different from a non-cause, because it is inherently different from the effect. You just have to apply the logic we have already talked about.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'cause' - it follows it doesn't inherently generate an effect - because it neither generates upon contact with the effect nor without contact, and *having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence* as well.

The cause does not inherently generate the effect because it does not generate it inherently upon contact, and it does not generate it inherently without contact. Since there is no other possibility there is simply no inherent generation at all.

*Your cause doesn't generate an effect. That's why that called effect*

*Doesn't exist. Lacking effect, cause becomes without cause, it is also non-existent.*

*Because these two are like an illusion I don't receive any fault*

*And the phenomena of the world do exist as well.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*that called effect*' - it *doesn't exist* inherently - *because your cause doesn't inherently generate an effect*. Take the subject 'cause' - it follows it *becomes without* a reason to be posited as *cause* - because of *lacking* generation of an *effect*. This *also is non-existent* because it is established as cause.

Take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *I don't receive a fault* from investigating whether cause and effect have contact or not, and *the phenomena of the world do exist as well* - *because these two*, cause and effect, *are like an illusion*, existing nominally and not out of their own nature.

If cause and effect were inherently existent then the effect would have to exist at the time of the cause, and the cause would have to exist at the time of the effect. The effect would not actually be able to have a cause, and likewise the cause would not be able to have an effect and so forth. But if cause and effect don't exist inherently then all those faults don't apply, and there is no necessity to investigate whether they have contact or not.

### 3.5.1.2.3.3. Refuting objections to that

#### 3.5.1.2.3.3.1. The objection

*'Does this refutation refute upon contact with the refuted*

*Or does it without contact?', is asked. Doesn't this fault also apply to you?*

*When you express this and demolish only your own point*

*Then you are unable to refute with your refutation.*

Here the Realists take exception to the analysis of cause and effect being generated upon contact or not, saying, 'Actually that is a fault that applies to you the Prasangika, not to me. In actuality cause and effect don't meet, as the cause is generated first and the effect is generated subsequently to the cause'.

In reality they don't meet, but this analysis can be applied to the belief of inherent existence. Here the Realists take exception to that, and say to the Prasangika, 'Actually you have that fault and not I'.

Mirror:

The Realists object saying, 'This fault of cause and effect meeting or not meeting applies to you. For example, *does this refutation refute upon contact with the refuted or does it without contact?*

We have already said that the Realists assert cause and effect to exist inherently and that the Prasangika refute cause and effect as existing inherently. The Prasangika have already stated many syllogisms refuting that cause and effect exist inherently and those syllogisms are what are referred to here as 'refutation'. What is being refuted is the Realist's point of view of inherent cause and effect. Here the Realists very cleverly say to the Prasangika, 'We can just turn your reasoning around. Does your refutation of inherent cause and effect refute inherent cause-and-effect upon meeting with inherent cause and effect, with that which is to be refuted, or does it refute inherent cause-and-effect without contact.

'If it refutes upon contact, then since they are of one potential, what does the refuting?'

They say the exactly same thing. If the syllogism makes contact with that which is refuted then they become of one potential - so what does the refuting? If the refutation occurs without contact between the syllogism and that which is refuted, then it should refute all that it doesn't have contact with. Having abandoned these two, no other idea will come into existence, i.e. there is no third possibility. No alternative is possible. They either refute upon contact or they refute without contact.

The Realists have just turned the reasoning around.

Mirror:

*'When you express this invalid refutation and demolish only your own point, then you are unable to refute that to be refuted with your refutation'.*

*Because of illogically denying all phenomena with a fake*

*Refutation that has the same consequence for one's own words*

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*You aren't of the holy beings' belief.  
Lacking your own point you are also a  
questionable refuter.*

Mirror:

Further, take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *you aren't of the holy beings' belief - because of illogically denying the existence of all phenomena with a fake refutation that has the same consequence also for one's own words* as meant for the opponent.

The Realist says, 'Actually, even though this argument of yours is directed at me, it backfires on you. Your own argument demolishes your own point of view'. You are not of 'holy beings belief' means that you don't hold the view of the Buddha and Nagarjuna, because you deny the existence of all phenomena, as you have fallen into the extreme of nihilism. Your fake refutation has the same consequence for your own words as for the opponent. You are also a questionable refuter - because you lack your own point and only refute the other's position'. That is what this is basically saying, 'All you do is argue with others, but you don't really have your own point of view'.

#### **3.5.1.2.3.3.2. The answer**

This has four sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1. How one's own refutation and affirmation is valid

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.2. The reason why the others consequence isn't the same

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.3. The lack of inherent existence can be established while its opposite cant be established

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.4 The way of coming to understand the rest of refutations not mentioned here

#### **3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1. How one's own refutation and affirmation is valid**

This heading has two sub-outlines.

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.1. The way of refuting the other's position

3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.2. The way of establishing one's own position

#### **3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.1. The way of refuting the other's position**

*Does the refutation refute without contact with that refuted*

*Or does it upon contact'? These faults already expressed*

*Definitely apply to those here having the position, but*

*With me, not having this position, these consequences are impossible.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - *the consequences 'does the refutation refute without contact with that refuted or does it upon contact', are impossible* with them - because *these faults definitely apply here to those having the position* asserting inherent existence, *but* I don't *have this position* asserting inherent existence.

'These consequence only apply to the people who hold the belief of inherent existent cause and effect, but since I don't hold that belief these consequences don't apply to me.

'That is how my argument and your argument are

dissimilar. My argument is aimed at your belief in inherent existence, while your argument cannot really be aimed at my belief in inherent existence, because I don't hold that belief. It is an argument that is only valid for someone who holds the belief of inherent existence'.

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*Edited Version*

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### 3.5.1.2.3.3.2. The Answer (cont.)

#### 3.5.1.2.3.3.2.1.2. The way of establishing one's own position

These verses explain why the consequence doesn't apply to one's own position in the same way as it applies to the other's position.

*You can see the features on the sun mandala  
During an eclipse and so forth on the reflection  
That is a mere nominal dependent arising, and really  
Unsuitable in relation to sun and reflection meeting  
or not.*

Mirror:

*You can see the features on the sun mandala  
during an eclipse and so forth on the reflection  
that is a mere nominal dependent arising and  
really unsuitable to come about if the imputed  
meaning is looked for, by asking, 'Do the sun and  
reflection meet or not meet?'*

The reflection of the sun mandala, i.e. the sun, on the water's surface, and the reflection of form in the mirror are very good examples for illusory dependent arising. By observing their reflections we can recognise, for example, an eclipse, or the dirt on one's face. Even though we don't look at the sun directly, we can recognise that an eclipse is occurring by observing the reflection of the sun on the water's surface. Likewise, just by observing the reflection, and without looking at the actual form, one can observe the impurities or the defects of the form that is reflected in the mirror. That's what the first and second lines mean – during an eclipse one can observe what's happening to the sun just by observing its reflection.

One can see that the mere reflection of the features of the sun mandala, and the features of the form and so forth, are a mere nominal dependent arising, and quite unsuitable to come about if the imputed meaning is looked for by asking 'do the sun and reflection meet or not?'

The reflection of form in the mirror and the reflection of the sun disc on the water's surface are not the reflected form or the sun disc. The reflection of form comes about in relation to that form, and the reflection of the sun disc comes about in dependence on the sun disc. However, the reflection of form is not that form, and the reflection of the sun disc is not the sun disc. Even though the reflection of form is not that form, it can still convey the features of that form. Likewise, the reflection of the sun disc can still convey the features of the sun disc. So, even though there is this nominal interdependence of functionality happening, there is no need to ask, 'Do the

sun and reflection meet?'

*Though non-true it can establish one's countenance as beautiful.*

*Likewise, know that also here it is said that the thesis*

*Is realised from reasons lacking validity, which are seen*

*To have the power to purify the face of wisdom.*

Mirror:

*The reasons of dependent arising, not being one or many, and so forth, are like the reflection that can establish one's countenance as beautiful though non-true. Know that also here it is said that the thesis of the lack of inherent existence is realised from a reason lacking the validity of inherent existence, which is seen to have the power to purify the face of wisdom.*

When one looks into the mirror, the reflection of one's own face looks back at one, but the reflection is not one's own face. However, relative to what one can see in the mirror one then can clean up one's own face, even though the reflection is not the actual face.

'The reasons of dependent arising, not being one or many, and so forth, even though non-true, are like the reflection having potential ...' They have power, similarly to the example, where we said that even though the reflection is not the actual object, one can recognise the features of the actual object in dependence on the reflection, clean the actual face and so forth. That's why Mirror says that even though it is a reflection, it still has a potential, i.e. it can do something.

The reasons of dependent arising and so forth are like these reflections with potential. They 'are seen to have the power to purify the face of wisdom'. They are able to purify the face of wisdom from the faults of true-grasping, and the reason why they can do this is because they lack true existence.

If these reasons were truly existent, then they would not be able to purify the face from the stains of true-grasping. So even though the reflection of one's face in the mirror is not one's actual face, it still has the potential to fulfil a certain function, because in dependence on the reflection in the mirror one can recognise where there is dirt on one's face and clean it up.

Likewise, the thesis and the reasoning that establish the lack of true existence also possess a potential to eliminate true-grasping, even though they lack true existence. It is as in the example, where one can recognise that an eclipse is happening by observing the reflection of the sun on the water's surface. Without actually looking at the sun or the moon, one can still observe the eclipse just by merely observing the reflection on the water.

#### 3.5.1.2.3.3.2.2. The reason why the other's consequence isn't the same

*Were the entity that is the reason conveying my thesis established,*

*And the entity of the directly conveyed thesis to exist as well,*

*Since these are again non-existent if the reasoning of meeting*

*And so forth is closely applied; it is your sorrow alone.*

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Mirror:

My dear Realists, accusing the pure position of having the same faults posited for the impure position *is your sorrow alone*

That's a very sad situation for you. To say that the same faults that the impure position possesses would also apply to the pure position is a very sad thing indeed.

because if we *closely apply the reasoning* of whether or not cause and effect *meet* to an inherently existing *entity that is the reason conveying my thesis, and to the inherently existing entity of the directly conveyed thesis, then these are again non-existent.*

We can see there is no such thing as an inherently existent reason or an inherently existent thesis.

### 3.5.1.2.3.3.2.3. The lack of inherent existence can be established while its opposite can't be established

*One is very easily able to introduce the realisation That all phenomena lack real existence, one can't make*

*Others understand inherent existence as easily. Why confuse*

*Worldly beings here through the net of wrong ideas?*

Mirror:

*One can't make other Madhyamaka understand inherent existence as easily as one can introduce a worldly ordinary opponent to the realisation that all phenomena lack inherent real existence, because there is no truly existing example accepted by both.*

Introducing a new student to the idea of the lack of true existence is easily done and one can find concordant examples with which to convey this idea. But it is infinitely more difficult to try to convince another Madhyamaka of the idea of true existence, especially as one can't find any concordant example with which to convey the idea.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'Realists' - it follows that it is inappropriate for any of them to *confuse* and bind *worldly beings here through the net of wrong ideas* - because this arguing coming out of true-grasping has come to an end.

What Chandrakirti is saying here is that, 'Ordinary worldly individuals are already in the grip innate true-grasping. On top of that, for you Realists to add intellectually acquired true-grasping to the innate true-grasping is completely inappropriate, and has to come to an end'.

### 3.5.1.2.3.3.2.4. The way of coming to understand the rest of refutations not mentioned here

*Here, during the position's answer, after them having digested*

*The refutation's left over stated above, meeting etc., I shall reply.*

*We are not questionable opponents,*

*Realise the rest stated earlier through this position.*

Mirror:

*I shall reply here, 'It doesn't apply to me', to the answer of the position negated by the analysis of*

*meeting and so forth, after them having digested the refutation's left over of cause and effect meeting and so forth, as stated above.*

Take the subject 'Madhyamaka' - we *are not questionable* proponents - because we don't accept that our own position isn't posited nominally and we don't accept ultimate existence as asserted by the other refuted position.

Take the subject '*this position* just explained' - it has a purpose - because it is for the purpose of *realising the rest* of the refutation *stated earlier.*

The Madhyamakas are not questionable opponents. Why? Because on the one hand they don't accept that their own position isn't posited nominally. This means that they do posit their own position as existing nominally, meaning they are not nihilists. On the other hand they don't accept ultimate existence as is asserted by the other refuted position.

### 6.3.5.2. Explaining the divisions of emptiness

This is the second major outline of the sixth mind generation - Manifest.

Explaining the divisions of emptiness is done in two outlines.

6.3.5.2.1. Explaining the divisions of emptiness in brief

6.3.5.2.2. Explaining the meaning of the individual divisions

#### 6.3.5.2.1. Explaining the divisions of emptiness in brief

How one arrives at this point is that initially the selflessness of phenomena was established with the reasoning of lacking the generation from the four extremes, and then the selflessness of person was established with the seven-fold reasoning - being unfindable in the seven ways. One then naturally arrives at this question. What is the division between coarse and subtle selflessness?

*This selflessness was taught in two aspects to liberate*

*Migrators, dividing it according to phenomena and person.*

*The Teacher taught this itself again in many aspects By dividing it further according to the students.*

This selflessness that is the lack of inherent existence it is established in two aspects. 'Take the subject 'this selflessness that is the lack of inherent existence' - it comes in two forms - because the teacher taught it relative to the basis of the person, and relative to the basis of phenomena.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*teaching this selflessness* that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena *in two aspects, by dividing it according to phenomena and person*' - it has a purpose - because it was taught that way *to liberate migrators* from cyclic existence.

This shows in brief the two-fold division of emptiness and the purpose for teaching the two-fold division of emptiness.

Mirror:

*The Teacher taught this emptiness itself again in many aspects by dividing it further according to the students.*

There are two purposes for the Buddha to divide it further into the sixteen emptinesses. One is to teach emptiness in accordance with the specific needs and fortunes of the disciple. There could be certain disciples who have the potential to realise emptiness through, for example, an explanation of outer emptiness. That is one reason – to subdue disciples in accordance with their fortune and merits. Secondly, when the Buddha explained emptiness to a group of students he would divide it into different aspects according to them.

*Having taught emptiness with elaboration, Explaining sixteen, he taught again four In a condensed way. These are Also posited for the Mahayana.*

In the Mahayana sutras it also teaches twenty emptinesses. The *Lion Sutra* also posits twenty emptinesses.

Sometimes the divisions of emptiness are explained according to whether they are condensed, middling or extensive. The condensed version is the two-fold division, the middling version is the four-fold division and the extensive division is the sixteen-fold division.

#### Questions:

How did the Buddha differentiate between the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena?

*Student: According to the base.*

How through the base? Which base?

*Student: On the base of person and the base of phenomena.*

Can you posit emptiness on the basis? For example the lack of an inherently existent person is the emptiness of that person, and the lack of inherently existent phenomena is the emptiness of the basis of phenomena.

An important thing to keep in mind is that while the lower tenets differentiate the two selflessnesses according to the object of negation, the Prasangika differentiate the two selflessnesses according to the basis.

Sometimes we can say that the selflessness of person overcomes the self-grasping at person and the selflessness of phenomena overcomes the self-grasping at phenomena. However we have previously posited both the self-grasping at person as well as the self-grasping at phenomena as afflicted obscurations. The lower tenets posit the self-grasping at person as afflicted obscuration, while positing the self-grasping at phenomena as obscuration to knowledge.

We can go through the sixteen emptinesses next time – you have to understand the object of negation first. Then it just goes through the different bases. First you have to ascertain the actual meaning of emptiness, and then it makes sense to go through the divisions.

What do you posit as the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of person?

*Student 1: The person lacks intrinsic existence because of not being findable in the seven ways.*

The subject is the person. The subject is what one thinks about, and analyses, trying to establish it as lacking inherent existence. Then one needs to posit a reason to establish that thesis.

*Student 1: Because of not being findable intrinsically with any of the seven ways*

Is that a syllogism?

*Student 1: Take the subject 'person' – it follows that it is not inherently existent – because of not being findable intrinsically in the seven ways.*

If it is not findable in the seven ways, is there a pervasion that it is emptiness?

*Student 1: Yes.*

Then the person is emptiness?

*Student 1: The person is lack of inherent existence.*

What is the person?

Wayne, if it is not findable in the seven ways, is there a pervasion that it is emptiness?

*Student 2: No.*

So debate Damien

*Student 2: Take the 'person' – it is emptiness – because you can't find it in the seven ways.*

*Student 1: That's what I am asserting.*

You can say to Damien, it follows that the person is not ultimate truth, because it is conventional illusory truth. That's what you have to say, because according to Damien's position, one loses the presentation of the two truths. There's a difference between emptiness and being empty. Don't you have that difference in English? Everything is empty of true existence, but that doesn't mean that everything is emptiness. If the person is emptiness, then it would be very easy for you to realise emptiness with your eye-consciousness. Then there would be no need to meditate; you would just have to look!

*Student: Take phenomena other than the person – they lack inherent existence – because they are not generated in any of the four extremes.*

*Student 3: Accept.*

Exactly what do you accept?

*Student: That phenomena do not exist inherently, because of not being generated in any of the four ways.*

If something were to exist inherently, would it necessarily have to be generated in any of the four extremes? Or, if somebody accepts inherent generation, do they have to accept the four extreme generations?

*Student 3: Yes.*

Which one?

*Student 3: They might say inherently generated from self.*

Even if somebody accepts inherent generation from self, then what's that supposed to be?

*Student 3: Inherent generation from self in their school.*

Which tenet accepts inherent generation from self?

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*Student 3: The universal being, for example.*

The universal being?

*Student 3: They posit a universal principle.*

What is the Samkyas' position?

*Student 3: The school posits a universal principle.*

Where the actual debate is coming up is that he posits the reason 'because they are not generated from the four extremes'. The question arises is whether or not the lack of generation from the four extremes is emptiness? If that is emptiness, then you would have already realised emptiness at the time of realising the reason.

For example if you say 'take the subject "person" - it lacks inherent existence - because it is not generated from any of the four extremes', then you have to investigate whether or not the non-generation of the person from the four extremes is emptiness. If it is emptiness, then you have already realised emptiness at the time of realising the directional property.

One could also ask, 'Does it follow that the unfindability of the person in seven ways is not emptiness?'

*Student: It's not emptiness.*

But we already established previously that the unfindability of a person in the seven ways is the final mode of the person's abiding.

When we say that it is not findable in the seven ways, what are the seven ways?

*Student: One with the aggregates, different from the aggregates, not endowed with the aggregated, not based on the aggregates, not endowed with the aggregates, does not depend on the aggregates, not a collection of the aggregates, not shaped like the aggregates.*

It really means inherently one or inherently different, but otherwise it's OK.

If the person and the aggregates were of intrinsically of one nature, then either the aggregates would become one, or the person would become many and so forth. This stems from being intrinsically of one nature. If it is just of being one nature, these faults don't arise. The person is of one nature with the aggregates, but not intrinsically so. We said before that there are tenets asserting generation from self, tenets asserting generation from other, tenets asserting generation from both and tenets asserting generation from no cause. You should read up on those so that you can posit them the next time.

What is meant by conventional and ultimate truth?

*Student: The meaning found by a valid cognisor...*

The definition went very well. What are the examples?

*Student: Vase and the emptiness of the vase.*

That's good!

Are those two of one nature, or of different nature?

*Student: One nature.*

That's very good!

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright*

*Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak*

*Edited Version*

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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatarama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་མོ།

28 September 2004

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Generate a virtuous motivation as usual, thinking, 'I have to attain complete and perfect enlightenment to be able to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put in into practice as much as possible'.

Last time we went through the verses that introduced the different divisions of emptiness. We had the two-fold division, the sixteen-fold division and the four-fold division. We have already covered the two-fold division.

At this point the debate arises as to whether or not practitioners following the hearer path realise the selflessness of phenomena, and whether or not they have complete realisation of selflessness arises. We have already covered this in the explanation of the homage.

One can say that the hearer practitioners have a complete realisation of selflessness for the purpose of eliminating the afflicted obscurations, but they don't have the complete realisation of selflessness for the purpose of eliminating the obscurations to knowledge. Otherwise, when they attain the path of no-more-learning, they would have to abandon the obscurations to knowledge. Another way of saying this is that they have a complete realisation of selflessness, but they don't have a complete realisation of selflessness via the door of limitless inference. This is yet another way of saying that they don't understand emptiness on the basis of great compassion.

The hearers' realisation of selflessness is an antidote to the obscurations to knowledge, but it isn't a complete antidote to the obscurations to knowledge. Their meditation on selflessness is merely a complete antidote to the afflicted obscurations.

### 6.3.5.2.1. Explaining the divisions of emptiness in brief

#### 6.3.5.2.2. Explaining the meaning of the individual divisions

This has two sub-headings.

6.3.5.2.2.1. The sixteen emptinesses

6.3.5.2.2.2. The four emptinesses

##### 6.3.5.2.2.1. The sixteen emptinesses

One crucial thing to keep in mind here is that this division of emptiness into sixteen comes about merely because of a difference in the basis of the emptiness. It doesn't come about through a difference in the nature of the emptiness itself. We are always dealing with a lack of inherent existence. The object of negation is always inherent existence. The only difference is the basis on which inherent existence is negated. This is very important to keep in mind, otherwise it could happen that somebody reading the line 'The eye is empty of the eye' could think there is no eye in the eye. One has to attach the words inherent existence, so that the quote means 'the eye is empty of an inherently existent eye'.

##### 6.3.5.2.2.1.1. Inner emptiness

Here the basis of the emptiness refers to inner phenomena. The distinction between inner and outer phenomenon is whether or not the phenomenon is held by the mental continuity. An example to clarify this distinction is one's hair. The tip of one's hair is not held by one's mental continuum. Why? Because we can cut off the tip of our hair without causing any particular feeling in the mind. However the root of one's hair is held by the mental continuum, because if we rip out our hair by the root then it causes a particular feeling. Likewise one's other faculties, the five physical sense-powers, are all held by the mental continuum, because they all cause different types of feelings to arise through contact with outer objects.

*Because this is its nature*

*The eye is empty of the eye.*

*Similarly, ear, nose, tongue,*

*Body and mind should be taught likewise*

*Because of not remaining unchanging and*

*Because of not disintegrating.*

*The six, the eyes and so forth*

*The six, the eyes and so forth*

*It is asserted as inner emptiness.*

Here the six sources are listed. We refer to the eye source, ear source, nose (smell) source, tongue (taste) source, body source and mental source as the six inner sources.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the lack of inherent existence of the six, the eyes and so forth*' - it is asserted as inner emptiness - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of inner true existence.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the eye*' - it is empty of the quintessential nature of the eye - because this emptiness is its nature - because it does not ultimately remain unchanging and because of not disintegrating ultimately. Similarly, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind should be taught likewise.

What this means is that the eye is empty of being truly existent. The reason why that is the case is because this particular emptiness is its nature. The eye lacks an inherently existent nature, and since the eye lacks an inherently existent nature it is empty of an inherently existent nature. If the eye didn't lack an inherently existent nature then it wouldn't be empty of an inherently existent nature, and the lack of inherent existence would not be its final nature.

One can apply this principle to each and every one of the different bases. If the eye were to exist inherently it would have to be established ultimately, and that would mean that it would either have to remain ultimately unchanging or it would have to disintegrate ultimately. But because the eye neither ultimately remains unchanging nor disintegrates ultimately it lacks inherent or ultimate existence.

*Mirror:*

*Similarly, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind should be taught likewise.*

This principle can be applied to all of the inner sense bases. If they were to exist truly they would have to be truly permanent or truly impermanent and so forth.

##### 6.3.5.2.2.1.2. Outer emptiness

*Because this is its nature*

*Form is empty of form.*

---

*Sound, smell, taste, tactile stimuli and Phenomena are the same.*

*The mere lack of quintessential nature of form And so forth is asserted as outer emptiness.*

Here the bases are the six outer sources, which are the form source, sound source, smell source, taste source, the source of tactile stimuli and the phenomena source.

In this verse 'form' refers to form source, which could also be described as visual stimuli. In general there is a difference between form and form source. 'Form source' refers to visual form, which is shape and colour for example, while 'form' just by itself includes all the other types of form such as sound, smell and so forth. Here 'form source' refers specifically to visual stimuli. For example with the example of food the first thing that one apprehends in relation to the food on the plate is its colour and the shape. This is comprehended by the eye-consciousness.

Colour and shape are visual forms that are only apprehended by the visual consciousness, by the eye-consciousness. One's ear-consciousness or one's smell-consciousness doesn't apprehend shapes and colours.

Normally there is a sound source in relation to food, which is the chomping sound that one makes when the food is chewed in the mouth. The smell source is the form that is apprehended only by the nose-consciousness. Then of course we have the taste source, with the different tastes such as salty, sweet, sour and so forth. The taste source is apprehended by one's taste-consciousness, which is the consciousness that is generated in dependence upon the taste sense-power in the tongue.

The tactile stimulus of the food refers, for example, to its temperature. Once we put the food into our mouth we recognise its temperature as being hot or cold and so forth. There is also the texture of food - whether it is a very coarse or smooth texture and so forth. Even though they are apprehended in the mouth these are examples of tactile stimuli, which will not be apprehended by the taste-consciousness. They will be apprehended by what is referred to as the tactile-consciousness or the body-consciousness. Then we have what is referred to as phenomena source, an example of which would be the impermanence of the food. The momentary nature of the food is an example of the phenomenal source of food. These are the six outer sources - the objects that are not held by the mental continuum.

*Mirror:*

*Form is empty of the quintessential nature of form because this emptiness is its nature. Sound, smell, taste, tactile stimuli and phenomena are the same.*

Take the subject '*the mere lack of quintessential nature of form and so forth*' - it is asserted as outer emptiness - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of outer true existence.

The emptiness of the six outer sources, form source and so forth, is referred to as outer emptiness, because their bases are outer objects. They are objects that are not held by the mental continuum. The inner sense-powers such as the five physical sense-powers and the mental sense-power are all held by the mental continuum. Their lack of inherent existence is regarded as inner emptiness, while the emptiness of the outer objects that we have just mentioned is regarded as outer emptiness, because of the base.

These emptinesses were taught to oppose specific types of true-grasping. For example, inner emptiness was taught in order to oppose the true-grasping at inner phenomena

contained within the continuum as truly existent. One can apply this principle to all the other types of emptiness, which are always taught to oppose specific types of grasping.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.3. Outer inner emptiness

*The mere lack of inherent existence of Both is outer inner emptiness.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the mere lack of inherent existence of both*' - it is outer inner emptiness - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of outer inner true existence.

In *Illumination* Lama Tsong Khapa explains outer inner emptiness by referring to the emptiness of, for example, the eyeball. One shouldn't confuse the eyeball with the actual eye sense-power. The eyeball is more like the container in which the eye sense-power resides. On the one hand the eyeball is regarded as an inner object, because it is contained within the continuum of knowledge. It causes mental benefit or mental harm upon contact, and therefore, as was explained before, it causes different types of feeling. That is why the eyeball is regarded as an inner object.

However, at the same time the eyeball is also the container of the eye sense-power, and not the eye sense-power. It is not contained within the category of sense-power. Therefore it is regarded as an outer object. In general there are many different ways of how A can contain B, but here we talk about containing from the point of view of being that object. The eyeball, the container of the eye sense-power is not contained in the category of sense-power because it is not a sense-power. That is why it is also referred to as an outer object.

That is why its emptiness is referred to as outer inner emptiness. The lack of true existence of outer inner phenomena is outer inner emptiness.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.4. Emptiness of emptiness

*The mere lack of inherent existence of phenomena Is taught by the sages to be emptiness. This emptiness is also asserted to be Empty of the entity of emptiness.*

*The emptiness of that called emptiness Is asserted as emptiness of emptiness.*

*It is taught to oppose awareness Grasping at emptiness as a phenomenon.*

The sages taught the mere lack of inherent existence of phenomena to be emptiness. What the sages defined as emptiness is the lack of inherent existence of a phenomenon, such as, for example, the instance of the lack of inherent existence of outer inner phenomenon.

*Mirror:*

*This emptiness that is the mere lack of inherent existence of phenomena as taught by the sages is also asserted to be empty of the entity of emptiness, because all phenomena are empty of true existence.*

Here, of course, when it says it is also asserted to be empty of the entity of emptiness it refers to being empty of the entity of truly existent emptiness or inherent emptiness. Why? Because all phenomena are empty of true existence. As all phenomena are empty of true existence, emptiness itself has to lack true existence.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the teaching on the emptiness of*

emptiness' – it has a purpose – because *it is to oppose the awareness grasping at emptiness as a phenomenon*, i.e. as truly existent.

The *Perfection of Wisdom sutra*, for example, teaches that emptiness is also empty of true existence.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.5. Great emptiness

*Because of pervading all, i.e. sentient beings  
And the worlds containing them, and because  
There is no limit through the example  
Of the infinite, directions are great indeed.*

*Whatever is the emptiness of  
The ten directions  
Is the great emptiness,  
Taught to oppose the grasping at the Great.*

What this is saying is that regardless of whether something is great or big or small it can't escape lacking true existence.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'the ten *directions*' – they are *great indeed* – *because of pervading all, i.e. sentient beings and the worlds containing them, and because the limitless* expanse of immeasurable love focussing on the sentient beings of the ten directions is taught *through the example of their infinity*.

*Whatever is the emptiness of* the inherent nature of *these ten directions*, i.e. the eight points of the compass together with up and down, *is the great emptiness*.

Sometimes the ten directions are referred to as the Great. As you know the ten directions are the four cardinal directions and the four intermediate directions, along with up and down.

The ten directions pervade all sentient beings and all the worlds that contain sentient beings. That is why it is appropriate to refer to the ten directions as the Great.

What 'there is no limit through the example of the infinite' refers to is 'because the limitless expanse of immeasurable love focusing on the sentient beings of the ten directions is taught through the example of infinity'. When we meditate of the four immeasurables, i.e. immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy and immeasurable equanimity, we focus on all sentient beings of the ten directions. The object of one's meditation is no longer really countable in number - it is infinite. Through the example of the infinite object of the four immeasurables we can also understand why the directions are referred to as the Great.

These meditations are referred to as 'immeasurables' because their object is infinite. There is no limit to sentient beings, there is no limit to the ten directions, there is no limit where one could say sentient beings stop here, or the ten directions stop here, and there is infinite benefit. That is why there are referred to as the four immeasurables. From infinite objects infinite benefit arises. Infinite benefit refers to both the benefit one can give to sentient beings as well as the benefit one receives from those meditations.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'teaching that emptiness' – it has a purpose – because it is *taught to oppose the grasping at* the true existence of *the Great*.

Teaching great emptiness has the purpose of overcoming the grasping at the ten directions as truly existent.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.6. Ultimate emptiness

*Because of being of great purpose,  
To go beyond sorrow is the ultimate.  
Whatever is the emptiness of this,  
That is the ultimate emptiness.*

*To endeavour opposing the grasping  
Awareness at nirvana as a phenomenon,  
Ultimate Exalted Wisdom took to  
Teaching the ultimate emptiness.*

Here 'ultimate' refers to either the dharmakaya or liberation i.e. having gone beyond sorrow.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*gone beyond sorrow*'...

As we said this refers to liberation, nirvana, and also the dharmakaya

*... it is ultimate because of being of great purpose.*

One's ultimate or final purpose is to attain the dharmakaya.

From here the idea originates that the truth of cessation is emptiness. For the Prasangika the truth of cessation is emptiness, which relates to this point. Because the ultimate aim is to go beyond sorrow or actually the state of gone beyond sorrow is referred to as ultimate,

*Whatever is the emptiness of* the quintessential nature of *this* ultimate *that is ultimate emptiness*.

Take the subject '*Ultimate Exalted Wisdom teaching the ultimate emptiness*' – there is a purpose – because it is *to endeavour opposing the grasping-awareness grasping at nirvana as a phenomenon*, i.e. as truly existent.

Because liberation is referred to as ultimate the idea could arise that it exists ultimately. In order to oppose the grasping-awareness that would grasp at a nirvana as truly existent Ultimate Exalted Wisdom, i.e. the Buddha, taught ultimate emptiness.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.7. Compounded emptiness

*Because of arising from conditions the three  
Realms are taught with certainty to be compounded.  
Whatever is the emptiness of this,  
That is taught as compounded emptiness.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*the three realms*' [the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm] they are *taught with certainty to be compounded* – *because of arising from conditions*.

Take the subject '*whatever is the emptiness of* the quintessential nature of *this* compounded phenomenon' – it is *taught as compounded emptiness* – because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of the compounded.

A compounded phenomenon refers to an impermanent phenomenon. The reason why impermanent phenomena are compounded is because they arise from causes and conditions, and because compounded phenomena arise from causes and conditions they therefore lack true or inherent existence. This lack of inherent existence of compounded phenomena is referred to as compounded emptiness.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.8. Non-compounded emptiness

*That which does not have generation, abiding,  
And impermanence, that is non-compounded.  
Whatever is the emptiness of it,  
That is non-compounded emptiness.*

Mirror:

Take the subject 'space' - it is non-compounded - because it is *that which doesn't have generation, abiding and impermanence*.

Take the subject 'space' - it is a non-compounded phenomenon - because it doesn't have the three features of compounded phenomena, which are generation, abiding and impermanence. If an object is compounded then initially it is generated, intermittently it abides, and finally it will disintegrate. Permanent phenomena such as space don't have these three features. They are not initially generated intermittently, they don't abide, and finally they don't disintegrate. That is why they are non-compounded.

We can relate this to our own situation - initially we were born, then intermittently we abide, but finally we disintegrate.

Mirror:

Take the subject '*whatever is the emptiness of the quintessential nature of this non-compounded*' - it is *non-compounded emptiness* - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of the non-compounded.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.9. Emptiness having transcended extremes

*Anything that doesn't have extremes  
Is called 'having transcended extremes'.  
Its emptiness of merely that  
Is called 'emptiness having transcended extremes'.*

Mirror:

Take the subject '*any dependent arising*' - it is called '*having transcended extremes*' - because it *doesn't have the extremes* of eternalism and nihilism.

Any dependent arising is called 'having transcended extremes', because there is no dependent arising that exists in the extreme of eternalism or nihilism. Anything that exists is not established within either of those two extremes.

Mirror:

Take the subject 'emptiness of the quintessential nature of that having transcended extremes - it is called '*emptiness having transcended extremes*' - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of true existence of that having transcended extremes.

For example, the Mind Only tenet asserts consciousness as truly existent because of not existing within the two extremes of eternalism or nihilism. This emptiness was taught in order to counteract this grasping, for example, that the consciousness must exist truly, because it is not established within any of the two extremes.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.10. Emptiness without beginning or end

*Beginning is first, the last is the end.  
Because of lacking these, cyclic existence  
Is described as lacking beginning or end.  
Since it lacks going and coming, that which  
Is the void of this dreamlike existence  
Is called emptiness without  
Beginning and without end.  
It is accurately taught in the treatises.*

First of all what is referred to here as 'that without beginning or end' is cyclic existence. Cyclic existence has no beginning, because there is nothing that can be pinpointed as the beginning of cyclic existence. Likewise, because it is difficult to pinpoint the end of cyclic existence cyclic existence is referred to as having no end.

With regard to cyclic existence having an end, there are different views. According to the Sera Je textbook, there is an end to cyclic existence.

However there is also the other view is that in general there is no end to cyclic existence, but that there is an end to one's individual cyclic existence. This view also has a very profound meaning.

One can see the end of one's individual cyclic existence when one begins to see emptiness. For example, when a seed is burnt then one can see the end of the continuity of that seed. It might be difficult to pinpoint the exact beginning of the continuity of the seed, but when the seed is burnt then one is able to see the end of the seed continuum. Likewise, on an individual basis, when one sees emptiness one is able to see the end of one's cyclic existence or samsara.

Because one's individual cyclic existence comes to an end, one can say there is an end to cyclic existence.

Being in cyclic existence one goes around the wheel of cyclic existence, from one existence to the next. This coming and going in cyclic existence, coming from one existence going to the next existence, then again going from that existence to the next existence, has no true existence. So it lacks inherent existence, and it is the emptiness of that without beginning or end.

Mirror:

*Cyclic existence is described as lacking a beginning or an end, because the beginning is the first and the last is the end, and samsara lacks both.*

Take the subject '*that which is the void of the quintessential nature of this dreamlike existence, since it lacks inherent going and coming*' - it is *definitely taught in the treatises that it is called emptiness without beginning or end* - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of coming and going.

The coming and going from one existence to a new existence in cyclic existence is without beginning or end, and it lacks a true existence. In such a way it is dream-like, because it lacks inherent going and coming. The emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of this coming and going is referred to as the emptiness without beginning or end.

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

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# Study Group - Madhyamakavatarama

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

དངུམ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

5 October 2004

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Generate a virtuous motivation, thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings' and in order to do so, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put in into practice as much as possible'.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.11. Emptiness of that not to give up

*That labelled 'to give up' is accurately  
Described as 'to discard' and 'to throw away'.  
To not give up is to not cast aside.  
Not to give up anything that is.*

*That which is the very emptiness  
Of the mere lack of giving up,  
Because it is that it should be described  
As emptiness of not giving up.*

What you have to keep in mind is that 'not to give up' refers to the Mahayana. The Mahayana is that which is not to be given up.

In the second line that labelled 'to give up' is accurately described as 'to discard and 'to throw away'. Here what is being discarded or thrown away is cyclic existence. So, 'not giving up' refers to the Mahayana, and that which is being discarded or thrown away is cyclic existence. The lack of inherent existence of that not to be given up is the *emptiness* of the Mahayana.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*that which is Mahayana*' - it is something *not to give up* - because it isn't *anything* to give up both from the point of view of entity as well as time.

Take the subject '*that which is the very emptiness of the quintessential nature of the mere lack of giving up*' - it should be described as the *emptiness of not giving up* - because it is the emptiness *that* is the lack of the true existence of not giving up.

The Mahayana is that which should not be given up, both from the point of view of its nature as well as from the point of view of time. The lack of inherent existence of that which one shouldn't give up consequently refers to the emptiness or the lack of inherent existence of the Mahayana.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.12. Emptiness of nature

*The identity of compounded phenomena and so forth,  
It is not created by students,  
Self-enlightened ones, conquerors' children and  
Tathagatas.  
Therefore the mere identity of compounded  
phenomena*

*And so forth is described*

*As mere nature.*

*That which is the emptiness of that itself,*

*It is the emptiness of nature*

The emptiness of nature is very similar to the emptiness of emptiness. The emptiness of nature refers to the emptiness of the primordial nature of compounded phenomena and so forth, which has existed since beginningless times. It is not something that was fabricated or created by hearers, solitary realisers, students or self-enlightened ones. It was not created by bodhisattvas or by the Tathagatas. The lack of inherent existence of compounded phenomena and so forth is the mere nature or emptiness of those phenomena. The emptiness of that nature is the emptiness of nature, which is very similar to the emptiness of emptiness.

One might doubt whether the emptiness of nature is just a repetition of the emptiness of emptiness that was mentioned as emptiness number four. However, even though they basically talk about the same emptiness, each is explained from a different point of view in order to dispel slightly different misconceptions.

The emptiness of emptiness was taught in order to dispel the misconception that emptiness exists truly, because it is found by transcendental wisdom. Having established emptiness as being the object that is realised by transcendental wisdom, then the idea could arise that because it is realised by transcendental wisdom it therefore has to exist ultimately. In order to counteract this misconception, the emptiness of emptiness was taught.

With the emptiness of nature the misconception that is being dispelled is different. Here the misconception is thinking that emptiness exists truly because it has existed since beginningless time, and has not been created by anybody. When one is presented with the idea that emptiness is the primordial nature of everything that has existed since beginningless times, not being created by anything or anybody, the idea could arise in one's mind that emptiness exists truly. In order to dispel this misconception, the emptiness of nature was explained. In general we can say that we have the final mode of abiding of an object, but the object is not established within that final nature.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.13. Emptiness of all dharmas

First we have to identify what those dharmas are.

*The eighteen spheres, six contacts and  
The six feelings arising from them,  
Possessing form and not possessing form,  
Likewise compounded and non-compounded  
phenomena,*

*Anything that is the void of  
All these phenomena is emptiness.*

The *eighteen spheres* refer to:

i) The six sense powers:

1. Eye sense-power
  2. Ear sense-power
  3. Nose sense-power
  4. Tongue sense-power
  5. Body sense-power
-

6. Mental sense-power

ii) The six primary consciousnesses generated in dependence upon those six sense powers:

1. Eye primary consciousness
2. Ear primary consciousness
3. Nose primary consciousness
4. Tongue primary consciousness
5. Body primary consciousness
6. Mental primary consciousness

iii) The six objects of those six primary consciousnesses:

1. Form source, i.e. visual forms such as shapes and colours
2. Sound source
3. Smell source
4. Taste source
5. Tactile source, i.e. tactile stimulus such as hot, cold, smooth, coarse and so forth
6. Phenomena source, i.e. mental stimulus.

The eighteen spheres refer to the six sense-powers from the eye sense-power to the mental sense-power. The six primary consciousnesses are generated in dependence on those six sense-powers, starting with the eye-consciousness and up to the mental-consciousness. Then we have the six objects of those six primary consciousnesses starting with visual objects, up to the sphere of phenomena.

The six types of *contact* are contact generated in relation to the eye sense-power up to contact being generated in relation to the mental sense-power.

From the six types of contact the six types of *feeling* arise. Contact precedes feeling. Contact is posited in between the coming together of sense-power, consciousness and object, but before having any experience of the object. Feelings relate to the feelings that are generated in relation to the eye-consciousness upon contact with the eye sense-power and so forth, up to the feeling that is generated through contact with the mental sense-power. On contact with a pleasant object a feeling of happiness is generated. On contact with an unpleasant object one generates the feeling of unhappiness. First there has to be the coming together of object, sense-power and consciousness, and if the object is a pleasant object, then one generates a pleasant feeling.

*Possessing form and not possessing form* encompasses all phenomena. Here when it talks about all dharmas it is referring to dharmas in the context of phenomena. Possessing form and not possessing form encompasses all dharmas. When it says that all dharmas are contained within the eighteen spheres, it is not referring to dharma from the point of view of the exalted Dharma, but to the dharma from the point of view of phenomena.

*Likewise compounded and non-compounded phenomena* encompass all dharmas. *Anything that is the void of all these phenomena is emptiness.* Anything that is the lack of inherent existence of all dharmas is the emptiness of all dharmas.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14. The emptiness of one's definition

One's definition is that which characterises the object. The definition of the object is that which characterises the object, through which the object is posited.

The emptiness of one's definition is explained in three outlines:

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.1. Condensed explanation

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2. Extensive explanation

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.3. Summary

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.1. Condensed explanation

*Any non-phenomenon such as suitable to be form  
And so forth is the emptiness of definition.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*the non-phenomenon* of truly existing *suitable to be form* and so forth' - it is *the emptiness of definition* - because it is the emptiness that is the lack of the true existence of definition.

#### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is divided into three:

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.1. Definitions relating to the bases

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.2. Definitions relating to the path

6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.3. Definitions relating to the result.

##### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.1. The definitions relating to the basis

*Form has the definition of that suitable to  
Be form, feeling has the nature of experience,  
Recognition is apprehending characteristics,  
Compositional factors are strongly activating,*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject '*that suitable to be form, the uncommon definition of form*' - it doesn't exist inherently - because it is neither inherently existing one nor inherently existing many.

One can apply this format to all the others as well.

*Suitable to be form* is posited as the definition of form. Here, the suitability aspect can relate to the suitability to transform into colour or shape.

*Feeling has the nature of experience*, feeling is basically the happiness, suffering or neutral experience that one has.

*Recognition* is the apprehending of the specific distinguishing characteristics of the object, such as the characteristics that distinguish a male from a female, so that one can say 'this is a male or this is a female'.

*Compositional factors* are strongly activating factors. What they activate is the mind. Compositional factors strongly activate the mind.

*Clearly knowing the individual objects  
Is the definition of primary consciousness,  
Misery is the definition of the aggregates,  
The spheres' nature is asserted as a striking snake,*

In general, *aggregates* refer to, as it says, an aggregation of objects, and a *sphere* generally refers to a type. But here it states that the definition of the aggregates is misery and the spheres' nature is asserted as a striking snake.

*The sources were taught by the Buddha  
As the very doors to birth,  
That which arises dependently and related  
Has the definition of meeting.*

The etymology of a *source* is that which generates primary consciousness. One has for example, form, like

shape and colour, that generates a visual primary consciousness and so forth.

*Mirror:*

*...that which arises dependently and related has the definition of the meeting of causes and conditions.*

In general, the meaning of dependent arising is being established in dependence upon its parts. The Prasangika assert that everything that exists is established in dependence on its parts, i.e. is dependent arising. But here it refers to the more coarse dependent arising of cause-and-effect.

On the side of the bases we have such things as form, feeling and so forth. The root text listed the different definitions, the different characteristics that define those objects, such as suitable to be form as form, and experience defining feeling and so forth.

### 6.3.5.2.2.1.14.2.2. The definitions relating to the path

Now we look at what defines the different aspects of the path. The root text reads:

*Letting go is the perfection of generosity, the Definition of morality is lack of misery, the definition of patience is lack of anger, of enthusiasm Is the very lack of the unspeakable,*

What defines the perfection of *generosity* is the thought of letting go. The actual generosity is not the act or the substance, but it is the thought of letting go.

*The definition of morality* is lack of the misery caused by mental afflictions. Morality soothes the suffering caused by the mental afflictions in the same way that shade soothes the suffering that is caused by heat. Here morality is defined by this aspect of soothing the suffering caused by mental afflictions. Of course there is also the other definition of morality, which is the mind of restraint, or self-discipline.

*The definition of patience* is the *lack of anger*. What do we define as patience? Patience is a mind that is not disturbed or agitated by suffering, and the causes of suffering, or harm. Patience is a lack of anger, a lack of agitation and disturbance in the face of suffering or harm. Patience is the antidote to anger, which overcomes anger.

The definition of **enthusiasm** is joy in virtue, lacking the unspeakable. The unspeakable refers to non-virtue, which is something that holy beings don't even want to talk about. Enthusiasm is the joy in the practice of virtue. If one just persists in one's practice of virtue without any joy, then that would be called just mere diligence or mere effort. However if it is combined with the aspect of joy, then it becomes enthusiasm.

### Opposites

The opposite of **enthusiasm** is laziness, which is counteracted by enthusiasm. The opposite of **patience** is anger or mental agitation. If one is angry, then that can be overcome by patience. The opposite of **morality** is amorality. The opposite of **generosity** is greed.

Amorality is confused or distorted morality, i.e. unethical actions of body, speech and mind, which can be

overcome by morality. Greed can be overcome by generosity. If one is greedy, then by slowly practicing a little bit of generosity, one can increase one's generosity and overcome one's greed. One can overcome one's different mental afflictions by practising the appropriate perfection.

*Mental stabilisation has the definition of bringing together, Wisdom's very definition is lack of attachment. The definitions of the six perfections Are stated as such.*

*Mirror:*

*Mental stabilisation has the definition of a single-pointed mind bringing together all virtuous dharmas.*

What is being opposed by concentration is mental wandering, which is its opposite.

The definition of *wisdom* is the lack of attachment. What this means is that wisdom is liberating - wisdom liberates one from attachment and mental afflictions. Mental stabilisation ensures that the mind is not disturbed by the mental afflictions, and wisdom liberates one from the mental afflictions, such as attachment and so forth.

*The definitions of the six perfections are stated as such* in the sutras.

*Mental stabilisations and the immeasurables and Likewise whatever other formless ones, These were taught by Perfect Transcendental Knowledge As having the definition of being undisturbed.*

The mental stabilisations refer the four form absorptions, which are sometimes referred to as the four mental stabilisations. Then we have the four immeasurables and the four formless absorptions.

*Mirror:*

*Take the subject 'mental stabilisations, the immeasurables, and likewise whatever other formless ones, these that were taught by Perfect Transcendental Knowledge as having the definition of being undisturbed' - they don't exist inherently*

For example, through the practice of generosity, our mind won't be disturbed by greed. Through the practice of morality, our mind won't be disturbed by amorality, while the practice of patience prevents the mind being disturbed by anger and so forth.

*The thirty-seven features of enlightenment - Their definition is definitely liberating. The definition of emptiness is The mere void aspect lacking focus,*

The thirty-seven features of enlightenment' are:

i) The **four close placements by mindfulness**; i.e. Close placement by mindfulness on

1. the body
2. feelings
3. mind
4. phenomena

Purpose<sup>1</sup>: Also called 'the paths that thoroughly realised phenomena', these four are meditated upon to realise the four noble truths on the body, feelings, mind and phenomena.

Etymology: Wisdom is placed closely by mindfulness on the object of meditation.

Path: Emphasised on the small path of accumulation.

ii) The **four perfect abandonments** i.e. the perfect abandonment of

1. not generating any new non-virtue not yet generated
2. abandoning the non-virtue already generated
3. generating new virtue not yet generated
4. increasing the virtue already generated

Also called 'the paths arising from striving', these four are explained after the four placements because they are the enthusiasm that is generated through realising what has to be abandoned and what has to be practised.

Etymology: They perfectly abandon the objects of abandonment.

Definition: Enthusiasm on the path that joyfully abandons that to be abandoned and joyfully adopts that to be practised.

Path: Emphasised on the middling path of accumulation.

iii) The **four legs of magical emanation** i.e. the leg of magical emanation of

1. aspiration
2. enthusiasm
3. intention
4. analysis

Also called 'the paths thoroughly training in concentration', they are explained subsequently to the four perfect abandonments, because somebody very enthusiastic about abandoning the obscurations and developing qualities needs concentration, a flexible workable mind, which can act as the basis for qualities.

Purpose: With concentration the bodhisattva can then send out emanations, and develop the worldly and supramundane qualities.

Etymology: Being endowed with the legs that can go to the pure buddha fields through magical emanation.

Definition: Concentration on the path, having overcome the five faults with the eight antidotes.

Path: Emphasised on the great path of accumulation.

iv) The **five powers** i.e. the power of

1. faith
2. enthusiasm
3. mindfulness
4. concentration
5. wisdom

Also called 'the paths training in clear realisation', they are explained subsequently to the paths thoroughly training in concentration, because through training one's mind in aspiration etc. one develops the heat and peak stages of the path of preparation, which will propel one

to see truth directly.

Purpose: To quickly complete the heat and peak stages, and to quickly attain the forbearance and supreme dharma stages of the path of preparation.

Etymology: Having becoming empowered to generate its resultant arya path.

Path: Start on the heat and peak levels of the path of preparation.

v) The **five forces** i.e. the force of

1. faith
2. enthusiasm
3. mindfulness
4. concentration
5. wisdom

Also called 'the paths related to clear realisation', they are explained subsequently to the paths training in clear realisation because after having attained the five powers in the nature of heat and peak, one then attains the five forces in the nature of forbearance and supreme dharma.

Purpose: To quickly complete the forbearance and supreme dharma stages of the path of preparation, and to quickly generate the path of seeing.

Etymology: 'Force' because they won't be overcome by their opposite mental states.

Path: Start on the forbearance and supreme dharma levels of the path of preparation.

vi) The **seven limbs of enlightenment** i.e. the limb of enlightenment of

1. perfect mindfulness
2. clear discernment
3. enthusiasm,
4. joy
5. pliancy
6. concentration
7. equanimity

Also called the 'the paths of clear realisation', they are explained subsequently to the paths related to clear realisation, because the path clearly realising truth newly is generated upon completion of the forbearance and supreme dharma levels of the paths of preparation.

Purpose: To abandon all *abandonments through seeing*.

Definition: Exalted knowledge that becomes the cause of its resultant enlightenment.

Etymology: 'Limbs of enlightenment' because they are the causes of their resultant enlightenment.

Path: Start on the path of seeing.

vii) The **eight limbs of the arya path**: i.e. the limb of the arya path of

1. right view
2. right thought
3. right speech
4. right action
5. right livelihood
6. right striving
7. right concentration
8. right wisdom

Also called 'the paths that definitively liberate', they are explained subsequently to the paths of clear realisation because the definitely liberating and purifying entity of

<sup>1</sup> Here and below I have added some points from Jetsun Chogigyaltsen's commentary on the thirty-seven, which you may or may not find interesting. Regards, Tenzin Fedor

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the path of meditation arises subsequently to the path of seeing.

Purpose: To abandon the *abandonments through meditation*, to investigate the meaning realised during meditative equipoise, convey the exalted dharma, generate faith in others, to purify the afflicted obscurations and the obscurations preventing becoming empowered with qualities.

Etymology: 'Limbs of the arya path' because they are the causes of their resultant arya path.

Path: Emphasised on the path of seeing.

These thirty-seven features of enlightenment are sometimes referred to as the thirty-seven features concordant with enlightenment, because they are concordant with enlightenment.

*Their definition is definitely liberating.* All of the thirty-seven features of enlightenment are in the definition of definitely liberating, because they are all an actual path.

*The lack of signs is mere pacification,  
The third's definition is a lack of suffering  
And ignorance. The definition of  
Emancipation is to liberate.*

There are three doors to liberation.

*Mirror:*

*The definition of the first door to liberation, i.e. emptiness, is the mere void aspect empty of true-grasping since it is lacking the focus of true-grasping, the definition of the second door to liberation, i.e. the lack of signs, is the mere pacification of signs, the third door's definition is a lack of suffering and ignorance, and the definition of emancipation is to liberate from the obscuration of absorption.*

Emancipation refers here to the eight emancipations, such as the emancipation, looking at that which possesses form as form and so forth.

To prepare for the exam you have to be able to list all of the thirty-seven features of enlightenment. There are many places where you can look. For example one very good place to look, even for those who don't speak Tibetan, is the blue *Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology* by Tsepa Rigzin. All thirty-seven features are listed in there.

Likewise, you should also ascertain the different aspects of the result, such as the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the four types of confidence, the uncommon dharmas of a Buddha and so forth. Also you need to know what is meant by a valid being, a valid quote and a valid cogniser. Knowing those qualities is very important, because by knowing them, one will generate the wish to become enlightened thinking, 'these are qualities that I would like to attain'.

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

*Edited Version*

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## Tara Institute Study Group 2004 – ‘Entering the Middle Way’

# DISCUSSION

BLOCK: 6

WEEK: 5

ASSIGNED: 12<sup>TH</sup> OCT 04

1. Aryadeva suggests that the emptiness of one object is the emptiness of all objects. Identify the common misperceptions and clarify intended meaning of this statement.
2. What role does ‘analysis and investigation’ play in terms of whether things exist nominally or inherently?
3. The Realists accuse the Prasangikas of just denying everything and thus not having a view of their own. Explain
4. What does the reflection of the sun on the water during the time of an eclipse teach us about Prasangika world view?
5. What main method is used to establish each of the two selflessness's (person and phenomena)?
6. On the subject of the divisions of emptiness – is it the base that is the same, and the natures different, or is the nature always the same, and it is the basis that vary?
7. What are Hearer practitioners missing in order to completely remove the obscurations to knowledge?
8. What absurd existence does the eye sense power (or any of the inner sources) have if it were to exist inherently?
9. What's the difference between the emptiness of emptiness and the emptiness of nature? Why is there no fault of redundancy in presenting the two, emptiness of emptiness and emptiness of nature?
10. Complete the following table.

| Name of emptiness   | Base of emptiness referred to |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Emptiness of the inner   |                               |
| 2. Emptiness of the outer   |                               |
| 3. Emptiness of the outer inner                                   |                               |
| 4. Emptiness of emptiness   |                               |
| 5. Emptiness of the great   |                               |
| 6. Emptiness of the ultimate                                      |                               |
| 7. Emptiness of the compounded                                    |                               |
| 8. Emptiness of the non-compounded                                |                               |
| 9. Emptiness of having transcended extremes                       |                               |
| 10. Emptiness without beginning or end                            |                               |
| 11. Emptiness of not giving up                                    |                               |
| 12. Emptiness of nature   |                               |
| 13. Emptiness of all dharmas                                      |                               |
| 14. Emptiness of one's definition                                 |                               |
| 15. Emptiness of the unobservable                                 |                               |
| 16. Emptiness of the quintessential nature of non-functionalities |                               |

***Tara Institute Study Group 2004 – ‘Entering the Middle Way’***

**Tara Institute Study Group 2004 - 'Introduction to the Middle Way'**

**EXAM**

BLOCK: **6**  
WEEK: **6**  
ASSIGNED: **19<sup>TH</sup> OCT 04**

TOTAL MARKS **/73**

1. Aryadeva suggests that the emptiness of one object is the emptiness of all objects. Identify the common misperceptions and clarify intended meaning of this statement. [4]

2. What role does ultimate 'analysis and investigation' play in terms of whether things exist nominally or inherently? [2]

3. The Realists accuse the Prasangikas of just denying everything and thus not having a view of their own. Explain [2]

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4. What does the reflection of the sun on the water during the time of an eclipse teach us about Prasangika world view? [2].

5. What main method is used to establish each of the two selflessness's (person and phenomena)? [2]

6. On the subject of the divisions of emptiness – is it the base that is the same, and the natures different, or is the nature always the same, and it is the basis that vary? [1]

7. What are Hearer practitioners missing in order to completely remove the obscurations to knowledge? [2].

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8. What absurd existence does the eye sense power (or any of the inner sources) have if it were to exist inherently? [2]

9. What's the difference between the emptiness of emptiness and the emptiness of nature? Why is there no fault of redundancy in presenting the two, emptiness of emptiness and emptiness of nature? [3]

10. Complete the following table. [16]

| <b>Name of emptiness</b>  | <b>Base of emptiness referred to</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Emptiness of the inner   |                                      |
| 2. Emptiness of the outer   |                                      |
| 3. Emptiness of the outer inner                                   |                                      |
| 4. Emptiness of emptiness   |                                      |
| 5. Emptiness of the great   |                                      |
| 6. Emptiness of the ultimate                                      |                                      |
| 7. Emptiness of the compounded                                    |                                      |
| 8. Emptiness of the non-compounded                                |                                      |
| 9. Emptiness of having transcended extremes                       |                                      |
| 10. Emptiness without beginning or end                            |                                      |
| 11. Emptiness of not giving up                                    |                                      |
| 12. Emptiness of nature   |                                      |
| 13. Emptiness of all dharmas                                      |                                      |
| 14. Emptiness of one's definition                                 |                                      |
| 15. Emptiness of the unobservable                                 |                                      |
| 16. Emptiness of the quintessential nature of non-functionalities |                                      |

**Tara Institute Study Group 2004 - 'Introduction to the Middle Way'**

**The Thirty-Seven Aspects Of The Path To Enlightenment [37]**

Group:

Aspect:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
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VII. \_\_\_\_\_

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