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## Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

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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

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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.

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Edited Version*

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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.

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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

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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*

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# Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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

25 July 2006

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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 uncleanness 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  
Does not stop in those that subsist on it,  
Similarly, longing for sensual pleasure  
Grows in people as they indulge.** 52

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  
Difference in sexual intercourse. 53  
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 is 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 Bunnnett*  
*Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*  
*Edited Version*

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# Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

1 August 2006

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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

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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  
Only for those with good qualities.  
How can reason prevent  
Those involved in it without reason?*

57

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  
She will remain with you  
As with disease, women should always be  
Kept from opportunity.*

58

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*

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# DISCUSSION

BLOCK: 4

WEEK: 5

8<sup>TH</sup> 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**

**15<sup>TH</sup> AUG 06**

MARK:

**/29**

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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\_\_\_\_\_

## ***Tara Institute Study Group 2006 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'***

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## ***Tara Institute Study Group 2006 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'***

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## ***Tara Institute Study Group 2006 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'***

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