
Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

31 July 2018

We begin with our meditation.

[*tong-len meditation*]

Cultivate your motivation by generating the thought of achieving the state of buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings, and at the same time cultivate the motivation to put whatever you learn about the Dharma into practice as much as possible.

There's a tremendous benefit in cultivating the bodhicitta motivation. When we look into the motivation that we cultivate, we can clearly recognise that the ultimate aim that we are trying to achieve on the spiritual path is full enlightenment, the state of buddhahood. At the same time, it also makes it very clear why we want to achieve that, which is to benefit all sentient beings. As Shantideva mentioned in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

If even the thought to relieve
Living creatures of merely a headache
Is a beneficial intention
Endowed with infinite goodness,
Then what need is there to mention
The wish to dispel their inconceivable misery,
Wishing every single one of them
To realise boundless good qualities?

There's a tremendous benefit in cultivating bodhicitta, even if just for an instant. We should not underestimate the benefit of beginning a practice by cultivating the bodhicitta motivation properly.

Many of us have taken the bodhisattva vows, been involved in the ritual of making a pledge to hold the bodhicitta mind and made a commitment to cultivate this aspirational bodhicitta mind at least three times during the day and three times at night. Furthermore, we have promised that we will cultivate and maintain this bodhicitta mind, as well as engage in the precepts or bodhisattva deeds in the presence of the infinite number of buddhas and bodhisattvas. So, we must remind ourselves of the importance of now keeping those pledges and vows, as well as our commitment to keep the refuge precepts and so forth and implement them in our practice.

We will now continue with the teaching on the *Lamp for the Path*. As far as the commentary goes, we are up to the heading:

How one trains in special insight

We have discussed the term *special insight* in the past, and it's very important that you remember what that state of special insight means, to the point where by simply hearing this term you will be able to recall its meaning.

Although we have learnt about topics such as calm abiding or special insight, we cannot just leave that

learning there. In order to remember what we have learnt, and become very familiar with it, every time we hear terms like 'calm abiding', or 'special insight', we should recall its contextual meaning and have some sort of picture of what it means. Then the meaning will really sink into our minds.

The commentary begins:

How one trains in special insight has two subheadings:

1. Detailed explanation
2. Summary

DETAILED EXPLANATION

The commentary continues:

The first has three which are:

1. The presentation of the collections (favourable conditions) for special insight
2. How to meditate on special insight
3. The results of the meditation

We touched on this meditative state of special insight when we were studying the topic of calm abiding. Here it specifically refers to the wisdom realising emptiness, not to any mundane or worldly paths that have the aspect of peacefulness and coarseness in order to advance on the various levels of higher realms within cyclic existence. Rather, special insight here specifically refers to the wisdom realising emptiness.

Why are we learning about this wisdom realising emptiness? It is because we are following the path with an aspiration to achieve the state of liberation from cyclic existence. In order to achieve that we must cut the root of cyclic existence, which is the ignorance of self-grasping. The wisdom of emptiness is the antidote to self-grasping because it directly opposes or counteracts the ignorance of self-grasping. In other words, the mind of the wisdom of emptiness or selflessness, and the mind of self-grasping directly oppose each other with respect to the same object of focus.

The presentation of the collections (favourable conditions) for special insight

The commentary then states,

Regarding the first [which is the subheading, the presentation of the collections] Karmalashila's *Middling Stages of Meditation* stated three collections for special insight.

Here the term *collections* refers to favourable conditions. Then the text says:

It says, what are the collections for special insight? They are relying upon the noble beings, great seeking through much hearing, and the proper attention.

The *Middling Stages of Meditation* states that there are three main favourable conditions.

The first is *relying upon the noble beings*. In order to gain the realisation of the wisdom of emptiness we have to rely upon a spiritual guide who is endowed with the full and correct knowledge of emptiness. Here, the perfect spiritual guru is called a noble being which in Tibetan is *sKyes-bu dam-pa*. The term *sKyes-bu* means a person, but as we have discussed in the past it connotes a being with capability or potential. The term *dam-pa* is translated as 'noble'. You'll find the etymological meaning of that

word in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge*, as being virtuous as opposed to ignoble or non-virtuous. So *sKyes-bu dam-pa* means a virtuous being.

A Kadampa master said, 'I call one who engages in the ten virtues and who also inspires others to engage in the ten virtues a noble being or *skyes-bu dam-pa*. He or she is a true noble person, a yogi, and a great practitioner, regardless of whether being an ordained or a lay person, or what costumes he or she is wearing.'

The English term 'holy' might have a different connotation. I understand that 'holy' connotes an intimacy with the Almighty God, and so one of the early popes who was a close friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, used the word 'holy' to honour the His Holiness. As he recognised in the Dalai Lama the quality that he saw in God, he used the prefix His Holiness to the Dalai Lama as an honour. I think from there onwards people started to use the title, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. But then, nowadays the title 'His Holiness' has become very cheap. Everybody is using it! Of course, if the only meaning of holy in holiness is referring to God then that's probably not appropriate for an atheist Buddhist!

The commentary asks, 'what are the collections for the special insight?' These collections are the favourable conditions necessary for us to meet in order to gain special insight, which is the wisdom of emptiness. One of them is *relying upon noble beings*. So we need to find a spiritual guide who is qualified with the knowledge of emptiness.

The next condition is *great seeking through much hearing*. When we study emptiness, it's not a matter of simply listening to the words but we have to keep seeking the meaning of the words and we must fully understand them. The more we hear about emptiness, the more questions we should ask in order to go deeper into the meaning of emptiness.

The third condition, *proper attention*, refers to thinking or contemplating. We have to refine our understanding through contemplation and utilising the intellect of our wisdom mind. Having fully understood the meaning through deep contemplation, we then must further develop our knowledge through meditation in order to gain special insight. The implication here is that spiritual realisation doesn't happen naturally, but it depends on consistent effort from our side in the initial stage and in the middle stage, until we gain the realisation.

In fact, we have already met these conditions to some degree: we have had contact with many great noble beings, and we have made an effort in studying and contemplating the meaning of emptiness.

Then the commentary continues with:

The sutra *Unravelling the Thought* puts it into two as it says, 'Special insight arises from the causes of the perfect view found through hearing and thinking'.

The sutra *Unravelling the Thought* clearly indicates how, before we can cultivate the wisdom realising emptiness, we have to gain an understanding of emptiness through hearing about and then contemplating emptiness. The term *perfect view* refers to the view of emptiness.

In terms of the order of calm abiding and special insight, first you achieve calm abiding followed by special insight. But if you talk about the order in terms of finding the view, there can be two ways. There are those who find the view before gaining calm abiding, and there are others who find the view after gaining calm abiding. What we can also understand here is that prior to gaining special insight we have to gain the view of emptiness. As the sutra says, *Special insight arises from the cause of the perfect view found through hearing and thinking*.

Then the commentary continues:

Likewise, here too, [which refers to this explanation of *Lamp for the Path*] there are two to the presentation of the collections for the special insight, which are the wisdom arisen from thinking by depending upon reason, and the wisdom arisen from hearing by depending upon scripture.

As we can see here *the wisdom arising from thinking by depending upon reason, and the wisdom arising from hearing by depending upon scripture* clearly align with the quote from the sutra *Unravelling the Thought*. It shows how the *Lamp for the Path* directly follows the meaning of the sutra.

Wisdom arisen by depending upon reason

The commentary then states:

The first has three subheadings ...

Here 'The first' refers to the *wisdom arisen from thinking by depending upon reason*. Here the text goes into the presentation of emptiness or the view of selflessness. The first part of the presentation of selflessness is the *wisdom arisen from thinking by depending upon reason*. The three subheadings are:

1. The reason of investigating the result to refute existent and non-existent production
2. The reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Sliver
3. The reason of investigating the identity to refute one or many

The reason of investigating the result to refute existent and non-existent production

The commentary continues:

Regarding the first, verse 48 [referring to the root text of *Lamp for the Path*] says:

**48. *Something existent cannot be produced
Nor something non-existent, like a sky flower
These errors are both absurd and thus
Both of the (other) two will not occur either.***

In relation to the above presentation - that the mind which cognises things as being empty of inherent production as being wisdom - ...

The first line presents the main thesis of middle way school, which is that all things are empty of inherent production, or inherent existence.

- the Existentialists argue that this is not acceptable because it is established in manifested reality that things are inherently produced and disintegrated.

Normally the term *Existentialists* refers to the two lowest schools of tenets, the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika. However here it also includes all the schools below the

Prasangika, i.e. the Chittamatrin and the Svatantrika Madhyamika as well as the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika.

The various schools of Buddhist tenets have different views, and use the same terms such as true existence, inherent existence, or existent from its own right and so forth in different ways. For example, the Prasangika school says that all things lack inherent existence, and that true existence, or existing in its own right have the same meaning. However, the school below that, the Svatantrika Madhyamika, interprets these terms differently. For example, they accept that things are empty of true existence but not inherent existence.

You have studied this in the past so let me ask you what is your understating of the object of negation here? When you say that things are empty of inherent existence what does that mean? In the *Heart Sutra* there's a dialogue between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra. In reply to Shariputra's question, Avalokiteshvara replies that all things, including the five aggregates, are empty of inherent existence. In order to think about the *Heart Sutra* and contemplate its meaning you should have some idea of what it means when it says that all the five aggregates are absent or devoid of inherent existence.

It is said that things are devoid of inherent existence; what is your understanding of inherent existence?

Student: It means things do not depend on causes and conditions ...

Yes, that's true, but when you use the words, depending on causes and conditions, that applies only to compounded or conditioned phenomena, and not to all phenomena. So in addition to not depending on causes and conditions, we should also add 'or not depending on their parts' so all things are covered.

Do you have anything more to add to that?

Student: The negated self refers to the self which is permanent, partless and independent.

When we talk about the idea of the selflessness in terms of a self, which is permanent, partless and autonomous or independent, we are talking about a gross form of selflessness.

All Buddhist schools of tenets reject a self that is permanent, partless and independent. That kind of self is rejected by all the schools. On the basis of this we say that all the Buddhist schools accept the view of selflessness. Here permanence means a moment-to-moment disintegration; singular or partless means not depending on any parts; and independent or autonomous means not dependent on causes and conditions. Broadly speaking, not existing inherently or independently can also mean not depending on causes and conditions or parts.

When the commentary states that, *the Existentialists argue that this is not acceptable* it is referring to the position of the Madhyamika that things are devoid of inherent production.

... the Existentialists argue that this is not acceptable because it is established in the manifested reality that things are inherently produced and disintegrated. In response to this question, another question is posed, which is to ask, for instance if a sprout is an inherently existent product then here is the question:

Does it exist or not exist or the both or neither at the time of its causes?

As to the **first hypothesis**, the problem is that it is pointless for the production of the sprout because it already existed.

This first hypothesis refers to the question, *Does the sprout exist at the time of its cause?* If a sprout exists at the time of its cause, *the problem is that it is pointless for the production of the sprout because it already existed.* That is the response to the question that is raised.

What do you think of this response? How does this contradict the point of the Existentialists?

Student: I think it's very convincing because we're talking about inherent production here. So if it exists at the time of the cause, it means there's no reason for a thing to be produced again.

If you say that the sprout existed at the time of its cause, there is a problem, right? Do you understand the problem?

In other words it's saying that if things exist inherently, then they exist independently, without depending on any causes or any other conditions. So if this sprout does not depend on any cause or condition, then there's no reason why the sprout could not exist during the time of its cause, right? And if that is the case, then how could it exist at the time of its cause? This is the question that is raised here.

Then the commentary continues:

The **second hypothesis** that the sprout does not exist at the time of its causes but is produced inherently is also logically untenable.

As it is said, 'Even hundreds of millions of causes cannot change things that don't exist'. Regardless of how powerful the force of the cause may be, it cannot produce an inherently existent sprout because such (a sprout) is like a sky flower, (a non-existent).

Although it is not necessary that something that does not exist at the time of its causes must be a non-existent in general, nonetheless, it is necessarily the case that if an inherently existent thing does not exist at the time of its causes, then it must be totally non-existent.

Stating something that was existent before is a non-existent at the present moment, attracts an absurd consequence of falling into nihilism.

To continue with the text:

The **third hypothesis** that it does and does not exist at the time of its causes also receives the above-mentioned two consequent fallacies; therefore, for a thing to have inherent existence is not logically tenable.

The **fourth hypothesis** is also untenable because it is not feasible for anything to be neither an existent nor a non-existent at the time of its causes. Thus, the sprout is not inherently produced because it is not inherently produced as an existent or a non-existent, or both or neither (an existent nor non-existent). Therefore, objects of knowledge being non-produced is established by reasoning. The *Descent into Lanka* sutra says, 'All things are unproduced because to the self-luminous nature of the mind of the Great Intelligent One, things are unproduced in terms of existence and non-existence'.

Nagarjuna's *Seventy Verses on Emptiness* says,

Being does not arise, since it exists.
Non-being does not arise, since it does not exist.
Being and non-being [together] do not arise,
due to [their] heterogeneity.
Since they do not arise, they do not endure or
vanish.

In fact, we covered all of this in detail when you studied the *Supplement to the Middle Way, Precious Garland*, and also *The Four Hundred Verses*¹. So it is good to refer to them, and also good to bring this up in your discussion session.

I will be going into retreat on August 12. On August 14 you can have a discussion night on calm abiding. On the following Sunday August 19 you are having a seminar on calm abiding, so after the seminar, on August 22 you have a discussion night on the topic of selflessness. You should particularly focus on identifying the object of negation and the four points of the analysis by referring to the lam-rim text, *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*.

Maybe you can discuss the section from the *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* relating to the presentation of selflessness in terms of the selflessness of person, and of the other phenomena, and the details about the four points of analysis. You should all try to study that. Those of you who have been studying this for a long time should put in even more effort, so that on the night you are well prepared in advance to handle questions from others.

Even though gaining the realisation of emptiness may be a bit far away, we should at least make every effort to cover all the topics relating to the view of emptiness. Similarly, when you are studying lam-rim, it's good to, as much as possible, cover the whole topic of the lam-rim from beginning to end. Even if you don't gain a full realisation at the moment, at least you are laying a good impression in your mind for gaining such a realisation in the future.

In terms of gaining a full-fledged knowledge of emptiness, you need to go through the process in which you initially learn by reading and hearing the teaching, then you learn by contemplating your initial learning, and finally by meditating on your knowledge of contemplation.

So there's a process there. For example, when you talk about this idea of selflessness of person, and selflessness of phenomena, you need to know what each selflessness means. What is the self that is being rejected? At the same time, it is also important to understand selflessness or identifying self-grasping with respect to your own experience. When we experience this view of grasping at the self, what we experience is that the self appears to have its own intrinsic reality, even though it is devoid of such reality. So when we experience this view, then how does that self arise? You cross-reference that self that you experience in your mind with what you have theoretically learnt about that. Then move onto the view of emptiness, what it means, and so forth.

What's important is to ensure whatever you learn sinks into your mind, rather than just making notes in a book. You've got to understand that you have to leave your notes behind one day; you can't take them with you. It may be beneficial if you could compile your notes into a book, as a legacy of your study and in that way it may benefit others. Alternatively, if you share your notes with others, rather than being very secretive about it, it can benefit others.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen is used with the kind permission of Sandup Tsering.

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Edited Version

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¹ Ed: CD of transcripts available in the bookshop.

Homework

Teaching: 24 July 2018

1. 'What are the collections for the special insight?'

The commentary asks, 'what are the collections for the special insight?' These collections are the favourable conditions necessary for us to meet in order to gain special insight, which is the wisdom of emptiness. One of them is *relying upon noble beings*. So we need to find a spiritual guide who is qualified with the knowledge of emptiness.

The next condition is *great seeking through much hearing*. When we study emptiness, it's not a matter of simply listening to the words but we have to keep seeking the meaning of the words and we must fully understand them. The more we hear about emptiness, the more questions we should ask in order to go deeper into the meaning of emptiness.

The third condition, *proper attention*, refers to thinking or contemplating. We have to refine our understanding through contemplation and utilising the intellect of our wisdom mind. Having fully understood the meaning through deep contemplation, we then must further develop our knowledge through meditation in order to gain special insight. The implication here is that spiritual realisation doesn't happen naturally, but it depends on consistent effort from our side in the initial stage and in the middle stage, until we gain the realisation.

In fact, we have already met these conditions to some degree: we have had contact with many great noble beings, and we have made an effort in studying and contemplating the meaning of emptiness.

2. It is said that things are devoid of inherent existence, what is your understanding of inherent existence?

Student: It means things do not depend on causes and conditions ...

Yes, that's true, but when you use the words depending on the causes and conditions, that applies only to compound or conditioned phenomena, and not to all phenomena. So in addition to not depending on causes and conditions, we should also add 'or not depending on their parts' so all things are covered.

Do you have anything more to add to that?

Student: The negated self refers to the self which is permanent, partless and independent.

When we talk about the idea of the selflessness in terms of a self, which is permanent, partless, and autonomous or independent, we are talking about a gross form of selflessness.

All Buddhist schools of tenet reject a self that is permanent, partless and independent. That kind of self is rejected by all the schools. On the basis of this we say that all the Buddhist schools accept the

view of selflessness. Here permanence means a moment-to-moment disintegration; singular or partless means not depending on any parts; and independent or autonomous means not dependent on causes and conditions. Broadly speaking, not existing inherently or independently can also mean not depending on causes and conditions or parts.

3. What is the existentialist argument against the position of the Madhyamika that things are devoid of inherent existence? What is the reasoning refuting the existentialist argument?

When the commentary states that, *the Existentialists argue that this is not acceptable* it is referring to the position of the Madhyamika that the things are devoid of inherent production.

... the Existentialists argue that this is not acceptable because it is established in the manifested reality that things are inherently produced and disintegrated. In response to this question, another question is posed, which is to ask, for instance if a sprout is an inherently existent product then here is the question: Does it exist or not exist or the both or neither at the time of its causes?

As to the **first hypothesis**, the problem is that it is pointless for the production of the sprout because it already existed.

This first hypothesis refers to the question, *Does the sprout exist at the time of its cause?* If a sprout exists at the time of its cause, *the problem is that it is pointless for the production of the sprout because it already existed.* That is the response to the question that is raised.

What do you think of this response? How does this contradict the point of the Existentialists?

Student: I think it's very convincing because we're talking about inherent production here. So if it exists at the time of the cause, it means there's no reason for a thing to be produced again.

If you say that the sprout existed at the time of its cause, there is a problem, right? Do you understand the problem?

In other words it's saying that if things exist inherently, then they exist independently, without depending on any causes or any other conditions. So if this sprout does not depend on any cause or condition, then there's no reason why the sprout could not exist during the time of its cause, right? And if that is the case, then how it could exist at the time of its cause? This is the question that is raised here.

4. Give the second, third and fourth hypotheses and their refutations.

Then the commentary continues:

The **second hypothesis** that the sprout does not exist at the time of its causes but is produced inherently is also logically untenable.

As it is said, 'Even hundreds of millions of causes cannot change things that don't exist'. Regardless of how powerful the force of the cause may be, it cannot produce an inherently existent sprout because such (a sprout) is like a sky flower, (a non-existent).

Although it is not necessary that something that does not exist at the time of its causes must be a non-existent in general, nonetheless, it is necessarily the case that if an inherently existent thing does not exist at the time of its causes, then it must be totally non-existent.

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To continue with the text:

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The **fourth hypothesis** is also untenable because it is not feasible for anything to be neither an existent nor a non-existent at the time of its causes. Thus, the sprout is not inherently produced because it is not inherently produced as an existent or a non-existent, or both or neither (an existent nor non-existent). Therefore, objects of knowledge being non-produced is established by reasoning. The *Descent into Lanka* sutra says, 'All things are unproduced because to the self-luminous nature of the mind of the Great Intelligent One, things are unproduced in terms of existence and non-existence'.

Nagarjuna's *Seventy Verses on Emptiness* says,

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Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

7 August 2018

As we have all established the motivation, we can now continue with the meditation [tonglen meditation].

Just reinforce your motivation.

I hope you have a copy of the commentary that we are going through. It reads:

As to the second (the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter), the root text says:

49. *A thing is not produced from itself
Nor from another, also not from both
Nor causelessly either, thus it does not
Exist inherently by way of its own entity.*

The commentary continues:

Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* says:

Not from self, not from other,
Not from both, nor from without cause:
Things do not arise
At any place, at any time.

This verse shows the source of verse 49 of the root text that we have just quoted, which is Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*. The commentary continues:

To quote Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*,

Things do not arise from themselves;
How could they arise from others?
This really summarises the essential meaning
Of the commentary to *Fundamental Wisdom*.

This one verse of the root text, verse 49, contains the essence or meaning of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* and Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*. To be able to summarise the entire meaning of the profound and extensive scriptures of Nagarjuna and the great master Chandrakirti into four lines truly shows Atisha's amazing qualities and realisations.

In *Fundamental Wisdom*, where it says *not from self and not from others* and so forth, this means that things do not arise from themselves and from others and so forth. The objection here as to things arising from themselves, is directed at the non-Buddhist school of tenets called Samkhya, which asserts the view that the cause and the effect are of the same nature: they propose that things arise from themselves or from their own nature. The assertion that things arise or are produced from others is made by all Buddhist schools of tenets below the Madhyamika school of the Svatantrika.

The verse also objects to the assertion by the Samkhya and Vaibhashika schools that things are produced from both self and others; the objection here is that things are *not produced from both*. And *nor from without cause* is particularly objecting to the view of the non-Buddhist Carvaka school which, although it does not necessarily say that there's no cause and effect, does assert that certain things are produced without cause. For example,

they say that the eyes of peacock's feathers and the sharpness of thorns arise from their own nature and not from causes, nor are they made by anyone.

Then the commentary reads:

In explaining this meaning, the commentary¹ to the *Supplement* highlights that the notion of saying here (in *Fundamental Wisdom*) 'NOT'² relates to the refutation of production from self and so forth, which actually is the reason to reject existence. So it does not relate to existence itself, for the rejection of existence is implied.

The commentary continues:

Therefore, the first half of the verse should not be considered as the reason and the next half as the thesis, (???) rather in overall it presents just the thesis of the rejection of the four extremes of production. This is because if the four extremes of production are rejected, then it would logically establish the lack of inherent production as well as the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter; this, in fact, is the intention of the self-commentary. However, it is said in the *Supplement to the Middle Way*, 'It does not arise from itself; how could it arise from something else? It does not arise from self and other together; how could it arise without a cause? Therefore, things are lacking inherent existence'. This clearly presents the syllogistic reason, and accordingly here (verse 49), the last line (it does not exist inherently by way of its own entity) indicates the thesis, *and* the word 'thing' (in the verse) indicates the subject and the rest of the reasons.

This is referring to the root verse that was quoted earlier (verse 49). If we refer to that verse, we can understand that, where the commentary refers to a *sylogistic* statement, the *subject* refers to 'things', which are referred to here as lacking self-production, and the reason for that is given. The syllogism is elaborated in the next paragraph:

Consequently, the syllogistic statement goes like this
- The subject, all internal and external objects, do not arise from themselves, because if they do arise like that, then the fallacy of the pointlessness of production and being infinitely produced cannot be avoided.

When it says here that *all internal and external objects do not arise from themselves*, it means they don't arise from an inherent cause, nor do they arise independently, without depending on a cause. If we proposed that things arose from an inherent cause, there would be an inconsistent consequence, and we would end up saying that there was no point in things being produced, because things were already produced or existed at the time of their causes. Alternatively, we would have to make an absurd assertion that things are produced infinitely.

Then the text continues:

Moreover, the objection below also cannot be avoided. 'If cause and effect were identical, produced and producer would be identical'. Things also do not

¹ Referring to Chandrakirti's self-commentary to his text, *Supplement to the Middle Way*.

² Here you have to refer to the text.

arise from other factors by the way of their own entity.

The idea here, that a result can arise from an inherent cause, also implies that the cause and the effect are one entity or of the same nature. If the cause were to exist inherently, then when you say that the cause and its effects are one entity or of the same nature, it would be no different to saying that they are one identity or a single object. If they are 'one', there is a problem because they should be appearing to our mind as one and not as separate entities. But that's not the case. So, as it says here, *if the cause and effect were identical then the produced and producer would be identical*. Then it wouldn't make any sense to make a statement like, 'the result is a product, whereas the cause is the producer', because they are one or identical.

Basically, the commentary is pointing out two logical problems if we assert the view that things are produced from an inherent cause. If things were to arise inherently, the first problem is that the production of a thing would be redundant or pointless, because the things already existed before or at the time of their cause. Hence, it would be pointless for them to be produced again. If things are produced again then the second logical consequence is untenable, in that the production of things would be infinite; they would continuously be producing.

After establishing that things do not arise from themselves, the commentary proceeds to the statement that things do not arise from others either. It reads:

If they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated. Consequently, anything should produce everything, and the objection below would be untenable. 'If cause and effect were different, cause and non-cause would be alike'.

It is important that we follow what is written here and then try to think it over, line by line. When it says here that things do not inherently arise, we need to have some idea of the situation if they did arise inherently. We have to bring that into our mind. So when we talk about the lack of inherent existence of particular things, it is not necessarily the case that we take on the task of actually searching for that thing itself. Rather, what is required here is to think that, if it is said that things do not exist inherently, then what would it mean if things were to exist inherently? And, if things exist inherently, how do we measure it if things have an inherent existence? In order to understand the lack of inherent existence, it is indispensable for us to recognise the precise measurement of inherent existence.

As mentioned earlier, if cause and effect exist inherently, they become like the same entity, and if that is so, a problem arises. Having understood this, however, doesn't necessarily mean that we don't hold on to the view that things *don't* arise from an inherent cause. We may still think that things inherently arise from some other cause or some different object. That's why the commentary goes on to reject the idea that not only don't things arise from an inherent cause or arise from themselves, but also from other.

So, we have seen that all internal and external objects do not arise from themselves, because if they did arise like that, then the fallacy of the pointlessness of production and being infinitely produced cannot be avoided.

It now says here that *things also do not arise from other factors by the way of their own entity, so if they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated*. This concludes that if things arise from others, then the producer and the produced become totally unrelated.

Question to student: Can you clarify your understanding of the problem of things arising inherently from other factors?

Student: If it seems to arise from other factors, then the producer and the produced would be a different entity, and so the two of them would be unrelated. That is the main point – that the two things would be unrelated if they were to arise from others.

Geshe-la: Why do the produced and the producer become unrelated?

Student: Because they each have an entity; those two entities are other in nature to each other. So if the two entities, the entity of the produced and the entity of the producer are 'other' to each other, then they have to be inherently different?

Geshe-la: The main point here is that the word 'inherent' is important, because we are not saying that cause and effect are *not* two separate entities – they are two separate entities. So if the result arises from the cause, the entities of the cause and effect are different from each other; that possibility is not rejected here. However, if we say the effect arises from an *inherently existent* cause, then the cause and effect become inherently separate entities and hence they would become two *totally unrelated* things.

The commentary continues by pointing out the problems that would result from making the assertion that the result arises from a cause that is inherently different from the result. It says *if they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated. Consequently, anything should produce everything*. We have to see that one of the problems in making that assertion is that anything should produce everything; if the particular thing doesn't require a unique or a specific cause to produce it, then a result can arise from things that are totally unrelated. Therefore, we would not be able to avoid this problem of anything arising from everything.

Then the commentary reads:

This also implies the essence of the reason of rejecting one and many, because it refutes an inherent one through rejecting self-production, and an inherent many through rejecting production from other. The production from both self and other is untenable because the production from either two is untenable.

Basically, the previous reasoning that establishes how things are not produced from the inherent self and others also implicitly establishes the fact that things do not arise inherently as one or many. In our previous teaching, as part of the outline under the *wisdom arisen from thinking by depending upon reason*, there is the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter.

Under this topic, we discussed refuting production from the four extremes.

Then we went to study the logical reasoning of investigating the identity to refute one or many.

Basically, this commentary refers to Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, which says *not from self, not from others, not from both, not from neither (or causeless)*. *Not from both* can be established by applying the same reason as *not from self* and *not from others*. Now, what follows after this is the reason not from *without cause*, which says:

Nonetheless, the causeless production is also not feasible, because if that were the case, then it would be useless for the farmers in the world to put an effort into farm work for the harvest.

Then the commentary continues:

As it is said, 'Because it is without cause and not depending on other factors, it should either exist all the time or not exist at all', this fault will also be untenable.

We continue with the commentary, verse 50, which reads:

50 *When phenomena are examined
As to whether they are one or many,
They are not seen to exist by way of their own
entity,
And thus are ascertained as not inherently
existent.*

The commentary reads:

With reference to this, the reason presented in the *Descent into Lanka Sutra* says, 'Just as a reflection of the form in a mirror, (things are) devoid of oneness or otherness'. The homage verse of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom* says, 'Without distinction, without identity'.

The homage verse in *Fundamental Wisdom* is:

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
The best of teachers, who taught that
Whatever is dependently arisen is
Unceasing, unborn,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Not coming, not going.
Without distinction, without identity,
And free from conceptual construction.

This verse specifically relates to the perception of emptiness of arya beings in meditative equipoise. With respect to the meditative equipoise of arya beings, the only thing that exists is emptiness, because all the appearances of relative truth have subsided. So, from the perspective of the arya's meditative equipoise, no production and the non-existence of any relative truth actually implies the emptiness of that relative truth. Thus, here we are not rejecting the existence of relative truth; we are rejecting inherent existence, what the emptiness is empty of.

Then the commentary continues:

In his text the *Ornament of the Middle Way*, Shantirakshita says, 'Those entities, as asserted by our own [Buddhist schools] and other [non-Buddhist] schools, have no inherent nature at all, because in reality they have neither a singular nor a manifold nature – like a reflected image'. Nonetheless, in order

to present more other reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically,...

Here *nonetheless, in order to present more reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically*, the text is referring to the root verse, verse 50, where this whole argument is put into a formal syllogism.

So:

Nonetheless, in order to present more other reasons or to put the above-mentioned syllogistically, the subject, all the internal and external things, (they) are definitely empty of inherent existence, (because they) do not inherently exist as one-ness or many-ness, (they are) like a reflected form in a mirror.

This statement summarises the whole meaning of the verse, so it is very important to reflect upon this full syllogism. It says that *all internal and external things are empty of inherent existence because they do not inherently exist as one or many* – the latter is the reason. *Things do not exist inherently because they do not inherently exist as one or many*. The statement *they are like a reflected form in a mirror* is just an analogy or example to show how things do not exist inherently.

Objectively not even an atom exists inherently. In terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject, the syllogistic statement is the subject as before, and (they) do not inherently exist as one-ness (because they) are with parts.

In terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject, the syllogistic statement means that all internal and external things are the base. The thesis here is that these things are definitely empty of inherent existence. The reason things are empty of inherent existence is that they do not inherently exist as one, or as many. So here, where it says *in terms of establishing or linking the reason to the subject*, the reason is that they do not inherently exist as one or many. So, *establishing that reason to the subject*, which is all internal and external things, means proving that things do not inherently exist as one or as many.

So firstly, we need to establish the subject in relation to the reason: *the subject as before*, which is all internal and external things, *do not inherently exist as one*. The commentary says that *things do not inherently exist as one*, and the reason it gives is because things have parts. This implies that if things are inherently one, they should exist independently, without depending on other factors, such as causes and conditions as well as parts. So, things don't exist on their own, but are dependent on their parts. Even if you take space as an example, it has parts in the sense of having directions. If space didn't have directions, then a plane would not be able to move or be positioned within space. Therefore, because things have parts, we reject the idea that things exist as *one-ness*. Then the text goes on to rejecting the idea of things existing as *many-ness*, or as different.

The subject as before³, (they) do not inherently exist as many-ness (because) logically it is untenable to accept (them) inherently existing as one-ness.

³ The subject is all of the internal and external things.

The text is simply saying that things cannot exist as a single, as one, and that the same reason proves that they can't exist as many-ness or as different.

Then the commentary reads:

As to the authentication of the pervasion ...

So, you look at the syllogistic statement and you establish the subject in relation to the reason. Now, in order to make the reason valid, there should be a *pervasion*.

As to the authentication of the pervasion (to the above syllogism), if it exists inherently (the opposite of the predicate), it must either exist in that way as one-ness or as many-ness, because one-ness and many-ness are mutually exclusive and if something exists then it must exist either as one-ness or as many-ness.

This whole syllogistic statement is important – you have to reflect on it. If you reflect on it, you try to think how all things do not inherently exist due to the reason given. Here, it then talks about the *pervasion*. Suppose, hypothetically, you were to say that things do exist inherently. What mode of existence would they have? The text is saying that there are only two alternatives – to inherently exist as one, or as many; there is no third alternative, just as, generally speaking, all things can be included into two categories of one or many. Therefore, here the *pervasion* says that if it exists inherently, then it must either exist in that way as one-ness or as many-ness because one-ness and many-ness are mutually exclusive. 'Mutually exclusive' means that to our perception when one possibility appears, the possibility of the other one will be negated; they cannot appear to the mind at the same time.

You should discuss the -so-called 'four points of analysis' in your next discussion session. The four points are: asserting the object of negation; asserting the pervasion; asserting the absence of one-ness; and asserting the absence of many-ness. On the basis of such a contemplation of the four points, we can understand the meaning of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of things, such as a person. If a person is inherently existent, then they must be inherently existent as one or inherently existent as many. You can apply these four points of analysis to the statement that a person is devoid of inherent existence because it doesn't exist inherently as one and it doesn't inherently exist as many. Knowledge of emptiness arises on the basis of negation of an inherently existent self. Therefore, the key to gaining knowledge of emptiness is identifying the object of negation, which is the inherently existent self. The next important thing is ascertaining the pervasion, which relates to the syllogistic statement. You should discuss the meaning of pervasion. Similarly, you should go into the analysis of whether a person exists inherently as one or many; if it is inherently one or many with its basis of designation the five aggregates, what logical problems will arise?

It is particularly important to precisely identify the object of negation. There is a passage by Shantideva that says: 'Without identifying the negated object, its non-existence will not be apprehended'. Therefore, in order to precisely identify the object of negation, it is important to observe closely how the negated self appears to the grasping at

the self we experience at an innate level. What is the reality of the self to that innate self-grasping? It is very important to recognise that self. If we recognise that self as totally lacking any support by valid cognition, and as just a mental fabrication and an erroneous or false view, then we can infer that the self-grasping is a misconception, and in reality, it is non-inherent with respect to any phenomena.

We talk about the selflessness of a person and of other phenomena and what the differences are, and also that the different schools of tenets have different views on selflessness, depending on their interpretation of the negated self. For example, we can talk about the self with respect to the selflessness of a person – in terms of the self as being a permanent, partless and independent self, or as a substantially existent or self-sufficient self. However, this self is not the object of negation here, as we are talking about the Madhyamika view of emptiness of true existence or inherent existence. The negated self here refers to the inherently existent self. Therefore, in pursuing the knowledge of selflessness or emptiness, it is said the most important point is to identify the exact self that is negated or what the emptiness is empty of.

Student: Sandup, don't we have to say that the self-sufficient and substantial self is refuted by the Prasangika as their gross object of refutation but not their subtle object of refutation? And their understanding of what that means is different from the Svatantrika-Madhyamika?

Sandup: Yes, that's true, but here we are talking about the self as the object of negation with respect to the view of emptiness according to Prasangika Madhyamika.

Geshe-la: The Prasangika school don't accept any notion of substantial existence because they say everything is imputed existence.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltzen is used with the kind permission of Sandup Tsering.

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Edited Version*

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Homework ANSWERS

Teaching: 7 August 2018

1. As to the second (the reason of investigating the cause called the Diamond Splinter), the root text says:

49. *A thing is not produced from itself
Nor from another, also not from both
Nor causelessly either, thus it does not
Exist inherently by way of its own entity.*

Explain this verse.

In *Fundamental Wisdom*, where it says *not from self and not from others* and so forth, this means that things do not arise from themselves and from others and so forth. The objection here as to things arising from themselves is directed to the non-Buddhist school of tenets called Samkhya which asserts the view that cause and the effect are of the same nature. On this basis, they propose that things arise from themselves or from their own nature. The assertion that things arise or are produced from others is made by all Buddhist schools of tenets below the Madhyamika school of the *Svatantrika*.

The verse also objects to the assertion by the Samkhya and Vaibhashika schools that things are produced from both self and others; the objection here is that things are *not* produced *from both*. And *nor from without cause* is particularly objecting to the view of the non-Buddhist Carvaka school, which although it does not necessarily say that there's no cause and effect, it does assert that certain things are produced without cause. For example, they say that the eyes of peacock's feathers and the sharpness of thorns arise from their own nature and not from causes or are made by anyone.

2. If we proposed that things arose from an inherent cause, what would be the consequences?

Consequently, the syllogistic statement goes like this - The subject, all internal and external objects, do not arise from themselves, because if they do arise like that, then the fallacy of the pointlessness of production and being infinitely produced cannot be avoided.

When it says here that *all internal and external objects do not arise from themselves*, it means they don't arise from an inherent cause, nor do they arise independently, without depending on a cause. If we proposed that things arose from an inherent cause, there would be an inconsistent consequence, and we would end up saying that there was no point in things being produced, because things were already produced or existed at the time of their causes. Alternatively, we would have to make an absurd assertion that things are produced infinitely.

3. Basically, the commentary is pointing out two logical problems if we assert the view that things are produced from an inherent cause. What are these two logical problems?

Then the text continues:

Moreover, the objection below also cannot be avoided. 'If cause and effect were identical, Produced and producer would be identical'. Things also do not arise from other factors by the way of their own entity.

The idea here, that a result can arise from an inherent cause, also implies that the cause and the effect are one entity or of same nature. If the cause were to exist inherently, then when you say that the cause and its effects are one entity or of the same nature, it would be no different to saying that they are one identity or a single object. If they are 'one', there is a problem because they should be appearing to our mind as one and not as separate entities. But that's not the case. So, as it says here, *if the cause and effect were identical then the produced and producer would be identical*. Then it wouldn't make any sense to make

a statement like, 'the result is a product, whereas the cause is the producer', because they are one or identical.

Basically, the commentary is pointing out two logical problems if we assert the view that things are produced from an inherent cause. If things were to arise inherently, the first problem is that the production of a thing would be redundant or pointless, because the things already existed before or at the time of their cause. Hence, it would be pointless for them to be produced again. If things are produced again then the second logical problem is untenable in that the production of things would be infinite; they would continuously be producing.

4. The commentary continues by pointing out the problems that would result from making the assertion that the result arises from a cause that is inherently different from the result. What are these problems? Give an analogy.

The commentary continues by pointing out the problems that would result from making the assertion that the result arises from a cause that is inherently different from the result. It says *if they were different by the way of their own entity, then the produced and producers would be unrelated. Consequently, anything should produce everything*. We have to see that one of the problems is that if we make that assertion, then anything should produce everything; if the particular thing doesn't require a unique or a specific cause to produce that thing, then a result can arise from things that are totally unrelated. Therefore, we would not be able to avoid this problem of anything arising from everything.

Basically, this commentary refers to Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom*, which says *not from self, not from others, not from both, not from neither (or causeless)*. *Not from both* can be established by applying the same reason as *not from self* and *not from others*. Now, what follows after this is the reason not from *without cause*, which says:

Nonetheless, the causeless production is also not feasible, because if that were the case, then it would be useless for the farmers in the world to put an effort into farm work for the harvest.

Then the commentary continues:

As it is said, 'Because it is without cause and not depending on other factors, it should either exist at all the time or not exist at all', this fault will also be untenable.

Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

28 August 2018

Reinforce the motivation you generated earlier.
[Meditation]

Now make sure you cultivate the bodhicitta motivation.

The more we cultivate and develop this altruistic mental attitude or bodhicitta mind within us, the more we will prevent harm to other beings and at the same time enable us to extend more benefit towards other beings.

Always bear in our mind that our thoughts and deeds of benefiting others actually fulfil our own interests as well. Similarly, if we hold any thought of harming others or engage in any deeds that cause harm to others, that also has the same effect of harming ourselves. Based on this understanding, and the benefit that this altruistic mind has for other beings, it is very important to always try to cultivate this intention when you first get up in the morning, thinking: I will do as much as possible to benefit others and to prevent causing harm to them.

In this way, we make a gradual progress on the path in terms of what to achieve and what to abandon on a daily basis.

We left off the commentary at:

Regarding the second which is the wisdom arisen from listening by depending on the scriptures.

The wisdom arisen from listening by depending on the scriptures

Prior to this we covered how you cultivate the wisdom that arises mainly from contemplating, which is in turn dependent on the wisdom which arises from listening.

In terms of the order of the presentation, it presents the result first followed by the cause. Earlier on the text talked about how to gain the wisdom which arises from contemplating in dependence upon reason. So first there are the logical reasons, and then you develop the wisdom arising from contemplation.

Here the text talks about the wisdom arising from listening which primarily depends upon the scriptures, and this wisdom is really the one which leads to the wisdom arising from contemplation. Of course, the scriptures referred to here are those which are very authentic and reliable sources. So we can see the importance of authentic sources in giving rise to the wisdom arising from contemplation.

The verses regarding this read:

51. *The reasoning of the Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness, The Treatise on the Middle Way and so forth Explain that the nature of all things Is established as emptiness.*
52. *Since there are a great many passages, I have not cited them here,*

But have explained just their conclusions For the purpose of meditation.

The commentary reads:

The first four lines advise relying on the great many scriptures which contend emptiness as their definitive meaning or subject matter.

The root text gives examples of reliable and authentic scriptures which we must study in order to gain the wisdom arising from contemplation. The two main texts recommended here are Nagarjuna's middle way text, *The Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* and his *Treatise on the Middle Way*. The second two lines of the first verse indicate the main subject matter of this text, which is an explanation of the way the nature of all things is established as emptiness.

With regard to the second verse the commentary says:

The next four lines confess the reason why only a few scriptures are cited here.

Therefore, those with intelligence must widely read, gain a definitive ascertainment of the profound emptiness and penetrate to the bottom of the view by relying upon the following:

Here we can note that the root text recommends the *Treatise on the Middle Way* and so forth as sources. The *so forth* includes:

- *Sutrasamucchaya, The Compendium of Sutras* (collection of excerpts from various sutras attributed to Nagarjuna as compiler) - the scripture which establishes emptiness as the definitive meaning.

That is just an example of a scripture in which emptiness is considered as a definitive meaning.

- Nagarjuna's text *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* establishes emptiness by reason in it.
- Nagarjuna's *Root Verses of the Middle Way* or *Fundamental Wisdom (Mulamadhyamaka-karika)*, which establishes the profound view of emptiness through a myriad of reasons as well as read the rest of Nagarjuna's collection of reasoning.

I taught you these in the past, so now you know that I didn't make a mistake in choosing those texts and you didn't make a mistake in terms of hearing the words of the right texts. Then there are:

- The scriptures of Aryadeva [*Four Hundred Verses*] and Bhavaviveka
- Especially the supreme commentary on the arya's view Buddhapalita
- Chandrakirti's and Shantideva's commentaries

The four great commentaries by Chandrakirti are his *Supplement to the Middle Way* and *Clear Words* and a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* and as well as on Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses*. These are the important texts for studying on emptiness. Then there are Shantideva's commentaries.

In short, all the scriptures that unravel the meaning of the emptiness in terms of how all things are fundamentally or originally devoid of inherent existence as presented in the Buddha's profound discourses such as in the mother the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras.

The commentary continues with:

The question: Why is an extensive scriptural citation and reasoning not provided here? This is because there are a great many passages to cite.

Because there are so many passages and scriptures to cite they aren't quoted here. Then the commentary continues

Regarding the line in verse 51, 'The reasoning of the *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*', the *Self-commentary* says, 'This presents the reasoning of dependent origination'. Atisha's *Definitive Compendium of the Essence* also says, 'Through familiarisation with the reasoning of dependent origination'. Atisha's *Definitive Compendium of the Essence* also says, 'Through familiarisation with the reasoning of dependent origination and others, destroy the great demon of grasping at things without any remainder'.

Here the emphasis is on applying the reasoning of dependent origination.

The Kadampa's pith instruction the *Blue Book* (Tib: *Beu bum sNgon po*) also praises the kingly reason of dependent origination.

Many of you have studied this topic in the past so I'm assuming that, as we go through this commentary, you will have some sort of understanding of what we are discussing here. Here the term *dependent origination* refers to the uncommon view of the Prasangika school that everything is dependent on mere imputation. The commentary then explains the significance of emphasising the reason of dependent origination with this quote from the *Blue Book*:

'Meditate on dependent origination in order to eliminate the extreme views of permanence and annihilation'.

This reasoning of dependent origination has the effect of simultaneously eliminating both types of extreme views –the extreme of permanence and the extreme of annihilation. So the reason of dependent origination is a very powerful reason.

The nihilistic view is that the law of karma doesn't exist, and this is countered by the fact that virtuous and non-virtuous actions result in happiness and suffering respectively. If we understand how things are dependent, then that knowledge explicitly eradicates the extreme view of annihilation. Therefore, there is no room for the extreme view of nihilism when we understand the truth of dependent arising or the dependent origination of things.

At the same time, through the realisation of the fact that things are dependent, we understand that things are dependently existent. Then we are automatically refuting the idea of things existing independently or without depending on any other phenomena. With an understanding of dependent origination this view of permanence or eternalism, such as the view that things exist inherently or independently, is implicitly negated.

When we think about it, relying on the reasoning of dependent arising is extremely effective in overcoming the wrong views of both of the two extremes – permanence and annihilation.

As the commentary says, by relying on this, one can truly understand the meaning of emptiness as dependent arising and the meaning of dependent arising as emptiness. These two things, dependent origination and

the emptiness of phenomena, are not separate; rather they are like one entity as they imply the truth of the same thing. That is why the reasoning of dependent origination is effective in realising the middle way, free from both extremes.

It is especially important when you are studying emptiness to make sure that your understanding of emptiness complements your understanding of dependent arising; likewise when you understand dependent arising properly then that complements and reinforces your understanding of emptiness.

Here is a question for you: Explain the quote from the *Blue Book* which says, 'Meditate on dependent origination in order to eliminate the extreme views of permanence and annihilation'.

[Student:] *If it is a phenomena of dependent arising then it arises from causes and conditions and that would defeat the extreme of permanence by showing it is not independent, and it also defeats the extreme of nihilism by showing there is cause and effect.*

So you meditate on dependent origination in order to eliminate the extreme view of permanence and annihilation. You said that by knowing that things depend on causes and conditions, you can overcome the extreme view of annihilation, and also overcome the extreme view of permanence.

[Student:] *If you show that something depends on cause and conditions it cannot be independent.*

That's good. The extreme of permanence means not depending on any other phenomena or any other things, and things existing in their own right.

In the commentary the quote from the *Blue Book* praises the reasoning of dependent origination as the *kingly reason of dependent origination*. It is called the king of all reasons because it eliminates both extreme views together.

At the end of this section, there is a line saying:

Hence [introducing the following syllogistic statement] Given: person and phenomena [i.e. the subject] are empty of inherent existence, because they are dependent originations.

This statement is the basis for meditating on emptiness. If you have gained an understanding just by focusing on this then you should be able to realise the wisdom of emptiness.

Then the commentary continues:

This point is mentioned in the *Sutra Requested by Madropa* (the Naga king) (Tib: *Ma.dros.pas zhus.pai.mDo*):

Whatever produces from conditions is unproduced.

It doesn't have the nature of production in itself.

Whatever depends on conditions is explained to be empty.

Whoever realises emptiness is pious.

Then it continues, 'Whatever is a dependent origination is devoid of its own identity even a tiny bit'.

In place of *devoid of its own identity* we can also say devoid of true existence, inherent existence or existing in its own right. These all have the same meaning.

The commentary also quotes:

As Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*, explains, 'Whatever is dependent arising is identityless'. Also, 'Depending on one thing another thing arises'.

All these scriptures cited in the commentary use dependent origination as a reason to establish that things are devoid of inherent or true existence. As you have studied in the past, you need to understand that *dependent origination* has different connotations depending on the various schools of tenets e.g. dependent in terms of depending on the parts of the things, or depending on things as being merely designated by conceptual thought.

Hopefully you might have some understanding of dependent origination, but what about emptiness? When you hear the word 'emptiness' does it carry any profound meaning or not? When it says that things are empty of inherent existence, and that things do not exist inherently, you should not get the notion that things don't exist at all.

Now the commentary continues:

The second is How One Trains in Special Insight

How one trains in special insight

53. *Thus, whatever is meditation
On selflessness, in that it does not observe
An inherent nature in phenomena,
Is the cultivation of wisdom.*

First we read the commentary:

Having thus presented all phenomena, encompassing sources, constituents and aggregates, ...

This refers to the categories and parts of phenomena.

... as being devoid of true existence, the conclusion is that person and other phenomena are absent of the self that exists by its own nature or inherently.

This gives a guide to engaging in, or meditating on, the fact that all phenomena are empty or devoid of true existence. The implication is that we need to ascertain the object of negation. That is to say, if a person exists truly, or inherently, or exists by itself or in its own right, there has to be a person or a self which exists independently, without depending on any other object. That is, the person should exist from the side of its own uncommon basis of designation. On the basis of the designation, that self or person should be a self that exists independently, and not depending on the aggregates or any other object. As the commentary says:

This is so because if they do have such a unique self-identity, then it should be found upon analysis, ...

In meditation you need to ascertain the negated self. If that self really reflects the ultimate nature of the person then how should the person exist? As it says in the commentary, such a person should exist independently on the uncommon basis of the designation and without depending on anything. Then we investigate whether it is possible to find such a person. Essentially, in your previous seminar you studied the four points of

ascertainment of i.e. the object of negation, the pervasion and the ascertainment of being empty of one or of many. These four logical points of ascertainment should be applied in order to see whether the existence of such a self is tenable or not.

To continue with the commentary:

... however not even an atom of it can be observed and found. Meditating and searching for (the self) in the analysis itself is meditating on the perfection of wisdom. As the *Middling Stages of Meditation* by Acharya Kamalashila says, 'Since you use wisdom to investigate the essence of all things, you practise concentration without objectification. Therefore, you are a practitioner of the concentration of supreme wisdom'.

At this point, we have established the fact that objects are devoid of true or inherent existence. Next:

As to the question, 'How do you abandon the grasping at that realised wisdom?', the answer is found here:

What follows is looking at the ultimate nature of the subjective mind, which we will cover in next week's teaching. In the meantime, take the time to read more about this topic, and more importantly, not just read but actually think over the subject matter. Finding it difficult is no reason to get frustrated or give up. Rather, what is important is to try to read some text, and as well, give some thought to reflecting on its meaning. Then gradually you will notice an increase in your understanding of the subject matter.

¹Especially when you have a thought of 'I', investigate how the 'I' appears to your mind. This is very important. At that time, you experience an 'I' which seems to have its own self-sufficient existence and which exists nominally. I believe that it is not possible to separate these two 'I's until you have gained the wisdom of emptiness. Nonetheless, from deep down we experience the arising of a sense of 'I', 'I'. If we look at that 'I' and investigate how it exists, we can notice it appears to exist in its right, without depending on any other objects. If we grasp at it as it appears to our mind as being the true mode of existence of a person, that's called the self-grasping of person. As discussed earlier, in order to identify the object of negation, you need to let that sense of 'I' appear to your mind, then investigate and verify its mode of existence as it appears to your mind.

You need to ask yourself whether the 'I' exists in the same way as it appears to your mind. If you go about it in this way then you will find it beneficial. If, instead of relating your investigation to your own experience you treat the subject of emptiness as something to stimulate your external intellect, you won't get anywhere. When we hear the terms 'person' and 'aggregates' we think of other people or their aggregates, but not ourselves and our own aggregates. We should be investigating the 'I' within us, not the 'I' of other people. Otherwise, we are like a detective who is looking for the footprint of a thief

¹ At Geshe-la's request, this section of the commentary was not translated on the night due to time constraints. It has been translated from the sound file.

in a grassland when the thief has already run into the forest; we won't be able to recognise the object of negation and thus we won't be able to refute it. Truly, we are so fortunate even just to hear about this profound teaching, and for it to be able to leave a positive imprint within our mental continuum. The teaching of emptiness – that all things do not exist inherently and are devoid of inherent existence – is the unique doctrine of the Buddha as mentioned in the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*.

We are going to read out *The King of Prayers* for Maria's brother, who passed away last week. Maria has been a TI resident and long-term friend of many of us, and she is close to me. She is a very good student who regularly comes to the teachings. She is a very lovely lady with a gentle nature and warm-heartedness, so we recite this to express our condolences to her and her family.

As we recite this prayer try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation and pray for the good rebirth and happiness of Maria's late brother. By doing this, not only do we help her brother, herself and her family, but it also gives us an opportunity to recite this great prayer and to cultivate the bodhicitta mind.

Not only do I pray for all sentient beings, but I am good at remembering in my prayers my friends and people I know when they face hardship. As we said in another teaching, when people face life's difficulties they pin their hope not on humans, but on God. So in alignment with this tradition we recite this prayer.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen is used with the kind permission of Sandup Tsering.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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Edited Version*

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Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment

༄། བྱུང་ལྡན་ལམ་གྱི་སྒྲོན་མ་བཟུང་བ་སྟེ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

4 September 2018

We will begin with the motivation of love and compassion for other beings as you have just cultivated in the meditation of giving and taking.

The meditation of giving and taking intensifies the love through which we wish other beings to have happiness, and compassion through which we wish them to be free from suffering. So, we should ensure that our motivation for listening to the profound teachings stems from love, which is to wish all other beings to have happiness, and compassion, which is to wish them to be free from suffering.

In everyday life too, we should cherish the incredible value of love and compassion within us, and always remember to maintain that love and compassion. Whatever actions we engage in, try to make sure they are infused with love and compassion, which very much represents basic human nature.

We may all have different reasons for practising meditation. Some of us practise meditation to bring more peace and happiness in our life, or to find a sense of relaxation. For others it is to spread peace and happiness to all other sentient beings. There are others who want to practise meditation to bring other beings under their control or have an influence over them. I would say we could achieve all of these through practising meditation, particularly through cultivating and developing love and compassion.

It is important to understand here that when talk about meditation or spiritual practice, such as cultivating love and compassion, we are talking about transforming our mind and the qualities within us. Therefore, when we practise meditation or spirituality, our focus must be turned inward and our mind should not be wandering after external things and events. That is to say, if we are cultivating love and compassion for other beings, we must ensure it arises from the depths of our heart. For our practice to progress to the point where we can experience its benefit, we must be prepared to practise over a prolonged period of time, as well as know the essential points of how to practice. You should not expect genuine love and compassion to arise after one or two days of meditation; rather you need to meditate consistently over and over again to gain familiarity with the practice. Only then will you really experience the benefits of the practice. When we develop more love and compassion through a proper understanding and application of the practice, then automatically all of the benefits we talked about earlier – such as bringing joy, peace, inner stability and having a positive influence on those around us – will naturally happen.

Some schools of thought claim you can bring other people under your control or influence them through the

power of anger. But if you check, you will see that you are not really winning them over to your side in that way. On the other hand, if we show love and compassion towards others, we can really win them over to our side.

Love and compassion will not only benefit individuals who cultivate it, but also the broader group or community. Where there is love and compassion, then naturally there is a friendly and harmonious atmosphere and more happiness. When we talk about the benefits we receive from love and compassion, we are talking about receiving benefit from some quality within us. Hence, we need to recognise that quality as our true and unfailing refuge or protection. This is what is meant by Dharma as being the true refuge.

For instance, we say that the ethical practice of refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions can prevent us from falling into a lower rebirth and hence serves as a true refuge or protection for us. Just note here that the Tibetan word for 'virtuous' is *gewa* and for 'non-virtuous' it is *mi-gewa*; in English, these Tibetan terms are often translated as virtuous or positive actions or deeds and non-virtuous or negative actions or deeds. The Tibetan term for karma is *ley*, which is rendered in English as 'action'. Technically speaking, when we talk of, for example, the ten non-virtues, there are not in fact ten non-virtuous actions, because the three mental non-virtues are not actions in the Tibetan sense of *ley* (or *karma* in Sanskrit). These three are not *ley* or actions, but they are *ley-lam* or an action path (i.e. a karmic path). If we engage in the ethic of restraining from the ten non-virtues, we don't have to wait for our future life to experience the benefits – we can experience them in this very lifetime. And, as we experience the benefits, our conviction or faith in the practice will increase, and we will recognise it as the 'unfailing refuge' within us.

HOW ONE TRAINS IN SPECIAL INSIGHT (CONT.)

Going back to the teachings, the commentary reads:

As to the question, 'How do you abandon the grasping at that realised wisdom?', the answer is found here:

We are talking here about *that realised wisdom*. Earlier on we talked about the view of emptiness, and then we talked about the wisdom that realises that view, which refutes the view of inherent or true existence. So the question now is, how do we avoid grasping at that wisdom itself?

The root text reads:

54. *Just as wisdom does not see
An inherent nature in phenomena,
Having analysed wisdom itself by reasoning,
Non-conceptually meditate on that.*

The question here is: 'how can we abandon misconceptions in relation to the wisdom realising selflessness?' Earlier on, the text discussed the way to abandon or eliminate this misconception of grasping at the self with regard to various phenomena or objects. It said this misconception could be abandoned or counteracted by the wisdom realising emptiness. So the question now is: 'if we grasp at the inherent existence of that wisdom itself, how are we going to abandon that?'

The commentary reads:

Just as the investigating wisdom could not see an inherent nature in any of person and other phenomena upon analysis, the wisdom itself is also lacking an inherent nature upon analysis because it doesn't truly exist as one or many.

As the commentary says, *the wisdom itself is also lacking an inherent nature upon analysis*, just as it previously said that *any person and other phenomena are also lacking inherent existence upon analysis*. If we investigate and try to find that wisdom as a consciousness or awareness, we will not be able to find it. Therefore, that consciousness exists at a relative level as something that is clear, and a knower – that is, in the definition of consciousness.

But if instead of leaving the definition there and being satisfied with that meaning of consciousness as being clear and a knower, we proceed to investigate and search for and identify that consciousness, we will not be able to find it. That's why the commentary says that *wisdom itself also lacks an inherent nature upon analysis because it doesn't truly exist as one or many*.

The words *nature upon analysis* refer to the final analysis. Just as you cannot ultimately find any other phenomena, in the final analysis, if you keep investigating and searching then, at the end, you cannot find wisdom consciousness as well. The commentary continues:

So, upon analysis by reasoning, both the subject and the object are without production; and non-conceptually meditating on it is definitely the cause of non-conceptual exalted wisdom.

Regarding this, the *King of Samadhi Sutra* says, 'Having analysed the selflessness of phenomena and then if meditating upon the point of analysis; that is the cause to achieve the resultant state beyond sorrow'.

The result of meditating on special insight [into the truth of emptiness]

We now go on to the third sub-heading under 'How one trains in special insight'.

The commentary reads:

The third, The Result of Meditating on Special Insight, has two:

1. The actual meaning
2. Establishing it by the scriptures

The actual meaning

Here, the commentary says:

Regarding the first the root text says:

55. *The nature of this worldly existence,
Which has come from conceptualisation,
Is conceptuality. Thus the elimination of
Conceptuality is the higher state of nirvana.*

According to Sharawa, 'This passage presents the benefit of special insight meditation in pulling out the root cause of samsara...

So the *root cause* is the ignorance that grasps at a truly existent self. The commentary continues to explain how the root verse is also referring to the four noble truths:

Moreover, [that] *Which has come from conceptualisation* presents the truth of cause (of suffering) to be abandoned, *the nature of this worldly existence* presents the truth of suffering to be known, the third line (*thus the elimination of conceptuality*) presents the truth of the path to be followed, and the fourth line (*the higher*

state of nirvana) presents the truth of the cessation to be achieved'.

Then it continues:

Based on this we can make the statement – given the true cause karma and mental afflictions are to be abandoned, and it is possible for them to be abandoned by those wishing for liberation,...

The statement here refers to a syllogistic statement and *the true cause* refers to the truth of the cause of suffering: *karma and mental afflictions*. So this statement clearly indicates that *karma and the mental afflictions* are *the true cause*, and thus are the main objects of abandonment for those who aspire to achieve the state of *liberation*. This statement also shows the possibility of abandoning karma and the afflictions. If that were not possible, you could not abandon the true cause. So the statement shows that not only are *karma and mental afflictions to be abandoned by those wishing for liberation*, but also that it is possible to abandon them.

However, all karma is not necessarily an object of abandonment, as certain positive karmas are not objects of abandonment. When we talk about karma as an object of abandonment, we have to know the context of the topic. Here, the karma or action specifically referred to is that which comes under the truth of the cause of suffering. The statement above says that karma and the mental afflictions must be abandoned if you aspire to liberation. However, the only reason given is simply:

... because they arise from the ignorance which is the conception of grasping at the true existence of things.

That's the reason or proof given in the commentary – that these karmas and all mental afflictions arise from ignorance. How could this prove the possibility of abandoning karma and afflictions? Can someone have a go at that?

[Student:] *Because ignorance can be exactly reversed or opposed by the wisdom realising emptiness. Through realising the wisdom, all ... adventitious karmas remain [inaudible] ...*

[Geshe-la:] Can you explain more about how, if there is an antidote or opposite force to ignorance, we can prove that ignorance can be abandoned?

[Student:] *When we look through this object there is existence ... it can't be found by ... [inaudible] ... investigating the... so [postulating?] the mind realising non-existence ... and therefore realising that it is not ... [inaudible] ... inherently, they must exist ...*

[Geshe-la:] Yes, that's fine. But what we have to consider here is that, on the one hand we talk about ignorance, and on the other hand, we talk about wisdom. They are two counter forces, but what we need to understand is that only one of them is tenable to the valid mind or supported by valid cognition. When we look at ignorance, the way in which it apprehends the object is not tenable to a reasoning mind or supported by valid cognition because it is based on mistaken perception. However, the way the object is viewed by wisdom accords with the ultimate reality of the object. Hence, wisdom is supported by valid cognition, in the sense that it cannot be refuted by a valid mind.

The commentary continues:

In relation with this, to quote Nagarjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, 'The Teacher, Buddha, said that the conception of the real existence of things which arise from causes and conditions is ignorance. From this ignorance the twelve dependent limbs arise.'

Again, there's a syllogistic statement:

Given: The samsara of the three realms of existence ...

When the commentary says *the samsara of the three realms of existence*, it is referring to the desire, form and formless realms. The term samsara or cyclic existence can refer to any of the five aggregates, so we can refer to the aggregates of human beings as cyclic existence, in the sense that human beings take rebirth or are born with these aggregates.

Of course, in the formless realms, not all five aggregates are present, but the other four [apart from form] are present. So going back to the syllogism:

Given: The samsara of the three realms of existence is to be known by those aspiring for liberation as being the absence of true existence, ...

It refers to *samsara for those aspiring for liberation* as something that these practitioners have to know as being empty of true existence. However, previously the commentary stated, the *true cause of samsara is the mental afflictions*, which are to be abandoned. We need to think about why the commentary has emphasised these two: that the true cause is to be abandoned, and that we must know the absence of true existence of samsara. Through meditation, we can recognise that the grasping at the self of the person is the root cause of ignorance. So if we can understand this, we can see the possibility of an end to our cyclic existence.

The reason then given in the syllogism is:

... because it is in the nature of being conjured by conceptual thought.

In other words, cyclic existence *is in the nature of being superimposed or imputed by our own conceptual thought*. When we understand this, we will understand that cyclic existence doesn't truly exist because it is merely imputed by thought.

The commentary continues:

To quote (the *Sutra Requested by Upali*):

A splash of pleasing flowers open their petals,
Golden palaces blaze in breathtaking beauty;
Look for their maker, but you'll never find him,
For all of these are built of conceptions –
The world is an invention of conceptions.

Rather than having their own independent existence or intrinsic nature, all things are imputed by our thoughts and labelling, which is to say that if things did not depend on imputation by thought or labelling, they should exist. In the latter case, certain objects would exist before being labelled or being given a name; the object would be able to be identified from its own side as being that particular object. As that is not the case, this quotation gives some analogies to show how all things are merely imputed by thoughts and by labels.

What is more important here is to relate this to our own practice and to our own way of viewing things. We should understand that the many and various things that appear to our mind do not necessarily align with the way

things actually exist. The example given here is of seeing beautiful flowers blossoming – if we see these as merely labelled, a mere projection of our conceptual thought, and if we associate this view with our perception of that particular object, this will have the immediate effect of lessening our attachment to that object as being beautiful.

So, we can just say to ourselves that the way an object appears to us is not the way it exists in reality, from the object's side. This understanding shows us the projections of our mind and how, because of these projections, we see objects in that particular way.

The commentary then continues with another syllogistic statement:

Given: The wisdom realising selflessness is to be followed by those wishing for liberation because completely abandoning the conception of grasping at things from its root is the state of liberation, and wisdom is the direct antidote to that conception.

The text here implies that nirvana, or the state of liberation, is a state of abandonment of the root: an abandonment of *the conception* or the *grasping at* the truly existent self *from its root*. That state of abandonment or the uprooting of the grasping at the true self is the state of nirvana or liberation.

The commentary goes on to the truth of the cessation of suffering:

Given: The state of the complete abandonment of conceptualisation is to be achieved by those aspiring for liberation, because it is the supreme or the great state beyond sorrow.

...and quotes...

Fundamental Wisdom says:

The cessation of ignorance occurs through,
Meditation and wisdom.

This shows how wisdom or the truth of the path is a means to achieve the truth of the cessation of ignorance.

Then the commentary further quotes:

Also *The Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

Seeing the selflessness in the object,
Is the cessation of the root of samsara.

... and continues by quoting the *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

The *Supplement to the Middle Way* says, 'Hence, a yogi who views the emptiness of the 'I and mine' will be completely released'.

The commentary continues:

In short, everything within *this worldly existence comes from the conceptualisation* of grasping at true existence, therefore it is rooted in it, and in *the nature of conceptual construction*. Those who fully *eliminate* and uproot *conceptualised* grasping together with its latencies will attain *the higher state of nirvana*, the supreme non-abiding nirvana enabling them to accomplish the welfare of their own self and that of others.

Here, we need to note where the text says that grasping at the self or the conception of the self is the root cause of cyclic existence. It is saying that nirvana or the state of liberation is achieved by uprooting self-grasping. In particular, it refers to the *root cause together with the latencies*. Normally we distinguish between the *root* or

seed of self-grasping, and the *latency* of self-grasping. When you overcome the latency of self-grasping, you achieve the full state of enlightenment. But this is not necessary to achieve the state of liberation of the hearers' vehicle, where the practitioner only needs to abandon the seed of self-grasping. The seed refers to a causal capacity to replicate a result similar to its type.

We will stop tonight's teaching here.

If it is feasible, it would be good to have another discussion night soon. We will decide the date of the discussion later.

Discussion groups are a good opportunity to develop and refresh our knowledge. In particular, this text touches on so many important topics, such as the four noble truths – the truth of suffering, which is to be known; the causes of suffering, which are to be abandoned; the cessation of suffering, which is to be achieved; and the path to be followed to that cessation. The text also talks about cyclic existence and self-grasping as its root cause. There are a lot of important topics that you have already studied in the recent past, and it is important to further enhance your understanding of them.

The translation of the commentary on *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* called *Joy of the Blossomed Excellent* by Panchen Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltzen is used with the kind permission of Sandup Tsering.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering
Edited Version*

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Homework

Sept 4th, 2018 teachings

1. How do you abandon the grasping at realised wisdom?

We are talking here about *that realised wisdom*. Earlier on we talked about the view of emptiness, and then we talked about the wisdom that realises that view, which refutes the view of inherent or true existence. So the question now is, how do we avoid grasping at that wisdom itself?

The root text reads:

54. *Just as wisdom does not see
An inherent nature in phenomena,
Having analysed wisdom itself by reasoning,
Non-conceptually meditate on that.*

2. How can we abandon misconceptions in relation to the wisdom realising selflessness?

Earlier on, the text discussed the way to abandon or eliminate this misconception of grasping at the self with regard to various phenomena or objects. It said this misconception could be abandoned or counteracted by the wisdom realising emptiness. So the question now is: 'if we grasp at the inherent existence of that wisdom itself, how are we going to abandon that?'

The commentary reads:

Just as the investigating wisdom could not see an inherent nature in any of person and other phenomena upon analysis, the wisdom itself is also lacking an inherent nature upon analysis because it doesn't truly exist as one or many.

As the commentary says, *the wisdom itself is also lacking an inherent nature upon analysis*, just as it previously said that *any person and other phenomena are also lacking inherent existence upon analysis*. If we investigate and try to find that wisdom as a consciousness or awareness, we will not be able to find it. Therefore, that consciousness exists at a relative level as something that is clear, and a knower – that is in the definition of consciousness.

But if instead of leaving the definition there and being satisfied with that meaning of consciousness as being clear and a knower, we proceed to investigate and search for and identify that consciousness, we will not be able to find it. That's why the commentary says that *wisdom itself also lacks an inherent nature upon analysis because it doesn't truly exist as one or many*.

The words *nature upon analysis* refer to the final analysis. Just as you cannot ultimately find any other phenomena, in the final analysis, if you keep investigating and searching then at the end, you cannot find wisdom consciousness as well. The commentary continues:

So, upon analysis by reasoning, both the subject and the object are without production; and non-conceptually meditating on it is definitely the cause of non-conceptual exalted wisdom.

3. What is the result of meditating on special insight and how is it related to the four noble truths?

55. *The nature of this worldly existence,
Which has come from conceptualisation,
Is conceptuality. Thus the elimination of
Conceptuality is the higher state of nirvana.*

According to Sharawa, 'This passage presents the benefit of special insight meditation in pulling out the root cause of samsara...

So the *root cause* is the ignorance that grasps at a truly existent self. The commentary continues to explain how the root verse is also referring to the four noble truths:

Moreover, [that] *Which has come from conceptualisation* presents the truth of cause (of suffering) to be abandoned, *the nature of this worldly existence* presents the truth of suffering to be known, the third line (*thus the elimination of conceptuality*) presents the truth of the path to be followed, and the fourth line (*the higher state of nirvana*) presents the truth of the cessation to be achieved'.

Then it continues:

Based on this we can make the statement – given the true cause karma and mental afflictions are to be abandoned, and it is possible for them to be abandoned by those wishing for liberation,...

The statement here refers to a syllogistic statement and *the true cause* refers to the truth of the cause of suffering: *karma and mental afflictions*. So this statement clearly indicates that *karma and the mental afflictions* are *the true cause*, and thus are the main objects of abandonment for those who aspire to achieve the state of *liberation*. This statement also shows the possibility of abandoning karma and the afflictions. If that were not possible, you could not abandon the true cause. So the statement shows that not only are *karma and mental afflictions to be abandoned by those wishing for liberation*, but also that it is possible to abandon them

4. How should we understand cyclic existence and the true nature of existence?

Cyclic existence *is in the nature of being* superimposed or imputed by our own *conceptual thought*. When we understand this, we will understand that cyclic existence doesn't truly exist because it is merely imputed by thought.

The commentary continues:

To quote (the *Sutra Requested by Upali*):

A splash of pleasing flowers open their petals,
Golden palaces blaze in breathtaking beauty;
Look for their maker, but you'll never find him,
For all of these are built of conceptions –
The world is an invention of conceptions.

Rather than having their own independent existence or intrinsic nature, all things are imputed by our thoughts and labelling, which is to say that if things did not depend on imputation by thought or labelling, they should exist. In the latter case, certain objects would exist before being labelled or being given a name; the object would be able to be identified from its own side as being that particular object. As that is not

the case, this quotation gives some analogies to show how all things are merely imputed by thoughts and by labels.

What is more important here is to relate this to our own practice and to our own way of viewing things. We should understand that the many and various things that appear to our mind do not necessarily align with the way things actually exist. The example given here is of seeing beautiful flowers blossoming – if we see these as merely labelled, a mere projection of our conceptual thought, and if we associate this view with our perception of that particular object, this will have the immediate effect of lessening our attachment to that object as being beautiful.

So, we can just say to ourselves that the way an object appears to us is not the way it exists in reality, from the object's side. This understanding shows us the projections of our mind and how, because of these projections, we see objects in that particular way

5. Describe the state of Nirvana.

The wisdom realising selflessness is to be followed by those wishing for liberation because completely abandoning the conception of grasping at things from its root is the state of liberation, and wisdom is the direct antidote to that conception.

The text here implies that nirvana, or the state of liberation, is a state of abandonment of the root: an abandonment of *the conception* or the *grasping at* the truly existent self *from its root*. That state of abandonment or the uprooting of the grasping at the true self is the state of nirvana or liberation.

The commentary goes on to the truth of the cessation of suffering:

Given: The state of the complete abandonment of conceptualisation is to be achieved by those aspiring for liberation, because it is the supreme or the great state beyond sorrow.

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Also *The Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

Seeing the selflessness in the object,
Is the cessation of the root of samsara.

...and continues by quoting the *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

The *Supplement to the Middle Way* says, 'Hence, a yogi who views the emptiness of the 'I and mine' will be completely released'.

The commentary continues:

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Here, we need to note where the text says that grasping at the self or the conception of the self is the root cause of cyclic existence. It is saying that nirvana or the state of liberation is achieved by uprooting self-grasping. In particular, it refers to the *root cause together with the latencies*. Normally we distinguish between the *root* or seed of self-grasping, and the *latency* of self-grasping. When you overcome the latency of self-grasping, you achieve the full state of enlightenment. But this is not necessary to achieve the state of liberation of the hearers' vehicle, where the practitioner only needs to abandon the seed of self-grasping. The seed refers to a causal capacity to replicate a result similar to its type.