
Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual, you may set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise them well'.

1.2. Exposition of good explanations in brief

This heading has two sub-divisions.

1.2.1. Actual meaning

1.2.2. Why outsiders do not appreciate the Teacher's doctrine

1.2.1. Actual meaning

Question: If birth and suffering are not virtuous, what is?

This question arises in relation to non-virtuous views that were explained in the previous teaching. Having refuted that merely taking rebirth and merely enduring physical suffering are not virtues that lead to liberation, then what is virtuous?

Answer: Harmful thoughts toward others as well as physical and verbal actions thus motivated constitute violence toward others [which includes the ten non-virtuous actions]. Non-violence is the opposite of this, namely the ten virtuous paths of action.

So this question and answer explains what should be abandoned and what should be adopted.

In brief Tathagatas explain 298
Virtue as non-violence
And emptiness as nirvana-
Here there are only these two.

This presentation of the nature of the Buddha's teaching is a response to the non-Buddhist schools such as the Nirgranthas and Brahmins. The Nirgranthas viewed the experience of physical pain and mutilation as part of a practice that achieves nirvana, whereas the Brahmin's view was that by revering Brahmins one will take rebirth as a Brahmin, which will be the way to liberation. Having refuted these views previously the Buddha's doctrine is now presented.

When we look into the Buddhist presentation including both the refutations of all the misconceptions and wrong views, as well as the Buddhist own view, we can begin to realise how extremely kind the Buddha had been in protecting us from misguided wrong views and conceptions. In that way we can really begin to see the great kindness of the Buddha and his skilful way of teaching.

What is being identified very clearly here as the essence of the Buddha's teaching is on one hand, abandoning non-virtue which means adopting a life of non-violence,

and on the other hand engaging in virtuous deeds such as generosity and so forth. This then becomes the cause for achieving the good qualities in a higher rebirth, which allows one to further create causes to obtain liberation. This is actually very sound advice for us to take to heart.

We can all relate to abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions and adopting the ten virtues as the practise of Dharma. All of us who have studied Buddhism for a while will be able to identify the ten non-virtuous deeds and the ten virtuous deeds. And what is being advised here is that avoiding the ten non-virtuous deeds and adopting the ten virtuous deeds is the practice of Dharma. The basis of the lam rim teachings is starting with the practice of the small scope, which as we learn in the lam rim teachings, becomes the cause for us to obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime, which in turn becomes a further basis for us to practice and accumulate the causes for obtaining liberation and enlightenment. Also the Buddha said in the *Pratimoksha sutras*:

Anyone who engages in violence

Do not call yourself a follower of my doctrine.

Here the Buddha clearly indicates that anyone who considers themselves as a follower of the Buddha's teaching has at the very least to adopt a life of non-violence. That becomes the core of our practice and something that we really need to reflect upon and take to heart. The first of the Pratimoksha or self liberation vows is avoiding killing. So we can see from that very fact that the very first vow is the direct avoidance of harming others by avoiding killing. This is how the Buddha has very skilfully led beings into the practice of Dharma.

Aryadeva's text also emphasises that practising the Buddha's teachings means avoiding non-virtue and adopting the virtues. It is really essential that we reflect upon these practices: sometimes we might take it quite lightly, but it is good to do a self analysis of our daily life, looking into how many of the virtues we actually adopt, and how many of the ten non-virtues we actually avoid in our daily life.

As the teachings indicate, at the very best one should avoid even the thought of engaging in the ten non-virtues. The first of the ten virtues is avoiding killing, which is probably relatively easy for us, as we may not find ourselves in situations where we have to intentionally kill, and even the thought of killing may be relatively easy for us to avoid. Then comes stealing, which could be a little bit tricky, as we might find ourselves in situations where even though we may not engage in an actual act of stealing, the thought of misappropriating something may occur in our mind, and that is a dangerous thought. Next comes sexual misconduct, which can also be tricky and we need to pay a lot of attention in order to avoid it.

As we go through the ten non-virtues one by one, we will find that we might actually engage in some of them, and, even if we don't directly engage in them we might find that the thought of them definitely occurs in our mind. If we don't pay attention in really trying to put an effort into avoiding the ten non-virtues as a basis, then it is quite difficult to keep intact all of the other vows that one may have taken. As the great masters have said, the rest

of our moral vows such as the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows will be easier to maintain when there is the sound basis of avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtuous deeds. If someone is not able to avoid the ten non-virtues, then it is almost impossible to observe the rest of the vows, thus the bodhisattva vows and tantric vows will be very hard to keep. This is really a very essential practice at our level, and we must pay attention to it.

If we look into adopting the ten virtuous deeds and avoiding the ten non-virtuous deeds we will come to see that this is a means of directly adopting a life of non-violence, refraining from harming others. We can see that adopting the ten virtuous deeds really restrains us from harming others. If we adopt avoiding killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, then that subsumes avoiding any physical harm to others. Likewise with the virtues of speech; if we adopt refraining from lying, harsh words and so forth then again we will notice that we will be refraining from harming others through speech. Similarly with the three virtues of the mind; if we adopt them, we will find that we are avoiding mental harm towards others. In this way, just by adopting these ten virtuous deeds, we naturally will be a well-respected, well-behaved and subdued person.

This practice is very practical practice for us. Even if we are not able to do other extensive and elaborate practices, it is good that we make sure that whatever practice we engage in now, becomes a complete practice. In that way it will become a fruitful practice, definitely gaining positive results. That would be good. As there is an immediate obvious benefit as well that we can experience from the practice of the ten virtues, it is essential that we pay attention to this.

The two essential points of the Buddha's teaching are, not harming others which is avoiding non-Dharma, and benefiting others which is virtue and adopting the Dharma. A person with some intelligence and wisdom will find that referring to these lines as a summary of the Buddha's practice really helps their intelligence and wisdom to increase.

This piece of advice from the Buddha's teaching is indeed very sound advice that anyone would be able to appreciate and accept. Thus we can see the skilful means in the Buddha's teachings. None of us wish harm to fall upon ourselves, whereas we all want and welcome all good things. That is also the case for everyone else. No being would want to experience any kind of harm and they would all want to experience every kind of benefit and help there is. Thus we can see the very skilful means of the Buddha's teaching, and how the very presentation of his teaching is something that anyone would welcome, relate to and appreciate.

These two lines also indicate what we are striving for, as well as what we wish to avoid. So our goals, both temporary and ultimate, are all presented in these two lines

This presentation subsumes the basic structure of one element of the Buddha's teachings, which is non-violence. Anyone who follows the Buddha's teaching is to adopt a non-violent approach, and the view that one adopts is the

view of interdependent origination. Even though interdependent origination is not explicitly mentioned here in these lines it is something that we can derive from the meaning of the lines. Later on it will be explained that the cause for obtaining liberation is developing the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness, which is obtained through the view of interdependent origination. What is explicitly mentioned here is that adopting a life of non-violence becomes the cause for high status, while the view of dependent origination as the cause for obtaining liberation.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

In brief Tathagatas say that the principle through which one attains a high rebirth is non-violence. The principle through which liberation is attained is natural nirvana,...

The meaning of the first line of the verse was explained earlier, and here the principal through which liberation is attained is explained as natural nirvana, which is:

...the emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena.

What is being explained is that natural nirvana refers to the actual emptiness of existence of all phenomena.

As the commentary further explains:

By directly experiencing this and recognizing that suffering will never arise again, there is separation from adventitious stains-the nirvana of separation from adventitious stains.

This is explaining the actualising of nirvana. The Prasangika presentation of natural nirvana is the actual realisation of emptiness. Those who have followed the Madhyamika teachings would remember that it included explanations of nirvana with remainder, and nirvana without remainder. According to other schools the nirvana with remainder refers to the nirvana attained by an arhat who has overcome the delusions, but who still possesses the physical aggregates. Whereas, they obtain the nirvana without remainder when the five aggregates have ceased.

The Prasangika presentation is that nirvana without remainder is obtained first. When an arya obtains the direct realisation of emptiness and is in meditative equipoise on emptiness, there is nothing but emptiness that appears to that arya's mind. Thus there are no stains, and no delusions that are in that arya's mind at that time. So, the mind is separated from adventitious stains, which are basically the stains of the delusions in the mind. They are called adventitious because the mind itself is not one with the stains, and can be separated from them. Because the nature of the mind can be separated from them, the stains or delusions are called adventitious. Thus when an arya being is in single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness the delusions do not affect their mind at that time and thus they have actualised natural nirvana, which is the direct realisation of emptiness. Whereas when they come out of meditative equipoise into the post-meditative state then they are said to be in the stage of nirvana with remainder. That is what distinguishes the unique Prasangika presentation of how natural nirvana is attained.

To back up that explanation the commentary quotes from the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* which says:

When reality is seen
Nirvana is attained; the task is accomplished.

As the commentary further explains:

It is posited that having reached the path of seeing one attains mere nirvana. To attain this, all the aggregates do not have to cease.

In relation to the manner of engaging in the practice of the four noble truths, it is mentioned that the suffering is to be recognised, the cause or origination of suffering is to be abandoned, cessation is to be actualised, and the path is to be meditated upon. Here actualised means gaining that realisation, so in this case actualising cessation means realising emptiness.

Finally, the commentary concludes:

The reason for explaining this here is to show that one definitely needs to understand emptiness to attain liberation.

1.2.2. Why outsiders [i.e. non-Buddhists] do not appreciate the Teacher's doctrine

Having explained that the Buddha's teaching is very meaningful, profound and appropriate why then do non-Buddhists not appreciate, or not follow that teaching?

Question: When outsiders are aware of the Subduer's teaching, why do they not appreciate these two principles?

The two principles refers to non-violence, which is a cause for high status, and the realisation of selflessness or emptiness as the cause of nirvana. So why do non-Buddhists not appreciate those principles?

Answer: Because they are attached to their own mistaken positions.

*To ordinary people their own position, 299
Like their birthplace, is attractive.
Why would you find attractive
That which precludes it?*

As the commentary clearly explains:

Attachment to their own position is something ordinary people have been accustomed to since beginningless time. Like their birthplace they find it attractive and do not want to give it up because of their attachment. Why would you outsiders find attractive these two principles which preclude and are contrary to your own position?

As mentioned here clearly, when someone is already accustomed to certain ways of thinking, certain patterns, certain habituations that they are attached to, anything opposing that is uncomfortable. They would not appreciate it and they wouldn't want to accept something that opposes what they are already familiar with and very attached to. That is the reason why they do not appreciate the Buddha's teachings.

As it mentions clearly here, 'You do not follow the Buddha's teaching because you cling to your own wrong views'. They are very attached to their own wrong views and because they are attached to their own wrong views they cannot give them up. Moreover, the Buddha's teaching is something that actually opposes their wrong

views. Because it opposes them, it challenges them and so they cling onto to their wrong views, and that's why they cannot accept, or do not appreciate, the Buddha's teaching.

We can really relate to being acquainted with, or accustomed to something that we cannot give up. We can see how for anyone who is really attached to a wrong view, it can be very hard to be receptive and appreciate the Buddha's teachings. We should feel very fortunate that we are not attached to and clinging onto wrong views, and so are able to be receptive to the Buddha's teachings. That is something that we should rejoice in, and we should make every possible effort to not engage in wrong views further on.

To see the strong impact of clinging onto one's own views we can look into the present situation in Australia with the elections. You will find out when election day comes, that some who have been supporting the Liberal Party for all these years might appreciate the good values the Labor Party have. However when election time comes, watch and see, they will still vote Liberal. Why? Because of their own very strong attachment to the Liberal Party; having been so acquainted with their doctrine and views and being so attached to their own party, even when they see good values in Labor, they will still vote for the Liberal Party. We can see that happening.

Basically what this all comes down to is attachment to one's own ways. What one is acquainted with is very hard to give up, and we cling onto it. If we relate it to our normal behaviour, sometimes we see that some kinds of behaviours, and ways of thinking are not appropriate and we don't like it. However it is very hard to give it up because of our acquaintance with it, and our attachment and clinging to our ways of thinking and behaviour. This is what it really comes down to: strong attachment makes for clinging.

The Buddha actually gave a very vivid analogy of how it is very difficult to give up something you are attached to. The Buddha said that it is like an alcoholic trying to give up drinking. Because they are so attached to the drinking it is very difficult for them to give it up, and even though they see the fault they cannot give it up.

What we derive from this as personal advice is that it all comes down to acquaintance, which makes it difficult to give it up. We must try to make every effort to acquaint ourselves with virtue, with good deeds, good behaviour, and good conduct. Even though it is initially difficult we should try to do it again and again so that it becomes a good habit that we can adopt naturally. When we identify a certain behaviour or deed as being negative we should try to avoid it at any cost, so that we don't become acquainted with it.

1.3. Advising those who seek emancipation to adopt good explanations

*The intelligent who seek what is good 300
Adopt what is worthwhile even from others.
Does the sun not belong to all
On earth who have sight?*

As the commentary explains:

Wise people, who see their birthplace as a reason for

their difficulties, leave and settle in a prosperous place. Likewise, intelligent people seek what is good and therefore adopt those points which facilitate the attainment of a high rebirth or liberation once familiarity with them has been gained, even though they are from others' texts.

If one has an aversion to the sayings and explanations of others then one cannot adopt those sayings and explanations. Whereas if one has an open mind to appreciating and seeing the qualities in the explanations of others, then one can adopt those explanations and use them for one's benefit.

The commentary explains that meaning with an analogy:

The sun is unbiased and thus provides light for all on earth who have sight. Does it not belong equally to all?

The significance of the analogy is that:

Similarly, the practice of these two principles can only be of benefit to everyone. Thus it is fitting to practise them with a sense of appreciation.

What is being indicated here is the two principles, which were referred to earlier, are really a sound practice. We can interpret this in two ways.

Firstly, they are a practice for anyone who has a keen interest and a wish to practice it. There will only be benefit for anyone who would practise in that way. This is an explanation which anyone can use. Just as the sun's rays can be used by anyone who has sight, likewise anyone who has the wisdom to see the qualities of these teachings can benefit from them. It is a teaching that can be shared by anyone who wants to use it for their own benefit.

Another way to understand this could be from the practice side of an individual. When an individual practises the two principles with the proper attitude and motivation of not being partial, but with the attitude of wishing to benefit others, then what one gains from these practices will naturally benefit anyone who one comes into contact with. As one practises to benefit oneself it will also benefit others. Someone who is only concerned with benefiting their own immediate circle of friends or relatives has only a partial concern. An unconditional concern for all is lacking. However if one has a proper attitude, then through the practice of these two principles one can benefit all equally.

The summarising stanza by Gyalsab Rinpoche himself is:

Become a proper vessel for good explanation
And learned in the non-inherent existence of
dependent arising,
The final object of the path that severs worldly
existence,
The understanding of which frees from attachment to
extreme views.

The verse starts with the line that one must become a vessel for good explanation, which means the understanding that frees one from attachment to extreme views. That is the indication of a good explanation. One becomes a proper vessel by becoming learned in it the specific view, which is the non-inherent existence of dependent arising. That is the final object of the path that

severs worldly existence, leading to the final goals. So that is how one understands the meaning of this verse.

More specifically 'severs worldly existence' clearly indicates that one must be acquainted with the final object of the path, which is the understanding of the non-inherent existence of dependent arising. This shows the direct relationship between non-inherent existence and dependent arising. Thus, by becoming learned and understanding that, one acquaints oneself with the final object of the path, which means the final antidote that severs worldly existence. That which overcomes worldly existence is basically the understanding of dependent arising, and through that the non-inherent existence of dependent arising phenomena.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the twelfth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on refuting views.

This concludes the commentary on the twelfth chapter, showing how to meditate on refuting views, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas"*.

CHAPTER XIII REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT SENSE ORGANS AND OBJECTS

This is the fourth subdivision of heading 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena.¹

There are two main sections to the chapter:

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

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.1. Extensively explaining the reasoning that refutes true existence
- 1.2. Showing that emptiness of true existence is like magical illusions and so forth

1.1. Extensively explaining the reasoning that refutes true existence

This is further subdivided into three sections:

- 1.1.1. Refuting true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects
- 1.1.2. Refuting true existence of that which perceives objects
- 1.1.3. Showing that lack of true existence is, like magic, a cause for amazement

1.1.1. Refuting true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects

This heading refers to what is apprehended by the five senses: the eye sense visual objects, the ear senses apprehends sound, the nose apprehends smell, and the body apprehends tangible objects. The mind sense is not

¹ The numbering of each chapter begins anew for ease of reference. In fact chapter 13 is heading 3.2.2.1.2.4. in the overall heading structure, while Chapters 9 to 12 form the previous three subdivisions of 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena. See 10 July 2007 for a more complete outline of the full structure.

indicated here, and it apprehends phenomena, the dharmadatu of phenomena.

What is being refuted here is true existence, which will be explained later. Basically it refers to true existence, or inherent existence, which is independent existence, meaning that it exists without depending on anything else, existing from its own side, by its own right. This heading has two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.1. General refutation
- 1.1.1.2. Individual refutations

1.1.1.1. GENERAL REFUTATION

This is subdivided into two:

- 1.1.1.1.1. Actual meaning
- 1.1.1.1.2. Showing other lines of reasoning

1.1.1.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

This is subdivided into five:

- 1.1.1.1.1.1. Refuting that a sense consciousness directly perceives a pot existing by way of its own character
- 1.1.1.1.1.2. Applying this reasoning to other instances
- 1.1.1.1.1.3. Absurdity of positing that other parts are seen because visible form existent by way of its own character is seen
- 1.1.1.1.1.4. Refuting direct perception of just visible form existent by way of its own character
- 1.1.1.1.1.5. Showing that the proof and what is to be proved are alike

1.1.1.1.1.1. Refuting that a sense consciousness directly perceives a pot existing by way of its own character

First of all a vase is apprehended by the eye consciousness isn't it? That's something we can all relate to. The doubt being raised here is whether the true existence of a vase is apprehended by the eye consciousness or not. What is being refuted here is that the true existence of the vase can be apprehended.

Question: When it says [in the earlier stanza 300]:

The intelligent who seek what is good
Adopt what is worthwhile even from others,
what is this good explanation?

Answer: It is about seeing that all phenomena have no inherent existence.

Having explained that, then this assertion or doubt is raised:

Assertion: It is impossible to cognize that all phenomena have no inherent existence, for if they did they would be totally non-existent like the horns of a donkey and so forth, and would not be directly perceptible.

Here the horns of a donkey are mentioned but in other texts the example is the horns of a rabbit, which are basically non-existent.

The assertion raised by the non-Buddhist school is that saying that all phenomena have no existence is absurd. Claiming that all phenomena have no inherent existence is similar, they say, to saying that they are non-existent, just like the horns of a rabbit. The reason you wouldn't see the horns of a rabbit is because they are non-existent, so you won't see them. Similarly, they say, if a vase was not inherently existent then you wouldn't see the vase.

The very fact that you see a vase is because it is inherently existent, and the fact that you see it is proof that it inherently exists, that it exists by its own characteristics or exists truly or inherently, and that is a fact. That is what the non-Buddhist schools' objection is.

The assertion continues:

However, since a pot and blue are directly perceptible, all functional things are in fact inherently existent.

Answer:

When seeing its form, one does not in fact 301
See the whole pot. Who that knows
Reality would claim that the pot
Is directly perceptible also?

The view of the non-Buddhists is refuted by the verse, which is explained in this way:

It follows that direct perception of a pot which exists by way of its own entity is not feasible. If it were, the awareness perceiving the visible form of the pot should perceive all its parts. Yet when visual consciousness perceives the pot's form, it does not in fact perceive every single part of the pot.

First of all the correct meaning of the Tibetan word *pum pa*, is vase rather than pot. Basically a vase is a label placed upon an object that is an accumulation of the eight substances. Similarly a person is a label placed upon the accumulation of the five aggregates.

The eight substances forming the accumulation on which the vase is labelled are the four elements and the four substances derived from the four elements. The four elements are earth, water, fire and wind. The four substances derived from the elements are atoms of visual form, taste, smell and tangible objects. Sometimes the sound element and the space element are added to these. When the combination of the eight substances come together, you label this combination 'vase', so that is what a vase is. What we have to understand is that a vase is not something which arises from its own side, but it is labelled upon a suitable base, which is the combination of these eight substances.

So the very fact that the vase is labelled upon the substances, in itself, indicates that the vase does not exist from its own side, because you have labelled it from the subject's side. When the vase is seen you don't see every part of it, you don't see the tangible part and all of that, you only see the visual aspect, i.e. of the sight substances you see only one of the parts.

The line of reasoning here is that if the vase were to be inherently existent to begin with, then that means that everything in relation to the vase would have to arise from its own side independently, without having to depend on anything else. If the vase were to exist independently then when you perceive the vase you would also have to perceive the vase independently, with all its characteristics, because everything would exist from its own side. That would have to be the case. The logical reasoning given here is that the very fact that you cannot perceive every aspect of the vase is an indication that it does not exist inherently from its own side or independently.

As the commentary further explains:

Who that knows the reality of things would claim that the pot is directly perceptible? "Also" refers to also blue existent by way of its own character.'

The pot is imputed in dependence on eight substances and therefore cannot exist byway of its own character, nor by seeing one part can one see all its parts. Similarly, if fire existed by way of its own entity, the fallacy that it should always keep burning would arise, since it would not require fuel.

This line of reasoning is also presented in the Madhyamika text. The analogy, which is quite vivid, is that if fire existed independently from its own side then it would not depend on fuel. But for fire to burn, the fact that it has to depend on fuel for its very existence indicates that fire does not exist independently or inherently.

As the commentary concludes:

Dialecticians contradict both reasoning and common knowledge when they call awareness arising in dependence upon individual sense organs direct perception, and assert that awareness free from conceptuality in which a sound image and a generic image may be apprehended as merged is direct perception. Each individual moment of consciousness cannot be a direct perceiver. Objects like the waxing moon, which are directly perceived by many people, are commonly held to be directly perceptible, whereas that which perceives these objects is not. Furthermore since they assert that sense consciousness is a direct perceiver, it is inconsistent to think that it is also a valid perceiver. An extensive explanation of this may be found in Candrakirti's commentary. It has not been included here for fear that it would be too long.

1.1.1.1.2. Applying this reasoning to other instances

The reasoning that one should understand here is the reasoning that was given earlier. The vase is dependent on its basis which is the accumulation of the eight substances, and on this basis the vase is labelled 'vase'. The vase does not exist from the object's (vase's) side, but rather the subject labels it upon the basis of the eight substances. Thus the vase does not exist inherently or independently. That is the main reasoning that was given earlier, so we can use that same logical reasoning in other instances.

By means of this very analysis 302
Those with superior intelligence
Should refute individually
All that is fragrant, sweet and soft.

As the commentary explains:

By means of this very analysis using the reasoning which refutes the assertion that sense consciousness is a direct perceiver in relation to a pot, blue and so forth [as explained earlier], existent by way of their own entity, the wise with superior intelligence [using that earlier reasoning] refute separately in each case the contention that sense consciousnesses are direct perceivers in relation to fragrances such as the fragrance of jasmine flowers, sweet tastes and that which is soft to touch, all existent by way of their own entity.

What is being explained here is that when an object is perceived by the senses, only one aspect of that object is perceived by any one sense consciousness. So the shape of the vase is seen by the eye consciousness but not the smell or the taste (if there is a taste) or the feeling or the tangibleness of the vase. Likewise the smell of a vase is perceived only by the nose sense but not by the eye or the ear or the tongue senses. Thus every sense perceives only one aspect of the particular corresponding object but not others. That is something which has to be understood.

As the commentary further reads:

Since one cannot make distinctions such as seeing one part but not seeing others, or distinctions with regard to what touches and what does not, or with regard to closeness and distance in relation to truly existent functional things, such fallacies ensue.

If the vase were to be truly and inherently existent, which means existing from its own side independently, then when any one sense perceives the vase it would have to perceive the vase completely in its full aspect. That is, if the vase were to be independently, inherently existent the eye consciousness perceiving a vase would have to perceive the taste, the smell and everything of the vase. It is similar with everything else that is dependent rather than inherently existent. As mentioned in the text what is close or distant, something we touch or not, is dependent on other factors. For example, closeness does not inherently exist. If it did, then close would have to always be close, but in fact when you move away what was close earlier becomes distant, and what was distant earlier becomes close when you go up to it. That is also an indication that it does not exist inherently from its own side, but rather is dependent on many other factors.

It is the same with touching and separation, and long and short. If touching were to be inherently touching then they would always have to be inherently touching, and then there could be no separation. But things that touch, or are close can be separated. It is the same with long and short. If long was inherently long then it would have to be long in all circumstances, but we all know that whatever we consider long is considered long only in relation to something else that is shorter. So that very thing that we consider long in relation to something shorter, becomes short when it is related to something that is even longer. If things were to be inherently existent then the fallacies of always having to be long and always having to be short, or always having to be touching and never separated, or that which is close always being close, and that which is distant always having to be distant would arise. What is mentioned here in the text is that those fallacies would arise if things were to be inherently existent.

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Edited Version

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As usual, let us sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation in our mind. First of all it is important to withdraw our mind from external distractions and bring it inward to focus on the teachings to be received. Then we generate the bodhicitta motivation, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.1.1.3. Absurdity of positing that other parts are seen because visible form existent by way of its own character is seen

The earlier contention was that a vase, for example, exists from its own side and is inherently existent, and this is what is being refuted.

Assertion: All parts of the pot are seen when its visual form is seen, for the pot is not a separate entity from its visual form.

Answer:

If because the form is seen 303
Everything is seen,
Why because of what is not seen
Would the form not be unseen?

The assertion indicates that when a vase is seen, then all its parts are seen, and thus a part of a vase is not a separate entity from its visual form.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

If on the grounds that visual consciousness sees the pot's form one can posit that all parts of the pot are seen, why on the grounds that visual consciousness does not perceive the pot's smell would even the visible form, which is accepted as seen, not be unseen?

The refutation of the non-Buddhists' contention is that if you claim that all the parts of the pot are seen when you see the form of a pot, then if you don't see one part, could you then say you don't see all of the parts? What is being asserted is that when the pot's form is seen, all parts of the pot are seen, and because the pot's form is seen as being inherently existent, then the vase or pot must be inherently existent.

According to our system, of course, the pot cannot be seen as being inherently existent because it does not exist inherently. However if it were to be an inherently existent pot, then just seeing one part of the pot or the vase as being inherently existent cannot imply that the rest of the pot or the vase also has to be inherently existent. Can one assume that by seeing one part of a vase, or pot, that we are seeing the entirety of the pot?

Student: Yes, if we have an omniscient mind.

Other students: No.

A vase is made up of an accumulation of eight substances, including the smell and tactile senses and so forth and the four elements. So does seeing, for example, the visual form

of the vase imply that one can also perceive the smell and the tactile and so forth?

Students: No.

If you close your eyes you could feel the vase with your hands or any other part of your body, and you could smell the vase with your nose, but you wouldn't be able to see it. In other words, if you close your eyes you wouldn't be able to see the form of the vase, or its shape or colour. Whereas if you look at a vase you won't be able to perceive the smell, and without touching it, you won't feel the vase. That is because, as mentioned in the text on cognition, a sentient being's sense perception can only perceive one object at a time, and no more. That means that the eye perception can only perceive visual objects, while the ear consciousness can only perceive audible objects and the nose can only perceive smells and so forth. There is an exception, of course, for enlightened beings like a buddha. The main question here is whether the eye consciousness can perceive the inherent existence of a vase. If it perceive form then why doesn't the eye consciousness perceive inherently existent form?

Students: Because inherently existent form doesn't exist.

Does form appear or not?

Students: Yes form does appear.

So the distinction between the appearance of inherent existence and the actual perception of inherent existence has to be understood. As the teachings state, a sentient being's eye consciousness perceives form, which appears as being inherently existent to the sentient being's eye consciousness. Thus the Prasangika say that a sentient being's sense consciousness is a mistaken consciousness, because what is perceived always has the appearance of inherent existence. Returning to the argument being posited here, if one sees one part of the vase, does that imply that all parts of the vase are seen?

Students: No.

In this argument what is being established is that the inherent existence of form and so forth cannot be perceived by the eye consciousness.

For those Buddhist schools below the Svatantrika, if it is valid cognition in relation to form it has to be valid in relation to an inherently existent form, i.e. to perceiving it as being inherently existent. These distinctions between perceptions have been explained earlier in the Madhyamika text.

1.1.1.1.4. Refuting direct perception of just visible form existent by way of its own character

Assertion: Though the pot is not a directly perceptible object of comprehension its visible form is established by direct perception and thus, indirectly, the pot existing by way of its own entity is also directly perceptible.

Answer:

There is no direct perception 304
Of just the form alone,
Because it has a close and distant
As well as a central part.

The commentary explains the refutation further:

It follows that there is no direct perception of just the visible form alone existent by way of its own entity because the visible form too has many parts, such as close, distant and central parts, and is thus imputed in dependence upon many parts.

Here, close distant and central refers to the front, back and middle parts respectively of a vase. Any tangible object has different parts to it and is dependent on those different parts. When you look at the front of a clock, for example, you don't see the back, because the back is a different part, which is not obvious to you right now. Then if you turn it around and look at the back of the clock then you won't see the front, and there is also the middle part. This indicates that any given object is dependent on different parts, and is a composite of the different parts that make it up. So, as all visible forms have different parts to them, they are dependent on those different parts and thus any given visible form is imputed on the different parts that it has. As the commentary concludes:

There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness.

There is no visible form existent anywhere that exists by the way of its own entity or inherently, or by its own characteristics, and it is this inherent existence that is being refuted. i.e. there is no inherent existence or existence by way of its own entity.

Thus from the Prasangika point of view all existent phenomena are imputed and are merely nominal. We can take another example, such as the Prime Minister. The label is merely imputed upon the person who has the characteristic of being nominated as a prime minister, which is determined by how many votes he has. When the required number of votes is reached, then the label of 'prime minister' is conferred, and from that day on, he is referred to as Prime Minister. This is an indication that a prime minister does not exist by way of its own entity or inherently. If that were to be the case then regardless of the number of votes there would have to be a prime minister. Thus as indicated in the text, 'There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness'.

1.1.1.1.5. Showing that the proof and what is to be proved are alike

*This also applies when one examines
Whether particles have parts or not.
Thus to prove a thesis by that
Which must be proved is not feasible.* 305

As the commentary explains:

When all the parts are separated, that form is finally reduced to the smallest particles. An investigation of whether particles have parts or not applies to those particles too.

This is basically a refutation of those who assert that there are partless particles. The implication is that the same reasoning refuting whether visible forms have parts or not applies to those who assert that there are partless particles. If you go down to the smallest particle, then when you investigate and analyse further, you will find that it has parts as well. As it mentions in the text:

If they have parts like a front and a back, they are, like the pot, imputed in dependence upon many parts...

Using a coarser object such as the visible form of a pot, it was explained that a pot or a vase has parts to it – a front part, a back part and a middle part. Similarly, even the subtlest particle also has to have a front part and a back part, and directional points such as east and north and so forth. This logical reasoning then implies that there cannot be a partless particle. What is being established here is that even

the smallest particle is nominal and an imputed phenomena, just like all other phenomena.

In establishing that the smallest particle also has parts, such as the front, and back, and the eastern, southern, northern and western directional parts, it is shown that the smallest particle is dependent on its directional parts for its existence, and thus it is imputed and nominated in dependence of those parts. Thus, unlike those who assert the tiniest particle is partless, suggesting an inherent existence or existence from its own entity, from our Buddhist point of view, specifically the Prasangika point of view, the tiniest part cannot be inherently existent, because it is dependent on its parts. If it didn't have parts, you could not establish it to be existent, so it would be non-existent. But even though it is the tiniest particle it does have parts, and it is dependent on those parts. Thus, the conclusion is that there cannot be a partless particle, and thus an inherently existent particle.

What is mainly being established here is that all existence down to the tiniest particle is imputed upon the basis, which is a dependent arising. In other words all existence is dependent on its parts.

As the commentary concludes:

If they do not have parts, they cannot exist because of being inapprehensible. Thus it is not feasible to prove that the pot exists by way of its entity as a directly perceptible object of comprehension by means of that which must be proved, for things do not exist by way of their own character.

1.1.1.1.2. SHOWING OTHER LINES OF REASONING

*Everything too is a component
As well as being a composite.
Thus even a spoken syllable
Does not have existence here.* 306

As the commentary explains the verse:

Moreover when objects apprehended by the physical sense organs are examined, all are components in relation to their composites as well as composites in relation to their components and are therefore merely imputed in dependence upon their parts.

This is yet another way of looking at an interdependent relationship. Any given object is a composite that is made up of components. The components and the composite are interdependently related: the composite is dependent on its components, because without its components it cannot be a composite. Likewise, the components are dependent on the composite, because without a composite there would not be components of that object. Thus they are interdependently related, and are merely imputed in dependence upon their parts. Another way of understanding this is that the composite is dependent on the components, and the components themselves are dependent on the parts that make up the components, i.e. every part is further related to something else. Another way of understanding it is, for example, that the pot or vase is dependent on its components, which are the eight substances that make up the vase. Then each of the substances are further dependent on their components, which are the parts and so forth that make up each of the eight substances.

As with the analysis of the smallest particle, names, which are ultimately reduced to spoken syllables such as "a," are also just conventions in this world and do not exist by way of their own entity.

Just as is the case with visible forms, when we talk about the actual names of things, then what makes up our speech are

sounds. These too can be reduced to one syllable such as 'a', and that also does not exist by way of its own entity. It is also dependent on other factors for its existence and thus it is merely imputed upon its parts. So, as it mentions in the commentary:

Thus you must recognize all dependently arising phenomena as mere names and terms.

Here the 'mere' in 'mere names and terms' connotes that things do not exist independently, without depending on any other parts and so forth, and that they do not exist from their own entity. That is what is being negated here when you say 'mere'. Thus, when the Prasangika view relates to everything as being mere names and terms, merely nominated by the conceptual mind; that 'mere' negates phenomena as being truly existent or inherently existent, or existing by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.2. INDIVIDUAL REFUTATIONS

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1. Refuting that sense organs apprehend objects existing by way of their own entity

1.1.1.2.2. Refuting apprehension by mental consciousness

1.1.1.2.1. REFUTING THAT SENSE ORGANS APPREHEND OBJECTS EXISTING BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITY

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects

1.1.1.2.1.2. Refuting truly existent auditory objects

1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects

1.1.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting that which perceives objects

1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects

This heading is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions (which refers to the Vaibashikas)

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions

This is divided into three:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different

Assertion: The pot is directly perceptible since visual consciousness sees the pot's visible form existent by way of its own character, consisting of color and shape.

Answer:

If shape is distinct from color 307
How is shape apprehended?
If not distinct, why would the body
Not also apprehend color?

What the Vaibashika assert, as we also assert, is that visual forms consist of shapes and colours. That being the case, what they are saying is that because the colour and the shape are perceived as existing by way of their own

character, then as a consequence the vase itself has to be established as being existing by way of its own character, or by way of its own entity.

This is refuted in the following manner. First of all what has to be accepted by both sides is that if anything exists it has to exist either as one or as separate or distinct. Nothing can exist outside of the two categories of being either one or distinct. That being the case, the counter-question to their assertion is:

Are color and shape inherently one or distinct?

If colour and shape are distinct:

If shape such as length and so forth is inherently distinct from color, how can a visual consciousness take shape as its object of apprehension? It follows that it cannot because shape is an entity distinct from color.

If colour and shape are one then:

Alternatively, if they are not distinct but inherently one, why does touch not apprehend color in the dark just as it apprehends shape? It follows that it should because they are one.

What is being implied here is that if the colour and shape of a vase, for example, are inherently one, then when you perceive the shape you would have to also perceive the colour of the vase. However if you were in a dark room and you touched the vase, you would be able to distinguish its shape, but you would not be able to perceive its colour. If the shape and the colour were inherently one then, by default, by perceiving either colour or shape, one would be have to simultaneously perceive the other. When it has been refuted that colour and shape are neither inherently one nor distinct, then we have also refuted the inherent existence of the vase itself.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both

Assertion: The visible form source exists because the four great elements which are causal forms exist.

Answer:

Only the form is visible 308
But the form's causes are not seen
If indeed it is thus,
Why are both not also
Perceived by just the eyes?'

What they are asserting is that since the four elements are existent by way of their own entity, then that which arises from the four elements are also inherently existent. As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Only the resultant form is visible but the form's causes such as the earth element are not seen. Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different. If they are inherently one, they must be one. In that case why does just visual consciousness itself not apprehend both the causal and resultant forms? It follows that it should because they are one.

This is using the same logical reasoning of one and many that was used earlier, but here the example is that because the causes are seen as being existent by way of their own entity, then the result which is a visible form will also be inherently existent or existent by way of its own entity. If that was the case then, as mentioned in the commentary:

Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different.

Since cause and effect have an interdependent relationship they cannot be inherently different, but if they are inherently one then they have to be one and the same. However the elements and the resultant form cannot be one because they are perceived by separate consciousnesses. While the form is perceived by visual consciousness, the elements are not. The main point being establishment here is that the cause and effect are dependently arising phenomena. This means that the cause (the elements) is dependent on the effect (the visual form) for its existence. The cause is thus imputed in dependence on the result. Likewise the result is also imputed upon the dependence of a cause. Thus they are not inherently different because they have the mutual relationship of depending on each other.

If they were inherently distinct or separate, then that would imply that there is no relationship between the two and that they would have to exist without having to relate to each other. Whereas the fact is that a cause has to be dependent on an effect for it to be a cause, and an effect is also dependent on a cause for it to be an effect. That mutual relationship indicates that they are not inherently distinct or separate.

Neither can cause and effect be inherently one. If they were to be inherently one, then when either consciousness apprehends one, they would also have to apprehend the other. That which apprehends the effect (visual form) is apprehended by visual consciousness, but the causes (the elements) are not apprehended by visual consciousness. This indicates that they are not inherently one.

If cause and effect were inherently distinct then the fault that would arise is that cause and effect would not be mutually related. Rather they would be mutually exclusive, and not depend on each other, which is absurd. Whereas if they were actually inherently one, then the perception of one would have to automatically mean that the other is also perceived. But that also goes against our experience.

Thus the conclusion is that cause and effect are neither inherently distinct nor inherently one but are mutually dependent. What the other schools are attempting to do is to establish the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character and then proving that the result, is by default, also existent by way of its own character. However that cannot be established.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

Earth is seen as firm and stable 309
And is apprehended by the body.
Only that which is tangible
Is referred to as earth.

This verse relates to the four elements, in particular the earth element. As the commentary explains:

Earth is seen as firm and stable and furthermore is apprehended by tactile consciousness. Thus only that which is tangible is referred to as earth. Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different. If one accepts them as truly existent, they are unrelated. It would thereby follow that visible form is causeless.

This is in relation to the earlier contention that by establishing the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character, the effect would also be established as existing by way of its own character or entity. That is being refuted again here, by saying that the earth, which is part of the causes is a tactile object that is

apprehended by the tactile consciousness, and not by the visual consciousness, because of its entity being firm and stable and so forth. Thus as mentioned here 'that which is tangible is referred to as earth'.

Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different.

What is being further established here is that the consciousnesses that perceive form and the elements are different, thus they cannot be established as being exactly the same or one. The Vaibashika said that by establishing the cause as being truly existent you can establish the effect as being truly existent, so what is being refuted here is that by establishing one you can establish the other. To begin with, they are separate and because they are separate you cannot establish one as being truly existent and thus establish the other as being truly existent.

As stated above the four elements are said to be perceived by the tactile consciousness but not by the visual consciousness. For beginning debate classes in the monastery young monks address this debate: Is the earth perceived by visual consciousness or not? Even though you are not beginners we can use that same formula. So does the visual consciousness perceive the earth element?

Some students say yes. Other students say no.

Does the visual consciousness perceive water or not?

Students: Yes.

Visual consciousness perceives fire doesn't it?

Students: Yes.

But the texts assert that the elements cannot be perceived by the visual consciousness. The implication then is that visual consciousness only perceives the colour of water, or fire, or the earth, but does not perceive earth, water or fire itself. That is what comes up in the debates. Of course saying that you don't see the earth or that you don't see water seems to go against normal conventions. The way to understand this, is rather tricky. According to the explanation here, earth is perceived by the tactile consciousness. We would accept that someone who is blind still perceives the firmness and so forth of the ground. When we move about in the dark, we can use our feeling sense of touch to try to find our way around. That is because we actually perceive what we feel. So that is how the ground or earth is asserted as being tactile consciousness. Yet if we say that we don't see the food that we eat or the water that we drink, then that also seems quite strange! However, according to the explanation in the teachings, food is actually perceived by the taste consciousness.

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

Vaisesika assertion: A pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity but neither is it not a visible object since it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

Since it was produced as something visible, 310
It is of no use at all to the pot.
As with the production of visibility,
It lacks even the entity of existence.

The Vaisesika assertion is basically that a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but neither is it not a visible object. Their reasoning is that it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

They assert that a separate generality is the mere entity of that object such as a mere vase, or a mere form, or a mere existence. The mere existence of any given object is called a separate generality. It is that 'mereness' of a mere vase or a mere pot that is directly perceptible. Although it is not a visible object, its entity is basically perceived through its mere existence or 'mereness'. What they seem to be implying is that initially a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but then through the 'mere existence' called the separate generality, then it becomes an object that is directly perceptible. What they seem to imply is that initially it is not a visual object by way of its own entity, but then it then transforms into something that is directly perceptible. As the commentary further explains, this too is unacceptable.

Has the pot come into existence as something visible through its own causes or not?

They distinguish between a pot not being a visible object by way of its own entity, but say that it is directly perceived later, by virtue of possessing a visibility which is a separate generality. The refutation is in the form of a question and a counter question: Has a pot come into existence as something visible by its own cause, or not?

In the first case it would follow that an association with the separate generality of visibility is of no use in making the pot directly perceptible, because it has come into existence as something visible through its own causes.

This is showing the absurdity of their second assertion.

For this reason the generality of visibility is not produced in relation to the pot.

Then furthermore as the commentary reads:

Further, a pot that has no connection with visibility and is not something visible lacks any inherently established entity of existence. Therefore the pot could not be either actually or imputedly directly perceptible as you contend.

Next Tuesday falls on the anniversary of Lama Tsong Khapa's passing away. Because of the significance of the day we won't have class that evening but a puja, which it would be good to attend.

As that day is a very auspicious day for making aspirations, many monks and nuns, in particular great teachers and beings, make special prayers on that day. So too do lay followers of this tradition.

Coming into contact with Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings, let alone understanding them is very rare, so we can consider ourselves fortunate to have met with the perfect teachings and the perfect teachers who expound the teachings. However it is essential that we make prayers to be able to continuously meet with these perfect conditions in lifetime after lifetime so that we can progress along the path. That's something that I personally do, and from my side I would advise you to follow suit.

In the old days this was one of two auspicious days celebrated in China. The other auspicious day called *shim-ju*, which is the anniversary of the passing away of the founder of the Sera Monastery, who was also a renowned teacher in China.

Lama Tsong Khapa was a very renowned teacher, and the Emperor of China sent letters written in gold requesting that Lama Tsong Khapa come and teach in China. Lama Tsong

Khapa ignored the first one, but when the second one arrived, Lama Tsong Khapa sent one of his disciples Jamchen Choje who was the founder of the Sera Monastery. Nowadays historians would say that by ignoring the Emperor's command Lama Tsong Khapa showed that he didn't have to abide by the commands of the Emperor, which is also an indication that Tibet was sovereign country.

In the old days there was hardly anyone within China who didn't know the name of Lama Tsong Khapa, because of the great contribution he made through his teachings and translations and so forth. It was traditional to offer butter lamps and light on that day, and at the Emperor's command the people had to offer a lamp on that day. But of course these days that tradition is not sustained any more.

There is a general belief that an ancient Emperor of China was actually a manifestation of Manjushri, so in Tibet it was taken as a bad omen when the last Emperor was not enthroned, and it was believed that a lot of disasters and calamities would befall China. In fact from that time on, many bad things did happen in China and also Mongolia and so forth.

Practitioners and followers of Buddhism, among others, found it difficult to stay in China and escaped to Taiwan. Many scholars and wealthy people came from Shanghai. They maintained the teachings and doctrines of Lama Tsong Khapa and to this day they have the translations of the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, the graduated path of enlightenment. Thus it seems that that worldly wealth as well as the teachings and so forth were able to be preserved in Taiwan. Even though there was some decline, nevertheless a lot has been preserved and to this day there are many who still have strong faith and engage in practice.

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not. That is something that is accepted by both sides. Even conventionally we all accept that the eye sense does not perceive other stimuli such as smells or taste and so forth. What is mainly being negated here is that the eye perceiving its objects by way of its own entity. The reasoning given here is that the eye does not perceive visible form by way of its own entity for, like the nose sense organ, it is an outcome of the elements, i.e. derived from elements. So it cannot perceive the object as being by way of its own entity. That the eye is an outcome of the elements is accepted by the Vaibashika as well. As explained earlier, being an outcome of the elements means that the object itself is made up of a combination of the eight substances. So because it is made up of the eight substances it has its own unique way of production, dependent on many factors. Therefore it cannot be perceived as existing by way of its own entity.

The reasoning here is that if, for example, the eye were to perceive visual stimuli by way of its own entity then that would imply that the object would exist independently without having to depend on anything else for existence. However, as mentioned previously, the visual stimuli itself is an outcome of the elements, which means it is a collaboration of the eight substances (which are the four elements plus visual forms, touch, taste and smell).

Objection: If the eye and so forth do not exist it contradicts explanations concerning the maturation of actions.

The objection is that if eye and so forth do not exist, then that contradicts the explanation concerning the maturation of actions, meaning that it will contradict the sutra that says if you do not accept eye and so forth then you will go against the sutras.

Answer: But even we do not refute that.

The answer from our system to refute the earlier objection is that we do not refute the eye and so forth as not existing.

Question: Why is that not refuted?

Answer: We refute that things exist by way of their own entity but far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we affirm it in our own system.

The reason why we do not refute that is because we only refute that things exist by way of their own entity. Far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we affirm it in our own system. What is being established is that when the eye and so forth are negated the eye sense and so forth are not being negated. What is being negated, is existing by way of its own nature, or existing inherently.

Therefore far from refuting the existence of all that is dependent arising, we are firm in our own system that everything is dependent arising.

Although it cannot sustain investigation by the reasoning which analyzes suchness and though it is not established by way of its own entity, it is undeniable that the eye sees visible form and does not hear sound.

Thus recognizing that the maturation of actions is inconceivable, one should accept it without applying analysis by reasoning.

That which is perceived and conventionally established is something that has to be accepted as existing. The analysis asserts that it exists without applying analysis and reasoning as to the nature of how it exists.

Certainly therefore the Subdier said that the fruition of actions is inconceivable. Sūtra says:

The maturation of sentient beings' actions is inconceivable.

Thus this whole world comes into existence through causes.

The sutra cited here says that the maturation of sentient beings' actions is inconceivable. Thus this whole world comes into existence through causes. There is actually much more to this citation, but this is what is relevant here.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.2. Refuting consciousness as agent

Having refuted that the eye exists by way of its own entity, this second heading concerns refuting consciousness as an agent existing by way of its own entity.

Assertion: The eye and so forth [meaning the rest of the consciousnesses] are inherently existent because one experiences consciousness, their effect.

Answer:

Because the conditions are incomplete

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There is no awareness before looking,

While afterwards awareness is of no use.

The instrument is of no use in the third case.

By using the effect as reasoning they establish that the causes, the eye and so forth, are also inherently existent. Thus they are saying that because of the eye organ there is an eye consciousness, and because there is an eye organ they exist inherently, because one experiences the consciousness as the effect. So they are establishing that because there is an effect that one experiences, then the cause itself must also be inherently existent.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

A visual consciousness does not exist before looking at a form, for prior to that the conditions which produce it are incomplete. Alternatively if it exists after looking at the form, it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use in looking at the form, because looking takes place before it exists.

The main point here is that visual consciousness does not exist before looking at form. What is being implied here is that a visual consciousness does not exist by way of its own entity before looking at form, for prior to that the conditions that produce it are incomplete. According to their assertion if it exists after looking at form, then it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use looking at the form, because looking at it takes place before it exists. Again, this has to be related to inherently existence, or existence by way of its own entity. What is being established then is that a visual consciousness could not exist inherently, or by way of its own entity, before looking at form, nor could it exist as being inherently existent after looking at something.

The main point being discussed here is that if visual consciousness were to exist by way of its own entity then, does it exist prior to looking at form or after looking at form? If it exists prior to looking at form then there is the absurdity that a visual consciousness could not exist before looking at the form, because before looking at the form its conditions to be produced are not complete. Alternatively if it exists after looking at the form, it follows that the eye consciousness is of no use in looking at the form, because looking at it takes place before it exists. So there would be no need for an eye consciousness. That is the absurdity which would arise if visual consciousness were to exist inherently, or by way of its own nature.

To make it simpler, does the eye consciousness see prior to the eye seeing form or afterwards? If it exists prior to seeing

form then it could not be established as seeing form because the very conditions necessary for seeing form have not been completed. So you could not say you could see prior to the eye seeing form. But if the visual consciousness perceives the visual form after it has been seen by the eye then what extra use would there be for an eye consciousness if the form has already been perceived?

The refutation is made by counter argument: if the eye consciousness were to exist inherently or by way of its own entity, then does it exist prior to the eye perceiving or afterwards? In both cases an absurdity arises. There is a third possibility. As the commentary reads:

As a third possibility one might think that that which looks and consciousness are simultaneous.

In that case: It would then follow that the instrument of looking would be of no use in the production of that visual consciousness because the two would exist simultaneously and would be unrelated.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3. Refuting the eye as agent

This is sub-divided into three:

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.1. Absurdity if the eye travels to look at visible form

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.2. Purposelessness if it travels to look at the form after it is seen

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.3. Consequence that all objects would be seen if the eye by way of its own entity perceived form without travelling

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.1. Absurdity if the eye travels to look at visible form

Assertion: The eye is the instrument of looking.

Again this is implying that the eye is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity.

Answer:

If the eye travels, that which is 313
Distant would take long to see.
Why are extremely close
And very distant forms not clear?

In answer to the assertion and to explain the meaning of the verse two counter questions are posited:

When the eye looks at a form, does it look after travelling to the object or without doing so? In the first case, if when the eye looked at a form there were motion of travelling toward the object, it should take longer to see distant objects.

The assertion is that it should take longer to see distant objects because if the eye actually has to travel over distance, then it would take a long time to see distant objects.

The commentary continues:

If the eye perceived through contact, why would the eye ointment and spatula, which are extremely close, and very distant forms not be equally clear? It follows that they would be because of being perceived through contact.

What is being explained is that if the eye needs to have actual contact with an object in order to see it, then very distant objects could not be seen because you couldn't have contact with very distant objects. However from our experience, we know that we can see very distant things, although not clearly.

The main point that is being refuted is that the eye is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity. If it is established that the eye is an instrument of looking by way

of its own entity, then the two main counter-questions which are raised are, does the eye look at form after travelling to the object or without having to travel.

In the first case, as mentioned here, if the eye had to travel a distance in order to see an object then the absurdity is that it would take a longer to see distant objects because of the time involved in the eye having to travel to the site of the object.

Alternatively if there had to be direct contact with the eye like eye ointment and the spatula which applies the eye ointment, in order to perceive things, then the absurdity would be that one would not perceive things which are at a distance, such as stars and the moon. However again from own experience, we know that we don't have to come into direct contact with an object in order to perceive it.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.2. Purposelessness if it travels to look at the form after it is seen

This section refutes the case where the eye travels to look at the object after having seen it.

If the eye travels when the form is seen 314
Its movement is of no benefit.
Alternatively it is false to say
What it intends to view is ascertained.

As the commentary explains the verse:

If the eye travelled to the form after seeing it [i.e. if that is what is being asserted], its movement would be of no benefit [or no use], for though it does so to view the form, that form has already been seen.

The point here is that if the eye were to travel to perceive form after seeing it, then the movement would be of no benefit because the form has already been seen, so what is the purpose of travelling to it?

The commentary continues:

Alternatively, if it approached without seeing the form which it intended to view, it would be false to say it had definitely been seen, for it approaches what is to be viewed without seeing it, like a blind man.

The analogy is that if a blind person said, 'I am going to see something' then that would be false. Even though he may say that he is going to see something, he will not actually be able to see it because of being blind. Similarly it would be false to say that something had been seen by an eye that travelled to see it.

1.1.1.2.1.1.2.3.3. Consequence that all objects would be seen if the eye by way of its own entity perceived form without travelling

If the eye perceives without travelling 315
It would see all these phenomena.
For that which does not travel there is
Neither distance nor obscuration.

To avoid these errors [as mentioned previously in relation to the eye travelling to an object to see it] one might assert that it perceives form by way of its own entity without travelling. In that case the eye which stays here would see all of these phenomena: the close and distant, as well as the obscured and unobscured. For an eye which does not approach the object there should be no difference between close or distant, obscured or unobscured objects.

If objects were to be seen by the eye by way of its own entity then these absurdities or faults relating to whether it sees it prior to travelling, or by travelling to the object, or without travelling to the object would arise. These are the faults that

arise if you posit that the eye perceives things by way of its own entity.

The main point being made here is that if the eye were to perceive objects by way of its own entity then regardless of the object the eye would have to perceive the thing. It wouldn't make any difference whether the object was close or distant or obscured or unobscured. If the eye was to perceive things by way of its own entity then regardless of the object the eye would have to be able to perceive it. The conclusion is that the eye does perceive things, but in relation to many conditions, and not by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.2.1.2.4. Consequence that the eye is an instrument of looking in relation to the eye

*If the nature of all things
First appears in themselves,
Why would the eye not
Be perceived by the eye itself?* 316

If the eye were to perceive things by way of its own entity then these further absurdities are being pointed out. The commentary explains the verse thus:

Just as the fragrance of the magnolia or blue lotus is first found at its source and afterwards, through contact, on a sesame seed and so forth...

This analogy relates to the general conventional understanding of where fragrances come from. When objects have a fragrance we know its main source from our own perceptions. Through coming into contact with another object such as sesame seed, the fragrance of a blue lotus will transfer onto that secondary object.

...it is the way of all things that their nature first appears in themselves. Since it cannot relinquish its nature even in relation to itself, if it is an instrument of looking by way of its own entity, why does the eye not perceive itself?

It follows that it should since the eye organ even with the eye as its object cannot give up its nature as an instrument of looking. Yet valid cognition negates that the eye perceives itself. Thus the subject, the eye, is not an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity, because it does not look at itself.

What is being established is that conventionally we accept that things have their own nature. What is being refuted here is that the eye is an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity. The absurdity being pointed out here is that if the eye were to look at form by way of its own entity, then that would imply that the eye would have to perceive itself because of having its own nature. However that goes against our observations. We cannot perceive our own eye without relying on something else. However if the eye itself was an instrument to perceive things by way of its own entity then we would have to be able to see our own eye. Not being able see our own eye is yet another conventional reason proving that the eye does not perceive things by way of its own entity.

The syllogism in relation to this is: The subject the eye, is not an instrument of looking at form by way of its own entity, because it does not look at itself.

1.1.1.2.1.2.5. Refuting a combination of three factors as the instrument of looking at visible form

Assertion: The eye alone does not have the ability to view form. The form is seen in dependence upon a combination of three factors.

Answer:

*The eye does not have consciousness
And consciousness lacks that which looks.
If form has neither of these,
How can they see form?* 317

The Sautrantika Buddhist school asserts that the eye cannot perceive or see things just by itself as other factors have to be present. The two other conditions which have to be present are the object and the eye consciousness. The eye can perceive only when all three conditions come into contact.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Since the eye is matter it is not conscious of the object. Consciousness is not that which looks at the object. The form, the objective condition, is neither that which looks nor consciousness. How can form be seen by way of its own entity through a combination of these three factors? It follows that it is not feasible because visible form which is one of them has no ability to see.

The main assertion here is that form can be seen by way of its own entity through a combination of these three factors. It follows that this is not feasible, because visible form which is one of the three factors has no ability to see.

The absurdity being pointed out is that they assert that form is seen in dependence on the combination of three factors, again implying that form is seen by way of its own entity. What is being pointed out here is that if one of the three factors does not have the ability to perceive at all, which is the object itself (form), then it cannot serve as a factor to actually perceive. Since you say that a combination of the three allows the eye to see, if one of them does not have the actual intrinsic ability to see at all, then one of the conditions does not serve its purpose. It is the general rule that if one of the factors of a combination does not stand, then the whole combination does not stand. So the assertion is thus is being refuted by pointing out this absurdity.

1.1.1.2.1.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT AUDITORY OBJECTS

We will continue with this in the next session.

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Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 December 2007

As usual it is appropriate to sit in a comfortable, relaxed posture. Withdrawing our mind from distractions we set our mind by generating a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by freeing them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.1.2.1.2. Refuting truly existent auditory objects

The three subdivisions of this heading are:

1.1.1.2.1.2.1. Refutation by examining whether sound is a maker of noise

1.1.1.2.1.2.2. Refutation by examining whether or not sound is apprehended through contact

1.1.1.2.1.2.3. Showing the flaws in this contention

1.1.1.2.1.2.1. Refutation by examining whether sound is a maker of noise

This outline has to be put into the appropriate context. What is being refuted is sound as being inherently existent sound, i.e. as a maker of either inherently existent noise, or noise that is existent by way of its own entity, or truly existent noise. Sound itself does exist, however what is being refuted is sound as an inherently existent phenomenon.

Texts such as this one give a detailed refutation of sound as being inherently existent, truly existent, or existent by way of its own nature and so forth. With a good understanding gained through the analytical process that is described in this text, then when one refers to the Buddha's teachings such as the *Heart Sutra* (where it says there is no sound) one would immediately be able to understand that what that really means is that there is no sound that exists inherently, or independently, or from its own side. That is something that one will be able to reflect upon immediately, as a result of having studied texts similar to this.

It would be a good result if one were to apply one's understanding of emptiness to any text that explains emptiness. Having studied these texts, and reflected upon them, the positive outcome that we should try achieve is spending some time every day in reflecting on the meaning of emptiness. It would be best of course to do this for a few hours every day, but if not then a few minutes reflecting on what emptiness means, and what bodhicitta means, and the actual meaning behind those words. For example, reflecting on emptiness means reminding oneself that things appear as being inherently existent - they appear to exist independently by way of their own entity, or by way of their own nature. In reality that's not how things are. In fact they exist in the opposite way to how they appear to one's consciousnesses. Then, what does bodhicitta mean? Try to simulate the feeling of

bodhicitta in one's mind to go beyond the words: try to feel what bodhicitta means. If we reflect like this even for a few minutes every day then that practice would place very strong imprints on our minds.

The whole purpose of studying is so that we can use what we learn in our daily life. As mentioned in the teachings, the whole purpose of reflecting upon selflessness is so that we can loosen the grip of grasping at the self. Then the practice becomes worthwhile. At our level the manner of practice is to reflect upon emptiness again and again. It is not as if the realisation of emptiness will suddenly come upon us, or that some day some great being will grant us the realisation of emptiness. That is not going to happen. We have got to put in an effort from our own side, and that is why we are studying texts such as this one.

As mentioned previously, it is worthwhile to spend some time reflecting upon how the two types of grasping arise within oneself. Having identified the two types of grasping, one goes further and examines the faults and disadvantages that arise as a consequence of that grasping. Having reflected upon that, and clearly identified how all our problems and difficulties and sufferings arise because of the two types of grasping, the determination to overcome self-grasping slowly becomes stronger in our mind.

Then we will develop a keen interest in developing the two types of selflessness, which serve as an opponent to the two types of grasping within oneself. Even though we may not be able to gain an actual realisation of selflessness, whatever time we do spend in reflecting on selflessness to that extent it will begin to harm the grasping within ourselves. So there is definitely a purpose in reflecting on selflessness.

As we reflect on bodhicitta, we again see how grasping at the self serves as the master, and the self-cherishing mind becomes the slave to that master. Whatever self-cherishing we have is due to grasping at the self. Thus as we contemplate bodhicitta, we reflect on the relevance of overcoming grasping at the self in order to overcome the self-cherishing mind. In that way the whole structure of the teaching on bodhicitta and emptiness becomes relevant to our daily practice and that is how we progress. There is no other way.

With respect to the heading the text reads:

Just as form cannot be looked at in terms of its own suchness, sound too cannot be listened to in this way.

If sound makes a noise as it travels

Why should it not be a speaker?

Yet if it travels noiselessly, how could

Awareness arise in relation to it?

318

The earlier verses refuted form as existing in its own way, or by its own entity. Sound is the next object to be discussed. Just as the refutation of form as existing by way of its own entity has been refuted, now sound as being inherently existent is being refuted.

What is being presented here first is the object of negation. In order to be able to establish the emptiness of any object, what is being negated has to be clearly identified first. What is being negated here, (the object of

negation) is sound existing by way of its own entity, meaning existing without having to depend on anything else, without depending on any causes and conditions, i.e. sound existing by its own nature or inherently. Once one identifies that as the object of negation, then the meaning becomes much clearer. So the text presents the faults that arise if sound were to exist inherently.

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

When sound is heard, does hearing occur because it approaches as an object of that which listens or not?

In order to refute the contention that sound is inherently existent, the counter question being asked here is that if sound were to be inherently existent then does the hearing of the sound occur because it approaches the object that listens, or not? In other words does the hearing itself travel towards the consciousness, or not?

In the first case, if it [i.e. sound] approaches as an object of auditory consciousness, does it do so emitting sound or silently?

More simply, if the sound does travel to the consciousness, becoming an object of the auditory consciousness, then does it travel so by making a sound or does it travel silently?

In relation to the first question:

If it travels toward auditory consciousness making a noise as it travels, why is it not a speaker...

The absurdity being pointed out is that if sound travels to the auditory consciousness while emitting a sound, then the sound itself would be the one that produces sound,

...since like Devadatta it travels, emitting sounds? If this is accepted, it follows that it would not be sound.

What is being explained is that if the sound itself is emitting sound as it travels to the auditory consciousness, then it would be like the speaker and so it would not be sound. By default, something that produces sound couldn't be sound itself, just as when Devadatta speaks or makes any sound he is the one who produces the sound, and is not sound itself. Similarly, if sound were to emit sound by itself from its own side as it travelled, then it would be the speaker and not sound itself.

In relation to the second counter question:

Alternatively, if it travels toward auditory consciousness noiselessly, how could awareness focusing on the sound be produced, since no sound is emitted?

If sound travels noiselessly then what is being perceived? How could it be perceived as sound if it doesn't make any sound? That is the absurdity in the second case.

1.1.1.2.1.2.2. Refutation by examining whether or not sound is apprehended through contact

*If sound is apprehended through contact, 319
What apprehends the beginning of sound?
If sound does not come alone,
How can it be apprehended in isolation?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Furthermore, if sound is apprehended through contact with the ear organ, what apprehends the beginning of sound before contact occurs?

Here 'beginning' refers to the first moment of sound. Like any substance, every product has its first, second and third moments and so forth. So when a sound is produced, that first moment of sound is what is referred to here as the beginning. At the first moment of sound there wouldn't be time for contact. Who could perceive the first moment of sound as being sound, because there is no contact at that time?

It follows that there is nothing with which to apprehend it, since neither the ear organ nor any other does so. If this is accepted, it follows that it would not be sound. Sound consists of nine substances and thus since it does not come alone, how can sound in isolation be apprehended?

As mentioned previously, sound is made up of the nine substances, which are the four elements, the four that are derived from the elements plus sound. Because it is made up of nine substances sound cannot be said to be apprehended or perceived in isolation by itself.

As the commentary further reads:

It follows that smell and so forth which are inseparably combined with it would also be apprehended, for according to you they must, like the sound, have contact with the ear organ.

The absurdity being pointed out is that as sound is made up of nine substances, then when sound is perceived it is not as if sound can be isolated, and only the substance that is sound perceived. The very composition of sound is a combination of the nine substances, so sound cannot be separated and perceived in isolation. It has to be perceived as a combination of all the substances. That being so, then it follows, 'that smell and so forth which are inseparably combined with it would also be apprehended, for according to you they must, like the sound, have contact with the ear organ'. The absurdity being pointed out is that if sound is perceived through contact with the ear organ, then because the ear organ comes into contact with all the substances, smell and so forth would also have to be perceived. But that is an absurdity.

1.1.1.2.1.2.3. Showing the flaws in this contention [which was mentioned earlier]

Question: What is wrong if the beginning [or the first moment] of sound is not apprehended?

Answer: It would fail to be sound.

*While sound is not heard, it is not sound. 320
It is impossible
For that which is not sound
Finally to turn into sound.*

If the first moment of sound is not apprehended then, by default, it would fail to be sound because, according to the explanation in the text, the definition of sound is that which is perceived by the ear consciousness. So if the first moment of sound is not perceived by the ear consciousness then by default it would have to fail to be sound, as it does not fit with the definition of sound.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains:

Until it is heard it is not sound because, like smell, it is not the ear's object.

Their contention is that, 'It becomes sound when it is heard'. The objection to that from our system is that:

If initially it was not sound but later became sound, it would follow that smell and so forth could do so too, but this is unacceptable with regard to permanent functional things.

If the first moment of sound is not sound, but later becomes sound then the other substances such as smell could also become sound. If what was first not sound can later become sound, then likewise smell could also turn into sound. That would be the absurdity that would follow.

Other schools could not accept that because they accept sound as being a permanent functional thing, and so it is not possible for one entity to change into another entity. The very fact that something is permanent means that its nature, or entity, always remains the same, and can not change. The sutra that is quoted here explains how sound, and so forth, does not arise independently without relating to anything else. Rather, sound arises in dependence on causes and conditions, and not independently without causes and conditions.

Sūtra says:

For instance, in dependence upon the strings and wood
And the hand's effort-through these three together
Sound is produced and issues from
Instruments like the vina and flute.

This explains how sound is not an independently existing entity, but rather a conventionally dependent arising phenomenon. It does so by using the analogy of a vina and a flute. A vina, which is like a small lute, is dependent upon the string and the wood and the effort of hands. In order for sound to be emitted from a vina, or violin, there has to be the wood structure, and the strings upon it, in addition to the function of the hand striking it. For a violin or vina the production of sound is dependent on these three conditions. Likewise, this true for a flute too.

The sutra continues:

When the wise investigate and think
From where it has come and where it has gone,
Searching in the main and intermediate directions,
They find no coming nor going of sound.

Here 'wise' refers to those who have mastered the understanding of interdependent origination and emptiness. When these wise beings investigate sound, they can establish conventionally existent sound. But when an inherently or independently existent sound is searched for it cannot be found anywhere. So the lines, 'From where it has come and where it has gone, Searching in the main and intermediate directions, they find no coming nor going of sound' relate to inherent or independently existent sound. Not finding an inherently existing sound is establishing the emptiness of sound.

I had intended to finish chapter thirteen in this session, but there are five more verses to cover, plus some other

analogies that are explained in detail. So, we might as well leave it for our next session, which will be next year.

We have had a very good year in covering the text. From my own side I feel very fortunate to have been able to present the explanation of this teaching without any obstacles of illness and so forth. So I feel very fortunate.

We can consider ourselves fortunate, in contrast to the beings who are not fortunate enough to grasp the meaning of this teaching, because *400 Verses* is a text that is quite difficult to understand and comprehend. Those who don't have much interest in the topic want to give up and not come to the teaching at all, especially when it sounds complicated or doesn't seem to make much sense to them. But even though the text is quite complicated and difficult to follow, you have kept coming to the sessions, regardless of being able to understand it or not. That means you have the keen interest in the subject itself, so in that way you are fortunate.

When we initially started the study group, I was advised against it by some. They said that previously Geshe Dawa had taught some difficult topics and the group ended up being reduced to only a few people coming; not many lasted. So I was advised against teaching difficult topics, because people might not be able to understand and give up. I started it anyway with the intention to see how far I could go. And it seems that we have got a good result!

The first topic that I taught the study group was the twelve interdependent links, which is quite a difficult topic. However people appreciated it and it went well. The next topic I taught was tenets, again a difficult topic, but nevertheless that seemed to be really taken well. Those who came appreciated it and said that it really seemed to open their minds to further understanding of the Dharma. I felt fortunate that I chose that topic, as it was successful.

Having put energy and time in studying the text zealously throughout the year, it is now an appropriate time to make a strong dedication, which means making strong aspirational prayers. We can make the strong prayer or wish to continuously be able to meet the great masters who propound these teachings, such as the great masters Aryadeva, Asanga, Maitreya, Manjushri, Nagarjuna and so forth. The basic structure of the teachings that they propounded so clearly is of conventional reality as well as ultimate reality, and they structured the whole path around these two realities or truths, i.e. conventional and ultimate truth. These teachings were propounded with great clarity by the great masters throughout the centuries, and later on other great teachers explained these teachings to us very clearly. So we can dedicate thus, 'Having met with a teacher who explain these teachings to us at this time, may I and other like-minded students continuously be able to meet with great teachers, with all the characteristics intact, and who explain the teachings faultlessly'.

Now of course I am not implying in any way that I am a teacher with all the characteristics intact, especially in relation to profound teachings like the ones that we have been covering. I am in no way qualified to be able to give detailed explanations of such a profound teaching.

However, what I can assure you is that I have given whatever explanations as best as I can, with a good intention, with a mind wishing to benefit others. However it is important to make strong prayers and dedications to continuously be with qualified teachers, meaning qualified teachers who have all the characteristics of a perfect teacher intact, continuously in this lifetime and in all future lifetimes.

I always have the attitude that I don't understand much. As a practical benefit of that, I don't seem to develop much pride in thinking that I have grand knowledge. Because of the general attitude I have as being on the lower side of understanding, it is my normal way of conduct to take a lower place. At teachings and so forth I like to go behind and sit at the side, where I am not noticed but more comfortable. However there are others who try to push me ahead saying, 'You should be sitting up at the front'. But I always feel uncomfortable there so I sit at the side. Recently in the teachings at Varanasi, I was sitting somewhat behind as usual, and there happened to be nun seated up at the front, She is from our organisation and knows me, and at one point she looked back, and when she saw me she was very startled to see me seated way behind. Nevertheless, adopting that sort of attitude seems to bring some sort of joy to the mind. I find that it is a more comfortable attitude.

At another teaching in Bodhgaya by His Holiness, organised at Lama Zopa's request, I was sitting below the platform, and at one point Roger Kunsang, (Lama Zopa's attendant) noticed where I was sitting, so he sent a message to someone else to bring me up. She said, 'Please come up and sit on the platform', but I explained that I felt comfortable where I was seated and wish to remain there. So she left me alone, but then another monk, Tenzin Sopa from Kopan, came over and said, 'Please Geshe-la', and again I tried to reason with him that I felt comfortable where I was. Then he said, 'It may be comfortable for you, but it is not for us!'

So, it is my general conduct to adopt a place where I have a bit more freedom for myself. If I am at the side then I am not noticed much and I have a bit more freedom. There are times and occasions where I enjoy having a bit more freedom and really being open to the generosity of others. It would be a really good thing to go out in the street and survive by taking alms, but that is impractical here - it wouldn't work out.

Besides the nice feeling that one gets by seeking alms, and allowing others to be generous, it is also a way to remember the Buddha's conduct, as he advised bikkhus and bikkshunis to adopt a life of depending on alms. That is why it occurred to me that it would be nice to adopt that custom sometimes. In fact, one time in Kushinagar in India I borrowed the begging bowl of another bikkhu and went around for alms with some others. I did that for the sake of remembering the Buddha and his tradition. Whatever I received then I offered back to the bikkhu, so by lending me his bowl he got quite a few offerings himself.

The main point of these stories is that it is important for all of us to recognise the value of modesty, and try to overcome pride within ourselves, especially in relation to

our Dharma brothers and sisters. We are all Dharma brothers and sisters with the same goal. In order to reach our goal we all need to practise and study together. We are here to help each other, not to compete with each other. It is natural that humans have different mental capacities - some may have a sharper intellect, others less and so a little bit slower in learning. Rather than ridiculing and shunning someone who is not very good at learning, or who seems to get it wrong, or who has questions and forth, one must try to help them, to nourish their understanding, and encourage them to go forward. That is how we must use whatever intelligence and knowledge we may have to help and support others, not to generate pride and particularly jealousy between each other. That is something we should try to avoid at all costs.

As advised in the teachings, one must try to adopt the practice of using whatever wisdom one gains from hearing the teachings to contemplate and analyse the teachings, and then using whatever wisdom one has gained from that for meditation. Then the meditation practice becomes a sound firm practice, because we will not be just meditating on some vague understanding or knowledge that we have. Having heard authentic teachings and gained wisdom from that, then analysing using the techniques that are presented in the teachings by using one's own intelligence and wisdom becomes a basis for one's object of meditation. Then meditation becomes really firm and stable. That is the process that we should endeavour to apply.

If one depends on a faith that is derived from merely hearing the qualities and benefits of the practice, then that faith is not a very stable faith. Rather, if we try to cultivate a faith that comes through having heard the teachings, analysed them and thought about them, and then further analysed them with one's own thinking process, then that is what is called a convinced faith. Such a faith is a very firm and stable faith, and it is something that we need to cultivate and develop within ourselves.

Finally I would like to thank you by putting my palms together, because you are all very generous and kind to me. As mentioned in the teachings there is great benefit by giving teachings, but that benefit is dependent upon having listeners. If the listeners have been good listeners then there will definitely be a benefit from the teachings that one gives. Likewise it is mentioned that when we listen to the teachings we will benefit, and that is dependent on the teacher. So there is clearly an interdependent relationship between the one who is giving the teachings and the one who is listening to the teachings. When I thank people for listening to the teachings some say 'That is not appropriate, how could you thank us?' but I know that I am not wrong!

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

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Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 February 2008

I am very glad that we have gathered again to begin Study Group for the year. The name Study Group implies that it is a group that is inclined to study. The equivalent is what our sister centre in Queensland, Chenrezig Institute, calls the BSB or Basic Study Programme. Geshe Tashi Tsering seems to be quite fond of that name, and says 'Our BSB is quite good'. I thought BSB meant Basic Study Group but when I asked someone else they said it stands for Buddhist Study Programme.

Why come to study group?

In any case our Tuesday evening group is called the Study Group. So it is appropriate to consider what type of study we are doing. Generally study means learning things that you previously hadn't known about, and further increasing one's knowledge so that it becomes even more profound. The connotation of 'study' in Tibetan has those two elements - learning something that one has not previously understood or known, and then increasing what one has already learned.

Having given that definition there may be some who feel, 'I have already studied whatever there is to be studied, and there is no need for me to increase my knowledge'. Our Study Group however is always relevant as it is the study of the different methods and techniques that subdue the mind, in particular how to overcome the delusions in the mind, and then increasing both that knowledge and the qualities in one's mind.

Why do we need to subdue our mind by overcoming the delusions, in particular the three root delusions of attachment, anger and ignorance? To answer that question we just need to reflect on our own life, and see that when delusions are prevalent in our mind they harm us on a continuous basis. We need to see how much suffering, disturbance and destruction delusions bring to our life whenever they dominate our mind.

The worldly knowledge that one acquires with normal study does not serve as a means of subduing the mind and overcoming the delusions. In fact, in many cases, if it is not put to good use worldly knowledge can be a cause to increase the delusions in one's mind.

To see the importance of the particular study that we do here, one can reflect on the fact that if one has not been able to subdue one's mind by overcoming the three root delusions, then no matter what kind of worldly or any other knowledge that one might have acquired, it will not be of much use to us if it has not served to overcome the delusions in one's mind. It will not be of real benefit as it has not brought real happiness and peace to our mind.

The conclusion that we need to come to is that one must definitely work to overcome the three delusions in one's mind. That begins by first of all identifying the delusions, and then slowly trying to engage in the practice of applying the different antidotes that are the techniques to overcome particular delusions. Therefore when we consider the

purpose of our study here we should always remind ourselves of that basic main purpose, which is to identify the delusions and then gradually overcome them.

As we progress in our study, the knowledge that we gain serves to establish any virtue that we gain from overcoming attachment, any virtue that we gain from overcoming anger, and any root virtues that we may gain from overcoming ignorance. These virtues then serve as a basis on which to increase those virtues within one's mind. That is the twofold purpose of our study.

Integrating Dharma and worldly life

The real purpose of the study we do here is to recognise and subdue the mind by not allowing the delusions, in particular the three poisons, to arise in the mind, and to increase any virtues that we develop. If we then abide by that conduct in our daily life then whatever worldly knowledge and virtues we may have gained in our earlier studies will actually serve as a purpose for our own benefit. So we can see that there is an incredible benefit from doing Dharma study. Not only do we gain qualities and virtues that lead to ultimate goals, but the very process of gaining the qualities of the virtues of Dharma study helps us to utilise our worldly knowledge on a practical level. Thus it helps to provide the basic necessities that we need to sustain ourselves, in addition to the benefit of bringing some peace and happiness in our mind.

Without Dharma practice and study, just having mere worldly knowledge can actually harm us by contributing to negative states of mind. For example, in relation to those who are better or superior to us in any way, we develop jealousy, to those who are inferior or less privileged than us we develop contempt and pride, and we develop a sense of competitiveness towards those who are considered as being equal to us, for instance colleagues at work. When these delusions arise in our mind they bring so much discomfort for us, and others. If mere worldly knowledge is not utilised with the Dharma then it can serve as a means for delusions to increase, thus harming oneself and others.

Because we are not free from samsara we all need to rely on worldly material things to sustain ourselves. So we do need worldly knowledge. But merely having worldly knowledge can serve to harm us by increasing the delusions whereas when worldly knowledge is utilised with a Dharma practice it can benefit us. When we integrate worldly studies with Dharma practice, then in addition to the great benefits from the Dharma practice, we can use whatever worldly knowledge we have for our real benefit and happiness.

An example of a beneficial practice

If we take one delusion, anger for example, we can see the negative consequences when anger arises in our mind, as well as the positive consequences when anger decreases as a result of applying the antidote. We have both those mental states within ourselves, - anger as well as patience. That is because we have the seeds or imprints of anger as well as the seeds of patience within our own mind. It is now a matter for us to recognise both of them, and completely understand how they work within our mind, and then to apply the positive and try to decrease the negative. It can be done in quite a simple practice: when one has a moment to oneself sit quietly somewhere and for the sake of understanding how anger works, try to imagine becoming angry in an unpleasant situation. You can create the scenario in your mind of someone criticising you for example, which makes you feel very angry, then imagine what the consequences would be. How would you react physically, mentally and

verbally? How would you normally react with anger? Then try to analyse the consequences. Is the outcome a beneficial effect for oneself and others or is it an unpleasant one?

Then practice the opposite: imagine applying the antidote of patience when anger starts to arise in one's mind. Imagine not retaliating, and not reacting out of that angry state of mind, but rather trying to subdue the mind of anger. Imagine the consequences and effects when one replaces anger with patience and tolerance. Would that bring calmness and peace to one's mind? What would the effect be for others? Would they feel much more at ease and peaceful too, or not? Analyse within oneself in this way, by generating the delusion and seeing the consequences. There is a particular Tibetan word *gyu-tag* which means to investigate and check one's mind; to see what kind of mental states one may have and what kind of effects one experiences as a result of those mental states. In this way if we apply the practice in our daily life, we can then slowly begin to apply the antidotes to the negative states of mind.

The importance of applying practice

Having analysed and understood the positive consequences of non-attachment, non-anger, non-hatred and so forth and the negative consequences of anger and attachment, it is not sufficient to just leave it at that. Just knowing that anger, for example, is destructive and harmful and that patience is beneficial will not really be of much benefit to oneself, if one doesn't engage in the practice of overcoming anger.

What then needs to be done is to put one's knowledge into practice. As one great master has said, 'It is not the fault of not knowing. We all seem to know quite well. The fault lies in not applying the practice'. In Study Group we can safely assume that everyone knows and agrees that anger is destructive, and that patience is a virtue. The negative consequences of anger are understood quite well, and the positive effect of patience is something we can all acknowledge and accept. It is the same with attachment. We can safely assume that most people definitely understand the negative consequences of attachment, as well as ignorance, and the positive effects of non-attachment are also understood.

If just knowing this doesn't seem to bring much change, then that indicates that we have not been able to apply our knowledge in our daily life. To explain this there is an analogy of a doctor diagnosing a patient's illness and prescribing the proper medication. If the doctor has properly diagnosed the illness and prescribes the proper medication, then there will be no fault from the doctor's side, and because it is correct medication there will be no fault from the side of the medication. Now if the patient does not take the medication and starts complaining that he is not cured, then is quite obvious where the fault lies!

It is the same in our situation - it is not as if we don't have the perfect teachings. The teaching itself is definitely valid, and there is no fault there. Nor is there any fault in the teacher who, using their knowledge of the scripture, presents the faultless teachings in a proper way. If the teaching doesn't seem to benefit one, then it can only mean that one has not applied the teachings in one's actual practice. It is good for us to know where the fault lies, because it seems that some people are confused about this. They may wonder why, if it is so correct and pure, doesn't the Dharma help to solve all of one's problems.

It is important to understand and keep in mind that even though the Dharma itself is pure, and the instructions are

pure, if we are not careful in utilising it in our practice then the very knowledge that we gain from the Dharma can actually turn into a cause for the delusions to increase. Here one must understand the fault does not lie in the instruction itself, but it lies in not applying the instructions in a proper way.

The focus of our study

The particular study topic we are covering now, which was indicated even before we actually engaged studying in this text, is the antidote to overcome delusions, in particular the root delusion of grasping at an inherently existent self, or the grasping at the self. These teachings describe the antidotes for overcoming that root delusion. Teachings that describe the various antidotes for overcoming delusions are generally classified into the extensive teachings and the profound teachings. Also the whole path of the teaching can be presented as that which deals with the conventional phenomena and that which deals with ultimate phenomena. The teaching in this text is a teaching that presents the profound teachings on emptiness. Within the Two Truths it presents the ultimate truth, which is emptiness.

It is good to be studying a profound teaching, but why is it profound? How is the profundity of the teaching utilised in overcoming the delusions within our mind? Again we go back to identifying the root delusion, which is the ignorance of grasping at the self. It is called the root delusion because grasping at the self is the main delusion that is the cause for us to cycle in samsara over and over again. In order to overcome that root delusion one needs to meditate on emptiness or selflessness, but without first identifying that actual root delusion within oneself and understanding that it is the main culprit, trying to meditate on emptiness wouldn't really have much effect. Therefore, as prescribed in the teachings, it is essential to clearly recognise and understand what that grasping at the self is, in order to overcome it.

It is also good for us to reflect and ponder again and again on why the ignorance grasping at the self is identified as being a root delusion. The way to identify self-grasping is to really check within oneself to see how the self-grasping comes about. When we think about it, we really do have that instinctive notion of a self, don't we? There's this really strong feeling of self identity, which is always there spontaneously. We don't even have to think about it, that notion of me, or the self, is always with us wherever we go, in whatever we do. There is nothing really wrong with a notion of a self, but the problem is that we have a misperception of how that self exists, and as a result there is the strong grasping or attachment to the self.

With an initial strong attachment to the self, what follows naturally is a strong attachment to the belongings of the self. The possessor is the self and the possessions are everything that belongs to, or which is related to, the self. We classify those who are beneficial to the self as friends, and we classify as foes or enemies those who seem to harm us. So as a result, attachment to friends and aversion or anger towards enemies arises. When we investigate how these delusions arise in our mind it becomes very obvious to us that they start from that misperceived notion of 'I' and 'me'. The importance of 'me' leads to attachment to those who are favourable to oneself, and aversion or anger to those who are not favourable to oneself.

When we have a good understanding of this root delusion - the ignorance grasping at the self - then we can apply that understanding directly to the twelve interdependent links. The first link is the link of ignorance which is identified as

the root delusion of all samsara, and that ignorance leads to the second link, which is karmic formations.

Also in the explanations of karma in the Four Noble Truths, the primary cause for samsara is said to be delusions. It is ignorance of grasping at the self that is the primary delusion within one's mind, which leads on to all the other delusions. When we begin to understand that, then we understand that we create karma as a result of the delusions.

The result of practice

You already have all this knowledge, so I am presenting it now just a reminder. In a way it is a recipe that brings out the flavour of the actual practice, which shows how we can apply that practice, derived from our understanding of the teachings, to our daily life. I mention this as a reminder of the main topic of our studies here. In fact reflecting on this, and on the importance of practice, it is in our best interest if we can actually apply the practice to our life, primarily to bring about a more subdued and kinder mind. That is the main purpose. If by coming to the teachings, studying the texts and so forth can help to induce a more subdued and kinder mind, particularly towards others, then that will serve as the purpose of our study.

If having applied the teachings to our practice in our daily life, then we can begin to see the result of having a kinder mind. That will then naturally result in having an even happier and more joyful mind, which will be a good result. When others see us being kinder than before, and genuinely more happy and jolly, then that will be the hallmark of the benefit of the teachings. Trying to convince others that Buddhism is good or that coming to teachings is good while one remains as agitated as before, or as short tempered and angry as before, will not be a good advertisement. Basically the best way to give others the message that the teachings work, that Buddhism works, is to show it through the positive transformation that one goes through oneself. Then others will speak up loudly about the benefit and real worthiness of the Dharma to others. Then one needn't say much to others to try to convince them, as they will be interested from their own side, because looking back they will say, 'This person used to be so irritable and agitated before, but having practised Buddhism they have become much kinder and happier, so there must be something to this'.

Once when I was teaching in Bendigo two students overheard others whispering among themselves saying, 'Those two used to be quite disagreeable people in the past but it must be the Buddhist path or whatever that they are following, as they seem to be much calmer and more subdued nowadays'.

The importance of motivation and dedication

Normally one needs to develop a positive motivation for engaging in the teachings. So the positive motivation that we can develop is, 'The purpose for engaging in the teachings and study is not merely for my own sake, but rather for the benefit other sentient beings. By putting the teachings into practice may I be able to attain the ultimate state of enlightenment so that I can benefit all sentient beings, by eliminating every suffering and bringing them to ultimate happiness'.

To stress the importance of motivation and dedication we can quote from a teaching by Lama Tsong Khapa that is in prayer form. The meaning of a particular stanza is:

In the beginning I spent a long time listening to the teachings,

In the middle part all the teachings that I heard and studied appeared as personal instructions,
At the end I put all these instructions into practice,
I dedicate all the merits to the flourishing of the Buddhist doctrine.

Here he basically explains his whole life in one verse, showing how he conducted his life in practice. The dedication to the flourishing of the Buddhist doctrine is the equivalent of saying, 'I dedicate for the happiness of all beings', because Buddhist doctrine is an unmistakable method of bringing happiness to sentient beings. If those techniques were to prevail then it will naturally bring about happiness as a result for whoever practises in that way. Therefore one should understand that dedicating for the welfare of all sentient beings is the equivalent to dedicating for the teachings to flourish. Likewise dedicating for the teachings to flourish is equivalent to dedicating to the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings.

I have spent quite a lot of time on what may seem like a sidetrack from our text. Even though it is quite warm and it seems like you are already quite overwhelmed by the heat, we will spend a few more minutes going into the text. If you can just endure that extra bit of suffering then it might be for a worthwhile cause. As the saying goes, that which is difficult to obtain, once obtained will be priceless. The literal meaning of 'priceless' is like a precious jewel; it is quite difficult for treasure hunters to find a precious gem and they have to endure all sorts of the hardships in their search for such a gem. However when they find it, that precious jewel will have great benefits, and all the hardships endured earlier will not have been in vain. Rather the hardships will have led to great gain. We can use that analogy for our study and practice. Regardless of a bit of heat and difficulty now, we will use it wisely to derive great benefit from the teachings.

1.1.1.2.2. REFUTING APPREHENSION BY MENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS¹

Without the sense organs what will mind 321
Do after it has gone?
If it were so, why would that which lives
Not always be without mind?

It is good to try to develop an understanding of what the heading means. It refers to refuting apprehension or perception by mental consciousness. So can mental consciousness actually apprehend an object? How does it apprehend an object?

Student: Through the senses?

Why should we refute apprehension of mental consciousness when mental consciousness does actually apprehend objects? What is wrong with the notion of mental consciousness apprehending objects? Why should we refute that? In other words why are we refuting apprehension by mental consciousness?

Student: We are refuting the mode of apprehension; that things exist inherently.

My interpretation is that it is not actually refuting the manner of how the mental consciousness apprehends, but rather the apprehension of mental consciousness itself. It might become clearer as we go through it.

The lower Buddhist schools posit that mental consciousness exists from its own side. whereas the higher Madhyamika

¹ This heading is the second part of 1.1.1.2, Individual refutations, which in turn the second part of 1.1.1. Refuting the true existence of that which is apprehended: the sense objects.

school refutes that mental consciousness is truly existent or that it exists from its own side. So, my view is that what is being refuted is that mental consciousness itself is inherently existent, or as the text states, existing by way of its own identity.

If it were just relating to the apprehension of objects by the mental consciousness, then it is commonly known that there are many modes of how mental consciousness apprehends objects, some in the right way and some in a faulty way. There are valid cognitions and invalid cognitions, which we dealt with earlier. Even though there are certain invalid apprehensions by mind that doesn't need to imply that we have to refute apprehension of the consciousness itself. Here we are referring to mental consciousness in general, and my interpretation would be that it refers to refuting the apprehension of mental consciousness as being truly existent or inherently existent.

Whereas a more literal explanation of the verse implies that the mental consciousness itself does not have the ability to apprehend things as being inherently existent.

Referring to mental consciousness, what is the difference between mind and mental factors, and what is the difference between mind and primary mind? This is a quiz for those who have studied mind and mental factors or *lo rig*. You should know this.

Student: Mind identifies the object and mental factors identifies the aspects.

Now the difference between mind and mental consciousness?

Student: Inaudible.

We talk about the mind as the primary mind when it views an object as a whole, without any detailed characteristics. Whereas the mental factors perceive the specific characteristics of the object. The analogy usually given in the teachings is of a king and the ministers or generals who work under the king. A more contemporary example would be a prime minister and his cabinet ministers. The prime minister is the overall political leader and the ministers have specific jobs to carry out the overall mission of the prime minister. Mind and mental factors operate in a similar way to perceive objects.

If you who wish to refresh your mind it would be good to go back to the notes of the teachings on Mind and Mental Factors. We did not have time to complete the six root delusions and the twenty secondary delusions at that time, but all of the earlier mental factors were covered, so it would be good to refer to your notes². I remember that we allocated a specific time of eight weeks to teach the topic Mind and Mental Factors and about seventy five people came, who were very eager and determined to study, and they stuck with it all the way through the eight weeks. If you put in such an effort, with interest and attention at that time, it would be unfortunate now to relapse and forget.

To explain the meaning of the verse the commentary posits this assertion:

Assertion: The mind apprehends objects after travelling to them.

Even though it is not specifically mentioned in the commentary this assertion implies the following question: when the mind apprehends objects does it travel to the object or not? The assertion is given as an answer to the

question, stating that the mind apprehends objects by travelling to the object. What this basically implies in relation to the main meaning of the verse is that although the mind has the ability to apprehend objects, that ability is not inherently existent within the mind.

In order to present an answer to the question above, we can speculate that there are two further questions: If the mind apprehends objects after travelling to the object then does it travel with the organ or without the organ? The answer relates to the assertion that the mind travels to the object with the organ. If that is the case then:

Answer: That is incorrect. Auditory consciousness does not travel to the object along with the ear organ, for the organs always remain in the body.

The commentary then explains:

Even if mind, such as an auditory consciousness, approached its object without the sense organs, how could it perform the functions of listening, looking and so forth, since like a blind person it would lack the ability to perceive its object?

What is being presented here is the absurdity of the mind apprehending an object without the sense organs. If it travelled without the sense organs then how could the mind perceive the object? How could it perform the function of listening and so forth if the organ is missing? The analogy that is given is that of a blind person: even though they have the features of the eye and so forth the reason why they cannot see is because there is damage to the organ. This shows that objects cannot be perceived without the organ.

As the commentary further reads:

If it were so, why would that which lives, i.e. the self, not always be without mind?

The word Tibetan word *sog* translated here as 'the self' also has the connotation of 'that which lives' or life-force in general. There are many different terms used in the sutras for 'the self'. In this instance 'that which lives' actually relates to the self so 'why would that which lives, i.e. the self not always be without mind?' This is a rhetorical question indicating that a self always has to have a mind. It would be an absurdity if the self did not have a mind.

When one investigates in this way by means of reasoning, neither sense organs nor consciousnesses have by way of their own entity the ability to apprehend objects.

What this explains is that, as explained in the teachings on Mind and Cognition, for the apprehension of an object to take place three factors must be present: mental consciousness, the sense organ or faculty, and the object itself. When these three conditions are present then an object is perceived. When one investigates one comes to realise that even though these three factors must be present when an object is perceived, none of them could apprehend it independently, and thus inherently perceive or apprehend an object. The mental consciousness by itself could not inherently apprehend an object; the sense organ could not independently or inherently apprehend an object; likewise the object does not present itself as an object to be perceived inherently or independently. That is the conclusion, which is the meaning of the verse.

The main point of this verse is, as explained here in the commentary, that 'neither organs nor consciousnesses have by way of their own entity the ability to apprehend objects'. Thus what is being refuted clearly is not that the mental consciousness does not have the ability to apprehend

² Available on the 2007 edition of the CD of transcripts of teachings.

objects, because it does, but that it does not apprehend objects by way of its entity or inherently.

If the mental consciousness were to apprehend objects by way of its own entity, or inherently, or independently then, as explained here in the commentary, since it is agreed on both sides that the organ serves as a necessary factor to apprehend objects, there would be the absurdity of asking whether it apprehends the object with or without the organ ?

If the consciousness travels to the object without the organ then the absurdity is that it would be like a self without a mind. If it travels with the organ then the absurdity is that the organ actually leaves the body. These are obvious absurdities.

The absurdities described above exhaust all the possibilities of how an object could be apprehended by a mental consciousness by way of its own entity or independently. The conclusion is that the mental consciousness does have the ability to apprehend objects, just as every organ has the ability to apprehend objects, and the object has the ability to be apprehended by the consciousness and the organ. However none of them, have that ability by way of their own entity or independently. Rather they do so interdependently by relating to each other. That is what is being refuted in this outline 'Refuting apprehension by mental consciousness'.

Although we were not able to cover much material from the text this evening, there is no big rush. We will do it slowly in our next sessions. When I was escaping from Tibet the first area of India we came into was Arunachal Pradesh. The people from Arunachal Pradesh are actually quite Tibetan, as their script is Tibetan, so they also speak a bit of Tibetan as many of their words are similar. We would ask them how much further we had to go, how many more mountains we have to cross before we actually get down to the main part of India. They set up camps which we had to reach each evening. When we asked how much further before we reached that evening's camp they replied, 'If we go slowly we will reach there quickly'.

That very simple saying has a deep meaning, and there is actually a good personal instruction in there. When we think about our experiences in life we notice that when we are in a great rush, then although we might be moving quickly our mind is full of anxiety, and wherever we have to go seems to take a long time - the buses seem to take longer to reach their destination. Whereas if you actually relax a bit and take it easy, time seems to go by quite quickly, and we enjoy it much more. So therefore there is practical advice in that saying.

As children in Tibet we would really look forward to Tibetan New Year because that was the biggest holiday of the year, with a lot of good things happening. As children it seemed to take such a long time to reach New Year, but now having grown up it seems that a year goes quite fast. Of course here the children wait for Christmas to come round.

If we go slowly we will reach the end quickly but of course we have to be careful that we do not lose out by going too slowly. I would like to relate to you an incident which occurred in Varanasi when I was there. It was part of the University's activities to have races for which awards were given. Apparently there were two students, one of whom, Urgyen, was normally referred to as the simpleton and the other was called Pema Gyalpo. In the race these two were left behind. With about five miles to go Urgyen said to Pema Gyalpo that as they were way behind anyway they might as

well just relax and take it a bit easier. Urgyen actually had something to eat and he shared it with Pema Gyalpo, so Pema Gyalpo relaxed quite a bit.

Students were given marks based on their finishing position right up to the last person. So when they came to the finishing line Urgyen suddenly put in a lot of effort in and overtook Pema Gyalpo and left him behind. Therefore Urgyen got a few more marks than Pema Gyalpo. Later the other students would tease Pema Gyalpo saying, 'Oh the simpleton Urgyen actually made a fool of you'. Normally Urgyen was called a simpleton, but he was actually quite clever, and not at all foolish.

*Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
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Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 February 2008

As we normally do, it is good to set a motivation for the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings and to liberate them from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

Setting a motivation can also serve as a pledge. When we generate the motivation of listening to the Dharma and putting it into practice in order to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all mother sentient beings, the part where one commits to putting the teachings into practice is in fact making a pledge to oneself.

1.1.2. Refuting true existence of that which perceives objects

This has two subheadings:

1.1.2.1. Defining the aggregate of recognition

1.1.2.2. Refuting its true existence

1.1.2.1. DEFINING THE AGGREGATE OF RECOGNITION

One needs to understand from the outline that what is being refuted is the aggregate of recognition as being truly existent, or existent by way of its own entity. Earlier, consciousness existing by way of its own entity was refuted, so there might be yet another doubt that the mental factor of recognition or discrimination may be inherently existent. In order to remove any doubts that mental factors also exist by way of their own entity, the specific mental factor translated here as recognition is refuted as being inherently existent.

For the consciousness to perceive things, all three factors of consciousness, the organ and the object must be present. When the consciousness perceives the object the five omnipresent mental factors also function together in apprehending or perceiving the object. These five ever-present or ever-functioning mental factors are feeling, recognition, intention, contact and attention.

With respect to the ever-present mental factor of **feeling**, we can assert from our own experience that whenever we have a conscious mind apprehending an object, there is always a feeling that accompanies that apprehension. Either you feel pleasant by coming into contact with that object, or you may have an unpleasant feeling, and there might be times when you have neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings, but just a neutral feeling. From our own experience we can definitely assert that there are these three types of feelings - pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Recognition or, as sometimes translated discrimination, is defined as the mental factor that sees the aspect of the object. For example, in order to perceive the colour 'blue', the two factors of the consciousness apprehending blue, the eye faculty or eye sense organ, and the object itself, the colour blue, have to be present. With these conditions being intact, then when the consciousness in the act of apprehending the object, recognises the aspect as being blue, then that factor determining it as 'blue' is the mental factor of recognition or discrimination.

The function of the mental factor of **intention** is to move the mind towards the object. Indeed the definition of karma is normally defined as intention, which is an appropriate definition of karma. Going back to the example of perceiving an object such as blue, the factor that naturally and spontaneously moves the mind towards the object without any control, is called the mental factor of intention.

The mental factor of **contact** is said to be the mental factor that serves as the basis for feeling to arise when any object is perceived. It serves as a basis is when the consciousness, the sense organ and the object come into contact. So, that combination of the three conditions for an object to be perceived, which is what contact is, serves as a basis for the mental factor of feeling to arise.

The mental factor of **attention** is that which holds on to a particular object allowing the consciousness to focus on it. This is the function of the mental factor of attention. The ability to identify a particular object is basically because the mental factor of attention keeps the mind focused on the object for a certain duration, which can be very short.

The mental factor of recognition and the aggregate of recognition are actually one and the same - they are synonymous.

An object already seen

Is perceived by mind like a mirage.

That which posits all phenomena

Is called the aggregate of recognition.

322

The objection that is raised to which this verse serves as an answer is:

Objection: If sense organs and their objects do not exist inherently, the aggregate of recognition which discerns what is exclusive to them will be non-existent.

Of course the aggregate of recognition is present whenever any one of the five senses perceives an object. For example when we hear something, that which discerns what we are hearing is the function of the mental factor of recognition, which is concurrent with the hearing consciousness. Likewise recognition is always present when we smell, taste or touch something. So the objection here is that the aggregate of recognition could not exist if it doesn't exist inherently.

Answer: Although they do not exist when analysed by reasoning, they are not conventionally non-existent, for mental consciousness apprehends the exclusive aspects of an object such as a visible form which has already been perceived.

What this is saying is that although things do not exist ultimately when analysed by reasoning, they do exist conventionally. This differs from the lower Buddhist schools which assert that if things exist conventionally they also exist ultimately. What is being stated in this answer is that if things exist conventionally that does not mean that they have to exist ultimately, or by way of their own entity.

The answer states that things do exist conventionally 'for mental consciousness apprehends the exclusive aspects of an object such as a visible form which has already been perceived'. What is being indicated here is that when we perceive an object, the fact that we are able to remember what we saw for example the colour 'blue' or that we heard a certain sound etc., is because of the recognition that takes place at that time.

Even though things do not exist inherently when analysed conventionally, they are perceived and they are not non-existent. The commentary gives this analogy:

For instance, though a mirage does not contain even a drop of water, recognition of water occurs.

We all know that even conventionally a mirage does not contain any water. However for someone who perceives a mirage, the recognition of water being there still occurs. Even though there is not even a drop of water there, that does not hinder the recognition of water being generated in the person who perceives the mirage. Using that as an analogy, we can understand that although the objects of the five senses appear as being inherently existent, there is not even an atom of inherent existence there. However the lack of inherent existence does not prevent the recognition of the perceived object from occurring, so even though things do not exist inherently, recognition of those objects can still be present and valid. There is no fault in the recognition being present, but that doesn't mean they have to be inherently existent.

As the commentary explains:

Likewise that which perceives the exclusive aspects of an object, a mental factor positing the exclusive signs of all phenomena, is called the aggregate of recognition.

Here the commentary establishes what I explained earlier: that which perceives the exclusive aspects of an object, such as the colour blue, which then allows us to recognise and say this is 'blue', this is 'red' and so forth, or particular aspects of sound (and likewise with all the other sense objects) is posited as being the aggregate of recognition.

As the commentary concludes:

Phenomena are simply posited by recognition and do not exist by way of their own entity.

From the Prasangika Madhyamika point of view, positing recognition does not validate that things exist by way of their own entity. One can still posit recognition even though things do not exist by way of their own entity. Whereas the lower Buddhist schools posit that the recognition of objects occurs in relation to seeing objects as being inherently existent, and that, they say, is why things are inherently existent. It is that view that is being negated here in our system.

When things are posited by recognition, it is positing the existence of the object but it does not validate the inherent existence or 'existence by way of its own entity' of the object. That should be clear and understood well.

1.1.2.2. REFUTING ITS TRUE EXISTENCE

This refers to refuting the true existence of the aggregate of recognition. Again, one should refresh one's memory about how the different schools posit the existence of phenomena. The schools below the Madhyamika posit things as being inherently existent, as well as existent by way of their own characteristics, and as well as being truly existent. The Svatantrika Madhyamika school however posits inherently existent phenomena but not truly existent phenomena while the Prasangika Madhyamika school refutes all true existence, as well as inherent existence, and existence by way of its own entity or characteristics.

Objection: If the aggregate of recognition does not exist inherently, it is impossible to posit phenomena.

Answer: There is no such error.

In dependence upon the eye and form

Mind arises like an illusion.

It is not reasonable to call

Illusory that which has existence.

323

The lower Buddhist schools assert that if the aggregate of recognition is not inherently existent then it is impossible to actually establish phenomena? However in our system there is no error if recognition is not inherently existent.

As an answer to the earlier objection, the main point being explained in the verse is then further clarified in the commentary.

Even though it does not exist by way of its own entity,

Here one must remember all of the synonyms such as not existing inherently, or not existing by its own characteristics, or not existing truly, are implied. Reading on the commentary continues:

...mind arises like a magical illusion in dependence upon the eye and visible form.

What we also can derive from this explanation is the fact that the Prasangika Madhyamika assert that all phenomena are merely labelled, or imputed, by the mind. As described earlier, the aggregate or mental factor of recognition functions, for example, to perceive the aspect of an object such as the colour 'blue'. So, the recognition of the object as 'blue' is from the mental side. It is not as if the object itself appears and calls out saying, 'I am blue'. Rather it is the mind that labels the object, 'This is blue', or 'This is red'. From that we can understand how, as the Prasangika explain, everything is labelled by the mind. That very process of perceiving an object, whatever the object may be, involves the mind saying 'This is blue' or 'This is big or small' and so forth. So that very function of recognition also shows how it is the mind that actually labels objects.

The analogy that is used here is a magical illusion. When a magician conjures things, the classic example being a horse, or here in the west a rabbit, that illusory rabbit or horse does not actually exist, yet the mind perceives a rabbit or horse. The conjured horse or rabbit is a mere illusion, which means that it does not actually exist, but this does not negate the fact that there is the perception of a horse or rabbit. Using the analogy that even though the mind perceives an illusion, it does not negate the existence of mind, we can understand that even though phenomena do not exist inherently or by way of their own entity, the mind that perceives the inherent existence of phenomena can still arise.

As the commentary explains, the mind rises like a magical illusion in dependence upon the eye and visible form. All three conditions arise in dependence upon each other, though none of the conditions are inherently existent. This means that the mind itself lacks inherent existence, the eye or the sense organ lacks inherent existence, and visible form, or the object, also lacks inherent existence. All are equally like an illusion insofar as they lack inherent existence, yet they appear as being inherently existent. They are described as being an illusion because of the fact that they appear as being inherently existent.

As the commentary continues:

Any phenomenon whose existence is existence by way of its own entity cannot be called illusory, just as women who exist in the world are not called illusory.

What is being explained here is that if phenomena were to exist by way of their own entity then you couldn't call it illusory. The example given is 'just as women who exist in the world are not called illusory'. Women who actually exist, who are alive and living would not be called illusory as opposed to women who might be conjured up by magicians or seen through hallucinations and so forth. Similarly if phenomena were inherently existent or existent by way of

their own entity, then you couldn't call them illusory. So the fact that they are called illusory means that phenomena don't exist as they appear to ordinary perceptions.

1.1.3. Showing that lack of true existence is, like magic, a cause for amazement

In explaining the following next verse the assertion in the commentary reads:

Assertion: It is amazing to claim that the sense organs can in no way whatever apprehend objects and that visual consciousness is produced in dependence upon the eye and visible form.

This assertion comes from the lower Buddhist schools. As has been proved earlier, the eye-consciousness, for example, does not have the ability to apprehend objects by way of its own entity or by way of its own side. Having that ability has been refuted by our system. Things are perceived in fact by way of the three conditions of consciousness, the sense organ and the object. The lower schools say that it is very peculiar and amazing that the sense organs cannot apprehend objects (inherently).

The response to that is:

Answer: That alone is no cause for amazement.

When there is nothing on earth 324
That does not amaze the wise,
Why think cognition by the senses
And suchlike are amazing.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Although when analysed by reasoning a sprout and so forth neither comes into existence from a seed which has ceased nor from one which has not ceased, [sprouts are produced in dependence upon seeds].

This analysis has been presented in the earlier parts of the teaching and in other texts as well. When analysing how the sprout comes about, does it occur at the time of the seed or when the seed has already ceased to exist? The answer to that is that it neither comes into existence from a seed when the seed is present (meaning an inherently existent seed), nor does it come from a seed that has inherently ceased. As the text further reads:

When to the wise there is nothing on earth which is not as amazing as magic, why should one think that cognition of objects by sense consciousnesses which do not have true existence and such-like are amazing, for this applies equally to everything.

What is to be understood as the meaning of, 'when there is nothing on earth that does not amaze the wise' is the understanding of the fact that things are dependent originations while at the same time they lack inherent existence. Thus from a non-inherently existent seed a non-inherently existent sprout is produced. They function to exist interdependently, as a dependent origination. Understanding and seeing that fact is most amazing for the wise. The recognition of the cause (the sense organs), the sense consciousness and the object coming together is not a cause of amazement for the wise, when much greater reasons for amazement are already in place.

1.2. Showing that emptiness of true existence is like magical illusions and so forth

The firebrand's ring and magical creations, 325
Dreams, illusions, and the moon in water,
Mists, echoes, mirages, clouds
And worldly existence are alike.

As the commentary explains:

Thus all dependently arising phenomena are like the ring formed by a firebrand which is whirled quickly.

We are all familiar with this effect. A fire or incense stick when whirled around very quickly looks like a firebrand and from a distance one sees it as a ring of fire, when in fact no ring of fire exists. This is the first of many analogies in the verse. Even though no ring of fire actually exists it is perceived as such by the eye and believed to be so. Using that analogy, though all phenomena do not have even an atom of inherent existence they appear as being inherently existent.

Though the woman created through meditative stabilization and the dream body do not have true existence, they act as causes for erroneous attachment to the self.

'A woman created through meditative stabilization' is a literal translation of a woman who is basically a mere illusion. Although such a woman, or a woman who appears in a dream, does not actually exist, it will still be a cause for attachment to arise for someone who is attached to that form. This analogy is used to show that even though phenomena do not exist inherently, they appear to be inherently existent, and we engage with such objects in the belief that they are actually inherently existent.

We should personalise all of these analogies in our practice to affirm how all of our misconceptions arise from our own mind. For example with the analogy of the firebrand, even though we know theoretically that there is no firebrand, we see it and momentarily we believe in it. From a distance we might believe there is a ring of fire, however when we analyse and find out what is causing it, we realise that there is no firebrand, and it is just one spark of fire that is being turned quickly. To personalise that analogy one must remind oneself that even though things do not exist inherently, not even oneself, still one perceives oneself as being inherently existent and thus the grasping at the self and other phenomena arises because of that misconception.

Another point that is good for us to take note of is that just because something appears as existing in a particular way, and we perceive it that way, that does not negate the fact that the perception itself is valid conventionally. We have to say that the consciousness is still valid in perceiving the thing, even though the object itself does not exist in that way. In relation to the firebrand there is nothing wrong in the perception; it is not as though we have a faulty mind. It is a valid mind which perceives that ring of fire, and there is nothing wrong with our senses - anyone would perceive it as a firebrand. But the fact is that it does not actually exist in that way. There is no real firebrand and it is the same with all the other analogies - there are certain things that may not exist in the way that we perceive them. That is good to understand.

Knowing that something does not exist in the way that it appears conventionally would help to overcome our fear, wouldn't it? When things appear to be dark or spooky, if we remind ourselves that that what we are seeing appears like that, but it doesn't really exist in that way, then that helps us to overcome the fear of whatever seems to be threatening. Similarly that will be true with the real understanding of emptiness. Once we develop a genuine understanding of emptiness which leads to the realisation of emptiness, then strong attachment and all the other delusions can be overcome, and fear can actually be overcome with the genuine realisation of emptiness.

When objects of attachment appear to us, we might notice from our own experience that for as long as the attributes of the object appear attractive and we really believe in that, then to that extent our attachment to the object increases. But as soon as we remind ourselves that even though it appears very attractive and beautiful it does not really exist in that way, our attachment is reduced. Just going through that process of analysis helps to reduce the attachment to the object.

Likewise with an object of anger: for as long as we exaggerate the negative qualities of that object we seem to experience strong anger or hatred. Whereas if we remind ourselves that the negative aspects that appear to us do not really exist in that way, then we will notice that the anger reduces a bit. Our limited experience of how anger and attachment can be reduced through our analysis should be a good sound affirmation of how, if we were to actually realise emptiness, that realisation would serve as an antidote to completely uproot the delusions from their source.

Although the illusory maiden conjured by a magician does not have true existence, she confuses the mind.

It is quite clear that even though things appear as being inherently existent, then just as an illusory maiden does not really exist so too things do not exist inherently.

Similarly the moon in the water,

The analogy of a reflection of the moon on a lake or still water is vivid and it may appear to be the moon that we see in the sky but, as we know logically, it is not the moon. Likewise even though things appear to be inherently existent, in fact in reality they are not inherently existent.

...mists and echoes resounding from mountain clefts and caves give rise to a distorted perception of them as they appear to be. A mirage causes mistaken perception, and clouds in the distance seem like mountains. Worldly existence consisting of environments and living beings, while empty of inherent existence, is able to function. Understand that it is like these analogies.

What is being summarised here is that, as with all the earlier analogies, things do not exist in the way that they appear to the perceptions.

Worldly existence consisting of environments and living beings,

The whole universe can be divided into the two categories of the environment and the living beings in the environment. So all existence, the environment i.e. those things used by living beings, as well as the living beings who live in the environment, are all equally empty of inherent existence:

...while empty of inherent existence, is able to function. Understand that it is like these analogies.

Like the analogies of things that do not exist and yet still appear to function, while the environment and living beings are empty of inherent existence and lack any true existence they still function. Then the commentary concludes:

Understand that it is like these analogies.

Then the commentary quotes from the sutras. Although it is quite straightforward we will read through the verses.

Sutra says:

1. In a young girl's dream she sees
A youth arrive then die, and feels
Happy when he arrives, unhappy when he dies.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

The sutra can be understood quite literally. In a young girl's dream she sees a youth arrive. Even though there is no

handsome young man, in her dream she believes that the young man arrives and then dies. She is happy when she sees the youth arriving but then feels very sad when he dies. All of these emotions occur yet they are just a dream. As in earlier examples the final line reminds us to 'Understand that all phenomena are like this'.

2. Those who conjure illusions create forms
Of various kinds-horses, elephants and chariots.
They are not at all as they appear.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

This verse is using the analogy of a magician conjuring objects like elephants and horses and so forth. While they appear to be very real, they do not exist in reality, so one should understand that all phenomena are like that.

3. The reflection of the moon, shining
In the sky appears in a clear pool,
Yet the moon does not enter the water.
Understand the nature of all phenomena is like this.

As explained in the verse when the reflection of the moon is seen on still, clear water, then it appears like the moon. However it is not as if the moon has travelled from the sky to enter the water, even though the moon appears vividly and clearly there. Thus one should understand that all phenomena are like that.

4. Echoes arise in dependence upon
Caves, mountains, forts and river gorges.
Understand all products are like this.
Phenomena are all like illusions and mirages.

One can relate this analogy to how things do exist. Echoes arise in dependence upon caves and mountains, fords and gorges, so when an echo is produced it is in relation to either caves, the sides of caves or mountains and so forth. Likewise one understands all phenomena to be like this, existent merely in dependence upon causes and conditions.

5. A person who is tormented by thirst
In summer at noon-that transmigrator
Sees mirages as a body of water.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

One could go into quite a lot of detail with this analogy. One of the conditions is a person tormented by thirst. It is noon on a hot, summer day. At such a time and in such conditions the transmigrator, or person, sees mirages of a body of water. Under those particular conditions they believe that there is water there. So using that analogy one could explain much more profoundly how we see things as being inherently existent under certain conditions. We won't go into detail but the main point is that one must understand that all phenomena are similar to this - even though they lack true existence they appear as being truly existent or inherently existent.

6. Although a mirage contains no water
Confused beings want to drink it.
Unreal water cannot be drunk.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

Using this analogy in relation to ourselves, ordinary beings things do not exist inherently or truly by way of their own entity. They appear to us as being truly existent and we totally believe in that. We engage with objects and so forth with that false notion that they do truly exist or exist inherently. But unreal water cannot be drunk even though confused beings want to drink it. Likewise understand that all phenomena are like this for us ordinary beings - even though phenomena or objects do not exist inherently, that is how it appear to us and we totally believe in that appearance.

7. Instantaneously in a cloudless sky
A circle of clouds appears,
But try to find from where they came
Understand all phenomena are like this.

In a seemingly cloudless sky clouds can suddenly appear as if they had existed there all the time. In fact, earlier on there were no clouds, but when the clouds are there they appear to be very solid and realistic. The analogy as used here is that if you were to look for their causes and conditions you could not find where they came from. Yet they did appear there. Understanding this analogy we see that things appear as being truly existent, and really seem to be true and real. But if we were to look to see if they exist in that way, then we would find that they are not truly existent. One should understand all phenomena are like that.

Like mirages and smell-eaters' cities,
Like magical illusions and like dreams,
Objects of meditation are empty of a real entity.
Understand all phenomena are like this.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltzen Rinpoche is:

Thus in the illusory city of the three false worlds
Manipulated by the puppeteer of karmic action
The smell-eater maiden performs her illusory dance.
Amazing that desire should chase a mirage!

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the thirteenth chapter of the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on the refutation of sense organs and objects.

This concludes the commentary on the thirteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on the refutation of sense organs and objects, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas*.

We will begin the next chapter in the next session.

*Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
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Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 March 2008

As usual, let us begin by developing a positive motivation such as, in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

CHAPTER XIV REFUTING EXTREME CONCEPTIONS¹

It is good to understand the meaning of the outline. In general, extreme conceptions refers to the two extremes of the nihilistic view and the view of eternalism. However in this heading particularly it refers to refuting the view of eternalism, which is viewing phenomena as being truly established, truly existent, existent by way of its own entity or existing by way of its own characteristics. The extreme view of nihilism is where one has the view that if things were to lack inherent existence or true existence, then things could not exist at all.

Here one must understand that refuting extreme conceptions does not mean refuting the existence of the prevalent wrong view itself, but rather it means refuting the mode of apprehension of that wrong view.

The two main subdivisions of the chapter are:

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

1. Presenting the material in the chapter

This section is subdivided into four main categories:

- 1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence
- 1.2. Showing the cause for mistaking functional things as permanent and truly existent
- 1.3. Briefly showing the reasoning that establishes absence of true existence
- 1.4. Showing the need to understand absence of true existence

¹ In the overall structure of the text this is actually 3.2.2.1.2.5., but for the sake of clarity numbering starts anew with each chapter.

The text has four subdivisions:

1. Meaning of the title
2. Translator's prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion

Section 3 Meaning of the text has two subdivisions:

- 3.1 An overview of the text
- 3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters, which has two outlines:
 - 3.2.1. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on illusory conventional truth
 - 3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth, the first section of which is:
 - 3.2.2.1 Extensively explaining ultimate truth, which in turn has three sub-headings:
 - 3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena
 - 3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena, to which this chapter belongs
 - 3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

1.1. Proving that functional things are empty of inherent existence

Again, this heading is subdivided into two:

- 1.1.1. Brief exposition
- 1.1.2. Extensive explanation

1.1.1. Brief exposition

Question: If, like the ring formed by a firebrand and so forth, worldly existence, because of being a dependent arising, does not exist inherently, what has inherent existence?

This question relates to the analogies that were given earlier, which showed that the lack of true existence, or inherent existence, is like a firebrand; even though there appears to be a firebrand it is actually an illusion that does not exist. Worldly existence is similar to that.

Answer: Not the slightest thing has inherent existence.

If a thing did not depend

On anything else at all

It would be self-established,

But such a thing exists nowhere.

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As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Anything existing by way of its own entity would not rely on anything else at all, but not the least thing is independent or exists without relying on something else.

This explains that things do not exist by way of their own entity, but are interdependent.

If anything existed inherently, independence would be established as its nature when examined by the reasoning which investigates the ultimate, yet this does not exist anywhere.

The commentary explains that there are many different types of reasonings that prove the lack of inherent existence. One of the supreme reasons establishing the lack of inherent existence is that because things are interdependent or dependent originations they cannot exist inherently, and it is this reasoning that is being established here.

A mode of existence of phenomena not merely posited by nominal convention is known as independent existence, existence by way of their entity, existence by way of their character, inherent existence and true existence.

This is establishing the different terminologies that are used for the object of negation.

This clearly indicates the object of negation through whose refutation there is no focus for conceptions of true existence.

What is being established here is that the object of apprehension of the misconception that perceives true existence, or independent existence, or inherent existence, does not exist as perceived.

Since Candrakirti's commentary repeatedly mentions qualifying the object of negation when refuting fabrications of true existence, one should not deprecate the Madhyamika view.

When the object of negation is presented in the teachings, there are instances where it may appear that the actual existence of phenomena is being negated. But that is clearly not the case, as it is stated clearly in earlier and later parts of the text that the non-existence of any phenomena refers to the non-existence of inherent existence, or independent existence. So what is being negated is the inherent existence or the independent existence of phenomena, and not the

actual existence of phenomena. If this is not understood clearly then there is the danger of deprecating the Madhyamika system.

This is also clearly explained in other texts as well. For example, in the beginning of the *Heart Sutra*, it mentions that things are empty of inherent existence, and then goes on to state that there is no form, no sound and so forth. The qualifying object of negation (empty of inherent existence) is established earlier in the sutra, so one needs to understand that the actual meaning of no form etc., implies that there is no form existing inherently, or by way of its own characteristic.

This needs to be clearly understood not only in mere words, but with a deeper understanding of what the object of negation means. Otherwise when the object of negation is presented, there is the danger of developing a wrong view about the Madhyamika view. For example, there are some who feel that the Madhyamikas are extremists, because they negate existence altogether. If one does not have a deeper understanding of what is presented in the teachings then there is the danger that we, too, may develop the wrong view when the object of negation is presented, thinking that things are being presented as being entirely empty of existence. So, it is important to understand that what is being negated is not the actual existence of the particular object, or phenomena in general, but the inherent or true existence of any phenomenon.

Thus the object of negation should be clearly understood as presented in this text and other commentaries. The selflessness of any phenomenon is the negation of that phenomenon existing independently from its own side, i.e. by way of not having to rely on anything else for its existence. Selflessness is classified into two types—selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the object of negation one must first develop a clear understanding of what is being negated. If we were to take a vase or a pot, for example, try to imagine how the vase would exist if it were truly existent, or inherently existent. What would such an existence mean? When one investigates further into the possibility of it existing truly, or inherently, or independently, then one comes to understand that that would mean that the vase would have to exist from its own side—independently. This means that the pot does not have to rely on any other causes and conditions for its existence, and exists in its own right, from its own side, without depending on anything else. Through that investigation, one reasons whether a vase or any other phenomena could exist in that way in reality. One will then come to the correct conclusion and understanding, which is that nothing can exist independently from its own side.

1.1.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into four:

- 1.1.2.1. Refuting a truly existent composite by examining the four possibilities
- 1.1.2.2. Refuting truly existent components
- 1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining for singleness or plurality
- 1.1.2.4. Applying reasoning which negates the four possibilities in other cases

1.1.2.1. REFUTING A TRULY EXISTENT COMPOSITE BY EXAMINING THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.1.2.1.1. Exposition
- 1.1.2.1.2. Explanation

1.1.2.1.1. EXPOSITION

If the composite known as “pot” exists by way of its own entity, are the visible form and the pot one or different?

“The form is a pot” they are not one. 327
The pot that has form is not separate.
The pot does not have form,
Nor does the form have a pot.

The pot is a composite because, as explained earlier, it is a compilation of the eight substances. So ‘if the pot itself were to exist by way of its own entity or inherently’, then ‘are the visible form and the pot one or different’ i.e. separate?

If they are inherently one then:

In the first case it follows that the form and the pot in the statement “The form is a pot” are not inherently one, otherwise there would be a pot wherever there was a visible form.

If the pot and its form were inherently one then the absurdity that would arise is that wherever there is form, there would have to also be pot. Thus the absurdity that arises would be that there would be a pot wherever form exists.

In order to refute that, this counter-statement is presented:

One might think that the pot which is something distinct from visible form possessed form the way Devadatta possesses a cow, as something separate.

The counter argument that if the pot and form were to be inherently one, then wherever there is form there is a pot, cannot be accepted. It is an absurdity that obviously goes against reality. The pot is distinct from visible form and thus possesses form, just as in the example given: Devadatta possesses a cow and thus he and the cow are separate.

In order to refute this the commentary explains:

However it follows that the pot which has form is not inherently separate from the form, otherwise it would be apprehensible independently of its form.

What is being established here in refutation of that counter statement is, if you say that the pot is inherently separate from the form, then it ‘is not inherently separate from the form’, because if it were to be separate from its form then it could be apprehended independently of its form. This means that you could apprehend the pot without its form but that also defies obvious reality. You cannot apprehend a pot without its form, thus pot and form could not be inherently separate.

If there were to be a pot that is inherently separate from form then that would mean that there is no correlation between pot and form whatsoever—they would be completely separate entities. If that were the case then you would have to be able to perceive a pot or vase without depending on the form.

As the commentary further explains:

The pot does not have form as something apart which depends upon it, nor does the form have a pot dependent upon it, like a dish and its contents, because neither exists inherently.

If pot and form were to be inherently separate then the pot and its form could not be a base. Every object has the characteristics of being a base and something that is dependent or based upon it. A table serves as a base for the objects placed upon it, such as a plate and the contents of the plate. So if pot and form were to be inherently separate then one could not establish them as being the base and what is

dependent upon it. The reason that is given here is that this is because neither pot nor form exists inherently.

1.1.2.1.2. EXPLANATION

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians

1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

1.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting other sectarians

Refuting other sectarians is also subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics

1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterized

1.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the characteristics

This heading is has five subdivisions:

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting the substantial entity as basis for a distinct generality

Vaisesika assertion: Though the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, existence and the pot are.

The Vaisheshikas assert that the pot and its form are not different substantial entities, but that existence and pot are different. So the Vaisesika have different ways of establishing different entities.

The pot is a substantial entity and is said to exist through its connection with the great generality "existence," which is something separate from it.

The pot is a substantial entity and it has a connection with what is called a great generality, asserted by the Vaisheshikas as being existence. Existence itself as a whole is referred to as the 'great generality', and it is separate from the pot.

Answer:

Since the two are seen to have dissimilar Characteristics, if the pot is separate From existence, why would existence Not also be separate from the pot? 328

Nine substances, as explained earlier, are established by the Vaisheshikas.² These are the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind.

As the commentary explains:

Existence and the pot are seen to have the dissimilar characteristics of a generality and of a specific. It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence,

Existence is called a generality whereas the pot is specific, so existence and the pot have the dissimilar characteristics of generality and specific. It is first established that generality and specific have dissimilar characteristics, and that existence is a generality whereas the pot is specific. So as the commentary explains, 'It is not feasible for the pot to be a substantial entity which is separate from existence':

...for if it were, why would existence not be a separate entity from the pot? It follows that it would be. If this is accepted, the pot is nonexistent.

In order to refute their assertion, what is being established is that if existence were to be a separate entity from the pot then the pot would cease to have any entity or existence, and so it would cease to be a thing. If the pot ceased to be a thing then the pot would be non-existent, as a pot could not exist if it ceases to be a thing.

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting it as a basis for distinct attributes

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

1.1.2.1.2.1.1.2.1. Actual meaning

Assertion: The substantial entity, the pot, exists because it acts as a basis for attributes, such as one and two, which are distinct from it.

A substantial entity is a composite of the nine substances of the four elements, earth, water, fire, and air, together with space, time, direction, self and mind, and it is said the very fact that the pot is a composite of the nine substances establishes it as being an existence.

As with all other existence, there are many attributes to the substances that make up a pot. For example the attributes of the four elements are said to be taste, form, smell and touch, whereas sound is said to be the attributes of space. Then there are the many attributes of the self such as different emotions and mental states like anger, pride and so forth. According to the Vaisheshikas there are six different attributes of the self which you can look up³. The attributes of each substance are said to be distinct from the actual entity, such as a pot.

Answer: "Attribute" and "substantial entity" are different words and have different meanings.

The attributes mentioned earlier in the above assertion are numerate attributes, such 'one' or 'two'. That which is able to differentiate between one and two pots and so forth is an attribute of a pot. So attribute and substantial entity are different words and have different meanings. That is what is being established.

*If one is not accepted as the pot
The pot also is not one.*

329ab

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines thus:

If the number one is not accepted as the pot, the pot is not one either because, like two and so forth, these are different words and have different meanings. If this is accepted, the term and thought "one" do not validly apply to the pot.

Basically this is establishing that 'one' and 'two' and so forth have completely different meanings.

Assertion: The pot is one by virtue of possessing the attribute one, but one is not the pot.

The main assertion here is that what is being refuted is that 'one', which is an attribute of vase, could not be entirely inherently one with the vase. If, for example, the number one, or the sound one, or the meaning 'one', was inherently one with the vase then vase and 'one' would have to be exactly the same, meaning that when you said 'one' you would have to understand that it meant vase and when you said vase it would immediately imply that you are speaking about 'one'. However we can see that there is obviously a difference, even in the very pronunciation of the words 'one' and 'vase'. They are obviously distinct even in their sound. That in itself shows that there is a distinction. Besides there

² See, for example, 17 July 2007.

³ See 18 May 2004.

is the distinction in the meaning in that 'one' refers to a particular number of something, whereas vase has another meaning. In refuting the Vaisheshika opponents, what is being established is that if 'one' and vase were to be inherently one and not distinct then they would have to be the same in every aspect; the very utterance of vase and 'one' would have to have the same meaning and so forth. But there are obvious differences between the two.

The commentary gives this answer to the above assertion:

Answer:

*Moreover possession is not reciprocal, 329cd
Therefore also it is not one.*

And goes on to explain:

Possession occurs between two similar things, as in the case of consciousness, and not between dissimilar things. Moreover there is no reciprocal possession between the pot and one, since the pot possesses one, but one does not possess the pot. The pot is also not one because of being a separate entity from one.

What is being established here is that the pot and 'one' could not be inherently one and the same. The pot is also not one, because it is a separate entity from one.

1.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. Inconsistency with the assertion that one attribute cannot rely on another attribute

The establishing statement is:

Furthermore, your contention that attributes qualify substantial entities but that one attribute does not qualify another is contradictory.

*If the form is the size of the substance, 330
Why is the form not large?*

As the commentary explains:

If the size of the substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, why is the attribute form not large just as the substantial entity is large?

If the size of a substantial entity, the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, then the absurdity that will be obvious to us is that there are, of course, different pots, which naturally implies that pots have different sizes and shapes and so forth, i.e. there are different attributes to the pots. What is being argued here is that the size of substantiality of the pot and the size of the form is the same, which is an absurdity. Therefore:

One must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large."

If the substantial entity, which is the pot, and the size of its visible form are the same, i.e. if the substantial entity and its attributes are the same, then, as explained here 'one must accept that the form has a separate attribute "large".'

Basically this is establishing that the fault that would arise is that one would have to 'accept that form has a separate attribute "large"', which means that if the attributes themselves also have attributes, then second attributes have to be established to the first attributes. Then that would mean that there would be no end to subsequent attributes, which would be a fault. To further explain, if form itself is an attribute of vase, and if you say that form itself would have to have attributes such as large, small or big and so forth, then one has to establish further attributes to attributes.

The absurdity pointed out to the opponent is that if one has to establish second attributes to the attributes then that is contrary to your own assertions.

Objection: Small and large cannot qualify form, for according to our textual system, one attribute does not qualify another.

The Vaisheshika opponents say, 'According to our textual system we cannot establish that', and:

*If the opponent were not different 330cd
Scriptural sources could be cited.*

To that the answer is:

If your opponents were not from a school other than your own, you could cite your textual system to fault their argument, but it is inappropriate here, since we are engaged in rejecting these very tenets.

The Vaisheshikas cite their own scriptures to establish what they believe. What our own system is saying is, 'Such a practice is inappropriate here, because you are refuting our system. If you were presenting this to those who follow your system then that would be fine, but it is inappropriate to cite your scriptures to us, as these are the very tenets that we are rejecting. Rather you must either use logical reasons or conventional realities and terms to refute us'.

1.1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that which is characterised

Assertion: Even if distinct attributes like separateness are refuted, the pot which they characterize is not refuted and thus exists by way of its own entity.

Answer:

*By virtue of its characteristic 331
The characterized does not exist.
Such a thing has no existence
As something different from number and so forth.*

The attributes such as separateness and so forth were clearly refuted earlier, but the pot that the attributes characterise has not yet been specifically refuted as being inherently existent. Thus they come up with the doubt that maybe the pot exists by way of its own entity.

As the commentary explains:

If one contends that existence and so forth have the characteristic of accompanying things while the pot has the opposite characteristic, then by virtue of this opposite characteristic, the pot it characterizes does not exist anywhere by way of its own entity. Such a thing, distinct from numbers like one, two and so forth, has no existence as pot established by way of its own entity. In brief, something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found.

The conclusion that is presented here is that, 'something characterized which is a different entity from its characteristics and characteristics which are different entities from that which they characterize cannot be found'. This means that both the object which is characterised, and the characteristics of that object such as the attributes, equally lack inherent existence, or existence by way of its own entity.

Having completed refuting other sectarians, we will continue with refuting our own sectarians in our next session.

*Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
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Edited Version*

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Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 March 2008

As usual, sitting in a comfortable and appropriate position one sets one's motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and practise it well.'

One must understand the meaning behind the words, 'having listened to the teachings, I will practise it well'. The connotation of these words is that practice or meditation has to be preceded by contemplation or analysis, which in turn has to be preceded by hearing the teachings. That should be a reminder of the intricate process of first listening to the teachings, which are then analysed and finally put into practice.

1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

It is good to remember that the essential point in this chapter is contained in the first verse. It is good to keep the meaning of that verse in mind and contemplate it again and again, as it actually summarises the very profound meaning of the entire text.

This section of the chapter has two sub-divisions:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.2. Briefly refuting that though there are many components, the composite is a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit

It is useful to remind ourselves of the essential points of the headings themselves. When this heading says 'Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit', it is good to ask, 'What does that mean?'. If things were truly existent, how would they exist? This brings to mind what the actual object of refutation is.

This section has five sub-divisions:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference, where difference also refers to being one or separate

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference

The ideas in this section were also covered in earlier sections.

Sautrantika assertion: The pot and its eight substantial particles are one truly existent entity.

*Because the pot is not separate
From its characteristics, it is not one.* 332ab

The assertion of the Sautrantika is that that the pot and its eight substantial particles are one, and are a truly existent entity.

A pot or vase is an entity that is an accumulation of the eight substantial particles. As mentioned previously, these are the four elements along with form, smell, taste and touch, which are tangible, and the accumulation of these eight substantial particles is what makes up a vase or pot. The refutation of partless particles was mentioned earlier in the text¹. Our own system accepts that a vase is an entity that is made up of the eight substantial particles. What the Sautrantika assertion is basically saying is that the eight substantial particles that make up a vase or pot, as well as the pot itself, are truly existent; that is what is being refuted in this section.

The refutation is presented in the first two lines of the verse, and explained thus in the commentary:

It follows that the pot would not be a truly single unit, because it is, by way of its own entity, one with and not separate from its eight substantial particles which have diverse characteristics.

What is being refuted is that the pot is a truly existent single unit. If that were to be the case, then the text implies that the pot could not be a truly existent single unit, because it is made up of eight different substantial particles, each of which has diverse characteristics. That in itself shows the falsity of a vase or pot being a single independent unit.

Even though it is not explicitly mentioned here in the commentary, what is implied from earlier and later refutations of this point is that since both the Sautrantika and the Prasangika accept that the vase is an entity that is made up of eight substantial particles, then what the Prasangika are refuting is that the pot is a truly existent single entity or unit. If the pot were to be a single entity, or a single unit, then either there would have to be eight pots, because there are eight diverse substantial particles that make up the pot, or all of those eight particles would have to be one and the same, not having diverse characteristics. Both of these options are absurdities. That is what is implied in the refutation presented here.

*If there is not a pot for each,
Plurality is not feasible.* 332cd

If it is stated that the pot is a plurality, meaning that there are many pots, because there are many separate characteristics of the particles that make up the pot, then, as the commentary suggests, there should be a pot for each of the eight substantial particles. Since there is no pot for each, it is not feasible to describe the pot as a plurality.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation

Assertion: The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

This heading explains how the vase itself is referred to as a composite, while the eight particles are the components that make up the entity to become a vase. Thus the components (like branches of a tree) are the different characteristics of different particles that make up the composite vase. Thus that what we call a vase is, in reality, a composite that is made up of its constituents or components, which are the eight particles.

¹ See Chapter 9, specifically the teachings of 7 and 14 August 2007

Assertion: The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

What is being further asserted is that the pot is a single unit. Even though it has eight substantial particles, those eight substantial particles come together to make a single unit.

The tangible and the intangible 333
Cannot be said to coalesce.
Thus it is in no way feasible
For these forms to coalesce.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

The pot's composite can in no way be a truly existent single unit due to the coalescence of the eight substantial particles such as visible form and so forth, because the four elements which are tangible, and visible form, smell and so forth which are intangible cannot touch and coalesce.

This is not refuting that the eight substantial particles are the constituents that make up the composite. Rather, what is being refuted is the pot's composite as being a truly existent single unit. The refutation explains that if you assert that the coalescence of the eight particles makes a single unit, then the assertion that the eight particles coalesce is, in itself, not feasible. This is because within the eight substantial particles, the four elements of water, fire, air and earth are tangible because we can touch and feel them, whereas the remaining four substances of form, smell, taste and touch are intangible. For example smell, taste and touch itself is not tangible, as we cannot feel it through our sensation of touch. Thus it is not feasible for tangible and intangible substances to be united into the one single entity or unit. That is how the assertion is refuted.

One should understand from the verse and the explanation given in the commentary that what is being refuted is that a composite is a truly existent single unit. What it seems to imply is that, as it says here, there cannot be a complete coalescence of the eight substances in itself. That is because you would have to be able to establish there being a single truly existent unit, which there isn't.

Here we can also refer to the analogies and examples that are given in other texts such as the *Madhyamikavatara* or the *Middle Way* text where there are seven refutations of such an interdependent, inherently existent composite such as a chariot². Other schools consider a chariot as independently or inherently existent, since when its parts are put together they make up a cart or a chariot. This implies to them that it is an inherently existent chariot that you can find. That is refuted in the *Madhyamikavatara*. The same sort of refutation is presented here, which is that the parts of the composite (here, the pot) come together, implying the existence of an inherently existent, or as specifically mentioned here, a truly existent unit, or single unit, or entity. That is not feasible.

1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

Assertion: Even though there is no mutual contact, their combination is the "truly existent" pot.

This is related to the earlier refutation that it is not possible for the tangible and intangible to touch and thus coalesce, and form a single unit.

Form is a component of the pot 334
And thus, for a start, is not the pot.
Since the compound does not exist,
Neither do the components.

In other words this is saying 'I agree that they cannot touch, but not being in mutual contact does not negate substantial particles coming together to form a truly existent pot'.

The first half of the verse is a refutation of this assertion. As the text explains:

The pot's visible form is a component or part of the pot and thus, for a start, is not the pot, just as smell and so forth are not.

What is mutually accepted is that there are components that make up the pot, and that visible form is one of the components of the pot. Thus to assert that the components coming together in combination forms a truly existent pot, implies that each of the components are also truly existent components that make up a truly existent pot. What this further implies is that the components that make up the pot would have to be a pot as they are truly existent, and one with the pot. However the component form, for example, is not a pot to begin with, just like smell and so forth. In other words each of the components is not a pot, so you cannot assert that their combination forms a unity of a pot.

A further assertion is that since a compound reliant upon its components exists, then that is the pot. The second half of the verse is the refutation of this assertion, and is explained in the commentary thus:

Since visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. The components, too, therefore do not exist by way of their own entity, because they have parts.

What they are asserting is that a compound is reliant upon its components, which in this case is called a pot, and that pot, they assert, is a truly existent pot. The refutation is that as visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. What is being presented is that as each of the components is not a pot, therefore the compound pot itself does not exist by way of its own entity. Similarly the components too, have to rely on other components. So they do not exist by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. That is how the refutation to the assertion is made.

To understand this refutation, one must take it a little further, with an understanding of how it is presented in other teachings. What is being refuted is a truly existent pot that consists of components called substantial particles. It is the accumulation of substantial particles that make up a unity to form the pot, which they say is truly existent.

What one should understand as the implication of the refutation made here is that if the coming together of the components establishes a truly existent pot, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot either in the composite or in its components, which are the eight substantial particles. If you were to search in either of the eight particles, you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot within each of the particles, which include form. What is being explained here is that form is not a pot. But if a pot was truly existent, then since form is a component of the pot then you would have to find a truly existent pot in the form.

This same reasoning and logic is used again when one refers to other teachings and other instances such as the self. What we call the self is the accumulation of the five aggregates. If the self were to be a truly existent self, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent self either in the composite of the five aggregates, the 'I', or in the components which are the individual aggregates. Thus with analytical and logical

² There are seven refutations in the teaching of 13 July 2004.

reasoning one asks, 'Does a truly existent self exist in the form aggregate, or the feeling aggregate, and so forth?' When you exhaust the possibility of finding a truly existent self either in the accumulation of the five aggregates or in the individual aggregates, then that exhausts all possibilities of there being a truly existent self. That is how a truly existent self is refuted. The same line of logic and reasoning is used here in refuting a pot as being a truly existent pot.

Thus the refutation in the commentary is that just as the component (the pot itself) is not truly existent, i.e. does not exist by way of its own entity, the components too do not exist by way of their own entity, and the reason given is because they have parts. One must understand how the logical reasoning is used here. If there were to be a truly existent pot then that would mean that the pot would have to exist without depending on any other factors, constituents, or components for its existence. It would have to be an entity that exists from its own side inherently, without depending on any other factors. So a pot cannot be truly existent because it has parts, or constituents, which in itself is very logical. Similarly the constituents such as the four elements, along with form, smell and so forth, in themselves cannot be truly existent or existent by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. So what is being established is, anything that has parts cannot be truly existent and independent because it is dependent on other factors for its existence.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

This means that if the pot has true existence then the consequence would be that everything is a pot, as all of the substantial particles would have to be a pot as well.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

This refers to the consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot would have to be one if the composite were truly existent.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

Why are some things that have form pots, and other things that have form not pots?

This is a hypothetical question referring to the consequences if there were to be a truly existent pot.

Answer:

If the definition of form 335
Applies without incongruity
To all forms, for what reason
Is one a pot and not all others?

The initial question is explained by the commentary as:

It follows that all should equally be pots [referring to all that has form], for if the definition that (form is simply that which is appropriate as form) applies without any incongruity to all forms such as smell, taste and so forth as well as pots and woollen cloth, truly existent things with form should be the same in all respects.

Even though this seems a little bit ambiguous, this is again refuting that there is a truly existent pot. The manner of refuting it in this instance is by showing the absurd consequence that would occur if a pot were to be truly existent. What is being implied here is that if there is a truly

existent pot then the components of the pot would also truly existent, which would mean that the component form, would be truly existent. Now, if form, which is a component of the pot, were to be truly existent then the truly existent form and the truly existent pot would have to be one and the same—they would be indistinguishable. As mentioned here in the commentary, the definition of form is that which is appropriate as form, and that definition of form applies to everything else that has the substance of form, such as the pot itself, woollen cloth and so forth. Since all other substances also have form as one of their components, then if form were to be indistinguishable from a pot, the absurd consequence would be that everything else that has the component of form would also be a pot.

It is commonly accepted that all substantially existent phenomena are made up of their components, in particular the eight substantial categories. Thus, for example, a pot is made up of the eight substantial constituents or components, one of which is form. However the constituents that make up the composite pot are not truly existent constituents of the composite. If they were to be truly existent then the absurdity is that because the attribute or constituent form is inherently or truly one with the pot, then there would have to be a pot wherever there is form.

Another example, is a pillar, which is also made up of its own unique eight substantial particles, however that doesn't mean that they are truly existent. Just as a pot is comprised of its own unique or uncommon eight substantial particles, so too a pillar is composed of its own uncommon eight substantial particles. However the uncommon substantial particles are not inherently one with their composite. Thus the absurd consequence is that if the composite is inherently one, then the components will naturally have to be inherently or truly one with composite as well.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

If you assert that form is distinct from 336
Taste and so forth but not from the pot,
How can that which does not exist
Without these not be distinct from form?

Again, what needs to be understood here is if the eight substances were to be inherently existent or inherently one with the pot, then the substances would have to be the same entity as the pot. Other texts explain that there are certain things which are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they have to be one. For example, products and impermanence are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one and the same entity. They have the same nature, but they are not one. Generally, when the texts say that two things have the same nature, it doesn't imply that they have to be one and the same entity. Here, the assertion is that the composite is truly existent, so if the composite is truly existent then the constituents have to also be truly existent. If that was the case then pot and its constituents would have to be one and the same entity. That is the absurd consequence presented here—that the constituents of the pot and the pot itself are actually one entity.

If two things were to be inherently one, then that would mean that they would have to be independently one, as being inherently one means that they do not depend on any other factors. Being one from its own side would imply that they are completely indistinguishable, i.e. one and the same in every aspect. They would not be separable at all because of being one entity. That's how it would have to be if it were

to be truly existent, existent by way of its own entity, or inherently existent. The absurd consequence of this is mentioned here:

It follows that form, smell and so forth would also be one, because of being one with the pot.

Objection: Form, smell and so forth are different.

The very fact that the sound 'form' and 'smell' are different indicates that they are different. Form, smell, taste and so forth have different terms, which also shows that there is a difference, and that they are not inherently one.

Furthermore, they also have specific and different functions. Form is perceived by visual consciousness, while smell is perceived by the nose consciousness and so forth. Thus they are perceived and experienced in different ways. That also indicates the difference between the substances. If they were to be one with the pot, then the substances would also have to be completely one and exactly the same; being one entity with the pot would imply that they are not different from one another. To return to the earlier example of products and impermanence: they are of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one. One is called impermanence, and the other is called product and so forth. So being of one nature doesn't necessarily mean that they are one and entirely the same in every aspect. The fact that the very term is different indicates that they are different. There are many different ways of differentiating between the different characteristics, and if they were to be truly one or inherently one, then they would have to be one in every aspect, which is absurd.

Then the explanation presented in the commentary is:

You assert that smell, taste, and so forth are distinct from visible form because they are objects apprehended by different senses, but that visible form is not distinct from the pot. Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form? it follows that it should be, because the pot is different from form, smell and so forth by way of its own entity.

This is presenting the absurd consequence of their assertion. You assert that smell, taste and so forth are distinct from visible form because their objects are distinguished by different senses. The implication that was presented earlier is that visible form is not distinct from the pot. If visible form, which is an attribute or a constituent of the pot, is not distinct from the pot, then that would imply that the other constituents would also have to be the same.

Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form?

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

The pot has no causes 337
And is itself not an effect.
Thus there is no pot at all
Apart from form and so forth.

This is something that we have covered in earlier sections³ as well as in other texts and other explanations, so it should be quite straightforward. As the commentary explains:

Since form and so forth are not the pot's causes by way of their own entity, the pot is not an effect existent by way of its own entity.

Refuting the cause as being truly existent implies that the effect also lacks true existence.

Thus there is nowhere a pot that exists by way of its own entity apart from its components like visible form and so forth.

Because of the reasons given earlier, there is no possibility of a pot existing by way of its own entity, not relating to its components. A pot cannot exist by way of its own entity and separate from its components, like visible form and so forth.

Since a pot cannot be isolated from its components, a pot that is a different entity from them does not exist. That is how a truly existent pot or a pot that exists by way of its own entity is negated.

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

Assertion: The pot is the effect of its components, such as clay, and they are its causes.

This assertion is, of course, is accepted by our own system as a general statement.

Answer:

If the pot exists by virtue of its causes 338
And those causes by virtue of others,
How can that which does not exist
By virtue of itself produce something disparate?

The commentary presents the meaning of the verse thus:

If the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes exist by virtue of other causes, [which is accepted in our own system, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity [implying that because the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes also exist by virtue of other causes, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity produce a disparate effect?

What is being established here is that that what is produced from causes and conditions cannot be an independent, truly existent entity. Thus:

Anything, therefore, that needs to rely on causes does not exist by way of its own entity. If it existed by way of its own entity, it follows that it would be causeless.

As the commentary explains:

This reasoning which refutes the existence of a pot by way of its own entity should be applied to all effects [meaning all other products].

What one should understand here is that even though both sides accept that a pot is produced by causes, the difference lies in the interpretation of that. For the Sautrantika it means that because a pot is produced by causes, it is truly existent. Whereas for the Prasangika, the very fact that it is produced by causes serves as a reason for it to be not truly existent. Because it is dependent on other causes and conditions it cannot be truly existent, and by implication it cannot be inherently existent.

Following the normal tradition of our Study Group classes, you would be aware that our next session is the discussion session, and the following week will be the exam. That of course should not imply that you need not come to those sessions. As I don't come to the discussion, I am not fully aware of how many attend the discussion sessions, but I do come to the exam session, and I noticed last year that the attendance at the exam is much less than at the normal

³ See, for example, 17 July 2007.

teaching sessions. So I would like to request that as those who come to these Study Group sessions are dedicated students, meaning that you want to study from your own side and thus you have committed yourselves to do the study, then coming to the exam is part of the study program. So taking it as a personal responsibility, it would be in one's best interest to come to the discussion, which will further enhance one's understanding of the teachings, while doing the exam is a way to help to formulate one's understanding by recapitulation and so forth. Thus my request is not to be lax about this, and to take it upon yourselves as a responsibility to come to the discussion and exam sessions as well.

Unlike any other discussion, the Study Group discussion is about the topics in the text, which are all topics about how to gain an understanding of emptiness. The mere formulation of a doubt about emptiness is said to be incredibly meritorious. A mere doubt about emptiness, and any attempt to try to remove doubts and to further enhance one's understanding of emptiness, is said to be incredibly powerful in purifying one's negative karma and accumulating merit.

It is said that any time and energy we spend in enhancing our understanding of emptiness is incredibly meritorious and powerful. Every attempt we make to enhance our understanding by raising questions and doubts, and trying to clear away those questions and doubts establishes a very strong imprint of that in our mind. That is the relevance of doing reading in general, and discussions on the teachings.

Just as the teaching is relevant, likewise the discussions and the exams and any attempt to enhance one's understanding are all relevant. One must understand that that is as much as we can do in our present capacity and circumstances. For us ordinary beings to be able to try to really develop renunciation, let alone understand emptiness and bodhicitta, is incredibly difficult. For it to occur in this lifetime is a mere possibility, and for it to actually happen is very, very difficult.

Without developing renunciation it is said that gaining an understanding of emptiness is quite impossible, and without an understanding of emptiness, it is also very difficult to develop bodhicitta, and vice versa. Bodhicitta and emptiness go hand in hand, and without the basis of renunciation, they are very difficult to obtain. But what *is* possible is to gain an understanding and leave an imprint on our mind. That is something that we have the capacity to do. It is within our capacity to leave as many imprints on our mind as possible, by receiving the teachings, doing the discussion and so forth. That is the relevance of the time that we spend together in the teaching itself, and also the discussions and so forth.

As mentioned in sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, reading, contemplating, and expounding even one word on emptiness is so incredibly meritorious that it cannot be really measured. As many of you would be voluntarily reading the sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, you would be aware of that. If we take advice at face value, then we can see the relevance of spending any time and energy in furthering our understanding on emptiness.

As further mentioned in the sutras, either reading, understanding, or propounding even a mere stanza on emptiness, not only purifies very heavy negative karmas that one has created from the past, but also becomes a cause to accumulate a sense of great merit that becomes a cause for one's enlightenment.

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DISCUSSION

Week 1 19.02.08

1. Why is this a profound teaching and what is a root delusion?

2. Explain the difference between mind and mental factors?

3. For the apprehension of an object to take place three factors must be present. What are these three factors and how does this help our understanding of the lack of inherent perception?

Week 2 26.02.08

4. Name the five ever-present mental factors.

5. Give the definition of Recognition established by this commentary.

6. How is the magician's conjured illusion of the horse/rabbit an analogy for the lack of inherent existence?

Week 3 04.03.08

7. The commentary explains that there are many different types of reasoning that prove the lack of inherent existence. One of the supreme reasonings is being established here. What is this reasoning?

8.a) Give the different terminologies for the object of negation.

b) Why is it stressed that one needs to clearly understand what the object of negation means?

9. The pot is a composite because it is a compilation of the eight substances. So if the pot itself were to exist by way of its own entity or inherently then 'are the visible form and the pot one or different' i.e. separate? Give the absurdities of the pot being either one with form or different from form.

Week 4 11.03.08

10. "The tangible and the intangible
Cannot be said to coalesce
Thus it is in no way feasible
For these forms to coalesce."

Explain this verse.

Tara Institute Study Group 2008 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'
Exam

Name:

Block: 1
Week: 6 (25 March 2008)

Mark: /32

1. Why is this a profound teaching and what is a root delusion? [2]

2. Explain the difference between mind and mental factors? [2]

3. For the apprehension of an object to take place three factors must be present. What are these three factors and how does this help our understanding of the lack of inherent perception? [4]

4.Name the five ever-present mental factors. [5]

5. Give the definition of Recognition established by this commentary.[2]

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Explain this verse. [2]