
Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 February 2007

We have this great opportunity to gather together again this year and continue. So first of all I'd like to greet everyone with *Tashi delek!*

The reason why I say that it is auspicious that we have gathered together again is because we are here to exchange knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. The Dharma presents methods to discard negative emotions and acquire positive beneficial attitudes, which is a means of subduing the mind. Therefore this gathering, where we learn and discuss the means of doing that, is really beneficial. Discarding negative states of mind is based on cultivating positive attitudes, which is basically an attitude of wishing to benefit and be kind to others. Based on a compassionate and loving attitude of wishing to benefit others we can slowly work at removing the negative states of the mind within oneself. That is why I say that having this opportunity to jointly engage in the Dharma is most auspicious and beneficial.

It is important that we think along these lines on a continuous basis so as to encourage ourselves. To further recognise how important that basis of love and compassion is, we must remind ourselves that the wish to benefit others is likened to a very valuable priceless object, which indeed it is. If we were to lose this attitude of love and compassion, then what kind of life would we have? It would really be an empty life without much meaning. For as long as we nurture and hold on to this attitude of love and compassion, to that extent we will have a happier and healthier life. That is because to the extent that we develop love and compassion and based on that, extend some benefit to others by being kind to them, or showing a kind attitude, or good behaviour, others will also like us. They will befriend us and we will be accepted and considered as a friend wherever we go. Therefore just as it is as of benefit for others, it is also of practical benefit for ourselves. Therefore we must maintain and develop this priceless attitude.

We must also understand that learning the Dharma is not a means to merely acquire knowledge. Rather the main purpose of learning is to subdue the mind. That is something that we need to understand and continually remind ourselves. Subduing the mind basically means overcoming the negative attitudes in our mind. These attitudes are based on self-cherishing, which is thinking only about oneself all the time, making oneself as the centre and always considering everything else as being less important in relation to oneself. The stronger that self-cherishing attitude is, the weaker the attitude of cherishing others and benefiting others will be.

Let us consider the state of mind where we have lost the

attitude of benefiting and helping others. What kind of outcome will that bring to us? First of all we find that there will be feelings of being neglected or not being loved by others. Instead of feeling lost and uncomfortable and negative we should look into the reasons why others are neglecting and abandoning us. We must look into our own mind and see whether we have an attitude of only thinking about ourselves while neglecting others. If we really look into the main reason why others abandon us, we will find that that the very attitude that we criticise in others is something that we have within ourselves. The more self-cherishing and self-clinging that we have the more the attitude of others towards us will be similar.

It is very important that rather than thinking negatively about others, we investigate and look into ourself and the kinds of attitudes we hold. Therefore we must look into the benefits of cherishing others and really develop a sense of love and compassion towards others, while overcoming the self-cherishing attitude – the mind that clings only to the self. In order to try to train our mind it is good to do this sort of analysis or meditation on what is the most beneficial. For example, we can see two groups of people: one group are those who are nurturing, and who have a loving attitude towards others; they have compassion and cherish others. The other group of people are those who are self-centred and who only think about themselves; their life is based on self-centredness. If we put ourselves in the middle of these two groups and analyse them, and if we were given the choice of joining one of them, then which group would we be inclined to join? Would we join the group of people who have a compassionate and loving attitude towards others, or would we join the group of people who are self-centred and who think only about themselves? If our natural choice was to join the group who exhibit love and compassion and kindness towards others, then that means that we see the value and benefit of such an attitude. Questioning and analysing in this way should give us enough reason to really develop that attitude of loving-kindness towards all others, and thus overcome our self-centredness and self-cherishing.

Having analysed in such a way, on further analysis we will come to realise that the good attitudes of love and compassion in these people didn't come about just by itself. Love and compassion are not qualities that arise without any training or development of the mind. So we think, 'If I were to naturally choose that group then I must follow suit. I must also develop the attitude of love and kindness in my heart. That is something I must do'. Developing our attitude in this way gives an outline for the motivation for practising Dharma and is the whole basis of the Dharma. So, as I normally remind you, the motivation of developing loving-kindness is very important, and we need to remind ourselves to generate and maintain that motivation.

I can also definitely see your development towards having a kinder mind, and that is something that I feel happy about. I can see that you have developed an awareness of karma, which is basically an ability to differentiate between negative and positive karmas. I'm

not saying that you may have developed deep-rooted, infallible faith in karma, as that is not something which is easily developed. Nevertheless, I see that you have a good understanding of karma and live your life accordingly. Because of the understanding you have, you are able to think, 'I should minimise engaging in negative deeds as much as possible and engage in positive deeds, and in this way bring about positive consequences for myself and others'. That is something which I definitely see that you are adopting, and that is a really good basis. The understanding and abiding by the law of karma, is said to be the basis or the very foundation of leading a Dharma life. That is something which is really important to maintain.

Recently, when I visited my own teacher, Khensur Urgyen Tseten, one of the first things he asked me was, 'How's your development of the Dharma going? Has your mind become kinder?', and my response to Khensur Rinpoche was, 'I feel that my mind has become much happier now, so I suppose that must be a sign that my mind has been becoming a little bit kinder'.

Part A Showing how the aspiring altruistic intention is generated after training in the attitudes of a person of intermediate capacity by explaining elimination of the four errors

The first four chapters mainly dealt with overcoming the four erroneous views, which is also something that His Holiness emphasised in his recent teachings in India. Studying this would have helped those who attended his teachings understand the points he made. The means of overcoming the four erroneous views that hinder the development of right attitude or view are the main practices of the medium scope. Overcoming these erroneous views is the means to overcome the obstacles to developing the bodhicitta mind and the actions of a bodhisattva. The first chapter covered overcoming the erroneous belief in permanence. The second chapter is on overcoming the erroneous belief of seeing the contaminated aggregates as pleasurable. The third is overcoming the erroneous belief of the contaminated aggregates being clean, while the fourth chapter is overcoming the erroneous belief of seeing the contaminated aggregates as having a self.

To actually give a more specific summary of the chapters presented so far in the *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattva* or the *Four Hundred*, the first four chapters explicitly present the four noble truths, by explaining the means of overcoming the four erroneous views, while implicitly they also show the means of overcoming the obstacles to developing bodhicitta.

Part B Explaining how to train in the deeds, having generated the practical altruistic intention.

The fifth chapter explained how to overcome particular obstacles to developing the bodhicitta attitude. The main subject matter was the actual explanation of the state of the bodhicitta mind, including an explanation of the

bodhisattva's deeds and the bodhicitta attitude. The sixth chapter specifically goes into overcoming the obstacles to engaging in the bodhisattva deeds. If you understand this summary of the chapters then it becomes a good means to integrate it into your meditation practice.

CHAPTER VI: EXPLAINING THE MEANS TO ABANDON DISTURBING ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS WHICH PREVENT THE DEEDS

The sixth chapter explains how to overcome particular delusions in order to develop a bodhicitta attitude. It is subdivided into two:

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

1. Explaining the material of the chapter

Presenting the material of the chapter is sub-divided into two categories.

- 1.1. Refuting the contention that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions are eliminated by tormenting the body with ascetic practices
- 1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

1.1. Refuting the contention that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions are eliminated by tormenting the body with ascetic practices

As the heading itself suggests, this section refutes the idea that contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes (the delusions) are eliminated by enduring severe ascetic practices, which is a view that others hold.

The refutation is not suggesting that we don't need to practise ascetic practices, rather it is refuting asceticism as the main means for overcoming delusions, and therefore a means to obtain liberation. That is what is being refuted here.

One must understand that when delusions and karma are explained, they should be understood in the context of the twelve interdependent links. Three of the twelve interdependent links, are identified as delusions, and they are to be abandoned. Two of the twelve interdependent links are identified as karma. One must also understand that whilst all delusions are to be abandoned, not all karmas are to be abandoned. If it is a delusion, then one can assert that it is something to be abandoned entirely. Whereas with karma, there are certain karmas that are beneficial, such as the karma to be reborn in higher rebirths, i.e. as a human being or in the god realms. Those kind of meritorious karmas are not seen as an object of abandonment. However there are those karmas that are a cause to be reborn in the lower realms and these are definitely to be abandoned. There is no question about that. We can therefore conclude that all delusions as well as karmas that are causes to be born in the lower realms are to be abandoned, whereas the karmas that are classified as meritorious karma are not to be abandoned. Even though they are still causes to be

reborn in samsara, they can nevertheless be utilised for one's practice. Therefore they are not entirely abandonments as such. Also, when we consider the classification of karma into virtuous and non-virtuous karma, non-virtuous karma is definitely to be abandoned, whereas virtuous karma is not.

***If desire increases through pleasure
And anger increases through pain,
Why are those with pleasure not ascetics?
Why are the ascetics those with pain?*** 126

As the commentary reads:

Since the source of all trouble lies in cyclic existence, which is caused by contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, Bodhisattvas who act as close friends to transmigrators encourage trainees to put an end to such actions and emotions.

What is being specified here is contaminated karma, which as mentioned before, are the karmas to be abandoned. That is what is being explained. Basically this assertion is presenting the view of a non-Buddhist school, called Jainism, which practises great austerities in relation to mortifying their body, such as intentionally inflicting pain on the body by piercing it with thorns and so forth. They also go around naked as a means of practising austerity. These are the kinds of practices that are being negated by the verse. The Jains claim that Buddhist practices are not an authentic practice, because they don't practise austerity, whereas, 'we Jains practise austerity', they say.

If [you claim] that is so, it is unreasonable to give the ordained buildings five hundred masonry courses high and food of a hundred flavours. Since these are pleasurable they increase desire.

What this refers to here is the non-Buddhist schools' claim that if you are saying that one must overcome the delusions, it is not proper that the Buddha has allowed you dwelling places that are reasonably comfortable to live in, good clothing that covers you well, as well as foods 'of a hundred flavours', indicating foods which are tasty and good. It is not proper that this is permitted to you, since these conditions will increase desire because they are pleasurable.

What they are saying may seem quite reasonable. The first line in the verse says, 'If desire increases through pleasure'. This is refuting the Jains' claim that pleasures increase desire, so therefore anything that gives pleasure should be avoided. The commentary further presents their argument:

From the outset, one should therefore avoid things like visual form that arouse desire. Those who undergo overt suffering by mortifying their bodies with heat and cold, letting their hair become matted and so forth are called ascetics, overcoming contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

After claiming that Buddhist practices are not ascetic, they go on to explain that their way of practising is an ascetic practice, and that should be the practice to adopt.

The non-Buddhist schools say that pleasure leads to desire. Therefore, they claim, anything that seems to give

rise to any pleasure should be completely abandoned in order to overcome desire. The refutation of this assertion is as follows:

If pleasure from one's body and possessions increases desire, and pleasure as well as its causes should be avoided, physical and mental pain which increase anger should be avoided too.

What is being explained here is that if you claim that anything that increases pleasure is to be abandoned because it increases desire, then anything that causes pain should also be abandoned, because pain gives rise to the delusion of anger. Therefore that should be avoided as well. In other words, 'The austerities that you practise, including inflicting pain on yourself, are a cause for anger to arise, so why do you practise them?'. The commentary goes on:

Why are those who have pleasure not ascetics and why are the ascetics those who fast and experience the pain...

and so forth.

As the text explains, those who overcome the contaminated actions and disturbing emotions are called real ascetics, not those who torment the body. That is the standing statement or reasoning that a Buddhist would give in response. As the commentary further explains, the Supramundane Victor (which refers to the Buddha) knowing the disposition of beings' minds, and seeing that some beings mind are afflicted by strong desire while in other beings the main delusion that is afflicting them is anger, gave different practices to overcome those delusions. As the commentary reads:

The Supramundane Victor gave certain individuals twelve rules of training to prevent desire. To prevent anger he permitted the angry to have fine food, clothing and so forth.

There are twelve rules for ordained Sangha with respect to their clothing, food and shelter. In relation to the robes, fine clothes are to be avoided and only patched clothes should be worn. Thus, different folds in the robes represent patches. Furthermore, clothing that has been discarded by others can be adopted and worn, which is another way of decreasing attachment to clothing. There are also rules in relation to how clothes should be worn. Also, ordained Sangha should not keep more than the three robes, and they should be made of wool or cotton, and no other kind of expensive material like silk and so forth should be used.

Food must be acquired through alms, which means going out to beg for one's food. The second rule in relation to food is to eat one's food at one time, meaning in one sitting, which refers to eating one meal a day. To further emphasise that, the rule is that meals should not be eaten after noon.

In order to overcome strong attachment to dwellings, the rules prescribe that the Sangha dwell in forest areas (which means in the forest or in the wilderness). Secondly, their dwellings should not have a proper roof, which means living out in the open and finding natural sources to protect oneself from the elements. The third

rule is to dwell in areas like cemeteries, or isolated places, which is in order to increase one's practice and to abandon attachment to dwellings. These are the four rules in relation to dwellings.

In relation to seating, one should not sit in a position leaning against anything i.e. one should avoid comfortable chairs and sit where one can avoid leaning on anything. This is to overcome laziness, and just leaning back and relaxing. This is prescribed in order to overcome a particular attachment to one's sitting place. Also Sangha should sit in isolated places. The list of these twelve rules is clarified further on. You could actually go ahead and read them.

To refute the accusation of the non-Buddhist schools that Buddhists do not practise austerity, first of all the refutation is based on the actual mortification and inflicting of harm on the body itself, which is not in itself a practice of real austerity. Mortifying the body is a practice of ignorance, rather than a practice to overcome delusions. That being so, then the Buddhist refutation also goes on to explain that, 'It is not as though we Buddhists don't have ascetic practices. In fact the Buddha laid down rules as a means to overcome attachment to dwellings and clothing and so forth, and these are ascetic practices in themselves, which are not easy to practise. These are not extreme as your practices, they are however practices that strengthen detachment. They are moderate practices, which become a means for overcoming desire and attachment. So we Buddhists do have ascetic practices'.

As the commentary further explains:

To prevent anger he gave the angry fine food, clothing and so forth. Therefore only the Shakyas who conquer disturbing emotions should be called ascetics.

What is being explained here is the skilful means of the Buddha and it is actually quite profound. In order to combat and overcome strong desires in those with strong desire, and thus practise detachment, the particular rules in relation to food, clothing and so forth were presented (as was explained earlier). Depriving someone, whose main delusion is anger, of food and clothing will just disturb their mind even further. Rather than being a means to overcome their delusion, it will actually increase it. So therefore as a skilful means to subdue the minds of those who are afflicted with anger, the Buddha prescribed fine food and clothing that would nourish the body, to the point where the mind can be subdued, and they can slowly overcome that strong aversion or anger in their mind, and thus help to subdue their mind. Thus as a summary it is claimed here that the Shakyas, meaning the followers of Shakyamuni Buddha, are the ones who are practising austerities in the real sense.

The presentation in this text follows that the advice that I give to people in relation to partners who are living together, or any other relationship that one has, which I've shared with you before. If your partner, for example, were to come home one day quite upset with something that may have happened during the day, they might be

quite agitated and upset. When you see them coming back in that state of mind, it would be very unskilful to start pestering them with questions like 'What happened?' or 'Tell me what went wrong?', when all they really want is to be quiet and have some peace of mind. So to really help calm them down, the best thing is to welcome them home, smile at them and say, 'What can I serve you?' and go and make a cup of tea for them, or maybe offer to make a delicious meal. After offering tea, a delicious meal and so forth, their mind will naturally calm down and then, without having been asked, they might start relating what is wrong and share their problem. But if you were to ask them questions right away, that would be considered as pestering, which could just agitate their mind even further. So therefore I normally advise that in relationships a more skilful way to react when one notices that they are unhappy or sad or agitated in some way is to offer them food to make them relax. That would then be a good way, so that one lives in harmony.

The commentary presents this analogy:

Just as one gets sugar and so forth by crushing sugar cane, all kinds of happiness in this life and in the future are gained by crushing the disturbing emotions.

The analogy being used here is deriving sugar from sugar cane by crushing it. That analogy is used to explain how the delusions are the very root of unhappiness. So therefore just as the sugar cane is crushed to derive the sugar, likewise the very root of the delusions is dealt with and the delusions are thus eradicated from the mind, leaving real happiness and peace - what we call liberation. It is not by inflicting more pain and more harm upon oneself that one eradicates the delusion, but rather combating and dealing the delusions themselves, so that one can overcome and uproot them from the very core. That is the real way of dealing with the delusions.

1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

We will cover this second heading next week.

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Edited Version*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual we will bring our attention inward and focus our mind on the teaching to be received. For that purpose we generate the bodhicitta motivation, which is, ‘For the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I need to attentively listen to the Dharma and then use it to overcome all the delusions’.

1.2. Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions

This section explains the means to abandon disturbing emotions, and to do that we first need to identify them. Only then can we attempt to overcome the disturbing emotions. That is the purpose of this section.

The technical definition of a delusion is the mental factor that causes the mind to be disturbed and uncomfortable. That definition includes the nature of what a delusion is, which is a mental factor, and its function, which is that it disturbs the mind and makes it agitated.

At our stage, as an ordinary person, rather than trying to overcome the delusions we actually seem to befriend and harbour them within us, because we don’t recognise them as delusions. When we actually begin to recognise and identify delusions as such then we begin to develop a strong wish to get rid of them, because we do not want our mind to be disturbed or to be uncomfortable. Therefore it is really important to initially recognise delusions, and then slowly try to overcome them.

In general, the delusions are classified into the six root delusions and the twenty secondary, or proximate, delusions. They have been explained before, so we won’t go into detail about them now. You can refer back to your notes or look into the text, where it explains the specific delusions. Some of the six root delusions are actually identified here in the text, but the main point is to not just look at the list and be able to name them. Rather you should use the list of the delusions as a means of recognising those that seem to occur in your mind. When you are in a disturbed state of mind try to relate that to a particular type of delusion, and thus recognise the source of the disturbance. Just that mere recognition and acknowledgment of the delusion helps one to understand what is going on in one’s mind. Using that process we can then slowly work at eliminating the delusions.

One develops a keen wish to overcome these delusions when one identifies and recognises the delusions within oneself as being a disturbing state of mind. When one really begins to identify the function of the delusions and how they disturb ourselves and others then a wish such as, ‘I must overcome the delusions’ can be generated in

one’s mind. The determination, ‘I must abandon them’, arises spontaneously in the mind. Therefore the text explains the means of abandoning disturbing emotions in this section.

Explaining the means to abandon disturbing emotions is further divided into two main categories.

1.2.1. The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions

1.2.2. How to cultivate the antidote which totally destroys the seeds of the delusions

This twofold classification is actually very useful. The first subdivision refers to the way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions or delusions which, when they arise in a manifest form, arise obviously in our mind. However the means to help to overcome those manifest delusions in our mind will not in themselves serve as an antidote to overcome the seeds of the delusions. For us, what serves as the antidote to overcome the seeds of delusions is actually the wisdom realising selflessness. Overcoming the seeds of delusions is very difficult to attempt without having developed what we call the wisdom realising selflessness.

On a daily basis, what disturbs us continuously are the manifest delusions. Thus techniques such as thinking about the unattractive features of an object that you are attracted to as a means of overcoming desire, or thinking about love and compassion as a means of overcoming anger are the antidotes that help us to overcome the manifest delusions.

Seeds and imprints

However while these techniques help to overcome the manifest delusions in our mind, they will not in themselves serve as a direct means to overcome the seeds of the delusions. That is how understanding this twofold subdivision can be helpful to our minds. As explained in previous teachings, there is a difference between the seed of a delusion and the imprint of a delusion. These are also classified respectively as the adventitious afflictions and the afflictions to omniscience. Even in Tibetan the terms for seed and imprint are sometimes used interchangeably so it can be confusing. However when we differentiate between the two obscurations with reference to seed and imprint then the seed relates to the delusions themselves, whereas the imprint is what we call the obscuration to omniscience. So the seed of the delusion is an obscuration to liberation, whereas the imprint is an obscuration to omniscience. To completely remove the imprint of delusions, which are the obscurations to omniscience, one has to use the wisdom realising emptiness that is infused with bodhicitta. To reiterate, the difference between a seed and an imprint is that the seed of delusion causes the next moment of a continuum to arise as a delusion bringing about an effect, while the imprint is like the residue of delusion that obscures our mind from omniscience.

1.2.1. The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions

The way to abandon manifest disturbing emotions is further sub-divided into three.

1.2.1.1. General explanation of how to abandon the three

poisons

1.2.1.2. Individual explanation

1.2.1.3. Detailed explanation of how to abandon anger and desire.

1.2.1.1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON THE THREE POISONS

This has five subdivisions which are:

1.2.1.1.1. Functions of the three poisons must be understood

1.2.1.1.2. Reason for the need to eliminate the three poisons

1.2.1.1.3. Antidotes to anger and desire must be applied individually

1.2.1.1.4. How to treat students having desire and anger.

This is in relation to how a teacher treats students with particular types of strong delusions in their mind.

1.2.1.1.5. How to apply the antidotes on understanding the sequence in which disturbing emotions arise

1.2.1.1.1. FUNCTIONS OF THE THREE POISONS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD

First of all the functions of the three poisons must be understood. The three poisons, as we all know, are desire, anger and ignorance, and they are three of the six root delusions.¹

They are referred to as poisons because for as long as one of these delusions is prevalent within oneself there is no ultimate personal benefit whatsoever, and it also serves as a means of harm for oneself and others. Therefore it is likened to poison, which if consumed would affect one with unwanted consequences. Likewise, for as long as the delusions are prevalent in one's mind they bring about unwanted sufferings. Despite this, however, it seems that we befriend and welcome the three poisons to our mind, instead of trying to remove them.

In the beginning, it is actually very difficult to recognise the difference between attachment and real love, and in fact in a worldly sense the word love basically refers to what we call attachment. We are encouraged to express love, but when it is mixed with strong attachment, then it can bring unfavourable consequences. Recognising that, and in order to overcome attachment, one must be able to differentiate between real love and attachment, and then cultivate the love and drop the attachment.

It is also good to note the reasons why the root delusions are called root delusions and the secondary delusions are called secondary, or more literally, proximate (meaning close) delusions. There are two different interpretations. One is that the six root delusions are called root delusions because they serve as the primary, or main delusions that arise in the mind, while the secondary or proximate delusions are like the branches or extensions that are derived from the main delusions.

Another interpretation is that each one of the six root

delusion arises in many different ways and circumstances, whereas the secondary or the proximate delusions arise very specifically. They are a specific state of mind that can be identified as a particular type of emotion at that particular time. Therefore root delusions are more general in nature, and when one of the root delusions arises a lot of other secondary delusions can arise. That then contributes to focusing on the object of the root delusion in many different ways.

Desire or attachment

The definition of attachment is that it is a mental factor which focuses on a contaminated object and exaggerates the qualities of that object, thus seeing it as being attractive.

The definition of attachment specifies focusing with an exaggerated view. The Tibetan term is *drotak* meaning superimposition. What that means in plain English is exaggerating the qualities of the object. A delusion is classified as a mistaken consciousness. If you were to define attachment as a mental factor that focuses on the qualities of an object and sees it as being attractive, then it would be hard to say that it is a mistaken consciousness, because there are indeed certain qualities in objects. Viewing an object, seeing its qualities, and being attracted to it is not sufficient to identify the attachment as a mistaken consciousness. What makes it a mistaken consciousness is the exaggerated part. Focusing on the object one sees its qualities but what happens is that the mind exaggerates those qualities. This means that one sees extra qualities of the object which are in fact not there. It is that extra perception, which is contrary to the actual mode of the existence of the object, that is referred to as being a mistaken consciousness.

We can actually gauge this from our own experience of having a very strong attachment to an object. How do we view the object? It seems completely appealing and attractive from every side, but later on, when our attachment to the object is reduced, we see it as being the complete opposite and even quite sour. That is how one can identify a feeling of attachment.

Anger

The definition of anger is focusing on one of the three types of object, and being unable to be patient or endure the object, and then generating an intention to harm the object.

The three main objects are oneself, one's friends and one's enemies. So harm to oneself, or one's friends is a reason for one to feel angry, while benefiting our enemies is another reason to feel anger. In relation to the three types of objects one has further reasonings which are: others have harmed me in the past, are harming me now and will harm me in the future; in relation to friends, others have harmed my friends in the past, are harming my friends now and will harm them in the future; and in terms of one's enemies, they have helped my enemies in the past, they are helping my enemies now and they will help my enemies in the future. These are the nine reasons to become angry. It is said that the negative delusion of anger is not present in the higher realms, because they don't have the reasons described above.

¹ The other three are pride, doubt and deluded views.

Focusing on an object, not being able to endure or be patient with the object, and thus developing an intention to harm the object is anger. The object of anger is mostly related to one of the three objects or the three reasonings.

Ignorance

That which obscures an understanding of the reality of phenomena is what is called ignorance.

The verse from the root text is:

*Desire's activity is acquisition; 127
Anger's activity is conflict.
As wind is to all the elements
Confusion's activity is nurture.*

Having understood how the disturbing emotions functions one must get rid of them.

Each of the three poisons are then explained.

Attachment

Desire's activity is to acquire both the animate and inanimate.

As it is explained in the commentary the very function of desire seems to be that we want to possess things.

Its antidote is to meditate on repulsiveness and to give up one's circle of friends and one's possessions.

As attachment is an exaggerated view of the qualities of an object the antidote is to see the actual mode of existence of the object by examining its unattractive features.

The techniques of how to meditate on the repulsiveness or the unattractiveness of an object have been explained previously. Although there are different ways, primarily one uses one's own contaminated body as the object of meditation. As described in the Abhidharma texts, if one were to do a close contemplation on one's physical body then one uses an analytic process based on the structure of the body. One begins with one's feet examining the toenails in detail, how they are made, what is their essence and then moves onto the toes themselves and the soles of the feet. Then go up the leg to the torso, seeing all the organs within one's body all the way up to the top of the crown of our head. As well as investigating the internal nature of the body, we are also investigating the nature of its surface.

When we look into how our body is structured we should find that there is nothing there that is really and truly attractive. So the primary practice is really in relation to one's own body. If one has a strong attachment to one's own body then in the process of that meditation one comes to realise that there is really nothing that is attractive in our body, and so the strong initial attachment that one has to the body will be reduced. In that way this meditation will help us to overcome attachment to our body.

If one uses this analysis that we call the close contemplation of our body, and in this way see the uncleanliness of the body and unattractiveness of the body, we can start to lose attachment to our own body. Then that same process is used on other bodies that one may be attached to. However there are those who say

that it is relatively easy to meditate on the unattractiveness of one's own body but when it comes to the bodies of others it is much more difficult.

One technique to visualise the repulsiveness of the body that is explained in some teachings, which is very effective, is to visualise the blood and fluids oozing out on the right side of the body, while on the other side the body the flesh is open and you can see the skeletal part of the body. At the front you visualise the actual organs, the intestines and the flesh and so forth being piled up in front of you. So in that way one dissects the body and meditates on its different aspects. The body becomes really repulsive and then any attachment will definitely be overcome at that moment.

As the commentary explains, the other means of overcoming attachment is to give up one's circle of friends and possessions. What this means is to give up one's attachment to one's circle of friends and possessions. So we must be give up and limit that attachment.

Anger

Anger's activity is strife and conflict.

Again this identifies the function of anger, which, when we relate it to our own experience, is very true. The very moment that anger arises brings up the wish to have a confrontation with others. The emotion of anger is very strong and the wish for conflict often initially arises with those with whom we share our accommodation and our food. In the moment of anger we can see nothing pleasant in staying together, or eating together,

Cultivating love and using houses and so forth that one likes are its antidote.

As the commentary explains, developing love is one of the means for overcoming anger. Here love is to be understood as wishing for the other to be free from suffering and to be happy. Keep that in mind when the circumstances arise for others to be upset. Because they are not in a happy state of mind, that leads them to say things or do things that are irrational and which, if we have not prepared ourselves, then become a cause for us to develop anger and be upset. When others are not happy or not well, and say or do things that are irrational we usually respond to that with anger, because we don't consider their plight or difficulty, and we see them as harming us. In fact when we reflect on why they are in that state of mind, why they are upset, or behaving irrationally, or saying unpleasant things, it is because their mind is disturbed. We can think about how they must be really suffering to be saying and doing the things that they are doing. In order to be able to understand this one first of all has to use oneself as an example. Judging from one's own experience, when one gets angry and upset how does one feel? Does one feel content or happy? One definitely feels ill-at-ease and uncomfortable doesn't one? Others have that same experience, and because of not feeling happy they are disturbed, which influences them to do or say things that seem to be irrational. If we can think along these lines to see others in a pitiful state, and thus develop a sense of wishing them to be free from

that negative state and to be happy, then instead of anger one can develop the love that will prevent anger from arising in the mind. So when thinking about anger it is very important to refer to oneself first and judge from one's own experience. As the teachings say, when anger arises in the mind then it disturbs oneself as well as others, and it brings no happiness to oneself or others. That is how anger harms. By thinking along these lines one develops the antidote, which is compassion or love.

The text refers to houses, but I think the more direct translation from the Tibetan is 'conducive or nice temples' - the sort of temples or nice dwellings that are conducive for the mind. 'So forth' refers to nice, nourishing food that makes the body strong and healthy. So when we notice that someone is angry, then as mentioned previously, we can allow them to ease down and offer them some good food and so forth that will help them to calm down.

The reason providing good dwellings and nourishment as well as clothing can help to reduce manifest anger is because of the very nature of anger. One of the reasons why anger arises is when unwanted or unfavourable circumstances are being experienced, and such unfavourable circumstances can be not having sufficient food, not having sufficient clothing or not having a sufficient place to live. Therefore as a direct means of opposing anger, if one can help to change the outer conditions by providing a good dwelling, good food and nourishment, clothing and so forth, then that opposes the unfavourable conditions and the immediate reason for them to be upset and angry is overcome.

Ignorance

Just as wind increases the strength of fire and the other elements, confusion's activity is to nurture both desire and anger.

This is using the analogy of fire, where wind strengthens and enlarges the fire. Likewise the activity of confusion or ignorance is said to nurture and increase the delusions of desire and anger. Some texts use the analogy of ignorance as the leader, with anger and desire being the right hand men or servants. This analogy shows that ignorance is the main delusion, which is supported by anger and desire.

Its antidote is meditation on dependant arising and so forth.

What is being indicated here is meditation on emptiness.

The analogy in the commentary is that it is like killing a sea monster with fire. There is a long story about this but the main point is that anger and desire and ignorance can be overcome. The word fire as used here is analogous to the fire of the wisdom realising emptiness, which can destroy all our negativities. So in a positive sense the fire is destroying something that is negative.

Of the three poisons it is said that **desire** is like the vast and extensive sea, which covers most of the world. So in this sense desire is something that links us from this existence to the next existence as explained in the twelve interdependent links. It is craving and grasping, which

are both desires, which propel us to the next life, and which are the connecting link between this life and the next. So desire is therefore likened to the sea which is very pervasive and extends beyond our direct perception.

Anger is likened to the fire that destroys positiveness. Just as fire will destroy houses and good things, anger destroys all our positive deeds, it destroys our good state of mind, it destroys that peace of mind, and then it further destroys the virtuous imprints and so forth in our mind.

Ignorance is likened to wind which, as mentioned earlier, nurtures and helps the fire to expand. That which can completely overcome and uproot the three poisons from their very roots is the wisdom realising emptiness.

1.2.1.1.2. REASON FOR THE NEED TO ELIMINATE THE THREE POISONS

This heading is in line with the following doubt that may arise in the mind. It seems to be possible to abandon attachment, anger and ignorance but why do I have to do that? Why is there a need to overcome or abandon these delusions? This subdivision is an answer to that doubt.

Assertion: though there are antidotes to the three poisons, why should one get rid of them?

Answer: Because they produce suffering.

The root text reads:

Desire is painful because of not getting, 128
Anger is painful through lack of might,
And confusion through not understanding,
Because of this, these are not recognised.

The text then describes how each of the three poisons causes suffering.

Desire produces suffering when one does not encounter what one badly wants.

Reflecting on the meaning of this it seems very true that the very nature of desire is wanting to possess something. When one does not acquire what one wants that brings a lot of suffering to one's mind, which comes from the attachment to what one wants. So attachment is the cause for the suffering that arises in the mind.

Anger produces suffering when one lacks might to crush the strong.

We know from our experience that we become very upset and angry with a situation or a person when we have no power to do anything about it. So we just have to endure the mental agitation, because we can't do anything about it and we can't fight back. When there is an unjust situation, or something with which one does not agree, and one cannot do anything about it, then this produces suffering in the mind.

Confusion induces suffering when one fails to understand a subtle matter thoroughly.

This refers to not understanding something on a higher level. Not understanding the actual reality of things then becomes a cause for us to experience all the different types of suffering. This refers to the actual mode of existence, or the reality of the situation. If, after having used one's analytical process one still does not

understand the reality of certain things, then that can cause a lot of suffering to arise in the mind.

On a very practical level if someone accuses us of not knowing anything and being completely stupid that could really offend us, and we could get very upset and angry with that wouldn't we?

As the commentary concludes

Therefore persevere in getting rid of the disturbing emotions.

Having identified each of the delusions and understood how they serve as causes for us to experience various types of sufferings one must then use one's full ability and might to overcome them. As an analogy, if we know an enemy is coming to attack us in a worldly sense we would prepare ourselves by wearing armour and carrying a sword to defend ourselves in battle. We would be prepared because we recognise the danger that the enemy poses. Likewise we must recognise that the delusions are harmful entities that harm our peace of mind, and that we must battle to overcome them.

1.2.1.1.3 ANTIDOTES TO ANGER AND DESIRE MUST BE APPLIED INDIVIDUALLY

Question: Do anger and desire occur together the way confusion occurs with both of them?

Answer:

The respective verse from the root text is:

Just as it is seen that bile 129
Does not occur with phlegm,
One sees that desire, too,
Does not occur with anger

This explains how the delusion of ignorance arises simultaneously with other delusions so that, for example, when anger arises ignorance is also manifested at the same time. When either anger or attachment is in the mind then ignorance is also manifest. However anger and attachment cannot arise at the same time in the continuum.

As the commentary explains:

Just as it is seen that bile and phlegm do not occur together, one sees that desire and anger, too, do not occur simultaneously in manifest form in one mental continuum.

The meaning what we derive from the explanation is that according to medical explanations phlegm and bile do not occur at the same time. That is said to be because of the element that is in union with each kind of sickness. As explained in the texts, when there is an excess of fluid in the body then that causes phlegm to be prevalent, whereas when there is heat in the body that is a cause for bile to be affected. The very nature of the elements that produce phlegm and bile (water and fire) is that they oppose to each other, and cannot exist in unison without harming each other. That is the main point. Of course water and fire can be in close proximity but they cannot be together without affecting each other. Likewise within our body phlegm and bile do not occur at the same time.

That is the analogy that is used to explain the main point,

which is that desire and anger do not occur simultaneously in a manifest form in one mental continuum. That is, in one person's mind in one moment of the mental continuum, anger and desire cannot arise simultaneously.

We can also understand from the very definitions of anger and desire that attachment is a mental factor that desires the object, wants to possess the object and exaggerates the qualities of the object. Whereas the anger focusing on an object is a wish to be able to avoid that object, not wanting to be near that object, and wanting to harm the object. That being the case, wishing to have an object and wishing to avoid it cannot arise at the same time.

We can see from our own experience with objects that if we have a strong wish to have it then attachment arises. Whereas when anger arises we wish to avoid an object and have an aversion to it. So we can see how the wish to possess some mistaken thing, and the wish to avoid something changes from moment to moment. Without even having to think about it desire immediately arises in our mind when we see something that appears attractive to us. Whereas when we see something we don't like aversion arises in our mind immediately. In this way aversion and anger arise spontaneously in our mind at different times, but as explained here, they don't arise at the same time.

When we relate this to our own experiences, we can think of a person who is very attractive and who seems very pleasing and nice, but at another time one does not want to be with that person and does not want to see them. Sometimes we want to be close to them and at other times we avoid them. We can see how this goes on throughout the course of our life.

This state of indecisiveness prevails in our life. When we are very attached to a person, we really want to live with them, and be with them, and we think we can actually have a good life with them. But then when we start to see their negative qualities and begin to develop some aversion towards them, then if one is already married we might think that we want to divorce them. So there are times when you may go through such indecisive states, 'Oh, I want to live with them, no, I want to divorce them. Should I live with or should I divorce them?' If we actually investigate what goes on in our mind, we can see that there are so many interesting things that go on that it can be quite a spectacle.

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

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Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 March 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to have a good motivation, such as, ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings.

In the last session we left off with an explanation of how the antidotes to anger and desire must be applied separately.

1.2.1.1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON THE THREE POISONS (CONT.)

1.2.1.1.4. HOW TO TREAT STUDENTS HAVING DESIRE AND ANGER

Earlier we described how the antidotes to desire and anger have to be applied individually, because anger and attachment do not arise simultaneously. This next topic explains how a teacher who guides students, having understood how antidotes must be applied separately, must individually guide students to overcome their delusions.

It seems that one method is to ask students with strong desire to do prostrations in order to use up their physical energy.

Desire should be driven like a slave 130
Because severity is its cure,
And anger looked upon as a lord
Because indulgence is its cure.

As the commentary explains:

Understanding the characteristics of desire and anger and how they function...

Earlier when the definitions of desire and anger were explained, both the nature and function of desire and anger were described.

...a spiritual teacher engaged in forming students makes those with desire work like slaves. This is because severity and lack of deference cure desire.

What this refers to is a way of curing students from having strong desire. Although the words ‘slave’ is used it can also be used in the sense of a servant or what is known here as a civil servant. In other words it can refer to those who work from morning to evening, and who are like servants to their boss. Because they are preoccupied with work, there is no time for self indulgence. Likewise, a teacher will give those with strong desire extra virtuous activities, in order to distract them from objects of desire. Thus desire is prevented from arising, because students are not given the opportunity to engage with objects of desire.

As the commentary reads:

The angry should be looked upon as lords. By treating them with indulgence and serving them

respectfully their anger will not arise; thus indulgence cures it.

As explained earlier, one of the main reasons for anger to arise, is not meeting with the objects of desire, or lacking the necessities. But, as explained earlier, and again here, when you provide someone with basic needs it reduces their manifest anger and prevents anger from arising. If the teacher treats the students for whom anger is a problem like lords, paying them respect and giving them what they need, their manifest anger will be reduced. What is being described here are the manifest delusions.

Understanding these explanations and applying them in our daily lives, can help us to understand and deal with others who may also have manifest delusions.

1.2.1.1.5. HOW TO APPLY THE ANTIDOTES ON UNDERSTANDING THE SEQUENCE IN WHICH DISTURBING EMOTIONS ARISE

Having recognised delusions, and further recognised the sequence in which they arise, the next point to understand is that delusions are prevalent at particular times. This refers to the delusions that are present in the morning, during the day, and at night.

First there is confusion, 131
In the middle there is anger,
And later there is desire,
In three stages during the day.

As the commentary explains:

At night sleep and lethargy increase and because phlegm predominates, first in the morning there is confusion.

This is as explained. During the night when we sleep the mind is in a state of stupor and then we wake up that state is still prevalent. So it is very difficult to wake up, because the residue of stupor is still prevalent in the mind. In the morning this hangover of stupor leads to the mind being in a very dull state. If we want to engage in an early-morning activity then having a dull mind is an obstacle that causes unease and suffering.

As the commentary goes on:

In the middle of the day one rides on the wheel of suffering caused by the frustrations of making a living, and anger arises because one is plagued by hunger and thirst.

After we have properly woken up, we begin to engage in major activities such as going to work. As we engage in these activities during the day there may be a lot of obstacles that will result in anger arising. As we work we also experience hunger and thirst, which also leads to agitation. During our normal activities there are many instances where things go wrong, so there are lots of situations where anger arises.

After work we come home, wash up and apply nice smelling perfumes and go out and that is when attachment starts to arise.

As the text identifies, there are three times when particular delusions are more prevalent. Along with understanding how we are influenced by the three delusions at all times, we must also understand this sequence of the particular times when particular

delusions are more prevalent than others. For example in the morning there is a dullness stemming from ignorance. As stupor and dullness can be recognised, one can then apply the antidote to overcome dullness. As an antidote to this morning dullness, young monks in the monastery are taught to recite the mantra of Manjushri (OM AH RA PA TSA NA DHI) as soon they wake up. During the day anger is more prevalent so we can apply the antidote to that. In the evening there are more conditions for attachment to rise so one can apply the antidote to attachment then.

Relating this to earlier explanations we can apply the understanding of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance, we can apply love to overcome anger, and we can meditate on the ugliness of objects as a means of overcoming attachment.

1.2.1.2. INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATION

This has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.2.1. How to abandon desire
- 1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred
- 1.2.1.2.3. How to abandon confusion

1.2.1.2.1. HOW TO ABANDON DESIRE

This is subdivided into two:

- 1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it.
- 1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it

Desire is hard to recognise as being a fault and therefore it is very hard to discard it.

*Desire is no friend, but seems like one, 132
Which is why you do not fear it.
But shouldn't people particularly
Rid themselves of a harmful friend?*

Desire masquerading as a friend deceives ordinary people.

Since that is so:

you must pay special attention to getting rid of it.

As explained in the commentary it is extremely hard to recognise desire as a delusion to abandon, because we are so influenced by it. Desire manifests within us very cunningly in the aspect of a friend who wishes benefit us. Though it is harmful, it disguises itself as a friend. Because desire seems to be a friend it is therefore very hard to recognise it as something to be discarded. When we allow ourselves to follow attachment or desire there is a pleasurable feeling as well, so that makes it even harder to see desire as something to be discarded.

As the commentary explains:

Ultimately it produces suffering, so it is not a friend, but looks like one because it seems benevolent. Therefore you do not fear it.

When desire or attachment arises it arises in the aspect of a friend, so rather than fearing it we trust it.

Shouldn't people make a particular effort to rid themselves of a harmful friend?

Even in worldly terms if one sees that a friend is harmful, we will distance ourselves from them out of common sense, even if they have been a friend for a long time. That is because they are harming us. In fact attachment is not a friend, because it definitely harms us. So shouldn't any wise person distance themselves from attachment, just as in the analogy of worldly friend who harms oneself.

Similarly one should get rid of desire.

If we look to the explanation in the teaching with our own deeper common sense and experiences we come to recognise that attachment brings us more suffering in the long run. So we learn not to completely rely on attachment. Then one can start to gradually overcome and abandon attachment. However I agree that it is not easy to recognise attachment as something to be abandoned. Even ordained people say that the very source of enjoyment comes from one's attachment. So if ordained people find it hard to give up attachment it must be even harder for lay people.

Not realising that attachment is a source of suffering and therefore not pleasurable is the source of many problems. It leads us into so much suffering. Attachment is really suffering rather than real pleasure, and the real source of attachment is ignorance.

As it is difficult to recognise attachment, we must use many different reasonings and antidotes to overcome attachment.

To further describe the severity of attachment Lama Tsong Khapa gave the analogy of attachment as being like the drop of oil on a piece of paper. That one drop begins to permeate and stain the thickness of the paper while it also spreads out on the surface of the paper. It can create a very dark obvious stain that is impossible to get rid of. When we are attached we are immersed in the object. With anger it is easier to distance ourselves from the object of our anger, because we can actually distance ourselves physically from that object. However with attachment even if we distance ourselves physically, the mind does not give it up. Put in a position of choosing to give up life or give up the object of attachment some people will even choose to give up life. With attachment we become completely immersed in the object.

Furthermore, the reason that we find anger is easier to overcome is because of the obvious suffering that anger causes in our mind. But with attachment, the more desire we have the more we want to hold onto the object. We don't see the disadvantages as easily and don't even recognise it as suffering.

1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

*Desire arises from causes and 133
Also arises through circumstance.
Desire arising, through circumstance
Is easy to deal with; not the other.*

The commentary explains:

Never give desire a chance to arise!

There are two ways in which desire arises.

It arises in two ways: some forms of desire arise from

a cause of a similar type created by repeated familiarity in the past.

All desire arises from a cause, the difference arises in relation to some having immediate causes and others not having an apparent cause. Attachment is often a cause of a similar type. This refers to the lack of immediate apparent conditions that cause attachment to arise.

When attachment seems to arise spontaneously, without having to think about or see a particular object, it is said to be attachment of the first type. Such attachment arises continuously from the past, which includes past life times. So this kind of attachment results from having a continuum with spontaneous desire arising.

Some arise adventitiously through the circumstance provided by the proximity of an object.

The second type is a strong attachment arising as result of contact with a beautiful object. Of the two types of attachment this second type is relatively easier to overcome, because once the object causing the desire is removed and is out of sight the particular attachment will subside.

The first type of attachment that arises through strong familiarity is not as easy to overcome. As the commentary states:

The other is not like that, since a strong antidote is needed to get rid of it.

This refers to the more common example of desire that arises through acquaintance or familiarity, which is very strong and difficult to overcome. It is very much like trying to overcome the habit of drinking or smoking; the longer you have had the habit the more difficult it is to overcome.

The previous discussion has concentrated on the negative side of desire or attachment. In a sense there is a positive side, which is that it is associated with love and kindness. For someone with a strong affinity for love and kindness, attachment is very difficult to overcome, and is not easily removed. That is because of the strong imprint of love and kindness that is due to familiarity.

The kind that arises through circumstance is like the following: a bird cannot fly without one of its wings.

The second type of attachment is like finding a bird with one wing - it cannot fly without both of its wings. The reason why it is easier to overcome this type of adventitious attachment is because circumstantial desire arises from the object. If the object is removed desire is not maintained for very long. Just like a bird needs two wings to fly, desire needs an external condition, which affects the internal condition of desire.

As the *Abhidharma* text mentions, when all three conditions for desire are prevalent it is extremely hard for desire not to be present. These three conditions are

1. One has not abandoned attachment
2. One is in close proximity to the object of desire
3. One has the faulty state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of the object.

When these conditions are present there is definitely room for us to be influenced by attachment.

Is important to understand the circumstances in which desire arises in order to eventually overcome it. So understanding the profundity of how desire arises is very useful. As explained earlier, all three conditions have to be present for desire to arise at both a subtle and a manifest level. If there was just one condition, such as meeting the object of desire, and we then concluded that anyone who comes into contact with objects of desire would have desire, then that would not be true, because those who have overcome desire are not influenced by it. Thus just meeting with an object is not a sufficient cause in itself for desire to arise. To go into it more deeply, the very basis of the condition for attachment to rise is the grasping at the self. That is the real culprit, grasping at the self.

1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred

*Anger is lasting and certainly
Makes one do grave non-virtue.
Thus constant awareness of their distinctions
Will bring to an end disturbing emotions.* 134

Anger is a fault more grave than desire, and therefore one should strive to get rid of it.

This verse is explaining that anger is a fault so one should get rid of it.

Since anger, which is made to last and held fast by resentment...

The actual word for resentment in Tibetan is *tro-wa*. Resentment is a mental factor which induces anger to last longer. That which makes anger long-lasting is another type of delusion, which causes resentment.

...certainly burns one's own and others' mindstreams and causes others harm, it is totally non-virtuous.

If one does not overcome anger when it initially arises, it becomes resentment, which is holding on to the initial cause of anger and thus harbouring agitation and anger towards that object.

When one does not retaliate, one might say that one is practising patience, but in fact that may just lead to more resentment. Not retaliating is called patience, but one may fall into the state of mind of holding on to resentment. One may seem very cool and calm but still be agitated. For as long as we harbour anger it harms ourselves and others and destroys our virtues.

Unlike attachment anger has no benefit either for oneself or others - it is totally non-virtuous. With attachment one can benefit others and there is some kind of pleasure in that. The disadvantage is that as the attachment is more difficult to recognise, it is more difficult to overcome. However with anger there is no benefit for either oneself or others. Because attachment is not totally non-virtuous, attachment in the desire realm is non-virtuous, but in the form and formless realms it is not non-virtuous.

The disadvantage or faults of anger are very obvious. We can see how there are so many grave misdeeds. As we see in the news, there are even those who kill their parents in anger, and other grave misdeeds are also performed out of anger.

As the commentary explains:

It makes one do serious misdeeds such as the five

heinous crimes.

If one were to harbour anger and not engage in overcoming anger or overcoming the imprints of anger, it will result in the sufferings of the lower realms. If we engage in the practice of purification, however, our anger can be purified.

As the commentary further explains:

Through consistent awareness of their different faults, disadvantages, causes and the means to eliminate them, disturbing emotions will be brought to an end. Thus, once their specific antidotes are known, one must get rid of them.

What is being summarised is that through having a constant awareness of how there is no benefit for oneself or others, and how it destroys virtue and puts non-virtuous imprints on our mind, and how it leads us to engage in heinous crimes, and knowing the causes of anger attachment and ignorance, and knowing the means of eliminating them, one must apply the antidotes.

*Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
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Edited Version*

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Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

ལྷན་འབྲེལ་བཞུགས་པའི་བསྐྱེད་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་གྲུབ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 March 2007

As usual we can sit in an appropriate posture and set our motivation, such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, and lead them to ultimate happiness I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I listen to the Dharma and will apply it in practice'. It would be very good to have that attitude in mind.

It is most important to remind oneself that the whole purpose of listening to teachings and studying the text is so that it can be put into practice. If we have that attitude from the very beginning, and remind ourselves of it throughout our studies, then that leaves a good imprint, from which we can benefit.

1.2.1.2.3. HOW TO ABANDON CONFUSION

This is subdivided into two which are:

1.2.1.2.3.1. Recognising the root of disturbing emotions

1.2.1.2.3.2. Recognising the antidote which eliminates it

As these two sub-divisions suggest, first there is identifying the actual root of all delusions and then having identified that, showing the means of how to eradicate that root by recognising the antidote.

1.2.1.2.3.1. Recognising the root of disturbing emotions

Question: The different characteristics of desire and anger have been described but what are the various characteristics of confusion?

The answer is the root verse:

As the tactile sense pervades the body 135
Confusion is present in them all.
By overcoming confusion one will also
Overcome all disturbing emotions.

As the verse indicates, the way in which confusion is the root of all delusions is described with the following analogy: the tactile or body sense is said to be a sense which pervades the whole body, and if this tactile sense is withdrawn then all the senses in relation to the physical body are also withdrawn. Similarly confusion or ignorance pervades all the delusions and so therefore once ignorance itself is severed, then all the other delusions are also severed. Another analogy that can be used is that it is like getting rid of a poisonous plant. Merely cutting off its branches will not stop the plant from growing; the only way to stop the plant from growing is to uproot it. That is true also for the delusions: unless the root of the delusions is uprooted they will continuously prevail within oneself. We can see for ourselves that even though we may be quite successful in overcoming desire on one day, on the next day we fall prey to our desires and maybe a few days later we might again fall victim to our desires. That is because desire has not been uprooted from our mind.

In the body the tactile sense organ pervades all other sense organs such as the eye and acts as a basis without which none of the others could exist.

As explained here just as what we call the tactile sense

pervades the whole body likewise confusion pervades all of the delusions within oneself.

The text further reads:

Confusion, which is the disturbing attitude ignorance, misconceives dependent arising free from inherent existence as truly existent.

That is how ignorance misinterprets reality. What is being described here is how ignorance serves as a root of all delusions and thus pervades all of the delusions.

It similarly is present in and pervades all disturbing emotions such as desire and anger.

Although all phenomena are dependent arising and lack inherent existence, which is the actual mode of existence, ignorance misconceives the mode of existence, which is of interdependent arising, and perceives it as having an inherent existence. To that extent it is a misconception. Ignorance obscures the mind from seeing the actual mode of existence, which is of interdependent origination or dependent arising.

As the text further describes:

Misconceiving things distorted by confusion as inherently pleasant or unpleasant one thinks of them as desirable or repugnant.

As described in their respective definitions both attachment and anger are an exaggerated view based on the qualities of the objects. Attachment is an exaggerated view of the attractive qualities of the object being viewed, thus leading to the arousal of desire. Whereas anger is the exaggerated view of the negative qualities of the object, thus leading to the development of an attitude of repugnance towards the object. Both of these exaggerated views are based upon the initial misconception of viewing the object itself as being inherently existent.

One must understand that these exaggerated views arise on a fundamental misconception. The very root or fundamental misconception is the misconception of ignorance which sees the object as being inherently existent. Thus by seeing the object itself as being inherently existent any qualities that are attributed to it are also viewed as being inherently existent. So the attractive qualities of an object are also seen as being inherently existent, and the same is also true with anger, where the negative qualities of the object are also seen as being inherently existent.

When we look into it, we see from our experience that the attractive or appealing qualities of an object appear to us as existing from the object's own side, regardless of anything that our mind imputes upon it. Therefore, out of ignorance, the object (and its qualities) is viewed as existing inherently, in and of itself, and from its own side. Thus it is explained that those sentient beings who have not given up either grasping at true existence or grasping at the self, as well as those who have not abandoned the imprints of grasping at the self, will view objects as being inherently existent. Because the object itself is viewed as being inherently existent, then other qualities about it are exaggerated as well. As the teachings say, for a sentient being there is always an appearance of inherent existence. For those who specifically have abandoned grasping at the self or grasping at true existence, the appearance of true existence or inherent existence is still there, however the belief in true existence does not exist anymore. The reason why the belief is not there is because they have abandoned grasping at true existence. But because the imprint of grasping at true

existence is still left upon the mind, that causes their mind to still see things as being truly existent. Thus only an enlightened mind that has completely eradicated the very imprints of grasping at true existence will not have even the appearance true existence.

It is very important to develop a really good understanding of these points about the lack of inherent existence, and thus gain an understanding of emptiness or selflessness. As Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom* mentions, even a doubt about the validity of emptiness which is the lack of true existence, will shatter the very foundation of samsara. As Nagarjuna has mentioned, it is really true that when one gains a conceptual understanding, or even just a glimpse into the concept of emptiness, that can really work at eliminating our misconceptions. Based on that understanding one can start working on eliminating the very root of our delusions, and thus the root of samsara.

As described earlier, attachment is an exaggerated view of the qualities of an object. So the stronger the exaggeration is, the stronger the attachment is to the object. When an object appears to us as being attractive then, for as long as we entirely believe in the attractiveness of that object, we will have a strong attachment. Even without an understanding of emptiness we can recall from our experience that if we see someone in the distance who appears to be very attractive, then desire may arise in our mind, even though we haven't had close contact with the object yet. However if we get closer to the object we begin to see faults in the person. Then that initial strong attachment and desire will start to wane and reduce, because we begin to notice that they are not as attractive as we thought initially. It could be because of the distance, because of their make-up, or something else but when we come close to them the attractiveness is not there. So even from this obvious experience we suddenly realise that what appeared to be entirely attractive and beautiful is not really true.

An understanding of selflessness or emptiness goes beyond even that. It actually explains how the very appearance of the object we have, is not true; how its whole appearance is actually an illusion and not true. Whether an object appears to be attractive or repulsive it appears to us as being inherently existent, and existing from its own side. Onto that false appearance we add further exaggerations. It is said that for as long as we have the appearance of the inherent existence of objects and believe in that, then to that extent we create karma in relation to those objects. As is explained in the teachings from the time someone sees emptiness directly they will not create any new throwing karma, which means the karma to be reborn again in samsara.

As is explained in the teachings, although there may still be an appearance of inherent existence to someone who realises emptiness, there is no belief in it, so they will not create any new karma to be reborn into samsara. With this understanding we can begin to see how the process of eliminating the causes for samsara works.

This understanding will then help us to gain a deeper understanding of the twelve interdependent links. The first of these links is the ignorance of grasping at true or inherent existence, which is indicated as the fundamental or root cause of samsara. With this explanation one comes to understand how that ignorance is identified as being the root cause of all the other delusions.

As the commentary further explains:

Thus one must understand how the mode of

apprehension entailed in the conception of true existence is present in the modes of apprehension of anger and desire. All other disturbing attitudes and emotions depend on the disturbing attitude ignorance, which is principal.

I want to emphasise the use of the term 'principal', which is called so, because by overcoming confusion through meditation on dependent arising and inherent existence, all other disturbing attitudes and emotions will be overcome as well.

As a conclusion the commentary further emphasises:

Therefore make an effort to understand emptiness as the meaning of dependent arising.

From this explanation one understands how ignorance is the principal or the main cause of all samsara. It is also explained in the root text of the *Madhyamika* that all delusions and all experiences in samsara come from the initial misconception of holding onto the transitory collections.

Of course the older students have heard this on many occasions. However just as a summary, what is being explained in this verse is that without overcoming ignorance there will be no cessation of the causes to be in cyclic existence or samsara. Therefore in order to attain liberation, as well as enlightenment, one needs to overcome the principal cause, which is ignorance, by gaining the wisdom realising emptiness which serves as the direct antidote. That is the essence of what needs to be understood.

1.2.1.2.3.2. Recognising the antidote which eliminates it

The root verse which corresponds to this sub-heading reads as follows:

When dependent arising is seen 136
Confusion will not occur.
Thus every effort has been made here
To explain precisely the subject.

These last two verses are verses that are often quoted in other texts, because they serve as very important explanations of how to bring about the cessation of all suffering. Therefore it would be good to actually memorise them and keep them in mind. The previous verse identified the root cause of all suffering, which is ignorance and this next verse shows us how over to overcome ignorance, which is through the realisation of emptiness and dependent arising. So these two verses are very important verses.

A good understanding of these two verses serves as a basis for whatever practice one engages in, such as the Lam Rim topics. Whatever Lam Rim topic one meditates on can be based upon the understanding one gains from these two verses. So in that way they serve as a very good foundation for one's practice, because as they explain that all practices should ultimately lead to achieving the same goals.

The verse serves as an answer to the following question:

What are the means to get rid of confusion, which is the root of futility?

What is being explained here is that there are so many activities in our life, where we put so much time, energy and effort, but to achieve what? In the end we find that we are putting all our energy and effort into achieving very futile results. There is no real essence in what we achieve.

Having meditated on the faults of samsara, and really looking into the causes of these faults, or into our senseless activities, and all the delusions that arise in our mind, we

should ask ourselves, 'What is the purpose?' 'What are the causes?' Having raised that question, we must use the different reasons and analogies explained in the teachings to develop a good understanding that ignorance is the main cause. However that understanding by itself does not really help one's mind much. One should really try to relate that understanding to one's experience, and develop a strong feeling, really looking into it from every angle and see how ignorance really serves as the root cause. Then you will develop the strong sense, 'Without getting rid of this cause I will never have real happiness, and things will never be right'. This instills a strong wish to get rid of the cause, which is ignorance. The verse in this section shows how to get rid of that ignorance.

Using this understanding in one's practice, in meditation, even analysing it in analytical meditation, one should arrive at the point of wanting to get rid of the cause. Then the natural question that may arise in the mind is, 'Is it possible to get rid of ignorance?'. When that question arises one must further look into how this ignorance perceives things. First of all one looks into how everything appears to us. Things appear to us as real. Is this true? Is it valid? Do things exist in the way they appear to us? If they existed exactly in the way they appear to us then one could conclude that there is nothing that one can do about it.

But through investigation and analysis one can slowly begin to see that things do not exist in the way they appear. When one begins to see the falsity of appearance and how the actual mode of existence is contrary to how it appears, then that means that there is a valid reasoning that one can use to overcome the misconception that we have. I wonder if you are getting the point that is being made here: it is that if one can see a discrepancy between how things appear and how they actually exist, then one can see that there is a need to overcome the misconception. Because things do not exist in the way they appear then one can conclude that there is a valid reason to overcome this misconception, the belief in appearance.

One comes to understand what emptiness means when one begins to understand what it is negating, and what is being negated is what appears to us and our belief in it. When we focus on phenomena, which means anything external, internal, impermanent or permanent, in brief all existence, they appear to be inherently existent, existing from their own side without depending on anything. What we call the view of emptiness is the opposite of that: it is seeing the non-validity of that appearance. When one begins to understand that all existence lacks inherent existence, that they do not have any inherent or independent existence then that is what is called the understanding of selflessness or emptiness. And that view, which comes from a deepening experience, serves as a means to completely eradicate that misconception about the nature of existence.

First of all one analyses how grasping at true existence is a misconception, because it views things as existing without depending on any causes or conditions whatsoever. This view that things exist in and of themselves is what we call the view of grasping at true existence.

As the text explains:

If a sprout, action and so forth exist by way of their own entities...

The analogy is a sprout and its cause, which is the seed, explaining action and its cause which is ignorance. Here action is the karma which is specifically the second of the

twelve interdependent links, compositional action. This specific karma is created as a result of the first link, which is ignorance.

If the sprout and action existed by way of their own entities they would not depend on the seed nor on ignorance, but they do.

This means that if a sprout existed by way of its own entity, or by itself, then it would not have to depend on anything else. Then one would have to conclude that a sprout would not have to depend on a seed. Likewise if compositional action were to exist from its own side, by its own entity, then one would have to conclude that it does not depend on ignorance. However, using the obvious analogy, as any ordinary person who sees the cause and effect sequence of a sprout and a seed knows, for a sprout to exist it has to depend on the seed. There can be no sprout arising without a preceding seed. Likewise for compositional action or karma there has to be the ignorance that precedes it. The fact that it has to depend on an earlier preceding cause for its existence is proof in itself that it does not exist by its own entity or by itself.

First of all, it is obvious that a sprout exists, and likewise karma exists. For a sprout to come into existence it depends upon a seed. Likewise the second of the twelve interdependent links, compositional action or karma exists, and its existence depends on the preceding cause of ignorance. Therefore since a sprout and karma are dependent originations they do not exist independently in and of themselves. The commentary further explains with the help of many different kinds of reasoning that one must understand that the existence of the sprout is exclusively a dependent existence, and not an existence by way of its own identity.

One derives a further understanding of dependent origination from this explanation, and when one gets some understanding of dependent origination, then one can begin to understand how that serves as a sound reasoning to validate emptiness. Within the four schools the Mind Only school and below assert dependent origination as a sequence of cause and effect. Where there is a cause there is an effect and that cause and effect sequence is what is meant by dependent origination.

However for the Prasangika school, which is the highest Buddhist school, the explanation goes further, saying that it is not merely the cause and effect sequence that determines the dependent origination of phenomena, but rather the dependence on different parts and conditions. From the Prasangika point of view anything that exists is a dependent origination. So even what we call permanent phenomena, which are said to be causeless, have parts and so therefore everything that exists has parts to it. Things are not partless, because everything has a part to it. Therefore anything that exists depends on its parts for its existence. Things could not exist without depending on their parts to make them what they are. Therefore it is said that anything which exists is in the nature of dependent arising.

As explained earlier in the commentary one uses many different kinds of reasoning to show what is explained in this point. One should not rely only on one reason for understanding things as lacking inherent existence and thus being empty of inherent existence. As the commentary further reads:

When dependent arising free from existence by way of its own entity is seen by directly valid perception,

confusion will not arise, and because confusion has ended, all other disturbing attitudes and emotions too will end.

When dependent arising itself is seen as a way of explaining how things do not have their own entity or independent nature, and when that is seen by direct valid perception then confusion will not arise, and confusion or ignorance will be severed.

Thus here in the *Treatise of Four Hundred* every effort is made specifically to explain how emptiness means dependent arising.

This is specifically clarified in Lama Tsong Khapa's concise work *The Three Principles of the Path*, where he clearly states that once one has come to an understanding of how dependent origination and emptiness enhance each other and are not contradictory, one has understood the meaning of the Buddha's intent. What is being emphasised here is that the understanding of dependent origination becomes a means to understand emptiness. That is why it is very important to emphasise it. In *The Three Principles of the Path*, Lama Tsong Khapa mentions dependent origination first for the specific reason that the understanding of dependent origination can enhance the understanding of emptiness, and in fact the term dependent origination is often used interchangeably with emptiness in many texts.

However another important point is raised in the commentary:

By merely understanding the dependent arising of a sprout, one does not understand the emptiness of true existence; if one did it would not be a reason establishing emptiness of true existence.

The mere understanding of the interdependence of a sprout does not necessarily mean that one has gained an understanding of emptiness. However dependent arising is used as a reason in the syllogism or a thesis that gives a reasoning for emptiness. The syllogism is: a sprout is empty of inherent existence, because it is a dependent arising. You use that syllogism for someone who has understood that the sprout is a dependent arising, but who has not understood yet that a sprout lacks inherent existence, which means they have not understood yet the emptiness of the sprout. For such a person this syllogism is a valid reasoning: a sprout is empty of inherent existence or lacks inherent existence. Why? Because it is a dependent arising. If understanding dependent arising were to equate with the understanding of emptiness then you couldn't use this syllogism, because if they have understood the sprout to be dependent arising that means they would have already understood emptiness.

The fact that this syllogism is used as a valid reasoning, means that there are those who have understood that the sprout is dependent origination or a dependent arising, but not yet understood emptiness or the lack of inherent existence of it. Therefore gaining an understanding of dependent origination doesn't necessarily equate with gaining an understanding or emptiness.

When you say that a sprout is empty of inherent existence because it is a dependent arising, this makes them begin to realise, 'Oh, I already understand a sprout is a dependent arising, so that means it must also be empty of inherent existence'. For such a person dependent arising serves as a reason that makes a great deal of sense.

When one discovers that existence by way of a thing's own entity is invalidated in many ways one discovers how phenomena exist. Understanding that they only

exist dependently means one should thereby understand that they do not exist by way of their own entity.

When one comes to understand that if the independent entity of any existence is invalidated through many reasons, one discovers how phenomena actually exist, and that they only exist dependently means one should then understand that they do not exist by way of their own entity. When one understands that, one understands that they do exist but they lack independent existence.

This is a very important point and many great scholars such as Nagarjuna and Lama Tsong Khapa have clarified and emphasised it in their teachings. Those who were recently at His Holiness' teachings will recall that His Holiness also considered this as the essence of the explanation of emptiness. So it is important to get the point.

First of all one must understand that emptiness and interdependent origination enhance and do not contradict each other. This does not mean, that someone who merely understands interdependent origination will automatically understand emptiness and vice-versa. What it does mean is that they do not contradict each other. The way they enhance each other is, as I explained, that for someone using many sound logical reasonings and analysis to establish emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, can easily establish the dependent origination of all phenomena and vice-versa, without having to use extra reasonings and much extra effort.

Of course we can refer to this commentary and other commentaries to get further understanding. However the main point is that emptiness and interdependent origination enhance each other and do not contradict each other. If one equates the lack of inherent existence with the non-existence of phenomena, then one has lost the point and fallen into an extreme view. However if one uses the understanding that the lack of inherent existence means that things exist in dependence on causes and conditions and their parts, one has focused on the right understanding, and not fallen into the extreme.

When you understand that things lack inherent existence that does not mean that they do not exist at all but that they exist in dependence, in relation to causes and conditions, and so forth. Things exist in relation to causes and conditions and those causes and conditions contributing to their existence also lack inherent existence. Because things exist in relation to other causes and phenomena; they do not have an inherent independent existence. Thus that understanding of dependent origination, that things exist in dependence on causes and conditions and its parts, enhances the understanding that things lack inherent existence. That is how the understanding of dependent origination enhances the understanding of emptiness. The understanding of one enhances and contributes to the understanding of the other, and in that way it becomes a very effective means of understanding the real intent of the Buddha's teachings, which is a very precious and holy understanding.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
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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

20 March 2007

As usual it will be appropriate to set a motivation for the teaching. While sitting in a comfortable and upright posture, we generate a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I need to listen to the Dharma and put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1.3. DETAILED EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON ANGER AND DESIRE

Even though desire will be explained first, anger is mentioned first in the heading simply because this order sounds better in Tibetan.

This heading is sub-divided into two categories:

1.2.1.3.1. How to abandon desire

1.2.1.3.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon anger

1.2.1.3.1. HOW TO ABANDON DESIRE

This is further divided into two sub-headings.

1.2.1.3.1.1. Characteristics of a person habituated to desire

This section gives a description of the outer signs and characteristics of a person who is habituated to desire.

1.2.1.3.1.2. Means of caring for such a person

This section explains how to help a person with strong desire.

1.2.1.3.1.1. Characteristics of a person habituated to desire

Question: How does one recognise people in whom desire is a strong habit?

Answer:

*They always like "Claiming the Earth," 137
Are extravagant, greedy and fastidious.
Characteristics such as these
Are seen in people with desire.*

The verse shows some of the characteristics of a person who is known to have desire. As the commentary explains, people who are habituated with strong desire are:

always like dances such as "Claiming the Earth,"...

They like dancing and singing and opera, in which they like to participate.

They also like 'fun and flirtation' as well as making jokes and so forth with others. There are also those who are extravagant, liking clothes and so forth. As indicated in the text they also have a liking for:

... flowers, perfume, garlands, jewellery, colour [such as make-up] and so forth.

As further explained in the commentary, people who are known to be habituated with desire also have, to a certain extent, the quality of being generous to others in addition to spending a lot of money on themselves. They utter kind words to others, as well as honest words, and they also take extra care in keeping things tidy - they can be obsessed with cleanliness. Those are the sort of characteristics that are seen in people who have strong desire. When you see such characteristics in others or in oneself, then that is an

indication of strong desire. Although it might not be true in all cases it is generally the case that those with strong desire have the qualities described above.

As explained in the commentary the characteristics of someone with strong anger in their mind are the opposite of those with strong desire in their mind. That seems to suggest that they are not extravagant, they don't seem to like going to the opera and so forth. They may like to be alone and also not say things honestly or in a nice way to others.

An equal mix of both types of characteristics is a characteristic of someone who has confusion or ignorance prevalent in their mind. So, those who have characteristics of both desire and anger are people who have confusion in their mind.

Having heard about these characteristics, it is good to be mindful of them and relate them to oneself or others to see if they apply to oneself or not.

1.2.1.3.1.2. Means of caring for [or subduing] such a person

Question: How does one train someone in whom desire is a strong habit?

Answer:

*Buddhas told those with desire 138
That food, clothes and dwellings are all
To be avoided and to remain
Close to their spiritual guides.*

As the commentary explains:

Buddhas told those with desire that objects of beauty and quality which stimulate desire such as fine food, clothes and dwellings are all to be avoided,...

As indicated earlier in the text, the Buddha placed restrictions on the food, clothing and dwellings that are appropriate for ordained sangha. Even in a worldly context, we find it is basically different kinds of foods that serve as a continual basis on which attachment arises. The same is true for clothing and housing. On a continual basis they arouse a strong desire in us, that is really prevalent.

The restrictions which the Buddha particularly laid down for ordained sangha are a means of overcoming manifest desire. As mentioned previously the Buddha laid down twelve rules of training.¹ Ordained sangha should dwell in isolated places, like cemeteries, or in places without a roof. Even with our limited experience, we can see that if we put someone with very strong desire for objects, and things like dwellings and so forth, into a situation where everyone else is living similarly (in moderate dwellings and so forth), then the strong desires for dwellings and so forth can definitely be reduced or minimised. Because everyone has a similar environment the manifest strong desire for objects can be reduced.

Specifically, for monks who are attached to dwellings like nice temples and so forth, it is laid down that they should live in isolation, or in cemeteries, or in housing without roofing. For those who are particularly attached to sleep and bedding, there are the restrictions of not sleeping by lying down completely, but by sitting in an upright posture and living in isolated areas like forests and so forth. There are also specific restrictions in relation to food for fully ordained monks: relying on foods from alms, eating only in one sitting, and not eating after noon. Monks should wear inexpensive, woollen, patched clothes. 'Inexpensive'

¹ See 20 February 2007.

particularly refers to second-hand clothes which others have already used for at least four months.

These restrictions were laid down by the Buddha so that his followers would be venerated because they were seen as being modest. Being satisfied with meagre shelter and food and so forth is also a bodhisattva practice, which is to hold a low place and to be satisfied with little. In that way these restrictions also help others to generate faith and admiration in the followers of the Buddha. Ultimately the main purpose is that these are a means of leading others onto the path, and the practise of Dharma.

The commentary further explains how to guide such beings:

...and that they should always remain close to their spiritual guides. Being made to work constantly by their spiritual guide will curb their desire and through instruction in training, they will be able to rid themselves of their incorrect mental approach.

These are the means of guiding someone whose mind is pervaded by desire. If we follow such instructions it helps the mind to overcome the manifest desires in the mind. It is also mentioned in teachings that as one practises in such a way, one should seek companions who are able to be content and also live on meagre necessities. Then the mutual benefit for each other becomes a means for practising well.

The text mentioned earlier that to guide and lead beings who have strong manifest anger prevalent in their mind, the teacher provides them with nice clothing and food and dwellings and so forth, which helps to overcome their manifest level of anger. Then they can be trained along the path. It is good to really keep this advice in mind to be used in practical ways. That means remembering that the best means of helping someone with strong anger prevalent in their mind is by providing necessities, which will calm them down.

What we normally tend to do is the opposite. When someone is angry we tend to become upset and respond with anger ourselves. So instead of resolving the situation we fuel it even more. Actually our anger just worsens the situation rather than making it better. So if one sees someone angry, then rather than responding with anger just let them be for a while and if possible provide them with nice things, that will help to subdue them. If, say, you have two children and one seems to be a little more short tempered, then maybe a good way to deal with that child is to provide them with better food. If you give better food to a child who has a short temper, that will help them to calm down.

1.2.1.3.2. EXPLAINING EXTENSIVELY HOW TO ABANDON ANGER

This sub-division is sub-divided into five.

1.2.1.3.2.1. Considering the disadvantages of anger

1.2.1.3.2.2. Explaining extensively how to apply antidotes to anger

1.2.1.3.2.3. Refuting that it is not wrong to punish the slanderer of an innocent person

1.2.1.3.2.4. Preventing anger by considering the benefits of patience

1.2.1.3.2.5. Appropriateness of cultivating patience when disparaged by others

1.2.1.3.2.1. Considering the disadvantages of anger

If one wants to get rid of anger, one should think about its disadvantages.

*Through anger, those who are powerless
Only make themselves look ugly;* 139

*But one who has power and is merciless
Is said to be the worst.*

It is of course very true that it is only by seeing the disadvantages of anger that a wish to actually overcome anger is instilled. Seeing the disadvantages is the necessary beginning. As the commentary explains, when one exhibits anger towards those who are more powerful than oneself, then, because the other is more powerful, one is not able to do anything about the situation beyond being angry. In this situation one suffers just because of the fact that one is powerless, and not able to fight back. Furthermore a state of anger makes one's face turn dark and unappealing. Angry frowns and the like make one look ugly: in fact one's whole appearance looks unappealing. Someone with a frown on their face and looking a bit fierce is not a person who is welcomed or liked to be seen by others. Therefore it brings about a situation where one is just left by oneself, and often not able to deal with the situation. The first part of the explanation in the commentary has concerned the inappropriateness of being angry towards someone who is more powerful.

What is explained next is that it is equally inappropriate to be angry towards those who are less powerful than oneself, because that is abusing their powerless situation. Being angry and merciless towards those less powerful is totally inappropriate. Such anger arises because of a lack of concern or love for the object. The combination of lacking concern and love for the object together with the object being less powerful than oneself will lead one to doing disastrous things, such as hurting them physically, or even leading to the situation of taking their life and so forth. So grave misdeeds can be inflicted on a less powerful object as a result of anger. Even in a worldly sense when a more powerful person abuses their power to hurt the less powerful, that is seen as being unfair and totally inappropriate.

Therefore it is made clear here that in either situation one should avoid exhibiting or harbouring anger. For one more powerful than oneself there is no point. Firstly, by getting angry towards the more powerful one will achieve nothing, because by itself, one's anger can do nothing to harm them. Because they are more powerful, one cannot do anything to harm them. So, just being angry and harbouring anger in one's mind cannot help the situation. Furthermore it makes one look ugly and so forth, and so it is inappropriate. For those who are less powerful than oneself, it would be considered as being inhuman and inappropriate to be angry with them, even in a worldly sense. From the Dharma point of view, it is definitely, totally inappropriate to be angry towards those who are less powerful. The point about having no compassion towards the object is very true. The very wish to harm the object is because the lack of love or compassion in one's heart.

As I often point out, even in normal situations with normal relationships one first has some affection, love and concern for the other. But as the love and concern begins to wane and diminish, then what replaces the concern and love is anger. So if anger towards the object starts to arise in the mind then that is a clear sign that one's affection and love for them is slowly waning and actually diminishing. Therefore one must be very careful towards those for whom one feels strong affection and concern. Initially, one needs to try and maintain that affection and concern and see all the good reasons as to why one should maintain it. If affection and concern diminishes then what comes in its place is anger.

Of course there are many more details about the disadvantages of anger and the advantages of practising patience, and these are described more extensively in the sixth chapter of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. So it is good to relate what is discussed here to those teachings, and learn from them. We do not have time to go into detail now, but it is good to remind oneself and look at those teachings as a means to enhance one's practice. As one studies a text like this, one should remind oneself of the other texts one has studied and revise them, and that will enhance the points which are made here. By revising and looking them up again, it really brings a deeper understanding to one's mind. Whatever understanding one gains not only deepens, but also becomes firmer and in that way we really make progress.

1.2.1.3.2.2. Explaining extensively how to apply antidotes to anger

That is sub-divided into five headings:

1.2.1.3.2.2.1. Inappropriateness of anger at the circumstances which terminate the effects of ill deeds

1.2.1.3.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of anger because unpleasant words are designated as harmful by oneself and are not inherently harmful

1.2.1.3.2.2.3. Advice to punish the abuser in treatises on social conventions is wrong

1.2.1.3.2.2.4. Inappropriateness of anger at those who make others aware of one's faults

1.2.1.3.2.2.5. Inappropriateness of anger when inferiors use abusive language

1.2.1.3.2.2.1. Inappropriateness of anger at the circumstances which terminate the effects of ill deeds

It is foolish to feel angry when one hears harsh words.

*It is said unpleasant words
End previously done ill deeds. 140
The ignorant and unwise do not
Want to purify themselves.*

The point being made here is that if one hears words of criticism and gets angry or upset, then that is very foolish. As the commentary reads:

Hearing unpleasant words is said to rid one of the effects of previously done ill deeds by bringing them to an end.

What is being emphasised here is a combination of the inappropriateness of anger with an understanding of karma. What this means basically is whatever unpleasant experience we may have, such as hearing criticism and so forth, is a result of particular karma that we have created in the past. As the teachings on karma emphasise, nothing can be produced without a cause. Anything that is produced is preceded by its own appropriate causes. Therefore when we experience certain kinds of words that are hurtful, it is definitely a result of a particular type of karma that we have created in the past that we have to hear those words. At this point, we can use the understanding of karma to understand that hearing these hurtful words now is a means of overcoming the particular negative karma that one has created in the past. In other words, hearing the unpleasant words is purifying or exhausting that particular karma now. Therefore if one uses the understanding of karma, then there is no real reason for us to feel unhappy about the situation, but instead we should feel rather glad that we are now exhausting that karma. As the commentary goes on to say:

Not to feel glad but angry at the circumstances that end these effects is simply to be ignorant regarding actions

and their effects and unwise in not wanting to purify ill deeds.

What is being explained here is that if one were not to accept the criticism, then that in itself indicates that one is failing to accept the cause and effect sequence of karma in general. If one were not to accept the cause and effect sequence of karma, then that means that one is not ready to accept the criticism as a means to exhaust one's karma. So feeling unhappy about criticism is indication that one is being foolish, because of either being ignorant of an understanding of karma, or, if one has such an understanding, then not accepting it. In contrast, if one accepts the criticism as a way of experiencing the effects of the karma that one has already created, in addition to a means of actually exhausting that karma, then it should actually bring joy to the mind, rather than feeling unhappy and hurt. That is what is being indicated here as the main point.

1.2.1.3.2.2.2. Inappropriateness of anger because unpleasant words are designated as harmful by oneself and are not inherently harmful

These sub-headings on antidotes to anger are actually very important points, so we have to pay careful attention to them.

For the following reason, too, it is appropriate to be angry about harsh words.

*Though unpleasant to hear 141
They are not intrinsically harmful.
Thus it is fantasy to think that
What comes from preconception comes from elsewhere.*

What is being explained here is that although harsh words are unpleasant, the words themselves are not intrinsically harmful; it is not as though the words themselves will harm us. If they were harmful, then one would have to assume that those who are uttering those words would also be harmed, because they have uttered the words. It is actually very clear: if words were to be intrinsically harmful from their own side, the one who spoke those words would have to be harmed too. As the commentary reads:

Thus, when the damage done by anger comes from one's own preconception that one has been insulted, it is just fantasy...

What is being explained here is that even though one conceives the anger that arises on hearing unpleasant words as being a result of the words that have been uttered, the words themselves do not harm us. What is actually harming us is only our preconception, what is called *namtok* in Tibetan, which is all of the different kind of superstitious minds which occur within oneself. It is only the superstitions or preconceptions in our minds that are harming us.

As the commentary says:

...it is just fantasy to suppose it comes from elsewhere. When one's own ideas have done the harm, it is unreasonable to be angry with others.

What is being indicated here is that the reason one is hurt is not because the words that have been uttered are intrinsically harmful themselves, but because of the way one perceives them. As a result of one's preconception, we feel the harm. Therefore it is not fair to blame others because we feel hurt. We can verify this through our own experience. For example, when certain words are uttered there may be times when they do not affect us, because of the context in which they were said. Yet at other times those very same words can make us feel hurt, blamed and so forth. If words

were intrinsically harmful from their own side, then one would have to conclude that they would be harmful at all times. Also, as mentioned earlier, if they are intrinsically harmful, then the one who uttered those words would have to feel harmed too.

But the fact is that the one who utters the words is not harmed, and we are also not harmed in every situation; it is only sometimes and in certain situations that we feel harmed. It is because of our preconceptions and how our superstitious mind interprets them that we are actually harmed. So actually the one to blame is our own superstitious mind, rather than the words or the person who utters them. Therefore the conclusion is that the harm that we bring upon ourselves through our misconception shouldn't be a reason for us to become upset with others and blame them for hurting us.

1.2.1.3.2.3. Advice to punish the abuser in treatises on social conventions is wrong

Assertion: Treatises on social conventions state that those who are abusive should be punished.

Answer:

Just as it plainly says 142
The abuser should be punished,
Likewise why should one who speaks
Pleasantly not be rewarded?

What is being explained in the commentary is that the kind of assertion that those who utter hurtful words should be punished, while those who say pleasant words are not rewarded, is a very biased way of looking at things. There are some biased treatises that do not really see the situation in an even-handed way.

As the commentary explains:

Just as it plainly says those who are abusive should be punished, likewise why should those who speak pleasingly not be rewarded? It would be reasonable to reward them, but since these treatises do not mention that, they are misleading.

What is being explained here is that there is a disparity between these two situations. The treatises that mention punishing those who use unpleasant words are misleading, as they are not based on sound reasonings.

1.2.1.3.2.4. Inappropriateness of anger at those who make others aware of one's faults

If that for which you are reviled 143
Is known to others though they are not told,
And anger at the speaker is unreasonable,
How much more so toward those who lie.

This verse serves as an answer to the assertion:

Anger is reasonable because abuse reveals one's faults to others.

The commentary uses that very reasoning as a counter-reasoning to show that anger is not reasonable. As it says:

If those things for which you are reviled, such as your blindness or lameness, are known to others even when they have not been told, it is unreasonable to be angry...[when they have been told]

What is being explained here is that if someone criticises you for faults that you actually have, (the examples here are if you are blind in one eye or if you are lame), by calling you a 'blind person' or 'lame guy', and if those faults are known to others, then mentioning them doesn't change anything. So why should one become upset about what is already known to others anyway? It is unreasonable to be angry about such

statements, because others know about it already, whether it has been mentioned or not.

As the commentary further explains:

If that is unreasonable, how much more so is anger toward those who speak untruly, when one does not possess a fault.

What is being explained here is that if someone were to call you a 'blind person' or a 'lame person' when in fact you are not blind or lame, then because they are uttering lies why should one get upset about lies? They might go around and tell everyone that one is blind or lame, but it is obvious that one is not lame or blind. Relating this illustration to other faults, if others mention faults that one does not have, then because they are in the wrong and obviously telling lies, one shouldn't take it as a criticism, because basically it is just a lie.

If someone points to something that is in fact a fault, others may already know about anyway, it is inappropriate to get angry or upset about it. So if they are pointing out faults which one does not have, it is also inappropriate to get angry, because they are in the wrong; they are telling lies and that is inappropriate. In both situations it is inappropriate to get angry. It is good for us to think about these lines. The analogy here is:

It is wrong for a king to punish both someone who calls the blind "blind" as well as someone who calls those who are not blind "blind."

A king will not punish someone who calls a blind person blind, because that is saying something that is obviously true. Likewise the king will not punish someone who describes someone else as being blind when they are not blind, because it is just an inappropriate lie.

Thinking about these points is a good way for us to consider and practise patience. If we can actually practise along the lines as advised here, then we could begin to consider ourselves as leading a meaningful life and doing a spiritual practice. But because we are not able to practise like that, we normally react just like children – whenever there is some criticism or whatever, we just get angry and fierce. On a practical level trying to reduce our anger and apply the practices of patience definitely benefits us in our immediate life, so we are able to lead a good happy life now, even if you are not to think along the lines of liberation and enlightenment, which seem so far into the future.

The immediate benefit in this life should encourage us to practice along these lines, even one does not really have any sight of liberation and enlightenment right now. It is actually very appropriate to look into the immediate benefits that one receives now, as it is difficult to see how doing a practice can benefit future life times. When we look into the benefit that we receive now, then that can serve as a reason to assume that if we have an immediate benefit from these practices, and if there were to be future lifetimes, then there would be no question that it will benefit the future as well. Because if it benefits now, it follows through logical reason, that it will benefit the future, whenever that future comes - in this life and in future lifetimes. As Lama Tsong Khapa clarifies in his teachings, by practising patience, one actually receives the immediate benefit of having a calmer and more peaceful mind now, and that definitely creates the causes for us to obtain higher rebirths in future lifetimes as well.

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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

27 March 2007

As usual it would be good to generate an appropriate motivation for receiving the teachings, such as thinking along the lines of, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings and to liberate them from suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and try to put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1. THE WAY TO ABANDON MANIFEST DISTURBING EMOTIONS (CONT.)

1.2.1.3. DETAILED EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON ANGER AND DESIRE

1.2.1.3.2.5. The inappropriateness of anger when inferiors use abusive language.

Abuse from inferiors 144
Does not ensure escape.
Abuse from inferiors thus should be
Seen as isolated and trivial.

This verse is an answer to the question, 'Is it reasonable to be angry on hearing abuse from one's inferiors?' and the answer is that it is not.

As the commentary explains,

Merely some abusive words from inferiors, who like what is profane and constantly do ill deeds, taking delight in others' suffering, do not ensure one's escape...

What is being explained here is that it is inappropriate to treat abuse from someone who is inferior as serious, or to allow that to affect oneself, because as indicated here, inferior beings are those who do not like the Dharma, do not take pleasure in practising the Dharma, constantly engage in ill deeds, and thus constantly engage in negative deeds, and they also take delight in the suffering of others. This means that whenever these inferior beings see others suffering, then rather than feeling compassion for them, they take pleasure in seeing that suffering. We consider such beings to be inferior beings in relation to the Dharma.

Since these inferior beings are in such an ignorant state it is totally unreasonable for us to take their abuse seriously and let it affect us. Therefore it is not appropriate to feel angry towards such beings. Instead of feeling angry towards them one should be happy. The reason for this is explained in the next few lines of the commentary;

Therefore regarding mere abuse from one's inferiors as an isolated and trivial error, it is appropriate to feel glad.

The reason for feeling glad is, because inferior beings who have the characteristics that were described earlier, take pleasure in the suffering of others, and it is possible that they could hurt us physically or even kill us. The fact that they only use abusive words and haven't harmed us in any other way is very fortunate. So we should feel very glad that it is only words that they have uttered, and they did not hurt us physically or threaten or kill us.

If we were to come into contact with a well known notorious evil being, and they merely criticise us, then we would feel

very glad that nothing more serious had happened to us - we would feel glad that they didn't harm us physically or kill us. If one thinks along these lines then rather than being angry at hearing criticism one should feel glad.

What is being implied here is that when very negative or inferior beings start to abuse us one should actually be careful. The text is actually giving us practical advice about not going into combat with inferior beings.

1.2.1.3.2.3. Refuting that it is not wrong to punish the slander of an innocent person

This section is in line with the worldly view that if someone were to use bad words, slander, and so forth towards an innocent person, then that is punishable, because they were criticising an innocent person. However, as explained here, that is an inappropriate view.

Assertion: Is it not wrong to punish those who slander the innocent?

Answer:

If harming others is not even 145
Of the slightest use to you,
Your approval of useless aggression
Is just an addiction.

As the commentary explains,

Retaliation by hurting others like the slanderer is not the slightest use...

Normally one would feel that it is justifiable to punish or retaliate when others abuse or criticise you without any basis. In other words, if one feels one is innocent, or if others are innocent when someone criticises or abuses you (or them), then it is seen as appropriate to retaliate. That is the normal view. What is being explained here is that when someone abuses or criticises us, retaliating with anger would be inappropriate, even if one feels innocent of the criticism.

As the commentary explains, retaliation by hurting others is not of the slightest use in reversing what has already been done. In fact that anger and retaliation will not in any way reverse whatever the harm or hurt that has been inflicted upon us.

What is being explained here specifically is that anger and retaliation could be seen as being reasonable if it could undo the harm that has been inflicted upon oneself. However the reverse is the case: undoing the harm that others have done to us by actually becoming upset and angry does even more harm to oneself.

Furthermore if retaliation and getting upset were to bring some gain in terms of qualities then again that could be seen as reasonable. However, rather than bringing qualities and gains, retaliation only brings loss for oneself, therefore there is no point in retaliating. Now these are all very sound reasonings, and although they seem very reasonable to us practising along these lines might not be so easy. So it is important to think about these practical reasons and thus remind ourselves constantly of the uselessness of retaliating and getting angry.

One must however not misunderstand or misinterpret what is meant here when it says not to retaliate. When it says not to retaliate with anger, there is no indication to suggest that one should not react at all and take the loss. In other words when others criticise and abuse us we don't have to accept their views and not do anything about it, and allow oneself to be defeated. That is not being suggested here. What is being said is not to retaliate with anger. When others criticise us or wrongly abuse us then there will of course be times

when we have to deal with the situation. If it is wrong criticism that is harmful to oneself and others then one has to deal with it in order to correct the situation. However as explained here one does that without feeling anger in one's mind and without animosity. With love and compassion in one's mind one can still correct things and make them right. It is important that we keep this in mind.

As the commentary further explains,

In that case your approval of aggression, which has nothing but drawbacks and no advantages, is just an addiction to something wrong.

What is being explained here is that if it is clear that there are no benefits or advantages to oneself, but one still retaliated then that would be just out of habituation, or as translated here, addiction. One would be retaliating out of habituation without any really sound reasoning.

1.2.1.3.2.4. Preventing anger by considering the benefits of patience

This is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse

1.2.1.3.2.4.2. Inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak

1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards a cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments.

The following three verses will explain the benefits of practising patience. Having explained earlier the disadvantages of anger, that there is no benefit whatsoever in retaliating out of anger, then the question may arise, 'What are the advantages of practising patience?' The sequence presented in the teachings, helps us to remember as well to practice in that way.

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse

Question: What wise person tolerates the worthless abuse of others?

Answer:

If through patience enormous merit 146
Is acquired effortlessly,
Who is as foolish as
One who obstructs this.

One must understand what patience actually means. The definition of patience is not allowing one's mind to be influenced by anger, in the event of being abused or suffering, or by any suffering one experiences from that or from any other reason. In a nutshell, patience is not allowing the mind to be upset by an abuser or by suffering.

When there is abuse and the like from others, patience means not allowing the mind to be influenced by anger and thus getting upset. If one were to actually practise patience then that would be of benefit for the mind.

As the commentary explains,

If through patience one gives anger no opportunity and does not harm others...

One of the advantages of patience is that if one practises it then anger has no opportunity to arise in the mind, and thus one will not harm others. Therefore patience prevents anger and harm to others. By practising patience there is no opportunity for anger to arise, thus one's own mind remains calm and peaceful, which is a direct benefit to oneself. As the commentary further explains,

...one will acquire the fragrance and adornment [of virtue], a flowing river [of tranquillity] undisturbed by ill will, and a pleasing appearance.

As explained here in the commentary the person who practises patience is naturally adorned with these ornaments and these qualities will be continuously experienced like the continuity of a river - one will continually experience that positive result. It is the opposite for someone who has anger.

As the commentary further explains, by practising patience one creates the causes to obtain the ultimate benefits of achieving liberation and enlightenment. Until the ultimate goals are achieved, one will attain rebirth with a good appearance in future lifetimes, which serves as a quality for practising the Dharma. Therefore the benefits from practising patience can be understood clearly as being for both oneself and others. Without patience we couldn't possibly endure the hardships and so forth associated with spiritual practices, and likewise without patience we cannot possibly benefit others to a satisfactory degree, because one would not be able to endure the difficulties involved in that. So to benefit others it is essential to engage in the practice of patience.

As the commentary says,

Then who is as foolish as one who obstructs the supreme path, for he destroys his good qualities. Therefore only those who bear abuse should be called wise.

If one were to retaliate with anger and not engage in the practice of patience one would experience so much loss, such as losing one's merit and virtues, as well as disturbing one's mind now and losing in so many ways in the future. Only a foolish person would destroy so much virtue. Thus someone who does not retaliate with anger in response to the abuse and criticism of others is a wise person, because of all the benefits they will achieve from that.

Of course this is completely contrary to the worldly view, where someone, who does not retaliate when they feel innocent of the criticism and abuse from others, would be considered foolish and very stupid, whereas someone who does retaliate would be considered as wise and brave. According to the teachings here, however, the complete opposite is the case.

In a worldly context anyone who repays kindness with kindness and harm with harm is considered to be a wise and brave person. Now there is nothing wrong with repaying kindness with kindness, but repaying harm with harm is what is considered as being foolish here, as it is of no benefit. So the main point, as explained earlier, is that there is no benefit in retaliating with harm when others abuse and criticise us.

If someone hits us with a stick and we hit them back it is not as though that retaliation will remove the pain: if we happen to hurt our head, hitting them back will not heal our head. Also if we hit back, the other person may hit us again and we might get hit twice!

1.2.1.3.2.4.2. The inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak

For the following reasons one should get rid of anger:

Aggression especially 147
Does not arise toward the powerful.
Why then do you approve of
Aggression which defeats the weak?

Aggression followed by harm does not arise towards those who are more powerful than oneself; it will only arise towards those who are inferior to oneself, which means those who are less powerful than oneself. What this means is

that one lacks the ability to fight with, and does not dare to be aggressive with those who are more powerful than oneself, because one realises that one is not capable of harming them. So out of fear of the mighty one does not dare to harm them. Therefore we can only inflict harm on those who are less powerful than ourselves. Even in a worldly context that is not justified, and is considered unfair. When you cannot do anything to prevent those more powerful than yourself from harming you, trying to use aggression to harm those weaker than oneself is very unfair. When we actually look into it we are actually only acting out our aggression on those who we think can take it, or in other words, on those on whom we can inflict it without fear of retribution.

In a practical sense, this can lead to situations where one becomes upset and angry with someone who is more powerful than oneself at work, or some other outside environment, but because one is not able to retaliate in that context, one comes home and starts acting out one's anger or aggression on one's partner or someone else.

As the commentary explains,

Aggression especially does not arise towards the strong because one is powerless to harm them. For that reason then do you approve of aggression and anger towards the wretched, which defeats only the weak? Such approval is improper.

1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments

Assertion: It is reasonable to get angry, since if one is patient, others may think one is incapable of retaliating and despise one.

Answer: It is not reasonable.

*Whoever is patient with a source
Of anger develops meditation. 148
Saying you fear the source of
Good qualities is just foolish of you.*

This of course is very much in accordance with worldly perspectives. Not retaliating when others criticise us and so forth might be seen as being weak and foolish, and thus one might be despised. So out of a fear of being seen as a weakling by others, one may then feel that it is appropriate to retaliate with anger. That is basically how many may feel: they fear being despised if they do not retaliate.

As the commentary explains,

Whoever patiently tolerates the causes for anger will develop meditative stabilisation on love and other kinds of meditation.

This is in relation to the good qualities that are said to be obtained by practising patience, and thus developing the love and so forth. These qualities are explained in *Precious Garland*, which says,

Gods and humans will be friendly,
Even non-humans will protect you,
You will have pleasures of the mind and many,
[Of the body], poisons and weapons will not harm
you,
Effortlessly will you attain your aims
And be born in the world of Brahma.
Though [through love] you are not liberated
You will attain the eight virtues of love.

As *Precious Garland* explains, gods and humans will be friendly towards oneself and one will receive protection from humans and non-humans alike. One will also have pleasures of the mind and many, which refers to the mind

and physical body. In relation to the physical body, poisons and weapons will not harm oneself, and, as mentioned earlier, one will effortlessly attain one's aims. By practising patience one will be able to achieve one's goals and thus be reborn in the realm of Brahma. Here Brahma can be understood from two points of view: from the worldly point of view Brahma is one of the highest abodes in the samsaric realm, and in another context Brahma can also refer to the enlightened state of a Buddha, the ultimate Brahma. 'Though through love you are not liberated' refers to the fact that even if one is liberated in this lifetime by practising patience, one will surely attain the eight virtues of love as a result of practising patience.

When the first line says that 'gods and humans will be friendly' that refers to how by the mere fact of practising patience one is naturally adorned with certain qualities of attractiveness and becomes appealing. Because one becomes appealing humans are naturally attracted to oneself, as well as the gods, who are also naturally attracted in the sense of wanting to benefit us and be helpful to us. So, in other words, by being patient one attracts not only human friends but the gods.

As the commentary further reads,

It is just foolish of you to claim you fear patience and give up the source of the above-mentioned virtues because of contempt regarding your ability to retaliate, for you destroy an excellent source of good qualities.

What it being explained here is similar to what was mentioned earlier - it would be very foolish to give in to retaliation and not to practise patience when the benefits of patience are so obvious.

1.2.1.3.2.5. Appropriateness of cultivating patience when disparaged by others

Assertion: Since it is difficult for the powerful to bear being disparaged by inferiors, it is proper to punish them.

Answer:

*Who has gone to the next world 149
Having ended all disparagement?
Therefore consider contempt
Preferable to ill deeds.*

Again this assertion or doubt arises from a purely worldly point of view: powerful people lose face if they are criticised and so forth by inferiors, and that is seen as very disgraceful. Thus it is seen as proper to punish those who have criticised.

As the commentary explains:

Who goes or has gone to the next world having completely put an end to his enemies by defeat and humiliation? Not even a few have done so.

What is being raised here is a counter question. Is there anyone who has come to the end of their life, who has conquered or vanquished all their enemies? There is no one whatsoever.

As the commentary further explains

By retaliating one creates ill deeds and will go to bad rebirths. Therefore one should endure contempt, thinking it is preferable to the ill deeds created by subjugating one's enemies.

There is no such thing as completely defeating all enemies and having no enemies when one dies. But it is a fact that having attempted to defeat enemies by retaliating with

anger, one actually carries the negative karmic imprints into the next life, and will experience the negative consequences of being reborn in the lower rebirths. That is what one will take onto the next life. Therefore as the commentary further states,

Through doing the former one will not go to bad rebirth but by doing ill deeds one will.

If one were to practise patience and not retaliate that would save one from experiencing the negative consequences of experiencing bad rebirths in the next lifetime, whereas if one were to retaliate one would have to experience the negative results. Therefore it is wiser and much more reasonable to accept the criticism and not to retaliate with anger, as that brings more benefit.

The main point being made is that it is much more preferable to endure criticisms and so forth than to retaliate with anger. That is because by practising the former one will not experience negative consequences in future lifetimes, whereas if one were to engage in the retaliation, one would have to experience the negative consequences in future lifetimes. Furthermore the negative karmic consequences that will ripen in the next lifetime will be further causes for one to again experience anger and retaliation, and therefore the cycle will not stop. The analogy that is given here is that just like a water wheel there is no end to disparagement. This is a very vivid analogy, a water wheel, like a Ferris wheel, continuously goes round and round, likewise through retaliation and anger one just creates more causes to act again in the same way, and that is how the cycle continues from one life to the next.

1.2.2. HOW TO CULTIVATE THE ANTIDOTE WHICH TOTALLY DESTROYS THE SEED

The previous sections concerned overcoming the manifest disturbing emotions. The following verse concerns uprooting the seed.

Disturbing emotions will never 150
Remain in the mind of one
Who understands the reality of
The abiding and so forth of consciousness.

What has being explained earlier is that patience can serve as an antidote to overcome manifest anger, however patience in itself is not an appropriate antidote to completely overcome anger at its root. Likewise, although meditating or cultivating compassion can be antidote to overcoming manifest anger, however it too cannot serve as the actual antidote to overcoming the root of anger.

As was explained earlier, both desire and anger arise from the ignorance that grasps at the self, which is the main source of the delusions that arise in the mind. Therefore without overcoming the grasping at the self completely one cannot overcome the other delusions, such as anger and attachment.

Since products change from moment to moment, they do not have inherent duration. Their production and disintegration are therefore not inherently existent either,

What is being explained is that what we call mind or consciousness is produced in dependence on causes, so therefore it is a product and because it is a product it is in the nature of impermanence. Thus it changes from moment to moment. Whatever is a product exists by its nature in this three-fold manner, in which there is a moment of production, a moment of abiding and a moment of

disintegration. The moment of production is not inherently existent because it depends on causes and conditions for its production. The moment of abiding also being dependent on causes and conditions for its abiding, is also not inherently existent, and nor is disintegration inherently existent. So in all three instances of the existence of a product there is not a single moment where one can find inherent existence.

Because it lacks inherent existence or production it changes from moment to moment. Having understood that, as the commentary reads,

One must abandon all disturbing emotions understanding that the three realms are like an illusion, since production, disintegration and abiding and so forth do not have inherent existence.

Having further understood how the three realms, which include all existence, are like an illusion, the disturbing emotions are also similar, and thus one can, and should, abandon the disturbing emotions. So as the commentary further reads,

Disturbing emotions will never remain in the mind of any adept [or yogi] who understands that the production, disintegration, abiding and so forth of consciousness do not have even an atom of real or inherent existence and who gains familiarity with this.

What is being explained here is that for a yogi or meditator, who understands what is described here, the negative emotions will not remain in the consciousness. The yogi who is engaged in removing the delusions can completely eradicate and overcome the delusions, or what can be called the negative emotions, in the mind.

The analogy given here is the one I have mentioned earlier, which is that it is like uprooting a poisonous tree. If one were to try to remove a poisonous tree by merely cutting off the branches that would not stop it from growing. If, however, one were to uproot the poisonous tree from its very roots then that would prevent the poisonous tree from further growing. So if we merely try to overcome our manifest levels of attachment and anger that will not uproot the delusions in our mind. Rather we have to combat the ignorance of the grasping at true existence.

As the commentary clarifies,

Thus by first gaining familiarity with antidotes that overcome manifest disturbing emotions and then eventually understanding dependent arising as devoid of inherent existence, one should rid oneself of all the seeds of disturbing emotions.

The summary stanza by Gyaltshab Rinpoche is:

Transmigrators governed by disturbing emotions
like desire,
Which prevent activities for the attainment of
enlightenment,
Are conveyed to the happiness of liberation by
teaching them
To become familiar with love and repulsiveness and
by teaching them suchness.

2. Presentation of the name of the chapter

This is the sixth chapter from the Four Hundred on Yogic Deeds showing the means to abandon the disturbing emotions.

This concludes the commentary on the sixth chapter, showing the means to abandon disturbing emotions.

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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

3 April 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set one's motivation such as, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, I need to achieve the state of enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as much as I can'.

CHAPTER 7 ABANDONING ATTACHMENT TO SENSE OBJECTS ON WHICH DISTURBING EMOTIONS FOCUS

It was explained earlier that having understood how the delusions arise and so forth, one must then battle to overcome them. This particular chapter is about identifying the sense objects themselves and how to abandon attachment to those sense objects. Unless we can overcome attachment to those sense objects they will become a condition for our attachment to arise, increase, and remain in our mind. That is how the sense objects influence us.

The commentary goes on to explain that in order to establish disgust for cyclic existence the faults of cyclic existence need to be explained. One must understand that the causes for rebirth in cyclic existence are attachment to sense objects, so therefore meditating on attachment to the sense objects becomes the means to develop that disgust. As explained in the commentary, in order to develop disgust for cyclic existence, one must develop detachment towards the causes for rebirth. The main cause for rebirth, as explained in the twelve interdependent links, is the second link, which is compositional karma. That in turn is under the influence of the first link, ignorance. Due to ignorance one creates what is called compositional karma, which becomes the main cause to throw one into cyclic existence for the next rebirth. Detachment towards that karma is a very profound way of saying that in order to stop cyclic existence; one must develop detachment towards its very cause, which is compositional karma itself. Until we avert that particular karma, we will never stop the causes for future rebirths in cyclic existence. Therefore, one must develop detachment towards compositional karma.

The chapter falls into two main sub-headings which are:

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

1. The explanation of the material in the chapter

Explaining the material of the chapter comes under three main headings, which are:

- 1.1. Considering the disadvantages of cyclic existence
- 1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth there
- 1.3. Explaining the need to abandon contaminated actions

1.1. Considering the disadvantages of cyclic existence

This is sub-divided into two:

- 1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence
- 1.1.2. Specifically abandoning attachment to happy rebirths

1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence

This is further sub-divided into two:

- 1.1.1.1. Why it is necessary to cultivate fear of cyclic existence
- 1.1.1.2. How to generate aversion to it

One must also try to relate these headings to the Lam Rim headings, which specifically consider the disadvantages of cyclic existence. The presentation that is given here is actually no different to what is taught in the Lam Rim. Although each has a different way of presenting the topic and a different way of presenting the headings, one should understand that essentially, both come to the same point. For example, the Lam Rim considers the disadvantages of cyclic existence under the heading of thinking about the three types of sufferings, the six types of sufferings and so forth. All of these explanations that are given in the Lam Rim are condensed in this text and that is how one should understand it. Even if one does not take the explanations here as being a completely separate topic, one can use it in the context of the explanations of the Lam Rim.

The specific differences between the presentation of the Lam Rim and that presented here is the different approach to the explanation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence. In the Lam Rim, these disadvantages are presented mainly from the point of view of the results of cyclic existence, such as the different types of sufferings. Through that the disadvantages of cyclic existence are presented. Whereas what is unique to this text is the presentation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence through an explanation of the causes of cyclic existence. When you combine the two, then it is clear that without overcoming the causes of cyclic existence then one cannot overcome the results. The realisation of the disadvantages of cyclic existence that one must develop is the same; it is just the presentation that is different.

1.1.1.1. WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CULTIVATE FEAR OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE

The reason why one must develop fear of cyclic existence is explained here.

On the basis of the influence of delusion and karma, that which continues to experience cyclic existence, being re-born in cyclic existence over and over again is what is called samsara. The reverse of that is considered as liberation, which is having severed the delusions and karma, and thus being free from being re-born again and again in this cyclic existence. That is what liberation is – being free from that conditioning.

When we consider the actual results of the influence of delusions and karma, we see that our contaminated body, the contaminated aggregates, is the result of the continuum of delusions and karma. When we see and experience the disadvantages of the contaminated aggregates, we realise that to overcome these disadvantages delusion and karma, which are the causes, must cease. Without the cessation of delusion and karma, one cannot overcome this condition of having contaminated aggregates.

One must first think about the disadvantages of cyclic existence in order to give up the contaminated actions which are its cause.

*When there is no end at all
To this ocean of suffering,
Why are you childish people
Not afraid of drowning in it?*

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Cyclic existence is explained with an analogy of a great ocean. We find this description in many of the teachings,

because if one were to be shipwrecked and stranded in the ocean, it would be almost impossible to escape, because of all the dangers that exist there. Similarly, once one is in cyclic existence, there are so many factors that bind us to that existence and it is extremely difficult to break free from it. Also there is a reference in other texts to the colour of the ocean resembling a milky colour. That makes the analogy even more vivid. A milky colour prevents one from seeing the depths and thus the dangers within the ocean. It is like an illusion, where you see the top of the ocean but may not be fully aware of the dangers that lurk beneath the surface. Thus cyclic existence is similar to a milky surface, which prevents you from seeing the actual dangers.

One must integrate these explanations of the disadvantages of cyclic existence into one's own experience, so that it can become a means for us to develop some renunciation, or the wish to be free from cyclic existence. If we were to just use it to look at others and see how they are suffering, then it would be hard to develop that renunciation within oneself. In relation to oneself, one can definitely see how one has fallen into the sea of cyclic existence, through the mere fact that we have obtained a body of contaminated aggregates.

As the commentary reads:

The beginningless cycle of rebirths is an ocean of suffering without any end at all, infested by thirty-six sea snake fetters of ignorance, pride and craving of worldly existence.

Here, there is reference to thirty-six fetters. There are, of course, different ways of classifying the fetters; however the main classification is the nine-fold classification of the fetters. What is translated here as fetters is from the Tibetan word *kun jor*. *Kun* has a connotation of 'all', so it refers to all types of suffering, while *jor* means that which makes you come into contact. So the literal meaning of *kun jor* is that which makes you come into contact with all types of suffering. The nine fetters are: attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views, view of superiority, doubt, jealousy and miserliness. When one honestly looks into oneself, one comes to realise how many of these fetters one has within oneself and then one can see how much one is immersed in samsaric existence.

As the commentary further explains:

It is churned by sea monsters of the sixty-two wrong views and fraught with whirlpools of birth and death.

Here sea monster is added to the list of analogies that include the ocean of cyclic existence, and the sea snake fetters. Within the ocean there are various types of fearsome creatures, and the sixty-two wrong views are like these unknown sea monsters. Again there is a whole list of different types of wrong views, and there are also different interpretations of the classifications of the different wrong views. We can go into more detail later, but one classification is based on the self and environment. In relation to the self: whether the self is permanent or impermanent, whether it is both or whether it is neither. In relation to the environment: is it permanent, impermanent, both or neither? In relation to self and the three times: was it existent in the past, or in the present, the future, all three or neither? So there are these views which are established as being wrong views because they are extreme views. There are also explanations of the wrong views in relation to the view of the transitory collections. However, we are not going into the details of the numbers right now, because all we need now is a basic understanding that there are different

types of wrong extreme views basically in relation to oneself and the environment. Those wrong views are likened to sea monsters and they are what bind us to cyclic existence. Fearsome sea monsters would, if you were stranded in the ocean, harm you or devour you, and bring a lot of suffering. Likewise, these wrong views are the factors that bring us tremendous suffering in cyclic existence.

The commentary further reads on:

Why are you ordinary childish people, drowning in it since beginningless time, not afraid?

Ordinary people have a great fear of drowning in the ocean, where it is hard to see its depth and expanse; this is similar to being in cyclic existence, where one cannot see or really understand the causes for being there. Just as it is hard to fathom the depth and the breadth of the ocean, it is even harder to understand the nature of cyclic existence, which goes back to beginningless time. So if ordinary beings are afraid of the ocean, which is a physical aspect that one can not measure and so forth, then how much more should one be actually afraid of cyclic existence, which is beginningless. The lines in the text indicate that one should develop the fear of such an existence.

If one should fear to drown in a sea whose depth and breadth are apparent, how much more so in this one!

This refers to the analogy of someone being stranded in an ocean, surrounded by fearsome creatures. If that situation is fearful then why wouldn't one be afraid of the situation of being in cyclic existence, which is beginningless and seemingly endless as well? Cyclic existence is a much more fearsome place to be in. Therefore the main point being made here is that for all these obvious reasons, one must definitely develop a strong fear of cyclic existence, and thus develop a wish to rid oneself of that situation. In Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way* he explains in great detail again using the analogy of an ocean, how the beings within cyclic existence have been continuously tossed in waves of suffering and torment from beginningless time. Unless the causes and conditions for that are stopped, it seems to be endless as well. In that kind of situation where beings are experiencing so much suffering on a continual basis, anyone aware of the fact that they are in that situation would definitely develop a strong fear, and thus the wish to be free from that. The reasons why we should develop a fear of cyclic existence is described in great detail in the following section.

1.1.1.2. HOW TO GENERATE AVERSION TO IT

This heading means how to generate aversion towards cyclic existence, and it is sub-divided into four sections.

1.1.1.2.1. Inappropriateness of attachment to youth

This refers particularly to our appearance. We may develop great pride in our appearance, especially in our youth. What is explained in this heading is that being attached to our appearance serves as a cause for remaining in cyclic existence. Therefore the text explains how it is inappropriate to be attached to one's youth.

1.1.1.2.2. Appropriateness of fear, because of being governed by contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes and emotions

What this sub-heading explains is that fear is developed by realising that one is governed, or influenced by contaminated actions and disturbing attitudes. These are what are called the delusions. It is very true that for as long as we are governed by them we are under the control of

contaminated actions and delusions, and for as long as we are under their control, then we have no choice whatsoever in the type of rebirth we will have in a future lifetime. As ordinary beings we cannot say with any certainty that we will not be re-born in the lower realms. If one finds oneself under the influence of delusions and karma, then that is already a sign that one has no real control over one's future rebirths, which are entirely dependent on the kind of karmic imprints that we gather through the influence of delusions. Therefore when we think about this reality, it should actually bring about a really strong fear of being held cyclic existence. Through these explanations, one can actually come to understand how what we have now is a result of being in cyclic existence, and that understanding can really bring us in touch with reality.

Those who are intentionally re-born in cyclic existence are the bodhisattvas, who out of great compassion, come back to cyclic existence to benefit all sentient beings. This is explained in the text, *The Grounds and Paths of the Bodhisattva: A Commentary on the Bodhisattvas' Deeds*. However what is explained in this sub-heading is that by realising the great shortcomings of being in cyclic existence, one must then develop a very strong intention to avoid remaining in cyclic existence.

1.1.1.2.3. Advice to make effort to abandon the causes for rebirth in cyclic existence

1.1.1.2.4. Refuting that effort to abandon cyclic existence is purposeless and ineffectual

1.1.1.2.1. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF ATTACHMENT TO YOUTH

Assertion: Though cyclic existence has many disadvantages, those who are proud of their youth and so forth are not afraid.

Answer:

*Youth lies behind and then
Once more it is ahead. 152
Though [one imagines] it will last,
In this world it is like a race.*

It is definitely the case that for many of those who are in the prime of life, a strong pride in their youthful state prevents them from really putting the Dharma into practice, because they have a sense that everything is fine and going well. That particular delusion is called haughtiness.

As explained further in the commentary:

Since youth and the like do not last, pride on that account is unreasonable.

As explained here, no matter how youthful or how beautiful one may look, and how good the circumstances may be, that situation will not last. It will definitely change and pass away. The more we contemplate the fact that youth and the good circumstances of youth will not last long, the less attachment we will have to that state. Youth is impermanent and definitely subject to change, so it will not be long before youth has gone. Contemplating that fact will definitely help to reduce attachment to youth.

As the commentary further reads:

In this life youth lies behind old age; after death it is once more ahead and then again it is behind old age. Though one imagines one can remain young, in this world youth, old age and death compete ...

As explained here, it is definitely the case where in this life we say that youth comes first, and at a certain stage we leave youth behind and it becomes the past, and old age comes to the forefront. Then after a certain period of old age, we come

to the point where we have to experience death and then due to the influence of delusions and karma, we have to take rebirth again. Then youth will be in front again, and after that old age comes up and youth is left behind and one has to experience that cycle again. In this way, youth, old age and death follow each other in a circle, and that circle seems to go on and on. When we really contemplate that, we feel disgusted about this situation where we have to experience these states again and again with all the shortcomings that accompany them.

The commentary goes on to say:

Though one imagines one can remain young, in this world youth, old age and death compete as if in a race, claiming "I'm ahead, I'm ahead!" Since none can always remain ahead, it is unreasonable to feel proud because of that.

It is as though youth, old age and death are competing in a race and each one claims that they are ahead. But the fact remains that once one is ahead, the other follows and after that the third. In this way the cycle continues. Nevertheless when you are young you feel, 'I am ahead, I'm youthful and that is what is ahead right now'. That is how we are continuously immersed in this illusion. The main point that we need to contemplate is the reality of how the duration of these states is actually very short. Then strong attachment in relation to youth and so forth will definitely be reduced. We can see the actual result of contemplating in that way.

1.1.1.2.2. APPROPRIATENESS OF FEAR, BECAUSE OF BEING GOVERNED BY CONTAMINATED ACTIONS AND DISTURBING ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS

Assertion: Though one must go on to another life, it is not frightening.

Answer:

*In worldly existence there is never
Rebirth of one's own free will. 153
Being under others' control,
Who with intelligence would be fearless?*

There are those who may feel, 'Oh well, I am going to take rebirth again, and go onto the next life. There is no big deal about that. It's okay, I can face that'.

As the commentary explains however:

In worldly existence childish beings like you do not have the power to will their own rebirth in good rebirths as gods, humans and so forth, but are under the control of other factors—contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

As explained here, if you, who are under the control of contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, were to have the control to be reborn as you like, such as a good rebirth in a human or god realms, then that would be fine, and it would be appropriate for you to say that you are not afraid. But if you are under the control of contaminated actions and disturbing emotions, then you have no control over your birth whatsoever. So how can you claim not to be afraid of being reborn again. It is as explained in the teachings: when a great practitioner dies they have great joy in their mind rather than fear, because of their certainty as to where they will be reborn. A middling practitioner will have no fear in their mind, and even a lesser practitioner will have at the very least no regrets in their mind when they die.

As the text continues:

[For someone who is] under the control of other factors – contaminated actions and disturbing emotions. While in

such a frightening situation, what intelligent person would be fearless? One should feel repugnance at being controlled by contaminated actions and disturbing emotions.

As explained here, for as long someone is actually under the control of contaminated actions and delusions, it is definitely appropriate that one develops fear. There definitely should be fear about the next rebirth, as that is what decides where one will go for the rebirth after that. The main point that is being made here is that if one is influenced or controlled by karma and delusions then, as a natural consequence, there definitely should be fear. Even if one were to claim that one has no fear, the natural consequence of being controlled by the karma of delusions is that fear will be generated at the time of death.

1.1.1.2.3. ADVICE TO MAKE EFFORT TO ABANDON THE CAUSES FOR REBIRTH IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE

Having explained how the fear is appropriate and will arise, and thus having initially developed a fear of cyclic existence, the advice now is how to overcome or abandon the causes for rebirth and cyclic existence.

Assertion: Though unable to cut through worldly existence in this life because of being enthralled by pleasure, one will try to do so in a future rebirth.

Answer:

The future is endless and 154
You were always a common being.
Act so that it will never again
Be as it was in the past.

Here it is pointed out that we usually have the view, 'I think it is just too difficult to practise now, because I am so engrossed in the desires and the pleasures of this life. So therefore maybe in a future lifetime I will do better!'. If one had this view out of laziness and procrastination then of course that would be a negative context. However we do find individuals who, while they are engaging in a practice of Dharma, accumulate virtue. They state that in this life they are not able benefit others much because of their limitations. But while they are accumulating virtue and merit, they say that while they may not be able to benefit others much in this life, 'Maybe in a future lifetime, I will have better conditions to help others'. That is a form of aspiration or prayer. It is not as though they are not doing anything now, and are just wishing for something good in the future. But rather while they are engaging in virtue now, they understand their limitations and realise that can't really do much to benefit others now, but they wish that they may be able to be of benefit in the future; that is a good attitude.

As the commentary explains:

Future rebirths are endless and the past is beginningless.

Future rebirths are endless and the past is beginningless. Throughout the beginningless past you were always only a common being. If you are an ordinary being now, which means that you are without any of the realisations, then it is definitely safe to assume that in all past lifetimes, you have always been an ordinary being.

As the commentary further explains:

[That being the case] act so that the present and future will not be as meaningless as the past during which you failed to free yourself from worldly existence.

The fact that we are an ordinary being shows that we have been an ordinary being in all our past lifetimes, and that we have not been able to free ourselves from cyclic existence.

Having coming that realisation now, what we can do is to change the present, which will then change the future. The text is advising us that don't have remain as an ordinary being just as we have in all past lifetimes, which were meaningless, but rather we can put this life to meaningful use now, and for the future, so as to create the causes to free oneself.

The commentary also quotes from *The Array of Tree Trunks Sutra*:

Think of the past bodies you have meaninglessly wasted
Because of your desires.
From today engage in the discipline of seeking
enlightenment
And through that discipline destroy desire.

This sutra quite vividly explains how we have, in the past, wasted all our rebirths in a very meaningless way because of our desires. Therefore, as the sutra advises:

From today engage in the discipline of seeking
enlightenment
And through that discipline destroy desire.

So by exerting ourselves to overcome desire, we begin to set the basis for developing liberation and enlightenment.

The main point being made here is that there is no one who wouldn't wish to achieve the ultimate results of liberation and enlightenment. In the short term, if we were given a choice, we would all definitely also wish for a good rebirth. However while we wish to achieve that, it is as though we intentionally destroy the causes for achieving that result by engaging in desire. Therefore it is as if we are wasting the causes for achieving the result that we want.

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Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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10 April 2007

As usual it would be appropriate to set a motivation for receiving the teachings, such as generating the thought, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the advice and instructions in the teachings and engage in putting them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1.1. Considering the general faults of cyclic existence

1.1.1.2. HOW TO GENERATE AVERSION TO IT (CONT.)

1.1.1.2.4. REFUTING THAT EFFORT TO ABANDON CYCLIC EXISTENCE IS PURPOSELESS AND INEFFECTUAL

This is sub-divided into two categories:

1.1.1.2.4.1. The actual meaning

1.1.1.2.4.2. Repudiating hope for the future without effort in this life

1.1.1.2.4.1. The actual meaning

*The conjunction of a listener, 155
What is to be heard and exponent
Is very rare. In brief the cycle of
Rebirths neither has nor has not an end.*

The verse and the explanation of it is in response to this question:

Does the cycle of rebirth have an end or not? If it does one will gain freedom without the need for effort. If it does not effort to cut through the cycle of birth and death is senseless since despite effort one will not gain freedom?

This may seem quite a fair question to ask. Since there is going to be an end cyclic existence anyway why strive towards achieving that end. Likewise if there is no end to cyclic existence then it is also meaningless to strive to end it. From an ordinary perspective it seems quite a logical doubt to have, why should one make effort to try to overcome samsara when it is going to end any way? And if there is no end then there is no point in trying to end samsara.

The main point of the explanation of the verse is that there is an end to samsara for those who have both acquired and used the favourable conditions that contribute towards overcoming samsara. Whereas there will be no end to samsara for those who don't have or don't use the favourable conditions.

As the commentary states:

A listener is one who has attained a special life of leisure and fortune...

This refers to the eight freedoms and the ten endowments that contribute to the perfect human rebirth.

... and is ready to generate spiritual paths.

Not only are there the conditions for a human rebirth, but there are those who are ready to generate the special spiritual path. This refers to the specific realisations of emptiness, which serve as the antidote that overcomes delusions.

What is to be heard refers to discourses teaching suchness [or emptiness], and their exponents are the Tathagatas. These three occur in the world simultaneously as rarely as the udambara flower.

Using the analogy of this rare flower, those who achieve the combination of the perfect human life with leisure and endowments, and who strive to achieve realisations, and who come into contact with the Tathagata's teaching are very rare.

The reason why it is rare for the Tathagata or enlightened Buddha to give teachings on this planet is because the causes that need to be created in order to achieve enlightenment are very rare. This means that the accumulation of merit takes place over countless eons, and it is very rare to find those who are prepared to make a concerted effort strive to accumulate merit over countless eons. Not only are the causes rare but so too is the effort required. So the result, which is becoming an enlightened buddha who gives teachings to the world, is thus very rare.

We can use also the analogy in a contemporary worldly sense: we only rarely see people wearing expensive jewellery made of gold, diamonds and other expensive gems, because the causes to obtain those precious gems are very rare. For example, if an earring cost a million dollars it would be hard to find ordinary people wearing such an ornament, because acquiring a million dollars is very difficult.

'The three rare ones' refers specifically to the Tathagata, who is the founder or the exponent of the teachings; the teaching itself, which is the Dharma; and the followers of the teaching, who are the Sangha. These three are said to be the three supreme rare ones in this world.

The Dharma refers not only to the actual oral teachings of the Buddha but also to the realisations that are derived from the teachings. These fall into two categories, cessation and the path. The realisations of the path specifically refer to the realisations of emptiness, and those who have obtained the realisations of emptiness and the cessation of delusions are the Sangha. Thus they can be understood as being very rare.

Having explained what the three rare ones refers to, the commentary continues,

Thus, in brief, for a person who has three rare and supreme prerequisites for the growth of spiritual paths, the cycle of rebirth is not without an end...

In our case we may not have had the fortune to meet the actual Buddha or Tathagata who came to this world in the supreme emanation, however we have come into contact with great spiritual teachers who we call spiritual friends, and who serve as the representative of the buddhas. These great masters have practised and studied and prayed over many lifetimes to be able to expound the Buddha's teachings. So they are like actual representations of the Buddha—when we come into contact with them, receiving personal guidance and instructions from them, they are like the buddhas for us. Having met these great teachers is equivalent of having met the buddhas and through their presentations we also meet the Buddha's teachings. They are also called the Sangha. So in this way we have the great fortune to meet with what we call the three supreme ones, and if we fortunate beings put what they teach into practice then there will be an end to samsara.

As mentioned earlier, the Dharma refers to the specific realisations that are obtained from having listened to the

teachings and received instructions, and that realisation of emptiness becomes the main means for overcoming samsara. The direct perception of emptiness definitely serves as a direct antidote to overcome the delusions that are the cause of samsara. Thus there is an end to samsara.

From the moment someone obtains a realisation of emptiness they are directly able to see the possibility of overcoming the delusions—the main delusion being the ignorance of grasping at the self. When the root delusion, grasping at the self, can be seen, then the process for abandoning it can definitely be seen. At that instant it is seen that cyclic existence at both a general and a personal level can be severed and completely overcome. Having gained the realisation of emptiness one gains ultimate confidence in one's ability to abandon the causes of cyclic existence. Once causes are identified the results of those causes will naturally be eradicated. The main cause of samsara is the grasping at the self, and when it is seen that it is possible to completely eradicate that self-grasping, then the result is that the experience of samsara will also be overcome.

As it further explains in the commentary:

In the case of a person for whom they are not assembled, it does not have an end because one cannot determine precisely when the cycle of rebirths will cease.

What is being indicated here is that those beings who do not have the prerequisites of the three supreme rare ones will not have an end to samsara, because they will not be able to engage in eradicating the causes for overcoming samsara. Actually, in other texts that he composed, the author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Je, clearly stated that while there was an end to samsara for the individual, he could not foresee an end to samsara in general, i.e. for all living beings. However other teachings such as *Root Wisdom* indicate there is an end to samsara for all beings. It is a matter of interpretation. In any case what is being presented here is that there is an end to samsara for those who have the intact conditions, whereas for those who lack the conditions there cannot be an end.

In relation to one's own personal practice it is quite irrelevant to try to find an answer as to whether there is an end to samsara in general or not. As indicated in every teaching, what is clear is that there will be no end to one's own samsara unless we acquire the causes to cease existing in samsara, which as mentioned before is gaining the realisations that serve as an antidote for overcoming the delusions. Even if one did conclude that there was an end to samsara in general, there is no possibility for ending one's own samsara unless one applies the causes. That is the understanding that one should gain here.

As the commentary further explains:

With regard also to its final mode of existence, it is not specified as either having or not having an end in terms of ultimate existence.

What this specifically refers to is the fact that when the question as to whether or not there is an end to samsara was asked of the Buddha he did not give an immediate answer. It is referred to as one of the unanswered questions. It is the same as when the Buddha did not give an answer as to whether there or not there is a self. If the Buddha had said there is a self the person who asked the question may have had the type of mentality that could have led them to a certain extreme, whereas if he had said there was no self they could have been led into another extreme. It is said that

there is an implicit understanding to be gained from the fact that the Buddha did not give an answer.

Here it is to be understood that the implicit understanding of the Buddha's reason for not directly answering the question as to whether or not there is an end to samsara, is that if the conditions are present then there is an end to samsara, but if the conditions are not present then there can be no end to samsara.

If the Buddha were to say that there is no end to samsara then a listener with limited capacity could completely misunderstand and think that there was no end at all, and might even imply that there could be no causes or conditions that would lead to the end of samsara. So in order to protect them from that extreme the Buddha didn't say that there is no end to samsara. If he had said that there is an end to samsara then again the listener of limited capacity might be led to the extreme of thinking that the end of samsara can be achieved without any causes and conditions, and thus not even engage in striving to break free of samsara. So in order to prevent these extreme views the Buddha remained silent.

Those who are wise need to endeavour to accumulate the causes and conditions that will lead to the achievement of the state of being free from samsara.

The main point one must derive from this explanation is that if one were to include oneself as one of the wise, one needs to understand the implications of what an end to samsara means, which is that if the causes and conditions to end samsara are assembled, then one can use those causes and conditions to cease existing in samsara. It would be a wise being who could do that.

1.1.1.2.4.2. Repudiating hope for the future without effort in this life

We can really take this outline as sound personal instruction, as it is a point that has to be considered well in relation to our practice. We must contemplate the fact that we have the perfect conditions right now, such as having met with flawless spiritual teachers, in the sense that they present the unmistakable meaning of the Buddha's teachings in an unbroken lineage. That is really a very fortunate condition that we have. We also have the opportunity to study and practise those teachings and we are surrounded by the Sangha—those who have realisations. We really do have the perfect conditions right now. So one must try to use this fortunate situation for the best purpose, which is to accumulate the causes to overcome samsara.

In this outline Aryadeva is really giving us very personal and sound advice, indicating that if we do not to use the perfect conditions we have now, it will be extremely difficult to find these conditions in the future. So one must strive to take the full opportunity of having met this great and fortunate state.

The next verse shows how it is difficult to obtain these conditions again in the future. It reads:

*Most people cling to
An unwholesome direction.
Thus most common beings
Certainly go to bad rebirths.* 156

The verse serves as an answer to the assertion that:

As long as scriptural texts exist, there will be spiritual friends and oral transmissions of them. One may therefore try to end worldly existence in other rebirths.

Again, this is a seemingly logical assertion. The spiritual texts do exist now and there will be spiritual friends giving the teachings continuously. That being the case why couldn't one continue to study and practice in future lifetimes? However what is explained in the verse is that even though there are teachers who expound the teachings, and the teachings remain, those who listen to the teachings and strive to practise them are very rare.

As it explains in the commentary:

Though the texts and the other two may exist, it is difficult to be proper listener for the following reasons:...

It clearly mentions here that despite having met the a teacher and listened to the teachings it is very difficult for the following reason:

...Most people cling to the ten non-virtuous paths of action, which is an unwholesome direction...

Here unwholesome is a reference to the Tibetan word *thumba mepa*, which is the opposite of *thumpa*, which means wholesome. Wholesome deeds refers, for example, to adopting the ten virtues, which is refraining from negative deeds. Those who refrain from the ten non-virtues and thus engage in the ten virtues are engaging in wholesome deeds, while those who adopt the ten non-virtues are following an unwholesome direction. As the commentary reads on:

...and thus through the power of their actions they are reborn in different states. Since most common beings therefore go to the bad rebirths...

The reality is that most beings don't naturally engage in the ten virtuous deeds and thus follow a wholesome direction, but rather engage regularly and naturally in the ten non-virtuous deeds. Thus they continually create the causes to go to the lower rebirths.

So as a conclusion, the author of the commentary explains that:

...one should make effort to hear the teaching while the two prerequisites are assembled. Not to strive for liberation as if one's head were on fire...

Although there is another analogy in the text this mention of one's head being on fire serves as an additional analogy. If one notices that one's head is starting to catch fire one would engage in every means to put the fire out immediately. Being in samsara is said to be an even graver situation than that. So to leave things as they are, and not do anything about it will bring disastrous results that will be experienced later. Thus one must strive to put all one's effort into overcoming the causes of samsara and thus be liberated. This is a personal instruction.

It is most meaningful if one takes this instruction as personal advice. When you think about it, one would definitely be wasting the great opportunity that one has now if one were not to put it into use to strive to create the causes to achieve liberation, at the very least. As the teachings mention again and again these conditions will not last and we can lose them. In comparison to many others we are really fortunate. Many don't even recognise that they are in samsara, or don't understand the gravity of their situation, or don't have the means to overcome the causes for samsara, which is a really sad situation. All we can do is feel pity and have compassion for them. As they don't have the means they cannot be blamed for doing nothing. We, however, do have the means, and we have the necessary conditions. If we were not to put them into use then it would be a great waste.

1.1.2. Specifically abandoning attachment to happy rebirths

This is sub-divided into two.

1.1.2.1. Aversion should be cultivated even to happy rebirths

1.1.2.2. Showing that to remain in cyclic existence out of attachment is like insanity

1.1.2.1. AVERSION SHOULD BE CULTIVATED EVEN TO HAPPY REBIRTHS

Assertion: Although bad rebirths must be avoided because they are states without freedom, full of many kinds of suffering, one need not feel aversion to good rebirths since they are happy states.

Answer: It is proper to feel aversion towards good rebirths just as one does towards bad ones.

On earth the maturation of ill deeds

157

Is seen to be only deleterious.

Thus to the wise the world appears

Similar to a slaughterhouse.

The assertion relates to our limited perceptions of the world as ordinary beings. It is quite obvious that we would not want to experience the suffering of, for example, the animal realm at any price. When we think about it, it would be quite unimaginable for us to experience all the limitations that the animals have, thus a wish to not have to experience the suffering state of an animal occurs quite naturally. However it might be more difficult for us to feel aversion towards the state of a wealthy human being. When we think of people who seem to have an abundance of wealth and plentiful possessions and experiences, we do seem to have a sense of longing to achieve such a state. We see value in having wealth, abundance, good status and so forth, and we see these worldly material things as being something that we would like to have.

As the commentary explains:

The remains of previous contaminated actions are seen only to the debilitated even those in good rebirth—deformed limbs and members, defective senses, poverty and so forth are unwanted maturation of ill deeds of humans beings living on earth. Thus to the wise exalted, worldly existence seems like a slaughterhouse...

What this is indicating is that in comparison with lower rebirths a human rebirth is a desirable, fortunate rebirth. Nevertheless within human existence there are so many types of sufferings such as are mentioned here—having deformed limbs and defective senses and living in poverty and so forth. This is explained in the commentary as being the results of previous karma. It is said that the ripening result of heavy negative karma is experienced in the lower realms, whereas the remaining karma not purified in the lower realms will be experienced in the human realms. Thus these great sufferings are said to be the ripening of previous negative karma. So when we see these plentiful obvious sufferings we can then see how a human rebirth is undesirable as well.

The 'unwanted maturation of ill deeds' also refers to specifically to the fact that sufferings are experienced even though they are not wanted. It is not as though one voluntarily accepts the sufferings experienced by those who are reborn in a state of poverty or with deformed limbs and so forth. There are so many other unwanted sufferings that are experienced by other human beings, as well as ourselves.

These are all what we call the maturation of the ill deeds or negative karma of the past. All these sufferings are prevalent

here in the human existence as well as in other rebirths. That being the case, worldly existence in general seems like a slaughterhouse to the wise and exalted. If we were to enter a slaughterhouse, or a place where there has been a lot of killing, we would feel a kind of energy that is unsettling and uncomfortable. In the slaughterhouses there would definitely be feelings of disgust as well as sadness. Likewise if one were to go to a cemetery there is a sense of unsettledness and sadness in one's mind, because of the feeling of proximity to the dead. Similarly it is said that the exalted beings that we call the noble Bodhisattvas, or those who have the realisations of emptiness, will have a feeling of disgust and sadness towards cyclic existence in its entirety.

The main reference here is to the sadness that is felt within the minds of noble beings when they look at cyclic existence. In relation to our own experience we can definitely get some sense of feeling of sadness when we reflect on the limitations and all the suffering that is experienced in the human realm. When we reflect on the conditions of all the people who are impoverished, struggling for life or in war stricken situations, that can bring an immediate sadness in our minds even at our level. However, in general, what is being explained here is that there is definitely a difference in the attitudes of an ordinary worldly being and a noble bodhisattva towards cyclic existence, or existence in the human realm. The perception of a noble bodhisattva is completely different to that of an ordinary being.

1.1.2.2. SHOWING THAT TO REMAIN IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE OUT OF ATTACHMENT IS LIKE INSANITY

Question: If the wise see worldly existence like a slaughterhouse, why do ordinary people feel no horror?

Answer: They are as insane as a mad elephant

Question: Insane in what way?

This means how could one see ordinary beings as being insane like an elephant.

Answer:

If "insane" means 158
That one's mind is unstable,
What wise person would say that those
In worldly existence are not insane.

In the world someone whose mind that does not function with normal stability due to an imbalance of physical constituents is called insane.

When there is imbalance in the physical constituents, which refers to the nerves and stems in the brain, a person starts to utter things that are meaningless or quite absurd, and they may also act in absurd ways. These signs are an indication of insanity in the worldly sense.

As the commentary further explains:

If that is insanity, what intelligent person would claim that those in the worldly existence are not insane? Ordinary people who want many outrageous things and speak impulsively do not have sound minds.

What is being clearly indicated here is that the description of insanity actually fits the actions and deeds of worldly beings talking about and striving to achieve things that are really quite meaningless. The actions and deeds of a worldly being would definitely be called an act of insanity according to the perception of the exalted, wise beings. Therefore, 'what intelligent person would claim that those in worldly existence are not insane?' is a rhetorical question, which

implies that worldly beings would be considered as insane by the wise and exalted.

From the exalted wise beings' point of view the indications of insanity include not having a stable mind, having an agitated mind, and not being focussed. When we refer to that description to ourselves we find that it is very true that we find it very hard to keep our mind focused even for a few moments, and that it is constantly moving about in every direction.

Thus a wise being clearly seeing this will definitely exert themselves to overcoming this act of insanity of being in cyclic existence, and in every way apply the antidotes for overcoming what we call samsara, or cyclic existence.

1.2. Abandoning contaminated actions, the cause for birth there

This has three subheadings

1.2.1. Advice to abandon actions projecting rebirth there

1.2.2. Why it is necessary to abandon them

1.2.3. Actual way to abandon them

The explanations for these headings that can be presented in our next session.

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Edited Version

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DISCUSSION

BLOCK: **1**
WEEK: **9**
17TH APRIL 07

20th February: - H/W #1

1. What were the Buddha's skilful means for a) combating and overcoming strong desire [2] and b) subduing the minds of those afflicted with anger? [2]

27th February: H/W #2

2. Give the definition of a delusion. [2]

6th March: H/W #3

3. Why is attachment hard to recognize as a fault, and why is it easier to overcome anger? [2]

13th March #4

4. Anger arises from the initial dislike of an object and subsequent exaggeration of its faults. What fundamental mistake is made even before this occurs? [2]

20th March H/W #5

5. List any 6 characteristics of a person who is habituated to desire. [3]

27th March – H/W #6

6. Give the definition of patience. [1]

7. In a worldly context, anyone who does not retaliate when they feel innocent of the criticism and abuse from others would be considered foolish and very stupid. What would the teachings advise? Relate a practical example. [2]

3rd April - H/W #7

8. What is Samsara? [1]

10 April – H/W #8

9. Discuss the perfect conditions for overcoming samara. [31]

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EXAM

NAME:

BLOCK:

1

WEEK:

10

24TH APRIL 07

MARK:

/20

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a) combating and overcoming strong desire [2]

b) subduing the minds of those afflicted with anger? [2]

2. Give the definition of a delusion. [2]

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