
Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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

30 May 2006

As usual, we can sit in a comfortable position with our bodies in a meditative posture, and generate a positive motivation to receive the teachings, such as, ‘I need to attain enlightenment to relieve the sufferings of all sentient beings, so therefore I will listen to the Dharma and practise to the best of my ability.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLAINING HOW TO ABANDON THE ERRONEOUS BELIEF IN PLEASURES BY MEDITATING ON THE CONTAMINATED BODY AS SUFFERING

In the first chapter the erroneous view of permanence is removed with an explanation of impermanence. The second chapter explains the methods and ways to abandon what is called contaminated pleasure, by meditating on the contaminated body as suffering. Of course the body itself is what we call a physical object, and therefore it is not an experience of suffering. What is indicated here though, is that the contaminated body is in the nature of suffering. In Tibetan there is a particular term *dul nga wa* which can translate as ‘nature of suffering’.

The teachings explain the methods for overcoming the erroneous view of seeing the body as a pleasurable object, by pointing out that actual reality of the contaminated body is in the nature of suffering. We need to understand this in relation to our own contaminated body, and understand that it is in the nature of suffering. It is only when we can relate it to ourselves that we begin to engage in practice.

It is important to actually relate the teachings to oneself, which in this case means to understand the circumstances of one’s own physical body. Chapter one related how our body is impermanent so therefore one uses all the explanations to relate that notion to one’s own body, thinking about how it is in the nature of being impermanent, how it is changing from moment to moment, and contemplating the gross and subtle changes of our own body. In the second chapter we further contemplate on our own body as being in the nature of suffering, and gain an understanding of how this body does not produce real lasting happiness, but is in the nature of producing suffering. When we relate this to our own condition then it becomes more realistic for us.

The chapter is divided into two sub-headings.

1. Explaining the stanzas individually
2. Summarising the purpose of the chapter

1. EXPLAINING THE STANZAS INDIVIDUALLY

This is subdivided into three.

- 1.1. How to meditate on the suffering nature of the coarse body
- 1.2. The Teacher therefore spoke of meditating on the body as suffering
- 1.3. How to meditate on the pervasive suffering of conditioning

1.1. How to meditate on the suffering nature of the coarse body

This has three subdivisions.

- 1.1.1. The way of showing the suffering body
- 1.1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on suffering
- 1.1.3. Refuting the existence of real pleasure

1.1.1. The way of showing the suffering body

This is further subdivided into two.

- 1.1.1.1. The necessity of protecting the body from deterioration despite recognising its suffering nature
- 1.1.1.2. Eliminating strong attachment to the body

1.1.1.1. The necessity of protecting the body from deterioration despite recognising its suffering nature

*Although the body is seen like a foe, [26]
Nevertheless it should be protected
By long sustaining a disciplined (body)
Great merit is created.*

With respect to the contaminated body, one must first recognise that it is attachment to this contaminated body that prevents us from wanting to be free from the conditions of this body. For as long as one has attachment to the body one does not have any wish to separated from it, and to that extent one does not develop true renunciation. When one begins to recognise the body as being a contaminated body that is in the nature of suffering, then that can serve as a basis to develop a true sense of renunciation, and the wish to be free from the conditions of this limited body, and thus develop a strong wish to achieve liberation. If one does not have that view of wishing to be free from a contaminated body, then for as long as we are attached to this body the thought of wishing to achieve liberation can never occur. That is how one should contemplate.

The explanation of the first part of the verse is that an arya or noble being considers the contaminated body to be like a foe, because it is a basis for one to experience suffering. It is made up of many gross repulsive elements and it serves as a basis for experiencing many different types of illnesses - traditionally four hundred and eighty-four sicknesses are mentioned but there seem to be more. The body serves as a basis for experiencing so many types of illness and is a source of so much suffering, and that is why the noble beings definitely see the body as something to be shunned.

In the teachings of the four noble truths, the Buddha mentions that the contaminated body is a truth of

suffering, as seen or understood by the noble beings, therefore it is called a noble truth. However even though noble beings see the body as a foe or an enemy, the body still needs to be protected. When we reflect further, we realise that we experience so much suffering physically, such as sickness and other shortcomings like feeling lazy and lethargic, because we have this contaminated body. All those downfalls come about because of having a contaminated body. Even though we can see it as a foe there is still a greater purpose in protecting and nourishing our body.

The purpose for protecting such a body is because one can engage in various practices such as observing morality; having practised morality one can then further train in meditation and develop wisdom. Therefore by protecting this body we are able to use it to engage in practices whereby we accumulate great extensive merit. Therefore the longer we have the body the greater purpose we can achieve.

When the body is regarded as an enemy because of its faults then the doubt may arise that there is no reason to sustain this contaminated body. Also, after having engaged in lengthy meditation on the impermanence of the body the view that there is no point in sustaining such a body may arise. To remove such doubts, which would be the extreme of neglecting the body, the purpose of sustaining the body is mentioned here.

Another way to view the contaminated body is that although it is something that is to be abandoned it can temporarily be used for one's practice. Ultimately the body has to be abandoned because it is in the nature of samsara, and anything in the nature of samsara has to be abandoned if we wish to achieve liberation and enlightenment. So in that sense it is ultimately an object of abandonment, however temporarily it is something to be nourished, because we need to have this body in order to engage in practice. So we can serve a great purpose by sustaining and maintaining such a body.

1.1.1.2. Eliminating strong attachment to the body

Assertion: If the body is to be protected then one should pamper it with food and clothing and so forth.

Answer: There are no faults in that.

***When human suffering is produced [27]
By the body, and pleasure by other (factors),
Why are you devoted to
This hull, a container of suffering?***

When we hear a part of the teaching saying the body should be nourished and protected, it may lead to the view, 'Oh then in that case I can pamper it by wearing nice clothes, eating nice delicious foods and so forth', and then indulging the body in it that way.

The explanation of the verse is that the sufferings experienced in relation to the body, the sufferings of hunger and thirst, the sufferings of feeling of cold, etc., are actually produced by the body itself. Furthermore the pleasures that are experienced in relation to the body such as the pleasure and contentment of having eaten a hearty meal, the pleasure that is experienced from having quenched one's thirst by drinking, the pleasure of feeling

warmth when one wears clothes and so forth, actually come from external factors.

We need to realise that one should actually use the body and exert oneself to accumulate virtue, rather than becoming completely attached to the body itself. The main point here is that it is the body itself which produces sufferings, and unless we ultimately get rid of the causes to have such a contaminated body, those sufferings will be experienced over and over again.

The text relates an analogy that Geshe-la thinks is a good analogy to illustrate this point. At one time a man riding a chariot met a beautiful girl, who was actually an emanation of an ogress. He gave her a ride and as they were riding along in the forest there appeared in front of them a really ugly ogress in a very fearsome aspect, which was actually another manifestation of the pretty girl. Wanting to destroy that ogress the charioteer took out his sword but as soon as his sword cut through it, two ogresses appeared, and then as he destroyed the two ogresses they appeared as four. So they were multiplying. At that point he heard a voice from the gods saying, 'Rather than trying to destroy all the ogresses out there in front of you, if you were to destroy the ogress in the aspect of a beautiful woman which is riding with you it would be equivalent of vanquishing all of the ogresses. Having heard that, he got rid of the beautiful lady riding with him in his chariot. Having destroyed the main source of all the manifestations, all the ogresses were overcome.

This analogy is used to illustrate the fact that until we overcome the main source of the sufferings we experience in relation to the body, we will continuously and repeatedly experience the various types of sufferings. The main source of suffering is the contaminated body itself, so therefore until we abandon the contaminated body we will definitely have to experience the different types of sufferings over and over again. The text indicates that the method of abandoning the contaminated body is by continually and repeatedly meditating on impermanence and the nature of suffering of the contaminated body. That will then get rid of the attachment, which is the main cause for the contaminated body. So by removing the causes one can abandon the contaminated body itself.

Until and unless we overcome attachment to our contaminated body we will have to experience these sufferings repeatedly. So when we look into how to overcome attachment to the body we look into what causes attachment to the body. On further analysis, when we relate this to the teachings then we need to realise that it is the ignorance of grasping at a true existence of the body that is the main source. That ignorance of grasping at a true existence is only overcome with the wisdom realising selflessness and emptiness. Therefore in a broader sense one must strive to gain the realisations of selflessness and emptiness in order to overcome grasping to the body.

As we expand our understanding and knowledge of the Dharma with a topic like suffering, then we use our

understandings of other topics of the Dharma, such as the twelve interdependent links. Through ignorance one creates karma, that karma is left as an imprint on the consciousness, which becomes the causes for further rebirth. By understanding how the twelve interdependent links bring us into the cycle of samsara then we can contemplate or meditate on the reverse: the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness overcomes the particular ignorance of grasping at a truly existent self is by. Ignorance ceases when one gains the realisation of realising emptiness, which is an antidote for overcoming ignorance. When ignorance ceases then compositional factors, which are the second link cease. Thus no more further imprints can be left upon the consciousness to take further rebirth into cycle existence. In that way the conditions to be reborn in cyclic existence cease. So, in this way one can expand one's knowledge in a broader sense beyond the immediate topics.

1.1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on suffering

This is further subdivided into seven.

- 1.1.2.1. Considering how this body mainly has suffering
- 1.1.2.2. Considering how suffering comes easily without the need for great effort
- 1.1.2.3. Considering how the body does not transcend its suffering nature
- 1.1.2.4. Considering how suffering causes harm
- 1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful suffering or pain is
- 1.1.2.6. Considering how the sensation of pleasure is like a visitor to the body
- 1.1.2.7. It is therefore proper to develop aversion to the suffering nature of the body.

As one gains further understanding and a real sense of how the body is in the nature of suffering, then that becomes an impetus for developing a real sense of renunciation.

As we relate this to our own body, and see how it is in the nature of suffering and how it really brings about all the different sufferings upon oneself, then that understanding can be used as a basis for understanding the suffering of others. And when we relate suffering to others, that helps us to develop a true sense of love and compassion towards other sentient beings.

1.1.2.1. Considering how this body mainly has suffering

This subdivision is subdivided into two.

- 1.1.2.1.1. The actual explanation
- 1.1.2.1.2. Considering how suffering follows one though one wants pleasure and does not want suffering

1.1.2.1.1. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION

*When humans do not have
As much pleasure as pain,
Should so much pain
Be considered negligible?* [28]

This verse is intended to overcome a further doubt which is that pain occurs only because of the body, and since it can be alleviated it is weak. As suffering is weak,

pleasure is greater, so therefore one does not fear pain. This means that one might have the false view that when things are fine one is experiencing more pleasure than pain, and even when one does experience pain there is the idea that it can be overcome. Then one might have this doubt that even if there is some pain it is tolerable, and wonder whether there is a need to make an effort to get rid of it.

As an explanation of this verse the text gives an example of how, for example, a person called Devadatta experiences the pleasure of sitting on a comfortable cushion, enjoying many sensual pleasures. While engaged in that very pleasurable state, a wasp stings him. All the senses are then completely focused onto that pain and any sense of pleasure and enjoyment completely vanishes from that moment. He would think about his suffering and feel aversion towards that.

If we relate that example to ourselves we can definitely relate it to the times where everything seems to be going along well, then suddenly there is some mishap or tragic experience. At that moment all the pleasure that we have felt earlier completely vanishes to the same degree as the intense pain or suffering being experienced.

Using that example, one considers how the contaminated body is actually the source of so much pain and suffering, and how the pain is much greater than the fleeting pleasures that are experienced. When that is the actual reality for humans, how could one still neglect the fact of pain because of the earlier doubt that one need not fear pain because it can be overcome? Having considered how pain dominates the human existence more than pleasure, and how when there is pleasure it can be immediately overridden by slightest unpleasant feeling, can pain or suffering still be considered as being negligible? One should not neglect the fact of the body is a true source of pain, and should engage in methods to overcome or abandon the contaminated body.

The verse emphasises how we are dominated by suffering, and that it is a false view that that we can survive on pleasure and pleasurable experiences. If we fail to understand that the very nature of our existence is based on suffering then that would be an obstacle to overcoming the contaminated body. To counter that, one develops a sense of understanding that the very nature of our contaminated bodies is suffering, and that engaging in virtue and abandoning negativity is the means to overcome and abandon the contaminated body.

1.1.2.1.2. CONSIDERING HOW SUFFERING FOLLOWS ONE THOUGH ONE WANTS PLEASURE AND DOES NOT WANT SUFFERING

*Ordinary people are bent on pleasure; [29]
Those who have pleasure are hard to find.
Thus it is as if transitory
Beings are pursued by suffering.*

What is being explained here is that even though ordinary beings are obsessed with engaging in pleasure, the reality is that very few experience real pleasure. The very pursuit of pleasure is in fact a cause to experience more suffering. Therefore that is an indication that those

who have pleasure are hard to find, because the pursuit and experience of pleasure become the cause for suffering.

'It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering' indicates that in the very process of trying to gain pleasure they are creating more causes to experience suffering. Therefore the suffering perpetuates itself more and more. It is as though transitory beings are pursued by suffering. The example given here is that it is like being followed by a shadow. Wherever you go the shadow follows, and just like a shadow suffering follows beings wherever they are.

If we look into our own experience in life, how many times have we been disappointed, because we haven't had that real happiness when we have thought, 'If I just have this then I would be really happy' or 'If I just obtained this object or situation I would be very happy'? We have actually experienced more problems afterwards. It is indicated here in the teachings that the very pursuit of happiness or pleasure becomes the means for experiencing more unhappiness and dissatisfaction. As it is explained with the analogy of the shadow we cannot outrun our shadow. If we try to run away from the shadow it just follows us wherever we go. Likewise, for as long as we have this contaminated body it will perpetually experience suffering over and over again, because of the basis that we have.

Therefore for as long as we have a contaminated body we are carrying our own burden of suffering with us, and the more we contemplate how the very physical contaminated body that we have serves as a basis for us to experience suffering, then the more strong attachment to the body will be lessened.

As long as we have a body there will be a shadow of the body, and likewise as long as we have a contaminated body we will have the sufferings which are related to it. Shantideva explained that even though beings wish for happiness, they destroy their own happiness by pursuing the causes of their suffering. Even though they do not wish for suffering they continuously run towards it, creating the cause for their own suffering and that is very pitiful.

It is necessary to contemplate and think about the meaning of these teachings over and over again. The more we familiarise our mind with the meanings of the topics the more one gains an inner understanding. Even if we cannot develop an uncontrived renunciation right away we can still leave very strong imprints on our mind to develop renunciation in the future. Meanwhile our strong sense of grasping to our external bodies and the external objects can be reduced, and thus the mind becomes more in tune with the Dharma.

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Edited Version*

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As usual it would be good to sit in an upright, comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, ‘In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to attain the ultimate state of enlightenment, so therefore I will listen to the teachings as a means of receiving the methods for practising’.

1.1.2.1.2. CONSIDERING HOW SUFFERING FOLLOWS ONE THOUGH, ONE WANTS PLEASURE AND DOES NOT WANT SUFFERING (CONT)

It is really important to contemplate the meaning of what was explained under this heading, such as the fact that even though we wish for happiness we do not experience happiness, and even though we do not wish for suffering that is what we do experience, and how suffering follows us just as our shadow does. Having considered all these facts, when we look into our own experience in life we definitely see that whatever we do, suffering always follows. Having contemplated in such a way should help us to develop renunciation.

We should definitely put some effort into thinking about why this is so. Why is it that even though we wish for happiness and do not wish for suffering we experience suffering over and over again? Why is it that suffering follows us just like our shadow follows us? It is very important that we think about these questions over and over again, so that we really start to feel the reality of these facts and why they are so.

1.1.2.2. Considering how suffering comes easily without need of great effort

This is further sub-divided into two.

1.1.2.2.1. If one wishes for rare pleasure it is appropriate to fear plentiful suffering

1.1.2.2.2. Valuing the body out of attachment is like valuing a foe or an enemy.

1.1.2.2.1. IF ONE WISHES FOR RARE PLEASURE IT IS APPROPRIATE TO FEAR PLENTIFUL SUFFERING

*Suffering is found at will, [30]
But what pleasure is there at will?
Why do you value the rare
But do not fear the plentiful?*

‘Suffering is found at will’ indicates that suffering comes about very easily and pleasure does not. ‘What pleasure is there at will’ indicates that even though one wishes for pleasure it does not come about at will, it is neither plentiful nor bountiful, and it does not come about as easily as suffering.

An analogy given in the commentary is that in the daytime when there is very strong heat it is very rare to

feel coolness. That is how rare the experience of pleasure is. When we relate the meaning of this verse to our own experience we can definitely find that it is a fact that even though we wish for happiness it is rare for us to experience real happiness. At a physical level it is very rare that we have complete physical well-being. Even though we may feel that things are healthy we are bound to feel some kind of physical discomfort at a some point. In fact in our daily life during the course of even one day we find that we experience much more physical discomfort than we do well-being. Of course what we wish for is well-being, for things to go well, and to feel comfortable and pleasure and happiness. But the reality is that we end up experiencing much more physical discomfort and suffering than we do pleasure. When we contemplate on the earlier points in the teaching we can really begin to realise that the reason for this is because we have a contaminated body. It is because of the nature of our body, which is that it is a contaminated body, that we experience suffering so readily. Contemplating in this way should help our mind to further develop a sense of renunciation.

The main points that one needs to understand from the explanation of the teaching is the means of overcoming the erroneous or wrong view that we have that our bodies are pleasurable objects. As a result of that view we have an attachment to our bodies, because we see them as being pleasurable. But that is an erroneous view and the reality is that the body is contaminated and is in the nature of suffering. That understanding, however, does not come about easily. It is relatively easy to relate and understand the suffering of suffering, which is the first type of suffering. That suffering is actually called pain, and when we experience great pain related to our body then that is something which we can immediately identify with, and understand. But that does not give a very deep sense of understanding of how the body is a contaminated body.

We experience some pain in relation to the body but then we go back to experiencing some pleasure and forget about the reality of the body as being contaminated. When we go further into looking into the very reality of the body, and how the very nature of the body is actually in the nature of suffering, then that understanding should develop a deeper sense of wishing to renounce the body. When we develop a deeper sense of renunciation, wanting to abandon this body, then the wish to be liberated will become stronger. That is what we call the aspiration to achieve liberation. So in that sense the understanding of how to develop renunciation becomes much deeper and more profound.

Once we develop a strong sense of renunciation in relation to ourselves, that deeper understanding becomes an impetus to develop what we call love and compassion towards other beings. By understanding how other beings also have the same reality of having a contaminated body, and how their suffering is much deeper, the understanding of love and compassion becomes much more profound. When we consider how others cherish such a contaminated body that is actually

only a source of more suffering, isn't that what we call a real object of compassion?

A more obvious example or analogy of how we can develop love and compassion towards others is if we see someone who is very ill, or suffering from an illness, and who does not consult a doctor and just bears that illness. If they could be cured by consulting a doctor yet they do not consult a doctor and just bear that illness, then we would think that was very foolish wouldn't we? We would think, 'How foolish not to cure themselves from an illness that can be cured? How foolish to bear such a suffering unnecessarily?'. It is similar to not wishing to be liberated from our contaminated body.

Returning to the analogy again, if an illness, no matter how painful or how much suffering it causes, can be cured by consulting a skilled doctor, then the wisest thing for any one would be to consult a doctor and follow the prescribed treatment. That is exactly the reality of our own case, and we are extremely fortunate to have the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is like a skilled doctor in that he prescribes the exact methods and techniques for overcoming the source of our suffering, our contaminated bodies and their causes. Therefore it would be wise for us to actually follow that advice as much as we can.

'Why do you value the rare but do not fear the plentiful?' Here the proper noun 'you' refers to worldly or ordinary beings, so the verse asks why do you ordinary beings value the rare, meaning the pleasurable experience, but do not fear the plentiful, which refers to the suffering.

'Why do you not fear the plentiful?' indicates that one should take that into consideration. The commentary reads, 'If you value rare and desired pleasure, it is appropriate to feel aversion for undesirable and plentiful suffering.' The main point here is that we value pleasure to the point of doing anything possible to obtain it, spending so much time and energy trying experience that contaminated pleasure, whereas if suffering comes we almost ignore it. We just try to deal with the suffering and do not put any effort into trying to abandon the causes for that suffering. The main point here is that we put so much time and energy into experiencing some temporary and fleeting pleasure, while not wanting any suffering. So why don't we spend more time and energy in engaging in the practice of abandoning the causes for our own suffering?

1.1.2.2.2. VALUING THE BODY OUT OF ATTACHMENT IS LIKE VALUING A FOE

Here valuing can also connote attachment, so having attachment to the body is like having attachment to a foe.

A comfortable body [31]
Is a container of suffering.
Thus valuing the body and
Valuing a foe both seem alike.

This very body that we have is what we consider a comfortable body, but in reality it is like a container of suffering. The analogy given is that the body is so fragile, with delicate skin like the skin of a baby so that even the prick of a small thorn causes suffering. In that sense it is

like a container of suffering because even a small thorn prick will cause so much suffering to the body.

Even though we consider the body a comfortable body, and we nourish and feed it and put so much time and energy into its upkeep, trying to make the body feel comfortable and at ease, the reality is that it is like a container of suffering where even a small discomfort can cause unease. That is what is to be contemplated.

Therefore since the reality is that our body is like a container of suffering, meaning that it is a condition for us to experience so much suffering, cherishing such a body is similar to cherishing a foe or an enemy.

One of the main points made in this verse is that no matter how much the body is nourished and cared for it still produces only suffering. The analogy that is given in the commentary relates to a story where a king saw a man asleep on the wooden planks of a chariot in the noon-day heat. The king felt sorry for this person so he provided him with very nice clothing and bedding, but as the person got quite used to that nice comfortable bed he was not even able to bear a small mustard seed lying in the bed. Where he had once been able to sleep on a bare chariot without any problem, he had become so spoilt with such a comfortable bed that he could not even bear the unease of a mustard seed in his bed. This analogy shows how when we think that we are going to take care of this body and nourish it and cherish it to make it feel comfortable, in fact it just becomes a further source for the experience of more suffering. Because it is a contaminated body even what we call very small suffering could become quite unbearable if we keep cherishing this body.

1.1.2.3. Considering how the body does not transcend its suffering nature

The body, however long one spends, [32]
Will not in itself become pleasurable.
To say its nature can be overruled
By other factors is improper.

What this verse relates is that no matter how much care is given to such a body with comforts and so forth, and no matter how long a time one spends doing that, it will not itself become pleasurable, and the reason is because the nature of the body is suffering.

To explain the verse further, it would be improper to consider that even though the body is in the nature of suffering, that nature can be overcome by other external factors. It is not appropriate to think that the body's very nature of suffering could be overcome by outside factors.

The analogy that is given in the commentary to illustrate this is that no matter how much a mother crow nurtures a cuckoo fledgling, the fledgling will always be a cuckoo and never a crow. A cuckoo fledgling will never turn into a crow no matter how long the mother crow nourishes it or looks after it. Asserting that the body by nature is pleasurable is like that. Pampering our body with clothing and making it feel pleasurable from other external sources and conditions will never change the fact that the body is by its very nature in the nature of suffering. In other words, pampering and clothing and

nourishing the body will never change the fact of its suffering state; it will not change the reality that it will experience suffering.

This is actually quite easy to understand, but we should not leave it at that thinking, 'Oh this makes a lot of sense and it's easy to understand'. We have to try to apply it to our practice; we have to try to really contemplate this fact, and the more we contemplate it the more it becomes a real reality for ourselves, and the stronger our deep sense of renunciation will become. The main thing is that not trusting such a contaminated body will develop our sense of renunciation, and then we can progress slowly in our practice. It helps our mind. Therefore it is important to bring our mind inward into this topic, meaning relating it to ourselves, our experience and really contemplating and using it in our meditation.

1.1.2.4. Considering how suffering causes harm

Doubt: The body's nature cannot be suffering, for those who are wealthy, such as kings with many attendants have nothing but pleasurable feelings from birth to death.

This heading deals with a particular doubt which may arise in our mind. In the earlier verses the emphasis was on how the body is a contaminated body, meaning that it is in the nature of suffering, which indicates that whoever has a contaminated body will be under the influence of suffering. However the doubt that may arise in the mind is that there are those who seem to experience great pleasure such as great kings or rich people and so forth. They have everything at their disposal and it may seem that they experience so much pleasure. Because they are very influential they have many people around them doing things for them, they have money to spend and they seem to be able to obtain whatever object they desire. So we may think, 'Oh they are really well-off, and they don't have to go through any difficulties or suffering'. Thinking in that way, however, is of course incorrect. What is being mentioned in the text is as long as they do not escape the contaminated body, which is in the nature of suffering, they will definitely experience mental suffering as well. This is a very important point being made in the teachings for us to really meditate on again and again. It also helps to further develop our compassion for beings who seem to be well off, rich and influential, and understand that they also go through sufferings.

The next verse serves as an answer to the doubt, which is quite easy to understand literally.

*The high have mental suffering; [33]
For the common it comes from the body.
Day by day, both kinds of suffering
Overwhelm people in the world.*

First of all, the sufferings of kings and other great beings may not be obvious at a physical level because they have so much material wealth at their disposal. They may appear to have quite a comfortable life but that is mainly on the physical level. On the mental level they have a great fear of a decline of their own prosperity, they fear that they may lose their wealth or that they may not be able to maintain their wealth. They suffer from the fear of

others taking away their wealth and so forth, and also experience unbearable suffering over the prosperity of others, which comes out of jealousy. It is not sufficient that they have wealth themselves - when they see other's wealth, it brings suffering to their mind, because they are not able to bear seeing other's experiencing the same amount of wealth. As it indicates here, so much mental suffering is experienced by beings who have high status and great wealth.

For common people who lack the necessities of life the experience of suffering arises from the body. Because they lack sufficient necessities to keep the physical body comfortable, such as protection from heat and cold and hunger, ordinary beings experience suffering more on a physical level.

In such a way rich and poor alike are overwhelmed by mental and physical sufferings on a daily basis.

The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, mentioned in one of his texts that, 'No matter who it may be, what their status, or where they come from, all beings are alike in having to experience so much suffering'. This statement is very true.

1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful pain or suffering is

Doubt: Though these two kinds of suffering exist, one does not notice them, because great pleasure makes them insignificant.

Answer:

*Pleasure is governed by thoughts; [34]
Thoughts are governed by pain.
Thus there is nothing anywhere
More powerful than pain.*

The thought may arise, 'Even though there is harm to the body, it can still be overcome by the pleasure, so it is appropriate to consider what we call pleasure as being something desirable'. The answer is that it is not appropriate.

To further explain the doubt, if one thinks, 'Yes I can accept that there are both physical and mental sufferings, but experiencing great pleasure can overcome both sufferings so there is no need to consider the body as being in the nature of suffering'. The answer is that this is not the case, as it is not possible for pleasure to completely overcome our sufferings.

When we relate this doubt to our own experience we find that it's true that we often feel, 'Oh yes I have a lot of suffering and it is difficult, but there is always some way to get out of it. If I am sick I can go to the doctor, or if I am unhappy I can do something about it'. So we always feel that we have a solution, which usually consists of trying to gain some temporary pleasure to overcome the suffering. We think that as long as we have that temporary solution to overcome our suffering then things should be fine, and it is that illusion which keeps us going in samsara. The fact is, as mentioned here, pleasure cannot really overcome suffering, because suffering is more powerful.

As an answer to this doubt the explanation in the verse is

that the reason why pleasure cannot overcome real suffering is because pleasure is nothing much more than a thought. What we call pleasure is actually governed by our thoughts, meaning that pleasure is actually a conceptual thought. To further explain this point, the analogy given is of a benefactor who engages in a generous act of giving something to others. That act of giving can produce a certain amount of comfort in the mind feeling, 'I have done something good', and a certain amount of happiness is felt from that. However in that elated state of mind the thought arises, 'Oh but if I continue to engage in this generous act my resources and wealth might come to an end'. When that thought arises the earlier thoughts of happiness and feeling quite good about one's generous act are completely overridden by the fear of losing one's wealth, and that brings suffering to the mind.

This shows very clearly what we call pleasure and suffering are just mental conceptual attitudes that we have in the mind. Therefore, even when we engage in an act that brings us pleasure it can so easily be overcome by suffering, just by a change of attitude. Feelings are not really stable, because they are just dependent upon conceptual states of mind. Therefore what we call 'pleasurable' or 'comfortable' feelings are not really stable, but are governed by our conceptual thoughts, which in turn are governed by the painful attitudes of mind.

As the commentary further explains, 'The arising and the cessation of pleasure are governed by thoughts, and since pleasurable thoughts are destroyed by pain, they are governed by pain. Therefore nowhere in the world is there pleasure more powerful than pain'.

As we have mentioned before it is important to contemplate these points made in the teaching.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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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

13 June 2006

As usual it is good to sit in a comfortable position and generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, ‘In order to liberate all beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose, I will listen to the teachings and try to put them into practice as best as I can’.

1.1.2.5. Considering how very powerful suffering is (cont)

Doubt: The experience of pleasure can overcome suffering.

*Pleasure is governed by thoughts; [34]
Thoughts are governed by pain.
Thus there is nothing anywhere
More powerful than pain.*

The view that the experience of pleasure will overcome suffering leads to the view that there is no need to consider the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering, because when one experiences pleasure it can overcome that suffering. Such a doubt is eliminated with this verse, which explains that it is not the case that the experience of pleasure can overcome suffering. In fact the suffering that we experience on a continual basis is much more prevalent than the fleeting pleasures we occasionally experience. Since suffering is more predominant than pleasure, it is not the case that pleasure can overpower suffering.

The main point made in relation to this verse is that we need to contemplate more deeply on how the fleeting pleasures that we experience are actually contaminated pleasures, and so are in the nature of suffering. Therefore contaminated pleasures cannot be relied upon; we cannot trust the contaminated pleasures, because ultimately they bring us more suffering.

Contemplating more deeply on the fact of how the contaminated pleasures are actually also in the nature of suffering can in the long run help to develop a sense of renunciation. Normally, it is relatively easy for us to develop a sense of renunciation, or disgust, towards obvious physical and mental suffering, but we don’t seem to give much regard to the suffering of change and the pervasive sufferings. In fact we seem to deliberately engage in experiencing the contaminated pleasures, which are in reality sufferings of change. Therefore it is very important for us to really contemplate and develop a sense of renunciation towards all levels of suffering.

1.1.2.6. Considering how the sensation of pleasure is like a visitor or guest to the body

Doubt: Although contaminated pleasures relating to the physical body are hard to find, they do no harm. But since pain harms, it is alien (or like a guest) to the body.

With the passage of time

Pain increases.

Pleasure, therefore, seems as if

Alien to this body.

[35]

This verse serves as an answer to the doubt that arises from the view that contaminated pleasures are favourable, and therefore must arise naturally in the body. Whereas pain is unfavourable and harms the body, it is as if it is alien to the body.

Pleasurable sensations are not natural to the body, for with the passing of time from childhood to youth, maturity and old age, suffering - such as that of aging - increases and pleasure vanishes.

As indicated in the commentary, childhood refers to the period from birth to the early teens, youth is from the early teens to 18 or 20, then maturity follows from 18 or 20 to about 35 to 40, and old age comes from then on. The pleasures that are experienced in childhood are all left behind, and it is as though one is moving forward towards more suffering, not towards more pleasures. The pleasures experienced in the earlier stages are left behind and will not be experienced again; one moves forward towards more difficulties and problems as we mature.

In youth, a certain amount of pleasure is experienced, but later it transforms into more problems. As we grow up we are given more responsibilities which are followed by more worries mentally. Then as old age comes, we experience more suffering related to the physical body as well. Therefore it is as if we are moving forward towards more and more suffering and leaving behind the pleasant or ‘pleasurable’ experiences. In this way, we can clearly see how suffering prevails as we become older. Therefore it is not really in the nature of our body to experience pleasure; rather suffering is much more prevalent in relation to our body.

In relation to the doubt that pleasure is in the nature of the body and suffering is alien or like a guest, in fact when we look into our situation it is the complete opposite of that. The reality is that pleasure is alien and like a guest, because it is experienced randomly, whereas suffering is in the nature of our body as it is experienced constantly throughout our life. When we are young, we experience a certain amount of pleasure, but we leave that behind and move forward towards experiencing more difficulties and problems in life, so therefore more suffering occurs and more pain is experienced. As we age, our bodies start to fail us and we experience much more suffering. When we look at our contaminated bodies, it becomes obvious that our body is in the nature of suffering rather than pleasure, which is completely contrary to the earlier doubt that pleasure is the nature of the body and suffering is alien, like a guest. Rather, the reality is that suffering is in the nature of the body, and pleasures are like the guest.

We need to relate the main points that are made in this verse to ourselves, and contemplate the sufferings that we experience in relation to this body. On very rare occasions we experience some pleasure and it only comes randomly. What we experience on a more continuous

basis is suffering. Therefore suffering is more in the nature of our body. When we reflect further we see how pleasure is fleeting, and suffering is much more prevalent. When we consider the sufferings that we experienced in our childhood, such as a trauma or some sort of abuse that haunts us again and again throughout our life, we see that certain kinds of traumatic sufferings experienced as a child can be carried throughout life. Every time we reflect on them, it brings so much pain and suffering in the mind and it is perpetuated throughout our life. Whereas what is left of the pleasures that we experienced as a child is but a memory. Do those memories give us any pleasure and happiness now in our life? We don't see that. Rather, we find that the pleasures were all fleeting and they are just mere memories.

The pleasures we experienced as a child are just a memory, whereas the suffering that we experienced is much deeper in ourselves. So when we reflect on that reality we can see how suffering is much more prevalent. That is why the teachings explain how the nature of our contaminated body is actually suffering. In contemplating that, it is very important that we develop a real sense of renunciation to overcome the contaminated body. Contemplating further we realise that it is karma and delusions that are the contributing causes to bring about this body. Having the strong grasping at the self (or the 'I') produces the delusions and karma, which is what we call the causes to obtain such a body. When one develops renunciation, one develops a deep sense of understanding that one must overcome that initial ignorance of grasping at the self. This then overcomes the delusions and karma that produce such a contaminated body.

Relating to earlier doubts about whether we have to nourish our body, it was explained in the earlier part of the text that we need to sustain our body, because we can use it to obtain the ultimate goals that we wish to achieve, and we can accumulate much merit with this body. Therefore while we still have this contaminated body, we need to nourish it to achieve our ultimate goals. We can use this body to live an ethical life, to accumulate merit and engage in the six perfections.

Meanwhile we must also understand that the nature of the body is contaminated. Therefore with an intention of completely and entirely overcoming the causes for obtaining this body in the future, we use the body we have now to accumulate merit. When we have that understanding we can see that there is a huge difference in how the body is nourished and sustained when one has understanding of the Dharma. It's completely different from a worldly view of sustaining the body, which is just for its fleeting mundane achievements. Whereas with the Dharma attitude, we engage in sustaining the body in order to accumulate merit for the purpose of obtaining the ultimate goals. Therefore we can definitely see that there is a huge difference from the Dharma point of view.

Contemplating on the nature of the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering serves as an impetus to develop a strong longing to achieve what is called

liberation – to be free from samsara, which is to be free from this conditioning. The very attitude of developing renunciation is an attitude of wishing to be free from being bound by karma and delusions. For as long as we are bound by karma and delusions, we are held in the cycle of obtaining such a contaminated body over and over again. What binds us is karma and delusions. Therefore in developing renunciation, one develops a very strong longing to overcome that factor that binds us to the cyclic existence, which means overcoming the delusions and karma.

As we develop that strong sense of renunciation with the understanding of what binds us to samsara, which is delusions and karma, we can then use that very understanding of renunciation to focus on others, and wish for them to be free from samsara, which then becomes love and compassion. Therefore when we develop a strong sense of renunciation within ourselves, that can also serve as an impetus to develop love and compassion by focussing on others. Then that love and compassion we have for others becomes much deeper and more profound, rather than just a sense of pity. The need to help others becomes really very strong in the mind, because one sees others in this very pitiful situation of being completely bound by the delusions and karma, and engulfed in ignorance. When one understands the state that others are in, when we get a glimpse of that by developing our renunciation, then a very strong wish to free other beings from that state of being bound to samsara will develop as well.

I explain this in an attempt to lead to a deeper, and more profound meaning, deriving it from other sources of the teachings. Therefore when we relate the verses here to other sources of the teachings, then the understanding becomes much deeper. In personalising the teachings for ourselves there may be some sort of doubt that renunciation is just focussing on oneself, which seems very selfish. But in fact, when one understands how developing renunciation can be an impetus for developing love and compassion for oneself and love and compassion towards others, we can see how renunciation and love and compassion are related and linked, and one can see the great importance of why one should develop renunciation. As explained in the teachings, renunciation is a basis for developing love and compassion. As the teachings explain, without developing renunciation, it is quite impossible to develop the real true, unique love and compassion towards others. Therefore as one enhances renunciation within oneself, with an understanding of the teachings we can then use that experience of renunciation to develop love and compassion towards others. This is quite important for us to understand and integrate.

1.1.2.7. It is therefore proper to develop aversion to the suffering nature of the body.

Doubt: Although the body's nature is suffering, causes of pleasure act as a remedy. Therefore one need not feel aversion towards the body.

*There seem to be many causes
Of suffering like sickness and others,
But humans do not seem to have
As many causes of pleasure.*

[36] Answer:

*With the intensification of pleasure [37]
Its opposite is seen to occur
With the intensification of pain
There will not likewise be its opposite*

When we think about it, this doubt can definitely arise in the mind, but that view is not correct. The verse acts as an explanation for why that attitude is incorrect. As a means to overcome that erroneous attitude, the commentary explains that there are many more causes for physical suffering than there are for pleasure. The reality is that there are many more causes for physical suffering: there are internal causes such as the different types of illnesses that arise within our body, as well as many external causes such as the feeling of extreme cold or heat, and other kinds of unpleasant sensations that can arise from the elements, or from harm that is inflicted by others. Therefore there are actually many more internal and external causes and conditions for the body to experience suffering rather than pleasure. In comparison the causes to experience pleasure are fewer. Therefore it is a completely erroneous view to think that pleasure can act as a remedy for suffering, when in reality suffering is experienced much more. Since the causes for pleasure are few, they cannot serve as a remedy to overcome suffering. Therefore one must feel an aversion towards suffering, by understanding how prevalent it is within our physical body.

1.1.3. Refuting the existence of real pleasure

This has five sub-divisions.

1.1.3.1. Showing that though real suffering exists, real pleasure does not

1.1.3.2. Showing it is erroneous to think of suffering as pleasure

1.1.3.3. From the start there is no real pleasure in riding and so forth

1.1.3.4. Ordinary people think of the feeling of satisfaction from alleviated pain as real pleasure

1.1.3.5. Showing other reasons why there is no real pleasure

1.1.3.1. Showing that though real suffering exists, real pleasure does not

This is sub-divided in two.

1.1.3.1.1. Reasons why seeing a slight increase in pleasure does not prove the existence of real pleasure.

1.1.3.1.2. Although there are causes producing real suffering, there are none producing real pleasure.

1.1.3.1.1. REASONS WHY SEEING A SLIGHT INCREASE IN PLEASURE DOES NOT PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF REAL PLEASURE

Assertion: If pleasure did not exist it could not increase, but since it is seen to increase, real pleasure does exist.

The explanation of the verse shows that it is not true to say that there is real pleasure just because there is an increase of pleasure. When we experience pleasure and it seems to increase, an obstacle or hindrance, which is pain, occurs and we lose that experience of pleasure. Just as we reach a heightened experience of that pleasure, what takes place eventually is actually pain. After experiencing pleasure we end up with dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

While that is true for pleasure, the same does not apply to pain. When we experience great pain, as the pain increases it is not as though there will be any pleasurable experience at the end of that pain. The pain continues to increase with no hint of pleasure.

At a very subtle level, although pleasure increases, it does not go up to a heightened state where we are just left in the state of bliss and where we are completely satisfied. From our own experience we find that we are never left with a completely satisfying experience for too long. Soon after a pleasurable experience, something happens where we lose that nice feeling of pleasure, and in fact we are left with a dissatisfied and discontented mind. So in the end what is left in place of pleasure is actually pain.

Whereas on a very subtle level when suffering begins to increase, it can increase to the point where we are completely overcome physically and mentally with agony, which can continue for long period of time. With experience we can find that this is actually very true, isn't it?

The main point is that just because there is some pleasure which increases to a certain point, that does not mean that real pleasure exists. Rather the very fact that pleasure is not stable proves that pleasure is not real.

1.1.3.1.2. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE CAUSES PRODUCING REAL SUFFERING, THERE ARE NONE PRODUCING REAL PLEASURE

*With the conditions for pleasure [38]
Its opposite is seen.
With the conditions for pain
There is not its opposite*

The first two lines, 'With the conditions for pleasure, its opposite is seen' refer to the fact that, as explained in the commentary, when, for example, we engage in the partaking of a delicious meal, this is considered as a condition for the experience of pleasure. If, however, we indulge to the point where we overeat, it is obvious that we will experience discomfort, suffering and pain as a result. Therefore as the verse mentions, pain is seen to occur together with the conditions for pleasure. This refers to the fact that by the very process of continually engaging in the conditions for pleasure such as eating, those very conditions for pleasure will turn into a cause for the experience of pain.

Yet when one has prolonged contact with the causes of pain, while engaging in these conditions for pain there is never an experience of pleasure. In other words, while experiencing the conditions for having pain, we are never left with an experience of pleasure. That is a fact; there is no real lasting pleasure. What is really prevalent in relation to our physical contaminated body is suffering.

The main point being made here is whether the pleasure that we experience is real or not. If the pleasure that we experienced was real, then the more we engage in the conditions for pleasure the more pleasure we should naturally experience, and we should be left with an end result of great pleasure and bliss. But the reality is that the more we engage in the conditions for the pleasure that we think we are experiencing, the more we are left with misery and pain.

Whereas the conditions of suffering are more of a real experience, because of the fact that the very conditions that produce suffering don't change. As we engage in the conditions for suffering we experience more suffering. It is only by avoiding the conditions for suffering that we can overcome that experience. Whereas with pleasure, it is not the case that we experience more and more pleasure as we engage more in the causes. In fact we are left with pain. I think that we can see the reality of this quite clearly when we relate this to ourselves.

As the teachings indicate, there is an assertion that for every contaminated pleasure, or what we call worldly pleasure, there is definitely a suffering. In reality, contaminated pleasures are actually a form of suffering. This assertion is made based on our experience, which is that even though the immediate experience may be pleasurable, the ultimate outcome of that experience is an experience of suffering, because the end result of engaging in that pleasure is suffering. Therefore the teachings indicate that every contaminated or worldly pleasure is actually in the nature of suffering. That is based on reality. Therefore developing renunciation in relation to the worldly pleasures, which is explained in the teachings as being a suffering of change, is what we need to try to meditate on. For as long as we hold onto the view that contaminated pleasures are to be acquired and held onto, then a real sense of renunciation and wishing to achieve liberation cannot occur in our mind.

1.1.3.2. Showing it is erroneous to think of suffering as pleasure

This is sub-divided into six sub-divisions.

1.1.3.2.1. Inappropriateness of considering the process of dying pleasurable.

1.1.3.2.2. Inappropriateness of considering being afflicted pleasurable

1.1.3.2.3. Inappropriateness of considering pleasurable a composite of various incompatible factors which is like an enemy

1.1.3.2.4. Inappropriateness of considering being destroyed pleasurable

1.1.3.2.5. Inappropriateness of considering the doing of tiring actions pleasurable

1.1.3.2.6. Inappropriateness of considering pleasurable the creation of causes of suffering for the sake of a little pleasure

1.1.3.2.1. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING THE PROCESS OF DYING PLEASURABLE.

Doubt: When we see someone else experiencing worldly pleasures, we comment, 'They are having a pleasurable and enjoyable time'.

*When you have spent, are spending [39]
An will spend time dying,
It is not at all proper to call
The process of dying pleasurable.*

This verse is presented to overcome yet another doubt that we normally take for granted. There are expressions in the worldly sense relating to the experience of pleasure by others. As the commentary indicates with its explanation of the verse, there is no real pleasure that is experienced by anyone.

Composite or compounded things by their very nature disintegrate moment by moment and furthermore this is true with regard to the three times. Because of being in the nature of impermanence, compounded things are changing from moment-to-moment, meaning that they are disintegrating. That reality of disintegration moment-by-moment is true at all times. In relation to the three times it was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future. Therefore we have already spent certain amount of time disintegrating in the past, which has led to our physical condition now.

At this very moment, we are spending time in disintegration, meaning that from the very subtle level to the gross level our body is changing. It will continue to change in the future, leading ultimately to the actual gross disintegration of our body, where it completely ceases to function, which is when we experience death. Therefore in reality, we are spending our time in the process of dying. Every moment brings us closer to death, and it is as if we are spending all our time in the process of dying. When we reflect on that reality, there is no time for pleasure. Therefore the main point here is that we need to put every moment of our life in trying to prepare for the actual moment of death, and to not to waste our time in fleeting pleasures.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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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 June 2006

Sitting in a comfortable and upright position, we generate a motivation to listen to the teachings. We can generate a motivation such as: ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to obtain enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings so that I can put them into practice to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings’.

1.1.3.2.2. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING BEING AFFLICTED, OR HARMED, AS BEING PLEASURABLE

*When beings with bodies are constantly [40]
Afflicted by hunger and so forth,
It is not at all proper to call
Being afflicted pleasurable.*

Like the earlier verses this one is an attempt to overcome the erroneous view we have of clinging onto contaminated worldly pleasures as being real pleasure and happiness, which is the main obstacle to developing renunciation. We are constantly experiencing the various types of obvious sufferings such as hunger, thirst and extreme heat and cold and so forth, as well as the subtle sufferings. Even when we are constantly afflicted by these normal and obvious sufferings in life, we still hold onto the view that our body is pleasurable. This is the erroneous view that prevents us from developing real renunciation.

When we really look into the situation further, and deeply investigate, we find that even the so-called pleasures that we experience are in reality not real pleasure at all; they are only contaminated pleasures. That will then give a sense of not completely putting our full trust and reliance on this contaminated body and the pleasures that are derived from it. With a firm foundation of understanding on this, one can then develop a sense of renunciation.

However, the fact that we do not experience real pleasure is not denying the fact that we do temporarily experience some happiness or pleasure, which will be explained in detail in a later verse. The main point here, however, is that any contaminated pleasures that we experience are not real, lasting pleasures. In fact, when we investigate further, even the pleasure that we do experience is actually based on suffering. As it is in the nature of suffering it is not a real or reliable source, which is the main point that is being made in this verse.

The two lines ‘When beings with bodies are constantly afflicted by hunger and so forth’ indicate that with this contaminated body, even on a very obvious level, we experience so many different types of suffering, such as hunger, thirst, feeling too cold or too warm. If we reflect further on the condition of our body, it seems to be quite

obvious that it is in the nature of suffering. For example, the body relies on food: if we don’t get our meals on time, what kind of experience do we have? Even if it gets a little bit late for our lunch we suffer. If we start feeling thirsty and we cannot get a drink what kind of uncomfortable experience do we go through? Being hungry is hard to bear. We immediately try to find some food to feed our bodies. Likewise with thirst, we need to have water or some other drink in order to quench our thirst, otherwise the body starts to cry out, and we feel very uncomfortable.

If the body’s nature was pleasurable, it would not have to rely on these external conditions. The very fact that the body cannot maintain itself without the constant input of contaminated substances to maintain it, shows the fact that the body itself is not completely reliable. It cannot be sustained by itself, and needs to depend on all these external conditions. As soon as we don’t have them, we immediately experience suffering. So therefore it is not at all proper to call being afflicted pleasurable.

While our bodies suffer in this way it is not at all proper to consider our physical body and the rest of the contaminated aggregates as being pleasurable; as it is in the nature of suffering, it is not pleasurable. Actually, it is quite easy to understand the verses literally. For our practice it is not enough just to understand the verse; we have to think about it further and try to use it in our meditation. Normally we might think: ‘Oh, the suffering of hunger and thirst is experienced only by impoverished or poor people who do not have food, like the people in Africa’. But in fact, we all suffer from hunger and thirst. As soon as we get hungry, we are experiencing the suffering of hunger, and as soon as we feel thirsty we have the suffering of thirst. It is not something which is reserved only for the impoverished or poor, is it? Thirst and hunger are something that all who have a contaminated body experience equally.

1.1.3.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING PLEASURABLE A COMPOSITE OF VARIOUS INCOMPATIBLE FACTORS WHICH IS LIKE AN ENEMY

*Though powerless, the combining of [41]
All the elements produces [the body];
Thus it is not at all proper to call
What is incompatible pleasurable.*

This verse is presented to show the fragility of the body itself. To come into existence this contaminated body depends on many factors, the main ones being the four elements. One may think that if all these conditions are intact within the body then the body should experience well-being and pleasure. This verse is presented mainly as a means of overcoming that doubt. The reality is that there is no such thing as the body being completely in harmony and well-being all the time. In fact, the basis for the body to not be well is always present.

The term ‘though powerless’ means that any one of the elements in itself is powerless to produce the body. All four elements have to come together in order to produce the body. The earth element is the one which stabilises our body or makes it firm. From the time of conception

where the sperm and egg meet, it is the earth element which stabilises the fertilised egg and allows it to develop. Just as a fruit needs warmth to ripen, it is the fire element within the body that allows the foetus to mature. Then the wind element allows the body to expand and grow. The water element is that which binds the different parts together. So from the very moment of conception the four elements contribute to the development of the body.

Although it is the combination of all four elements that allows the body to sustain itself and grow, the four elements are imbalanced. It is not as though the four elements are compatible with each other and in perfect harmony. There is always the tendency for either one or the other of the elements to be a bit out of balance. For example, when the fire element increases too much then that causes fever, and the different diseases that arise from the fire element to be experienced. Likewise if the wind element increases too much, and is out of balance with the other elements, then we suffer from the diseases related to that factor.

It is only seldom that all the elements are in harmony. The short periods of time when they are in harmony is what we consider as having good health. But there's always the basis for them to go out of balance; even the slightest factor will throw one of the four elements out of balance, which will then produce what we call ill-health, and then we experience suffering. The main point here is that the body itself is dependent on all four elements to be able to sustain itself, and since the four elements themselves are not compatible, our bodies are always prone to experience suffering, and therefore our body is in the nature of suffering.

In order to use this verse in our meditation practice, it is of utmost importance that we reflect on the meaning of the verse. As it is explained here, in order for us to survive we have to rely on this body, and in order for this body to be able to survive, it has to depend on the four elements. If the four elements were always in perfect harmony, then one would feel at ease, but in reality although the body depends on them the four elements are not in harmony. The analogy given in the commentary is that if different types of opposing animals such as a horse, a jackal, a snake, a bird, a deer and a child-eating crocodile are put together they are never going to be in harmony. By nature, they are creatures which prey on each other, and we could therefore never expect them to be in harmony. Likewise the elements within our body can never really be in harmony. The very fact that water opposes fire, and so forth means that the reality of our body is in its very nature a basis for suffering.

This further emphasises the point that one cannot totally rely on this contaminated body, and that one needs to develop a strong wish to abandon the causes for such a contaminated body by developing renunciation. As another analogy of how the four elements are not in harmony, one could use an example of four individuals, who never get along, having to live together. No-one would consider such a room or house to be a

comfortable, happy place. Why? Because these four individuals cannot get along; if you put them together, the outcome will definitely be quite disastrous, won't it? It's like that with the body: the four elements within our body are like four individuals who are not in harmony. Therefore, the body naturally experiences the result of being uncomfortable and is always in a state of unease.

1.1.3.2.4. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING BEING DESTROYED OR HARMED PLEASURABLE

*When there is never that [42]
Which will relieve cold and so forth,
It is not at all proper to call
Being destroyed pleasurable.*

Following on from the previous verse (41) the doubt may arise that the extremes of the external elements such as extreme cold or heat can be overcome by applying an opposing force. Therefore one may have a doubt that it is still possible for the body to experience pleasure when one overcomes the cause of suffering.

The meaning derived from this verse (42) is that just because one has the sensation of temporarily overcoming harmful agents such as extreme cold by applying an opposing agent such as heat, one cannot call the body pleasurable. With temporary relief from an earlier suffering it seems that we are experiencing pleasure. For example, when one experiences heat after experiencing extreme cold, the first moment will be pleasurable because of the fact that it is removing the earlier extreme suffering of cold. In reality, however, it is just replacing one suffering with yet another suffering.

Because the earlier suffering from cold was more extreme we experience the first moment of warmth as being pleasurable. If that were real pleasure, then the more heat that we experience, the more pleasure we should feel. But the reality is that if we remain in the heat for too long then it again starts to become quite unpleasant, and so we experience suffering again. Likewise when we go into cold from extreme heat, the first moments we experience would be of pleasure. That is because the second experience is removing the earlier extreme suffering of heat. But then if we stay in the cold, we will again experience suffering. Therefore, just because intense suffering can be removed with another later experience, which is experienced as pleasure, that in itself is not proof that the body has a nature of pleasure. In reality, that pleasure that we experience is actually in the nature of suffering. Therefore the real condition of the body is one of suffering.

1.1.3.2.5. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING THE DOING OF TIRING ACTIONS CONSIDERING THEM AS BEING PLEASURABLE

Doubt: Since conventionally one uses the expression 'Devadatta is lying down comfortably', real pleasure does exist.

*When on earth no action is [43]
Done without exertion,
It is not at all proper to call
Performing actions pleasurable.*

This verse is presented as an answer to the above assertion. The indication here is that the normal conventional view is that someone who is lying down looking very comfortable is experiencing real pleasure, and so we think that there must be real pleasure. The first two lines imply that whatever the action of any ordinary being who lives on this planet Earth there is always some effort which goes into it. There is always some effort involved in whatever one is doing, whether it is sitting, standing up, making a cup of tea, or lying down. They all require some effort - nothing which is done without some effort.

Whatever actions worldly beings do, there is nothing which is done without some effort or exertion, which implies that there is some unease. On the subtle level one may not immediately notice it, but whenever there is effort there is always some unease, which implies that it is discomfort, and thus it is a suffering. This however, should not be applied to the Dharma activities we do, where even though there is suffering it is said that one should endure that suffering.

In the worldly sense, if we look further into the small details of what it takes to experience even what we would normally consider pleasurable, for example, doing something to have a good time, we find that there is some exertion and unease involved in that as well. Lying down, standing up, going around, working, engaging in recreation activities and so forth all require some effort, therefore on a subtle level there is an unease, which is suffering. So it is not painless, as there is always some suffering involved. That being the case, it is not at all proper to call actions pleasurable, when in reality any action that is performed requires some effort and some unease.

1.1.3.2.6. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING PLEASURABLE THE CREATION OF THE CAUSES OF SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF A LITTLE PLEASURE.

Doubt: If there were no pleasure, it would not be feasible to experience suffering for the sake of pleasure, but since suffering for pleasure's sake is seen, pleasure does exist.

*In this [life] and in others, always [44]
One should guard against ill deeds.
Calling them pleasurable is not at all
Proper when there are bad rebirths.*

This is an answer to the doubt where one feels that if there were to be no pleasure at all, then it would not be feasible to experience suffering for the sake of pleasure. But since we do voluntarily experience suffering in order to get some pleasure, it must be the case that there is some pleasure. When we relate the first part of this doubt to our own lives, it seems that in whatever job we do we endure a lot of suffering. We all have so many complaints and we know that it is not easy. However we endure a lot of suffering at work with the intention of gaining pleasure. In order to get a pleasurable result, we have to sacrifice ourselves by doing jobs that we are not happy with, where we experience hardships and so forth. It is really true isn't it that we exert ourselves and

involuntarily experience suffering with an intention of experiencing some pleasure?

The explanation of the verse is that those who do not know about the consequences of karma, engage in ill-deeds for the sake of a little pleasure. However as a result of engaging in the causes for obtaining pleasure all of those deeds would be considered as being ill-deeds, and the result of that would be suffering in this life, such as exerting ourselves, rising early for work and meeting with all the unfavourable circumstances during work. All of that is suffering, so even in this life, one has to experience the result of suffering. Furthermore there are cases where, for the sake of pleasure in this life, one may face the consequence of death.

So there is suffering even in this life as a result of engaging in the causes to experience some fleeting pleasure, not to mention the sufferings in future lives. Therefore engaging in negative activities for the sake of pleasure is the action of the unwise. Those who are wise, would never consider engaging in ill-deeds for the sake of a little pleasure. Therefore, engaging in deeds to seek some fleeting, temporary pleasure could not be considered as being proper. How could one consider it proper?

Further examples of how the pursuit of temporary pleasure or happiness include acts of stealing, cheating others, engaging in drug abuse or drug trafficking and so forth. These are actions which bring negative, unpleasant results, even in this lifetime, not to mention the negative consequences that are going to be experienced in the next lifetime. If engaging in such ill-deeds brings negative results for this life and for future lifetimes could one still consider that as being desirable or favourable? It cannot be considered at all proper.

Understanding that reality, one should guard oneself from ill-deeds at all times. Just as we guard our possessions against theft and make sure that we never lose our things in robberies or thefts, we should guard our virtuous deeds. Guarding oneself from engaging in negative deeds is something that we should pay much more attention to, as it is of great importance to us. Taken on a very practical level the advice given here is something that we should definitely consider and cherish. The advice about the negative consequences of stealing and so forth is something which is really quite obvious isn't it? The negative results and negative consequences of stealing and so forth are obvious to anyone in this life. We need to pay attention to following such advice starting from the very practical to the more profound deeper levels.

1.1.3.3. From the start there is no real pleasure in riding and so forth

Doubt: One sees that those intent on pleasure ride horses and elephants, considering it a discomfort to walk on their own two feet. Therefore pleasure does exist.

The root verse which serves as an answer is:

There is never any pleasure [45]
For humans in riding and so forth.
How can that which at the start
Does not begin, in the end increase?

The riding of horses or elephants is seen to be something that produces real pleasure. One should consider the fact that on a subtle level there is some discomfort right from the very beginning of the act, whether it be riding, or eating, or drinking or any other kind of worldly activity. When we start riding a horse, slowly it starts to feel uncomfortable. In fact if you ride for too long, you might even get sores on your backside. From my own experience, having ridden to Lhasa on horses from the province where I come from took many months. Once you have ridden for a certain period of time, the whole body starts to ache. The body becomes all tense and tired from having sat on the horse, then one starts feeling pain on the backside as well. So then you get off the horse and start walking with the horse for a while, before you get on again. Just getting off the horse and walking for a time is such a relief. It is the same with any other worldly activity such as eating or drinking; as soon as we engage in an activity to the point of excess it starts to become very uncomfortable.

The main point here is the fact that there is some discomfort from the very beginning, and that when that same action is prolonged for a certain time, it starts to feel very uncomfortable and unpleasant. On a very subtle level there is already discomfort at the start. To emphasise this further, how could suffering increase if it had not already been there at the beginning? The fact is that in order for suffering to increase, it had to have been there from the beginning.

In reality, that which from the very start was a small incipient cause of pain is mistaken for pleasure. What is actually the cause for pain is, in the initial stages, mistaken for pleasure and we grasp onto that pleasure. But in reality it is an initial cause for pain, so therefore in its very nature it is suffering. As mentioned earlier, as the activity starts to increase it becomes more noticeable to the point where we start to feel uncomfortable, and at that stage we call it suffering. The fact remains that in the initial stage the cause of suffering was already there.

Furthermore, what we consider as pleasurable starts with a small cause of suffering in the beginning, whereas what we call suffering does not start with a cause of pleasure. Therefore what we consider pleasure is not real, but what we call suffering is actually more prevalent. So therefore in all of the three times, the beginning, the middle and the end, the contaminated body is always in the nature of suffering.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
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DISCUSSION

BLOCK:	3
WEEK:	5
27 TH JUNE 06	

From 30 May 2006

1. Explain why feelings of pain from the body should not be treated as negligible.
2. Once one realises the very nature of our contaminated bodies is suffering, what can one do about it?
3. *It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering.* Comment.

From 6 June 2006

4. The first type of suffering (the suffering of suffering) does not give a deep understanding of how the body is a contaminated body. Why not?
5. Relate how cherishing your body can be like cherishing your enemy.
6. Describe the various sufferings that the rich and poor cannot escape.

From 13 June 2006

7. Explain why pleasurable sensations are not natural to the body.
8. Why does contemplating the nature of the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering serve as an impetus to renunciation?
9. Why are contaminated pleasures a form of suffering?

From 20 June 2006

10. 'If the body's nature was pleasurable it would not have to rely upon these external conditions'. Explain.
11. Why is the body in always in a state of unease? Give two examples that illustrate this point.
12. 'How can that which at the start does not begin, in the end increase?' Explain these two lines using an example.

YOU ARE IN GROUP 1

DISCUSSION

BLOCK:	3
WEEK:	5
	27 TH JUNE 06

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YOU ARE IN GROUP 2

DISCUSSION

BLOCK: **3**
WEEK: **5**
27TH JUNE 06

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3. *It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering.* Comment.

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4. The first type of suffering (the suffering of suffering) does not give a deep understanding of how the body is a contaminated body. Why not?
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12. 'How can that which at the start does not begin, in the end increase?' Explain these two lines using an example.

YOU ARE IN GROUP 3

DISCUSSION

BLOCK:	3
WEEK:	5
27 TH JUNE 06	

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3. *It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering.* Comment.

From 6 June 2006

4. The first type of suffering (the suffering of suffering) does not give a deep understanding of how the body is a contaminated body. Why not?
5. Relate how cherishing your body can be like cherishing your enemy.
6. Describe the various sufferings that the rich and poor cannot escape.

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8. Why does contemplating the nature of the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering serve as an impetus to renunciation?
9. Why are contaminated pleasures a form of suffering?

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10. 'If the body's nature was pleasurable it would not have to rely upon these external conditions'. Explain.
11. Why is the body always in a state of unease? Give two examples that illustrate this point.
12. 'How can that which at the start does not begin, in the end increase?' Explain these two lines using an example.

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EXAM

NAME:

BLOCK: **3**

WEEK: **6**

4TH JULY 06

MARK:

/36

1. Explain why feelings of pain from the body should not be treated as negligible? [2]

2. Once one realizes the very nature of our contaminated bodies is suffering, what can one do about it? [3]

3. '*It is as if transitory beings are pursued by suffering*'. Comment [3]

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

4. The first type of suffering ('suffering of suffering') does not give a deep sense of understanding how the body is a contaminated body. Why not? [2]

5. Relate how cherishing your body can be like cherishing your enemy? [2]

6. Describe the various sufferings that the rich and poor cannot escape. [3]

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

7. Explain why pleasurable sensations are not natural to the body. [4]

8. Why does contemplating the nature of the contaminated body as being in the nature of suffering serve as an impetus to renunciation? [4]

9. Why are contaminated pleasures a form of suffering? [3]

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

10. 'If the body's nature was pleasurable it would not have to rely upon these external conditions'. Explain. [4]

11. Why is the body in always in a state of unease? Give two examples that illustrate this point. [3]

12. 'How can that which at the start does not begin, in the end increase?' Explain these two lines using an example. [3]