
Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual we shall sit in a comfortable upright position in a relaxed manner, and develop a motivation for receiving the teachings, such as, ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and then put it into practice as best as I can’.

1.2.1.5. ADVICE TO ASSOCIATE WITH WOMEN GIVEN IN SOCIAL TREATISES IS ERRONEOUS

Assertion or doubt:

Texts on social conventions recommend indulgence in sensual pleasures during youth; thus it is acceptable.

Answer:

It is inappropriate to act according to conventions which encourage one and others to act improperly.

*In old age one dislikes [59]
What one did during youth.
Why would the liberated not
Be extremely saddened by it?*

The heading refers to the social treatises that are the works used in social contexts about the benefits of engaging in a sexual relationship and the qualities of women and so forth. These treatises encourage the need for relationships and so forth. So, is it appropriate to follow those social treatises that suggest having sexual relationships and so forth? The answer, which this verse relates to, is that it is not appropriate.

Although these conventions encourage people to act improperly it is inappropriate to follow that advice. As the commentary says:

If the passionate, in their old age, despite not having achieved freedom from desire, dislike the mere memory of the bad things they did during their youth why would liberated Foe Destroyers not be extremely saddened...

Generally speaking, when some people reach old age they are actually saddened when they think about their youth and the things they did then, especially the various sexual relationships that they had during their youth. This is the case even for those who have not entirely abandoned or overcome desire. The mere memories of their engagement in social relationships in their youth bring sadness and regret to their mind. When they think about it, that brings about suffering.

... why would liberated Foe Destroyers not be extremely saddened by and deprecate lascivious behaviour? Since they see it as utterly reprehensible and a source of aversion, those interested in their own good should give it up.

As the commentary suggests, the explanation of the verse

is that the liberated, meaning the Foe Destroyers, will definitely then see it as being something to be avoided.

The main point being made here is that if attachment and desire, specifically sexual desire, were to be something to be adopted because they were useful, then having engaged in excessive sexual relationships or desire in one’s youth would bring about deep satisfaction and be a source of joy and pride. But as mentioned here in the commentary, the main point being made in the root text is that this is not the case. Rather it is the reverse: when in old age people think about their earlier engagements and sexual behaviour, then it brings sadness to the mind. This is a natural occurrence even for those who have not purposely given up or abandoned desire. So that is an obvious reason why desire is not something to be cultivated and nurtured, but rather is something to be abandoned. The liberated or the Foe Destroyers, have abandoned desire and continuously see it as being something to be completely abandoned for one’s ultimate benefit.

The practical application of this advice in a personal sense, would be that even though it may be initially difficult to completely abandon and give up sexual desire, it is nevertheless something that one should try to minimise and try to slowly overcome by not giving it full attention. By seeing the disadvantages of desire, slowly work on reducing the lustful mind and intentions in your mind. Then in old age, as a result of having put in some earlier effort into seeing the faults and minimising one’s engagement in sexual desire and so forth, there will be joy in one’s mind. Even a mere attempt at trying to overcome desire will bring joy to one’s mind.

1.2.1.6. OTHER REASONS FOR THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF DESIRE FOR WOMEN

This is sub-divided into five categories:

- 1.2.1.6.1. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from intercourse with women as the best pleasure in the Desire Realm
- 1.2.1.6.2. Unfeasibility of having exclusive control over a woman because of one’s desire for her
- 1.2.1.6.3. Refuting that desire is pleasurable (This is not actually covered as a heading in Gyel-tsap’s commentary)
- 1.2.1.6.4. Unfeasibility of women alone as the cause of pleasure during intercourse with them
- 1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them

1.2.1.6.1. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from intercourse with women as the best pleasure in the Desire Realm

Doubt or assertion:

Since pleasure in relation to women is the best pleasure in the Desire Realm, one should keep a woman for that purpose.

Answer: That is not correct.

*Those without desire have no pleasure, [60]
Nor do those not foolish have it.
How can there be pleasure for one
Whose mind constantly strays?*

The commentary's explanation of the verse is:

How can the pleasure of one who desires a woman and whose mind constantly strays from reality be the best? It is not the best.

What the text is asking here is how can the mind that does not see reality, that does not see things as they are, consider the pleasure gained from sexual pleasure as being the best pleasure? How can that be so, when the mind itself is not clear? The reason why it is not the best pleasure in samsara is that:

Those without desire for women do not have pleasure focusing on them. Moreover those who are sensible do not have desire.

What is being indicated here is that the pleasure that is experienced in relation to women is only for those who relate to women in that way. But in reality it is not a real source of pleasure. What is being indicated here specifically is the cause-and-effect relationship between desire or attachment to a woman, and the pleasure that is derived from that. The seeming pleasure that one experiences is only in relation to the attachment or desire that one has for the woman. Those who do not have the cause of attachment to a woman do not experience this seeming pleasure. Therefore the root text is basically showing the cause-and-effect relationship between attachment and the pleasure derived from that. The attachment itself arises only in those who are infatuated with desire - those who do not have sensible minds. Whereas for those who have sensible minds, attachment either does not arise, or they do not follow their attachment.

This analogy is given in the commentary:

A young man desired a king's queen and although he experienced suffering for a long time on her account, he was not able to accomplish what he wanted.

The analogy refers to an actual incident where a simple person became very attached to a queen and tried many ways to obtain her attention, such as trying to be taken on as a servant. To cut what is actually quite a long story short, despite all the attempts that he made he was not able to achieve what he wanted, which was to be with the queen. In fact while pursuing these attempts he experienced a lot of difficulty and a lot of suffering, and in the end what he experienced was great disappointment. What this story shows is that the result of attachment is actually much greater suffering than real pleasure.

If one experiences pleasure it is only momentary and fleeting. In fact the main outcome of being attached to external objects and seeing them as a source of satisfaction (as was the case with the simpleton and the queen) is in the end only suffering. So we can see that when we focus on external objects, become attached to them, and try to pursue and obtain them, it actually just brings more misery and suffering. That is something which we can also relate to in many different situations.

The reality of the situation is contrary to what we assume. If obsessive attachment to external objects, whether they be actual objects or just thoughts and ideas,

was a source of joy and real pleasure, then we ordinary beings, rather than the Foe Destroyers or the Arhats, would be the ones who experience the most pleasure. But in fact, it is the Arhats, who have completely overcome and abandoned the attachment to external objects, who are the ones experiencing the most joy, true pleasure and real happiness.

1.2.1.6.2. Unfeasibility of having exclusive control over a woman because of one's desire for her

As the heading suggests the main point being made here refers to the erroneous view that we have of possessing an object of desire. For example, if a man has an obsessive desire for his spouse then he has a mind of complete control over her, 'She is mine and no-one else's but mine'. He has a mind set of completely owning his spouse. This is also the case for women with an obsessive desire for their husband.

Assertion or doubt:

Even if you make a woman your own, why keep her possessively out of jealousy toward other men with the thought that she is yours and no one else's? It is unreasonable to do so.

*You cannot have intercourse constantly [61]
With a woman to match your attentiveness to her.
Why keep her possessively with the thought,
"She is mine and no one else's."*

This is something which happens very often in normal relationships and daily life. It is definitely appropriate to think about this, to consider how the teachings deal with it, and how to combat these situations.

As the commentary reads:

You lustful person, you are not capable of constant sexual intercourse with a woman to match your attentiveness toward her in the hope of enjoyment.

This is quite clearly the explanation of the verse.

The main point being made here is that the greater the possessive attitude towards one's spouse, the greater the degree of attachment. This leads to jealousy arising in one's mind when one's partner seems to have even a casual relationship with others. Even just talking with another brings a lot of jealousy, and that is because of one's obsessive, possessive feeling towards the object, 'Its mine and no one else's but mine'. Even though we may not use those words, that's how we think, 'The object of my desire belongs only to myself'. That possessive feeling arises from very strong grasping at the object.

The next analogy given in the text indicates that jealousy does not arise when others interact with something to which we are not attached. Rather jealousy arises only in relation to an object that one has obsessive attachment towards. It is actually absurd when you think about it that the very object that one is obsessed with is not, in reality, at least not in practical terms, something that one is using all the time anyway. Yet even when one does not use it all the time, a sense of jealousy arises when others use it.

The analogy which is related in the commentary is:

An old Brahmin whose digestion was weak found a lot of good food. Though he was unable to eat it, he did not give it to anyone else but took still more.

This is an absurd situation of someone who has a lot of food they cannot possibly digest themselves. He has digestion problems to begin with, and he couldn't possibly consume all the food. While he could have shared it with others, he did not do so out of obsessive attachment to the food. In fact, he still wants to take more. A further example that is given is about a king who has a lot of queens, and who can not possibly have a relationship with all of them, yet he has a sense of possessing them all and keeps them in his palace.

1.2.1.6.3. Refuting that desire is pleasurable

In the Desire Realm it is conventionally accepted that having women is a source of happiness. However in reality, that is not the case. Even though it is conventionally accepted, it is inappropriate.

*If desire were pleasurable
There would be no need for women.
Pleasure is not regarded as
Something to get rid of.* [62]

As the commentary explains:

If desire were pleasurable one wouldn't need women as a means to quell it, for pleasure is not regarded as something of which to rid oneself.

When we consider the facts this is very true. If desire or attachment itself was pleasure, then one wouldn't need to try to satisfy it or try to overcome it. In other words in the case of a man desiring a woman, he would not need to have a woman to fulfil his desire, because the desire alone is pleasurable. What is being indicated here is that attachment or desire in itself is not something that is pleasurable. In layman's terms it means that if desire itself was pleasurable, then a man wouldn't have to rely on a woman because he would just be satisfied by having desire for her. Just the desire for the woman would be fine, because that in itself would be pleasure.

The analogy which is given in the commentary is:

A hungry man entered a house at night and saw a pot of ash, which he mistook for flour...

I think that the flour in Tibetan would be *tsampa* which is an instant food.

...and another of water. [Out of delusion about the contents] he mixed them together and ate. When his hunger was gone he realized it was ash. Feeling disgusted, he threw the remainder away and left.

The analogy actually goes further to say that he becomes quite unwell, and sick from the ash. So the moral of the story is that while under the influence of a delusional mind, in this case being completely overwhelmed by hunger, the person failed to recognise ash as being ash, and thought it was something edible. Also the time and circumstances didn't help the situation; in the dark, he thought there was something edible. So having consumed it, he was sick. Actually this analogy really fits the situation of desire towards any object, and particularly the case of sexual desire, in that it is only out

of delusion and the illusion of being a pleasurable object that one seems to experience some pleasure. But in reality what is left afterwards is an unpleasant feeling – more suffering. When we really contemplate the situation of sexual desire, we can see that it actually brings much more unpleasantness in the future as a result. Contemplating in this way should help us to minimise and eventually overcome sexual desire and indeed all desires.

1.2.1.6.4. Unfeasibility of women alone as the cause of pleasure during intercourse with them

Assertion or doubt: Pleasure occurs through intercourse with a woman.

Answer:

*Even in intercourse with a woman
Pleasure arises from other [factors].
What sensible person would say
It is caused just by his lover?* [63]

Who but a fool would say that his lover alone is the cause of pleasure during intercourse? The pleasure from intercourse is caused by other factors, namely by an incorrect mental approach.

The analogy which is given in the commentary is:

A simpleton's wife made him work and he enjoyed it.

What is being indicated with this analogy of a simpleton, is that only fools would think that all pleasure comes only from one's spouse. As the analogy indicates, the wife asked her husband to do a lot of errands for her, such as fetching wood, making a fire with it, then boiling water and then, 'You have to wash my body and serve me in various different ways'. In such a way the story describes the many errands and tasks the wife gave the man to do, which in reality were not pleasurable tasks. But as the man's mind was completely obsessed with his wife, he saw them as being pleasurable tasks, which he did willingly and without any hesitation, whereas normally he might not have considered them as being pleasant. His willingness was only because of his obsessiveness towards his wife. Only a fool would accept doing so many errands for a bossy and lazy wife. This also refers to a wife who serves a bossy and lazy husband.

Other commentaries indicate that the main point being made in relation to this verse is that the actual interaction with men and women – sexual desire that is experienced from sexual intercourse, for example - is not something that is in itself pleasure in its own right. There has to be attachment involved. Without attachment, the mere fact of having a sexual relationship would not be considered as a pleasure. Specific examples would be a celibate person, one who has taken vows to refrain from sexual activity, such as an ordained person who has taken vows because they are trying to overcome attachment. If they were forced to have a relationship with a woman (in the case of a man), it would not be experienced as pleasure. Rather it would be experienced as an unease in the mind; it would actually be considered as suffering. That is because the attachment is lacking. Without attachment, then it is not experienced as pleasure. Going back to the

earlier point: if the mere sexual contact with the other sex was in itself a pleasure, then anyone who experienced it would have to experience pleasure from that. However it is a fact that not everyone experiences it as pleasure.

1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them

Assertion:

Sensuality does give rise to real pleasure, because the infatuated seek sensual gratification again and again.

Answer:

They do not seek it because desire is pleasurable by nature

Blinded by desire they do not see [64]
Sensuality's faults, like a leper scratching.
Those free from desire see the infatuated
As suffering like the leper.

Like a leper who, because it gives a little pleasure, keeps scratching without seeing the harm it causes, like bleeding and oozing...

The first part of the verse is very obvious with this particular analogy of a leper who has sores on his body, which can apparently be very itchy. When the leper tries to soothe the itch by scratching the sores, the scratching gives a temporary satisfaction, but the actual result of the scratching is unpleasant when blood and puss start to ooze out. Nevertheless, he keeps scratching again and again, and it is impossible for him to control it, because of the intense desire to scratch. The itch is so strong that the desire overpowers the knowledge of the consequences.

Similarly,

...those whose eye of intelligence is blinded by desire, do not see sensuality's faults.

People seem to keep engaging in sensual activity again and again. I don't know what sort of real pleasure is experienced, but somehow people seem to get into relationships again and again.

The analogy given to describe it further is:

It is like gambling and drinking which cause one to waste one's property

This again is a very obvious problem in society: by engaging in gambling and drinking people may experience temporary pleasure, but they lose so much and this causes so much suffering afterwards. Yet they go on doing it. Engaging in drinking, for example, seems to really harm the physical body.

I think the particular point is that engaging in sexual desire again and again, is not beneficial for the health either. [laughter] It is explained in teachings that it is not beneficial for one's health, when one excessively engages in sexual intercourse. It is explained that by engaging in sexual intercourse, one loses one's seminal fluids, which actually is essence of strength in one's body.

1.2.2. Refuting desire while seeing the body as unclean

We can refer to this heading in our next class.

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

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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Sitting in an upright position we set our motivation for receiving the teachings, such as developing the state of mind where we think, ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings in order to gain the means and methods to achieve enlightenment’.

Normally we talk a lot about the benefits of bodhicitta. We find that in almost every teaching the benefits of bodhicitta are explained in great detail. The significance of explaining bodhicitta in very great detail is so that we can put some of it into practical use, such as developing a bodhicitta motivation for whatever practice we do. Therefore, it is really beneficial to try to incorporate the bodhicitta attitude into our practice at the very outset, and in that way we can use it in a practical way that is of great significance and benefit to ourselves and others.

1.2.1.6.5. Unfeasibility of the pleasure from women being desirable because the infatuated pursue them (cont)

We covered this outline last week. The root verse explained that the person who is blinded by desire does not see the faults of sensuality. The verse indicated the analogy of lepers scratching their wounds: even though the scratching causes blood and pus to ooze out and the wounds become very sore, the lepers cannot control themselves and continuously scratch their bodies, which then causes more and more pain. Similarly, even when there is a lot of suffering that comes about as a result of desire, those infatuated by desire cannot stop their desire for objects.

As was explained with a further analogy last week, it is the same with gambling and drinking. With addiction to alcohol to the point where one’s health deteriorates and one loses one’s wealth and so forth, or with addiction to gambling to the point of losing one’s possessions, still they blindly carry on and comfortably indulge in their addiction. These are further examples of desire.

1.2.2. Refuting desire while seeing the body as unclean

This heading shows that if one does not see the body as being unclean then many faults arise. There are six subdivisions:

1.2.2.1. Refuting that a woman’s physical and verbal behaviour is pleasurable because with her one bears the gross insults that she inflicts

When we actually relate to this we find this is actually very true, in that it explicitly shows all the faults that arise from desire.

1.2.2.2. Refuting the existence of pleasure to women because of the jealousy felt over them towards other men

1.2.2.3. Inappropriateness of strong desire on realising that women’s bodies are unclean

1.2.2.4. Refuting that the body is not objectionable on the grounds that it is without shortcomings

1.2.2.5. Refuting the idea that women’s bodies are clean

1.2.2.6. Refuting other seeming reasons for considering the body clean

1.2.2.1. REFUTING THAT A WOMAN’S PHYSICAL AND VERBAL BEHAVIOUR ARE PLEASURABLE BECAUSE WHEN WITH HER ONE BEARS THE GROSS INSULTS THAT SHE INFLECTS

Assertion:

Though sensual pleasure is unclean, bearing insults from a woman, like being spat on, and responding with flattering physical and verbal behaviour is pleasurable for those that [are under the influence of] desire.

Answer: That is incorrect.

*During a famine the destitute,
Tormented by hunger [bear] what occurs.
This is how all the infatuated
Behave when they are with women.*

65

To further illustrate the meaning, normally one would not bear such insults from anyone, but if under the influence of such strong desire for a woman one bears any kind of insult, even to the extent of physical pain. There are cases where being bound with chains, strapped up and beaten up is also experienced as pleasure. These sort of circumstances are nothing else but the desire that completely overwhelms the mind, to the extent that it perceives this as being pleasure. Normally, of course, it is not considered as pleasure at all, because it is actually pain, but in that moment it is perceived as pleasure. For someone who is infatuated by the desire, say for a woman, when she insults and uses disparaging words, then rather than becoming angry and upset with that, one tries to please them with nice words. To consider that sort of behaviour as being pleasurable is not correct.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

During a famine the destitute, tormented by hunger, bear what occurs, such as being insulted even a hundred times by merciless rich men. In the hope that he will give them a trifle. Since the behaviour of the infatuated when they are with a woman is like that, it cannot be pleasurable.

When someone is really destitute and at the mercy of others, gaining some meagre food just for bare survival may mean bearing insults and the like. There is no choice but to bear those insults. It is similar with those who are infatuated with desire, as in the case of a man for a woman: there are times when they do not wish to be insulted and so forth, but they have to bear the insults because of their desire for the object.

As the commentary says, those who willingly accept the insults and hardships from an object of desire do so only

because the lust in their mind influences them in that way. There is no other reason.

The analogy is:

...like someone in prison who wanted to drink the liquid from cow dung.

Apparently when someone is in a destitute situation, such as being in prison, and neither fed well nor given drink, then in a state of complete weakness they may even be willing to drink liquefied cow dung, which would give them some sort of nourishment. Even though one would normally never consider drinking something like that, they are willing to do so in such a situation. The main point being made here is that this is inappropriate for anyone in their right mind. It is not feasible for anyone who can see the obvious uncleanliness of the body to be attached to it, and to indulge in that sort of desire for such an obviously unclean object.

As I mentioned earlier, and which is also explicitly mentioned towards the end of the chapter, although these examples explicitly refer to a woman's body it is exactly the same for women who are attached to a man's body; they should use the same analytical meditation procedure in exactly the same way.

1.2.2.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF PLEASURE TO WOMEN BECAUSE OF THE JEALOUSY FELT OVER THEM TOWARDS OTHER MEN

Assertion:

There is real pleasure from women because those who are attached to the pleasure from women are seen to jealous of others.

Answer:

This does not establish the existence of real pleasure in relation to women.

*Through arrogance one may be
Attached even to one's privy,
Anyone infatuated with
A woman would be jealous of others.* 66

When we refer again to the earlier explanations of what is, and what is not, real pleasure the teachings are not denying that there is a seemingly pleasure that one experiences in relation to the objects of desire, in this case from sexual desire. What is being shown, however, is that in reality, there is no real pleasure, and for those who do not have attachment to the object, not even the fleeting pleasure is experienced. When this relates to the relationships between men and women, it is the same experience for both. The fact that there is no real pleasure from its own side can be seen with attachment, and particularly in the case where the attachment is exceedingly strong.

One seems to get some pleasure from the object, and that attachment is based on exaggerating the qualities of the object. There are instances where the exaggeration has to be really worked at. When you see a beautiful object you may not see it as being extremely beautiful in the beginning, but as you view the object and think about its qualities again and again, then the more one becomes familiar with the object and exaggerates its qualities, the

stronger and stronger the attachment to that object becomes. Then one seems to get some pleasure whilst being in the company of that object.

If we just follow the influence of the desires in our mind, which is to exaggerate the qualities of the object, then there would be no way of dealing with attachment, because one is completely under the influence of the desirous mind that keeps exaggerating the qualities more and more. We need to recognise that the only way to deal with desire, to initially minimise it, and then to eventually overcome it, is to analyse it in the way the teachings describe. There is no other way to combat desire except in this way.

The actual meaning of the verse is that just because others are jealous of the desirable object, that does not serve as a sound reason to say that there is real pleasure to be derived from the object of desire.

As the commentary explains:

A rich man who is arrogant because of his wealth may be possessive about his privy and forbid others to use it.

A toilet, especially in the Eastern context, is not considered to be a place to be proud of; it is not considered a clean place. However a rich person, who is proud of his wealth, may be very attached to his own toilet and be angry and jealous when others use it. In the Eastern context it is quite absurd to be very attached to such an unclean place such as a toilet. The main meaning from the analogy is that one could be attached to even lowly things such as a toilet, but that does not mean that just because one is attached to something it has to be very special, with a lot of qualities. One can be attached and jealously can arise even for such an unclean thing as a toilet. Although it is not specifically mentioned, this can also be the case for other things.

The main point is that a rich person, or anyone else, who is attached to the toilet, is attached not because it is a great object with qualities, but rather because of their miserliness and their attachment to objects.

The meaning is indicated in the next part of the commentary:

Anyone who is infatuated with a particular woman is seen to be baselessly jealous towards other men.

King Gambhirasikhara who was arrogant about his status would not allow a serving woman to drink water.

Out of his miserliness he even made his maids drink water from another source than his.

1.2.2.3. INAPPROPRIATENESS OF STRONG DESIRE ON REALISING THAT WOMEN'S BODIES ARE UNCLEAN

Assertion: Although women's bodies are unclean desire is reasonable because they are a source of pleasure. As mentioned before this applies equally to women's and men's bodies.

Answer: When one realises that they are unclean desire is inappropriate.

*It is reasonable for confusion
And anger about unclean to occur;
It is not at all reasonable
For desire to occur.*

67

The doubt that even though it is accepted that by nature bodies are unclean, desire is reasonable, because bodies are a source of pleasure seems to be a very strong doubt.

As the commentary explains:

When one steps in excrement without noticing it, it is feasible that confusion could occur and that the offensive smell could give rise to anger. However it is not at all reasonable for incongruous desire to occur.

This is a very explicit example of stepping in some excrement because one did not see it in the first place, maybe because it was dark or just because one did not see it. Not seeing the excrement in the first place is the analogy of the ignorance in one's mind when one engages with the object of desire. The ignorance blinds one from the true nature of the object of desire, seeing it as being pleasurable. Stepping in excrement without having seen it means that out of ignorance one stepped on it, and then when the foul smell starts to rise that generates anger in one's mind. Feeling happy and pleasurable and attached to that experience is just totally unreasonable. That is the analogy that is being explained.

Similarly when attached to the physical body of the opposite sex (here it specifically mentions a man being attached to a woman) then out of ignorance one may initially feel desire for that object, and then become upset when it does not meet with one's actual satisfaction and provide pleasure. Blindly maintaining one's desire is not feasible at all, and the analogy is that it is like stepping in excrement at night.

1.2.2.4. REFUTING THAT THE BODY IS NOT OBJECTIONABLE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS WITHOUT SHORTCOMINGS

Assertion:

Though the body is unclean it is not considered to be objectionable because conventionally it is without shortcomings. In some areas there is a common saying that 'Brahmins are purer than others and women are purest of all'.

Answer: That this is not correct.

*If, accepted to some people,
A pot of filth is objectionable,
Why would one not think objectionable
That from which the filth comes?*

68

Of course this is in a setting where the caste system was at its strongest. Within the caste system in India Brahmins are said to be the highest caste, and they are considered to be the pure caste. Conventionally there are sayings where Brahmins are purer than others meaning other castes, but women are the purest of all, meaning that women are very pure. So there is this very high regard in the conventional sense, which relates of course to the physical body. That is not correct.

The meaning of the verse is:

When all except people not in their right mind find a pot full of filth, such as vomit, objectionable, why

would anyone sensible not consider the body from which this filth comes objectionable?

Again the analogy is very explicit in portraying the main meaning of this teaching, which is that the filth coming out of the body, such as vomit or excrement, is considered to be very dirty, and even the very containers of that filth are considered to be dirty. So if the very pot holding filth such as excrement or vomit is also dirty, then why wouldn't any sensible person consider the very source of the filth, our bodies, as being dirty as well. When we think about it, it is exactly the case that our bodies are filth producers; they are the mechanism that constantly produce filth. Because excrement is constantly produced we have to constantly go to the toilet, and many other kinds of dirty substances are constantly produced by this body. Therefore when we look at it realistically, we can see that if we can consider what comes out of it as dirty, then why is the source itself, the body, not dirty as well?

A further analogy given in the commentary is of a

lustful man who saw attractive qualities in a beautiful woman, but found fault with her when he saw her carrying a pot full of vomit.

A rich man had a beautiful maid but when others saw her carrying a pot of vomit, they thought she was not clean, and no longer regarded her as beautiful.

When we think about these analogies and the meanings that are derived from the teachings we can see how explicit and meaningful they are, and how much weight they carry.

1.2.2.5. REFUTING THE IDEA THAT WOMEN'S BODIES ARE CLEAN

Assertion or doubt: Women's bodies are clean because people regard them as clean.

Answer: It is absurd that a women's body is by nature clean.

*Clean things are looked upon
As most worthless of all.
What intelligent person
Would say that it is clean?*

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The commentary explains that:

Clean things like flowers, perfume, ornaments and so forth are looked upon as most worthless of all by virtue of having being in contact with a woman's body...

Here again one has to understand that as with all the other verses the meaning here is in relation to any male or female contaminated body. When we look into the analogy further, the meaning is that what is initially considered to be nice and clean, turns into something filthy as a result of coming into contact with this contaminated body, whether it be male or female.

Let us look first of all at delicious, nice-smelling food which is consumed: soon after coming into contact with this body it is turned into excrement, something which is named nicely, but which is actually filthy. Likewise with other substances such as perfume, or as mentioned here, flowers and so forth. Initially they are very beautiful for a

certain period of time if they are left on their own, but having come into contact with this body perfume begins to mix with sweat and starts to smell quite foul. Therefore anything that comes into contact with this body turns into something being filthy, and the reason for that is because the body itself is quite contaminated and not clean to begin with.

The further analogy given in the commentary is:

...just as the sweet water of the Ganges becomes saline on meeting the ocean.

The analogy of the Ganges River that is given here is that at its source the Ganges is clean, fresh, sweet water, but as it flows down into plains and meets with the saline ocean the Ganges water becomes saline, because of coming into contact with the saline sea water. Likewise in relation to the physical body, whatever comes into contact with the contaminated body also becomes filthy, because the nature of the body is unclean.

In this way the teaching provides many different ways and angles for contemplating the unclean nature of the body.

1.2.2.6. REFUTING OTHER SEEMING REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE BODY CLEAN

This is subdivided into three further subdivisions:

1.2.2.6.1. Refuting the idea of the body as clean because others are seen to be proud of it

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting that the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

1.2.2.6.3. Refuting that women's body need not be given up on the grounds that sages are seen to enjoy them

1.2.2.6.1. Refuting the idea of the body as clean because others are seen to be proud of it

Assertion or doubt:

The body is clean because one sees people taking pride in it.

Answer:

*Whoever has lived in a privy
And without it would not have survived,
In such a dung worm, arrogance
Arises through stupidity.* 70

As the commentary explains:

Whatever is born from the womb has lived in the mother's womb between the stomach and the intestines, which is like living inside a privy. Like a dung worm it has been nurtured by excremental juices without which you would have not survived.

What is being described here as excremental juices refers to the amniotic fluid, without which the baby would not survive. When we are in that sort of state we are like what is called a dung worm. So it is absurd to be proud of that, and thinking of that as clean only arises through stupidity. When one actually thinks of the reality of how one came into being then there is nothing to be so proud of. Rather, it is as it is explained in the analogy.

Then the commentary goes on:

It is like the following analogy, a young man who had been put in a cesspit and lived on excrement escaped, and afterwards thought it was unclean when someone else's clothing touched him.

What this analogy refers to is the particular instance where a man, who had indulged in adultery, was punished for that act and, in the tradition of old days, thrown into a cesspit. He had to live in filth for a period of time. After he escaped from that the cesspit he was taken to the doctors who cleaned him up and nourished him, and he was restored to his normal health. After he had regained his former lustre and his health was restored, he went through a particular area where a lowly person touched him. Completely forgetting that he had recently being immersed in filth himself, he considered that even the touch of a lowly person's clothing was very dirty. This shows the absurdity of the situation.

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

We will leave this for the next session, when we might also be able to finish the third chapter.

*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

5 September 2006

As we sit in a comfortable and upright position, let us generate a positive motivation, such as, ‘In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can’.

1.2.2.6. REFUTING OTHER SEEMING REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE BODY CLEAN (CONT.)

1.2.2.6.2. Refuting that the body is clean because one sees what is unclean about it being removed with effort

Assertion or doubt:

The body is definitely clean since washing and so forth removes dirt from it.

Answer:

No means whatsoever will purify 71
The inside of the body
The efforts you make toward the outside
Do not match those toward the inside

The misconception one can have is that it is only external dirt which makes the body unclean, and once that dirt is removed then the body remains clean. When we relate this to ourselves, this is a notion that we definitely carry don’t we? After a shower or bath we have the feeling, ‘Now I’m very clean’. The main point that is being stressed here in the verse is, what use is there in paying so much attention in cleaning the outside of our body, when the inside remains dirty?

When whatever means employed, such as ritual ablution and washing do not cleanse the inside of the body. You do not make as much effort to clean the external filth that has come out of your body as you do to cleanse the inside of the body, but it would be reasonable to do so.

As is indicated here, in an attempt to clean the body one may even go to the extent of ritual ablutions to cleanse the body in an attempt to clean it of impurities, but in fact that ritual does not in itself really help to purify the inside. When it is appropriate to focus on cleaning inside of the body, performing the ablutions and so forth does not really help, therefore it is not really appropriate. The point being made here, ‘You do not make as much effort...to cleanse the inside of the body but it would be reasonable to do so’, indicates that we clean the outside with the idea that it will make us clean, but in fact the inside of the body remains unclean. Again, this is tackling the notion that we have that if we keep our bodies clean on the outside, then we can conclude that we have a clean body.

But in reality, as mentioned earlier, if what is produced from the body is unclean, then how can the source itself be clean? Therefore we use that logical explanation here as well: cleaning the outside of the body, which is just the surface of the body, in itself cannot be a means to clean the inside. While the inside remains dirty, there is no way that we can really clean the body.

This verse is tackling the notion that we have of cleanliness, from which arises a sense of our bodies being pure, from which attachment arises. Whether in relation to our body or to others’ bodies, that notion of the body as being clean and pure serves as the basis for attachment to the body to arise. So in order to overcome that attachment we need to really question the very basis of the misconception that we have about the body, which

is that it is clean and pure. If one generates a notion that the body is clean just because we are able to clean it and put on perfume and so forth, which is the feeling of being clean that is socially accepted, in reality that is not really cleaning the body. By nature, under the skin, the body is still dirty. If we cannot really clean what is inside just by cleaning the surface how can we rest by thinking that the body is clean and pure? When we analyse in this way, we can then definitely begin to also see through reasoning that there is a misconception which lies behind the notion that the body is clean and pure. That notion only arises because of ignorance; it is the ignorant mind that contributes to this notion. The analogy given in the commentary is:

Two jackals were sitting under a palasa tree. When a palasa blossom [a particular type of tree which has a particular type of blossom] fell, one of them thought they were all like that. The other thought that though the blossom that had fallen was not meat, the ones still on the tree were meat.

This is like thinking that what leaves the body is filthy, while that which remains in it is clean. As indicated in the analogy, one of the jackals has a realistic understanding that all the blossoms are the same and has no further assumptions. Whereas the other jackal thought, ‘Well, the one that fell down wasn’t be meat, but there must still be meat on the tree’. By being overly attached to meat in general it assumes there must be meat on the tree. Our thinking about the body is similar. Even though we may generate a conception that what is produced from the body is not clean (which is quite obvious), we can still hold the notion that the body must be pure and clean, and therefore attractive.

1.2.2.6.3. Refuting that women’s bodies need not be given up on the grounds that sages are seen to enjoy them

Assertion:

Since ascetic sages do not give up women’s bodies, craving for women is not something to abandon.

Answer:

If, like leprosy, being full of 72
Urine were not common to all,
Those full of urine, just like lepers,
Would be shunned by everyone.

Here, ‘sages’ refers to Brahmins and also kings and the like. In India at that time Brahmins, kings and the like were considered to be of high caste, and therefore pure and clean. Brahmins particularly are considered to be very pure because of their caste and their social standing; likewise with kings and other noble beings.

This sub-division arises because of the assertion that since very highly regarded people such as Brahmins and kings, who are considered socially as being pure, have a relationship with women, then that must be an indication that women, by default, must also be pure. Basically, this doubt arises from thinking that if pure beings can have attachment, then the same must be feasible for me too. [laughter]. This is using others as an excuse for oneself to also have attachment.

This is also very much related to our normal erroneous way of thinking. When we see others misbehaving in some way, we take their example as a reason or excuse for us to also engage in that way. It is hard for us to see others doing good and say, ‘Because others are doing good, I should also follow that example and also be good’. [laughter].

The meaning of this verse is explained with an analogy. The reason why sages, Brahmins, kings and the like – those who are considered to be pure, and who are socially held in high esteem – have attachment to women’s bodies is because they themselves possess a similar body. which is made out of a

similar substance. It is not because women's bodies are so pure that they are attached to such bodies, but because they have a similar impure body themselves, so having an impure body to begin with is the reason why one is attached to other impure bodies.

The meaning of the verse is also explained in the commentary, however the main point that one should understand is that the verse serves as an answer to the assertion by using the analogy of lepers. If those who have contracted leprosy were pure and clean, then they would not be shunned, abandoned or avoided. The fact that those who have contracted leprosy are shunned by society and kept at a distance is because leprosy is seen as being impure and contagious, and that's why others fear it. Using that as an analogy, it explains how women's bodies are not pure and clean. The reason that sages and the like have attachment to a woman's body, is because they have a similar type of body themselves, not because the other's bodies are by nature clean. As the commentary reads:

Although women are full of urine, these sages do not give them up because they themselves are the same.

It is quite explicit that the reason for not giving up women is because they have the same type of body. The commentary continues:

If only some and not all were full of urine, those full of urine would be shunned by those who were not, just as one holds one's nose and avoids contact with lepers.

Women are not avoided because all are alike, not because they are clean.

As explicitly indicated here with the leper analogy, the reason why those who don't have leprosy are almost disgusted by those who do have leprosy, is because it is seen as being dirty, or something which one does not like to have contact with. That's why they are kept at a distance and generally shunned in society. If there were some women who were considered dirty and some others who were pure, then that would also be the case with women. But all women are alike, and those who are attached to women also have the similar bodies. Therefore attachment arises for anyone who has a similar body. That is the main point.

The main points to be understood here is that while in reality, male and female bodies are unclean by nature, the reason we are attached to the body is because of the erroneous notion of seeing the body as being pure and clean. Out of that ignorance attachment to the body arises. The analogy making the meaning of the point clearer is:

A man without a goitre visited a place full of people with goitres and was thought ugly.

Apparently there are certain areas (especially in old times) where almost everyone in the village would have a goitre. It was very normal to have a goitre, and not considered as ugly. Whereas of course in a larger society, having a goitre is considered as ugly. However, in an area where everyone has a goitre, it becomes the norm, and so when someone without a goitre comes to such a place, they would be seen as being very strange. Some goitres are really quite large, as big as the head, so if that is the norm, then someone without a goitre looks very strange, as if something was missing.

When you derive the meaning of the analogy the point is that even though a goitre is not normally considered to be a beautiful feature of the body, in a place where everyone has a one it is considered to be nice and normal, and maybe even beautiful. Therefore when someone who does not have a goitre arrives, they are seen as being ugly. The notion of a goitres as a beautiful extension of the body arises out of their ignorance, and out of their misconception they consider it as being beautiful. That is similar to our attachment to the body.

1.3. Refuting the idea of cleanness because of wearing perfumes and so forth

Assertion or doubt:

Though a woman's body is unclean, the uncleanness can be removed by beautifying it with perfumes and so forth.

Answer:

*Just as someone lacking a part
Is delighted with a substitute nose,
Desire holds that impurity is
Remedied by flowers and so forth.*

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Even after having accepting that a body is by nature impure and unclean, and therefore any contaminated body including a woman's body is also in the nature of being unclean and impure, a further doubt may arise that uncleanness can be removed with perfumes and so forth.

This is something that we definitely see, and that we don't have to ponder. People rely upon external substances such as perfume, make-up and so forth to beautify themselves, and by doing so, they have the feeling that they are clean and pure. The main doubt is that even though the body is unclean, the uncleanness can be removed and the body can be beautified through perfumes and so forth, so isn't that reasonable? Therefore, the argument goes, it is appropriate to have attachment to the body, because it can be beautified.

This mode of thinking really does occur, doesn't it? We have this notion when we are dirty that the moment after cleaning up and putting on perfume and makeup we have become clean and beautiful. So, we feel that it is appropriate to have attachment to such a beautified body. As was pointed out earlier, the need to clean and beautify the body, indicates that the body by its very nature is impure and unclean. It is only when it is beautified and made clean through external substances and conditions, that it is then viewed as being clean and pure, and thus attachment arises.

In explaining the meaning of the verse, the commentary gives this analogy:

It is like a man lacking a part because his nose has been cut off, who is delighted with and proud of a golden artificial substitute.

In reality, it is considered as ugly when a such a prominent limb of the body as the nose is missing. However if the person puts on a beautiful substitute they can actually generate a sense of pride by thinking that the substituted nose makes them beautiful. In fact, because the natural nose is missing, it is not a situation to be proud of at all, but because other external conditions have created a nose, then a sense of pride arises from that. However, in reality, despite the artificial nose, it is still a person without a nose, so there is nothing to be really proud of. Even if they put on an artificial nose, it still remains the fact that they are a noseless person.

As the commentary further says:

Attaching flowers and so forth to the body as a means to remedy its foulness and holding that this will make the body clean, will not do so.

This is the same as the earlier analogy: the notion that one can beautify the body by attaching perfume, flowers and so forth to it, thinking that such external objects make one beautiful. In reality, the body remains by its very nature unclean and impure, and nothing can really change that, but still the notion arises, 'I am beautiful'. The analogy given in the commentary is that

It is like smearing butter on a cat's nose, which makes it think even a handful of insipid food is rich and tasty.

This particular analogy refers to tsampa. Normally if you make

a tsampa meal with a lot of butter and sugar, it is considered to be rich and tasty. In particular, adding butter to the tsampa makes it rich and tasty. So if you smear butter on a cat's nose and give it tsampa made with just plain water and no butter at all, it thinks that it's eating a very delicious tsampa meal with butter, just because of the fact there's some butter smeared on its nose. The cat can smell the butter and it assumes that the meal it's eating is also rich with butter.

1.4. Refuting the idea that anything towards which freedom from desire may arise is clean

Assertion:

There are fragrances and so forth for which one invariably feels desire.

Answer:

*It is inappropriate to call clean that
Toward which freedom from desire arises.
Nor is there anything which is
A definitive cause of desire.*

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The meaning of the verse as the commentary explains:

There is no thing which is a definitive cause of desire since in the end one will become free of desire toward all things. To call clean the body, toward which exalted Foe Destroyers have generated freedom from desire, is inappropriate.

The main point being made here is that if an object was truly desirable and therefore attractive from its own side, then Foe Destroyers would not lack desire for the object, but will also see it as being attractive. However the fact is, Foe Destroyers have overcome the state of seeing desirous objects as being attractive. This is because the very nature of objects are not desirable, and there's no real attractiveness within the objects themselves.

The analogy that is given in the text is:

A merchant not recognising his daughter, felt strong desire for her, but when he recognised her, he was free from desire.

The analogy indicates that even in worldly circumstances, there can be similar situations to the Foe Destroyers in their rejection of objects as desirous. This analogy is of a merchant who left on a trading mission while his wife was still pregnant. He was gone for a long period of time, and did not know that the child was a girl, who had grown up by the time the merchant returned. When he came back to his home town he saw some older girls playing, and noticed that he had an attraction towards one girl. When someone pointed out to him that that this girl was his daughter, the attachment immediately went away. Suddenly what seemed initially attractive was no longer an object of desire.

1.5. Nominally all four non-erroneous features are possible with regard to one thing

The outline refers to the way the four erroneous features of impermanence, uncleanness, suffering and selflessness can be all posited in the one object.

Assertion:

Is it possible or not for a single thing to comprise all four of these undistorted features, such as impermanence and so forth?

*In summary, all four, that is
Impermanence, uncleanness, suffering
And selflessness are possible
With regard to a single [thing].*

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As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

In summary, all four – impermanence, uncleanness, suffering and selflessness – are possible with regard to a single [contaminated] thing [for example, even a

contaminated body]. Whatever is a product is impermanent, because of being momentary. Whatever is impermanent is unclean because it produces aversion. Whatever is unclean is suffering because it harms. Whatever is suffering is selfless, because it is not under its own power. Therefore, developing aversion to cyclic existence, the uncleanness of which is exemplified by one's own body, make effort to gain the path to liberation.

This summary refers to all of the points that were made earlier, by thinking about the body as being impermanent and unclean in nature and so forth. Contemplating that, one develops renunciation. Having developed renunciation, one then strives to train in the path to achieve liberation.

The actual verses from the root text have already been completed, however the next stanza is from the author of the commentary, Gyel-tsap Je himself:

Understanding that sentient beings are also bound
Like oneself in this unclean prison,
With energy generate compassion observing
transmigrators,
And make effort to accomplish highest enlightenment.

'Unclean prison' in the context of the first two lines of this summarising stanza, refers particularly to our contaminated body. To think of any inmate being attached to their prison would be quite absurd. However, we are in a similar situation of being attached to our own unclean body. This chapter has gone into detail about explaining how the body is unclean, and impure by its very nature. If we can then understand how we are obsessed with this impure body and therefore attached to it, we clearly see the absurdity and the inappropriateness of being overly obsessed and attached to this body. One can then begin to develop renunciation, which means, 'I wish to abandon such an impure body which is a source of suffering for ourselves'.

Renunciation and compassion

Once one develops that attitude of renouncing the impure, contaminated body in particular and samsara in general, then using that same attitude we divert our attention toward other sentient beings. Then we can see how other sentient beings are also in a similar situation to ourselves, being overly obsessed with our impure, prison-like bodies, and how they experience great suffering because of that. When we can understand that and develop the wish to free other sentient beings from that situation, that is what is called compassion. Renunciation and compassion are similar attitudes but they differ in terms of their focus. When the focus is on oneself, wishing to be free from samsara it is called **renunciation**. **Great compassion** is when the focus is on all other sentient beings, wishing them to be free from the prison of cyclic existence.

It is a fact that it is not possible to develop compassion for other sentient beings without first developing renunciation for oneself. If, however, one focuses only on oneself, wishing to be free from suffering only for oneself and just remains with that attitude, then it is only a cause to achieve self-liberation. With that attitude one cannot achieve enlightenment, only liberation. Therefore the emphasis here is, as it has been from the very beginning of the text, on developing love and compassion toward other sentient beings, thus creating the causes to achieve enlightenment, which is the ultimate means to benefit other sentient beings.

In the process of contemplation, one first contemplates one's own situation, seeing how we are bound by the chains of desire and grasping to samsara. After contemplating thoroughly on how we are in the prison of samsara, we then use that as a basis to understand how others are also suffering just like ourselves. Then, as one directs one's focus towards other sentient beings,

contemplating the fact that other sentient beings have all been equally kind to oneself, as well as suffering just like oneself, one begins to generate love and compassion for others.

It is feasible to think about the welfare of other sentient beings. Because everyone is in the same situation as oneself. Furthermore there is much more reason to focus on other sentient beings and their welfare, because each and every sentient being has been equally kind to oneself. When the mental state of recognising the kindness of other sentient beings becomes very strong, then the wish to repay their kindness can be developed.

Then one goes further, looking into how one could possibly free other beings from suffering. One then comes to understand that the only way to free all sentient beings from suffering is to achieve enlightenment for oneself first. Since there is no other way, striving to achieve enlightenment to benefit other sentient beings, becomes the ultimate way. When one contemplates in this way, then bodhicitta can be developed. This is the way we train our mind, by doing the essential practice which we can derive from these teachings. It is very useful therefore, just even to recite this last stanza. As we recite it, we think about the meaning and then spend some time just contemplating that meaning. That in itself can be a great daily meditation for ourselves.

Seven-fold cause and effect method for developing bodhicitta

Using the earlier contemplation as a basis, one can further enhance the method for developing love and compassion and thus the bodhicitta attitude, by using the seven-fold cause and effect sequence of developing bodhicitta. The first four are the basis for developing love and compassion and helping other beings. They serve as a basis by reinforcing the need to benefit other sentient beings. Whereas the fifth, sixth, and seventh are the actual tools for helping other sentient beings, the seventh one being the actual bodhicitta mind. Five and six are great compassion and special intention.

1. Perceiving all beings as one's mother: In answer to the question, 'Why do we need to help other sentient beings?' we contemplate how, all sentient beings have been kind to us, particularly through the kindness of having been our mother over many lifetimes in the past; and how they have helped and cared for us in so many numerous ways, just like our own mother does in this life.

2. Remembering their kindness: The next step is remembering the kindness of all beings who have been kind to us as a mother.

3. Repaying the kindness: Based on remembering the kindness, the wish to repay that kindness can be generated. When the wish to repay that kindness becomes strong in the mind, then the real purpose of benefiting other sentient beings is stabilised in our mind.

4. Great love: By now we have gained a little bit of insight, so we can lead, help and guide others sentient beings who are blinded by the ignorance of not understanding reality. Most beings don't have the means to gain the insight, which is the Dharma and the teachings. Most of us have the teachings and perfect teachers who expound the teachings by explaining them clearly to us, and we have the intelligence to understand the teachings, so we have a much greater advantage. We already have many qualities, techniques and methods to help other sentient beings.

Therefore it is most appropriate that we extend our help to them, with both temporary help and ultimate help. Temporary help is giving the things that other beings might need now – practical needs such as food and clothing, medicine and so forth. That help is however only of temporary benefit. The ultimate means to help other sentient beings is to guide them out of samsara - the cause for all suffering. By giving them the

means to come out of samsara, you're helping them out of their prison. By guiding and helping others, and giving advice you are helping them to free themselves, so that they do not have to experience the sufferings over and over again. That is the ultimate way to help them.

You can relate the seven cause and effect sequence in a very practical way in every-day life, if you can consider you mother as being kind to you in this life. As one thinks about the kindness of one's mother, one comes to a point where remembering her kindness becomes spontaneous and natural. Then the next stage which follows naturally, is the wish to repay that kindness. We can see that there are people who say that they would do anything to help their mother; it is really a spontaneous wish and they will go out of their way to help their mother in whatever circumstances. When the earlier stage of recognising and remembering the kindness becomes strong, then the wish to repay the kindness to one's mother in this life becomes very strong. Naturally, one then wishes to do anything. When one wishes one's mother to be happy and joyful that is what is called love. When that is extended to all sentient beings, it becomes great love.

5. Great compassion: When the wish for one's mother to be completely free from all suffering is generated, then that is what we call compassion. When this wish is extended to all living beings, it becomes great compassion.

6. Special intention: When the wish for all mother sentient beings to be happy and free from suffering is generated to the point where one feels that there is no-one else but myself who has that responsibility. Just as one would think that 'I have the responsibility to make my mother as happy as possible and to see that she does not suffer in any way', taking upon that responsibility oneself, similarly when that sort of responsibility is extended to all sentient beings, then that is when special intention is developed.

Furthermore, one comes to understand that even though one is willing to take on full responsibility for bringing about the happiness for one's own mother, one may find that one does not have the capacity or ability to do so right now. When that understanding is extended to all sentient beings, and one searches for a solution, one comes to realize clearly that it is only by achieving enlightenment that one can help all beings to be free from suffering. It is only an enlightened being, a buddha who has the means to do that. So, in order to benefit my mothers-all sentient beings, I have to achieve enlightenment and become a buddha myself. That is the only way.

7. Bodhicitta: When that confirmation is developed, and the determination to achieve enlightenment in order to fulfil the responsibility of helping one's mothers-all sentient beings is developed in one's mind, that is when bodhicitta is developed.

This is the process of the seven-fold cause and effect training of the mind in developing bodhicitta. Contemplating this again and again leaves a very strong imprint on the mind for developing bodhicitta. So it is very useful and very important for us to meditate in such a way.

2. Explaining the name of the chapter¹

This traditionally comes at the end.

This concludes the commentary on the third chapter, showing how to abandon erroneous belief in cleanness, from Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas".

This concludes the outlines of the main part of the text as well as the commentary.

¹ In the teaching of 18 July 2006 this was given as 2. Summarising the purpose of the chapter.

Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 September 2006

As usual we sit in an upright, comfortable position and generate a positive motivation such as, ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to attain enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and put it into practice as best as I can’.

CHAPTER 4: EXPLAINING HOW TO ABANDON ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF OURSELF BY SHOWING THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF CONSIDERING CONTAMINATED THINGS AS ‘I’ AND ‘MINE’

This chapter explains how to abandon erroneous conceptions of oneself by showing the inappropriateness of considering contaminated things as ‘I’ and ‘mine’. In general ‘I’ refers to the self of the person, and ‘mine’ refers to other existent phenomena, such as the aggregates and all external phenomena. More particularly ‘I’ is called the possessor and ‘mine’ refers to what is being possessed. Therefore the ‘I’ as a possessor is the actual being or person, and what is being possessed is referred to here as being mine.

The erroneous conception of the self of person, is viewing the ‘I’ itself, as having inherent existence, or having its own characteristics. Since neither the ‘I’, nor what is possessed by the ‘I’, mine, exists by its own characteristics, and neither ‘I’ nor ‘mine’ exist inherently, this chapter (and others further on), shows how to overcome that misconception. They show how a conception of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ is an erroneous view, because they do not exist in the way that we see them.

There are two main headings:

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

1. Explaining the material of the chapter

This section is presented under two main headings:

- 1.1. Briefly showing how to refute the referent object of pride
- 1.2. Extensive explanation

1.1. Briefly showing how to refute the referent object of pride

*Who that is wise about worldly existence
Would be arrogant, thinking “I” and “mine”?
For all things belong equally
To all embodied beings.* 76

The antidote to overcome manifest conceptions of a self is explained in this chapter, while destroying the seeds of conception of a self is explained in the later chapters. The *seed of conception* is explained as *that which serves as a basis for producing further conceptions of a self*. This had

been explained in earlier teachings¹, however just to mention it again, the seed is the basis that produces further conceptions of the self.

Moreover, since the kings are very proud, the conceptions of “I” and “mine” are explained mainly with reference to them.

So the manifest level of the ‘I’ and ‘mine’ is being dealt with in this chapter, and the example that is used is the king, because kings can have great pride and arrogance.

Generally all phenomena are said to be classified into self and others. However, here the ‘I’ and ‘mine’ refer particularly to the possessor and that which is possessed by the ‘I’ (that which is directly used by what is called the self).

By considering oneself praiseworthy, arrogant pride arises, thinking, “I am the owner”, which is a conception of the self, and, “These things are mine.”

Because of a great sense of natural pride and arrogance a king thinks, ‘I am the owner’, which comes from the grasping at the self. The misconception here, which is called the grasping at the self, should be understood in relation to the pride of the king. When arrogance is developed as in, ‘I am the owner’ and ‘These things are mine’, that conception arises from the misconception of grasping at the self. This is because the king has the view of the self as being an independent self, not depending on anything else. This misconception of a self-sufficient independent self then leads to pride and arrogance, which arises as, ‘I am the owner and the subjects and so forth are mine’. So the secondary misconception of ownership arises from the primary misconception of viewing the ‘I’ as being an independent self-sufficient ‘I’.

The misconception that these things are mine also arises through viewing the objects that are possessed as being self-sufficient independent existing phenomena. Because of that misconception, further misconceptions such as, ‘These things are mine’ arise with an arrogance and strong sense of attachment.

This does not occur in the excellent who think correctly about the state of worldly existence.

What is being explained here is that from this sort of misconception, which is based on grasping at the self, followed by thinking, ‘I am the owner and these things are mine’, will not occur for excellent beings, who have the correct understanding of worldly existence.

The erroneous view of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ which ordinary beings have, is what leads one into samsara. Because of the grasping, attachment arises, and from attachment one creates karma. Likewise with anger: when one does not meet with the conditions that one wishes for then aversion arises, which is the reverse of attachment, and one creates karma. So due to attachment and aversion one creates karma, which become the causes to circle in samsara over and over again. Therefore ‘the excellent’, who are noble beings that have that correct understanding of selflessness, will not adopt this erroneous view.

Generating such pride might be appropriate if a certain person could have control over certain things throughout their lives.

¹ See for example 9 September 2003

What is being explained here is, if holding such an erroneous view was in accordance with reality, then that would be a worthwhile view to hold on to.

However, all things, such as different places, are the same as that through the power of previous actions they will eventually be used by all ordinary embodied beings.

What this refers to is the fact that even though a majestic being such as a king may hold the view of 'I' and 'mine', they could not possibly use all possessions just for themselves. The reality, is that everything is used commonly by all beings, and no one person can claim anything as being theirs, only to be used by themselves. There is nothing which can be owned and used entirely by one person. Everything in the universe is used commonly by beings who dwell in the universe. As the commentary states, 'For example, forests and houses are common property'.

Relating this explanation to the verse, we come back to the main point. As mentioned earlier, this presentation is an attempt to overcome what we call the manifest pride that is generated in beings such as kings and so forth, in fact in all those who are arrogant. Contemplating how there is nothing that can be claimed as being solely possessed by oneself, and how in reality everything is shared common property, definitely minimises and reduces a sense of pride, in particular the feeling that things are mine and belong to me.

One can also apply further understanding in relation to what is explained here, which is that things do not exist from their own side but are interdependent. That can also help to reduce the manifest level of pride. We can clearly see how a very powerful king could think, 'I own a lot of possessions, I own this country' and so forth. That very strong sense of manifest egotistical pride can definitely be tackled by this realistic approach of contemplating on how things are shared and common property.

When we use this explanation in a practical sense in our life we find we can relate it to personal experience. We do find, don't we, that there is a difference between viewing something as being entirely mine, possessed by myself and belonging to me, as opposed to an object that one considers as common property. With common property there is less sense of possessiveness, isn't there? Whereas for a particular thing that one regards as being 'mine' that sense of possessiveness is a lot stronger. That is something that we can see from our own experience.

When we take this as practical advice, it actually becomes very good advice about reducing a strong sense of attachment to things. As mentioned earlier the stronger the sense of ownership one has for something the stronger the attachment one has to that object. Whereas if one could consider things that one has as being common property, which can be used by anyone, then that reduces strong attachment to things.

It is the same in a family. If someone keeps things aside saying, 'This can only be used by a particular person', then whoever claims that object would have a strong attachment to it, whereas there is not that strong possessiveness or attachment to an object that is considered as being common property. Therefore this is actually pointing out a practical way of reducing attachment to objects.

1.2. Extensive explanation

There are three sub-divisions.

- 1.2.1. Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth
- 1.2.2. Refuting arrogance because of caste
- 1.2.3. Showing other means to giving up ill deeds

1.2.1. Refuting arrogance based on power and wealth

This is sub-divided into five categories.

- 1.2.1.1. Abandoning haughtiness for five reasons
- 1.2.1.2. It is inappropriate for a king to be proud
- 1.2.1.3. Considering what is religious and irreligious
- 1.2.1.4. It is appropriate for a king to feel distressed²
- 1.2.1.5. It is inappropriate for a king to have excessive attachment to his kingdom³

1.2.1.1. ABANDONING HAUGHTINESS FOR FIVE REASONS

This has five sub-divisions.

- 1.2.1.1.1. Inappropriateness of arrogance because the name of the king has been given to a servant
- 1.2.1.1.2. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the power to give and collect wealth
- 1.2.1.1.3. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of enjoying whatever objects one wishes.
- 1.2.1.1.4. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of being the guardian of people.
- 1.2.1.1.5. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the merit of protecting all beings.

1.2.1.1.1. Inappropriateness of arrogance because the name of a king has been given to a servant

Assertion: Since all world enterprises are under the king's control, pride is appropriate.

Answer:

*Society's servant, paid with a sixth part,
Why are you so arrogant?
Your becoming the agent of actions
Depends on being placed in control.*

77

In the first place how did the king come the king? He was selected by the people. It was actually the people who chose the king to work for them. So in fact the king is actually a servant of the people.

As the commentary explains, referring the earliest eras on this planet,

After the crops of wild rice, which were not planted by the people of the first era, declined and land was apportioned...

What the commentary is explaining here is how the world of this era came into existence. The first beings who inhabited this earth were beings of a pure race, who were like godly beings. They had a natural radiance of light from their body, so they did not need the light from sun. Nor did they have to rely on contaminated food, because they survived on what is called the food of concentration; they were high beings who did not have to rely on gross food. Also, there was no distinction between male and female. They were equal, with no sense of difference or discrimination. Then, as time passed by things started to slowly degenerate, and one of the first things that occurred was that people started to develop a fondness for each other, and then a bit of attraction to each other, and that led to a slow transformation in their appearance, which is when the different male and female organs began to form.

² The text says 'it is inappropriate' but this is a misprint or mistranslation.

³ This translation is a correction of what is in the text.

Because of that initial attachment to each other, their natural radiance started to diminish, and then the ability to sustain themselves on the food of concentration started to wain. Then they started to have to look for something to sustain themselves. Nevertheless their karma was still quite good and there were crops that they could eat. These crops were actually quite miraculous in that after they were reaped in the morning, they were ripe again by evening, so it was like they had a ready crop that grew spontaneously. However that also started to diminish, and they had to start accumulating for the next day, the day after and so forth.

Meanwhile, because they were attracted to each other and there were these distinct separate organs, there was sexual intercourse, and because of this reproduction occurred, and they started having babies. Then they had to make shelters, whereas earlier didn't need shelters because they were able to sustain themselves. With the need for shelter the beings started to become busier and busier, and more and more possessive of their things. They had to have houses which they had to protect, they had to start to accumulate their wealth and harvest, they had to start dividing the land and claim, 'This is my land where I grow my crop; you can not take my crop, and you can not come onto my land', and that is how disputes started to arise. Also because of attachment there were disputes and arguments over relationships, and this is how times slowly became more and more degenerate, with more and more problems.

As things started to get out of hand with disputes and so forth they all came together, and had a meeting. They decided to elect one of themselves, who was a bit stronger and more powerful than the rest, to be the leader to bring order. Having decided to elect a leader, they realised that, as his main job would be to rule and bring things into order, he should not have to do extra work to support himself, so they decided to offer him one sixth of their harvests.

...people began stealing each other's harvests. For protection they gave one sixth of their harvest as payment to the person they appointed to guard their fields and called him the king.

This is the explanation of how the first king came to exist on our planet in this era - he was appointed by the people. After that the hereditary system developed, but the first king was an appointed king.

How then can it be appropriate for you, the king, to feel arrogant when you are the servant of a community of many people, paid with a sixth of the harvest? It is inappropriate to claim proudly...

This is further explaining, how, in accordance with the explanation in the verse, because the king was appointed by the people and thus paid by the people to be its leader, he is actually like the servant of the community. 'So that is why it is totally absurd that you feel proud when you are actually a servant of us'.

It is inappropriate to claim proudly, "I control all activities". Your becoming the agent of an action depends upon your being placed in control and appointed agent by the people.

This explanation relates to the fact that it is inappropriate for the king to feel arrogant, and, in particular, to feel that, 'Everything belongs to me. I am the possessor, and everything is mine'. Firstly, in reality, the king was appointed to that position by the people, who elected him

and appointed him as king. So the very term and the very position is given by the people. Secondly, the ministers, servants and so forth are actually the ones who decide whether or not the king is an appropriate person to rule. If the subjects, from all the ministers and officials down to the servants and so forth, anonymously agree that the king is unsuitable to lead then the king will not have any power, and nor will he be able to exercise any power. So, because of these facts, it is inappropriate for the king to feel, with a sense of arrogance, that, 'Everything is mine and belongs to me'. With that understanding then the strong sense of pride and arrogance can definitely be reduced.

What is being directly tackled here is that false sense of pride as in, 'I am powerful', 'I am the owner' or 'I am the leader, and the subjects, and so forth, are my subjects and belong to me'. What is being pointed out here that the very status that you have of being in power, or regarding yourself as king is something that is totally dependent on the nomination of the people. It is not something that independently arose from your being. The king does not independently exist from his own side. In other words there is no inherent king from his own side. Rather, from the very beginning he has been totally dependant on the people who elected him, or named him as king. As mentioned earlier, if the subjects anonymously disapprove and agree not to have him, then the king can be deposed.

The analogy used here is,

For instance, it is inappropriate for a servant to feel proud when his master delegates a task for him.

When a master asks a servant to do something they willingly carry on that task without any sense of pride. They know that they have to do it because the master ordered it. In fact this analogy shows that it should be understood that the king is like the servant of the people. There should be no pride or arrogance in just being the servant of the community.

1.2.1.1.2. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of having the power to give and collect wealth

Generally another reason for a king to feel proud is because he feels that he has the power to give and take things back at his will. In fact it is inappropriate to have that view.

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king controls the giving and getting of wealth.

Answer: That is inappropriate.

*When those in his care receive their due, 78
They think of their master as the giver.
When the master gives what is to be given,
He thinks with conceit, "I am the giver."*

As the commentary states.

When those in the king's care receive their annual wages due for service rendered, they think of themselves as inferior and of their master as the giver.

This is referring to that fact that anyone receiving their due, their monthly wage or whatever, for whatever they are worth, receives it with humbleness, because anyone receiving what they are owed does not develop a sense of pride in receiving it. That being the case for those who receive wages, the master, in the case of king, or any other master, thinks, with conceit and arrogance, 'I am the giver' when he gives those in his care the wealth that is due. It is inappropriate to feel proud of being a benefactor just

because of paying employees their wages.

The main point being made here is in relation to the king. Just as those who work for the king would not develop a sense of pride and conceit in receiving their wages, because they are rightfully receiving what they worked for, likewise the king, from his side, should not feel conceit and pride in giving wages, because he is giving it to those who have worked for it, and to whom the wages are due. In other words there is no sense of pride in giving to those who are the right recipients. If the king did not give the due wages then it would be a debt, because he owns the people what they are entitled to receive as their pay. The main point being made here is that just as those who receive a payment do not have any conceit, likewise the king who gives that should not feel any conceit or pride in doing what is the normal outcome of work, which is that it be rightly done, and that payment for that work be rightly given.

So no sense of pride and conceit need be developed on either side. The receivers, such as the king's ministers, servants and other workers and so forth, do not have conceit and pride when they receive their wages, and likewise it is inappropriate for the king to feel pride in giving, because in reality it is not giving but just what rightly belongs to the other.

1.2.1.1.3. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of enjoying whatever objects one wishes

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king is free to enjoy all objects.

Answer: It is not appropriate.

*That which you wrongly regard, 79
Others [consider] a source of suffering.
Living by working for others,
What causes you pleasure?*

The commentary states,

What wrongly appears as a cause for superlative happiness to you king is seen as a source of suffering for those with discriminating wisdom and disciplined senses.

What is being explained here is that what seems to be happiness is actually a completely misconception, because it is in fact actually just suffering. It rightly appears as suffering to those with discriminating wisdom and disciplined senses. Therefore, what you think of as being happiness is in fact not really happiness or joy.

Further, as the commentary explains,

Since you have experienced uninterrupted suffering in the process of protecting large communities of people and must live by working for others, it is not a cause only for happiness. How can this cause you pleasure when it is a source of many problems?

This is referring to the misconception of the king himself, who has a sense of ownership and enjoyment at his disposal, whenever he likes. The pleasure that he himself thinks he has is, in fact, erroneous, when his obligations and all the actual work he does are considered. This also relates to the misconception we have of the riches of the king, and, in fact, of all those who have similar status to a king, and who have riches. We see them as having all the enjoyments, when in reality, besides the actual pleasure itself not being real happiness and actually being suffering, there is all of the suffering from the worry, and so forth, of protecting large

communities of people, and constantly working for the welfare of others. Dealing with so many difficulties, problems, wars and so forth, are all part of the responsibility of kings. So in comparison with the responsibilities and anxieties and frustrations of that workload, the seeming enjoyments are nothing. When that is realised by the king, as well as by those of us who view the position of the king, then the conception of it as being joy and pleasure is removed.

The analogy given here is that it is 'like craving for women and liquor and so forth'. Again, those who have attachment and crave for sexual intercourse, as well as those who are addicted to that, and to liquor and so forth, give up everything for their addiction, and it seems pleasurable to them, but in reality they suffer much more.

A further analogy is that it is similar to feeling glad at being appointed to punish thieves. Actually, punishing others for one's living, is not a really desirable job to have.

1.2.1.1.4. Inappropriateness of arrogance because of being the guardian of the people

Assertion: Pride is appropriate because a king is the protector of his people.

Answer: Pride merely because of that is inappropriate.

*When a ruler seems to be the protector 80
Of his people, as well as protected,
Why be proud because of the one?
Why not be free from pride because of the other?*

As the commentary explains,

A king may feel proud because he protects his people but it also seems the ruler himself is protected by the people, since he could not be the king unless they protected him. In that case why be arrogant because of the one?

What is being explained here in practical terms here is that the king may take pride in being the ruler, and thus being the protector of his subjects, but in reality the king himself has to be protected by the people. To begin with, without his personal guards and so forth, the king would be in danger, and furthermore on a wider range the subjects are the ones who put the king in his position, and they are therefore the protectors of his sovereignty, his status and so forth. While it may seem obviously inappropriate for the subjects to have a sense of pride in being the protectors of the king, why should the king have arrogance and pride over being the protector for the subjects, when both are actually equal in protecting each other.

The main point is the absurdity of the situation. If it is not feasible for the subjects to take pride in being the protector of the king then why should the king take pride in being the ruler or protector of his subjects, when they are equal.

The analogy is that it is just like a husband and a wife. They have an equal responsibility for looking after each other and there is no sense of pride about that. If that is the case between friends or partners, then the analogy fits the meaning of the king and his subjects in that there should be no pride in protecting each other.

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

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DISCUSSION

BLOCK: **5**

WEEK: **5**

19TH SEPT 06

1. Overcoming sexual desire will bring joy to one's mind. Elaborate on this advice given by Geshe la. [2]
2. How does the commentary treat having a possessive attitude towards one's spouse? [2]
3. Is desire for a woman (or man) pleasurable by itself? Prove why this is/is not the case. [2]
4. Sex is not in itself pleasurable. How does the commentary support this assertion? [3]
5. Relate the analogy which points out the unreasonableness of blindly maintaining one's desire. [2]
6. Give some examples that show the nature of the body to be unclean. [2]
7. '*The body is clean because one sees people taking pride in it.*' How is this assertion addressed in the commentary? [3]
8. '*Although women are full of urine, these sages do not give them up because they themselves are the same.*' What assertion is this analogy addressing? [1]
9. . What likeness do Foe Destroyers have to the merchant in the analogy about the traveling merchant and his daughter? [2]
10. Summarize the absurdity of being obsessed and attached to this body. Is this attitude the basis for developing renunciation? [3]
11. In the first verse of Chapter Four, what is taught to overcome manifest pride in those who are arrogant? [2]

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EXAM

NAME:

BLOCK: **5**

WEEK: **6**

26TH SEPT 06

MARK:

/24

1. Overcoming sexual desire will bring joy to one's mind. Elaborate on this advice given by Geshe la. [2]

2. How does the commentary treat having a possessive attitude towards one's spouse? [2]

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7. *'The body is clean because one sees people taking pride in it.'* How is this assertion addressed in the commentary? [3]

8. *'Although women are full of urine, these sages do not give them up because they themselves are the same.'* What assertion is this analogy addressing? [1]

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11. In the first verse of Chapter Four, what is taught to overcome manifest pride in those who are arrogant? [2]