
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 September 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: For the sake of all other mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the practice of listening to the Mahayana teachings and then put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2. *Showing that meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness can overcome the afflictions and their imprints*

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.2. *Specific presentation (cont.)*

There are two verses under this heading, the first of which was covered last time. The second reads:

34. *When objects and non-objects
Do not linger before one's awareness,
And since there is no other possibility,
They are totally pacified in non-existence.*

The commentary explains:

Thus, when no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingers before one's awareness, and as there is no other aspect of true existence at this time, one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent and then all elaborations become pacified. In the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly, all dualistic elaborations with regards to emptiness are pacified and although the realisation of emptiness, conceptually or with a meaning generality has not stopped dualistic appearance, it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regards to the meaning it ascertains. This verse and the lower five verses elaborately show the reality of the result.

The explanation starts with *when no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingers before one's awareness*. Here functionality refers to the category of compounded phenomena, impermanence and so forth, while non-functionality refers to permanent phenomena such as non-obstructing space.

This section of the text shows the absurdity of the **Mind Only** presentation in that if things were to exist truly, as the Mind Only say they do, then they would have to exist either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena. These are the only two possibilities - functional or non-functional. Here functional and non-functional can also be related to the basis of imputation and the emptiness of that base, or in other words, conventional illusory phenomena or ultimate

phenomena. If something exists it has to exist in one of these two categories.

When the commentary refers to *no truly existent functionality or non-functionality* lingering before one's awareness, it is saying that if true existence were established it would have to be established either as a functionality or a non-functionality. And since true existence doesn't appear before the awareness in either in these two ways, there is no other aspect of true existence that it could be. This leaves no other possibility for it to exist, as it does not appear to the valid awareness in any other way.

One realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent and then all elaborations are pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly. If truly existent phenomena were to exist then they would have to appear either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena; or as the basis of imputation, or the emptiness of that base. When one realises that it does not appear in any of these ways, then one sees that the object of true grasping is non-existent. What is being explained here is that grasping at true existence is a mistaken conception. Whatever appears to the mind that grasps at true existence does not actually exist in the way that it appears, because it is a mistaken conception.

When one realises that, then that is the dawning of the realisation of emptiness. As the commentary mentions, *all elaborations are then pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly.* When one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent, then all elaborations are pacified.

This is a very significant point. When the objects of true grasping are seen as non-existent, then, as mentioned earlier, all the elaborations are pacified. There's this statement in the teachings which says 'the non-seeing is the ultimate seeing'. This is the same point being made here. When one realises that the apprehended object of true grasping doesn't exist, then one sees emptiness.

Further on the commentary states, *in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly, all dualistic elaborations with regard to emptiness are pacified.* We had a lot of discussion earlier about how all dualistic appearances are pacified for a being who is in meditative equipoise realising emptiness directly. For such a being there's no dualistic appearance whatsoever - such as conventional appearance, or the appearance of the subject and object as being distinct, or true existence. So the three types of dualistic appearances have completely subsided.

Furthermore, *although the realisation of emptiness, conceptually or with a meaning generality, has not stopped dualistic appearance, it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains.* As opposed to the direct perception of emptiness, when one gains a conceptual understanding of emptiness, or the realization of emptiness with a meaning generality, although the true existence of objects is not perceived it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains, there's still the perception of the object and subject as being distinct. That is because emptiness is not yet perceived directly but rather through

a generic image. Thus, the dualistic appearance of subject and object being distinct is still present.

When the commentary mentions the *elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains*, it means that although all dualistic appearances have not subsided, the appearance of true existence in relation to the particular object that it is seeing subsides.

To explain how a conceptual mind perceives objects, think of how, when we see the colour blue with our eye consciousness, there's nothing that obstructs us from seeing the colour blue. We see it nakedly – blue - as it is, without any obstruction. When we close our eyes however and bring up the image of blue in our mind, we see the colour blue but not directly, we are rather see or perceive it through a generic image – or meaning generality. So we're not seeing blue directly. This is the difference between direct perception and perceiving an object conceptually.

What is being presented here in summary is the stages of ascertaining the ultimate reality of phenomena up to the point of directly realising emptiness. That process of gaining the realisation of emptiness directly is a gradual one where one first obtains the conceptual understanding of emptiness. With a conceptual understanding of emptiness, one ascertains a vivid and clear understanding of what emptiness is, but there is still something that obstructs one from seeing it directly. One is able to see emptiness only through the generic image and not directly. Therefore one has to meditate further to familiarise oneself with the meditation of realising emptiness. When one further develops that then eventually one obtains the actual direct perception of emptiness.

If we take someone who enters the Mahayana path from the very beginning, (i.e. not having entered either of the two lower vehicles' paths), then on the first two paths, the **path of accumulation** and the **path of preparation** the bodhisattva has only a conceptual understanding of emptiness, and has not yet developed the direct realisation of emptiness.

Whenever a bodhisattva obtains **calm abiding focussing on emptiness**, then they have reached the **path of accumulation**.

When that bodhisattva, on further meditating on emptiness, develops the **special insight on emptiness**, then they reach the **path of preparation**.

The bodhisattvas on these paths still only have a conceptual understanding of emptiness. When that conceptual understanding which perceives emptiness through a generic image or meaning generality is further developed, and becomes a **union of calm abiding and special insight directly perceiving emptiness**, the bodhisattva then has obtained the **path of seeing**.

It is said that one with a definite lineage and sharp faculty who has not entered the Mahayana path yet, and who is inclined to become a bodhisattva, first obtains the realisation of emptiness and then develops bodhicitta. But one of duller faculty will generate bodhicitta first and then gain the realisation of emptiness. Those with sharp faculty who have not entered the path first ascertain as to whether enlightenment is possible or not, whether

liberation is possible or not, and whether it is possible to overcome the delusions or not. And then only by seeing and ascertaining that it is possible, and working towards achieving that, they develop bodhicitta because they realise that it is possible to overcome all delusions and thus see the possibilities of attaining enlightenment.

The older students will recall that this was explained in detail when we covered the Madhyamaka teachings.¹ Whenever this topic comes up in any teaching then one has to be able to relate it to this understanding. If we start to think that there's possibly a different explanation, then one has missed the point.

Gyaltsab Je then mentions:

A Red One from Toelung argues: On the basis of thinking that the meaning of this commentary, and of the abbot of the two truths, is that at the time of the manifesting of the mode of abiding, no object of knowledge or consciousness exists: 'I do not know consciousness without an object of knowledge and prime cognition without an object of comprehension. I accept the lack of true existence to exist truly.'

Gyaltsab Je further mentions:

Gyaltsab Je: It is very clear that they do not understand the position of the great pioneer², while oneself is under the influence of a mere personal investigation, to be conceited with the presumption that one has realised the meaning of the middle way is a great mistake.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3. *Showing that one will receive the perfect complete result of abandonment*

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.1. Showing with example that although there are no conceptual thoughts the hopes of the disciples will be fulfilled

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.2. Refuting arguments with regard to this

This is a very meticulous presentation of an argument questioning how the Buddha could benefit sentient beings if there are no conceptual thoughts.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.1. Showing with example that although there are no conceptual thoughts the hopes of the disciples will be fulfilled

What is presented first here is this carefully constructed argument:

Argument: If buddhas have pacified all conceptual consciousnesses, then they also do not think, 'I shall show the Dharma to those to be subdued' and therefore it is invalid to say they fulfil the purpose of sentient beings by showing the Dharma and through other actions or enlightened activities.

The first verse under this heading serves as an answer:

35. *Like the wish-fulfilling jewel and wish-granting tree
Fulfil hopes
Similarly, through the power of prayer
The body of the conqueror appears to disciples.*

The answer in the commentary reads:

Answer: There is no fault. Although they have no conceptual thoughts, the wish-fulfilling jewel grants

¹ See the teaching of 15 October 2002 for example.

² Nagarjuna.

humans their wishes and wish-granting trees fulfil the hopes of gods when supplicated.

Similarly, the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet them. Although the buddhas do not have conceptual thoughts, their form bodies appear and teach the Dharma through the power of previous prayers such as, 'May I be able to fulfil the purpose of sentient beings effortlessly and simultaneously.'

To establish the example, the commentary responds to the opening argument saying *there is no fault*. The example is the wish-fulfilling jewel, which has no conceptual thoughts. A wish-fulfilling jewel is a mythological jewel, representing the most precious and supreme object that humans could possess. When humans supplicate this wish-fulfilling jewel, all their wishes will be fulfilled. Likewise, for the gods a wish-fulfilling tree is the most precious object they can possess because when the gods make supplications to the wish-fulfilling tree, all of their wishes are fulfilled. Both the wish-fulfilling jewel and the wish-fulfilling tree are devoid of a consciousness, so of course they don't have any conceptual thoughts. The specific meaning of this is that it is not as if they have an intentional thought of wishing to benefit humans or gods, but nevertheless they do fulfil the wishes of the humans and gods.

To explain the meaning of the analogy the commentary states, *similarly, the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet the conquerors*. This is a very, very significant point in relation to our personal conditions right now. What is being illustrated here is that due to the aspirational prayers of the buddhas and the merit of the sentient beings, sentient beings are benefitted by the conquerors. When we relate that to our own situation and our own conditions, we can see that meeting with perfect Mahayana teachers is due to the teachers' aspirational prayers, as well as our own merit. So we need to consider ourselves as extremely fortunate to have met these good conditions right now.

Although buddhas do not have conceptual thoughts, their form bodies appear and teach the Dharma through the power of previous prayers such as, 'May I be able to fulfil the purpose of sentient beings effortlessly and simultaneously.' The resultant state of buddhahood is a result of the practices and unimaginably extensive aspirational prayers that have been made by bodhisattvas while engaging on the path. This also shows us the importance of the power of the aspirational prayers, which we really need to acknowledge.

At this point the Tibetan version of the commentary then states, *the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet them*. It is not really clear in the translation, but through the combination of the previous aspirational prayers of the bodhisattvas, the buddhas enacting those aspirational prayers, and due to the merit accumulated by the disciples, they are benefitted through the actions of teaching and so forth.

Having presented this explanation a counter argument is then presented:

Argument: Because a long time has passed since these prayers were made they cannot generate a result in

the present, and as the ones praying were bodhisattvas, it is invalid to posit the enlightened activities of the conquerors as their result.

This is again a very clever argument. Since the aspirational prayers were made by bodhisattvas on the path, they must have been made a long, long time ago. So how could those aspirational prayers made such a long time ago have taken effect now in the aspect of the buddhas' deeds?

We can see that the arguments being presented here are not really all that different to the questions and doubts that we normally have.

The next two verses serve as an answer:

36. *For example, although having passed
After having established an offering tree to the
garuda,
And though a long time has passed since then,
Poisons and so forth will be pacified.*
37. *Having established an offering tree to the
conquerors
In accordance with the bodhisattva practices,
Although the bodhisattva has gone beyond
misery,
They fulfil all purposes.*

The commentary explains:

Answer: There is no fault. For example, the Brahmin may have passed upon having established an offering tree to the poison pacifying garuda, and although a long time has since passed, the offering tree can even now still pacify poisons. Similarly, the bodhisattvas have established an offering tree to the conquerors by way of building up the two accumulations in accordance with the bodhisattva practices, and although the bodhisattvas have manifested the non-abiding nirvana, this does not contradict them fulfilling all the temporary and ultimate purposes of sentient beings. This debate arises from not knowing placement through continuity.

The commentary begins the explanation with the statement: *there is no fault*. The example to illustrate the point is a mythological story of a Brahmin who, in order to protect villages from harmful snakes and so forth, took it upon himself to make great offerings to a garuda, which is a mythological bird that devours snakes. From the mass of offerings that he established through his prayers and practices, he made the offering tree i.e. great mass of offerings, to the garuda. And even though a long time has passed since then, that mass of offerings still has that ability to continuously pacify poisons. This analogy is used to counter the earlier argument that there can be no effects if a long time passes.

Then, as further explained, *similarly, the bodhisattvas have established an offering tree, a great mass of offerings, to the conquerors by way of building up the two accumulations in accordance with the bodhisattva practices. Although the bodhisattvas have manifested non-abiding nirvana*, meaning that when bodhisattvas reach the ultimate state of enlightenment, *this does not contradict them fulfilling all the temporary and ultimate purposes of sentient beings*.

As the commentary further mentions, *this debate arises from not knowing placement through continuity*. Basically, this argument arises from failing to understand that a

benefit that occurs on a continuous basis has a continuous effect.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.2. Refuting arguments with regard to this

The first two lines of the verse are presented:

*38ab. How can one become endowed with a result
From having presented offerings to one lacking
mind?*

This is then followed by the argument from the commentary:

Argument by a hearer: How can one achieve the result of merit by making offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind? They also do not possess the thought of having received the offering.

This is an argument by a follower of the hearer vehicle who says, *how can one achieve the result of merit by making offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind?* This is implying that since a buddha does not have a conceptual mind that can know that they have received an offering and so forth, then how can one be sure that one actually receives the benefit of that offering?

Then the next two lines of the verse serve as the answer:

*38cd. Because it is taught that it is the same,
Whether they remain or have gone beyond
sorrow.*

The answer from the commentary:

Answer: It follows it is valid that merits are received by making offerings to the buddhas although they lack conceptual consciousness. Why? Because it teaches in the *Maitri Lion's Roar Sutra* that it is equally meritorious to make offerings to the body of a buddha that is actually present, as it is to the relics of a buddha who has passed beyond sorrow.

As presented in the commentary, when hearers say that it is not valid to make *offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind*, so it follows *it is valid that merits are received by making offerings to the buddhas although they lack conceptual consciousness*. And the reason is *because it is taught in the Maitri Lion's Roar Sutra*. Since we both agree that the Buddha's words in the sutras are a valid source that we can rely upon, there is a quotation from a sutra that explains our argument.

The quotation from the sutra reads,

Aside from the benefits of circumambulating,
Making offerings to those present and
To the relics of those gone beyond sorrow,
There is no difference in the merits
To a mind of equal faith.

As clearly mentioned in the quotation, when those who generate faith equal to the faith of the buddhas make offerings to images of the Buddha, they receive the merit equal to making the actual offering to the Buddha, because of that faith.

These are very, very significant and important points for our personal practice. Rather than doing some regular practice and making offerings mindlessly, we need to remember that we are making an offering to the actual Buddha. When we remember that, then it makes our practice much more powerful, and much more worthwhile because, as mentioned here, one receives the same benefit as if one had made the offering directly.

The main point is that when one makes an offering to a reliquary, or an image or representation of the Buddha as if it were the actual Buddha, then the benefit one gains from that is equal; meaning that the blessings one receives from the representation of the Buddha will be the same as receiving an actual blessing from the Buddha.

As you would recall, one of the refuge commitments is to regard all representations of the buddhas as being an actual buddha, and to have respect for any representation of the Buddha as being the actual Buddha. That is part of our refuge practice. Therefore these are significant points showing us the way to accumulate extensive merit when we engage in practices of making offerings and so forth. That is a significant point for us to recall.

Under the same heading the next four lines of verse are:

*39. Whether illusory or ultimate,
The result is taught in the scriptures.
For example, like having a result
Relative to a true buddha.*

The commentary explains their meaning:

The Buddha taught in the scriptures that one will receive a result by making offerings to the buddhas and so forth regardless of whether they exist conventionally or ultimately. For example, it is just as you assert. This can be seen in your assertion of the results with regard to a true buddha. The important meaning or point is that, while treating the analysis into the meaning of suchness with equanimity for the moment, regardless of whether they are true or false, one will receive the result in accordance with the functionality. This is the important meaning.

Again these are very pertinent points. Earlier we saw that the Realists – the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas – accept true existence. Regardless of whether one accepts the buddhas as being truly established or truly existent, or whether they lack true existence, the point is that by relying on the buddhas, making offerings and so forth, the resultant benefit is the same. The commentary goes on to say *it is just as you assert. This can be seen in your assertion of the results with regard to a true buddha*. Basically this is saying that gaining extensive results by making offerings to a true or truly existent buddha is similar to our earlier presentation.

The commentary further mentions that *the important meaning or point is that, while treating the analysis into the meaning of suchness with equanimity for the moment*. What it is saying here is: let's just put aside for the time being whether something exists truly or not, the main thing is that *one will receive the result in accordance with the functionality*. One will actually definitely receive the result of making offerings to the buddhas and so forth.

2.2 Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness

There are two subdivisions.

2.2.1. Argument

2.2.2. Answer

These are points that were raised earlier. As I've also emphasised, the unique presentation of the Prasangika is that one definitely needs to realise emptiness to obtain even liberation. Before we actually go into the explanation here, I'd like to check with you, why is it necessary to realise emptiness?

Student: It is my understanding that if any realisations of compassion or other such realisations weren't on the basis of emptiness they would not be accurate realisations. So we would always have new problems coming up, because those other realisations wouldn't have [inaudible].

Basically what you are saying in a roundabout way is another point that is also mentioned in the teachings, which is that compassion and so forth is not a direct opponent to the delusions, and therefore cannot overcome the delusions. That is the point here - in order to achieve liberation one has to overcome the opponent to obtaining liberation, which is this grasping at a self. It is only that which directly opposes grasping to a self - which is selflessness - that can become a cause to obtain liberation.

Can someone else give an explanation of what liberation means?

Student: Being free from afflictive obscurations.

I want the specific meaning of that word 'liberation'. What is one being liberated from?

Many students answer together.

The word liberation has a connotation that one is bound by something. To be liberated would have a connotation of being liberated from something to which one has been bound, right? Here that specific binding factor is karma and delusions. It's the karma and delusions that bind us to our contaminated aggregates. Our contaminated aggregates are cyclic existence and what binds us to our own cyclic existence of the contaminated aggregates is delusions and karma.

To give a specific illustration to clarify the point: If someone is bound to a tree with strong rope or chains then the tree is analogous to our samsaric aggregates. Basically, when we talk about samsara in relation to ourselves, our aggregates are our samsara; the person tied to the tree is analogous to our consciousness, and the strong rope or chains that bind that person to the tree are delusions and karma. When the chains are unshackled, then the person is free. Likewise, when karma and delusions are overcome, then we are freed from that which binds us to contaminated aggregates.

On a personal level we need to understand that samsara refers to our contaminated aggregates. Even in Tibetan, the term samsara can be misunderstood as being a place, and this has carried over into English. When samsara is referred to as a place then it is specifically referring to the abode of samsara.

The actual samsara is one's own aggregates. When the teachings refer to circling in samsara, they are referring to circling from the most unfortunate realm of the hells without respite, up to the highest form of the cyclic existence, which is called the peak of existence. Beings move through many different realms uncontrollably, i.e. bound by delusions and karma to these existences, from the lowest of the cyclic existence to the hell without respite, up to the peak of existence, and every other existence in between. We have no control because we are bound by delusions and karma. So when we talk about samsara, it is good to have a clear understanding that it is

our personal samsara, to which we are bound by our own delusions and karma.

When one is not bound by delusions and karma, yet is reborn in the abode of samsara, it has come about through aspirational prayers to benefit sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are still in the abode of samsara but they are not there involuntarily due to karma and delusions. Rather, due to their aspirational prayers, they are there as a way to benefit sentient beings in samsara.

2.2.1. Argument

The *argument* is presented in these two lines:

*40ab. One becomes liberated by seeing truth,
Why should one see emptiness?*

Other translations of the last line say, *What does emptiness do?* That is the argument.

This is a presentation from a hearer opponent:

Hearer opponent: By meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths' 16 aspects of impermanence and so forth, one will attain the result of a liberated arhat. Why should one realise the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena for this? It is without purpose and even unsuitable.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

Gyaltsab Je: For this hearer opponent not only does one not need to realise emptiness to attain enlightenment, they do not even accept the concept of selflessness of phenomena. These, who do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, are the main opponent. To refute them, and to refute on the side also those that, while positing the Mahayana sutras as valid, assert that one does not need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat, I state these sources which, refuting these opponents, establish that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to be liberated from existence.

2.2.2. Answer

The *answer* is presented in these three subdivisions:

2.2.2.1. Establishing that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to liberation from existence

2.2.2.2. Establishing it as the path to the non-abiding nirvana

2.2.2.3. Advising that it is suitable for those wishing for liberation to meditate on emptiness

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

This is again subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing this with the Mahayana sutras

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing this with logic

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing this with the Mahayana sutras

The lines from the verse under this heading are:

*40cd. Because it is taught in scripture that
Without this path there is no enlightenment.*

This is the point where the actual answer is presented, and there's quite a bit of it. So it will be good for you read it as preparation for next time.

In other parts of the text Gyaltsab Je attempts to just give a literal explanation of the verse by inserting all of the words of the verse into the explanation. Here we can see that much more explanation is presented, and this is

actually Lama Tsong Khapa's own words, as they are from notes taken when Lama Tsong Khapa himself was teaching. So these are actually very significant points.

In the following verses Shantideva will be establishing the Mahayana sutras as valid teachings of the Buddha. These are very significant points that will be presented, and so it is good to be familiar with them.

In the Middle Way teachings establishing that the Mahayana teachings are valid words of the Buddha is explained in the part on identifying the lineage of bodhisattvas. I'll not go through the explanation now but if you can prepare by reading the text, then it will become clearer when I go through the text in our next session.

We can conclude here for the evening. Once you are able to apply the logical reasoning in its proper place then it will be easy to understand and read the text. It just requires the application of logic.

Addendum

Final revision of the commentary on verse 29 from the teaching of 6 September 2016

29. *When the mind is devoid of that perceived
Everyone will have gone thus.
In that case, what is the benefit
Of that imputed as mere mind?*

The commentary explains:

If this is accepted: It follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation - because all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended.

If however one accepts this position, then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom.

The explanation is that *it follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation.* According to the **Mind Only** system the apprehension of form and the mind apprehending form being of different substance is the grasping to self of phenomena. So according to them, if things did exist externally then this is how it would have to exist, i.e. apprehender and apprehended being distinct and of different substance. Thus, they assert that the apprehender and apprehend are devoid of being distinct.

So the **Madhyamikas** are saying: at the time *when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended*, then all sentient beings by default would already be *thus gone ones* or enlightened buddhas *effortlessly, and attain liberation - because, according to you, Mind Only, all minds would have be free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended.* Since, according to you *all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended*, then this would mean that sentient beings are effortlessly and spontaneously liberated. Again according to the Mind Only, form and

the apprehension of form being devoid of being different substance, is the selflessness of phenomena. Thus the **Madhyamikas** conclude: *then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Block	Week	Teaching Date	Assigned
3	6	20 Sep 2016	27 Sep 2016

1. Explain verse 34

*34. When objects and non-objects
Do not linger before one's awareness,
And since there is no other possibility,
They are totally pacified in non-existence.*

The commentary explains:

Thus, when no truly existent functionality or non- functionality lingers before one's awareness, and as there is no other aspect of true existence at this time, one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non- existent and then all elaborations become pacified. In the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly, all dualistic elaborations with regards to emptiness are pacified and although the realisation of emptiness, conceptually or with a meaning generality has not stopped dualistic appearance, it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regards to the meaning it ascertains. This verse and the lower five verses elaborately show the reality of the result.

The explanation starts with when no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingers before one's awareness: here functionality refers to the category of compounded phenomena, impermanence and so forth, while non-functionality refers to permanent phenomena such as non-obstructing space.

This section of the text shows the absurdity of the Mind Only presentation in that if things were to exist truly, as the Mind Only say they do, then they would have to exist either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena. These are the only two possibilities - functional or non-functional. Here functional and non- functional can be also related to the basis of imputation and the emptiness of that base, or in other words conventional illusory phenomena, or ultimate phenomena. If something exists it has to exist in one of these two categories.

When the commentary refers to no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingering before one's awareness, it is saying that if true existence were established it would have to be established either as a functionality or a non-functionality. And since true existence doesn't appear before the awareness in either in these two ways, there is no other aspect of true existence that it could be. This leaves no other possibility for it to exist, as it does not appear to the valid awareness in any other way.

One realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent and then all elaborations are pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly. If truly existent phenomena were to exist then they would have to appear either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena; or as the basis of imputation, or the emptiness of that base. When one realises that it does not appear in any of these ways, then one sees that the object of true grasping is non-existent. What is being explained here is that grasping at true existence is a mistaken conception. Whatever appears to the mind that grasps at true existence does not actually exist in the way that it appears, because it is a mistaken conception.

When one realises that, then that is the dawning of the realisation of emptiness. As the commentary mentions, all elaborations are then pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly. When one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent, then all elaborations are pacified.

2. What is the answer to this "argument by a hearer: How can one achieve the result of merit by making offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind? They also do not possess the thought of having received the offering."

.... when those who generate faith equal to the faith of the buddhas make offerings to images of the Buddha, they receive the merit equal to making the actual offering to the Buddha, because of that faith.

These are very, very significant and important points for our personal practice. Rather than doing some regular practice and making offerings mindlessly we need to remember that we are making an offering to the actual Buddha. When we remember that, then it makes our practice much more powerful, and much more worthwhile because, as mentioned here, one receives the same benefit as if one had made the offering directly.

The main point is that when one makes an offering to a reliquary, or an image or representation of the Buddha as if it were the actual Buddha, then the benefit one gains from that is equal, meaning that the blessings one receives from the representation of the Buddha will be same as receiving an actual blessing from the Buddha.

3. a The unique presentation of the Prasangika is that one definitely needs to realise emptiness to obtain even liberation. Why is it necessary to realise emptiness?

...in order to achieve liberation one has to overcome the opponent to obtaining liberation, which is this grasping at a self. It is only that which directly opposes grasping to a self, which is selflessness, that can become a cause to obtain liberation.

3. b Explain the specific meaning of that word 'liberation'. What is one being liberated from?

To give a specific illustration to clarify the point: If someone is bound to a tree with strong rope, or chains then the tree is analogous to our samsaric aggregates. Basically when we talk about samsara in relation to ourselves, our aggregates are our samsara; the person tied to the tree is analogous to our consciousness, and the strong rope, or chains that bind that person to the tree are delusions and karma. When the chains are unshackled, then the person is free. Likewise when karma and delusions are overcome, then we are freed from that which binds us to contaminated aggregates.

On a personal level we need to understand that samsara refers to our contaminated aggregates. Even in Tibetan, the term samsara can be misunderstood as being a place, and this has carried over into English. When samsara is referred to as a place then it is specifically referring to the abode of samsara.

The actual samsara is one's own aggregates. When the teachings refer to circling in samsara, they are referring to circling from the most unfortunate realm of the hells without respite, up to the highest form of the cyclic existence, which is called the peak of existence. Beings move through many different realms uncontrollably, that is bound by delusions and karma to these existences, from the lowest of the cyclic existence the hell without respite, up to the peak of existence, and every other existence in between. We have no control because we are bound by delusions and karma. So when we talk about samsara, it is good to have a clear understanding that it is our personal samsara, to which we are bound by our own delusions and karma.

When one is not bound by delusions and karma, yet is reborn in the abode of samsara, it has come about through aspirational prayers to benefit sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are still in the abode of samsara but they are not there involuntarily due to karma and delusions. Rather, due to their aspirational prayers, they are there as a way to benefit sentient beings in samsara.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 September 2016

As usual let us begin with our practice of meditation, based on the motivation that we had generated during the recitation of the refuge and bodhicitta prayer. Indeed, whenever one engages in meditation practice it would be good to first begin by generating refuge and bodhicitta.

That requires not just reciting the words but actually spending some time generating a strong mind of going for refuge and trying one's best to generate a bodhicitta motivation. If one regularly spends some time doing this, then with familiarity one's practice will surely improve.

If one goes straight into meditation without first generating a proper motivation, such as taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, then the practice will not have much effect. We have recited these prayers thousands of times, but if we have not taken much initiative to really understand the implication of taking refuge and what it really means to generate the bodhicitta motivation, thus gaining some affinity with this, then all the recitations we've done so far would not amount to much benefit. I have mentioned many times before that generating a proper mind of refuge should not be underestimated; it is a really essential practice that subsumes the essential points of the entire path.

To incorporate a real understanding of refuge, one needs to spend significant time thinking about the two causes of going for refuge. The first is generating a fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence in general, and the sufferings of the lower realms in particular. The second cause is to generate the mind of complete trust and reliance on the objects of refuge, the Three Jewels. If one takes the time to generate the first cause in one's mind, it will familiarise our mind with genuine renunciation. Then, when one contemplates the second cause, one sees that the object of refuge has the full potential to protect one from having to experience the sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence. When one places one's full confidence and reliance in the objects of refuge e.g. in the Buddha, by saying 'You have the full ability to protect me. I definitely don't want to experience unimaginable great sufferings, so please bless my mind to be able to engage in the practices of developing renunciation as a way to be free from all sufferings'. Contemplating how all beings are also suffering and have the equal right to be free from suffering, and generating bodhicitta right after this, is the means to ensure our refuge becomes the Mahayana refuge.

Therefore, we do not just wish for ourselves to be free from suffering but for all living beings to be free from all sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence. For that purpose, with the understanding that the objects of refuge have the full ability to free oneself and all beings from all suffering, one makes supplications to request

blessings for oneself and all beings to be free from all suffering.

To make this more meaningful it would be more effective at times adopt ordinary language, as if we were speaking to a close friend, saying for example, 'I know that you, the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, have the full ability to help me and all sentient beings, so please grant me your blessings to subdue my mind.' When one thinks like this in ordinary terms, it can inspire us and have a stronger effect on our mind. At our ordinary level it's good to apply whatever means that work for our mind.

Another significant point about taking wholehearted refuge is that it is the foundation for receiving all other vows, e.g. pratimoksha or self-liberation vows. The teachings explain that the real foundation for receiving the vows is generating a mind of renunciation, and this in turn is based on refuge.

Going back to the two causes of generating refuge, when one wholeheartedly thinks about the suffering of cyclic existence, and particularly the suffering of the lower realms, one develops a strong sense of fear about having to experience that suffering; the greater the fear the stronger the determination to be free from the sufferings will naturally be. So when one develops that strong aspiration to be free from these sufferings, one naturally develops the second cause, one naturally develops the second cause, which is the mind that confidently understands that the objects of refuge have the ability to help one to be free. This in turn helps one to develop strong renunciation in one's mind.

More significantly, the causes for obtaining higher status in our next life involve the practice of ethics, which is to observe the vows that we have taken. This then protects one from being born in the lower realms. When one practises moral discipline and keeps the vows with the strong intention to be free from the lower realms, this becomes the cause for one to obtain a higher rebirth in the human or god realms in the next life. When one practices moral discipline with the intention that it be the cause to be free from cyclic existence in all the six realms, that then becomes the cause for one to attain liberation.

The teachings explain that when one incorporates these sentiments while taking refuge, it will ensure that the effects become really sound. Further, when taking refuge is preceded with the intention that it will be the cause for all living beings to be free from all suffering, then it becomes the specific Mahayana refuge, and a cause for enlightenment. In this way we can understand how the refuge practice incorporates the entire path. It is because refuge combines so many essential points of the path that His Holiness the Dalai Lama often emphasises that the act of going for refuge is an essential practice.

Actually, taking refuge is not unique to Buddhism. All religions have the practice of taking refuge that precedes whatever other practices or rituals they engage in. For example, before starting a ceremony Christians make the sign of the cross, representing the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Every tradition has an act of refuge essential to their faith. If we consider ourselves Buddhists then it is important to understand what our objects of refuge are, what they entail, what it actually means to take refuge

and so forth. As mentioned earlier, when we expand our understanding of going for refuge, it actually combines all the essential points of the path.

If our understanding of refuge is limited to just the recitation of the refuge prayer, then it would be not much more than that, just a recitation. If we fail to incorporate the actual understanding, then when we recite the prayer, it will be like 'Oh yes, I'll just recite this refuge prayer that I know from memory'. But then we will find that this doesn't really move our mind. If this happens, it's a sign we have not paid much attention to the actual meaning of refuge.

As mentioned earlier, the essential part of refuge is thinking about the two causes. If one takes time to contemplate the two causes of going for refuge in depth, it will move one's mind to the point where one really feels compelled to go for refuge wholeheartedly. This means one has contemplated the actual reality, not just imagined the sufferings of the lower realms and the suffering of cyclic existence in general, but contemplates the prospect of having to actually experience them personally.

Reflecting on this will move one's mind to the point where one feels the desperate urgency to be free from having to experience all those unimaginable sufferings, with the understanding that the objects of refuge have the full ability to help free oneself. Then the practice of going for refuge won't just be words, but a real act of going for refuge from the depths of one's heart.

I have noticed that Christian priests are also referred to as 'Father'. There might be different subtleties; grosser level and subtler level connotations of what 'Father' means. The priest himself can't be referred to as God so maybe it is more suitable for him if he refers to himself as 'Father'.

A student says that Christianity is patriarchal and all the higher positions go to men.

That seems to have changed in recent years. Now apparently women can also become priests. I noticed soon after I came to Australia that the gender discrimination was very prominent. Even in the same jobs men were paid much more and women were paid less. This must be true in other countries too, however I did notice that this was prevalent here. Equality and women's rights are significant issues to consider and will be beneficial for future generations.

(Meditation)

Now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I definitely need to achieve enlightenment, so for this purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The extent to which one makes this a commitment, prior to engaging in the teachings, will ensure the practice becomes more meaningful and purposeful.

2.2. Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness

There are two subdivisions:

2.2.1. Argument

2.2.2. Answer

2.2.1. Argument

The commentary begins by presenting the argument of a hearer opponent, who is a proponent of the Hinayana or Lower Vehicle tenets.

Firstly, it is good to understand the difference between a hearer who is a proponent of the Hinayana tenets and a hearer who has entered the path. A hearer who has entered the path doesn't necessarily have to be a proponent of the tenets of the Lower Vehicle, as there are also hearers who are proponents of the Mind Only School's tenets as well as the Middle Way School's tenets, i.e. the Svatantrika and Prasangika views. Hearers who are proponents of the Lower Vehicle tenets can, of course, definitely enter the path because they are able to develop renunciation. However, as they hold the views of Lower Vehicle tenets, they will not be able to advance further than the path of accumulation, because to attain the path of preparation and onwards one has to have the correct understanding of emptiness.

According to the Prasangika, all hearers and solitary realisers who are on the path of preparation, all the way up to becoming an arhat, have to necessarily be proponents of the Prasangika view because they would have gained the realisation of emptiness. That is because without the correct understanding of emptiness, followed by the actual realisation of emptiness, one could not possibly obtain the path of seeing and onwards. According to the Prasangika, anyone who realises emptiness would necessarily have to be a proponent of the Madhyamika Prasangika view.

So, a hearer who has realised emptiness would be a hearer who is on the Hinayana path and a proponent of the Mahayana tenet. This means that a proponent of the Mahayana tenets doesn't necessarily have to be a Mahayanist. Further, this means that someone who is a proponent of the Mahayana vehicle hasn't necessarily entered the Mahayana path.

We claim to hold the views of the Mahayana tenets, but we may not have entered the path of the Mahayana vehicle yet. The criterion for entering the Mahayana path is generating actual bodhicitta. Unless one has developed bodhicitta, which is the hallmark or doorway to the Mahayana path, there is no way one can enter the Mahayana path. Therefore one needs to know the distinction between a proponent of the Mahayana, and an actual Mahayanist who has entered the Mahayana path. This clarifies the distinction between hearers who are Hinayana proponents, and hearers who are proponents of Mahayana tenets.

One also needs to understand that there is a distinction between the uncommon Hinayana sutras and the common teachings shared by the Hinayana and the Mahayana. There are hearers who adhere only to the uncommon Hinayana teachings, and hearers who adhere to the shared teachings, which are common to both the Hinayana and the Mahayana. So, the hearer opponent

referred to in the commentary refers specifically to one who adheres to the Hinayana tenets.

Their argument is:

**40ab. One becomes liberated by seeing truth.
Why should one see emptiness?**

Hearer opponent: One will attain the result of a liberated arhat by meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths' sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.

This opponent posits that by meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths and the sixteen aspects, one becomes liberated. One needs to understand here that they are referring to the coarse understandings of the four noble truths.

For example, in relation to the four aspects of the truth of suffering i.e. impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless there is no specific difference in grossness and subtlety of impermanence between the Hinayana proponent's view and the Prasangika view. Impermanence is basically the same insofar that functional things are momentary - i.e. changing from moment to moment. So, there is no further subtlety than that.

With suffering, however, there some differences, but particularly in relation to emptiness and selflessness there is a huge difference of grossness and subtlety between the lower schools and the Prasangika. So this hearer proponent is essentially saying that by meditating on the direct perceptions of the four noble truths and the sixteen aspects, (which are only on the coarse level) one can become liberated. I have explained the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths in detail when we did the teachings on the Middle Way.¹

As further stated in the commentary:

Why should one realise the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena for that? It is without purpose and even unsuitable.

Here again we need to understand that the proponents of the Hinayana tenets, i.e. the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika, do not accept the selflessness of phenomena. Gyalsab Je further clarifies this in the comment relating to the opponents' views using the words of Lama Tsong Khapa.

2.2.2. Answer

The commentary beings by stating:

Answer: For this hearer opponent not only does one not need to realise emptiness to attain enlightenment, they do not even accept the concept of selflessness of phenomena. These, who do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, are the main opponent.

As explained here, the main opponents are those who do not accept the Mahayana sutras. This implies that some proponents of the Lower Vehicle do not accept the Mahayana as the true words of the Buddha. The commentary further explains:

To refute them and to refute on the side also those who, while positing the Mahayana sutras as valid, assert that one does not need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat.

Again, while some may assert the Mahayana sutras as the words of the Buddha, they do not, however, assert that one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena or emptiness to attain the result of becoming an arhat.

I state these sources which, refuting these opponents, establish that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to be liberated from existence.

The point here is that positing any sutra as valid (in this case a Mahayana sutra) means it has to be infallible in relation to the meaning that is presented. Hence, to present the Mahayana vehicle as valid requires accepting whatever is presented in the Mahayana vehicle to be infallible. Some may accept the Mahayana vehicle as valid on one hand, but then say that one doesn't need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat to be liberated, which is a contradiction. These include not only the lower schools of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika but also the Mind Only schools, and within the Middle Way school the Svatantrika as well, for they do not adhere to the correct understanding of the view of selflessness of phenomena.

The answer to the opponents' arguments is subdivided into three headings, which are meticulously presented.

2.2.2.1. Establishing that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to liberation from existence

That is, in order to be free from cyclic existence one cannot do without the wisdom realising emptiness.

2.2.2.2. Establishing it as the path to the non-abiding nirvana

Further, even to attain non-abiding nirvana i.e. full enlightenment, the realisation of emptiness is essential.

2.2.2.3. Advising that it is suitable for those wishing for liberation to meditate on emptiness

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

This is divided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing it with Mahayana sutras

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

The detailed explanation of this is presented in the Middle Way teachings that I have explained in the past.²

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing it with Mahayana sutras

**40cd. Because it is taught in scripture that
Without this path there is no enlightenment.**

It follows one definitely needs to realise emptiness to attain the result of a hearer or self-liberator arhat. For what reason? Because in the *Sutras of the Wisdom Gone Beyond* it teaches that without meditating on this chapter realising emptiness one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment.

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practices* it quotes the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras as saying that those with a recognition of functionalities cannot attain liberation, and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as those results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom. The scriptures refer not only to the highest enlightenment.

¹ See the teachings of June 2002.

² See 2005 teachings.

Further: I am not going to cite the innumerable quotes from the sutras showing that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena. In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

If one thinks, 'Is it not devoid of reason to state arguments to those that do not accept Mahayana quotes as valid' then there is no fault. The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments. The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation. Master Shantideva cited these texts also because he knew it would refute the wrong conception of thinking of isolated Mahayana sutra as not the words of the Buddha.

The commentary opens with a response to the Lower Vehicle hearer opponent who states that one does not have to realise emptiness in order to attain liberation. It confirms that one definitely does need to realise emptiness to attain the result of hearer or self-liberator arhat.

It notes that if one were to ask the reason, it is explained in the *Sutras of the Wisdom Gone Beyond* which teach that without meditating on the path realising emptiness one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment i.e. the hearer's enlightenment, the self-liberator's enlightenment or the bodhisattva's enlightenment.

It further explains:

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practices* it quotes the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras as saying that those with a recognition of functionalities cannot attain liberation ...

What is referred to here as the 'recognition of functionalities' is the recognition of true existence or grasping at a self. Then the commentary further explains

... and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

This means that enlightened beings such as the buddhas and all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator, are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

These include once returner, never returner and all the stages of the hearer's path, as well as the self-liberator's path all the way to the self-liberator arhat. All these are only attained in dependence on the perfection of wisdom, i.e. the realisation of emptiness.

The emphasis here is that the scriptures refer not only to the highest enlightenment. As quoted earlier, this refers to the Buddha of the three times, as well as the result of the stream enterer up to the self-liberator arhat. These are all mentioned in the teachings as those who depend on the perfection of wisdom, or the realisation of emptiness.

It does not just refer to the highest enlightenment as needing to understand the realisation of emptiness, but all of these earlier mentioned stages.

Then Gyaltsab Je mentions:

I am not going to cite the innumerable quotes from the sutras showing that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena.

Here he is indicating that there are many citations from other texts as well.

In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

In referring to the two lines from the root text, the commentary further mentions:

In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

This indicates that some followers of the hearer's path do accept the reasons of the Mahayana sutras. As such it implies this argument is for those who do not accept the Mahayana as the Buddha's words. Of course those who accept that the Mahayana teachings are the Buddha's words do not need to use any of the arguments presented here.

The next is:

Is it not devoid of reason to state arguments to those that do not accept Mahayana quotes as valid, then there is no fault. The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments. The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

As an answer to that argument the commentary says:

The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments.

In other words, the opponent does not need to have to completely accept all the valid reasons of that argument right away.

The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

The reasons of similarity and normality are presented next, along with the pervasiveness of these reasons.

The commentary further explains:

It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation.

The master [Shantideva] also cited these texts because he knew it would refute the wrong conception of thinking the Mahayana sutras are not the words of the Buddha. It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation.

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.2.1. Establishing it by way of similarity

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with common reason, which earlier mentioned normality.

2.2.2.1.2.1. Establishing it by way of similarity

*41ab. If the Mahayana is not established
Then how are your texts established?*

Argument: The Mahayana Sutras are not established for me because I do not regard them as the words of the Buddha, and I do not accept them to be valid. Stating them as an argument to establish that the realisation of emptiness is also the path for the hearers and self-liberators makes the argument equal to the proposition.

Answer: How do you establish the quotes belonging to the Hinayana basket, which you accept to be valid, as the words of the Buddha?

The reply to this by the opponent is as follows:

Reply: The Hinayana sutras are the words of the Buddha because we both accept them to be the words of the Buddha.

The opponent says here that presenting to me that the Mahayana sutras are valid, and quoting citations to prove it, doesn't work for me, because I don't even accept the Mahayana sutras as valid from the beginning.

The next lines of verse read:

*41cd. Since they are established for both of us.
Initially they are not established for you.*

This is the reasoning of similarity.

*42ab. The conditions through which you generate
faith
Are the same for the Mahayana.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines.

The reasons are exactly the same here because immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you. But later, through the condition of accepting them to be valid scriptures the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the Vinaya and the Sutra, as well as not contradicting the Abhidharma, the method for comprehending the words and meanings, you generated faith in the sutras. The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana Sutras.

The commentary states that the reasons presented are exactly the same as a Mahayana proponent refuting the Hinayana proponent who does not accept the Mahayana as the words of the Buddha, particularly *The Perfection of Wisdom*. Having asked 'How do you accept the baskets of the Hinayana as being the valid words of the Buddha?' they respond by saying 'because we both accept them'. Then the commentary mentions here:

Immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you.

What you state now as the Hinayana basket being valid words of the Buddha was not something you could establish right from the beginning. To see them as valid you had to go through a process of learning about them,

studying them, and then it dawned on you that they were actually valid. However, before engaging in studies to gain understanding, they would not have appeared to you as being valid.

How they accept them to be valid scriptures is done by:

Accepting them to be valid scriptures of the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the Vinaya and the Sutra, as well as not contradicting the Abhidharma.

So in relation to the three baskets of the Hinayana sutra, it is related that the earliest disciples of the Buddha gathered as a council to establish that they had heard it from the Buddha themselves. Then due to that and further engaging in training, such as applying the training of the three higher trainings of morality, contemplation and meditation and wisdom in this way, they tested out the teachings, as mentioned here:

The method for comprehending the words and meanings through reason, you generated faith in the sutras.

They established the reasons for validity through earlier accounts of how the sutras came into being, as well as having tested out the treatises through reason and logic. Then they are accepted as valid.

'Just as that is the case for you', the Prasangika school says:

The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana sutras.

This is equally true for the Mahayana sutras. When you engage in understanding and practice, test them out with reason and logic, then you'll establish the teachings of the Hinayana basket as valid words of the Buddha. It is exactly the same for the Mahayana sutras.

The next lines of verse read:

*42cd. If true because two others assert it, then
The Vedas and so forth also become true.*

43a. If you say, 'The Mahayana is in question',

The commentary explains here:

If this is not the case, and something becomes valid because two random people accept it, then it follows that also the Vedas and so forth are true, because there are two parties that accept them to be true.

Argument: Because you also accept the Hinayana sutras that I accept as the words of the Buddha, we do not have any dispute there. But because I do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, we have a dispute in that regard.

The explanation here is quite clear. If it is not the case that something becomes valid because two random parties accept it, then it follows that the Vedas, which are non-Buddhist tenets, are also true because two parties accept them to be true.

The opponent presents the argument:

Argument: Because you also accept the Hinayana sutras that I accept as the words of the Buddha, we do not have any dispute there.

The opponent says that 'there is no dispute with the baskets of the Hinayana teachings because you accept it and I accept it. But because I do not accept the Mahayana

sutras as the words of the Buddha we have a dispute'. So what the opponent is presenting here is that the very fact that there is a dispute over the Mahayana teachings indicates that it is questionable whether they are the words of the Buddha.

What is being presented as an argument is that because there is a dispute that is a reason to say that they are not valid. The remaining part of the verse that reflects on this meaning is:

*43bcd. Non-Buddhists also question the texts,
And other texts are also questioned by
Self and other. Therefore they should be
abandoned.*

Answer: The Hinayana scriptures are questioned by non-Buddhists and Hinayanists alike. Also, while the Hinayana scriptures are accepted by all eighteen Hinayana schools as valid, there are individual quotes, such as the quotes that show the existence of an intermediate state, which are accepted by some Hinayana schools as the words of the Buddha, but are also not accepted by some Hinayana schools. It follows that the Hinayana baskets being valid is also something to give up, as they contain parts that are disputed by Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools.

The commentary explains the Hinayana response that if you cannot accept the Mahayana sutras as being valid words of the Buddha because there is a dispute, then it follows that the Hinayana scriptures are also questioned by both non-Buddhists and Hinayanists, on the same basis. Within the Hinayana scriptures some texts assert that there is a self, and others refute that saying that there is no self. Also in terms of permanence, there are texts that say some functional things are permanent, and other texts say they are not permanent and so forth. There are many points of disagreement and thus dispute.

The commentary further mentions here that while:

Hinayana scriptures are accepted by all eighteen Hinayana schools as valid, however there are individual quotes, such as the quotes that show the existence of an intermediate state, which are accepted by some Hinayana schools as the words of the Buddha, but are also not accepted by some Hinayana schools.

As such it further reasons that:

It follows that the Hinayana baskets being valid is also something to give up,

The earlier Hinayanist argument was that because there is a dispute it would not be valid. Leaving aside non-Buddhist schools even within the Hinayana subdivisions, where there are disputes and arguments about different points, this passage implies that since there is a dispute, then it would have to be considered as not valid and be given up:

As they contain parts that are disputed by Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools.

The commentary mentions an example of a Hinayana sutra about the existence of an intermediate state, which some Hinayana schools would accept as valid, while others do not. Another example is the *Vinaya Sutra*; the Tibetan system follows a particular system of the Vinaya from *mulasavastivada* tradition, whereas the Theravadin follow the school of the elders, which is a slightly different system that presents the Vinaya vows. There are

slight differences in terms of the numbers of the full ordination vows, with the system followed by the Tibetan tradition having slightly more in number, albeit subsumed into the main ones. So in fact, there is not much difference in that regard as well.

This reminds me of the time His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke of meeting two Theravadin monks in a gathering somewhere; elder monks who His Holiness showed respect to and who in turn showed respect to him. When they sat down to have a little discussion he noted that one of the elder Theravadin monks said that 'we are the same in being followers of the Buddha, but there is a big difference between us'.

His Holiness was taken a little bit by surprise, then he actually started going through the vows in the *Vinaya Sutra* until it came to their notice that in terms of the Vinaya there was not much difference at all. His Holiness said that in terms of quoting and numbering the vows etc. he happened to have a better memory that day to quote even more recitations from the sutras. His Holiness commented that it made him feel good on that occasion to be able to quote the sutras well. That was in Tasmania.

Later, as a result of this encounter with the Theravadin elders, His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a particular proposal to have meetings with the monks from the Theravadin tradition to discuss these vows and the Vinaya sutras and other differences and the similarities between the different schools. Some meetings have taken place since.

In a recent teaching in Dharamsala, His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned that as a result of these meetings many Theravadin monks from the Thai tradition attended these teachings, as did the most senior abbot from that tradition. Apparently the abbot of the Theravadin monks was astonished at the Dalai Lama's depth of understanding and knowledge of the sutras.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
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Edited Version*

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Block	Week	Teaching Date	Assigned
3	7	27 Sep 2016	4 Oct 2016

1a. What is the advice given on how to incorporate a real understanding of refuge into our meditation?

If one goes straight into meditation without first generating a proper motivation, such as taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, then the practice will not have much effect.

To incorporate a real understanding of refuge, one needs to spend significant time thinking about the two causes of going for refuge. The first is generating a fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence in general and the sufferings of the lower realms in particular. The second cause is to generate the mind of complete trust and reliance on the objects of refuge, the Three Jewels. If one takes the time to generate the first cause in one's mind, it will familiarise our mind with genuine renunciation. Then, when one contemplates the second cause, one sees that the object of refuge has the full potential to protect one from having to experience the sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence. When one places one's full confidence and reliance in the objects of refuge e.g. in the Buddha, by saying 'You have the full ability to protect me. I definitely don't want to experience unimaginable great sufferings, so please bless my mind to be able to engage in the practices of developing renunciation as way to be free from all sufferings'. Contemplating how all beings are also suffering and have the equal right to be free from suffering and generating bodhicitta right after this is the means to ensure our refuge becomes the Mahayana refuge.

1b. What are the causes for attaining higher rebirths in our next life?

More significantly, the causes for obtaining higher status in our next life involve the practice of ethics, which is to observe the vows that we have taken. This then protects one from being born in the lower realms. When one practises moral discipline and keeps the vows with the strong intention to be free from the lower realms, this becomes the cause for one to obtain a higher rebirth in the human or god realms in the next life. When one practices moral discipline with the intention that it be the cause to be free from cyclic existence in all the six realms, that then becomes the cause for one to attain liberation.

2a. Describe the opponents who argue that 'One will attain the result of a liberated arhat by meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths' sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.'

The commentary beings by stating:

Answer: For this hearer opponent not only does one not need to realise emptiness to attain enlightenment, they do not even accept the concept of selflessness of phenomena. These, who do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, are the main opponent.

As explained here, the main opponents are those who do not accept the Mahayana sutras. This implies that some proponents of the Lower Vehicle do not accept the Mahayana as the true words of the Buddha. The commentary further explains:

To refute them and to refute on the side also those who, while positing the Mahayana sutras as valid, assert that one does not need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat,

Again, while some may assert the Mahayana sutras as the words of the Buddha, they do not, however, assert that one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena or emptiness to attain the result of becoming an arhat.

2b. Describe what it means to posit a sutra as valid.

The point here is that positing any sutra as valid (in this case a Mahayana sutra) means it has to be infallible in relation to the meaning that is presented. Hence, to present the Mahayana vehicle as valid requires accepting whatever is presented in the Mahayana vehicle to be infallible. Some may accept the Mahayana vehicle as valid on one hand, but then say that one doesn't need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat to be liberated, which is a contradiction. These include not only the lower schools of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika but also the Mind Only schools and within the Middle Way school the Svatantrika as well, for they do not adhere to the correct understanding of the view of selflessness of phenomena.

3a. What response, using references to the Mahayana sutras, is given in the commentary to the Lower Vehicle hearer opponent who states that one does not have to realise emptiness in order to attain liberation.

The commentary opens with a response to the Lower Vehicle hearer opponent who states that one does not have to realise emptiness in order to attain liberation. It confirms that one definitely does need to realise emptiness to attain the result of hearer or self-liberator arhat.

It notes that if one were to ask the reason, it is explained in the *Sutras of the Wisdom Gone Beyond* which teach that without meditating on the path realising emptiness one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment i.e. the hearer's enlightenment, the self-liberator's enlightenment or the bodhisattva's enlightenment.

It further explains:

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practices* it quotes the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* as saying that those with a recognition of functionalities cannot attain liberation ...

What is referred to here as the 'recognition of functionalities' is the recognition of true existence or grasping at a self. Then the commentary further explains

... and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

This means that enlightened beings such as the buddhas 'and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

These include once returner, never returner and all the stages of the hearer's path, as well as the self liberator's path all the way to the self liberator arhat. All these are only attained in dependence on the perfection of wisdom i.e. the realisation of emptiness.

The emphasis here is that the scriptures refer not only to the highest enlightenment. As quoted earlier, this refers to the Buddha of the three times as well as the result of the stream enterer up to the self-liberator arhat. These are all mentioned in the teachings as those who depend on the perfection of wisdom, or the realisation of emptiness. It does not just refer to the highest enlightenment as needing to understand the realisation of emptiness, but all of these earlier mentioned stages.

3b. Explain the 'reasoning of similarity' a division of 'Establishing it with logic' under 'Establishing that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to liberation from existence'.

*41ab. If the Mahayana is not established
Then how are your texts established?*

Argument: The Mahayana Sutras are not established for me because I do not regard them as the words of the Buddha, and I do not accept them to be valid. Stating them as an argument to establish that the realisation of emptiness is also the path for the hearers and self-liberators makes the argument equal to the proposition.

Answer: How do you establish the quotes belonging to the Hinayana basket, which you accept to be valid, as the words of the Buddha?

The reply to this by the opponent is as follows:

Reply: The Hinayana sutras are the words of the Buddha because we both accept them to be the words of the Buddha.

The opponent says here that presenting to me that the Mahayana sutras are valid, and quoting citations to prove it, doesn't work for me, because I don't even accept the Mahayana sutras as valid from the beginning.

The next lines of verse read:

*41cd. Since they are established for both of us.
Initially they are not established for you.*

This is the reasoning of similarity.

*42ab. The conditions through which you generate faith
Are the same for the Mahayana.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines.

The reasons are exactly the same here because immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you. But later, through the condition of accepting them to be valid scriptures the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the vinaya and the sutra, as well as not contradicting the abhidharma, the method for comprehending the words and meanings, you generated faith in the sutras. The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana Sutras.

The commentary states that the reasons presented are exactly the same as a Mahayana proponent refuting the Hinayana proponent who does not accept the Mahayana as the words of the Buddha, particularly *The Perfection of Wisdom*. Having asked 'How do you accept the baskets of the Hinayana as being the valid words of the Buddha?' they respond by saying 'because we both accept them'. Then the commentary mentions here:

Immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you.

What you state now as the Hinayana basket being valid words of the Buddha was not something you could establish right from the beginning. To see them as valid you had to go through a process of learning about them, studying them and then it dawned on you that they were actually valid. However, before engaging in studies to gain understanding, they would not have appeared to you as being valid.

How they accept them to be valid scriptures is done by:

Accepting them to be valid scriptures the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the vinaya and the sutra, as well as not contradicting the abhidharma,

So in relation to the three baskets of the Hinayana sutra, it is related that the earliest disciples of the Buddha gathered as a council to establish that they had heard it from the Buddha themselves. Then due to that and further engaging in training, such as applying the training of the three higher trainings of morality, contemplation and meditation and wisdom in this way, they testing out the teachings, as mentioned here:

The method for comprehending the words and meanings through reason, you generated faith in the sutras.

They established the reasons for validity through earlier accounts of how the sutras came into being, as well as having tested out the treatises through reason and logic. Then they are accepted as valid.

‘Just as that is the case for you’, the Prasangika school says:

The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana Sutras.

This is equally true for the Mahayana sutras. When you engage in understanding and practice, test them out with reason and logic, then you’ll establish the teachings of the Hinayana basket as valid words of the Buddha. It is exactly same for the Mahayana sutras.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 October 2016

As usual let us engage in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate a good bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings. Indeed, the mind of wishing to benefit others is a very important and precious mind.

If we don't have the right mindset, then even though what is to be practised may be quite clear, we might engage in practices that are contrary to the teachings. However, this will not occur if we generate the mind of wishing to benefit others.

An example of practising contrary to the teachings would be to immediately revert back to our old habits of becoming upset or angry in difficult situations, rather than generating love and compassion. That is the complete opposite to the mindset one should have. Although one wishes for happiness, one voluntarily engages in creating the causes for one's own misery or suffering. We know the teachings and if we fail to put them into practice, then that will be the inevitable result. While regularly familiarising ourselves with positive states of mind such as love and compassion may not completely prevent anger from arising, when situations that cause us to become angry occur, that love and compassion will help us immediately notice the anger and not allow it to take root. That comes from familiarity with practising love and compassion regularly.

Throughout the day, in our spare time, it is really important to intentionally put some effort in to generate and familiarise ourselves with a virtuous state mind; this is really important. We might claim to be Dharma practitioners and set aside a minimum time for practice, but most of our time we are completely immersed in the afflicted distractions. In contrast to that, if we actually take the initiative to periodically bring a virtuous object to mind, then that definitely contributes to having a genuinely relaxed body and mind and to experience a happy state of mind. This will also ensure that one will have a genuinely happy life.

I mention this as a reminder for you to put into practice whatever Dharma you already know. For those who don't know anything about Dharma practice, then there is not much that can be done, as they are only familiar with following the afflicted distractions. As they don't know how to practise the Dharma, we cannot blame them for not practising.

But in our case it is different, as we know the value of the Dharma and have the means to practise it; we know the disadvantages and faults of following the afflicted distractions. Furthermore we know the great benefits of generating a virtuous mind, and know how to generate it. If, while knowing this and having the means to do so, we

fail to put it into practice, then the fault lies with ourselves. As the previous masters warned, 'disregarding karma and its effects while understanding karma, is like knowingly taking poison'. So, we need to be really mindful. Taking these points into consideration is the best method for having a meaningful, happy life.

Often it seems I go off on a tangent, however the point that I always try to emphasise is to actually put the teachings into practice. That is something I've taken interest in since I was very young. I've always been concerned with putting into practice what I have learnt; that has always been my intention. Through that familiarity from a young age it has become part of my character. Thus, whenever I share the teachings it is to emphasise putting into practice whatever one has understood. I believe that this is essential. Therefore I feel compelled to relate the ways and means of how to practice.

As those of you who come on Wednesday nights know, I always emphasise the importance of putting the Dharma into practice in everyday life. This must be why Fedor took the initiative to make a booklet out of the Wednesday night teachings. It must be useful for some, because quite a few have come up and thanked me for the book.

Whenever we engage in the teachings, our intention and priority should always be on putting it into practice. Now, while the subject we are dealing with is quite complex and hard to fully understand at times, we must consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have this opportunity to engage in listening to these teachings. Even though it's difficult, try not to resort to despair, thinking, 'Oh, it's too difficult'. Rather, just continue listening with the intention, 'May I be able to understand this profound teaching and put it into practice someday'.

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing this with logic (cont.)

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with shared reason

The four sub-divisions under this heading are:

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness.

From the heading alone, one should be able to derive an understanding of what is being presented, i.e. the reasons why it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one doesn't realise emptiness. The Tibetan term for arhat is *dra-chompa* which literally means foe destroyer. So, we need to understand what that means. What is the 'foe' that they have destroyed? What is the state of 'going beyond sorrow'? More specifically, the heading explains that it is impossible to achieve the state of liberation if one lacks the wisdom realising emptiness. So this heading presents the point that without the wisdom realising emptiness, there is no possible way of becoming an arhat or foe destroyer.

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions.

As explained earlier, in relation to the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, there are the coarser levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects and more subtle levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.¹ This presentation relates to the coarser levels. It explains that there is no way that one can become an arhat through relying on the coarser levels of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths alone. One can only abandon the manifest levels of delusions with that coarse level of understanding, but not completely abandon all forms of delusion and their imprints.

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to that

This refers to refuting an argument on the previous presentation.

2.2.2.1.2.2.4. Showing that even those merely wishing to attain liberation need to meditate on emptiness.

What is being confirmed under this heading is that one definitely needs to have the realisation of emptiness in order to achieve liberation.

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness.

The first two lines of the root text are:

*44ab. If the root of the teachings is the essential
bhikhu,
Even the essential is difficult to abide.*

Under these two lines the commentary explains that:

The arhats had received direct teachings from the Buddha, and assembled them later into the collected works of the Buddha. Therefore, in a discussion amongst bhikkhus, it would be difficult for even an ordained arhat to be the root of the Tathagata's teachings because of the following reason:

Take the subject 'superior hearer': it follows they have not attained the state of an arhat – because they did not take the wisdom realising emptiness as the path. This shows also the consequence that those who do not accept the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena cannot destroy the foes. The word 'even' indicates that 'not only can those devoid of a realisation of emptiness not become enlightened'.

As the commentary explains, *the arhats received direct teachings from the Buddha, and assembled them later into the collected works of the Buddha.* After the Buddha had passed away, those arhats who had received the teachings directly from the Buddha convened a gathering where they assembled a collection of all of the teachings of the Buddha. They had heard the teachings directly, and in that first council they recorded what they had heard. As mentioned earlier, the eighteen different Hinayana schools formed at that time, arising from some of the disputes in interpreting the words of the Buddha. So, that's one way of stating how arhats are the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Another way of understanding the essence of the Buddha's teaching is the Vinaya sutra itself. As hearer arhats, they had heard the Vinaya teachings from the Buddha. In particular, the self-liberation vows are said to be the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*:

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha (self-liberation) vows. Thus, please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

While it is commonly accepted that the sangha in general, and the arhats in particular, are the essence of the Buddha's teachings, it would be difficult to state that they are actually the essence of the Buddha's teachings, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness and thus are not actually arhats. The reasoning is presented in the following syllogism. Take the subject 'superior hearer': it follows they have not attained the state of an arhat – because they did not take the wisdom realising emptiness as the path.

If one does not need to have the wisdom realising emptiness in order to become an arhat then, by default, it would be contradictory for the arhats to be accepted as the essential holders of the Buddha's teachings. They would in fact not be real arhats, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness, i.e. they have not taken the wisdom realising emptiness as a path.

As the commentary further explains, the syllogism shows that *those who do not accept the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena cannot destroy the foes.* Thus, it is difficult to establish the arhats as being the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Then the next two lines of the verse are presented:

*44cd. The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

The commentary explains as follows:

Take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties to go beyond sorrow as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum – due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.

Or: It is saying that for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow. The first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason.

In brief, the *mind endowed with an object* means the mind that is endowed with the perception of a truly existent or an inherently existent object. Such a mind will have difficulty in even abiding beyond sorrow.

The syllogism, *take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties in going beyond sorrow,* indicates that hearer arhats could not possibly go beyond sorrow, as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum. The reasoning is that this is due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.

The **Madhyamikas** are saying, since you accept that the hearer arhats have not actually overcome true-grasping with reasoning, and therefore *grasp at functionalities as truly existent*, they could not possibly go beyond sorrow. In other words, they could not possibly obtain the state of liberation.

¹ See teaching of 23 July 2002.

Then the commentary indicates that *the first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason.*

In verse 44, the first set of two lines serves as the proposition: *If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu, and the mind endowed with an object.*

The second set of two lines *Even the essential bhikhu is difficult to abide and has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow, show the reasoning, which is that for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow.*

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. *If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions.*

This heading posits a similar argument to the previous heading. If you accept the first case, then it has to follow that by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions one can become an arhat.

The first two lines under this heading are:

*45ab. If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions,
One transforms immediately afterwards.*

Then the commentary states the argument:

Argument: One does not need to realise emptiness to become an arhat. By meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, one exhaustively abandons the afflictions and attains the liberated result of an arhat.

Then the commentary gives the answer:

Answer: It follows that the person who has merely abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily transforms into an arhat immediately afterwards because by merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth one eliminates the afflictions and becomes an arhat. These two are similar in all aspects.

The opponent's argument is that *one does not need to realise emptiness to become an arhat because by meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, one exhaustively abandons the afflictions and attains the liberated result of an arhat.* This is their reason for saying that it is not necessary to realise emptiness.

The **Madhyamika** contradict this by saying that if you assert this, then *it follows that the person who has merely abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily transforms into an arhat immediately after they have abandoned those manifest afflictions.* This is achieved by *merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.*

The proponents of the **Hinayana** tenets for example, do not accept the subtle selflessness of person. Rather, they assert a person who is empty or devoid of having a self-sufficient substantial existence. When they gain that realisation, the manifest levels of delusions such as anger and attachment can be overcome. However they have not been completely uprooted, because the means used is not an ultimate antidote for overcoming the afflictions.

The counter argument being proposed here by the **Madhyamika** is that you holders of the Hinayana tenets would have to also accept that by temporarily overcoming these manifest afflictions, one would then become an arhat, *merely by meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, and eliminating*

the [coarse] afflictions. As mentioned here, *these two are similar in all aspects,* which means that the reasons you gave earlier, and the reasons presented here on overcoming the manifest levels of the afflictions are exactly the same. Since they don't accept the latter, the Madhyamika are saying 'according to you, you would have to accept both because *these two reasons are similar in all aspects*'.

The reasons are similar in all aspects in that the opponent asserts that *by meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, that one will exhaustively abandon the afflictions and attain liberation, becoming an arhat.* That is what they accept.

The counter argument is, 'in that case, you would have to also accept that by abandoning the manifest afflictions temporarily, one is immediately transformed into an arhat'. As the realisation of the sixteen aspects is only on the coarser level, and since they accept that as the criteria for abandoning the afflictions and obtaining arhatship, then by default they would also have to accept the second proposition.

The next two lines of the verse are:

*45cd. Although not having afflictions,
One can see that their karma is still potent.*

The commentary that explains this reads as follows:

This is unacceptable however. Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily non-existent, it is observed that the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily has the karmic potential to connect with a future existence.

The school of the opponent is expressed by: 'If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions', and the meaning of this is as stated in: 'One becomes liberated by seeing truth.'² What it is saying is that if one can abandon the afflictions and attain the state of an arhat through meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence etc.

This is actually quite clear. It is unacceptable to posit that by abandoning the manifest levels of afflictions one becomes an arhat. That is because *although the manifest afflictions are temporarily non-existent, it remains a fact that the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily still has the karmic potential to connect with a future existence,* i.e. cyclic existence. So those who have overcome the manifest levels of afflictions still carry the karma to be reborn into cyclic existence.

As the verse states: *Although not having afflictions, one can see that their karma is still potent.* The point is that they still have the karmic seeds to be propelled into cyclic existence.

The commentary continues:

The school of the opponent is expressed by: 'If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions', and the meaning of this is as stated in: 'One becomes liberated by seeing truth.' What it is saying is that if one can abandon the afflictions and attain the state of an arhat through meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.

This is the meaning of what it is saying, because at this point it is debating whether or not one attains

² This is the first line of verse 40.

liberation from the afflictions merely through the path of impermanence and so forth. This also is very clear from the arguments of, 'One becomes liberated by seeing the truth.'

The meaning is certainly not that, while accepting that one can eliminate the afflictions by meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects, that one will not be liberated from suffering through that.

The meaning is that when that posited specifically by the two Hinayana schools as afflictions³ is temporarily absent in its mere manifest form by having generated the earlier explained path in the continuum, they posit that one has attained liberation from the afflictions. As a result, by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions temporarily, one will then immediately attain liberation from all contamination.

This is the assertion of both of the **Hinayana** lower schools, which posit a self-sufficient and substantially existent person that has to be abandoned. The lower schools accept that as the selflessness of the person, while for the **Prasangika** this is only the coarser level of the selflessness of a person. For the Prasangika the selflessness of a person is a person who is empty of being a truly and inherently existent person. It is only by abandoning the view of grasping at an inherently and truly existent person that one can actually abandon the afflictions from their very root. What is being established here is that while we both accept that abandonment of the coarse afflictions, for the Prasangika, the subtlest level of the afflictions is only abandoned when you abandon that grasping at an inherently existing self.

Thus the argument that overcoming the manifest afflictions temporarily is the *cause to immediately attaining liberation from all contamination* cannot be accepted.

This is shown in the lines:

That one cannot accept this is shown in the lines, 'Although not having afflictions one can see that their karma is still potent'. This is saying that although the manifest afflictions are temporarily absent one can observe the potential to be thrown into a future existence through the power of karma.

The conclusion in the commentary is quite clear:

These lines need to be explained in this way, and not as some commentaries and past Tibetans have done, who say that because it is observed that Maugalyana and Phagpa Sodreng experienced the suffering result of karma created earlier while an ordinary individual, they are not liberated in the moments afterwards. Here it does not refer to the potential to create suffering in this life, but it is saying that one is not liberated because one has not stopped the karmic potential that throws one into a future existence.

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to this

The first two lines of the next verse read:

46ab. 'You say the craving that takes forcefully,
Is temporarily non-existent and say it is certain.'

The argument is:

Argument: The attainment of the state of arhat by meditating on the path of impermanence and so forth is not merely temporary. Craving is the simultaneously acting condition for the forceful taking of another existence, and as it is exhaustively abandoned through this path, there is no seed and one does not take another rebirth. It is like this with certainty.

In stating, *The attainment of the state of arhat by meditating on the path of impermanence and so forth is not merely temporary*, the **Hearer** opponent is saying, 'I'm not claiming that by overcoming the manifest afflictions, one can become an arhat. I'm not saying that that is temporary'.

Craving is the simultaneously acting condition for the forceful taking of another existence, and as it is exhaustively abandoned through this path, there is no seed and one does not take another rebirth. It is like this with certainty. So here the Hearer is positing a counter argument to them saying, 'we don't accept that it's a temporary abandonment. Rather it is a complete abandonment, and one does not have to take rebirth in samsara.

The next two lines of the verse, which serve as an answer, read:

46cd. *Although this craving is not afflicted,
Why should it not be like ignorance?*

Then the commentary reads:

Answer: Although the craving in the continuum of the person that you assert to be an arhat is not afflicted as explained in the *Knowledges* similar to there being posited a total incomprehension⁴ that is afflicted according to the *Knowledges* and one being not, why should there not be a craving that is afflicted according to the *Knowledges* and one that is not? Both need to be posited.

These texts show the existence of a craving that is commonly renowned as non-afflicted in the two Hinayana schools and the Mahayana, but for the craving that is asserted by our own system certainly no afflicted and non-afflicted are asserted.

The **Prasangika** are saying that *although the craving in the continuum of the person that you assert to be an arhat is not afflicted as explained in the Knowledges, similar to there being posited as total incomprehension that is afflicted according to the Knowledges and one being not, why should there not be a craving that is afflicted according to the Knowledges.*

What the Prasangika are saying is that there is the common ignorance as explained in the two *Knowledges*, and uncommon ignorance according to our system. The **common ignorance** that is taught in the two *Knowledges* is the ignorance grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent. The **uncommon ignorance** as taught in the Prasangika system is the ignorance grasping at an inherently existent self.

To explain the meaning of the line although this craving is not afflicted: first we need to understand that just like with ignorance there are two types of craving, one that is induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient and substantial existent, and the other is craving which is

³ The coarse afflictions correspond to the explanations of the two *Knowledges* i.e. *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Vasubandhu and the *Compendium of Knowledge* by Asanga. These are the explanations of the afflictions having as their root the grasping at a self-sufficient substantial self. This text however follows the uncommon Prasangika presentation of the afflictions.

⁴ Ignorance.

induced by grasping at an inherently existent person. The **Vaibhashika** and **Sautrantikas** (the two Hinayana schools) accept that craving induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient substantial existent is an affliction, but do not accept that there is craving induced by grasping at a person as inherently existent; that is because they do not assert that the grasping at an inherently and truly existent person is a wrong view of the transitory collection. So, the **Prasangika** are saying that while we both commonly accept that the craving induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient and substantially existent is an affliction in accordance with the presentation in the two Knowledges, this craving however is not an affliction that is induced by the grasping at an inherently existent person, which is a wrong view of the transitory collections. Thus, in saying *although this craving is not afflicted* the Prasangika are saying that according to our system this craving that is induced by the grasping at a person as self-sufficient substantially existent is not afflicted, (i.e. not an affliction induced by the view of transitory collections), but they are not saying that it is not an affliction at all. The Prasangika do of course accept that craving is an affliction.

The line *why should it not be like ignorance?* means that since there are two levels of ignorance, why should it not also be the same for craving? There is the coarse craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at the person as self-sufficient substantially existent, and the more subtle craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at an inherently existent self.

Basically the **Hinayana hearers** assert that arhatship is obtained when grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is abandoned.

If you read through this carefully, it will become clear. I have explained this previously and this material is also explained in the *Madhyamaka* teachings.

As explained earlier, the view of a self-sufficient substantial existent person as being ignorance, is accepted by both schools. However, the **Hinayana** schools do not accept the grasping at an inherently existent person as being an affliction. They don't assert that one has to overcome the grasping at a truly existent or an inherently existent person to become an arhat, because they don't accept that as being ignorance of the transitory collection. That is the main point being presented here. The lower schools assert that abandoning the ignorance of grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is the cause to become an arhat. But the **Prasangika** do not accept that.

The commentary continues:

Thus, it is saying that although one temporarily abandons the manifest craving induced by the grasping at a person that is a self-sufficient substantial-existent self, how can one say that the craving induced by the transitory view that is grasping at the person as existing out of its own nature, is non-existent? The elimination of the earlier mentioned in manifest form does not stop even the manifest form of the just mentioned transitory view and craving.

If it is the same for both schools that when their manifest afflictions are abandoned, then this does not mean that the seeds are abandoned, then it is meaningless to set that craving apart.

What is being explained is that through meditating only on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths as taught in the two *Knowledges*, a person may have abandoned the manifest craving that is induced by the grasping at the person as self-sufficient substantially existent. But that will not harm the manifest craving that arises from grasping at the self as inherently existent. The craving that arises from the grasping at the self as inherently existent will not be harmed in the slightest by the meditation on the sixteen aspects alone. Although it can abandon the manifest coarse afflictions to a degree, it will not abandon the seed of the afflictions at all.

We will now recite the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, dedicating it to Susanna's mother, who is in Germany and is experiencing complications with her health. Susanna comes here regularly, and is a regular donor, and this is when the Centre needs to take the initiative to help out. We need to be mindful of those who are experiencing difficulty. After all, even dogs and cats recognise someone who has been nice and kind to them, and return their affection.

We will pray that Susanna's mother be freed from her illness and that she be quickly restored to health, and so that she has some more years. If however it is an illness that she cannot overcome and passes away, then we pray for her to have a good rebirth in the next life in Amitabha's pure land, coming into contact with Amitabha directly, receiving teachings from Amitabha and then gaining all the realisations of the path in her mind.

In general this is a good way to proceed whenever there is an occasion that we need to pray for others who pass away.

I, for my part, have definitely done prayers and as a study group if we can do these prayers, and then when she hears about that, that will also help Susanna.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Edited Version

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The Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths

Truth of Suffering

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of suffering by grasping at purity, happiness, permanence and self. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of suffering, which are impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless, counteracts this.

Take the subject suffering of suffering - it is **impermanent** - because it is generated adventitiously; it is **suffering** - because it is powered by karma and afflictions; it is **empty** - because there is no separate controlling self; it is empty - because it **isn't** established in the nature of an **independent self**.

Truth of Origin

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of origin by grasping at sufferings to be without cause or to have a discordant cause. Regarding the latter there is the grasping at suffering being produced by only one cause, being produced by a creator the intention of whom preceded the result, and grasping at suffering to be changeable adventitiously but being essentially permanent. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of origin, which are cause, origin, intense generation and condition, counteracts this.

Take the subject contaminated karma and craving - it follows it is the aspect of **cause** - because it is the root of its resultant suffering; it is **origin** - because it generates its resultant suffering entirely again and again; it is **intense generation** - because it generates it strongly; it is the aspect of **condition** - because it is the concurrently acting condition of it's resultant suffering.

Truth of Cessation

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of cessation by grasping at liberation to be non-existent, by grasping at certain contaminated dharmas to be liberation, by grasping at certain sufferings to be supreme liberation, and by thinking that even though one can exhaust the sufferings one could reverse from that state.

Understanding the four aspects of the truth of cessation, which are cessation, peace, supremacy and definite emergence, contacts those misconceptions.

Take the subject complete freedom from suffering achieved through the power of the antidote - it is the aspect of **cessation** - because it is the freedom having abandoned suffering; it is **peace** - because it is the freedom having abandoned the afflictions; it is **supreme** - because it is liberation with benefit and bliss; it is the aspect of having **definitely emerged** - because it is irreversible liberation.

Truth of the Path

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of the path by thinking that a path to liberation is non-existent, thinking that meditation on selflessness isn't suitable to be the path, holding certain meditative absorptions alone to be the path to liberation and holding a path reversing suffering to be non-existent.

Understanding the four aspects of the noble truth of the path, which are path, suitable, accomplishment and definitely liberating, counteracts those misconceptions.

Take the subject wisdom directly realising selflessness - it is the aspect of **path** - because it is a path progressing towards liberation; it is the aspect of **suitable** - because it is the direct antidote against the afflictions; it is the aspect of **accomplishment** - because it is a transcendental wisdom directly realising minds final nature; it is the aspect of **definitely liberating** - because it is the antidote irreversibly eliminating the afflictions.

This list was prepared by Ven. Tenzin Dongak as a supplement to the teachings on 30 July 2002

2016

Homework

Block: 3 Week: 8 (4 October 2016) Assigned: 11/10/2016

1. 2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

The first sub-divisions under this heading is:

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness

The Tibetan term for Arhat is *drs-chompa*. What does this literally mean? How does this relate to the heading?

The four sub-divisions under this heading are:

2.2.2.1.2.2.1.1. Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness

From the heading alone, one should be able to derive an understanding of what is being presented i.e. the reasons why it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one doesn't realise emptiness. The Tibetan term for arhat is *dra-chompa* which literally means foe destroyer. So, we need to understand what that means. What is the 'foe' that they have destroyed? What is the state of 'going beyond sorrow'? More specifically, the heading explains that it is impossible to achieve the state of liberation if one lacks the wisdom realising emptiness. So this heading presents the point that without the wisdom realising emptiness, there is no possible way of becoming an arhat or foe destroyer.

2. The second subdivision states:

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions.

Explain.

2.2.2.1.2.2.2.1. If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions

As explained earlier, in relation to the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths there are the coarser levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects and more subtle levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.¹ This presentation relates to the coarser levels. It explains that there is no way that one can become an arhat through relying on the coarser levels of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths alone. One can only abandon the manifest levels of delusions with that coarse level of understanding, but not completely abandon all forms of delusion and their imprints.

3. 44ab. If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu,
Even the essential is difficult to abide.

As the commentary explains, *the arhats received direct teachings from the Buddha, and assembled them later into the collected works of the Buddha*. After the Buddha had passed away, those arhats who had received the teachings directly from the Buddha convened a gathering where they assembled a collection of all of the teachings of the Buddha. They had heard the teachings directly, and in that first council they recorded what they had heard. As mentioned earlier, the eighteen different Hinayana schools formed at that time, arising from some of the disputes in interpreting the words of the Buddha. So, that's one way of stating how arhats are the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Another way of understanding the essence of the Buddha's teaching is the Vinaya sutra itself. As hearer arhats, they had heard the Vinaya teachings from the Buddha. In particular the self-liberation vows are said to be the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*:

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha (self-liberation) vows. Thus, please me to accomplish this essential practice.

4. The first two lines of the root text are:

*44ab. If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu,
Even the essential is difficult to abide.*

While it is commonly accepted that the sangha in general, and the arhats in particular, are the essence of the Buddha's teachings, it would be difficult to state that they are actually the essence of the Buddha's teachings, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness and thus are not actually arhats.

Give the syllogism presenting the reasoning.

While it is commonly accepted that the sangha in general, and the arhats in particular, are the essence of the Buddha's teachings, it would be difficult to state that they are actually the essence of the Buddha's teachings, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness and thus are not actually arhats. The reasoning is presented in the following syllogism. Take the subject 'superior hearer': it follows they have not attained the state of an arhat – because they did not take the wisdom realising emptiness as the path.

If one does not need to have the wisdom realising emptiness in order to become an arhat then, by default, it would be contradictory for the arhats to be accepted as the essential holders of the Buddha's teachings. They would in fact not be real arhats, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness, i.e. they have not taken the wisdom realising emptiness as a path.

As the commentary further explains, the syllogism shows that *those who do not accept the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena cannot destroy the foes*. Thus, it is difficult to establish the arhats as being the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

5. Then the next two lines of the verse are presented:

*44cd. The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

Give the syllogism that relates to the second two lines of the verse.

The commentary explains as follows:

Take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties to go beyond sorrow as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum – due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.

Or: It is saying that for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow. The first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason.

In brief, the *mind endowed with an object* means the mind that is endowed with the perception of a truly existent or an inherently existent object. Such a mind will have difficulty in even abiding beyond sorrow.

The syllogism, *take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties in going beyond sorrow*, indicates that hearer arhats could not possibly go beyond sorrow, as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum. The reasoning is that this is due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.

The **Madhyamikas** are saying, since you accept that the hearer arhats have not actually overcome true-grasping with reasoning, and therefore grasp at functionalities as truly existent, they could not possibly go beyond sorrow. In other words, they could not possibly obtain the state of liberation.

Then the commentary indicates that *the first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason*.

In verse 44, the first set of two lines serve as the proposition: *If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu, and the mind endowed with an object*.

The second set of two lines *Even the essential bhikhu is difficult to abide and has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow*, show the reasoning, which is that *for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow*.

4. a) How do the Hinayana posit the selflessness of person?

This is the assertion of both of the **Hinayana** lower schools, which posit a self-sufficient and substantially existent person that has to be abandoned. The lower schools accept that as the selflessness of the person, while for the **Prasangika** this is only the coarser level of the selflessness of a person.

b) How do the Prasangika posit the selflessness of person?

For the Prasangika the selflessness of a person is a person who is empty of being a truly and inherently existent person. It is only by abandoning the view of grasping at an inherently and truly existent person that one can actually abandon the afflictions from their very root. What is being established here is that while we both accept that abandonment of the coarse afflictions, for the Prasangika, the subtlest level of the afflictions is only abandoned when you abandon that grasping at an inherently existing self.

Thus the argument that overcoming the manifest afflictions temporarily is the *cause to immediately attaining liberation from all contamination* cannot be accepted.

5. The lower schools assert that abandoning the ignorance of grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is the cause to become an arhat. But the Prasangika do not accept that. Explain why.

Basically the **Hinayana hearers** assert that arhatship is obtained when grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is abandoned

If you read through this carefully, it will become clear. I have explained this previously and this material is also explained in the *Madhyamaka* teachings.

As explained earlier, the view of a self-sufficient substantial existent person as being ignorance, is accepted by both schools. However, the **Hinayana** schools do not accept the grasping at an inherently existent person as being an affliction. They don't assert that one has to overcome the grasping at a truly existent or an inherently existent person to become an arhat, because they don't accept that as being ignorance of the transitory collection. That is the main point being presented here. The lower

schools assert that abandoning the ignorance of grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is the cause to become an arhat. But the **Prasangika** do not accept that.

The commentary continues:

Thus, it is saying that although one temporarily abandons the manifest craving induced by the grasping at a person that is a self-sufficient substantial-existent self, how can one say that the craving induced by the transitory view that is grasping at the person as existing out of its own nature, is non-existent? The elimination of the earlier mentioned in manifest form does not stop even the manifest form of the just mentioned transitory view and craving.

If it is the same for both schools that when their manifest afflictions are abandoned, then this does not mean that the seeds are abandoned, then it is meaningless to set that craving apart.

What is being explained is that through meditating only on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths as taught in the two *Knowledges*, a person may have abandoned the manifest craving that is induced by the grasping at the person as self-sufficient substantially existent. But that will not harm the manifest craving that arises from grasping at the self as inherently existent. The craving that arises from the grasping at the self as inherently existent will not be harmed in the slightest by the meditation on the sixteen aspects alone. Although it can abandon the manifest coarse afflictions to a degree, it will not abandon the seed of the afflictions at all.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 October 2016

As usual, we will generate a pure, positive motivation for receiving the teachings, one not stained by self-interest.

You are all aware of what the bodhicitta motivation entails. As I regularly mention, even if we do not have the capacity to fully comprehend the bodhicitta motivation, we can all understand how every sentient being does not wish for any kind of suffering and spontaneously wishes to achieve every happiness. So we can ensure that whatever we do, in terms of listening to teachings and putting them into practice, is for the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings – eliminating all their suffering and presenting them with the highest happiness.

It is important to reflect on the essential points encompassed by the term ‘bodhicitta motivation’. A bodhisattva is defined as a noble being whose **mind** is imbued with the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings – the bodhicitta mind – and their actions are to engage in the six perfections. This is what characterises a bodhisattva’s state of mind and their deeds.

Next, to get an overview of the entire path taken by a bodhisattva to achieve enlightenment, as I have often mentioned, the *basis* is the two truths [conventional and ultimate truth]. The *actual path* encompasses method and wisdom and the *result* encompasses the two main bodies of the Buddha [the rupakaya and the dharmakaya]. When one reflects on this overview of the path to enlightenment, it will have an effect on one’s mind.

In the teachings, as Mahayana practitioners we begin our practice by generating the bodhicitta motivation. But we must really take to heart what this entails: we have to at least generate a similitude of the bodhicitta motivation in our mind, and our actions should also be a similitude of the six perfections. We should ensure that in our everyday actions we engage in a similitude of the six perfections – generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. If we assume that we are a Mahayana practitioner and act otherwise, then we are not getting the essence of these points.

This is really important. Normally, we might say, “Oh, but I have a very busy life”, but we can, in fact, reflect on these points wherever we may be, and whatever we are doing. And when we have time for practice, we need to bring these points to mind. As I share with you regularly, if you spend some time reflecting on this, and try to take it to heart and implement it in your practice, you will definitely get the benefit. When the benefits start to dawn upon you, this will help transform and subdue your mind. Otherwise, we will be practitioners in name only.

As mentioned earlier, the path encompasses the two collections of method and wisdom. Accumulating merit is said to be the supreme method, and the supreme means

to accumulate merit is the generation of bodhicitta. Without bodhicitta, one cannot possibly attain one of the two results of the path – the rupakaya or form-body of a buddha, and the dharmakaya or truth-body of a buddha. The substantial cause for attaining a buddha’s form-body is generating bodhicitta, and then further developing and maintaining that. The cause to achieve the dharmakaya or the truth-body of a buddha is gaining the supreme wisdom, the wisdom realising emptiness. Therefore, the study and recollection of emptiness is essential to achieve our goal of enlightenment, which is encompassed in these two bodies of a buddha – the form-body and the truth-body.

We normally say, “Yes, I aspire to achieve enlightenment”, but what does it actually entail? What is the specific method and wisdom that one has to actually cultivate and generate? When we relate to the teachings in this way, we can see that it is a systematic, logical and reasonable approach to achieving the goal of enlightenment. And the teachings are presented in this way by none other than the incomparably kind and compassionate Buddha. Seeing how the teachings of the Buddha are presented can actually move our mind. When we see the real value of the teachings and how they are presented in such a systematic and approachable way, this can help us to be inspired and to generate strong admiration and faith in the Buddha and his teachings.

When we engage in the teachings in this way, with this understanding, it helps us to rapidly increase our understanding of the Dharma, and our intelligence and wisdom also increases.

Did you understand the explanation of Verse 44 from last week’s session? Specifically the point that the first two lines state the proposition, and the second two lines state the reason. Was that clear to you?

44 *If the root of the teachings is the essential
bhikhu,
Even the essential bhikhu is difficult to abide.
The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

[Some students respond to Geshe-la] What you are referring to is what was mentioned in the explanation of how the monks and arhats serve as the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. Right? However, I’m referring to this particular point that the first two lines serve as a proposition and the second two lines state the reason.

Without going through too much further elaboration, we’ll just look at this syllogism: Take the subject, ‘a hearer arhat as you assert’ – it would be difficult to establish them as an ultimate bhikhu who is the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, because their minds still possess grasping at true existence, and thus have difficulty in abiding beyond sorrow.

Thus the hearers, who are proponents of the **Hinayana** tenets, assert that one does not need to gain the realisation of emptiness in order to become an arhat. That is their assertion. The **Mahayana** refute that assertion by saying: “While you [Hinayanas] may accept arhats as being the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, if they were to be devoid of having the wisdom realising emptiness, then it would be impossible to establish them as the

essence of the Buddha's teachings, because without that realisation of emptiness they could not possibly go beyond sorrow and achieve liberation".

Basically the proponents of the two lower schools, the **Vaibhashika** and the **Sautrantika** assert that by gaining the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient and substantially existent person and further meditating on it, one will attain liberation. Thus they assert that one does not need to have the realization of emptiness to become an arhat.

The **Prasangika** say that you cannot become an arhat without the realisation of emptiness. That is because one cannot overcome the grasping at an inherently existent self by merely abandoning grasping at a self-sufficient substantially existent self. Thus, they say that while the mind still possesses grasping at true existence, it is difficult to establish a true or ultimate bhikhu, i.e. an arya being, who has the direct realisation of emptiness.

In fact all the schools below the Prasangika assert that one need not gain the realisation of emptiness of phenomena to become an arhat. They only assert that the realisation of the selflessness of the person is sufficient to become an arhat. According to the **Mind Only** and **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** schools, grasping at true existence is the obscuration to omniscience, and not an afflicted obscuration. It is only the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** who assert that grasping at true existence is an afflicted obscuration, and that in order to overcome the delusions at the very root and become an arhat, one has to realise the selflessness of persons as well as phenomena. This is why, as mentioned previously, the Prasangika assert that whoever has the realisation of emptiness necessarily has to be a proponent of the Prasangika tenets.

There are said to be eight unique presentations of the **Prasangika** system; one of them is the assertion that grasping at true existence is an afflicted obscuration. Another unique presentation is that if one is an arya or superior being then one necessarily has to have the realisation of emptiness.

Following that point, we went through refuting the lower schools' assertion that one will gain liberation by merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. The Prasangikas' refutation led to the explanation that there are both subtle and gross aspects of the four noble truths; I wonder if you understood that point?

There is a distinction between the gross and subtle aspects of the four noble truths. These were quite clearly presented previously.¹ For example, with respect to the second noble truth - the truth of origination - the craving imbued by the transitory collection of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self is the *subtle truth of origination*. And the *gross truth of origination* is the craving imbued by the grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person.

With respect to the first noble truth - the truth of suffering - the contaminated aggregates obtained through grasping at an inherently existent self or person are the *subtle truth of suffering*. Whereas the contaminated aggregates

obtained through the view that holds onto a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of suffering*.

Regarding the third noble truth - the truth of cessation - the *gross truth of cessation* is gaining the understanding of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person, and further meditating on that to eventually obtain a cessation of the manifest level of the delusions. Realising the emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence of the nature of the mind, and further meditating on it and perfecting that realisation to obtain the cessation of completely abandoning grasping at true existence, is the *subtle truth of cessation*.

Similarly, with the fourth noble truth - the truth of the path - the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of the path*. Whereas gaining the realisation of the lack of an inherently existent self or person is the *subtle truth of the path*.

As explained earlier, with respect to impermanence, which is the first aspect of the truth of suffering, all schools make no distinction between subtlety and grossness. It is not as if the Prasangika assertion of impermanence is more subtle than the lower schools. There is no such distinction, because impermanence is accepted by all schools as being the momentariness of all functional phenomena, and this is the subtlest level of impermanence. Momentariness is the definition of impermanence that is asserted by all schools.

Also, with the second aspect of the truth of suffering, there is no distinction of subtlety and grossness. Regarding emptiness, the person being empty of self-sufficient, substantial existence is gross emptiness, whereas the person being empty of inherent existent is subtle emptiness.

All the remaining aspects of the four noble truths can be understood in the same way. When one understands the four aspects of the truth of suffering, then that can be related to the four aspects of the truth of origination, four aspects of the truth of cessation, and the four aspects of the truth of the path. They are all similar.

From this presentation, one can also understand that the Prasangika and lower schools differ in their distinction between the subtlety and gross understanding of the twelve interdependent links.

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with shared reason

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to this (cont.)

Following from our last session, we are now on the second verse under the same heading:

47. *Craving arises from the condition of feeling,
And they have feeling;
It abides for some whose
Mind is endowed with an object.*

As the commentary explains:

A person who has not realised emptiness has not abandoned in the slightest the ignorance grasping at the true existence of feeling, and through the condition of feeling, such a person would generate

¹ See the teaching of 23 July 2002.

craving for not being separated from happiness and wish to be separated from suffering. Because we posit that the arhats have the grasping at inherent existence of feeling, then craving is existing in the continuum. For as long as the mind that possesses the object that is perceived as truly existent is manifest in the continuum of the person, for that long it is impossible to stop the manifest craving that is induced by it.

As explained clearly in the commentary, the *person who has not realised emptiness* implies someone who has not overcome the grasping to true existence. Such an individual *has not abandoned in the slightest the ignorance grasping at true existence of feeling*. As I have explained previously, this is something we can understand from our own experience. For as long as we grasp at a feeling, then due to that grasping we will grasp at the feeling of happiness and crave pleasurable sensations, and not want to be separated from pleasure. We will also crave to be free from unpleasant feelings or suffering. This is something we can all naturally relate to. If we strongly grasp at feeling, we will naturally want to grasp at happy or pleasurable feelings, and not want to experience any unpleasant feelings or suffering.

It is also quite clear here that *because we posit that the arhats have grasping at inherent existence or feeling, then craving exists in the continuum*. Again, as mentioned previously, the **Prasangikas** are responding to the lower schools by saying: "Because what you call an arhat has grasping at the inherent existence of feeling, a craving will definitely exist in their continuum". The reasoning behind this assertion is that, *for as long as the mind that possesses an object, i.e. perceiving the object as truly existent, manifest in the continuum, it will be impossible to stop the manifest craving induced by that grasping at inherent existence*. This is quite clear.

2.2.2.1.2.2.4. *Showing that even those merely wishing to attain liberation need to meditate on emptiness.*

The verse relating to this heading reads:

48. *The mind lacking emptiness
Will arise again despite ceasing,
Like the absorption without recognition.
Thus meditate on emptiness.*

The commentary explains:

Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates as being the emptiness of being inherently established, they will again become manifest, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness, but also to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object of negation.

In the statement, *Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates, both selflessness or emptiness, which is that the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are presented as what is to be realised*.

Even while one is devoid of that realisation, the manifest afflictions may be stopped temporarily. It says here that

the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped through meditating on the selflessness of the self-sufficient, substantially existent person. Through that meditation, one can overcome the manifest level of afflictions, which are temporarily stopped.

However, *they will again become manifest*: that is, the afflictions will become manifest, and the reason used here to establish that is the example, *just like in the case of absorption without recognition*. The *absorption without recognition* - or 'equipoise of no-discrimination' as some translate it - is a meditative state in which all the gross sensation in the meditator's mind is completely stopped. They have no gross conceptions based on gross sensation or feelings in their mind. All of that is completely stopped.

In that meditative state or absorption, all recognition or discrimination temporarily stops. Later, however, when the meditator comes out of that meditative state, all the gross sensations and concepts will resurface. That is because the meditator has not actually stopped recognition or discrimination altogether; they still have discrimination or recognition in their mental continuum. Thus, when they come out of that meditative state or absorption, discrimination will resurface. This illustrates how all of the manifest afflictions are only temporarily stopped because, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition, they can reoccur.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness or the omniscient mind, but also even to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire or one has to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object of negation. As specified here, the meditation on emptiness has to serve as a means to negate the subtle object of negation. This is not just any kind of negation, but the subtle object of negation.

According to the **Prasangika**, the subtle object of negation relates to both the person and the aggregates. Thus, the inherent existence of a person is the object of negation based on a person, and the inherent existence of the aggregates is the object of negation in relation to the basis of the aggregates. The Prasangika assert there is no coarseness and subtleness in relation to the selflessness of a person and the selflessness of phenomena. They do not assert a distinction between coarseness and subtleness in relation to the basis of imputation or the object itself, but they do in relation to the *mind* that realises or perceives the object.

All the **lower schools** below the Prasangika, on the other hand, assert both a coarse and subtle person and phenomena. The selflessness of a person is said to be coarse selflessness, whereas the selflessness of phenomena is said to be subtle selflessness. Only the **Prasangika** assert that there is no distinction between the two.

Now, when we say the object of negation has to be eliminated or refuted in order to gain an understanding of the emptiness of the person and aggregates, we need to first understand what is to be negated.

If a person were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? If the aggregates were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? As you already know, if a

person existed without depending on any other factors – such as aggregates or any other causes and conditions for their existence – that would mean the person exists inherently. Likewise, if the aggregates did not depend on any causes and conditions or other factors for their existence, then the aggregates would have to exist inherently. Since a person cannot possibly exist without depending on aggregates and other causes and conditions for their existence, a person therefore lacks inherent existence. This is also true for the aggregates.

The commentary continues to present this point:

Tseg Wang-juk Sengye and others interpret the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* as saying that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, and posit the fault of non-pervasion for inferring the result from the cause for the line, ‘craving arises from the condition of feeling’. Regarding this, the sun of the earlier ones had not risen and it is advice unsuitable to arise collectively.

Master Shantideva posits the true-grasping at the person and phenomena as affliction. If one wishes to understand this topic extensively, then one should read the great commentary that was composed by Je Rinpoche himself on the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

These points are quite easy to understand, as they have been presented earlier.

The commentary next presents this comment:

There now follows three verses starting with, ‘If the words attributed to sutra’ which attempt to show reasoning why the Mahayana sutras are the words of the Buddha. There is no occasion to see how they could come above the lines, ‘If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu’, and in addition, the *Great Commentary* states that they are not the words of the master Shantideva.

So the following three verses are said by the *Great Commentary* not to actually be the words of Shantideva. However, they are presented here as a supplement to the main text.

49. *If the words attributed to sutra
Are regarded as teachings of the Buddha,
Then why do you not regard most
Of the Mahayana in the same way as your
sutras?*

The commentary states:

However that may be, their meaning is: If the words that show the higher training of the mind belong to the sutras, those that show the training in morality belong to the Vinaya, and those that show the training in wisdom are not in contradiction to the Abhidharma and are posited as the words of the Buddha, then, as the Mahayana sutras show mostly the three trainings, why are they not accepted as the words of the Buddha?

As clearly presented here in the commentary, *if the words of the Buddha that show the higher training of the mind belong to the sutras, those that show the training in morality belong to the Vinaya ...* This explanation is based on the Tripitaka, or the three baskets of the Buddha’s teachings. All of the teachings in the Tripitaka are words of the Buddha which belong to either the sutras, the Vinaya, or to the wisdom basket. The counter-argument by the **Prasangika** is that, as the bulk of the Mahayana teachings

fit into one of these three baskets, then why are they not accepted as the words of the Buddha? This implies that they should be.

The next verse reads:

50. *If because of only one
All become faulty,
Then why, through one concordant sutra,
Are not all teachings of the Conqueror?*

As the commentary explains:

If you assert all Mahayana sutras as faulty on the basis of the reason that there is one sutra on which you do not realise the complete definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha, then why do you not assert all Mahayana sutras as the words of the conqueror when you see the definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha complete on one Mahayana sutra?

If you assert all Mahayana sutras are faulty based on the reason that there is one sutra on which you do not realise the complete definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha – in other words, if there is one Mahayana sutra that doesn’t fit into this definition of the Tripitaka, or the Buddha’s words, then this counter argument is presented.

... then why do you not assert all Mahayana sutras as the words of the conqueror when you see the definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha complete on one Mahayana sutra? This implies that, in following your reasoning, it should be accepted as the words of the Buddha. The next counter-argument to that is:

Argument: If the extensive *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and so forth were the word of the Buddha ...

The main difficulty they find in accepting the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* as the word of the Buddha is because of statements such as: “... there is no eye, no ear, no nose ...” and so forth, as in *The Heart Sutra*. They would see that as contradictory to Buddha’s words. So it follows that:

... then Mahakashyapa should realise their subject, but he does not. Therefore they are not the word of the Buddha.

What the **Hearer** proponents are presenting is a meticulous argument, saying that the council of the seven prominent disciples of the Buddha who compiled the Buddha’s words, (Mahakashyapa being one of the main disciples of the Buddha) should be able to understand the subject. Thus they are arguing that Mahakashyapa did not understand this subject, so how could it be the words of the Buddha?

The verse relating to that reads:

51. *The words are not comprehended
By the great Mahakashyapa and so forth.
Who would disregard them
Just because you do not realise them?*

As the commentary explains:

Answer: Who would disregard the extremely profound, that is asserted to be difficult to comprehend by Mahakashyapa and so forth, as the word of the Buddha because you do not comprehend it? That is unsuitable.

What is being thus explained here is that there are certain words that are extremely profound, such as those that relate specifically to the presentation of emptiness.

Because the nature of the presentation on emptiness is profound, it was *difficult to comprehend by Mahakashyapa and so forth*, meaning the other disciples. So they had difficulty accepting it as word of the Buddha because they did not comprehend it.

This is virtually saying that if it could not be comprehended by the great Mahakashyapa and so forth, how could it be understood by you? That would not be a suitable reason to say that it is not the words of the Buddha.

I was hoping that by the end of this year we could finish this chapter, but it seems like that might be quite difficult.

Once we have completed the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, my intention is to teach *Lamp of the Path*, by Atisha. This is a text I had a keen interest in studying when I was quite young and I really paid a lot of attention. Because I have a fair bit of familiarity with this text, I feel that it would be an appropriate text to teach.

His Holiness presented this teaching in Sydney, as you would recall. I have received it prior to that. His Holiness was using the commentary by Panchen Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsan and had mentioned that the lineage of this commentary is quite rare, quite an explanation based on the commentary as well.

The reason I am announcing the next teaching topic is so that you may start to collect some commentaries and translations and become familiar with them.

Since that text is the basis of all other Lam Rim teachings, going through it will be a good way to go over the main points of the Lam Rim teachings. It is considered the very root of all Lam Rim teachings – it is the main source.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Edited Version

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Homework Answers

Block: 3 Week: 9 (11/10/2016 2016) Assigned: 18/10/2016

1, a) Give the Vaibashika and Suatrantika assertion as to how one will attain Liberation.

Basically the proponents of the two lower schools, the **Vaibhashika** and the **Sautrantika** assert that by gaining the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient and substantially existent person and further meditating on it, one will attain liberation. Thus they assert that one does not need to have the realization of emptiness to become an arhat.

b) How do the Prasangika respond their assertion?

The **Prasangika** say that you cannot become an arhat without the realisation of emptiness. That is because one cannot overcome the grasping at an inherently existent self by merely abandoning grasping at a self-sufficient substantially existent self. Thus, they say that while the mind still possesses grasping at true existence, it is difficult to establish a true or ultimate bhikhu, i.e. an arya being, who has the direct realisation of emptiness.

2. Explain the gross and subtle aspects of the Four Noble Truths.

There is a distinction between the gross and subtle aspects of the four noble truths. These were quite clearly presented previously.¹ For example, with respect to the second noble truth, the truth of origination, the craving imbued by the transitory collection of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self is the *subtle truth of origination*. And the *gross truth of origination* is the craving imbued by the grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person.

With respect to the first noble truth, the truth of suffering, the contaminated aggregates obtained through grasping at an inherently existent self or person are the *subtle truth of suffering*. Whereas the contaminated aggregates obtained through the view that holds onto a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of suffering*.

Regarding the third Noble Truth, the truth of cessation, the *gross truth of cessation* is gaining the understanding of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person, and further meditating on that to eventually obtain a cessation of the manifest level of the delusions. Realising the emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence of the nature of the mind, and further meditating on it and perfecting that realisation to obtain the cessation of completely abandoning grasping at true existence is the *subtle truth of cessation*.

Similarly, with the fourth noble truth, the truth of the path: the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of the path*. Whereas gaining the realisation of the lack of an inherently existent self or person is the *subtle truth of the path*.

3. 'Even while one is devoid of that realisation, the manifest afflictions may be stopped temporarily.'

Explain this statement.

The commentary explains:

Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates as being the emptiness of being inherently established, they will again become manifest, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness, but also to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object of negation.

In the statement *Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates*, both selflessness or emptiness, which is that the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are presented as what is to be realised

Even while one is devoid of that realisation, the manifest afflictions may be stopped temporarily. It says here that the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped through meditating on the selflessness of the self-sufficient, substantially existent person. Through that meditation, one can overcome the manifest level of afflictions, which are temporarily stopped.

However, *they will again become manifest*: that is, the afflictions will become manifest, and the reason used here to establish that is the example *just like in the case of absorption without recognition*. The *absorption without recognition*, or 'equipoise of no-discrimination' as some translate it, is a meditative state in which all the gross sensation in the meditator's mind is completely stopped. They have no gross conceptions based on gross sensation or feelings in their mind. All of that is completely stopped.

In that meditative state or absorption, all recognition or discrimination temporarily stops. Later, however, when the meditator comes out of that meditative state, all the gross sensations and concepts will resurface. That is because the meditator has not actually stopped recognition or discrimination all together; they still have discrimination or recognition in their mental continuum. Thus, when they come out of that meditative state or absorption, discrimination will resurface. This illustrates how all of the manifest afflictions are only temporarily stopped because, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition, they can reoccur.

4. a) What is the difference between the Prasangika and the lower school's assertions about the object of negation.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness or the omniscient mind, but also even to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire or one has to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object negation. As specified here, the meditation on emptiness has to serve as a means to negate the subtle object of negation. This is not just any kind of negation, but the subtle object of negation.

According to the **Prasangika**, the subtle object of negation relates to both the person and the aggregates. Thus, the inherent existence of a person is the object of negation based on a person, and the inherent existence of the aggregates is the object of negation in relation to the basis of the

aggregates. The Prasangika assert there is no coarseness and subtleness in relation to the selflessness of a person and the selflessness of phenomena. They do not assert a distinction between coarseness and subtleness in relation to the basis of imputation or the object itself, but they do in relation to the *mind* that realises or perceives the object.

All the **lower schools** below the Prasangika, on the other hand, assert both a coarse and subtle person and phenomena. The selflessness of a person is said to be coarse selflessness, whereas the selflessness of phenomena is said to be subtle selflessness. Only the **Prasangika** assert that there is no distinction between the two.

b) Now when we say the object of negation has to be eliminated or refuted in order to gain an understanding of the emptiness of the person and aggregates, we need to first understand what is to be negated. Explain the object of negation.

If a person were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? If the aggregates were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? As you already know, if a person existed without depending on any other factors – such as aggregates or any other causes and conditions for their existence – that would mean the person exists inherently. Likewise, if the aggregates did not depend on any causes and conditions or other factors for their existence, then the aggregates would have to exist inherently. Since a person cannot possibly exist without depending on aggregates and other causes and conditions for their existence, a person therefore lacks inherent existence. This is also true for the aggregates.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 October 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

As usual, let us set our motivation for receiving the teachings. It is important to generate a bodhicitta motivation as much as possible, even if it is at a very basic level, such as a contrived bodhicitta motivation. When a positive motivation is generated from both sides – from myself as the teacher and yourselves as the listeners – then through that combination of positive motivations we can definitely derive some benefit from our gathering.

As I usually remind you, it is important to be clear about our motivation in all our activities. Whether that activity is virtuous or not is dependent on the preceding intention or motivation. So it is really important to be mindful of that. Indeed, any activity or behaviour that we may adopt is preceded by an intention generated in our mind. Thus there is no activity that is not a consequence of such an intention. Therefore the teachings indicate that the mind is the forerunner of all activities; good or bad.

Trying to maintain a positive frame of mind at all times really helps to secure whatever activity we engage in as most meaningful and beneficial. As I mention regularly, it is not as if we can separate our actions from our state of mind, because there is no action that is not preceded by an intention in our mind.

I've related this story to you previously: one of the younger geshe once asked me, "How does one engage in meditation?" My response was, "by always maintaining a virtuous frame of mind". I emphasised that not being separated from a virtuous mind is my definition of meditation. Then the young geshe put his hands together and said, "Well, that was an unsurpassable personal instruction!"

In the past I've shared stories where I've responded to the queries of younger geshe who are teaching now, and who have many students themselves. For some reason they seem to be fond of having discussions with me, and I respond quite candidly to them. Sometimes I get carried away but I feel that sharing these stories can be relevant and helpful.

2.2. Establishing that even just to obtain Liberation one needs to recognise emptiness

2.2.2. Answer (cont.)

2.2.2.2. ESTABLISHING IT AS THE PATH TO THE NON-ABIDING NIRVANA¹

It is good to take note of the explanations here, because they are very meticulous and precise explanations of this topic. So if we pay attention, we can derive a good understanding.

The verse reads:

52. *For the sake of those suffering due to ignorance
They attain freedom from the extremes of
attachment and fear
And achieve an abiding in cyclic existence.
This is the fruit of emptiness.*

The commentary explains:

The attainment of the non-abiding nirvana definitely depends on the realisation of emptiness. That is because ordinary individuals are attached to the true existence of the aggregates and have fallen into the extreme of eternalism, where they circle in cyclic existence under the control of karma and afflictions. Hearers and self-liberators generate fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence, and have fallen into the extreme of nihilism, where they take the going beyond sorrow that has merely cut birth in existence as their main goal of attainment.

For the sake of the miserable sentient beings circling in cyclic existence due to the delusion that the self and the aggregates exist truly, superior bodhisattvas who are free from these two extremes have achieved an abiding in cyclic existence due to the power of their compassion. This is the fruit of realising emptiness, because if they were devoid of the realisation of emptiness, then although they may abide in cyclic existence, by experiencing true sufferings of cyclic existence, they would become weary and fall into the extreme of nihilism.

In essence, what is being presented here is the faults of being separated from the wisdom realising emptiness and great compassion. This is a precise presentation of, firstly, the faults or the disadvantages of lacking the wisdom realising emptiness, and secondly, lacking great compassion.

The disadvantages of not gaining the realisation of emptiness.

As explained in the commentary, *the attainment of non-abiding nirvana definitely depends on the realisation of emptiness*. That is because *ordinary beings are attached to the true existence of the aggregates and have fallen into the extreme of eternalism*, and so *are attached to the true existence of the person and the aggregates*.

This means that through grasping at a self of person and aggregates, ordinary beings fall into the extreme of eternalism, *where they circle in cyclic existence under the control of karma and afflictions*. So the consequence of grasping at truly existent persons and aggregates, and not overcoming that grasping by gaining the realisation of emptiness, is that ordinary individuals fall into the extreme of eternalism, and so circle in samsara.

As explained in the commentary, *ordinary individuals are attached to the true existence* and so forth. It is good to take this as a personal instruction by relating it to oneself. What does 'ordinary being' mean? Ordinary beings are those who are ignorant of grasping at a self. Thus, if one grasps at a truly existent self then one is an ordinary being. In order to take this as a personal instruction, we need to apply it to ourselves, rather than relating it to other individual beings. For as long as we have not exhausted previously created karmas, and continue to create new karma uncontrollably due to ignorance of grasping at true existence, then we will definitely be propelled into cyclic existence over and over again. This is what circling in cyclic existence means at a personal level.

¹ This heading, and the next one were introduced in the teaching of 20 September 2016.

The key factor that propels one into cyclic existence is, as mentioned here, *falling into the extreme of eternalism*. The extreme of eternalism is to be understood as holding onto the person and the aggregates as being truly or inherently existent. Of course this is not to say that one cannot accumulate good karmas and merit, but until and unless one has overcome grasping at true existence, and completely nullified it, whatever karma one creates will be just another cause to be reborn in cyclic existence.

Another way of putting it is that until one gains the wisdom realising emptiness, one cannot possibly overcome the root cause for circling in cyclic existence. And for as long as one is reborn in samsara due to ignorance, one will inevitably experience the various types of sufferings.

The fault of lacking great compassion

As the commentary explains, *hearers and self-liberators generate fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence, and have fallen into the extreme of nihilism where they take the going beyond sorrow, which has merely cut birth in existence, as their main goal of attainment*. The driving motivation of hearers and self-liberators on the Lower Vehicle or Hinayana path is wanting to be free from personal suffering. You can't blame them for that; we can relate to wanting to be free from suffering. In fact there is a great danger that we fall into their way of thinking. When we are really weary and fed-up with suffering it is very easy to be driven to just wanting to be free from suffering, and not give much thought to the welfare of all other sentient beings.

When the driving motivation is wanting to be free from personal suffering, then for as long as individuals are on the hearer and solitary-realiser paths, the underlying motivation will always be the dominant force that pushes them towards their goal of self-liberation. It is not as if hearers and solitary realisers - and arhats in particular - don't work for the welfare of other sentient beings, but it cannot be compared with the driving motivation of a bodhisattva, whose only wish is to achieve enlightenment for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings. So the driving force for bodhisattvas to attain enlightenment is to benefit all sentient beings; whereas the driving force for the hearers and solitary realisers is to attain liberation in order to be free from suffering. Thus, hearers and solitary realisers have fallen into the extreme of nihilism.

The commentary goes on to state *that hearers and solitary realisers have fallen into the extreme of nihilism where they take the going beyond sorrow, that has merely cut birth in existence, as their main goal of attainment for the sake of the miserable sentient beings circling in cyclic existence due to the delusion that the self and the aggregates exist truly, superior bodhisattvas who are free from these two extremes have achieved an abiding in cyclic existence due to the power of their compassion*. What one should note here is that all superior beings have equally severed the karma that projects one into cyclic existence, and whether they are a superior bodhisattva, superior hearer or solitary realiser, they will not newly create the projecting karma that propels one into cyclic existence by virtue of being an arya superior being.

Why are superior beings called superiors? Some explain it as being because they are superior to lower beings on the path, but that is a very limited understanding. In the context of the commentary, 'superior' has the connotation of being exalted. That which makes them superior is their state of mind. So the term 'superior' does not refer to the external appearance of a person, but rather to their state of mind. What makes

them a superior is that their mind is free from grasping at a self. Because they are free from the grasping at a truly existent self, they will never again create projecting karma, which is a cause to be reborn in cyclic existence. That is because they have gained the realisation of emptiness, and are thus free from being controlled by grasping at a self.

What motivates one to create the karma that projects one into cyclic existence again? It is grasping at a truly existent self, which uncontrollably motivates one to create karma. Then that karma, created through the influence of grasping at a self, becomes the karma that projects one into cyclic existence over and over.

When the reverse takes place, where one's mind takes control over the grasping at true existence, at that time grasping at true existence cannot overpower one's mind and influence it to create karma. That is when one has true control over one's mind. Thus the precise controlling factor is gaining the realisation of selflessness or emptiness. When one's mind is dominated by that wisdom realising emptiness, then that nullifies grasping at true existence, and thus the creation of karma that propels one into cyclic existence completely ceases. As the antidote, which is the correct understanding of emptiness, becomes stronger in one's mind, the opponent, which is self-grasping or grasping at a self, naturally becomes weaker and weaker.

The commentary states that *this is the fruit of realising emptiness, because if they were devoid of the realisation of emptiness, then they would abide in cyclic existence, experiencing the true suffering of cyclic existence*. If bodhisattvas were to abide in cyclic existence without the realisation of emptiness, then they also have to experience the true sufferings of samsara, just as we do. Any happiness we experience is only a temporary, fleeting pleasure, and not real happiness. Whereas the sufferings we experience are true suffering. So a bodhisattva without an understanding of emptiness would experience the true sufferings of cyclic existence and *become weary*, and that would influence them to *fall into the extreme of nihilism*. If they were weary about their own suffering, then that would cause them to lose interest in benefitting others, and they would strive only for self-liberation, and thus fall into the extreme of nihilism.

The happiness that we experience is not true happiness, because all happiness and pleasure that we experience in samsara is necessarily contaminated. Therefore, as the teachings explain, the samsaric happiness that we experience is necessarily one of the three sufferings, specifically the suffering of change.

We can relate to this with our own experience. When we are very cold we experience the first moment of being in the sun as being very pleasurable, and we experience happiness. But if we remain in that hot sun, very soon we start to feel very uncomfortable, and we want go back to the cold, which would then be experienced as pleasurable. But then that changes after a short time and we feel uncomfortable again. As explained in the teachings, the nature of what we perceive as happiness is actually contaminated happiness. The fact that happiness does not last is because it is contaminated.

2.2.2.3. THUS, ADVISING THAT IT IS SUITABLE FOR THOSE WISHING FOR LIBERATION TO MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS

The verse reads:

53. *Thus it is not valid
To repudiate the side of emptiness.
Therefore, free from doubt
Meditate on emptiness.*

As the commentary explains:

Thus, it is invalid to repudiate the side of emptiness, as it was explained earlier, because it will also be contradicted by the reasons explained below. Therefore, even those wishing to attain the enlightenment of the hearers and self-liberators should meditate on emptiness free from doubt. True-grasping is the affliction of ignorance that becomes the root of cyclic existence and without negating its grasped or apprehended object it is impossible to attain liberation.

If you recall, the proponents of the lower schools such as the Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas, say that there is no need for the realisation of emptiness. The commentary responds, saying that *it is invalid to repudiate the side of emptiness. As it was explained earlier, and because it will also be contradicted by the reasons explained below.* This indicates that further reasons will be presented to explain why it is necessary to meditate on emptiness.

The commentary says, *therefore even those wishing to attain the enlightenment of the hearers and self-liberators should meditate on emptiness free from doubt. True-grasping is the affliction of ignorance that becomes the root of cyclic existence, and without negating its grasped or apprehended object it is impossible to attain liberation.*

This reminds me of a debate in my early days when I was in Varanasi. During a debate session I quoted a few lines from the *Compendium of Knowledge* where it says, 'while there is no beginning to cyclic existence, the end can be seen when one realises emptiness'. The example that is given is that, 'although there is no beginning to a seed, the end of a seed can be seen when it is destroyed by fire'.

One of those attending the debate session was the late Geshe Lobsang Gyatso who was the founder of the School of Dialectics. He came up to me afterwards and said, "Oh, you really made a very good point in the debate", and then we had a further discussion about it.

The point is that what ends cyclic existence is seeing that the cause of cyclic existence is grasping at a truly existent self. Until one can see that this grasping can be destroyed, it is quite impossible to comprehend that there can be an end to cyclic existence. When one is able to negate grasping at a truly existent self, then it is possible to attain liberation and thus end cyclic existence.

Again, taking this as a personal instruction, what is being presented here is that grasping at a self is the root cause of cyclic existence. What that implies is that unless and until one overcomes self-grasping, one cannot possibly overcome the root cause of cyclic existence. Overcoming self-grasping refers to looking within oneself, and being able to identify the grasping at one's own self.

How do we go about holding this mistaken view? How does it manifest? How does that then become the cause for our own cyclic existence? When we are able to identify that grasping within ourselves, then it is like a doorway that opens the possibility for ending our own cyclic existence.

Otherwise, as in the analogy in the teachings, it would be like trying to look for the thief in the plains when they've actually run into the forest. If one knows that the thief has run into the forest then it would be really foolish to be looking around in the plains and trying to find the thief there, when in fact they've run into the forest. In other words it's the wrong place to look for the thief. Similarly we need to be identifying the self-grasping within ourselves!

Next is a presentation on afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge. The verse further explains the need to meditate on emptiness to attain liberation.

54. *Emptiness is the antidote against the darkness
Of afflictive and knowledge obscuration.
How can those wishing for quick omniscience
Not meditate on it?*

The commentary explains:

Since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote against the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness, which is free from the two obscurations, not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not even abandon the seed of the afflictive obscurations.

The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, and the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. But to posit everything that appears as truly existent as the obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable.

First of all, as defined in the teachings, an obscuration is that which hinders the obtaining of either liberation or omniscience.

There are two types of obscuration:

1. Afflictive obscurations which are specific obscurations that hinder the attainment of liberation;
2. Obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, which hinder the attainment of omniscience or enlightenment.

All afflictions and their seeds lie within the category of **afflicted obscurations**. There are the afflictions themselves and the seeds of these afflictions, which have the potency to generate future afflictions. Both the seed of the afflictions and the afflictions themselves are afflicted obscurations.

The **obscurations to knowledge or omniscience** are the imprints of those seeds.

Therefore as the commentary explains, *since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness that is free from the two obscurations not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not abandon even the seeds of the afflictive obscurations.*

As explained further, *the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions.* As specifically mentioned here, the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions.

And the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. The appearance of true existence is said to be a manifest obscuration to knowledge. The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, which are the cause of the appearance of true existence.

However as the commentary further mentions, positing *everything that appears as truly existent as an obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable*. This means that while true existence itself is an obscuration to knowledge, whatever appears as existing truly doesn't necessarily have to be an obscuration to knowledge. An example of an appearance of true existence that is not an obscuration to knowledge is the eye consciousness of an ordinary being. For the eye consciousness of an ordinary being, there is an appearance of true existence, but the eye consciousness itself is not posited as an obscuration to knowledge.

Thus, as explained, the final imprints of the afflictions are the **seeds of the obscurations to knowledge**, and due to the imprints the parts that make true existence appear to the mind are the **manifest obscurations to knowledge**.

If we take ourselves as an example, when we see a person or the colour blue, it appears to us as solidly existing from its own side. When someone walks in the door, they don't appear as being dependent on different parts, causes and conditions. Rather they appear as solid and existing from their own side; that is how it appears to our eye consciousness. That is the appearance of true existence.

The commentary continues with a summary of what has just been explained. It is presented first as an argument:

Summary

Argument: One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness.

The opponent is saying, "I don't wish to meditate on emptiness, because it makes me afraid. Why should I meditate on emptiness if it makes me afraid?"

Of course we can't blame anyone for having this fear if they are not familiar with an understanding of emptiness. If one attempts to actually meditate on emptiness with only a partial or incorrect understanding of emptiness, then that can bring about the wrong conclusion that nothing exists. If one thinks that nothing exists, then one has a feeling of losing the sense of reality, which can cause strong fear to arise.

Without a proper understanding of emptiness there is the danger that one will fall into the extreme of nihilism. For example, if we were to take the words of the *Heart Sutra* literally - that 'there is no eye, no ear, no nose', and so forth - then we could start thinking, 'if I don't have any of my senses, then perhaps nothing exists'. If one fails to understand that the implicit meaning of 'no eye', 'no ear' and so forth, is that there's no inherently existent eyes, there's no inherently existent ear, and no inherently existent nose and so forth, and takes the words in the sutra literally, then one has come to the wrong understanding.

One should be able to immediately understand from this passage in the *Heart Sutra* that there is no inherently existent eye and so forth. That is what is meant by emptiness of eye - that it is empty of being an inherently existent eye. When we apply this understanding of emptiness to the entire *Heart Sutra*, then we can imagine how powerful and profound even one recitation of the *Heart Sutra* will be.

If we can develop our understanding of what emptiness really means, and take the time to contemplate it, then due to our acquaintance with the correct understanding of emptiness, we will definitely be suitable recipients for receiving the profound teachings on emptiness; if not in this life then in future lives. As suitable recipients of the profound teachings of emptiness, through hearing the teachings on emptiness we will be able to spontaneously

gain the realisation of emptiness. As explained in the *Madhyamakavatara*, the Middle Way teaching, 'Merely hearing the word 'emptiness' moves a suitable recipient to the point where the hair on their body stands on end spontaneously, and tears flow from their eyes uncontrollably'. That is an external sign that one is a suitable recipient for the profound teachings on emptiness.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in his teachings on the *Madhyamakavatara*, 'even if these signs don't occur, someone who listens to the unmistakable teachings and instructions on emptiness from a qualified teacher, and then thinks about it and contemplates it again and again, can be a suitable recipient of the profound teachings of emptiness'. I've explained this many times previously. These are really important points to bear in mind. Being a suitable recipient of the teachings to the point of gaining a real and profound understanding of what emptiness means, is based on the acquaintance with emptiness that we develop now.

When I taught the *Madhyamakavatara*, the Middle Way teaching, there were some who commented that although they didn't really understand much of it, it moved them to tears. So I'll take that as a good sign. Indeed, the teachings on emptiness do really seem to move the minds of some people. When they hear these teachings their minds are soothed and become very calm. That is definitely a sign that emptiness has a positive effective for some fortunate individuals.

We will conclude the teaching here and with the remaining time we will recite the dedication chapter of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, and dedicate it to Susanna's mother who has just passed away.

Doing a practice like this together, or by oneself, dedicating it to someone else with a good intention and a good motivation, will definitely benefit them. Not only will they benefit, but we will benefit too because we're dedicating our prayers to them. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned, when you dedicate yourself to benefitting others, your own needs and purposes will also be fulfilled. This is a really significant point: when we do something for the benefit of others, we also receive benefit from that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

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Edited Version

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Homework

Block: 3 Week: 10 (18/10/2016 2016) Assigned: 25/10/2016

1. Explain the disadvantages of not gaining the realisation of emptiness

The disadvantages of not gaining the realisation of emptiness

As explained in the commentary, *the attainment of non-abiding nirvana definitely depends on the realisation of emptiness*. That is because *ordinary beings are attached to the true existence of the aggregates and have fallen into the extreme of eternalism*, and so *are attached to the true existence of the person and the aggregates*.

This means that through grasping at a self of person and aggregates, ordinary beings fall into the extreme of eternalism, *where they circle in cyclic existence under the control of karma and afflictions*. So the consequence of grasping at truly existent persons and aggregates, and not overcoming that grasping by gaining the realisation of emptiness, is that ordinary individuals fall into the extreme of eternalism, and so circle in the samsara.

As explained the commentary, *ordinary individuals are attached to the true existence* and so forth. It is good take this as a personal instruction by relating it to oneself. What does 'ordinary being' mean? Ordinary beings are those who are ignorant of grasping at a self. Thus, if one grasps at a truly existent self then one is an ordinary being. In order to take this as a personal instruction, we need to apply it to ourselves, rather than relating it to other individual beings. For as long as we have not exhausted previously created karmas, and continue to create new karma uncontrollably due to ignorance of grasping at true existence, then we will definitely be propelled into cyclic existence over and over again. This is what circling in cyclic existence means at a personal level.

The key factor that propels one into cyclic existence is, as mentioned here, *falling into the extreme of eternalism*. The extreme of eternalism is to be understood as holding onto the person and the aggregates as being truly or inherently existent. Of course this is not to say that one cannot accumulate good karmas and merit, but until and unless one has overcome grasping at true existence, and completely nullified it, whatever karma one creates will be just another cause to be reborn in cyclic existence.

Another way of putting it is that until one gains the wisdom realising emptiness, one cannot possibly overcome the root cause for circling in cyclic existence. And for as long one is reborn in samsara due to ignorance, one will inevitably experience the various types of sufferings.

2. How do hearers and solitary realisers fall into the extreme of nihilism?

The fault of lacking great compassion

As the commentary explains, *hearers and self-liberators generate fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence, and have fallen into the extreme of nihilism where they take the going beyond sorrow, which has merely cut birth in existence, as their main goal of attainment*. The driving motivation of hearers and self-liberators on the Lower Vehicle or Hinayana path is wanting to be free from personal suffering. You can't blame them for that – we can relate to wanting to be free from suffering. In fact there is a great danger that we fall into their way thinking. When we are really weary and fed-up with suffering it is very easy to be driven to just wanting to be free from suffering, and not give much thought to the welfare of all other sentient beings.

When the driving motivation is wanting to be free from personal suffering, then for as long as individuals are on the hearer and solitary-realisers paths, the underlying motivation will always be the dominant force that pushes them towards their goal of self-liberation. It is not as if hearers and solitary realisers, and arhats in particular don't work for the welfare of other sentient beings, but it cannot be compared with the driving motivation of a bodhisattva, whose only wish is to achieve enlightenment for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings. So the driving force for bodhisattvas to attain enlightenment is to benefit all sentient beings, whereas the driving force for the hearers and solitary realisers is to attain liberation in order to be free from suffering. Thus, hearers and solitary realisers have fallen into the extreme of nihilism.

3. What motivates one to create the karma that projects one into cyclic existence again? What happens when the reverse takes place?

What motivates one to create the karma that projects one into cyclic existence again? It is grasping at a truly existent self, which uncontrollably motivates one to create karma. Then that karma, created through the influence of grasping at a self, becomes the karma that projects one into cyclic existence over and over.

When the reverse takes place, where one's mind takes control over the grasping at true existence, at that time grasping at true existence cannot overpower one's mind and influence it to create karma. That is when one has true control over one's mind. Thus the precise controlling factor is gaining the realisation of selflessness or emptiness. When one's mind is dominated by that wisdom realising emptiness, then that nullifies grasping at true existence, and thus the creation of karma that propels one into cyclic existence completely ceases. As the antidote, which is the correct understanding of emptiness, becomes stronger in one's mind, the opponent, which is self-grasping or grasping at a self, naturally becomes weaker and weaker.

4. Why is the happiness that we experience not true happiness?

The happiness that we experience is not true happiness, because all happiness and pleasure that we experience in samsara is necessarily contaminated. Therefore, as the teachings explain, the samsaric happiness that we experience is necessarily one of the three sufferings, specifically the suffering of change.

We can relate to this to our own experience. When we are very cold we experience the first moment of being in the sun as being very pleasurable, and we experience happiness. But if we remain in that hot sun, very soon we start to feel very uncomfortable, and we want go back to the cold, which would then be experienced as pleasurable. But then that changes after a short time and we feel uncomfortable again. As explained in the teachings, the nature of what we perceive as happiness, is actually contaminated happiness. The fact that happiness does not last is because it is contaminated.

5.a) Explain afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge.

Next is a presentation on afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge. The verse further explains the need to meditate on emptiness to attain liberation.

**54. *Emptiness is the antidote against the darkness
Of afflictive and knowledge obscuration.
How can those wishing for quick omniscience
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The commentary explains:

Since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote against the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness, which is free from the two obscurations, not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not even abandon the seed of the afflictive obscurations.

The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, and the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. But to posit everything that appears as truly existent as the obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable.

First of all, as defined in the teachings an obscuration is that which hinders the obtaining of either liberation or omniscience.

There are two types of obscuration:

1. Afflictive obscurations which are specific obscurations that hinder the attainment of liberation;
2. Obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, which hinder the attainment of omniscience or enlightenment.

All afflictions and their seeds lie within the category of **afflicted obscurations**. There are the afflictions themselves and the seeds of these afflictions, which have the potency to generate future afflictions. Both the seed of the afflictions and the afflictions themselves are afflicted obscurations. The **obscurations to omniscience or knowledge** are the imprints of those seeds.

Therefore as the commentary explains, *since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness that is free from the two obscurations not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not abandon even the seeds of the afflictive obscurations.*

As explained further, *the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions*. As specifically mentioned here, the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions.

And the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. The appearance of true existence is said to be a manifest obscuration to knowledge. The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, which are the cause of the appearance of true existence.

However as the commentary further mentions, positing *everything that appears as truly existent as an obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable*. This means that while true existence itself is an obscuration to knowledge, whatever appears as existing truly doesn't necessarily have to be an obscuration to knowledge. An example of an appearance of true existence that is not an obscuration to knowledge is the eye consciousness of an ordinary being. For the eye consciousness of an ordinary being, there is an appearance of true existence, but the eye consciousness itself is not posited as an obscuration to knowledge.

Thus, as explained, the **final imprints** of the afflictions are the **seeds** of the obscurations to omniscience, or knowledge, and due to the imprints the parts that make true existence appear to the mind are the **manifest obscurations to omniscience**.

b) If we take ourselves as an example, what appears when we see a person or the colour blue?

If we take ourselves as an example, when we see a person or the colour blue, it appears to us as solidly existing from its own side. When someone walks in the door, they don't appear as being dependent on different parts, causes and conditions. Rather they appear as solid and existing from their own side – that is how it appears to our eye consciousness. That is the appearance of true existence.