

## Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

13 May 2008

As usual we sit in a comfortable relaxed position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise well'.

### 1.1.1.2. Summarized meaning: showing the effects of refuting production

*There is no coming of the produced, 360*  
*Likewise no going of that which has ceased.*  
*Since it is thus, why should existence*  
*Not be like a magician's illusions?*

In order to understand the meaning of the verse the commentary quotes from a sutra that reads:

Sutra says: "Monks, it is as follows: when the eye is produced, it does not come from anywhere, and when it ceases, it does not go anywhere."

This relates to production by way of its own entity: that which does not come from anywhere nor does it go anywhere when it ceases. The commentary then explains the meaning of the sutra:

Thus if there were inherent production, a thing should come from somewhere when it is produced, like the rising moon, and go somewhere when it ceases, like the setting moon. In that case it would be permanent, but since production and cessation are mere nominal imputations, one must accept that they are like magical illusions.

The analogy illustrating the absurdity of production being inherently existent is that it would be like the rising moon that must come from somewhere when it rises and goes somewhere when it sets. The meaning of the phrase, 'In that case it would be permanent' is, first of all when we perceive the moon rising in the evening and setting in the morning, we perceive it as being the same moon. However if the moon that rises and the one that sets were in fact the same moon, then of course it would be permanent. If the question is, 'Is there a moon when it rises?' then the answer is yes. Likewise, is there a moon when it sets? Yes there is a moon. However if the question is whether it is the same moon, then of course it is not the same, because the moon goes through change every single moment from the time that it rises until it sets. So that means while the earlier moments of the rising moon cease, the consequent later moments of the moon continue to come into existence.

Earlier in the teachings, it was shown that a functional thing in the morning ceases to exist by evening. The continuity of a functional thing in the morning will still remain in the evening, however the actual functional thing that one relates to in the morning will cease. This is the case for all functional phenomena; all productions have the nature of ceasing the moment after they are produced.

If production were to be inherently existent, or existent by way of its own entity, then it would be unchanging or unceasing. In that case the moon would be permanent: the setting moon would have to be the same moon that rose

earlier in the evening. However that is absurd, as the moon is an impermanent phenomenon.

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

Since things do not come from anywhere when they are produced nor go anywhere when they cease, why should external and internal existence not be like a magician's illusions? When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child.

What is being explained is that all functional phenomena, while lacking inherent existence, have the nature of being produced and then ceasing, and thus they are like magical illusions. An example of a magical illusion is a conjured horse or rabbit that appears to be a real horse or rabbit, but which in reality is not an actual horse or rabbit. All phenomena are in the same nature in that they appear as being inherently existent but in reality lack even an atom of inherent existence. That is how everything is like a magician's illusion.

When the commentary says, 'Why should external and internal existence not be like a magician's illusions?' that rhetorical question implies that all external and internal phenomena are in fact like a magician's illusions. Further on, when it says, 'When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child', it is differentiating two different analogies. Although all phenomena are like a 'created illusion', they are not like a 'barren woman's child', which is an example of non-existence. There cannot be a child to a barren woman, so that is an example of something that does not exist, whereas magician's illusions, such as conjured horses, do exist. The mistaken perception is to perceive the illusion as an actual phenomena, e.g. to perceive the conjured horse as an actual horse. That is a mistaken view, but actually perceiving the illusion is not mistaken, because there is a conjured horse. So in debate if it is asked whether a conjured horse exists, i.e. a magician's illusion, then the answer would have to be 'yes'. But if the question is whether the conjured horse actually exists as a real horse, then the answer is no. Though the illusion exists, the horse does not actually exist. Likewise, an unenlightened being's view that phenomena are truly existent is a mistaken perception, even though phenomena do exist. That is how the magician's illusion analogy illustrates the existence of all phenomena.

The difference between these two examples should be clearly understood. A barren woman's child is an example of something that does not exist, while a magician's illusion, such as a conjured horse, does exist. Another analogy of something that exists, but which does not exist in the way it appears, is the reflection of our face in the mirror. Although the reflection of our face exists, the reflection in the mirror is not actually our face. So seeing the reflection as being our actual face is mistaken. However the image of the reflection of our face in the mirror does exist. So the conclusion is that the mere reflection of our face in the mirror is existent, while the actual face does not exist in the mirror.

### Putting theory into practice

The reflection of our face in the mirror is one of the analogies of how phenomena are like an illusion, and it should be incorporated into our thinking, and used in our daily life. Most of us look in the mirror in the morning, so when you see the reflection of your face, it would be good if that reminded you of how things lack inherent existence. When you see the image of your face in the mirror, you can remind yourself, 'Even though my face appears there, in reality it is

not my face. Likewise all phenomena appear as being inherently existent, or truly existent. However that is not the case, as they lack true existence'. If one can actually bring that to mind, then looking in the mirror would have served a great purpose in accumulating great merit.

The significance of this analogy relates to the syllogism: 'Things lack true existence, because of being interdependent origination'. If one were to actually bring to mind the meaning of that when one looks in the mirror, then there will not be much room for attachment when one looks in the mirror! In fact it can become an immediate antidote for overcoming attachment. As the advice given is to meditate on emptiness from the beginning of the morning, I suppose this would be a good way to start meditating on emptiness.

As the great masters have repeatedly advised we must put into practice whatever we have learned through the teachings. We must try to take that advice in a practical way, but it does not necessarily mean we have to go into solitude. On a daily basis we can use our daily activities, such as looking in the mirror, to remind ourselves of the actual meaning of the teachings. If we can remind ourselves of how the mirror illustrates that phenomena lack inherent existence, or true existence, and bring to mind that just as the reflection in the mirror is not one's face even though it appears to be, we can then go on to recall that all phenomena, though they appear to be truly or inherently existent, in reality they lack any inherent or true existence. Just bringing that to mind is highly significant, and that is how we put into practice the meanings we derive from the teachings. That is how we can familiarise ourselves with the teachings on a daily basis.

The teachings often refer to recalling an image and meditating on it. One often finds that sort of instruction in the teachings. Focusing on an image refers to the meditation object. For example, if we are meditating on the image of Buddha Shakyamuni, it is not the gross outline of the painting or the statue that we are focusing on in our meditation, but the complete image of the Buddha that one recalls in one's mind. Even though bringing the image of the Buddha to one's mind is initially difficult, it becomes clearer and clearer through familiarity, and that is what we focus on in the practice of meditation.

Likewise Lama Tsong Khapa said that focusing on the image means focusing on the aspect of the Buddha, and that is what one brings to mind. The more one becomes familiar with that image as one engages in the practice of meditation, the more vivid the image will become in one's mind. As it becomes clearer and more vivid, then one's practice of meditating on it becomes more and more profound.

The commentary then further refers to Chandrakirti's *Madhyamika* text, which explains that though things appear to be inherently existent or truly existent, in reality they entirely lack inherent existence or true existence in every way. Just like an illusion appears to be real, things appear to be truly existent. An Arya being perceives all phenomena as being like an illusion, and seeing phenomena as an illusion, which leads one to freedom from bondage to samsara. As explained further, until and unless one sees all phenomena as an illusion, yet functioning in the nature of interdependent origination, there is no way to gain freedom from cyclic existence.

## 1.1.2. General refutation of inherently existent production, duration and disintegration

This has four sub-headings.

1.1.2.1. Refutation of inherently existent characteristics by examining sequentiality and simultaneity

1.1.2.2. Refutation through the consequence of infinite regress of the characteristics

1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining whether they are one or different

1.1.2.4. Refutation by examining whether they are existent or non-existent by way of their own entity

### 1.1.2.1. Refutation of inherently existent characteristics by examining sequentiality and simultaneity

Here the word 'characteristics' refers to the three characteristics of products mentioned previously, which are production, duration and disintegration. The refutation refers to inherently existent production: if it existed then the characteristics would have to occur either simultaneously or sequentially, as there is no other way they can occur.

*Production, duration and disintegration* 361  
*Do not occur simultaneously.*  
*If they are not consecutive either,*  
*When can they ever occur?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

Since production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products, do not occur simultaneously by way of their own entity nor consecutively by way of their own entity, when do they occur by way of their own entity?

This implies that as the characteristics do not occur simultaneously or consecutively, there is no other way that they can occur. The syllogism in relation to the refutation here is, as quoted in the commentary:

Subject: Production, duration and disintegration  
Predicate: Do not exist inherently  
Reason: Because of not being inherently simultaneous or consecutive.

Another syllogism in relation to the production, duration and disintegration not existing inherently uses the reason, 'because they are phenomena that have parts'.

Here the syllogism is that production, duration and disintegration, do not exist inherently, because of not being inherently simultaneous or consecutive. In relation to earlier explanations, if they were to be simultaneous then the fault that would arise would be that the three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration would be one and the same, and could not be differentiated.

On the other hand if these three characteristics were produced consecutively, then when there is production, it would lack the other two characteristics, i.e. duration and disintegration would not exist at that time. Likewise when there is duration then that phenomenon would not have production or disintegration, and also when there is disintegration it would lack duration and production. Thus the definition of a product would not apply. Then, as mentioned previously, the fallacy of functional phenomena lacking characteristics of a product, would occur.

So the conclusion is that since the characteristics of a product cannot be inherently simultaneous, nor consecutively existent with the product, there is no way that a product can be inherently existent.

### 1.1.2.2. Refutation through the consequence of infinite regress of the characteristics

If things were to be inherently existent then another fault would be infinite regress of the characteristics. In this verse inherent production, or inherent existence, is refuted by showing the fallacy of infinite regress of the characteristics.

*If for production and all the others, 362  
All of these occurred again,  
Disintegration would seem like production  
And duration like disintegration.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Since production, duration and disintegration would all require the production of production and so forth, disintegration like production, would have another disintegration and duration too would seem like disintegration in that one would have to assert that it has another duration. Thus there would be infinite regress. In that case the basic characteristics would not be established. Therefore there is not even an atom of inherent existence.

If production, duration and disintegration existed inherently then the infinite regress would be that production itself would need another production, and duration would need another duration and that duration would also need another duration and in that way there would be infinite regress in all three instances of production, duration and disintegration. Thus there would be no way that one could point out the actual characteristics. As it says here, the characteristics themselves would not be established, because they would all have to depend upon another factor for their existence. If the characteristics cannot be established then that which is characterised also cannot be established. Therefore, that which is characterised cannot be established inherently.

Basically what is to be understood here is that there is continuity in relation to the continuity of production, duration and disintegration. However it is not an inherently existent continuation. When we talk about a phenomenon in terms of being a product, then that phenomenon, whatever it is, has production, duration and disintegration. However it is the continuity of that phenomenon that goes through production, and then duration and disintegration. For example when the seed turns into a sprout it is not as though the seed itself without changing, travels along and becomes a sprout. However the continuation of the seed can be established as existing at the time of the sprout.

It is the same with the individual self: we relate to ourselves as existing in the morning, through the day and in the evening. That existence is based on the continuity of the self of the individual. It is not that the same individual in the morning exists at noon and then exists in the evening as well. Of course conventionally the fact that we wake up in the morning establishes that the individual from last night still exists. However that is because there is the continuation of the self or individual from the previous evening.

During the night when the individual sleeps it is the continuation of that person who went to sleep. Then they wake up in the morning and continue to exist throughout the day and evening. So in reality it is the continuity of the individual or the person. It is because of the continuity of the person can be established that we are able to establish that the person exists. So conventionally we would say that the person from last night still exists now. If we were to ask, does the person from last night still exist this morning? Yes. Does the person from this morning exist at noon? Yes. Do

they still exist in the evening? Yes. So, it is because of establishing the continuity of the person that we can conventionally say that the person exists.

Some individuals can use this for their practice to establish the existence of past lives. They relate waking up in the morning seemingly not having been conscious during sleep, to the existence of past lives. Just as one wakes up in the morning and continues to function, so too one was reborn following death in a past life. The continuity of one's existence from past lives can be understood in this way.

In relation to the existence of a self or 'I', what we have to understand is that there is what is called a 'mere self', and it is this mere self that is the self that comes from previous lifetimes into this life, and which will continue on to future lives. In relation to ourselves there is the 'mere self' which is characterised and related to the existence in 'all our lives', and a self that is characterised with the features of 'this life'. The self that is characterised with this life is a self that is imputed upon the aggregates that we have now, and this self will come to an end when we experience death. That is, the self that is characterised in relation to this life will cease to exist.

However the 'mere' self will not cease to exist, as it is that which continues on to future lives. In the teachings of the *Life Stories of the Buddha* we see, for example, that the Buddha mentions that at a certain time he was a certain being, a bodhisattva, a Brahmin and so forth. When it is related to past lives of the Buddha, for example, it is referring to a particular instance of a particular lifetime. It is the same for clairvoyants who can remember their past lives, for example being a Deva being, or celestial god. Their memory of that shows that the self is a continuation of 'the mere self' that existed then which is remembered by the self that is characterised with the features of the life now. Thus one can have a memory of a previous lifetime such as a god.

When that existence of a lifetime of a god is remembered it relates to the individual at that time. It is not remembered as, 'I am now that god who was in the previous lifetime'. Rather it is remembered as an individual at that time, who is related to the self now, who had an existence at that time as a god, that is being remembered. So that is how one should relate to the self, which comes from the past and goes on to future lifetimes.

### 1.1.2.3. Refutation by examining whether they are one or different

What is being refuted here is a phenomenon existing either as an inherently existent one or single entity, or existing as an inherently different or separate entity in relation to its characteristics.

*Question:* Are the characteristics and that which they characterize one or different in nature?

*Assertion:* That which is characterized, namely a product such as a pot, is different in nature from its three characteristics-production, duration and disintegration.

*Answer:* How can that which is characterized, namely a product such as a pot, be impermanent? It follows that it is not, for impermanence and the pot are inherently different.

The characteristics are production, duration and disintegration and 'that which they characterise'. A vase, for example, would be 'that which is characterised'. So the question here is are the characteristics and that which they characterize one or different or separate in nature?

*If that which is characterized is said to be  
Different from its characteristics,  
How can the characterized be impermanent?  
Alternatively, existence of all four is unclear.* 363

The assertion relates to the first two lines of the verse. What is being explained here is that if the characteristics and that which is being characterised, i.e. the pot and its characteristics, are inherently different then because there is no relation between the characteristics and that which is being characterised, that would mean that the pot would not have those qualities of production, duration and disintegration. So the pot could not be impermanent.

The absurdity is clearly pointed out. If the pot and its characteristics were inherently separate or different, then that would mean that they are mutually exclusive, i.e. there is no relationship between the pot and its characteristics. If that were the case then because they have no relationship whatsoever, the characteristics of production, duration and disintegration would not apply to the pot because there is no connection, as they are inherently separate. If they are not related in any way then those qualities will not apply to the pot and then the pot would fail to be impermanent. That which makes a pot impermanent is its characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. However if the pot is completely separate from its characteristics then those qualities would not pertain to the pot and it would fail to be impermanent.

As the commentary continues:

Alternatively, if they are inherently not different, the four, i.e. the three characteristics and that which they characterize, do not clearly have the entity of existing as functional things. It follows that the characteristics are not characteristics because of being one with that which they characterize, and that which they characterize is not what is characterized because of being one with the characteristics. One should therefore not assert that they are inherently one or different.

If that which is being characterised and the characteristics are inherently one then they cannot exist as a functional thing, because that which is characterised and the characteristics will be one and inseparable, and we would not be able to distinguish between them. The commentary says that if they were inherently one then, 'It follows that the characteristics are not characteristics because of being one with that which they characterise'. If they are one with what they characterise then how can there be characteristics? That is the absurdity that would follow if they were inherently one.

The meaning of 'and that which they characterise is not what is characterised because of being one with the characteristics', is that a functional phenomena ceases to serve the entity of being a functional phenomena, because the distinction between the characteristics, and that which is being characterised, cannot be established. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

Thus the commentary concludes that 'one should therefore not assert that they are inherently one or different'. This relates to the earlier syllogism:

Subject: A phenomena that has the three characteristics, such as a pot  
Predicate: Does not exist inherently  
Reason: Because it is not inherently existent one or inherently existent different.

The conclusion from our own system is: if you were to ask if whether that which is being characterised and the characteristics are separate or not then conventionally, as mentioned earlier in the commentary, we would have to say that they are separate. The very fact that they have a different sound indicates that they are separate. One is 'that which is to be characterised' and the other is 'the characteristics' of that which is to be characterised. So they are clearly separate conventionally. However what is being refuted here is that they cannot be inherently separate. Thus that which is characterised and the characteristics are conventionally separate but not inherently separate.

#### **1.1.2.4. Refutation by examining whether they are existent or non-existent by way of their own entity**

That is subdivided into two.

1.1.2.4.1. Refuting that production is truly existent because there are truly existent producing causes

1.1.2.4.2. Production and so forth are neither truly existent things nor non-things

It is good to refer to just the outline to try to get an understanding as to how it relates to the explanation in the text. The outlines can serve as a reminder of the main points that are made in the text.

##### **1.1.2.4.1. Refuting that production is truly existent because there are truly existent producing causes**

What is being refuted is that there are truly existent producing causes. Conventionally there are producing causes, and because they are producing causes that lack inherent existence, there also have to be effects. So conventionally we would have to say that there are producing causes and thus there is production. However what is being refuted here is that there is truly existent production because there are truly existent producing causes. There cannot be truly existent producing causes that produce truly existent effects.

*Assertion:* Production and so forth exist inherently because the agent of production exists inherently.

*Answer:*

*A thing is not produced from a thing* 364  
*Nor is a thing produced from a non-thing.*  
*A non-thing is not produced from a non-thing*  
*Nor is a non-thing produced from a thing.*

As the commentary clearly explains:

The sprout, as an already existing functional thing is not produced again while the seed as a functional thing exists, because a sprout is not produced unless the seed undergoes change. Also a sprout that has already been produced cannot be produced again.

The very fact that a sprout is called a sprout means that it is already produced. That which is already produced is already a functional thing and does not need to be produced again. A sprout will not be produced when the seed as a functional thing exists, means that when the seed exists then the sprout is not produced, because the sprout is produced only when the seed undergoes change. 'Also a sprout that has already been produced cannot be produced again'. In both cases the absurdity that is being pointed out is that a sprout cannot be produced while the seed still exists. If the sprout is already produced then it does not have to be produced again because it has already been produced. That is the fallacy being pointed out.

We can relate the explanation in the commentary to the four possibilities outlined in the verse:

1. 'A thing is not produced from a thing'. This refers to an inherent existent thing. An inherently existent thing is not produced from another inherently existent thing, because an inherently existent thing does not have production, i.e. it cannot produce things. So, an inherently existent thing being produced from another inherently existent thing, is the first absurdity.

2. 'Nor is a thing produced from a non-thing'. A thing cannot be produced from a non-thing because that goes against the law of cause and effect sequence. A non-thing cannot produce anything so it cannot produce a thing. The possibility of that is an absurdity because of not pertaining to the law of cause and effect sequence.

3. 'A non-thing is not produced from a non-thing' i.e. a non-thing cannot produce anything. A non-thing cannot be produced from a non-thing because a non-thing cannot produce anything. Therefore that possibility is also pointed out as an absurdity.

4. 'Nor is a non-thing produced from a thing'. Even though a thing does produce other things it does produce an effect, and the effect that it produces has to be a functional thing, an existing thing. So a thing cannot produce a non-thing. That is the last absurdity of the four possibilities.

The commentary continues:

The sprout as a functional thing is not produced from a non-functional seed, because a non-functional thing does not have the ability to produce an effect. Furthermore a non-functional effect is not produced from a non-functional cause: a burnt seed does not produce a burnt sprout.

The last part says that 'since inherent production is impossible, causes and conditions giving rise to it are meaningless'. So the conclusion, as it says in the commentary, is that inherent production is impossible and so causes and conditions giving rise to it are meaningless. If there were any possibility, it would have to be one of these four possibilities. However an inherently existent thing produced from an inherently existent thing is not possible. The next possibility is that a thing is produced from a non-thing, however the absurdity is that a non-thing cannot produce anything. Likewise with the third possibility of a non-thing being produced from a non-thing. However that completely forsakes the cause and effect sequence of phenomena that applies to functional things. Non-functional things cannot have the cause and effect sequence, so a non-thing being produced from a non-thing is absurd. The last possibility is that a non-thing is produced from a thing. Though a thing does produce phenomena, what it produces in relation to the law of cause and effect is a functional thing, and it cannot produce a non-functional thing. That is the fourth fallacy. As there is no possibility of an inherently existent production under any circumstances, there cannot be an atom of inherent existence in any phenomena.

So the conclusion is that the law of cause and effect sequence relates conventionally to existing phenomena, being produced and having effects, but cannot relate to inherent existence under any circumstances. By understanding that one should come to the conclusion that there cannot be inherent existence under any circumstances. Though conventional causes produce conventional effects, there cannot at any time be inherently existent causes that produce inherently existent effects.

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Edited Version*

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## Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

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### **1.1.2.4.2. PRODUCTION AND SO FORTH ARE NEITHER TRULY EXISTENT THINGS NOR NON-THINGS**

In relation to the outline 'things' refers to compounded phenomena. Compounded phenomena are things that are amassed and have causes and effects, so they are impermanent phenomena. Whereas 'non-things' are uncompounded, permanent phenomena. So production and so forth is being refuted as being either truly existent 'things' or truly existent 'non-things'. The verse that presents the refutation is the following verse:

*A thing does not become a thing, 365*  
*Nor does a non-thing become a thing.*  
*A non-thing does not become a non-thing,*  
*Nor does a thing become a non-thing.*

The main points being presented here are the refutations of truly existent phenomena. It is good to bring to mind the reasons why things lack true existence or existence by way of their own entity or inherent existence. Why do they lack that? One can first relate to how things appear to us and then question whether they exist in the way they appear to us. In relation to an ordinary being's perception, we can conclude that if things were to exist in the manner that they appear, then that would imply that things are truly existent. That is because to an ordinary being's perception, everything appears as being truly existent or inherently existent. It is good to think about this in relation to one's own perceptions. Do things actually exist in the way that they appear to oneself or not?

In order to investigate and analyse whether things exist in the way that they appear, one must first relate to how things appear to one's own perception. How do they appear? How do external and internal phenomena appear to us when we perceive them? That is something that we need to contemplate and analyse. With this kind of investigation one will get closer and closer to the actual understanding of the lack of true or inherent existence. Otherwise just by relating to these topics and assuming that things do not truly exist, or just saying with mere words that things lack true existence, will not really help one's practice very much. One needs to engage in the actual analysis and investigation oneself.

Investigating and analysing further why things appear as being inherently existent to our consciousness, we can consider for example, how things appear to our eye consciousness. The reason why an eye consciousness perceiving the colour 'blue' is considered a mistaken consciousness is because the eye consciousness itself is stained with, or influenced by, the ignorance of grasping at the self, which is the misconception of grasping at a truly existent self. Thus an ordinary being's eye consciousness is considered to be a mistaken consciousness. Though it is not a wrong consciousness as far as perceiving 'blue' as the colour blue, it is mistaken with regard to perceiving 'blue' as being inherently existent. It should be understood that when the blue colour appears to the eye consciousness it appears as being independently existent, existing by way of its own entity, meaning that the blue colour appears to exist in of

itself without depending on causes and conditions. It does not appear as being an interdependent origination but rather a phenomenon that exists from its own side, without depending on causes and conditions. That is how it appears to the eye consciousness and the misconception of grasping at the self influences the eye consciousness to hold on to that appearance and believe in it. The eye consciousness seeing the blue colour as 'blue' is not a wrong consciousness, but it is mistaken in relation to perceiving the colour 'blue' as truly existent. It is this misconception of grasping at true existence or inherent existence that influences us to believe in what appears to the eye consciousness.

To clarify again, the appearance of 'blue' as the colour blue is not wrong but apprehending the colour blue as existing by way of its own entity without depending on causes and conditions, and then grasping and believing that, is the mistaken conception of grasping at true existence. This is how we must identify the ignorance of grasping at true existence that we have within our own mind. It is very important that we understand and realise this point. Then in our investigation we will come to understand that everything that appears to the five sense consciousnesses appears as being truly existent for an ordinary being. Therefore they are mistaken consciousness.

Understanding this will definitely help our practice in reducing and eventually overcoming our misconceptions. Take the example of when something beautiful appears to the eye consciousness. One should immediately question, 'Does it exist in the way that it appears to me or not?' Does the beauty truly exist in the object that one sees, or not? If beauty does exist in the way that it appears to one's eye consciousness, then the conclusion would be that beauty is indeed truly existent – that beauty does exist independently, as that is the criteria for true existence, which is existing in the way that it appears to an ordinary perception.

Likewise, in relation to an object that one feels aversion towards; do the faults that appear to one's perception actually exist in the way that they appear or not? When one does this analysis with the logical reasoning given in the teachings, one can then conclude that neither the beauty nor the faults of the object that one perceives actually exist in the way that they appear to oneself. That will then immediately reduce the attachment and aversion in relation to the object. We will then be able to see the direct connection between the analysis and the effect, true existence or inherent existence, and how that understanding serves as an antidote to reduce strong attachment and anger. So in this way we can see the relevance of the practice.

As the teachings mention, it is really incredible when one begins to see attachment and aversion being reduced in this way. Then one can derive the meaning of the teachings that say, 'Even having a doubt about selflessness or emptiness will shatter the very core of samsaric existence'. Also we can then begin to understand the teachings, which say, 'When one meditates on the antidotes of grasping at true existence, that then becomes an antidote for overcoming all delusions'.

With a detailed investigation and analysis, we then come to the correct conclusion that things do not exist in the way the way they appear to an ordinary perception. To make the main point, as mentioned previously that conclusion, becomes a highly valid conclusion in our thinking. The reason is because when one actually comes to the point where one understands how things do not exist in the way that they appear to an ordinary perception, it is like holding the view of emptiness. It is holding the view associated with

emptiness, because the realisation of emptiness is basically seeing the lack of inherent or true existence in phenomena. Thus, bringing to mind the understanding that things do not exist in the way that they appear is bringing to mind the view of emptiness. In that way it becomes a highly meritorious, highly valuable view with which to familiarise our mind.

To make it simple for oneself, try to understand that perceiving things as truly existent or existing by way of their own entity is a faulty perception, and in this way we can identify the ignorance of grasping at true existence, which is what we need to abandon. The opposite view which is that things do not exist in the way that they appear to an ordinary perception, and therefore lack any kind of true or inherent existence. This is associated with the view of emptiness, which is what we need to adopt.

By recognising these two views as opposites we can familiarise ourselves with the correct view of selflessness or emptiness. It seems that I have side-tracked a bit; however I feel that these are very important points and techniques that we need to use in our daily lives.

We may not have the actual realisation of emptiness yet, but being keen students we wish to know the best way to practise in order to gain an understanding of emptiness. So for us the best way is to constantly remind ourselves of how things lack inherent or true existence. Even though all phenomena appear as being truly and independently existent, that is in fact false; phenomena do not exist in that way. We should constantly remind ourselves of that view and familiarise ourselves with understanding of emptiness. Of course we may not yet have a real conceptual understanding of emptiness derived from a lot of analysis, but constantly reminding and familiarising ourselves with this will lead to the direct realisations of emptiness.

The reason I stress this is because it is important that we use the great opportunities that we have now, such as the leisure of having clear thinking. We have the attribute of having a clear mind now so we must use it in a positive way. This in itself is a great opportunity. If we can use the clarity of our mind, the time and the leisure now to use our thinking process to rationalise and think. If we can use this ability of our mind now in a positive way to become familiar with the essential points of the Dharma such as the understanding of emptiness, then that makes our time now most worthwhile and useful. This is how we put into practice what we have heard from the teachings. We hear the teachings and we are interested in the teachings, but if we don't actually take it further in our daily life by using our intelligence and ability to think about these points now then that would be a wasted opportunity.

The Dharma says that wasting our time never stops, and that from moment to moment our life is fading away. So in each moment we are losing a great opportunity. As the great Kadampa masters have mentioned, 'The more one hears the more it should enhance one's positive way of thinking, that then makes one's life most meaningful and useful'. So this is the way to go about our practice.

In a practical way as the Kadampa masters have stated, and in reality what we need to practise is what we hear in the teachings, which is where we find the means to do the practice. Otherwise we hear some people saying 'I have heard the teachings, but I don't know what to meditate on now. I don't know what practice to do'. That shows the disparity between what is being heard and not utilising it for one's own practice. In fact if one begins to use whatever one

hears in the Dharma in one's daily life as a practice, then in fact there will be no lack of practices to do. The more one hears, the more one's practice is enhanced. Rather than being confused about what to practise, we gain more and more ways to practise if we can actually find a practical way to use every bit of information that we get from the teaching in our daily life. That then becomes the practice.

In relation to explaining the verse commentary raises this question:

Moreover, should one consider that production and disintegration pertain to that which has the nature of a functional thing or a non-functional thing?

What is being asked is do the characteristics of production and disintegration refer to things that have the nature of a functional thing or a non-functional thing? What needs to be understood in relation to the question is whether production and disintegration exist by way of their own entity. Do production and disintegration refer to that which has the nature of a functional thing by way of its own entity or do they refer to a non-functional thing by way of its own entity? The answer is that both views are inappropriate.

Then as the commentary further explains the meaning the first line 'A thing does not become a thing':

Something already produced does not again become a thing being produced, since it is senseless for it to be produced again.

Because it is produced already, it does not have to be produced again. To continue the explanation of the verse:

A non-functional thing is not produced again as a thing...

This is in relation to the second line 'Nor does a non-thing become a thing'. The reasoning is:

...otherwise it follows that even a barren woman's child could be born.

This points out the absurdity of a non-functional thing being produced again as a thing, because a non-functional thing cannot be produced at all. A non-functional thing does not relate to the cause and effect sequence. A non-functional thing cannot be produced again as a thing, just as there cannot be a barren woman's child. The conclusion is that a thing does not become a thing by way of its own entity, likewise a non-thing cannot become a thing by way of its own entity. In both cases there is a fallacy.

In relation to the first two lines of the verse, the commentary concludes:

Thus there is no inherent production of either functional or non-functional things.

Then in relation to the third line of the verse 'A non-thing does not become a non-thing' the commentary explains:

A totally disintegrated non-functional thing does not again become a disintegrating non-functional thing for something non-existent like a barren woman's child does not disintegrate.

In the first two lines, both a thing and a non-thing were refuted as being produced by way of their own entity and then the third line relates to refuting disintegration by way of its own entity. In refuting disintegration by way of its own entity, then the explanation of the third line is given in the commentary:

A totally disintegrated non-functional thing does not again become a disintegrating non-functional thing for something non-existent like a barren woman's child does not disintegrate.

So again, this shows the absurdity of a disintegrating non-functional thing because something non-existent cannot disintegrate, just like a barren woman's child.

In relation to the fourth line of the verse 'Nor does a thing become a non-thing' we can use the example of a pot. When a pot disintegrates it does not become a non-thing. A pot is a thing, a product, a functional thing. When the pot disintegrates it is not as if the pot then transforms from a functional thing into a non-functional or non-produced phenomenon. However, if the pot were to exist by way of its own entity or be inherently existent, then it could be the case that upon disintegration, it actually became a non-functional thing, a non-functional phenomenon. This is in relation to things lacking true existence or existing by way of their own entity. Even factually, when a pot breaks, on a gross level we could say that the pot disintegrates and ceases to exist as a pot, because it has broken into pieces. However the fact that the pieces remain also shows that the pot has not transformed or turned into a non-thing because there is continuity of the pot. Clearly the continuity of the pot, which is in pieces, is still tangible as we can still see them and so, even on a gross level, we can interpret the absurdity of a thing transforming into a non-thing as not possible.

In relation to the reasoning of the refutation in the commentary, it says:

A functional thing that is already produced does not become a non-functional thing, because the two are contradictory.

'The two are contradictory' refers to a thing and a non-thing being mutually exclusive as they cannot be both a thing and a non-thing. If it is a thing, a produced phenomenon, it cannot be a non-produced phenomenon, it cannot be a non-thing. Likewise if it is a non-thing, it cannot be a thing. So they are mutually exclusive. But if things were to exist by way of their own entity, then they could be one, a thing and a non-thing. However the fact that a thing and a non-thing are mutually exclusive means that a thing cannot be transformed into a non-thing.

Then the commentary quotes this sutra:

"All products and non-products are free [from inherent existence]. Those sages who do not have conceptions [of inherent existence] understand that which is a non-product with regard to all phenomena and are free from views of an [inherent] self."

The meaning of the sutra is similar to the explanation that I gave earlier that if one understands that things do not exist in the way that they appear, then one is free from the misconception of inherent existence.

The literal term 'non-product' means permanent phenomena, but here 'non-product' actually refers to the view of emptiness, which is a non-produced and non-obstructing phenomenon. Thus when the sutra says 'Those sages who do not have conceptions [of inherent existence] understand that which is a non-product with regard to all phenomena', then 'non-product with regard to all phenomena' refers to the emptiness of all phenomena and thus they 'are free from views of an inherent [existent] self'.

### 1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently

That is sub-divided into three:

#### 1.1.3.1. Brief explanation

#### 1.1.3.2. Extensive explanation

#### 1.1.3.3. Summarized meaning

### 1.1.3.1. BRIEF EXPLANATION

*Assertion:* Neither that which has been produced nor that which is unproduced is being produced. That which is in the process of production is being produced.

*Answer:*

*A thing in the process of production*

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*Since half-produced, is not being produced.*

*Alternatively it follows that everything*

*Is in the process of being produced.*

In relation to the earlier refutations, what is now being asserted by the opponent is, "OK, I agree that neither that which has been produced nor that which is not-produced is being produced; rather that 'which is the process of production' is what we will call as 'being produced'". In relation to the assertion the process of production is understood as a thing that is half produced and also half not-produced. That is more or less how we would think of something which is in the process of being produced: it is as if they are half produced but not yet fully produced. When we talk about someone coming, if they are not here yet, but they are already in the process of coming, then we say that they are on their way. They are not in the place where they have started from because they have already left, but they are not yet here. That's where we conventionally use the term 'someone is coming', meaning that we have the idea that someone is on their way.

This assertion is made in relation to a particular refutation that was made earlier in relation to things being produced by way of their own entity. If things are already produced then the production is a thing that has already been produced. The refutation made earlier, is that there is no point in something that has already been produced being produced again, because it has already been produced, and further production is redundant. That refutation was made earlier. Following that refutation, the opponent thinks, 'Well OK, things that are already produced cannot be produced again by way of their own entity, because there is no point'. Then they feel, 'so, I would conclude by asserting that that which is in the process of being produced must then be produced by way of its own entity.'

The refutation being made here, in relation to explaining the meaning of the verse is:

It follows that a sprout in the process of production is not being produced by way of its own entity, because that which is in the process of production must be posited as half produced and half unproduced.

As they assert the process of production as being that case, the refutation is made in pointing out this absurdity:

The produced part belongs to what has already been produced and the unproduced part to what is unproduced.

The produced part belongs to what has already been produced, which is already accepted by the opponent i.e. producing what has already been produced by way of its own entity is redundant. The not-produced part has not been produced yet. So if it is not produced you cannot claim that it is produced by way of its own entity. The conclusion is that:

There is nothing in the process of production with parts other than these existent by way of its own entity.

If something were to exist by way of its own entity, then in the process of production there is no other part than that which is half produced and that which is half not-produced.



So, there are no parts to be found that can be established as being existent by way of their own entity. Furthermore:

If the produced and the unproduced are both considered to be that which is presently being produced, both past and future are also in the process of being produced.

The further refutation is that, 'If the produced and the unproduced are considered to be that which is being presently produced' i.e. half produced and half not-produced, then the commentary explains:

Alternatively, it follows that all three times are presently being produced, since all produced and unproduced things are in the process of production.

Because all things are in the process of production, then if it is half produced and half not-produced, this will also apply to past and future being produced in the present, which concludes that all three times are being produced at the same time. So the absurdity being pointed out is that according to this logic all three times exist right now.

### 1.1.3.2. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

1.1.3.2.1. Refutation by examining that which is in the process of being produced

1.1.3.2.2. Refuting the assertion that a thing existing between past and future is that which is in the process of being produced

1.1.3.2.3. Refuting the assertion that a thing before it is produced is what is in the process of being produced

1.1.3.2.4. Refuting the assertion that the unproduced is what is in the process of being produced

#### **1.1.3.2.1. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING THAT WHICH IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED**

As mentioned previously the assertion is that what is being produced is considered to be in the process of being produced. So:

If that which is presently being produced exists by way of its entity, is it considered to have its own nature or not?

This is pointing out two alternatives; is it considered to have its own nature or not?

Both are unacceptable. It follows that it could not be in the process of production.

It should be understood that when it says 'considered to have its own nature or not' then these are the only two possibilities. So if

...it is considered to have its own nature [then] it follows that it could not be in the process of production.

The question in relation to the verse, refuting the meaning of the verse is:

*That which has the nature of presently being produced 367  
Is not in the process of production,  
Nor is that in the process of production  
Which lacks the nature of presently being produced.*

The commentary continues:

It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature of being in the process of production.

What should be understood here is that it is redundant to say that something has the nature of being in the process of production, because its nature is the very process of production. You cannot say that it has that nature when that is its nature. The main point in relation to the two alternatives is does 'that which is presently being produced' exist 'by way of its own entity? Is it considered to have its own nature or not?' It is redundant to say that it is produced

with its own nature because its very nature is being produced in the present. Thus to give it an extra characteristic by saying that it is produced with its own nature, is absurd, because its very production (being produced in the present time) is its nature. Thus it is absurd to say that 'it is produced with its own nature.'

### Refutation of the first alternative, having its own nature

However it is not produced with its own nature, so the absurdity would clearly be how could something be produced without its nature being present? Something existing without its nature is clearly an absurdity. The commentary is quite clear too:

It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature of being in the process of production.

It should become clear when one joins this understanding with the understanding that what is being refuted is that it being produced by way its own entity. Thus:

It follows that anything which has the nature of presently being produced does not have the nature [by way of its own entity] of being in the process of production.

That is the main point that is being refuted, which should be clear.

### Refutation of the second alternative, not having its own nature

It follows that whatever does not have the nature of presently being produced is also not in the process of production, because that which is not presently being produced is contrary to that which is.

That which lacks the nature of presently being produced cannot be in the process of production, because that which is not presently being produced is contrary to that which is.

If it lacks its own nature then it cannot have that nature. The refutation of the second alternative is clearer than for the first alternative. But in both instances production by way of its own entity is being refuted.

#### **1.1.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT A THING EXISTING BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE IS THAT WHICH IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED**

Again, this relates to the earlier refutations showing that it is an absurdity for something to be produced prior to being produced by way of its own entity. Something being produced after it has been produced by way of its own entity has also been refuted. Even the process of being produced by way of its own entity is also an absurdity. Now the opponent is asserting that somewhere between the past and future things must be produced in relation to the three times.

*Assertion:* That which is in the process of production exists, since it is located between the past and future. These two times may be posited in relation to what is presently being produced.

This assertion is basically re-affirming the process of production.

*Answer:*

*For anyone to whom the two are  
Impossible without an intermediate,  
There is nothing in the process of production  
For it too would have an intermediate* 368

In explaining the meaning of the verse, the commentary reads:

In any opponent's system in which there is definitely an intermediate stage without which the past and future cannot exist, that which is presently being produced could not exist by way of its own entity...

What is being established is that, even in the opponent's system, which asserts that there is an intermediate stage that cannot exist without the past and future: 'that which is presently being produced could not exist by way of its own entity'. The reason for this is that 'there would be infinite regress'.

So if what is being presently produced exists by way of its own entity, then the absurdity or fault would be that:

...there would be infinite regress, in that anything in the process of production would require another intermediate stage and that one yet another and so on.

Thus this refutation is based on the fault of there being infinite regress.

### **1.1.3.2.3. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT A THING BEFORE IT IS PRODUCED IS WHAT IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED**

The intermediate stage of what is being produced has been refuted, so the opponent is now asserting that a thing is in the process of being produced before it is produced.

Earlier it was refuted that the half-produced and half-not-produced were part of the process of production. Thus the question now is:

*Question: If the half-produced is not in the process of production, what is?*

In relation to this assertion the commentary reads:

Since the process of production is, for example, the sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun is said to be in the process of production.

'The sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun' is being established as the 'process of production'. Thus what is presently being produced appears to be a different entity from that which is half-produced and half-not-produced.

*Assertion:*

*Since the process of production is the arising  
Of the produced through cessation,  
That which is presently being produced  
Appears to be a different entity.* 369

The commentary explains:

Since the process of production is, for example, the sprout's being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun is said to be in the process of production.

'The sprout being produced through cessation of the seed, something in a state where its production has begun' is said to be in the process of production. Thus what is presently being produced appears to be a different entity from that which is half produced and half not-produced. This all refers to the assertion that is made in the verse.

The answer to the assertion made in the verse is:

*Answer:* If one could point to anything and say, "This thing has been produced from this thing which is in the process of production," one could identify something in the process of production existent by way of its own entity in relation to the thing produced from it.

The verse below serves as an answer to the assertion that has just been made.

*When a thing is produced there cannot be  
Anything in the process of production.  
If the produced is in the process  
Of production, why is it being produced?*

In explaining the first two lines the commentary reads:

However when a thing has been produced, there cannot be anything in the process of production which exists by way of its own entity, for what was in the process of production has ceased. A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist

The main point in the refutation is where it says 'A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist'.

What was explained earlier is that when an effect is produced, conventionally it is produced when the cause has ceased. That is of course, the conventional reasoning that we use with, for example the syllogism 'There is fire on the hill because we perceive smoke'. Normally we infer that there has been a fire because of the fact that there is smoke, even though the fire may not be seen now because it has already ceased.

Likewise with a seed and a sprout. When the seed undergoes the transformation it ceases and then the sprout is produced. Conventionally the production of an effect can be used to infer that the cause has ceased. Conventionally, that is true. However here when we are relating it to existing by way of its own entity, then the production of an effect cannot serve as an inference for there being a cause ceasing by way of its own entity. That is the main point. Thus as it mentions here:

A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist.

This is in relation to inherent existence or existence by way of its own entity. 'A produced thing which has arisen from such a process of production and which would permit its inference does not exist', which means it cannot be used as an inference or a fact. The inference that with the cessation of production the cause has ceased and an effect takes place, cannot be used as a way to establish that that process has taken place by way of its own entity.

The assertion in relation to the second half of the verse is:

*Assertion:* The produced is in the process of production.

The answer given in the last two lines of the verse is clearly explained in the commentary:

If the produced is in the process of production, why is it being produced again? This is unfeasible because it has already been produced.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright  
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Edited Version*

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## Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

27 May 2008

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### *1.1. Extensively establishing dependent arisings which are not inherently produced as existing in the manner of a magician's illusions (cont.)*

#### *1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently*

##### 1.1.3.2. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

##### **1.1.3.2.4. REFUTING THE ASSERTION THAT THE UNPRODUCED IS WHAT IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PRODUCED**

This is subdivided into three:

###### 1.1.3.2.4.1. Actual meaning

###### 1.1.3.2.4.2. Refuting the justification

1.1.3.2.4.3. Necessity of accepting that the unproduced is being produced, if that which is in the process of being produced is produced byway of its own entity

###### 1.1.3.2.4.1. Actual meaning

*A thing in the process of production is said* 371  
*To be the entirely unproduced arising.*  
*Since there is no difference, why should the pot*  
*Not be considered as non-existent?*

As mentioned previously the earlier and following verses are refuting the inherent existence of produced and non-produced phenomena. In relation to products, the conclusion is that conventionally there are phenomena that are in the process of being produced, but they are not in the process of being produced by way of their own entity. Similarly there is cessation of the causes, for example a seed, but the cessation is not by way of its own entity. Likewise there is production but the production is not by way of its own entity.

As I have mentioned earlier during the study of the *Madhyamika*, that text explains very clearly whether cessation occurs at the time of seed. At the time of the seed there is cessation of the seed, but complete cessation of the seed has not yet occurred. If the complete cessation of the seed occurs at the time of the seed, then there would be no seed left. So there can't be complete cessation at the time of the seed. The conclusion indicated in the *Madhyamika* is that there is cessation at the time of the seed, but that complete cessation of the seed has not yet taken place.

Likewise at the time of the seed, there is production of the sprout but not the complete production of the sprout. If there were to be complete production of the sprout at the time of the seed then there couldn't be a seed either, because complete production of the sprout only occurs when the seed has completely ceased to exist. That is how we should understand that there is production, but not complete production.

One must understand that the following assertions are made by those who assert that products, and so forth,

exist by way of their own entity. They assert inherent existence or true existence and so are opponents of our own system. The assertion in relation to the verse is,

*Assertion:* A thing that is presently being produced is said to be produced, for although unproduced, it is approaching production.

Again this relates to the earlier refutations. The assertion here is that a thing that is presently being produced (i.e. in the process of being produced), is a produced effect.

With respect to the refutation in the verse the commentary further explains:

If a thing that is in the process of being produced is said to be produced because, even though it is entirely unproduced, it is approaching production...

This is rephrasing the assertion: you say that a thing that is in the process of being produced is actually produced, 'because even though it is entirely unproduced it is approaching production'. Then the refutation is made in the following explanation from the commentary:

[If you assert that is the case then] why should a pot while performing its function not be considered a non-functional thing? It follows that this is a reasonable assertion, since there is no difference between the produced and the unproduced.

Here a counter argument is being used to point out the absurdity. What our system is saying in refutation is that if you can assert that something that is not-produced is being produced then that would be an absurdity. It would be similar to saying that at the same time as a pot is performing its function it is also a non-functional thing. That same logical reasoning also holds for this case as well. So the absurdity is pointed out with the counter-argument, 'it follows that this is a reasonable assertion, since there is no difference between the produced and the unproduced.

'Since you do not make any distinction between what is produced and what is not produced then the same logical reasoning would also make no distinction between a functional thing and a non-functional thing, such as a pot. Now a pot, of course is a functional thing. For as long as it is a pot it is functional in relation to its definition, which is that which holds water, that which is bulbous and has a spout. So a pot is a functional thing but according to your absurd assertions, the pot could also be a non-functional thing.'

The refutation is made with this counter argument: if you assert something that is not produced as being produced, then that would be the same as asserting a functional thing to be a non-functional thing.

###### 1.1.3.2.4.2. Refuting the justification

*Assertion:* There is a difference between that which is in the process of being produced and the unproduced. That which is in the process of production is said to be associated with the activity of production, whereas the unproduced is not necessarily associated with the activity of production.

This is pointing out the difference between that which is in the process of being produced and that which is not-produced.

Answer:

*That which is presently being produced, 372*  
*Though incomplete, is other than unproduced.*  
*Yet also since other than produced,*  
*The unproduced is being produced.*

The answer in relation to this verse is, as the commentary explains:

Since a thing in the process of being produced is associated with the activity of production, you assert that even though it has not completed that activity, it is other than unproduced and future.

The meaning of the verse, as the commentary explains, is that 'you assert that even though it has not completed the activity, it is other than unproduced and future'. This means that at the time of the seed the sprout is actually considered a future sprout because it is not yet produced, i.e. at the time of the seed, which is a cause, the effect, which is a sprout, has not yet been produced. So because it is not produced it is the future of the seed, and not the present. Having the not-produced or the future actually existing in the present would be an absurdity. That is one of the main things being pointed out here: at the time of the seed that which is not-produced and in the future cannot be asserted as being part of the present.

As the commentary further explains:

Yet in that case, since a thing in the process of being produced is other than something produced, you are saying that the unproduced is being produced.

The absurdity that is being pointed out is that the opponents are asserting that the activity of production is what is produced, and that anything associated with that activity can be asserted as being produced. The refutation to that assertion is pointing out the absurdity of asserting that something is produced because it is associated with the activity of production, when in fact it cannot be produced because it is the future. 'If it is produced then how can something that is yet to be produced, already exist at the time of the cause? How can the sprout exist at the time of the seed if it is the future of the seed? However what you are in fact implying is that the not-produced is being produced, and that is an absurdity.'

**1.1.3.2.4.3. Necessity of accepting that the unproduced is being produced, if that which is in the process of being produced is produced by way of its own entity**

*That which is presently being produced, 373*  
*Though not yet existent, is later said to exist.*  
*The unproduced is thus being produced –*  
*But the non-existent does not arise.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

Since that which is presently being produced is other than something produced, you must accept that it is unproduced. You might claim that anything in the process of being produced exists as a thing, because, even though it did not exist previously, it has afterwards become associated with the activity of production. If on this account you say that an entirely unproduced thing associated with the activity of production is being produced, that too is incorrect. An unproduced thing, referred to as non-existent, as

not attained its entity. It does not undergo production, because it is not engaged in that activity.

As the commentary explains, 'you might claim that anything in the process of being produced exists as a thing', however that implies 'that an entirely unproduced thing associated with the activity of production is being produced'. That is incorrect as something that is unproduced or not produced is non-existent, so it cannot have an entity; a sprout that has not been produced cannot have the entity of being a sprout because it has not been produced yet. Thus that which is in the process of being produced cannot function as a produced thing. The assertion is indicated in the outline itself - the necessity of accepting that the not-produced is being produced. So, what is being refuted is something that is not produced as being produced. The absurdity that is being pointed out is if that which is in the process of being produced is produced by way of its own entity, then the not-produced is being produced. That is the main point made here.

The reason why the not-produced cannot be asserted as being produced is because of the fact that what is to be produced depends on causes and conditions; it has to depend on something for it to be produced. So if the cause itself, or if the process of being produced exists by way of its own entity, then that implies that it exists without depending on causes and conditions. If that which is being produced doesn't depend on causes and conditions for its existence, then the produced could already exist at the time when it is in the process of being produced, and that is a falsity.

#### 1.1.3.3. SUMMARIZED MEANING

*The completed is called existent. 374*  
*The uncompleted is called non-existent.*  
*When there is nothing in the process of production*  
*What is being referred to as such?*

As the commentary explains:

That which has completed the activity of production is said to exist as a thing, and that which has not performed the activity of production is said not to exist as a thing. If neither that which has nor that which has not completed the activity of production is in the process of being produced, what is being referred to as presently being produced? Anything in the process of being produced does not have the least existence by way of its own entity.

This explanation of the verse is quite clear: 'Anything that is in the process of being produced does not have the least existence by way of its own entity'. The refutation is made in relation to how they assert the production of something. Earlier the opponent asserted that that which is considered as being produced is something that is half produced and half not-produced. However those assertions have been refuted by pointing out that the part that is already produced would have to be considered as something that is already produced, and so it is redundant to be produced again, and the part that has not been produced does not yet exist. So that which is half produced (completed) and half not-produced (uncompleted) can in no way be asserted as existing by way of its own entity.

## 1.2. Concluding summary of the refutations of inherent existence

*Since without a cause  
There is no effect,  
Both starting and stopping  
Are not feasible.*

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As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Investigation by reasoning shows that there is no effect without a cause. Since cause and effect, then, do not truly exist and since the bases therefore do not truly exist, the sprout's starting to be produced and the seed's stopping to exist are not feasible by way of their own entity.

In summary, through investigation of the reasoning that was established in earlier verses it is clear that there cannot be an effect without a cause. As cause and effect do not truly exist and as the bases do not truly exist, there cannot be an effect without a cause. Likewise through investigation one finds that there cannot be an effect from a truly existent cause. Here bases refer to that which is the reliant and that which it relies upon, which is cause and effect. The reliant is the effect and that which it relies upon is the cause. A basis that is truly existent does not exist, so there cannot be a truly existent relationship between cause and the effect.

The text refers to 'the sprout's starting to be produced and the seed's stopping to exist are not feasible by way of their own entity'. A sprout starts to be produced and a seed ceases to exist, but even though they exist conventionally they cannot exist by way of their own entity. To support this the commentary refers to a sutra, which reads as follows:

Sentient beings, humans, those born from power  
whoever they may be,  
None that were born and died here were born  
[inherently].  
The nature of all things is empty like magicians  
illusions,  
But the Forders are unable to recognize it.

The commentary explains this quote from the sutra in the following way:

For instance, the men and women conjured by an illusionist cause the spectators of the magic, who think of them as men and women, to feel attraction and aversion. [With that analogy of illusory men and women the commentary continues] Though they also appear to the magician, he does not think of them in this way. They do not even appear to those who are unaffected by the spell.

The analogy is of the different circumstances in which a magician conjures men and women; to some the illusion actually appears as real men and woman, and they feel attraction or aversion towards them. The illusion also appears to the magician himself but he does not see them as being real, while nothing appears to those who are not subjected to the spell. In relation to this example, the three different types of persons are:

1. Those on whom the magician has cast a spell who see the illusions and believe in them; they see the men and women.

2. The magician whose spell affects his own eyes; he see the conjured men and women but does not believe that they exist.

3. Those who do not have the spell cast over their eyes; they do not see the illusion - so even the appearance of men and women is not there.

In explaining these examples the commentary further reads:

You must understand that these analogies apply respectively to the perception of common beings who have not understood dependent arising's emptiness of inherent existence, to the wisdom of subsequent attainment of the Exalted, and to the meditative equipoise of the Exalted.

The three types of persons mentioned earlier in the analogy correspond to these three types of people.

1. The first type of person is the spectator who experiences the magic spell, and who see the illusory men and women and believes in them. This corresponds to an ordinary being who has not understood dependent arising or the emptiness of inherent existence. Without the realisation of emptiness, and due to the strong imprint of grasping at the self, all phenomena appear as inherently existent. Not only do phenomena appear as being inherently existent, but ordinary beings also believe that they exist in the way that they appear.

2. The magician sees the conjured men and women, but does not believe that they exist in that way. This corresponds to 'the wisdom of subsequent attainment of the Exalted'. 'Subsequent attainment' refers the post-meditative state after meditative equipoise. When you come to the post-meditative state then the appearance of inherent existence will still be there, but due to the realisation of emptiness there is no belief in the appearance.

3. For the Exalted, meaning an Arya, who is in meditative equipoise there is neither the appearance nor the belief.

Though this has been explained several times before, I will repeat the essence again: An Arya being who is in meditative equipoise does not have any dualistic appearances, which means that they don't have any of the three dualistic appearances; the appearance of any conventional phenomena, the appearance of inherent existence, and the duality of subject and object appearing as being separate. For an Arya who is in meditative equipoise these three appearances are completely cut off. The only appearance to the meditative equipoise of the Exalted is the appearance of emptiness, so there is no appearance of any discrepancy between subject and object, no appearance of conventional phenomena and no appearance of inherent existence.

For the Exalted who is the post-meditative state, the opposite is true. There is the appearance of conventional phenomena and inherent existence as well as the appearance of subject and object as being separate. Of course the exception is for an enlightened being, so a buddha would not have these appearances at any time.

The commentary explains:

You should learn how Conventional phenomena are established by Conventional valid cognition and

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Ultimate Truth by conceptual and non-conceptual reasoning consciousness from the presentation in [*Gateway for Conqueror Children*], *Explanation of [Shantideva's] "Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds"* and so forth.

This refers to the definition of conventional phenomena and ultimate phenomena. Conventional truth and ultimate truth were explained earlier when the ninth chapter of Shantideva's text was taught. What is to be noted is that the definition of conventional and ultimate truth given in the *Madhyamika* text and the definition given in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, are presented in different ways. In relation to the *Madhyamika* text, as it mentions here, 'you should learn how Conventional phenomena established by Conventional valid cognition and Ultimate Truth by conceptual and non-conceptual reasoning consciousness'. Whereas in Shantideva's text the explanation is different: that which sees the object with duality is conventional truth, and the consciousness or perception that sees things without duality is ultimate truth. The two definitions come to the same thing but the way each is presented is different.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltzab Rinpoche is:

Production and disintegration of composite things  
Are like dreams and like illusion.  
When they are mere terms and mere imputation,  
How could non-products be truly existent?

The meaning of the first two lines was explained earlier. When the stanza says that all appearing phenomena 'are like dreams and illusions, when they are mere terms and mere imputation', this relates to the earlier explanation about how phenomena lack any inherent or true existence and are just mere terms or imputations. Here 'terms' means being merely labelled conceptually and verbally. Finally, 'how could non-products be truly existent?' is a rhetorical question, implying that products could not possibly be truly existent in any way.

## 2. Presenting the name of the chapter

*This is the fifteenth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on the refutation of that which constitutes products.*

This concludes the commentary on the fifteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on refuting [the inherent existence of that which constitutes products, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas"*.

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

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

3 June 2008

As usual we sit in a comfortable relaxed position and generate a positive motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and practise well'.

## 3.2.2.2. SECTION B: SHOWING HOW TO MEDITATE ON SETTling [THE PROCEDURE BETWEEN] SPIRITUAL GUIDES AND STUDENTS BY WAY OF [EXPLAINING] THE PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTERS AND ELIMINATING REMAINING COUNTER-ARGUMENTS BY MISGUIDED OPPONENTS<sup>1</sup>

This heading is sub-divided into two:

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

### 1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

Explaining the material of the chapter has two main sub-divisions:

- 1.1. Briefly explaining the purpose of writing these chapters
- 1.2. Eliminating remaining counter-arguments raised by misguided opponents

#### 1.1. *Briefly explaining the purpose of writing these chapters*

The commentary reads:

These chapters were written so that trainees may enter the state of liberation through giving up attachment to cyclic existence.

This relates to the earlier discussion on the purpose of studying this text. The main purpose is explained in the first line, which is to present the material of the previous fifteen chapters in order for a trainee to gain liberation and thus they must give up attachment to cyclic existence. The explanation in the commentary is on how to do that.

Without ascertaining the meaning of emptiness as it actually is, one cannot develop enthusiasm for omniscience or even for liberation through the giving up of attachment to cyclic existence.

<sup>1</sup> The numbering of this heading refers back to the initial structure the text outlined on 7 March 2006 and 14 March 2006, and on 10 July 2007. The text has four subdivisions:

1. Meaning of the title
2. Translators prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion

Section 3 'Meaning of the text' has two subdivisions:

- 3.1 An overview of the text
- 3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters
- 3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth

This has two subdivisions:

- 3.2.2.1. Extensively explaining ultimate truth
- 3.2.2.2. Showing how to meditate on settling [the procedure between] spiritual guides and students by way of [explaining] the purpose of the chapters and eliminating remaining counter-arguments by misguided opponents

As usual, the numbering recommences with the beginning of a new chapter.

The way to release oneself from samsara is by first of all giving up attachment to cyclic existence. One does that by gaining the realisation of emptiness. Without developing the realisation of emptiness there is no possibility of freeing oneself from attachment to samsara or cyclic existence. One must derive a more detailed understanding of the main cause of cyclic existence or samsara, which is the ignorance of grasping at the self; the ignorance of self-grasping. The ignorance of self-grasping is the main cause which leads one into cyclic existence.

In one's own practice it is good to recall the way the ignorance of self-grasping becomes the cause for leading one into samsara. This can be understood in more detail by reflecting on the twelve links of interdependent origination. Ignorance being the first link then causes karma and so forth. So, through the sequential cause and effect of the twelve links, one then enters into samsara. For as long as one has the main cause of ignorance grasping at the self, one will repeatedly be thrown into samsara. So to free oneself one must overcome the very root cause, and the only way to overcome the ignorance of grasping at the self is by cultivating the direct antidote, which is the realisation of selflessness or emptiness. Consequently emptiness and selflessness are the main antidotes for overcoming the grasping at a self.

...one cannot develop enthusiasm for omniscience or even for liberation through the giving up of attachment to cyclic existence. The emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena frightens those who have not heard sufficient teaching and are bound by the noose of clinging to a self. As already described, the path leading to freedom from worldly existence should therefore only be explained after first making the mind ready, in the way that the death of a king's beloved queen was conveyed to him.

So the main cause for overcoming grasping at the self or clinging to the self is the realisation of emptiness. However if emptiness is presented before the trainee is ready, in the sense of having the right mental capacity to absorb the explanation of emptiness, they may become frightened. The text itself is presented in such a way that the first eight chapters deal mainly with conventional reality. The text goes into great detail explaining conventional reality in terms of the suffering and so forth of cyclic existence before the explanation of ultimate reality, which is emptiness.

As we recall, the first chapters deal with impermanence, the nature of suffering, the impurity of the body and so forth. Thus the chapters begin with an explanation of conventional reality first, particularly in relation to how one enters into samsara, the suffering nature of cyclic existence. Then later the teachings on emptiness, ultimate reality, are presented. This is the way to prepare the trainee. The particular Tibetan word they use is to 'ripen' the mind, which means making the mind receptive to the teachings on emptiness. This is presented in the earlier part of the text and then one is led to ultimate reality.

...in the way that the death of a king's beloved queen was conveyed to him.

The analogy refers to the manner in which a king is told of his beloved queen's death. If he were informed in an abrupt manner he would be shocked and have difficulty coming to terms with the disturbing news. A skilled minister conveys the death of the king's beloved queen in a very tactful way by first conveying reports that gradually lead the king to acceptance of the news of the queen's death. The skilful

minister does not mention the queen's death directly but in a gradual way. Then the king is not so shocked or devastated. In fact a skilled minister relates the sad news in a way that makes it easier for the king to accept without great emotional shock and aversion.

The text employs this analogy in the understanding of emptiness. If emptiness is presented in a sequential way, then when the trainee actually hears the topic of emptiness they should be able to accept it without fear and aversion to the idea. Instead they will experience joy and acceptance. The mind can be further developed in that realisation. A fearful reaction to hearing about emptiness can thus be avoided.

Some students have commented that even though the *Madhyamika* is a difficult text and can be hard to understand, it gives some joy to the mind. This demonstrates receptivity of the mind to the topic of emptiness. Even though it may be hard to fathom and understand the subtleties of the presentation of emptiness if it brings joy to the mind and an eagerness to understand more about it, that definitely shows a receptive mind, one that is ready for that teaching.

*For various reasons, that which is empty* 376  
*Appears nonetheless as if not empty.*  
*These are refuted individually*  
*By all the chapters.*

The commentary then explains the meaning of the verse:

Even though things are empty of inherent existence, they appear not to be empty and are thought of in this way for various reasons, such as considering them truly existent. All of the preceding fifteen chapters refute these reasons individually.

As explained here clearly, even though things lack inherent existence, for an ordinary being they appear as having inherent existence. "For various reasons", means through various different imprints and so forth. However the main reason here is "such as considering them truly existent" Adherence to true existence or the perception of true existence becomes the main cause for things to appear as being inherently existent.

Therefore true existence is refuted in the preceding chapters. "Individually" meaning that in each chapter it has been presented in different ways, either explicitly or implicitly. All the chapters deal with how to overcome the misconception of true existence. One should understand that the cause of the appearance of true existence is the misconception of holding phenomena as being truly existent. "All of the preceding fifteen chapters refute these" meaning the causes for the appearance of inherent existence, and the belief in it. "These reasons" means many different reasons for adhering to the misconception of true existence, and all these reasons have been refuted individually. What should be understood here is that all of the material presented in the text, and every verse within each chapter, are related to overcoming the misconception of inherent existence. When it is understood that they are all presented as techniques for overcoming that misconception, there is no evidence contradicting that.

## 1.2. Eliminating remaining counter-arguments raised by misguided opponents

That is sub-divided into eight:

- 1.2.1. Refuting reasoning to negate emptiness
- 1.2.2. Refuting adherence to theses which fall into extremes
- 1.2.3. Showing parity of reasoning with regard to true existence or lack of true existence

- 1.2.4. Refuting non-existence as the thesis
- 1.2.5. Refuting that things are not empty because analogies and reasons to establish emptiness exist
- 1.2.6. Explaining the purpose of teaching emptiness
- 1.2.7. Showing that conceptions of extremes of existence are erroneous
- 1.2.8. Impossibility of refuting through reasoning that which is free from extremes

### 1.2.1. Refuting reasoning to negate emptiness

This is in relation to refuting their reasons that negate emptiness.

This is sub-divided into three:

- 1.2.1.1. Impossibility of refuting the thesis of emptiness
- 1.2.1.2. Impossibility of proving the thesis of non-emptiness
- 1.2.1.3. Refuting other reasoning

#### 1.2.1.1. IMPOSSIBILITY OF REFUTING THE THESIS OF EMPTINESS

This is sub-divided into two:

- 1.2.1.1.1. Actual meaning
- 1.2.1.1.2. Refutation by virtue of parity

##### 1.2.1.1.1. ACTUAL MEANING

*When the author and subject also exist* 377  
*It is incorrect to call them empty.*  
*Also with regard to these three, whatever*  
*Arises in dependence does not exist.*

The commentary then explains the meaning of the first two lines, which are the assertion.

*Assertion:*  
*When the author and subject also exist* 377ab  
*It is incorrect to call them empty.*

The commentary says:

If the chapters were written for these purposes...

"The chapters" here are the previous fifteen chapters. "These purposes" indicates the purposes of explaining emptiness. The purpose of explaining the fifteen earlier chapters is to present emptiness. In relation to that the opponent says:

If the chapters were written for these purposes, things are established as not being empty...

In our own system the chapters were written for the purpose of explaining emptiness. The opponents say, 'in fact, what you are saying actually establishes things as not being empty; it is contrary to things being empty'. The reason they give is:

...since the author and the subject matter explained by the fifteen chapters exist.

They say that because the author exists and the subject matter exists then to say 'that they are empty is contrary to what you're presenting. How could they be empty? They could not be empty.' That's what they are trying to establish.

"Also" indicates the words that express the meaning of emptiness.

They summarise by saying:

Therefore it is incorrect to speak of the emptiness of inherent existence of things.

*Answer:*  
*Also with regard to these three, whatever* 377cd  
*Arises in dependence does not exist.*

Then in relation to the second two lines of the verse which serve as the answer or the refutation to the opponents' assertion:

According to us, the words, subject matter and author are imputations dependent on one another and do not



exist independently. Whatever arises in dependence does not exist inherently. Since the author, subject matter and words are all dependently imputed, these three also do not have inherent existence. Thus emptiness is well established.

The response is that words are dependent on the subject, the subject is dependent on the author and without the author uttering the words there could not even be a subject. So they are all dependent on each other for their existence. 'Thus we are not negating the existence of words, subject and author, but we say that their existence is interdependent, they are dependent on each other, so they are actually empty of inherent existence.' Contrary to the opponents' understanding of emptiness which for them implies that nothing exists, from our own system what is being established is that things exist in dependence, through dependent origination, particularly in relation here to the words, the subject and the author. They do exist but they do not have inherent existence. So, this in fact establishes the view of emptiness well.

For the opponent the words, subject matter and author are inherently existent. For them if they exist, they have to exist inherently. Whereas in our own system, the words, the subject matter and the author exist not independently but rather in dependence upon each other. They lack inherent existence because of their interdependent co-existence. They exist, but not inherently. This is the way emptiness is established well.

#### **1.2.1.1.2. REFUTATION BY VIRTUE OF PARITY**

In the same way as saying that the establishment of emptiness is flawed, claiming that emptiness does not exist is also a flaw.

*Assertion:* If all of these were empty, the senses and their objects would be like donkeys' horns! But since they exist, things do exist inherently.

*Answer:*

*If through flaws concerning emptiness* 378  
*[Things] were established as not empty,*  
*Why would emptiness not be established*  
*Through flaws concerning lack of emptiness?*

The opponents assert that if everything is empty then phenomena could not exist. The senses and the objects would be like "donkeys' horns" and the existence of donkey horns is analogous to non-existence. So if all phenomena, if everything were empty, then the senses and what the senses perceive, the objects, would all be like donkey horns, implying that they would be non-existent. But since they do exist they have to exist inherently. That is how they establish existent phenomena as being inherently existent.

If on account of the [presumed] flaws concerning proof of emptiness, the words and so forth were not empty because one has to, accept their existence, why would emptiness not be established through flaws concerning your proof that things are not empty?

In refuting their assertion our response is: 'As we present things as being empty you attempt to prove that as a way of saying that things are in fact not empty. If you say that to us then by that same logical reasoning when you prove things to be not empty, why wouldn't that in fact prove things to be empty?' 'It follows that you should certainly accept emptiness because you accept the interdependence of the words and so forth.' As they accept that the author, the subject and words all depend on each other, they are in fact accepting interdependence. 'So since you accept that, you would have to accept emptiness.'

The parity is that 'just as you have refuted us, in fact that same reasoning similarly applies to you.' The opponents say that the words, the subject and the author exist. Their assertion is that because they exist, they couldn't be empty. That's how the opponent refutes the presentation of emptiness from our system. However, we employ the same line of logic to refute them. We state that 'if you're saying that because it exists, things couldn't be empty, in fact, because things do exist interdependently, they should be empty.' This is the unique presentation in our system.

#### **1.2.1.2. IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROVING THE THESIS OF NON-EMPTINESS**

This is sub-divided into two:

1.2.1.2.1. Actual meaning

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the justification

##### **1.2.1.2.1. ACTUAL MEANING**

*In refuting the thesis of others*  
*And in proving your own thesis,*  
*If on the one hand you like to disprove,*  
*Why do you not like to prove?*

379

This is how our system clarifies the verse:

You cannot establish your own thesis merely by dismissing the proponents of emptiness.

You cannot establish your thesis of a lack of emptiness or that there is inherent existence simply by dismissing the proponents of the view of emptiness.

Opponents asserting that things exist truly must refute the others' thesis of emptiness as well as prove their own thesis that things are truly existent. You, however, are simply engaged in dismissing the proponents of emptiness.

Opponents refute the thesis of emptiness but they do not actually prove their thesis of things being truly existent. If one were to refute someone else's view or thesis, then the proper way to do this is to give logical reasons proving one's own thesis, while refuting the other's thesis. So what our system is saying is 'you are simply just refuting the thesis of emptiness while not giving any sound reasoning to establish your own thesis of true existence.'

If on the one hand you like disproving the thesis of others, why do you not like proving your own? You should! To proponents of emptiness whatever proofs you adduce to validate your own thesis remain as unestablished as that which is to be proved. You should therefore give up adherence to the thesis that things are inherently existent.

The proof or reasons they give should actually prove their thesis, but the reasons given are not sound enough to prove their thesis. So because they can't establish acceptable reasons to prove their thesis they 'should give up adherence to the thesis that things are inherently existent.'

The reasons they give, such as the existence of the author, the words and the subject help to establish our views as well, as in our system we don't negate the existence of the words, subject and author. In fact, we establish them more clearly, as dependent arising. So their reasons, rather than proving their own thesis only serve to help prove and validate our own system's thesis. When they say the author exists, the words exist and the subject exists they are in fact saying exactly what our system claims. They do exist by virtue of being dependent origination, dependent arising. Through establishing phenomena as dependent arising, lack of inherent existence and therefore emptiness is also established.

### 1.2.1.2.2. REFUTING THE JUSTIFICATION

Assertion:

*When thoroughly investigated,  
The non-existent is not a thesis.* 380ab

The thesis put forward by proponents of emptiness is not feasible since when thoroughly investigated, it is illogical. Something which does not exist as a knowable object is not an assertable thesis. Therefore the thesis put forward by proponents of true existence is established.

Answer: No thesis is feasible when investigated by the reasoning that analyzes the ultimate.

*Then all three, such as oneness,  
Also are not theses.* 380cd

Since negated by this reasoning, truly existent oneness, otherness and ineffability asserted by any opponent are also not theses. Therefore one should not assert even the slightest true existence.

Ultimately under thorough investigation truly existent oneness or otherness cannot be found. The main point here is that after thorough investigation true existence cannot be found anywhere. So therefore one should not assert even the slightest true existence.

I will conclude here for the evening so that you can read on and prepare yourself for next time.

Next Tuesday there will not be a Study Group session because we are going to Sydney for His Holiness' teachings - I presume most of us are going. The following Tuesday, 17 June will be discussion night and 24 June will be the exam night, so keep that in mind. I have told Venerable Carolyn to send out a message to that effect. But before Venerable Carolyn conveys the message to you, I am conveying it personally! [laughter].

It's good for those who are going to Sydney to receive the teachings from His Holiness to be mentally prepared to receive this very valuable teaching. The teaching itself has very sound instructions, so it's very good to attend with a clear mind. Apparently His Holiness will be teaching in English, therefore since you will receive a direct teaching it's good to prepare one's mind. The text has been translated into English as well, so that's something that you will have access to.

In preparation for receiving the teachings it is good to go with the understanding and awareness that the Lama who is giving the teaching is the actual manifestation of Avaloketishvara the buddha of compassion, and the teaching itself is a highly valuable instruction of the text by Kamalashila, the great Indian master. The main subject matter is on how to develop calm abiding and special insight. We have covered the subject matter in our previous lamrim studies, so you will be familiar with it. However, it is good to take note that Kamalashila himself was an adherent of the Svatantrika Middle Way School. However when His Holiness presents the emptiness of selflessness from the text, he might actually relate it to the Prasangika point of view. So it is good for you to go with the understanding that even though it is presented in the Svatantrika view, His Holiness might present it from the Prasangika point of view, in order to leave a stronger imprint on the mind.

So the Lama is Avaloketishvara the subject matter is a supreme subject, and the listeners, you, are all qualified listeners, so in this context all the conditions are perfect. One should take this opportunity and put some effort into trying to gain as much as one can from this teaching, as to get this

opportunity again in the future might be very rare and difficult.

The main outline of the *Middle Stages of Meditation* text as I recall is compassion, then bodhicitta and then the method. The outline itself clearly indicates the structural flow of the text and through the outline one can gain an overview of the presentation of the text. The two lower scopes are included in the outline of compassion. The small scope and the medium scope presentation of the teachings will be subsumed into that. So when it is presented through the text itself, you will see how eloquently it is all put together.

As it will be presented in English, I might not be able to participate so much; I will just sit there, and just when I think that I understand something it might just flow onto the next subject! However, I have received the teaching from His Holiness once before in Bodhgaya.

Again, I want to remind those who are going to the teachings to take the utmost advantage of the opportunity to accumulate merit. From the time that you start the journey to receive the teachings, just one step taken is a virtuous act that collects merit. It is good to also reflect on it in this way and to take the utmost advantage of the opportunity.

We can be inspired by the stories of previous masters such as Atisha who travelled all the way to Indonesia to receive teachings on bodhicitta. Of course in those days the journeys took many days on foot and by boat. This is an example of the way an arduous journey for the purpose of receiving the Dharma was, in every aspect, a way to accumulate merit. Of course we will not have to travel for many days, in fact we can take a plane and reach there in a few hours. These days when we go to India it only takes a few hours. Atisha's journey to Indonesia is said to have taken twelve months. For us, taking an aeroplane to India might take only twelve hours. So one hour corresponds to a month! It seems that in the past journeys taken on foot and so forth were less costly; even though now it may be easier to receive the teachings in terms of travel, we have to pay more as it is more expensive. (laughter)

The reason why I mention all this is for us to recognise the fact that we are incredibly fortunate in having such valuable teachings so accessible. Of course, the great effort made, and great hardship endured by earlier masters, was performed in the context of a practice itself. Each part of the journey, and all of the difficulties were part of the practice of the accumulation of great merit. However in this time and age, we are able to receive the teachings without having to experience much hardship. That is something that we should also feel grateful for and happy about and in this way we should feel fortunate. It is important to recognise that.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright*

*Edit 1 by Judy Mayne*

*Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

*Edited Version*

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**Week: 1 (13 May 2008)**

1. 'When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child.' This part of the commentary is differentiating two different analogies. Explain this difference.

2. a) Give the syllogism in relation to the refutation of inherently existing characteristics occurring either simultaneously or consecutively. Identify the subject, predicate and the reason.

b) Give the faults that would arise if the three characteristics were to arise simultaneously or consecutively.

3. Give the syllogism that relates to phenomena, that has the three characteristics, being one or different. Identify the subject, predicate and reason.

**Week 2: (20 May 2008)**

4. Explain the difference between mistaken consciousness and wrong consciousness in relation to the perception of blue. Why is it very important that we understand and realise this point?

5. Explain verse 365:

A thing does not become a thing,  
Nor does a non-thing become a thing.  
A non-thing does not become a non-thing,  
Nor does a thing become a non-thing.

6. Explain verse 370:

When a thing is produced there cannot be  
Anything in the process of production.  
If the produced is in the process  
Of production, why is it being produced?

**Week: 3 (27 May 2008)**

7. Explain this verse:

The completed is called existent.  
The uncompleted is called non-existent.  
When there is nothing in the process of production  
What is being referred to as such

8. a) Explain the analogy of the magician's illusion, the three types of people and the beings they correspond to.

9. a) Give the definition of Conventional and Ultimate truth from the *Madyamika* text, as presented here in his commentary,

b) Give the definition of Conventional and Ultimate truth from *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*

**Week 4 (3 June 2008)**

10. Give our system's refutation of the opponent's assertion that:

When the author and subject also exist  
It is incorrect to call them empty  
Also with regard to these three, whatever  
Arises in dependence does not exist.

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

## Exam

Name:

Block: 3

Mark:

Week: 6 (24 June 2008)

1. 'When dependent arising is seen as it is, it is like a created illusion and not like a barren woman's child.' This part of the commentary is differentiating two different analogies. Explain this difference. [4]

2. a) Give the syllogism in relation to the refutation of inherently existing characteristics occurring either simultaneously or consecutively. Identify the subject, predicate and the reason.[3]

b) Give the faults that would arise if the three characteristics were to arise simultaneously or consecutively.[4]

3. Give the syllogism that relates to phenomena, that has the three characteristics, being one or different. Identify the subject, predicate and reason.[3]

4. Explain the difference between mistaken consciousness and wrong consciousness in relation to the perception of blue. Why is it very important that we understand and realise this point? [6]

5. Explain verse 365:

A thing does not become a thing,  
Nor does a non-thing become a thing.  
A non-thing does not become a non-thing,  
Nor does a thing become a non-thing.[4]

6. Explain verse 370:

When a thing is produced there cannot be  
Anything in the process of production.  
If the produced is in the process  
Of production, why is it being produced?[4]

7. Explain this verse:

The completed is called existent.

The uncompleted is called non-existent.

When there is nothing in the process of production

What is being referred to as such [4]

8. a) Explain the analogy of the magician's illusion, the three types of people and the beings they correspond to.[6]

9. a) Give the definition of Conventional and Ultimate truth from the *Madyamika* text, as presented here in his commentary.[4]

b) Give the definition of Conventional and Ultimate truth from *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. [4]

10. Give our system's refutation of the opponent's assertion that:

When the author and subject also exist

It is incorrect to call them empty

Also with regard to these three, whatever

Arises in dependence does not exist.[4]