

Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 April 2008

Sitting in a comfortable position, you can generate a positive motivation in your mind such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

1.1.2.1.2.2. Briefly refuting that though there are many components, the composite is a truly existent single unit

Assertion: Though it has many components, the pot is a truly existent single unit.

As clearly explained in the outline itself, what is being refuted is that when many components come together they form an inherently single unit.

Answer:

Though they meet and come together 339
Form cannot be smell.
Therefore like the pot
The composite cannot be one.

As explained previously, both sides accept that the pot is a composite that is made up of the eight substances. What is being asserted is that when these eight substances come together they form a truly existent single unit. To explain the meaning of the verse the commentary says:

Though visible form, smell and so forth meet and combine, form cannot be smell, for the things that create the composite do not give up their different characteristics.

When different components such as form and smell and so forth come together to make a composite, such as a pot, each component retains its particular characteristics. That which is to be perceived by the eye consciousness is form, that which is perceived by the nose consciousness is smell, and that which is perceived by the tongue consciousness is taste and so on. Each of the substances has its own characteristics, which remain as separate characteristics even when they combine to make a composite such as a pot.

Thus, the absurdity that is being pointed out here is that if the composite, the pot, is inherently existent, or truly existent, then all the components that make up the composite would also, by default, have to be truly or inherently existent. The pot would have to be one with its components and all of the components would have to be inherently one with each other. That means that they would have to combine and become a single unit with undifferentiated characteristics, which is an absurdity.

Though form, smell and so forth combine they do not have one nature. Thus just as the pot as a truly existent single unit was refuted by the words [in stanza 332],

Because the pot is not separate from
Its characteristics, it is not one,

the composite too cannot be a truly existent single unit.

Even though the components, the eight substances, do combine to make a unit or composite, which is the pot, they do not become one in nature. As explained earlier, this is because their particular characteristics remain. If you assert

an inherently existent pot or truly existent pot, then the absurdity is that by default everything that is related to the pot would also have to be truly existent or inherently existent, and thus they would have to become one in nature. Just as the components were refuted as being truly existent earlier, so too, the composite cannot be truly existent.

How one should understand the conclusion to be asserted from one's own side is that while the pot or the vase is a single unit, it is not a truly existent single unit. If the pot were to be truly existent single unit, then the eight substances that make up the pot would also have to be truly existent. Then the pot would have to be one with the components, which, because they are truly existent, would have to be one with each other. Being a truly existent one or a single unit with all the other components means that the composite and components would lose their individual characteristics. And that is an absurdity, as the eight substances each have their own particular characteristics and do not combine to become one. Likewise when the components combine to make a pot they do not combine to make a pot that is an inherently existent single unit; rather they combine to make just a pot.

As mentioned previously in the text, if the pot were to be an inherently or truly existent single unit or one, then it would have to exist independently without relying on any other factors or components. That point also has to be understood in this context as well.

As one analyses the content here one should bring to mind immediately earlier explanations that gave reasons as to why the pot or the vase is not a truly existent, or an inherently existent one, or a single unit. The reason, as mentioned previously, is because it is a dependent origination. If a pot were to be an inherently or truly existent single unit then that implies that the pot would have to exist independently of all its components, i.e. it would have to exist without depending on, or relating to its components. That would be absurd because the pot is a dependent origination.

Thus one must understand that the vase or pot cannot exist independently, or cannot exist from its own side, because its existence depends on its components. It cannot exist otherwise. Because it depends on its components to come into existence it cannot exist from its own side.

1.1.2.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT COMPONENTS

This has four subdivisions:

1.1.2.2.1. Just as a composite does not exist truly apart from visible form, smell and so forth, there are no truly existent elemental derivatives that do not rely on the elements

1.1.2.2.2. Refuting truly existent elements

1.1.2.2.3. Refuting the rejoinder

1.1.2.2.4. Refuting a fire particle as truly existent fire

1.1.2.2.1. JUST AS A COMPOSITE DOES NOT EXIST TRULY APART FROM VISIBLE FORM, SMELL AND SO FORTH, THERE ARE NO TRULY EXISTENT ELEMENTAL DERIVATIVES THAT DO NOT RELY ON THE ELEMENTS

Just as the pot does not exist
Apart from form and so forth,
Likewise form does not exist
Apart from air and so forth.

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Just as the previously explained reasoning shows that there is no truly existent pot apart from form, smell and so forth, there is no truly existent component visible form apart from the great elements such as air, for it is imputed in dependence upon these.

Basically what is being explained here follows on from the earlier refutation of a truly existent pot on the grounds that there are no truly existent components. Using the same logical reasoning, if there is no truly existent composite then that by default, also proves that there are no truly existent components. So on the one hand, showing that there are no truly existent components proves that there is no truly existent composite. While on the other hand there is no truly existent composite, so there cannot be truly existent components.

The phrase 'for it is imputed in dependence upon these' means that a composite has to be established in dependence upon its components—without its components a composite cannot be established. Likewise components depend on a composite because if there is no composite one cannot talk about its components. That logical conclusion applies to both the composite as well as its components. In other words, it should be understood that in refuting a truly existent composite, then by default the same logic is applicable to its components. Just as there is no truly existent composite, so there cannot be truly existent components. Likewise in establishing that there are no truly existent components then by default one should understand that there is no truly existent composite.

To explain it a little bit further, if the components were to be truly existent then that implies that the components do not depend on a composite. In and of themselves they would have to exist independently of the composite, and could not depend on the composite. But the reality is that the very fact that something is posited as a composite means that it is dependent upon its components. The establishment of component means that it is related, or dependent upon, a composite. Likewise establishing a composite means that it has to depend on its components. Both the composite and its components are dependent originations and so cannot be truly existent. One can relate this line of reasoning to understand all other phenomena.

1.1.2.2.2. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT ELEMENTS

Just as visible form, smell and the like cannot exist without air and so forth, the great elements too do not exist by way of their own entity without relying on each other. Thus fire is that which burns and the other three elements that which is burnt.

This is the same line of reasoning that was explained earlier. Visible form, smell and so forth are that which comes from the four elements. That which derives from the elements cannot exist without the elements, so the elements themselves are dependent on each other. Here the relationship between the four elements is related to the example of fire as that which burns, and the remaining elements as that which will burn as a cause, in dependence on the fire.

*That which is hot is fire but how
Can that burn which is not hot?
Thus so-called fuel does not exist,
And without it fire too does not.* 341

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Fire burns only fuel whose nature is the other three elements, yet hot fuel is fire and no longer fuel to be burnt. If it is not hot, since it is unrelated to fire how will it burn?

What is being explained here is the interdependence of fire and the other elements. The definition of fire is that which is hot and burns. However in order for fire to burn there has to be fuel, for without fuel there could not be fire that is hot

and burning. The fuel is a combination of the other three elements. So none of the four elements in general, and in particular the fire element, exists inherently or independently. If fire were to exist independently or inherently then it would have to have the nature of hot and burning without having to depend on the fuel, which is the composite of the other elements. Obviously there could not be fire without fuel, so fire clearly depends on fuel, or the other elements, in order to have the nature of hot and burning. Thus fire cannot exist independently or inherently from its own side.

Thus fuel independent of fire does not exist by way of its own entity and because of this, fire independent of fuel does not exist by way of its own entity either.

In summary what is being explained is the interdependence between fuel and fire. In order for fuel to be perceived as fuel, i.e. to function as fuel, it has to depend on fire. If fuel were to function as fuel without depending on fire then there would have to be independently or inherently existent fuel without any fire. If the fuel did not depend on fire it would burn by itself without a fire having to be lit. Clearly, however, in order for fuel to be called fuel it has to depend on fire so that it does become fuel. Likewise fire itself has to depend on fuel for it to burn, for without fuel there could be no fire and would not burn. Thus one should come to the clear conclusion that fuel and fire are dependent on each other, and thus that they are co-existent, and do not exist independently from their own side.

If you treat the analysis of the material presented here as an intellectual game of mere words, then it may seem quite shallow, and you will not gain the understanding of the real meaning behind it. Even by just hearing the words, 'fire does not exist from its own side independently', and 'fuel does not exist independently from its own side', one should be able to understand that this is a presentation of the emptiness of fire and fuel.

Likewise, hearing that 'fire depends on fuel to be in the nature of hot and burning', and that 'fuel depends on fire for it to be called fuel', one should then be able to understand the profound meaning of interdependent origination. If, in the explanation of this, one can derive the subtle meaning of emptiness and interdependent origination, then one has made the analysis and study of this text worthwhile. By slowly referring to this analysis and the presentations here, one further strengthens one's understanding of emptiness and interdependent origination, which will be incredibly beneficial.

One should use the meaning of these verses to benefit one's practice of both analytical and contemplative meditation. In relation to the example used here, analytical meditation is the process of analysing how fire is not inherently existent, and by analysing further, reasoning what it would mean if fire were to be independently or inherently existent from its own side. It means that fire would have to exist as the nature of being hot and burning without depending on anything else, which means without depending on fuel. So, one contemplates whether fire can exist in that way. Can fire exist without depending on fuel for it to burn?

When through such analysis one comes to the profound conclusion that it would be absurd for fire to exist independently and inherently, and then one places one's mind on that conviction, and remains focussed on that for some time, then that is contemplative meditation on emptiness.

It is instructed in the teachings that it is initially much more important to use analytical meditation, analysing and further analysing, and then to use contemplative meditation later on. Do not spend too much time on contemplative meditation in the beginning, because you will not be able to come to the right conclusions. It would be very hard to really progress very far just by sitting rigidly, without much analysis or understanding of what emptiness and dependent origination means, and assuming that one is meditating on emptiness. That sort of meditation on emptiness will not take you very far!

With respect to discerning the emptiness of phenomena, the instruction is that one should not come to the immediate conclusion that things lack inherent existence too soon. Otherwise there would be the fault of simply thinking, 'Oh yes things lack inherent existence, and they don't truly exist', and just leave it as an intellectual understanding. Then one may not really exert oneself to reach more profound understandings, thinking 'Oh yes, yes', and taking the above statement for granted, just on faith, and not really go beyond that. The instruction in the teachings, particularly the teachings on emptiness, is that if one comes to a conclusion too soon in one's thinking about emptiness, then that will be a fault.

However one should not prolong the confirmation that things lack inherent existence for too long either. If one leaves it for too long then one may never come to the conclusion and be in an extreme state all the time. There is a danger of not really reaching the profound conclusion that things lack inherent existence if one does not actually make an attempt to come to that conclusion. So there needs to be the right balance in coming to the conclusion that phenomena lack inherent existence—it should not be reached too soon, nor left for too long either.

Furthermore it needs to be understood that analytical meditation is in fact meditation, in that it is keeping one's mind focused on an object. One may be analysing the nature of things within a certain context, so one is focusing on the particular object and analysing it. Insofar as one's mind is focused on the object it is meditation. However it is not what we call contemplative meditation, because contemplative meditation or single-pointed mental stabilisation is when the mind is focused on a single object. The definition of single-pointed mental stabilisation is to be focused on the object single-pointedly through one's own power. Analytical meditation is when one is focused on an object, which is not a single object, whereas contemplative meditation training one's mind by focusing only on a single object.

Analytical meditation does fit into the definition of mental concentration or stabilisation and so we can definitely assert that analytical meditation is a form of meditation. In fact for us beginners it is a very skilful and practical way of meditating. We all know from our own experience that attempting to focus our mind on one single object is extremely difficult initially, if not impossible. If we are left thinking that meditation means focusing only on one single object we might find meditation so difficult that we do not attempt it very often. Whereas it is relatively easy for us to read the text and analyse the context of what is being explained, and really focus our mind on that.

During the time that we are reading a text and thinking about the meaning of those passages, we are meditating, and that is an essential point to understand and remember. There are many who misinterpret meditation as only being focused on a single object, and there are many who come to the

wrong conclusion that if it is meditation it has to be a contemplative meditation, and that analytical meditation is not really meditation. That is a totally wrong conception. So one must understand that and see the value of analytical meditation. In fact, for us beginners, analytical meditation is much more practical and worthwhile.

Furthermore, as explained in the teachings, genuine contemplative meditation must be preceded by analytical meditation. In contemplative meditation one is focusing on an object that has been examined first by a focused mind through one's wisdom. That means one doesn't focus on just any object in contemplative meditation, rather the focus must be on an object that has been asserted with one's wisdom as being a valid object to meditate upon. Where does that wisdom come from? It comes from analysis. One has to first analyse the object in order to assert that it is a suitable object to focus on in one's meditation. So we can see how profound wisdom only arises through analysis, and through thinking about the object.

In order to engage in a focused meditation, such as using the breath as an object, one has to first think about the technique. That process of learning and thinking about the technique itself is part of an analytical meditation. It is only when we have actually understood the instructions properly that we can even attempt to engage in contemplative meditation. This process of analysing first, then contemplating what one has analysed, and then further analysing is called the union of analytical and contemplative meditation. Within the Lam Rim teachings the early sections are primarily analytical meditation, whereas when it comes to the topic of how to achieve calm abiding then the practice becomes primarily contemplative meditation. I am emphasising this point to show the great value of analytical meditation. It should not be just brushed aside on the grounds that it is not important.

1.1.2.2.3. REFUTING THE REJOINER

Assertion: Fuel is hard and so forth but not hot by nature. When it is overpowered by fire, it grows hot and is that which is burnt.

This assertion is presented by the opponents in relation to the earlier refutation which said, 'fire burns only fuel whose nature is the other three elements, yet hot fuel is fire and no longer fuel to be burnt. If it not hot, since it is unrelated to fire how will it burn?' There it was shown that if fuel is in the nature of fire then how it can be considered as fuel, because it is already one with the fire.

What the opponent is presenting is that fuel is not hot so it cannot be one with fire; it is only one with the nature of fire when it is overpowered by fire.

Answer:

*Even if it is hot only when
Overpowered, why is it not fire?
Yet if not hot, to say fire contains
Something else is not plausible.*

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The commentary goes on to explain:

Even if fuel grows hot only when overpowered by fire, why is it not fire? It follows that it should be fire because it is hot and burns. Yet if fuel is not hot at that time, it is implausible to claim that some thing else which is not hot is present in fire. In that case just heat divorced from the other three elements would be fire, but if one of the great elements does not exist the others cannot exist either. Moreover it contradicts the statement, "Things that arise simultaneously are reciprocal effects like the elements."

What is being presented here is that fuel becomes one with fire and is hot and burning at that time, so that is what is existent at that time. Fuel existing as one in the nature of fire implies that it is not dependent on the other elements.

What is being presented here as a refutation is that there cannot be heat that is divorced from the other three elements. If that were the case, one would be able to assert that the fire element can be divorced, or absent, from the other elements. However that cannot be the case. All the elements exist in relation to each other. They cannot exist inherently by themselves or singly at any time. They are always coexistent and that is what is being presented here as the main point.

In relation to the verse, the absurdity that is being pointed out here in the refutation is that if what you assert is true, then the fire element would have to exist independently without relating to the other elements. However as the text says,

Things that arise simultaneously are reciprocal effects like the elements.

This means that wherever the elements are they coexist together, and that at no time can one element be separated from the others.

1.1.2.2.4. REFUTING A FIRE PARTICLE AS TRULY EXISTENT FIRE

Assertion: Since the other three elements are not present in the smallest substantial fire particle, there is fire even without fuel.

Answer:

If the particle has no fuel 343
Fire without fuel exists.
If even it has fuel, a single-natured
Particle does not exist.

The commentary explains the meaning thus:

Fire without fuel exists if the smallest fire particle does not have fuel. Since it therefore would follow that uncaused fire exists, one should not assert a smallest substantial particle as do the Vaisesikas.

The Vaisheshikas assert a substantial partless particle, which one cannot accept. As the text further reads:

If one admits that even the fire particle has fuel, for fear of the conclusion that it would otherwise be causeless, it follows that there is no single-natured particle since the other elements are certainly present in each particle.

What is being presented basically is that each particle, such as an earth particle, incorporates the other three particles, wind and water and fire particles as well. Likewise with the other element particles—each possesses all the other element particles.

1.1.2.3. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING FOR SINGLENES OR PLURALITY

This has two sub-headings.

1.1.2.3.1. Refuting truly existent functional phenomena through the reason of being neither one nor many

1.1.2.3.2. This fallacy equally applies to other sectarians

1.1.2.3.1. REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA THROUGH THE REASON OF BEING NEITHER ONE NOR MANY

The reason that is presented here is that of being neither one nor many.

When different things are examined 344
None of them have singleness.
Because there is no singleness
There is no plurality either.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

When functional things like pots and woollen cloth are examined as to whether they are or are not truly existent, these various things, because they have parts, do not have truly existent singleness.

This is refuting truly existent singleness. Having asserted that there cannot be truly existent singleness then also by default:

Nor do they have truly existent plurality for the very reason by which they are not truly single, since plurality comes about through an accumulation of single units. External and internal phenomena are not truly existent because they are neither one nor many. They are like reflections.

This is a summary of what has been explained quite extensively in the earlier part of the chapter. The analogy that is presented here is that phenomena are like reflections. The particular analogy that is related here is seeing a reflection of one's face in a mirror. If one were to investigate whether the reflection were single and one with the face, it does not exist as inherently one with the face nor does it exist as inherently separate from the face. That is the point. Similarly all other phenomena do not exist as either inherently single or inherently separate or many.

Furthermore the reflection of the face in the mirror is also used as an analogy to explain how things do not exist independently or inherently, even though that is how they appear to exist. Even though things appear to us as being independent and inherently existent, in reality things cannot exist in that way.

The analogy again is the reflection of the face. Even though the reflection of the face in the mirror appears to be like the face, in reality it is not the face. It appears in every aspect exactly as the face, however we know conventionally and accept that it is not the face. It is the same with all other phenomena: they lack inherent existence even though they appear to be inherently existent.

We can take the analogy further to explaining how things lack true existence, As explained earlier, things lack inherent existence, or independent existence, or true existence. These terms are all synonymous. In relation to the term 'truly existent' when we see the reflection of our face in the mirror it appears to be truly our face, but it is truly not our face. Reflecting on that analogy can actually help us to understand the actual meaning of the true existence or inherent existence of any phenomena. These analogies provide a very good way for us to reflect upon the lack of inherent or true existence of phenomena. It is very good to think about these analogies and really use them in our practice. If we do that, then through this analysis our practice can become very profound. That is how the analogy serves as a great benefit for our practice.

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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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Sitting in a comfortable position, generate a positive motivation along the lines that we have just recited in the Refuge Prayer, which is a prayer that encompasses both refuge and the bodhicitta motivations. As indicated in the Mahayana teachings, an authentic Mahayana attitude has to consist of refuge as well as the bodhicitta attitude. Thus in addition to the Refuge prayer, we generate this strong motivation, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings may I achieve the state of enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

As mentioned previously, it is worthwhile treating the teaching session as a pledge, where along with actually listening to the Dharma, we re-confirm our pledge to achieve enlightenment. That pledge should also be re-confirmed as we practice.

It is really significant that we begin our practice session with that motivation. Reciting the Refuge Prayer, which encompasses the bodhicitta attitude, is an element that secures our practice as an authentic practice. In terms of the actual elements within the Refuge Prayer, the stronger the refuge that we have in our mind, the stronger the confirmation of being protected from the lower realms in our future life will be. Similarly, the stronger our bodhicitta attitude is, the stronger our determination to dedicate our practice towards enlightenment will become.

This prayer also encompasses generating refuge in order to overcome an improper or incorrect path, while generating bodhicitta in order to overcome the lower vehicles and enter the Mahayana path. I have mentioned this many times previously, but I mention it again so as to remind ourselves of the significance and importance of the bodhicitta motivation.

To further indicate the significance of generating refuge and bodhicitta, you might recollect from earlier explanations that generating refuge is the doorway to entering the Buddhist path, whereas generating bodhicitta is the doorway to entering the Mahayana path. It is essential that we remember these points in our practice.

When the Lam Rim teachings refer to the topic of precious human re-birth, it mentions that there are three levels of taking the essence of a precious human life. The first level, or most basic way of taking essence of a precious human life is to use it so that we can protect ourselves from unfortunate births in future lives. The next best way to take the essence from one's precious human life is for it to become a cause to be free from being reborn into cyclic existence, and thus obtain liberation. While the utmost way to take the essence of one's precious human life is to enable it to become a cause for achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. So we can think of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta along these lines.

One must not underestimate the great significance of taking refuge. Merely taking refuge with a strong convinced mind is, in itself, a means to protect oneself from being re-born in lower realms. So by taking refuge one is taking the essence

of one's precious human life. Thus merely taking refuge is, at the very least, a great practice. The reason that I emphasise the significance and importance of taking refuge is because it is the very foundation of any practice we do along the Buddhist path. All our practices on the Buddhist path are based on refuge. Whatever practice we engage in, it starts with taking refuge, and it is important that we don't underestimate the part of taking refuge. It is one of the essential elements of our practice because it secures our practice, so it is a very significant practice.

As we engage in the teachings and practise meditation and so forth, it is good to remind ourselves why we are doing that practice. What is it that we are trying to get out of the practice? What is it that we are trying to achieve? Here we need to reflect back on the Lam Rim, a teaching which presents the entire Buddhist path. You can summarise it by thinking of how refuge plays an important role all along the path. In the practice of the small scope, as we begin to realise that we have a precious human life with these unique conditions as a human being, we come to contemplate how we can use this precious human life in the best way. Also, following the presentation in the Lam Rim, just as we have this precious human life now, we contemplate how easily we can lose it; when we experience death, we lose this precious human life. Then we think about how difficult it would be to achieve such a life again in the future. Thus we must utilise this precious human life that we have now in the utmost way.

Then, one reflects further on how one's karma—positive and negative actions, in particular the negative actions and imprints on one's mind, and the actions that follow—can lead to an unfortunate rebirth in the lower realms. Thus a strong fear of the lower realms and wishing to be free from that is generated, and one develops a determination to obtain a fortunate rebirth, such as a human or in the god realms. Then in order to achieve such a fortunate rebirth one generates a strong conviction that taking refuge has the potential to help one, and so one takes refuge. Thus taking refuge becomes the most essential practice to avoid lower rebirth.

Then as we reflect further, we see that even if one were to be free from the lower realms, and be reborn again as a human being or in the god realms, one will still have to go through sufferings and so forth—there are still a lot of disadvantages in returning to a life in cyclic existence. So again one determines to free oneself from that, to take the essence of one's human life to try to create the causes to be free from the whole of cyclic existence. Thus one engages in depth in the practices of the four noble truths and the three higher trainings. In that way one again takes strong refuge in order to be able to utilise and engage in these practices. Thus in the medium scope, one's practices are also based on taking refuge.

Then, as one contemplates further, one sees that even if one were to be free from suffering and from cyclic existence, which would be a satisfactory personal goal, all other sentient beings would continue to suffer immensely while they remain in cyclic existence. Thus one generates a strong determination to free all other beings from all suffering, for which one needs to train further in order to reach the highest goal of enlightenment, where one reaches one's full potential. Based on taking refuge and seeking the guidance of refuge, one generates a bodhicitta attitude, wish to achieve enlightenment in order to help others, which is based on love and compassion. In that way, we can see how

refuge is the basis all along the path leading up to enlightenment, and so see its value. Of course taking the essence of one's precious human life as explained in the teachings and using it in the best way, doesn't mean sitting back, and relaxing, and making a lot of money. That's obviously not what it means!

It is really important that we contemplate these factors and constantly remind ourselves of them as we engage in the practice of the Dharma. It is particularly important for those of you who have already studied and learned a lot, and actually put quite a lot of effort into your study. One must ensure that the actual study becomes worthwhile, and that one utilises the study that one has done so that it becomes beneficial. The way for it to become really useful is to ensure that whatever study one does serves as a purpose for one's practice. As mentioned previously the practice is really contemplating and generating a strong sense of refuge and the significance of that refuge in one's mind. Based on that, one contemplates the practices of the small scope, incorporating that into the medium scope, and then into the great scope, combining the practices of the three scopes in that way for one's ultimate goal.

Unless we actually make a particular effort to remind ourselves and make sure that our practice is a worthwhile practice, it is so easy for our mind to become completely immersed in, and distracted by, worldly affairs. Normally there are moments of joy and happiness that we experience in the practices that we do. But then that joy or happiness seems to fade away, and it seems so fleeting that we begin to wonder why that happiness and joy doesn't remain. Why is it that even though we seem to get some benefit from the practice, it doesn't secure our happiness? Why is it that we have more problems in our life? Those sorts of doubts and questions may arise in the mind. So one must recognise what is really disturbing us. What are the main causes which interrupt our practice? What is preventing the joy and happiness in our mind from becoming stable?

You will all have noticed for yourselves the simple fact that the stronger our attraction to worldly concerns the more disturbed the mind becomes, and that we find little joy and peace if we allow the mind to be attracted to worldly distractions. Rather than contributing to real happiness, attraction to worldly affairs makes our mind unhappy, and the stronger the attraction we have to worldly affairs, the greater the disturbance. Thus it is very important that we reduce our attraction to the worldly concerns.

Even though we are not able to overcome our attraction to worldly concerns completely, we should make every effort in our practice to make sure that we are attempting to do so. Just for the time when we focus inwardly on our breath, we may feel some relief, and our mind is happy and settled. If we leave our practice at just focussing on our breath for a while, and limit our practice time to just the morning or the evening, and not remember the real practice, which is constant awareness of not allowing ourselves to become completely distracted with the worldly affairs, then we will become completely immersed in those worldly affairs. The main thing is to try to develop a sense of distrust of worldly or samsaric values. Try to develop in one's mind a sense of disgust or disillusionment with samsaric pleasures. If one actually develops that, then the strong belief in and attraction towards worldly pleasures will naturally be reduced. Then, as a result, we will definitely experience a longer lasting sense of contentment and happiness in ourselves, which is really worthwhile.

If we don't pay particular attention to this, then the reverse may actually occur. Rather than achieving a subdued mind our attempt to practice may lead to more distractions in the mind, and stronger desire than before. There is a real danger of that happening, so one must really be careful to prevent that from happening.

One's practice must be utilised in the proper way. Developing a sense of disenchantment with samsara by contemplating the sufferings of samsara is relatively easy for us. Seeing the sufferings of samsara definitely discourages us from wanting to be in samsara. More difficult is developing a sense of disenchantment with the pleasures of samsara, because it is hard to develop a sense of disillusionment or disenchantment with these pleasures.

Even harder still, is developing disillusionment or disenchantment with the neutral experiences of samsara. This is an essential point that we have to recognise. There are what is called the worldly meditative stabilisations, where one develops disillusionment and disenchantment with the worldly pleasures, accompanied by the development of an attraction to the quietness and the peacefulness of that neutral feeling that one gains from meditative concentration. If one is not able to also identify that as a samsaric fault, then further engaging in that meditative concentration creates the causes to be reborn in a higher rebirth, such as long-life gods and so forth. Thus one is actually just creating the causes to further one's existence in samsara. Therefore it is very important that we really pinpoint and understand what it means to develop disillusionment or disenchantment with samsara. It means disillusionment not only with the sufferings, but also the pleasures and the neutral feelings as well.

If one practises in this way, developing that sense of disillusionment and disenchantment with samsara, and lessening one's attraction towards samsaric pleasures, then one will experience, even in this life, release from the difficulties and problems in life that keep us so entangled. The lessening of those problems will bring about a certain amount of ease and happiness that we can experience even in this life, while at the same time creating the causes for a better future life. Thus by giving up or lessening one's desire for the pleasures and attractions worldly life, one gains an immediate benefit while also creating the causes for a better future life. In that way one gains a two-fold benefit.

Alternatively, if we allow our practice for lessening disillusionment or disenchantment with the worldly pleasures to lapse, we will experience more problems in this life. We won't gain real happiness and joy in this life while at the same time creating more causes for suffering in future lives, so we lose out both ways. Thus I would consider anyone who engages in the practices in order to gain the two-fold benefit – benefit for this life as well as benefit for future lives - to be really wise. What better person could you find than that? But I don't know how you think [*soft laughter*].

The main obstacle to developing disenchantment with samsara really comes down to attachment. That is the main delusion in the mind that prevents us from developing a sound sense of disenchantment, which then becomes the obstacle to developing renunciation. Without developing renunciation we can't even enter the path, so in order to develop that disenchantment, one must definitely deal with lessening attachment. Shantideva's text, *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, explains explicitly and very clearly how attachment serves as a fault that prolongs our existence in

samsara. Shantideva clearly explains, as do many other great teachers, that attachment is the main obstruction to our practice of developing disenchantment and renunciation. That is something that we must really pinpoint and recognise.

There are many who, on hearing about the need to develop disenchantment and disgust for the samsaric pleasures ask, 'How can I experience any joy and pleasure if I give up worldly pleasures?'. That is a strong fear or misconception that many hold on to. But the teachings confirm that in giving up or in overcoming the desire for worldly pleasures, one's sense of real pleasure and joy increases rather than decreases. In fact one experiences real joy and pleasure in one's mind.

1.1.2.3.2. THIS FALLACY EQUALLY APPLIES TO OTHER SECTARIANS

*Though they assert that where there are none 345
Of those things there is singleness,
Singleness does not exist
Since everything is threefold.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

One may think this refutation applies to our own sectarians who assert that the elements and elemental derivatives occur simultaneously, but not to outsiders...

What is being indicated here is that some may feel that the refutation made earlier, which applies to our own sectarians, is not applied to outsiders, indicating non-Buddhists such as the Vaisheshikas, who hold the view of a partless particle. As explained previously the Vaisheshikas assert that there is a permanent partless particle, which is a single unit that exists by itself. So, what is being explained is that assertion by the non-Buddhists is also being negated.

The commentary further explains the assertion of the outsiders as:

a small permanent earth particle which is a single unit exists,

The next part is an addition in the English translation, which reads:

...where there are no functional things apart from the smallest particles such as earth particles and so forth.

As indicated here in the commentary, the non-Buddhist schools such as the Vaisheshikas assert that there are partless particles. A partless particle is the smallest particle, an entity existing by itself, and a single unit. In our own Buddhist system we do not assert a partless particle. As mentioned previously, every particle consists of the eight substances, thus there cannot be a single particle in itself, as there are always other particles or other elements. Yet while the non-Buddhist schools such as the Vaisheshikas assert that there is a partless particle, at the same time they also accept that:

Yet even in their system the smallest earth particle is three-fold in that it has substantial entity, singleness and existence.

Thus the refutations that were applied earlier in our own system apply to the non-Buddhists as well. There is an absurdity in asserting on the one hand that there is a partless particle, and on the other hand asserting that a partless particle has the entity of being a 'substantial entity, a singleness and existence'. That in itself contradicts the assertion of it being a single unit. As there are three different elements to the partless particle it is cannot be a completely single unit just in itself. Thus the refutations that were made earlier apply to the non-Buddhist schools also.

So, as the commentary concludes:

Thus precisely the same fallacies apply to them.

1.1.2.4. APPLYING REASONING WHICH NEGATES THE FOUR POSSIBILITIES IN OTHER CASES

*The approach of existence, non-existence, 346
Both existence and non-existence, and neither,
Should always be applied by those
With mastery to oneness and so forth.*

The four possibilities are:

1. The Tibetan text of the commentary begins with:

The Samkhyas claim the effect exists at the time of the causes;

This is a particular assertion of the Samkhyas, which is that the effect, or the result, exists at the same time as the cause.

2. Next are the Sautrāntikas.

Though they do not assert that the effect exists at the time of the cause, they assert cause and effect as being truly existent.

3. The non-Buddhist Nirgranthas assert that:

... both existence and non-existence in that a thing is permanent in nature yet temporarily impermanent

The Nirgranthas also assert that which is produced from self and other at the same time, i.e. they assert self-produced objects as well as objects produced from others. To use the example of an earthen vase: they would say that an earthen vase is both self-produced as well as produced by others. It is self-produced because of the fact of being produced from mud or clay, and it is produced by others, because it is made by the potter.

4. Furthermore there are:

...those who assert that though things are substantially existent, they neither exist nor do not exist since they cannot be said to be this nor that.

The Tibetan commentary then reads:

Those who have mastered the art of employing the meaning of suchness always refute oneness, otherness, both and neither by applying the kinds of reasoning which refute the [earlier] assertions.

They apply the reasons previously explained in [stanza 265]... "For those who assert effects exist" [The reason they apply is either] the reason of dependent arising, the lack of being one or many, the diamond fragments reason and so forth.'

'Diamond fragment' is sometimes translated as 'diamond silver'.

So basically verse 346 is refuting these four possibilities.

The five types of reasoning

There are actually five reasonings indicating the lack of inherent existence.

1. The second reasoning mentioned in the text relates to phenomena having a **lack of being one or many**. That reasoning comes in the form of this syllogism, which refers to the nature of phenomena: a sprout is not truly existent, because it is neither truly existent one nor truly existent many. This reason relates to the *nature* of phenomena

2. The first reason in the text is the reason of *dependent arising*, which is called the **king of reasonings**. As mentioned previously, in relation to the syllogism using the subject of a sprout: the sprout lacks inherent existence, because it is a dependent origination.

3 The next reasoning is the **diamond fragment reasoning**, which was explained extensively in the Madhyamika text¹. This reasoning relates to the *causes* of phenomena, and the syllogism is: the sprout lacks production from an inherently existent cause, because it is not produced with any of the four possibilities. Thus it lacks the possibility of being inherently self-produced, being produced from an inherently existent other cause, being produced by neither the self nor the other, or being produced by both.

4. Another of the five reasonings, which is not indicated here specifically, is the reasoning that relates to the *effect*, the reasoning of **existence and non-existence of generation and cessation**. Basically, it refers to lacking an inherently produced effect at the time of the cause. So things are not inherently produced at the time of the cause and nor are they inherently not produced at the time of the cause. The actual syllogism is found in the Madhyamika notes².

5. The fifth reasoning is established in relation to both *cause and effect*. It refers to **being free from the four mutually exclusive possibilities in relation to the cause and effect**. Thus the syllogism is a sprout lacks inherent generation because a single inherently existent cause cannot generate an inherently existent effect, multiple inherently existent causes cannot generate multiple inherently existent effects, multiple existing causes cannot generate a single effect and a single cause cannot generate multiple effects. So the reasoning covers the four mutually exclusive ways of negating how, from either a single or multiple inherently existent causes, there cannot be single or multiple inherently existent effects.

1.2. Showing the cause for mistaking functional things as permanent and truly existent

Question: If things therefore do not have the slightest inherent existence, for what reason do those opponents hold that they are truly existent?

Answer:

*When the continuum is misapprehended, 347
Things are said to be permanent.
Similarly when composites are
Misapprehended, things are said to exist.*

The initial question indicates that if things do not actually have the slightest inherent existence as we assert, referring to our own views, and as there are so many reasonings showing the lack of inherent existence, then why do others hold the contrary view, which is of true existence?

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Though there is no valid reason [to hold true existence] in the case of a thing which lasts three days, they feel compelled to assert that whatever existed before must exist later. Functional things are said to be permanent when the continuum which is posited through imputation upon former, intermediate and later moments is misapprehended.

This is explaining the reason why others have these misconceptions. First of all the misconception of permanence arises because others see the continuum of an object as being the actual object, and do not recognise and see the momentary changes that occur. In this particular example, something that is seen for three days, which was seen the previous day, the next day and the day after, is seen as being

the same thing. For as long as it is considered as the same thing, that misapprehension instills the wrong view of permanence.

We can relate this to our own experience. For example when we see someone that we know, we don't even question whether we are seeing the same person - there are no doubts at all. The fact that we think that there is no change at all and that we are seeing exactly the same person, is the misapprehension of permanence, or seeing the other as being permanent, and it is called grasping at permanence. In reality if the person that we see today is in fact the actual person of yesterday, then that implies that a person will never age, because we are always seeing the same person. How could the same person not age?

To point out the absurdity of thinking things are permanent: if it is the same person, then someone who was twenty-nine yesterday and who has a birthday today (thus turning thirty), would have to be the same person who is twenty-nine. But we don't say that do we? Rather the person is now thirty. The fact is that the person who was twenty-nine yesterday is thirty today, because a change has taken place. If there was no change taking place at all then the person couldn't have become a year older, and turn thirty. You can't have a person who is both twenty-nine and thirty years old today can you?

What is being specifically explained here is how that misapprehension, which results in a grasping at permanence, occurs. This misapprehension, or this faulty state of mind, occurs because of holding on to the continuum of something, such as a person actually staying as the same person. This misapprehension, which is explained here, and which causes the grasping at permanence, is none other than the view that occurs when we see today the person that we saw yesterday. As soon as we think, 'Oh I'm seeing the person that I saw yesterday', then that indicates that there is the misapprehension that is the grasping at permanence. There is nothing else that is really identifiable as being grasping at permanence.

Of course, someone who actually has an understanding of impermanence will not have that notion of seeing exactly the same person and believing that nothing has changed. They would understand that subtle changes have taken place because of their underlying realisation or understanding of impermanence.

As the commentary further explains:

Similarly when the composite is misapprehended, it is said that there are truly existent functional things.

Just the misapprehension of permanence occurs, so too the composite of a phenomena is misapprehended, because of the misapprehension of the composite establishes the misapprehension of true existence, i.e. that things exist truly, that they are truly existent functional things.

Finally, the commentary states:

There seem to be even many adherents to the *Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition* who, through not knowing how to posit the composite and the continuum, follow outsiders.

This refers to certain Buddhist schools such as the Mind Only, or Cittamatrin school and so forth. Even though they follow the treatises on valid cognition, they still hold on to the view of true existence, such as is held by the non-Buddhist schools.

¹ See 15 April 2003 for these five reasonings.

² The sprout lacks inherent generation, because it isn't inherently generated at the time of its cause, nor is it inherently not generated at the time of its cause.

1.3. Briefly showing the reasoning that establishes absence of true existence

*Anything that has dependent arising
Is not independent. 348
All these are not independent,
Therefore there is no self.*

The verse is a very significant verse that is often quoted in other teachings, and so it is worthwhile memorising as a way of reminding oneself of its meaning.

Objection: Even if our view that things exist were wrong, your view is that things do not exist, since you do not accept functional things. It is unreasonable because it contradicts both what is seen and unseen.

The objection raised here is by other systems, which assert truly functional existent phenomena. Because that view is refuted by our own system, they have a counter-objection saying, 'You're claiming that my view, which establishes truly existent functional phenomena, is wrong, however because you say that there are no truly existent functional phenomena, your view is actually an extreme view. You're establishing a nihilistic view in saying that things do not exist. That is unreasonable, because it contradicts what is seen and unseen', i.e. things that are obvious.

Answer: We make no claim that things do not exist for we are proponents of dependent arising.

Question: Do you assert that things are truly existent?

Answer: No, because we are proponents of dependent arising.

Things exist, but they don't truly exist, and the reasoning that establishes things as not being truly existent is the reasoning of dependent arising. Thus the syllogism is: things are not truly existent, because they are dependent arising.

Question: What does that mean? [i.e. What does saying that things are dependent arising mean?]

Answer: It means that while things are empty of inherent existence, like magical creations and mirages, they can produce effects.

The analogy used here is when a magician conjures things such as horses and elephants. Even though they do not exist they have the function of performing tricks. Similarly, even though things do not exist inherently, they still function.

As further explained in the commentary:

Any relative thing which is found to arise and exist dependently is not found to exist independently. All these phenomena lack an independent mode of existence and thus there is no self of persons or of phenomena.

What is being clearly explained here is that because phenomena lack an inherent mode of existence, there is said to be no self of persons as well as no self of phenomena, referring to an inherently existing self.

Then as the commentary further explains:

The person [this is the subject of which is the person] and the aggregates do not exist inherently, [Why?] because they arise dependently.

This is presented as a syllogism, in the form of subject, predicate and the reason.

Then a counter-question is raised from the others:

Question: We too accept that effects are not independent, so what is the difference?

They are saying that as they also accept that effects are not independent, therefore what is the difference between your

view and our view? The answer points out an essential difference, which is that,

You do not understand that dependent arising means mutual reliance.

What our system is saying in reply to the question, 'What is the difference between our views if we both accept that effects are not independent?' is that there is a difference because there is a difference in how we interpret dependent arising.

We may have completed this text by June. The next text will be *The Mahamudra*, and it would be good try to acquire the text, because without a text it would be really hard to follow the teaching and maintain its continuity. Apparently the translation is quite good. So while I refer to the root text and the commentary, you can refer to other commentaries, and read them to become familiar with the text.

Even though we may not be able to go into a detailed explanation of the actual text, if you read the commentaries while we go through the explanation, that will become a very good source of inspiration for one's practice. That is why I chose this text - it is a very inspiring for one's practice.

To use an analogy as to how we are going to conduct our study sessions it will be as if I am pointing the way to the door, to indicate that there are valuable things once you open the door. Then it is up to you to open the door and actually find the valuable things. That is how I will present it. Even if we don't have enough the time to go into much detail in the actual sessions here, if you can read the commentaries and study them, you will find great inspiration in the text.

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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

15 April 2008

As usual we shall sit in a comfortable sitting posture and generate a positive attitude in our mind, such as, 'in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.4. Showing the need to understand absence of true existence

This has two sub headings.

1.4.1. Inherently existent dependent arising is not seen by the Exalted

1.4.2. Release from worldly existence is gained through understanding emptiness

1.4.1. Inherently existent dependent arising is not seen by the Exalted

Here, 'the Exalted' refers to an Arya who is engaged in meditative equipoise.

Things do not assemble 349
Unless there is an effect.
Aggregation for an effect
Is not included for the Exalted.

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary says:

Since nothing is produced by way of its own entity things do not assemble and come together to produce an effect unless there is an effect to produce. Since anything inherently existent would be permanent, it could not rely on an effect.

First of all, 'an effect' relates specifically to products such as compounded phenomena, where there has to be an assembly of things in order for it to be produced. What is being pointed out here is that such an assembly of things is not an inherently existent assembly. If something were to exist inherently then it would not need an assembly of things in order to produce phenomena. The main point is that while there has to be an assembly for compounded phenomena to be produced, that assembly cannot be inherently existent.

If an inherently existent aggregation for the sake of an effect is, in fact, possible then it would have to be perceived by a noble being in a state of meditative equipoise. The fact is, however, that an Arya being in meditative equipoise does not see any aggregation for the sake of an effect taking place.

I have explained this in greater detail earlier. The meaning of the last two lines of the verse was clarified in the teachings on the *Madhyamika*, and in other teachings. For an Arya being in meditative equipoise, there is no appearance of conventional phenomena. In a single-pointed meditative state on emptiness there is no appearance whatsoever of conventional phenomena. So the conclusion, as explained in the teachings, is that not seeing conventional phenomena while in meditative equipoise is ultimate seeing.

What this also implies is that if conventional phenomena were to appear to an Arya being in meditative equipoise, then they would have to be inherently existent. The lines, 'an

aggregation for an effect is not included for the Exalted', mean that an Arya being in meditative equipoise does not see the assembly of an aggregation in order to produce an effect. This implies that an aggregation for an effect is not inherently existent. There can be no inherently existent assembly for an effect to take place, because of the fact that it is not seen by Arya beings.

The main point is illustrated in the last part of the explanation in the text, where it says:

Aggregation for the sake of an effect is not included within the perception of the Exalted during meditative equipoise which sees suchness, because it directly perceives the lack of inherent existence of things.

An Arya being in meditative equipoise does not apprehend conventional phenomena. In relation to a particular phenomenon such as a vase, the non-appearance of the vase to an exalted or noble being in meditative equipoise is the appearance of emptiness of the vase. Such exalted beings don't see conventional phenomena, because they are focused on ultimate phenomena. This further implies that it is not possible for any sentient being's mind to single-pointedly focus on both conventional and ultimate phenomena at the same time. It is only an enlightened mind that is able to do that.

When a sentient being's mind is single-pointedly focused on ultimate phenomena, conventional phenomena cannot appear, and when conventional phenomena are apprehended, then ultimate phenomena cannot be perceived at the same time. A sentient being, even an Arya, cannot engage with conventional phenomena when in a state of meditative equipoise on emptiness. This means, for example, that an arya being in meditative equipoise would not be able to teach the Dharma, and would not be able to listen to the Dharma. Only an enlightened being, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, is able to simultaneously be in meditative equipoise on emptiness while teaching the Dharma.

We see images of the Buddha with the left hand in the mudra of meditative equipoise and the right hand in the mudra of turning the wheel. You must understand that this indicates that only a buddha, an enlightened being, is able to remain in meditative equipoise while simultaneously being able to teach and propound the Dharma.

The conclusion to take note of is that if the question is, 'Does the conventional exist for the wisdom of an Arya being in meditative equipoise?', then you would have to say that the answer is, 'No, conventional phenomena do not exist for the wisdom of an Arya being in meditative equipoise'. Does a conventional phenomenon exist normally? Generally it does exist. But here the point is that it does not exist in the perception of an Arya being's wisdom of meditative equipoise, in which the non-perception of conventional reality is the perception of emptiness.

In debate one could bring up the question: Is the non-existence of vase emptiness or not? Likewise is the non-perception of a vase the perception of emptiness or not? The conclusion is that the non-existence of a vase is of course not emptiness, however the non-existence of a vase in the wisdom of meditative equipoise of an Arya being is the emptiness of a vase. It is good to take note of these points so that one can relate it to other phenomena and the understanding of emptiness.

This sort of investigation enables one to pinpoint the subtleties in understanding the presentation of ultimate reality or emptiness. It is good to work with these sorts of

topics in one's mind and come to the right conclusions. If we have doubts and questions, and are not familiar with these particular analyses, then we might be lost in doubt and not be able to clarify the point. The subtle points and differences explained in this mode of reasoning will help to remove certain doubts from our mind when they arise.

1.4.2. Release from worldly existence is gained through understanding emptiness

This heading implies that without an understanding of emptiness one will not be released from worldly existence or samsara. In basic language what is being said is that if one has gained a realisation of emptiness then one can obtain freedom from samsara, but freedom from samsara will not be possible without that realisation.

One gains release from cyclic existence when deluded ignorance which conceives things as truly existent ends. This depends on understanding emptiness of inherent existence.

The awareness that is the seed of existence 350
Has objects as its sphere of activity.
When selflessness is seen in objects,
The seed of existence is destroyed.

As mentioned here, the question is whether one will be able to gain release from cyclic existence. The answer is yes, it is definitely possible to gain release from cyclic existence, but that doing so depends on understanding the emptiness of inherent existence. The conclusion is that one can definitely gain release from cyclic existence when the deluded ignorance, which conceives of things as being truly existent, ends. So in order to obtain freedom from cyclic existence one must end that ignorance, which depends on gaining an understanding of the emptiness of inherent existence.

As explained in the commentary, the **first line** of the verse means that:

The seed of worldly existence is the conception that phenomena are truly existent.

The awareness that is said to be the seed of cyclic existence is the conception that phenomena are truly existent i.e. the misconception of grasping at true existence. It is good to take note, as explained in the commentary, that here *existence* refers not just to any existence but specifically to cyclic existence or samsara, and that *awareness* refers to not just any kind of awareness, but the misconception grasping at true existence. This ignorance of grasping at true existence is referred to as the *seed*.

The commentary explains the meaning of the **second line** as:

Objects such as form are its sphere of activity.

The seed has been defined as the ignorance grasping at true existence. The *objects* perceived by that ignorance are presented here as *form*, which appears as being truly existent. So the appearance of true existence in relation to form is explained here as the *sphere of activity*, meaning that ignorance engages in perceiving phenomena such as form, as truly existent.

The phrase, 'objects such as form' includes other objects as well. If we relate that to internal phenomena then this would relate to our five aggregates, which are form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness. The five aggregates, referred to here as internal phenomena are the basis of imputation of oneself. So we relate form for example to our physical body, and perceive it as being truly existent, inherently existent or independently existent, which means not relating on anything else, but existing in its own

right. So seeing our body in this way and then grasping at it is called grasping at true existence. It is the same for the other aggregates. That is how we perceive them as being truly existent.

As further explained in the commentary:

The seed of worldly existence is destroyed and one attains liberation by seeing that these objects lack an inherently existent self and by gaining familiarity with this.

Having identified the seed of worldly existence, which as explained previously, is the ignorance of grasping at true existence, this part now explains the **last two lines** in the verse. What is being explained is that one then attains liberation when the seed of worldly existence, which is the ignorance of grasping at true existence, is completely eliminated. How? By 'seeing that these objects lack an inherently existent self'.

After we have understood that perceiving all phenomena as being truly existent is a misapprehension by a faulty state of mind, and that phenomena such as form and the other aggregates lack true existence, we meditate on that - not just once or twice but again and again. In that way we further investigate, and see more and more clearly how they lack true existence. Then through that familiarity one slowly gains a more and more profound understanding of the lack of inherent existence or true existence. Through that familiarity, one will eventually completely destroy the seed or the root of samsara, which is ignorance, and thus obtain liberation.

As further explained in the commentary:

On becoming a Hearer or Solitary Realizer Foe Destroyer or on reaching the eighth ground, one achieves the complete elimination of conceptions of true existence.

This explanation is in accordance with the view of the Prasangika-Madhyamika. According to this viewpoint, grasping at true existence is the deluded obscuration, while the imprint of grasping at true existence is the obscuration to omniscience. The Prasangikas say that deluded obscuration is abandoned when a Hearer or Solitary Realiser attains the level of foe destroyer or arhat. For the Mahayana who has not entered any of the two lower vehicles first but enters the Mahayana path from the very beginning, the conception of true existence, which is the deluded obscuration, is abandoned on the eighth ground. That is what is being specifically explained here.

These are very profound explanations about the necessity of realising emptiness, because without the realisation of emptiness one cannot overcome cyclic existence and obtain liberation. It is good to relate to these explanations and encourage oneself to try with every means to gain that realisation. The process begins with first recognising what cyclic existence is, and this is gained through understanding, for example, the four noble truths. The first noble truth is the truth of suffering, so one goes over exactly how that truth relates to cyclic existence, and the different levels of the truth of suffering. One particularly focuses on pervasive suffering, understanding how the contaminated aggregates are in the nature of suffering, and how that is the basis for being in cyclic existence.

Then one reflects on how one actually obtains those contaminated aggregates, thus gaining an understanding of the truth of origination by seeing how through delusions and karma one obtains the contaminated aggregates. Then one goes deeper into the nature of delusions and karma,

specifically identifying the seed, i.e. the ignorance of grasping at true existence. What is that misconception and how does it come about? After having identified ignorance, then one thinks about how to apply the antidotes for overcoming the grasping at an inherently or truly existent self. In this way one gains a further insight, which contributes to the understanding of emptiness or selflessness.

It is also important to relate whatever uncomfortable circumstances one may find oneself in to the understanding of the four noble truths. For example, the experience of just a headache can be used as an opportunity to actually reflect upon all of the four noble truths in great detail, using that as a great analytical meditation, which then helps to generate a very strong Dharma state of mind. For example, when one has a headache thinking immediately: Why do I experience a headache? Where does this pain come from? What is the nature of the pain? What does the pain reflect? By reflecting on the pain like this, one realises that one experiences the pain because of having the contaminated aggregates.

Then one relates that pain to a more subtle level of suffering, thinking about how one's contaminated aggregates serve as the basis to experience the pain of that headache. Then the next question arises. How did one obtain the contaminated aggregates? So one begins to reflect on the truth of origination, thinking about delusions, and how it is delusions and karma that were the cause of those contaminated aggregates, which were not causeless. So the real cause of the headache is the delusions and karma that were the main causes for one to obtain contaminated aggregates. Then, one analyses delusions and karma further, pinpointing as mentioned previously, the main cause of delusions, and the specific delusion of the ignorance of grasping at a truly existent self.

Having identified that, one reflects on how these causes can be removed. It is possible. How? It is when one develops the wisdom that serves as a direct opponent or antidote for overcoming that ignorance, which is the wisdom realising selflessness or emptiness. Then one can remove the causes within oneself and that understanding or wisdom is referred to as the true path. When one reflects on that, one realises that through that understanding one can remove the causes and obtain the state of true cessation, which is the complete elimination of all suffering. So in this way, with the experience of a headache one can use the four noble truths generally to serve as a basis for a deeper understanding of the whole structure of the path.

If one can structure one's practice along the basis of the four noble truths then it becomes a really comprehensive, complete practice in itself, and moreover a manageable practice that we can relate to. After the Buddha gave the teaching on the four noble truths he then explained further that the truth of suffering is to be recognised, the truth of origination is to be abandoned, the truth of cessation is to be actualised, and the truth of the path is to be meditated upon. So the incomparably kind Buddha explained the actual manner of how to practise.

One has to fully understand why one is in the nature of suffering. What does that mean? To fully understand that is the first step. Then when one fully understands the nature of suffering, the truth of suffering in relation to oneself, then the wish to abandon the causes of suffering, which is the truth of origination, will arise spontaneously in the mind.

When one sees that it is possible to abandon the original cause of suffering then the wish to actualise the cessation of

suffering will spontaneously develop as well. When the strong determination to actualise cessation is developed, then the wish to meditate upon the path, the true path, which is specifically the wisdom realising emptiness or selflessness, will arise. That then becomes the actual true path that is to be meditated upon. Becoming familiar with this, and meditating upon it becomes the antidote. In this way one gets the true essence of the practice while meditating on emptiness.

An assumption that one is meditating on emptiness but lacking a deep basis of understanding of how it relates to the whole structure of the path is quite shallow. While befriending grasping at a self, attempting to meditate on emptiness would just be pretentious. Meditating on that sort of emptiness can never serve as an antidote to self-grasping, because it is in fact befriending that grasping at a self.

The way to practice is to befriend the wisdom realising selflessness, and to see the self-grasping as the real enemy. We are not talking about external enemies here. Meditating on, and befriending the wisdom realising selflessness means gaining a familiarity with meditating on selflessness and emptiness, and that understanding will then lead one to real freedom—overcoming cyclic existence.

The summarising stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

All who have gained a free and fortunate human body,
Following the reasoning of Nagarjuna and his son,
Should understand emptiness to mean dependent
arising.
Who would not make effort to achieve this end?

The meaning of the first line is clear. It refers to those who have obtained this precious human life in order to gain the ultimate freedom from cyclic existence and so forth. According to the second line one then follows the reasoning of Nagarjuna and his sons. Here 'his sons' refers to Aryadeva and Chandrakirti, specifically Aryadeva. The third line refers to the particular reasons establishing emptiness, which were presented earlier and also explained at other times. They are: being free from independent or inherently existent one or many; using dependent arising itself, such as a sprout is not inherently existent because of being dependent origination; being free of the four extremes; lacking the four possibilities of production; and lacking an inherently produced effect at the time of the cause.

By referring to the text you will be able to determine the particular type of reasons used by the great masters as a way to gain a profound understanding of the explanation of emptiness. The last line implies that one should make every effort using these means to achieve the ultimate goals.

We have covered texts that were composed by the masters that have been referred to here. The root text composed by Nagarjuna is *The Root of Wisdom*, and this text, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses*, is a commentary on that text. We have previously studied Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, which is also a commentary on *The Root of Wisdom*. In Study Group we have also covered the ninth chapter of Shantideva's *Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, which relates to the teachings on emptiness. So when we reflect upon what we have ventured into and studied, we can rejoice and commit to further expanding our knowledge.

Even though I cannot claim that I have clear understanding of these texts, I rejoice in feeling that I have had great fortune to be able to try to make an attempt to explain them, and in that way I feel that I have made good connection with the

explanations found in the texts. I definitely rejoice on having had that opportunity, and likewise you can rejoice too.

So regardless of whether the teacher has been able to explain it well, and regardless of whether the listeners have been able to understand much of it, the point is that we can definitely rejoice in having made an attempt to try to explain and understand these teachings and texts. Just the attempt has been a great fortune for us. But we should not leave it just as being a great fortune.

We should make the strong aspirational prayer, 'Even though I may not have understood much now, may the imprints that I have gained from having listened to these teachings serve as a cause to be able to gain a clearer understanding of these teachings throughout this life. And particularly in future lifetimes, may I never be separated from the teachings such as these of the great masters, which very clearly and precisely explain the unmistakable ways to liberation and enlightenment. May I be able to continuously, in all my lifetimes, come into contact with such teachings, and never be separated from them'.

In fact the opportunity that we have had to be able to come into contact with the teachings, i.e. the teacher teaching, and the students listening, is in itself definitely a result of having made previous connections, aspirational prayers and so forth. So the fact that we are able to do it now is already a great fortune as a result of previous connections that have been made. Having made the connection now we can use it as an opportunity to further our connection with these teachings, to gain the ultimate understanding of wisdom.

2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the fourteenth chapter of the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on the refutation of extreme conceptions.

This concludes the commentary on the fourteenth chapter, showing how to meditate on the refutation of extreme conceptions, from *Essence of Good Explanations, Explanation of the "Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas"*.

CHAPTER XV: REFUTING THE INHERENT EXISTENCE OF PRODUCTION, DURATION AND DISINTEGRATION, THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRODUCTS¹

This heading is actually the definition of a product, which is that which has the characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. So this chapter refutes the inherent existence of the specific characteristics of products, which are production, duration and disintegration.

The chapter is divided into two main sections.

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

1. Explanation of the material in the chapter

The material of the chapter is divided into two sections.

- 1.1. Extensively establishing dependent arisings which are not inherently produced as existing in the manner of a magician's illusions
- 1.2. Concluding summary of the refutations of inherent existence

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

This has three subheadings.

- 1.1.1. Specific refutation of inherent production
- 1.1.2. General refutation of inherently existent production, duration and disintegration
- 1.1.3. Refuting that what is in the process of being produced is being produced inherently

1.1.1. Specific refutation of inherent production

This has two subheadings.

- 1.1.1.1. Extensive explanation
- 1.1.1.2. Summarized meaning: showing the effects of refuting production

1.1.1.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This has five subdivisions.

- 1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether that which exists or does not exist is produced
- 1.1.1.1.2. Refutation by examining the beginning, middle and end
- 1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining both self and other
- 1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining sequentiality and simultaneity
- 1.1.1.1.5. Refutation by examining the three times

¹ The correct numbering of this chapter heading is 3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the Inherent Existence of Production, Duration and Disintegration, the characteristics of products, but as, has been the case throughout, numbering starts anew with each chapter for ease of reference.

See 4 March 2008 for a complete of the structure of the text, part of which is

3.1 An overview of the text

3.2 Specific explanation of the different chapters, which has two outlines:

3.2.2. Explaining the stages of the path dependent on ultimate truth, the first section of which is:

3.2.2.1 Extensively explaining ultimate truth, which in turn has three sub-headings:

3.2.2.1.1. General refutation of true existence by refuting permanent functional phenomena

3.2.2.1.2. Individual refutation of truly existent functional phenomena

3.2.2.1.3. Refuting the inherent existence of production, duration and disintegration, the characteristics of products

1.1.1.1.1. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING WHETHER THAT WHICH EXISTS OR DOES NOT EXIST IS PRODUCED

There are four subdivisions of this heading.

1.1.1.1.1.1. Reason refuting production of that which exists or does not exist

1.1.1.1.1.2. Establishing its mode [of operation]

1.1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining the time of production

1.1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining the thing itself and another thing

1.1.1.1.1.1. Reason refuting production of that which exists or does not exist

This relates to one of the five reasonings, which is the reasoning concerning whether and effect exists or does not exist inherently.

Assertion: Products exist inherently because their characteristics such as production exist.

Answer: Products would exist if their characteristics existed, but these do not exist inherently.

How can the non-existent be produced, 351
If what does not exist at the last is produced?
How can that which exists be produced,
If what exists from the outset is produced?

Some schools say that production is inherently existent, because their characteristics, such as production, exist. That is the assertion that is being refuted. The reason given in the assertion as to why production is inherently existent, is because its characteristics of production, duration and disintegration exist. What is being specifically refuted here is the inherent existence of products as well as their characteristics. 'Products would exist' means that products would exist inherently if the characteristics also existed inherently, but the characteristics do not exist inherently.

The commentary elaborates on the answer to the assertion.

If production is asserted to produce products,

What should be understood in this explanation is that if production is asserted to produce products is a specific reason for that which exists, or which does not exist, then does the effect exist at the time of the cause or not? There are two possibilities.

If the **effect does exist at the time of the cause:**

...then according to those who propound the non-existence of the effect, the sprout which does not exist at the time of the seed is produced after the final moment of a seed for which the necessary causes and conditions are assembled.

A sprout which does not exist during the last moment of the seed cannot be produced by way of its own entity, otherwise it follows that donkeys' horns and so forth would also be produced. Thus how can anything which does not exist at the time of its cause be produced by way of its own entity? It cannot.

If the assumption is that the effect does not exist at the time of the cause then, 'how can anything that does not exist at the time of the cause be produced by way of its own entity? It cannot'.

If the **effect does not exist at the time of the cause**, implying it does not exist by way of its own entity at the time of the cause, then the refutation was made earlier.

How can anything which exists at the time of its cause be produced?

If it does exist by way of its own entity, then

It follows that it will not be produced, since anything existing at the time of its cause was produced from the outset, prior to being itself.

The absurdity that is being pointed out is that if the effect already exists at the time of the cause, then what is the need for producing it if it already exists? There would be no extra need as it already exists at the time of the cause.

Then the actual syllogism follows:

The subject, a sprout, is not produced by way of its own entity, for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.

The subject is the sprout, the predicate is 'not produced by way of its own entity', and the reason is 'for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.'

Transcribed from tape by Judy Mayne
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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

22 April 2008

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

1.1.1.1.2. Establishing its mode [of operation]

This heading establishes the mode of the earlier syllogism, which is:

The subject, a sprout, is not produced by way of its own entity, for neither that which exists at the time of its cause nor that which does not exist at the time of its cause is produced by way of its own entity.

This syllogism refutes both possibilities of an effect being produced by way of its own entity, either the instance of the effect existing at the time of the cause, or the instance that it doesn't exist at the time of the cause.

Since the effect destroys the cause, 352
That which does not exist will not be produced.
Nor will that which exists be produced
Since what is established needs no establisher.

In relation to the first two lines, the commentary explains:

Since the sprout cannot be produced unless the seed undergoes change, the process which produces the resultant sprout destroys the causal seed. Thus something which does not exist at the time of the seed will not be produced by way of its own entity.

¹The Vaisheshikas use the first part of the reasoning (also presented earlier in the text) to assert that the effect exists at the time of the cause. Thus for them the fact that the seed undergoes change and that the resultant sprout destroys the causal seed, is a reason for the sprout to exist at the time of the cause. They state that there is a sprout at the time of the seed, because if not then how could the sprout be produced later through the change of the seed? They conclude that it has to be the case that the sprout already exists at the time of the seed. Their assertion however implies that the sprout exists at the time of the seed by way of its own entity and is thus also produced by way of its own entity. In our system, the fact that the seed undergoes change and that the resultant sprout destroys the seed, does not serve as a reason to establish the existence of the sprout at the time of the seed. Rather it serves as a valid reason to show that there cannot be truly existent production. As the commentary further explains:

In general, even though a sprout which is non-existent at the time of the seed is produced, it is incorrect to accept truly existent production, for then one must also accept the production of rabbits' horns.

This is refuting the assertion that there is inherent production of a sprout because it exists at the time of the seed. The fact that the seed undergoes change and produces a sprout means that there is no inherently existent sprout at

the time of the seed. Thus it is not correct to accept that the sprout is produced by way of its own entity, even though a sprout that is non-existent at the time of the seed is produced.

What is being refuted is, that there is a truly existent production of a sprout. This also implies that the sprout does not exist at the time of the seed, however because of the lack of the sprout at the time of the seed, it doesn't mean then that there is a truly existent production. If there was indeed truly existent production, then anything could be produced from anything and thus the absurdity of having to accept the production of rabbits' horns, which is a non-existent phenomenon.

In relation to the last two lines, the commentary says:

Since something which is established at the time of its cause does not need anything to establish it, that which exists at the time of its cause will not be produced.

This is refuting that the effect exists at the time of the cause, with the reasoning that something that is already established at the time of the cause does not need to be produced. In our own system the sprout is not established at the time of the seed, and it is thus produced later. Even though the sprout does not exist at the time of the cause, that does not however imply inherent production, as there cannot be production from its own side.

The last part of the commentary says:

...that which exists at the time of its cause will not be produced.

If the effect does exist at the time of the cause, then there is no need for it to be produced, because that is already established or existent at the time of the cause.

1.1.1.1.3. Refutation by examining the time of production

There is no production at that time, 353
Nor is there production at another.
If not produced at that time nor another,
When will there ever be production?

As the commentary reads:

At a time when the sprout itself exists there is no production, since it does not need to be produced.

Again, what is implied is an inherently existent production or production by way of its own entity:

Other than that, when it does not exist there is no production, since it cannot be produced. If it is not produced at that time nor at the other, when will there ever be production?

The last sentence in the commentary is a rhetorical question, implying that there couldn't be a time of production. What is being explained is that if it is not produced at that time or at any other time, then that exhausts any possibility of it being produced. Again, this refers to being produced by way of its own entity, and that is what is being refuted.

The refutation is of production by way of its own entity. The main point of the verse is presented as a counter question: if something is to be produced by way of its own entity, then is it produced at the time that it exists, or at any other time? If you say that it is produced at the time of its existence, then that is redundant since it already exists. That's an absurdity in itself, for if it already exists then there is no need for it to be produced. If it is not produced at its own time, then the only other option is for it to be produced at another time when it doesn't exist. But how can it be produced at a time when it doesn't exist?

¹ Trans: This section has been revised extensively after discussion with Geshe Doga to clarify the finer points of the argument.

1.1.1.1.4. Refutation by examining the thing itself and another thing

Assertion: Milk turning into something which is curd constitutes production.

Answer: That is incorrect.

*Just as there is no production
Of that as the thing it is,
Neither is it produced
As something else.* 354

What is being refuted here is that there is inherent production either because things maintain their own entity, or because they transform into something else. The example used is of milk (the cause) and curd (the effect). If milk maintains its own entity then, as the commentary explains, with the meaning of the first two lines:

Since something which exists as milk does not need to become milk, there is no production.

Thus the absurdity of a production of something that maintains its own entity is being pointed out.

If you (Vaisheshikas and the like) however conclude that things must be produced by transforming into another entity, again implying a production by way of its own entity, then as the commentary further explains:

Neither is that milk produced as something else, i.e. curd, for the two are different entities.

The main point being made here is that the milk and curd are two different entities. This indicates that milk has its own characteristics, and that curd has its own characteristics. This in turn implies that those particular characteristics that constitute milk, and those which constitute curd, come about due to certain causes and conditions, which means there cannot be inherently existent milk or curd. Thus milk cannot produce curd as something else by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.2. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END

There is no inherent production for the following reason too.

*The first, intermediate and last
Are not possible prior to production.
How can each begin
Without the other two?* 355

As the commentary explains the verse:

First production, then duration and lastly disintegration are not possible prior to production, because that which is unproduced cannot have production, duration and disintegration.

What is being refuted is production by way of its own entity. If production were to be by way of its own entity, then the characteristics of whatever is produced, which are production, duration and lastly disintegration would not be possible. If inherently existent production or production by way of its own entity occurs prior to production, then that implies the absurdity of the different instances of production, duration and disintegration becoming one. That is there would be no distinction between production, duration and disintegration. This absurd implication would occur if there was inherent production or production by way of its own entity, and that is what is being refuted.

As it mentions in the text:

...because that which is unproduced cannot have production, duration and disintegration.

What is being mainly refuted are these three instances of production, duration and disintegration existing by way of their own entity. If each were to exist by way of its own entity, then they would not be related to each other. But these three phenomena *are* clearly related to each other: because of production there is duration and so duration is related to production. Likewise, because there is duration, then what follows is disintegration and thus it is clearly a fact that disintegration relates to duration. So production, duration and disintegration are interdependently related and thus cannot be inherently existent. Having refuted the possibility of an inherently existent production, duration and disintegration, the counter-assertion is:

Assertion: Production while a thing is being produced, duration while it lasts and disintegration when it disintegrates exist consecutively by way of their own entity.

What is being established in this counter-assertion is that while it is being produced there is production, and while it lasts there is duration, and that there is disintegration when it disintegrates, which implies that each characteristic of production exists by way of its own entity.

First of all, the assertion implies that production, duration and disintegration are all separate entities. Asserting that production, duration and disintegration exist by way of their own entities, implies that these three instances of production, duration and disintegration are completely separate entities, and that there is no relationship with each other, i.e. that they occur at different times and also exist as separate entities. The refutation to that is found in the last two lines of the verse. In explaining that refutation the commentary says:

How could each at its particular time begin without the other two? Duration and disintegration are impossible without production. The same applies to the other two. Moreover a product is not feasible without any one of these characteristics.

The definition of a product is that which has three instances within one entity, the product. Thus a product has, by its very nature, production as well as duration and disintegration, and all three occur in the one product. Everything that is a product has an instance of production, an instance of duration and an instance of disintegration and all occur in the same product. So there is a relationship between the duration, disintegration and production. The earlier assertion implies that it is completely separate, however how could each particular instance occur without the other two? As explained earlier, each of the instances of a production has to rely upon the earlier moments.

As we go into each of the assertions and refutations, we come to realise that these later assertions relate to the earlier refutations, which were made to the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools. An earlier assertion implied that there is no production, duration and disintegration, but from the point of view of our own system, it was established that production, duration and disintegration occur in every product.

The other system implied that there is no production, duration or disintegration by stating that a product is existent by way of its own entity. That was refuted, by establishing that although there is production, duration and disintegration, they cannot exist by way of their own entity. Having refuted their initial assertion in that way, what they now assert is that there is production, duration and disintegration, but that each exists at its own time.

Production exists at a certain time, then duration exists separately by way of its own entity and then disintegration exists by way of its own entity. This assertion is refuted by asserting that their assertion implies that there is no relationship between production, duration and disintegration.

In other words their assertion implies that at the time of production, there is only production and during the time of duration, there is only duration and during the time of disintegration there is only disintegration. This shows that there is no relationship, and that is what is being refuted here. If you accept their assertion, then the product loses its characteristics, because every product has to have production, duration and disintegration within its own entity.

Let us use a vase as a particular example of a product. As it is a product, a vase has to have all characteristics of a product, which are production, duration and disintegration. If it is asked whether it is a production, then yes, it is a production. Does the vase have the characteristic of duration and disintegration? Yes, that same vase has the characteristics of duration as well as disintegration. So, all three characteristics exist in the one product, the vase. If we don't establish a vase in that way, then it fails to be a product, which is impermanent, because all those characteristics will not be present. That is how a vase is to be established.

In establishing the vase as a product, one is establishing the vase having all three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration. Establishing the vase as a production, which is an effect, implies it has to have a cause, as without a cause there cannot be production. That has to be understood. One also has to understand that establishing the vase having duration implies that it is a production. That is because it is a product that has been produced over a period of time, and thus it has duration. Establishing that a vase has the characteristic of disintegration also implies that the vase had duration. Without duration there cannot be disintegration. So establishing the characteristics in this way shows how production, duration and disintegration are interdependently related. Thus, just as the vase cannot exist by way of its own entity, neither can its characteristics exist by way of their own entity.

As one contemplates whether a vase could exist by way of its own entity or not, one can investigate by relating to its characteristics in this way. The characteristic of a vase is that it is impermanent, and that it is a product. What are the reasons of a vase being a product? They are that it is a production, a duration and disintegration. Then one contemplates each of the characteristics, e.g. does the production of the vase exist by way of its own entity? By contemplating in this way one should then come to the conclusion that because it is a production, then that implies that there is a cause. So the production of the vase could not exist by way of its own entity because it depends on a cause. The very fact that it depends on a cause implies that it exists interdependently.

Then one can further contemplate on the duration of a vase. Is the duration of the vase by way of its own entity? In relation to other characteristics one must then come to the understanding that the duration of the vase could not exist by way of its own entity. Why? Because it depends on production, and without production there could not be duration. It is the same with disintegration. By investigating whether the disintegration of the vase exists by way of its

own entity, one also comes to the conclusion that disintegration cannot exist by way of its own entity, because it depends on the duration. In this way, by contemplating the basic definition of a product, one gains a further understanding of how the vase is interdependent and thus how it cannot exist by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.3. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING BOTH SELF AND OTHER

For this reason too products cannot be inherently produced [with the following reasons].

The thing itself does not occur 356
Without other things.
Thus there is no coming into existence
Either from self or from other.

The meaning of the verse as presented in the commentary is:

The thing itself, such as a clay pot [the clay pot being an example of a thing], does not occur without other things, such as clay, since it depends upon clay.

First of all an earthen vase or clay pot, for example, cannot occur without other things, such as clay. In other words being an earthen vase it has to depend on other factors, the first of which is clay. Furthermore:

The clay does not exist by way of its own entity either, since it depends on pebbles.

The Tibetan word, *sek*, translated here as pebbles, has two possible meanings. You have to fire any clay pottery in order for it to be produced and *sek* could refer to the firing of the vase. However the English commentary translates *sek* as 'pebbles'. That could also mean that the clay itself is not an inherently existent thing, as it depends on many of its own parts, such as small pebbles and so forth, to become clay. Thus the clay itself is dependent. The commentary further explains:

Thus the pot does not come into existence either from self or from other, for since neither self nor other exist by way of their own entity, there is no inherent production.

As mentioned previously, one of the schools from the other systems established that the vase is both self-produced as well as produced by others. That very assertion is an absurdity in itself. They assert that a thing, for example a vase, is self-produced because it has its own characteristics. However it is also produced by others because it is produced from other things. In both instances their assertions imply that the vase is an inherently existent self-production as well as an inherently existent production by others.

The refutation from our system is that:

...since neither self nor other exist by way of their own entity, there is no inherent production.

1.1.1.1.4. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING SEQUENTIALITY AND SIMULTANEITY

That is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.1.4.1. Actual meaning

1.1.1.1.4.2. Refuting proof of inherent production

1.1.1.1.4.1. Actual meaning

It cannot be said to exist 357
Before, after or simultaneously.
Therefore production does not occur
Simultaneously with the pot.

The commentary explains the meaning:

Moreover there is no inherent production, since it is impossible to say that production and so forth exist before, after or simultaneously with the pot.

The production of a vase cannot exist before the vase occurs, neither can it exist simultaneously with the vase.

Furthermore:

Therefore the pot's production does not occur simultaneously with the pot by way of its own entity. If it did, since the basis and that which is based upon it would be co-existent, it would follow that the pot had been produced, for it must exist even as it is approaching production.

The assertion and its refutation are also related to what was explained earlier, but are from a different perspective. What is asked is that if there was an inherent production of the vase, then would that production exist prior to the production of the vase, or simultaneously with, or after the vase is produced? All instances are absurd. Thus, as the root text says, production 'cannot be said to exist before, after or simultaneously' with the pot.

If it did, then the basis and that which it is based upon would be co-existent. First of all, for the production of the vase to exist prior to its production or after its production is a clear absurdity. The only possibility left is that it is produced simultaneously, and that is what is being refuted here.

If production did occur simultaneously with the vase then the basis and that which it is based upon would be co-existent. It would follow that the vase had already been produced, for it must exist even as it is approaching production. Then as established here, if the basis, and that which is based upon it are co-existent, then one would have to say that the pot has already been produced. Even as it was in the process of being produced you would have to imply that it had already been produced, which is also an absurdity.

1.1.1.1.4.2. Refuting proof of inherent production

Assertion: The pot's production exists, for without it there could be no oldness and so forth, but there is oldness characterized by cessation.

Answer: That is incorrect.

*That which was previously produced
Was not old when first produced. 358
Also that which afterwards has been
Constantly produced is not old.*

'The pot's production exists' implies that the pot's production by way of its own entity exists. They are saying that the pot's production exists (implying existence by way of its own entity) because it could not become old without its production. However you can obviously see that there is an old pot. Of course what has to be understood here is that from our own system we would agree that there is an old pot, however the pot characterised as being old is not existent by way of its own entity. What they are trying to establish is that there is an old pot, and because it is an old pot that implies that there is a production that is existent by way of its own entity.

In relation to the first line of the verse, which refutes their assertion, the commentary states:

The previously produced pot was not old when first produced because at that time it was new.

What is also implied here is that if a pot were to be produced by way of its own entity then it would always have to remain new. You would call it a new pot soon after it is produced, but if that new pot was produced by way of its own entity, then it would have to always remain as new, and

it could never get old. Furthermore as the commentary reads:

A previously produced thing does not grow old by way of its own entity. Nor is that old which afterwards has constantly been produced, for also at that time it is new. Since afterwards it is newly produced, it will not become old by way of its own entity. Furthermore, by refuting production existent by way of its own entity, oldness existent by way of its own entity is refuted, but mere [conventional] oldness is accepted in our system too.

That clarifies the main part of the refutation, which is that 'by refuting production existent by way of its own entity, oldness existent by way of its own entity is refuted'. However conventionally, even in our own system, oldness is accepted, and one accepts that there is an old pot.

What one must understand as a main point from this verse is that refuting that there is a production by way of its own entity also implies that an old pot existing by way of its own entity is refuted. As mentioned here in the commentary the existence of a conventionally old pot is not being refuted, as that is accepted in our system. What is thus being refuted is that the old pot exists by way of its own entity.

1.1.1.1.5. REFUTATION BY EXAMINING THE THREE TIMES

Since there is no inherent production in any of the three times, production does not truly exist.

*A present thing does not
Come into existence from itself, 359
Nor come into existence from the future,
And also not from the past.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse the commentary reads:

Since cause and effect are not simultaneous, a present thing does not come into existence from its present self. Nor does it come into existence from the future, nor from the past. Moreover, since there is no inherent production in any of the three times, one must accept that production is false and like a magician's illusion.

This is asserted quite literally and clearly. What is being established is that cause and effect are not simultaneous. This implies that there is no inherently existent cause or effect in relation to the three times. Of course generally, we would say that the three times are related to each other – the present is related to the past, and the future is related to the present. However if they were to exist inherently then there would be no relationship between the past, present and the future. The main thing is that because there is no inherent production of any of the three times, production itself is like an illusion.

The main point of this verse is in establishing that there is neither production by way of its own entity in the past nor production by way of its own entity in the present, nor in the future. That leaves no room for production by way of its own entity. If there were to be production by way of its own entity, then it would have to be either in relation to the past, or present or future. But having refuted that there is production by way of its own entity in any of the three times, then that exhausts any possibility of a production by way of its own entity.

Following the normal set-up of the study group, the next session will be the discussion session and following that is the exam. As mentioned previously, discussion and the exam are an important element of study and a means of understanding of the material. So one must try to attend those sessions as well.

Week: 1 (1 April 2008)

1. In relation to the composite explain the meaning of the phrase: 'for it is imputed in dependence on these.'

2.a) Give the definition of fire.

b) Explain the interdependence of fuel and fire

3. How can one use these verses to benefit one's practice of both analytical and contemplative meditation?

Week: 2 (8 April 2008)

4. Non-Buddhists such as the Vaisheshikas hold the view of a partless particle.

a) How do the Buddhists assert that particles exist?

b) Show how the Buddhist's refutations that were applied in "our own system" apply to the non-Buddhists as well.

5. Name the five reasonings.

6. Memorisation: verse 348:

Week: 3 (15 April 2008)

7.a) What are products/compounded phenomena?

b) What is being pointed out about compounded phenomena and how does this relate to an Arya being's perception in meditative equipoise?

8. In debate one could bring up the question: Is the non-existence of vase the emptiness of vase? Likewise is the non-perception of vase the perception of emptiness or not? Give the conclusion.

9. Give the syllogism of the sprout, identifying the subject, the predicate and the reason.

Week: 4 (22 April 2008)

10. 'In establishing the vase as a product, one is establishing the vase having all three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration.' Explain the implications of these three characteristics.

Exam

Name:

Block: 2
Week: 6 (6 May 2008)

Mark: /44

1. In relation to the composite explain the meaning of the phrase: 'for it is imputed in dependence on these.' [4]

2.a) Give the definition of fire.[2]

b) Explain the interdependence of fuel and fire.[2]

3. How can one use these verses to benefit one's practice of both analytical and contemplative meditation? [4]

4. Non-Buddhists such as the Vaisheshikas hold the view of a partless particle.

a) How do the Buddhists assert that particles exist? [2]

b) Show how the Buddhist's refutations that were applied in "our own system" apply to the non-Buddhists as well. [2]

5. Name the five reasonings. [5]

6. Memorisation: verse 348. [4]

7.a) What are products/compounded phenomena? [2]

b) What is being pointed out about compounded phenomena and how does this relate to an Arya being's perception in meditative equipoise? [4]

8. In debate one could bring up the question: Is the non-existence of vase the emptiness of vase? Likewise is the non-perception of vase the perception of emptiness or not? Give the conclusion. [4]

9. Give the syllogism of the sprout, identifying the subject, the predicate and the reason. [6]

10. 'In establishing the vase as a product, one is establishing the vase having all three characteristics of production, duration and disintegration.' Explain the implications of these three characteristics.
[3]