
Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

15 February 2005

I'm very happy to start the year again with the Study Group. You are all familiar with the rules of the Study Group - it is a group where one has to study. For example, if one lives in Australia one has to follow the rules that govern Australia!

It is very fortunate to have the Study Group, and being able to study the text *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by the great Shantideva is also very fortunate.

Shantideva is a very special being who has generated bodhicitta. Just hearing or remembering his name purifies non-virtuous karmas.

If one asks which of the three baskets of teachings does the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* belong to, the answer is that it belongs to the sutra basket. Even though in general it covers all three baskets of teachings, it falls into the sutra basket, because it primarily concerns itself with the sutra basket of teachings.

We can always recognise the class to which a teaching belongs by looking at the homage. As we have said before, if the homage is to Manjushri then it falls into the abhidharma class of teachings, and if it is homage to the buddhas and bodhisattvas then it is a teaching that falls into the sutra class of teachings.

We should understand well that the teachings of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* have to be preceded by meditations that are common to the small and medium-capable being. It falls within the framework of the graduated path to enlightenment where the teachings concerning the Mahayana practices have to be preceded by meditation on the practices common to the small and medium-capable being.

The motivation of the Mahayana practices is the motivation of bodhicitta. The practices of the Mahayana being of great capacity are the six perfections.

OUTLINE OF THE TEXT

Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life is comprised of ten chapters.

1. The first chapter shows the benefits of bodhicitta. Why? Because by becoming aware of the benefits of bodhicitta then one is motivated to generate bodhicitta.

2. Just as one would first clean one's house if one were to invite the Wheel-Turning King to one's home, one first purifies the mind of negativities through confession before generating bodhicitta in one's mind. That is why the second chapter is called the chapter of confessing negativities.

3. After having confessed negativities and accumulated merits the third chapter deals with taking the mind of bodhicitta. This chapter also deals with the auxiliary limbs of the meditations common to the small and medium-capable being

The second and third chapter go through each of the seven limbs of practice such as taking refuge, offering prostrations,

making offerings, confessing with the four powers, asking the buddhas to remain and teach the Dharma, rejoicing, dedication and so forth.

One generates bodhicitta after going for refuge, offering prostrations, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, asking the buddhas to remain and teach the Dharma, and then dedication. Then after doing each of these practices one generates bodhicitta. So one has all the practices there in the opening chapters.

4. After having generated bodhicitta one needs to look after it so that it doesn't degenerate. For that conscientiousness is needed, which is why the fourth chapter is the chapter on conscientiousness.

The next six chapters deal with the way the six perfections are practised.

5. The perfection of morality comes in the fifth chapter which shows how one practises morality with mindfulness and awareness.

6 - 9. The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth chapters deal respectively with the perfections of patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom.

10. The tenth chapter explains how to practise the perfection of generosity. It is the chapter that deals with the dedication of virtues, and it shows how one dedicates one's possessions, one's merits and one's body to others.

THE NINTH CHAPTER: WISDOM

The ninth chapter is the chapter that deals with the perfection of wisdom. It has two main divisions: explaining the etymology of the title and the actual meaning of the text.

A. EXPLAINING THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE TITLE

Explaining the title is done in two headings: the condensed explanation of the need to generate wisdom, and the elaborate explanation of the need to generate wisdom.

I. THE CONDENSED EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

The first verse explains the need for the generation of wisdom.

*The Able One explained all these different limbs [1]
For the purpose of wisdom;
Therefore those who wish to pacify suffering
Should generate wisdom.*

There are two different explanations of the meaning of the first line. According to one explanation 'these different limbs' refers to the eighth chapter alone - the explanation of mental stabilisation. The other explanation is that the other five perfections such as generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm are included. We will concern ourselves only with the second possibility.

When it says all these different limbs were taught by the Able One for the purpose of wisdom, it means that the other five perfections of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm and mental stabilisation are the supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom. So the final aim of all these different practices is to generate wisdom.

What it shows is that if one wants to attain a state of complete enlightenment then one needs to practise a path that combines method and wisdom. One needs a path that

unifies method and wisdom on the basis of the Two Truths, through meditating on the Four Noble Truths in a way that combines method and wisdom. Then one can attain the two bodies of a Buddha. That is what is implied here - the first initial five perfections act as supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom.

Therefore, those who wish to attain mere liberation for themselves alone also need to rely on the generation of wisdom. So wisdom is indispensable, regardless of whether one wants to attain complete enlightenment, or mere solitary liberation.

It is important to understand that to attain mere individual liberation one also needs to generate wisdom. One could get the idea that it is only necessary to generate wisdom if one wants to attain complete enlightenment, but that it is not necessary for the attainment of individual liberation. There are certain debates in regard to that, but these are based on a misunderstanding. One needs to generate wisdom for the attainment of both complete enlightenment and individual liberation.

The question could arise, 'In order to realise emptiness does one need to engage in the bodhisattva practices of all the six perfections?'. The answer here is, 'No, one does not need to do this, because, for example, followers of the hearer path realise emptiness'. But one needs wisdom. That is why the last two lines state explicitly, 'therefore those who wish to pacify suffering should generate wisdom'. This states explicitly that those who want to attain individual liberation also need to generate wisdom. This was also mentioned by Nagarjuna when he said,

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates
There will also be 'I' grasping.
If there is a self-grasping there is karma
And from karma there is birth.
Their three paths are in mutual causation;
Without beginning, end or middle;
The wheel of cyclic existence turns;
Like the wheel of a firebrand;
Because it isn't obtained from self, other
or both and nowhere in the three times;
The grasping at 'I' ceases;
And from that karma and birth.

This directly shows that even the followers of the lesser vehicle need to realise emptiness in order to attain individual liberation.

Why does one need to realise emptiness to liberate oneself from cyclic existence.

Student 1: Because ignorance is the root of cyclic existence.

Why do you need to realise emptiness to overcome the root of cyclic existence?

Student 1: Emptiness is the antidote to grasping at 'I' and 'mine'.

You have to explain how the antidote actually counteracts the root of cyclic existence.

Student 1: As long as there is grasping at the aggregates one continues to take rebirth.

No, no. How does the antidote counteract the root of cyclic existence?

Student 1: The wisdom realising emptiness eliminates grasping at the aggregates, which are the root of cyclic existence.

Why do you need to realise emptiness in order to overcome

the true-grasping at the aggregates? When one says emptiness is needed there is a reason why that emptiness is needed.

Student 1: Because it is the exact opposite to grasping at cyclic existence

If they are the direct opposite then ...?

Student 2: It is able to demolish the false perception of things existing from their own side.

How does it eliminate the false perception?

Student 2: Because grasping is dependent upon the appearance of things appearing from their own side.

Geshe-la is asking how does the wisdom realising emptiness counteract true-grasping.

The wisdom that realises emptiness understands the non-existence of the apprehended object of true-grasping. So the grasped object of true-grasping is understood to be non-existence, and in such a way one stops the true-grasping. As I said to you previously, true-grasping cannot be removed from the mind in the same way as one pulls out a splinter from one's hand. It has to be counteracted by the counter-positive wisdom that realises the absence of the apprehended object.

The wisdom realising emptiness counteracts true-grasping by realising the non-existence of its apprehended object. By realising the non-existence of the apprehended object one counteracts the ignorance.

Antidotes such as love and so forth are mere temporary antidotes to delusions, because they don't realise the absence of the apprehended object of ignorance. For example, love is counter-positive to anger, but it does not realise the absence of the apprehended object of ignorance, and in such a way it cannot ultimately act as an antidote to afflictions. It can only be a temporary antidote to anger. However that doesn't take away any of its value - love is still very important to meditate on.

This first verse completes the first outline, the need to realise emptiness in short. This verse also shows very clearly that Nagarjuna and Shantideva are of one mind in their view as to the importance of realising emptiness. Both assert that it is essential to realise emptiness in order to attain complete enlightenment as well as individual liberation. It is good to keep in mind how these two are actually of one mind in their views.

II. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

This has four sub-outlines:

1. Understanding the view
2. Practising it through meditation
3. Cutting off the mental fabrications of true grasping
4. The function of realising emptiness

1. Understanding the view

This heading has three sub-outlines:

- 1.1. An explanation of the Two Truths
- 1.2. Refuting different debates about the Two Truths
- 1.3. Establishing the Mahayana as supreme

1.1. AN EXPLANATION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The conventional and the ultimate [2]

Are asserted as the Two Truths;

The ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness,

Awareness is stated to be conventional.

The first two lines show the two-fold division of the Two Truths.

The category 'objects of knowledge' is posited as the basis for the two-fold division of the Two Truths. This adds a very profound meaning to the term 'object of knowledge'. We don't just talk about Two Truths in general, but the Two Truths are actually a division of objects of knowledge.

The Two Truths are the objects that are to be known. Here Shantideva gives the term 'objects of knowledge' a more specific meaning; he is not just referring to objects of knowledge in general. The Two Truths are the objects that are to be known.

This deeper meaning of the term 'objects of knowledge' is directly related to the meaning of omniscient consciousness. Omniscient consciousness is not called 'omniscient' because it knows a great variety of objects, but because it can comprehend the Two Truths directly at the same time. This is not possible if one has not abandoned the grasping that holds the two Truths to be of a different entity.

The first two lines, 'The conventional and the ultimate are asserted as the Two Truths' also eliminates the existence of a third truth. This concurs with the explanation given in the sutras.

1.2. DEFINITION OF TWO TRUTHS

Lines three and four deal with the definition and the definiendum of conventional and ultimate truth. When it says 'the ultimate isn't an object engaged by awareness', 'the ultimate' shows the definiendum, ultimate truth; and 'isn't the object engaged by awareness' shows the definition of ultimate truth implicitly. In the last line 'awareness is stated to be conventional' the word 'awareness' shows the definiendum conventional truth, and 'is expressed to be conventional' explains the definition of conventional truth in an implicit manner.

In the first line the 'conventional' refers to the person and the aggregates, and the 'ultimate' refers to the lack of true existence of the person and the lack of true existence of the aggregates. Those two are asserted as the Two Truths.

So this first line shows that there are the Two Truths, which cuts off the existence of a third truth. The last two lines show the definition of the Two Truths as well as the two definiendums.

You probably have the definition of the Two Truths readily lying on your tongue now.

Definitions of conventional and ultimate truth

According to *Introduction to the Middle Way*

What it gives here very briefly as the definition, i.e. it isn't the engaged object of awareness, seems to be different from the definition that we learnt in *Introduction to the Middle Way*. There it said that *the meaning found by a valid cogniser engaged in nominal analysis, as well as being a nominal cogniser with regard to the found meaning*, is the definition of **conventional truth**.

The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaged in ultimate analysis which becomes an valid cogniser engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to that object is the definition of **ultimate truth**. The definition that is given here is a little bit different but in meaning they are the same.

According to *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's way of Life*

Out of this third line a very popular misunderstanding arises where one says, 'Oh, emptiness is an object that is beyond comprehension, because it says here, similarly to the sutras, that the ultimate is not an engaged object of awareness'. It is very easy to misinterpret that statement and think, 'Oh that means that emptiness is simply beyond any type of understanding'. But that is obviously not correct, because we have the wisdom that realises emptiness, and the wisdom that realises emptiness is a type of awareness. So obviously emptiness is an object that is engaged by a certain type of awareness.

The meaning of this third line is that the ultimate is not an object that can be directly engaged by dualistic awareness. So the ultimate is never an object that could be directly engaged by a dualistic awareness. In other words one can say it is not an object that can be directly engaged by a mistaken awareness, which comes to the same thing.

The explicit statement the ultimate is not an object that is directly engaged by a dualistic awareness implicitly gives us the definition of **ultimate truth**, as *that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by the direct valid cogniser that realises it directly*. Thus the definition of ultimate truth that is given here is the same definition that is used by the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka - that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by direct valid cognition that realises it directly. That is the definition of ultimate truth - whatever is realised in a non-dual manner by direct valid cognition realising it directly is ultimate truth. That is implicitly asserted here by stating the ultimate is not an object that can be directly engaged or directly realised by dualistic awareness.

Similarly *that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly* is the definition of **conventional truth**, which is shown in the fourth line.

This definition is according to the *Sutra of the Meeting of the Father and Son*. In this sutra one difference between the positing of the definition in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* and here in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, is that in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* the definition of the Two Truths is posited without making any specific distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual awareness. Here it specifically ties the definition to non-conceptual awareness, [which is also why 'intellect' is actually not a good translation].

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Edited Version

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

22 February 2005

Please generate a good motivation for listening to the teachings, thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do that, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'. Having some motivation to precede listening to the teachings benefits our practice.

2. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

2.1. Understanding the view

2.1.1 An explanation of the two truths (CONT.)

This heading has three sub-outlines:

2.1.1.1. An explanation of the two truths

2.1.1.2. Definition of the two truths

2.1.1.3 Characteristics of the person who has understood the two truths

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

With regard to the definition of the two truths there is a slight difference in the way the definition is posited here, compared with the Introduction to the Middle Way. Even though the meaning is ultimately the same, it looks different, and is done so for different purpose.

2.1.1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON WHO HAS UNDERSTOOD THE TWO TRUTHS

*Regarding this, two aspects of transitory being
are seen, [3]*

Yogis and ordinary beings.

The ordinary transitory being

Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,

*And yogis are harmed as well through
distinctions [4ab]*

Of awareness by the one above.

There are two types of beings - the yogi and the ordinary being. The ordinary being is harmed by the yogi, and the yogi is also harmed by higher yogis through distinctions of awareness.

The point of reference of 'regarding this' is the person. 'Transitory being' actually conveys the definition of person. So when it says 'regarding this, two aspects of transitory beings are seen', transitory being is actually given as the definition of the point of reference, which is the person. Even 'transitory being' does not really convey the complete meaning of the Tibetan word, which is comprised of two syllables - transitory and dependent. Transitory and dependent is given as a definition of the point of reference - the person. Why? Because first of all the person changes momentarily and that's why 'transitory' is used. It is dependent because the person is the 'I' labelled in dependence on the aggregates.

After having given the definition of person, it says that there are two aspects or types of person, the yogi and the ordinary being.

A yogi is a person who possesses the special union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness in their mental continuum, which would make that yogi a Madhyamaka. Ordinary being refers to Realists and so forth, who assert true existence.

The ordinary transitory being

Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,

The next two lines basically say that the yogi harms the ordinary transitory being. What this means is that the view of the ordinary transitory being is harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi. The view of the ordinary transitory being asserts true existence and inherent existence, which is the view harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi with different reasonings. For example, the reasoning of one and many, that things are never truly existent one or many. Or they may use the reasoning of dependent arising and so forth, using such syllogisms as: take the subject sprout - it lacks true existence - because it is a dependent arising. This kind of reasoning harms the view that asserts true existence.

Here one shouldn't confuse the lack of inherent existence with a lack of existence. Just because an object does not exist inherently does not mean that it also doesn't exist at all. Lacking inherent existence does not preclude existence. The meaning that we should contemplate is that objects are dependent arisings. Objects arise in dependence on causes and conditions and therefore lack this independent nature, i.e. lack being independent from causes and conditions. Objects exist interdependently. Interdependent existence means that objects lack the independence that exists independently of causes and conditions. That is what is not there. What is there is that objects exist in dependence on the accumulation of causes and conditions.

And yogis are harmed as well through distinctions

Of awareness by the one above.

Here the word 'harm' has a more figurative meaning, while the word 'harm' in the context of the fourth line has a more literal meaning. The reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi harms the wrong views of the Realists in the same way as a valid eye-consciousness harms the perception of a white conch shell as yellow. If one had a perception of the white conch shell as yellow, but then regained proper sight, seeing that the conch shell was actually white, then that harms the perception of the white conch shell as yellow. In this context the harm is really meant in a literal sense.

But in the sixth line the harm is more figurative. It means more to outshine. First of all, yogis harm ordinary worldly beings, the Realists, but then the lower yogis are harmed by the higher yogis. Secondly it means that the higher yogis outshine the lower yogis. Because they are higher, they outshine the lower yogis, which is the more figurative meaning of the word 'harm' used here.

According to Gyaltsab Rinpoche's commentary, if it is seen from the point view of bodhisattvas of a different continuum, it is meant figuratively. The high yogis outshine the lower yogis because of the greater power of their mind and so forth.

It can also be looked at from the point of view of just one person, who moves from being a lower yogi to being a high yogi. From that point of view it becomes more literal because the higher realisation does do away with the lower realisation, and its associated faults. For example the path of seeing is not able to harm the seeds of the innate true-grasping; for that the path of meditation is needed. If we think about what is actually harming true

grasping, then it can only be the wisdom realising emptiness.

If you really think about how the wisdom realising emptiness harms true grasping, then we can relate it very nicely to our Dharma practice. Contemplating how one can counteract the different delusions, how the wisdom realising emptiness counteracts true-grasping, and thinking about the mechanics behind the whole process is very useful for one's practice. Applying that to one's mind is very useful.

The point of all that was mentioned above is to show that if the wisdom that understands ultimate truth can not even be harmed by the wisdom understanding conventional truth, then there is no need to mention that it would be harmed by the grasping at partless particles. It also shows that the wisdom understanding ultimate truth on the other hand can harm all extreme views.

The higher views always harm the lower views. For example the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika assert the existence of partless particles, and objects that are an accumulation of partless particles. The Mind Only assert phenomena that exist truly. The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka assert inherent existence. So the reasoning of the Mind Only refutes the point of view of the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika, i.e. the existence of partless particles. The reasoning of the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka refutes the assertion of true existence by the Mind Only. The reasoning of the Prasangika refutes the assertion of inherent existence by the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka. In such a way, the lower tenets are always refuted by the superseding tenets.

2.1.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS

2.1.2.1. Refuting objections of the Realists in general

2.1.2.2. Refuting objections by Mind Only

2.1.2.1. REFUTING OBJECTIONS OF THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

Here the worldly beings are the beings whose view is common to the Realists. This point is comprised of six lines.

*Through examples asserted by both, [4cd]
And because of no investigation towards a
result.*

*Transitory beings see objects and [5]
Believe them to exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here
The yogi and the transitory being disagree.*

The **Realists** reply to the reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi, 'My dear Madhyamaka, your reasoning doesn't harm us in the least, because you don't have any valid reasoning that could establish the lack of true existence'.

Here the **Madhyamaka** will say, 'Reason not established, there is a valid reasoning with which one can prove the lack of true existence'. The way the Madhyamaka does this is by way of examples that are accepted by the Realists as well as the Madhyamaka, such as the example of the illusion, the dream and so forth. With these examples the Madhyamaka can establish the lack of true existence to the Realists. The Madhyamaka reply is, 'There exists a valid concordant example for both our systems, and that's why I can prove the lack of true existence'.

As you may recall, *if there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then that object is false. If appearance and existence are concordant, then that object is true.*

What the line 'And because of no investigation towards a result' means is, 'You Realists say that objects exist truly. If so then there is no point in practising the six perfections of generosity and so forth in order to attain the result of a complete Buddha, because everything exists truly and inherently'. This line states an argument by the Madhyamaka, 'According to you there is no point in practising generosity and the six perfections because in order to attain the result of a buddha, because everything exists inherently.'

The Madhyamaka says, 'Even though there is a lack of true existence, there is no problem with practising the six perfections in order to obtain the state or the result of enlightenment. Even though the practice of the six perfections and the state of enlightenment are not found at the time of analysis, they exist nominally and are practised nominally'.

*Transitory beings see objects and
Believe them to exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here*

The yogi and the transitory being disagree. Both kinds of transitory beings see different objects, such as a fire and so forth, but the difference is that the ordinary transitory being accepts these objects to be a perfect meaning, i.e. existing truly, existing perfectly, existing inherently. They don't accept them to be like an illusion, and that's why yogis and Realists disagree here.

Review

What is the basis of the division of the two truths?

Student: Objects of knowledge.

What is the meaning of objects of knowledge?

Student: Objects perceived by a valid cognisor.

If you give the definition, then give the actual one. An object of knowledge is an object that is suitable to be made an object of awareness.

What is purpose of saying that the object of knowledge has a two-fold division of the two truths, and not just saying that first we have objects of knowledge and then we have the two truths. What is the purpose of saying that objects of knowledge is the basis of division for the two truths?

Student: It's to point out that the Buddha's omniscient mind can see both conventional and ultimate truth at the same time.

That was more the explanation of why the Buddha's consciousness is referred to 'omniscient consciousness', which is directly linked to the two-fold division of ultimate truth and conventional truth. Here we are talking more about the object of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known. When it says objects of knowledge, it gives a meaning to the etymology of objects of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are given as the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known.

What are the two truths?

Student: Conventional and ultimate.

If it exists, is it necessarily either of those two? Is there pervasion that if it exists that it is either of those two?

Student: Yes.

Then what about the subject 'the two truths'?

Student: The subject 'two truths' is conventional truth.

That was a very good answer. [Laughter]

If there are no more than two truths, then what happened to the Four Truths? Geshe-la explained it at the beginning of the class, but I think I forgot to translate that one. The truth of cessation falls into ultimate truth, and the other three truths fall into conventional truth. Geshe-la asks what happens to the Four Truths if two truths are supposed to be enough.

First let's posit the four noble truths.

Students: Suffering, cause, cessation and path.

Is the noble truth of suffering a conventional truth or an ultimate truth?

Students: Conventional.

The origin of suffering?

Students: Conventional.

The truth of the path?

Students: Conventional.

And cessation?

Students: Ultimate.

The Four Noble Truths are contained within the two truths, which is good to know. If somebody were to say that because of the Four Noble Truths there are more than two truths, then the answer would be that there is no pervasion. It is good to train in these types of argument to develop your understanding.

Is the conventional truth true or false?

Students: False.

Is ultimate truth false or true?

Students: True.

What is the meaning of true and false?

Student: If it is false there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence

What is the meaning of true?

Student: There is no discrepancy.

So that appearance and existence are concordant.

[Geshe-la holds up a paper serviette]

Is that paper serviette conventional truth or ultimate truth?

Students: Conventional truth.

Is there a discrepancy between appearance and existence?

Students: Yes.

What is the discrepancy between appearance and existence, because it appears as a serviette, and it is a serviette?

Student: It appears to be inherently existing white paper.

Why does it appear to exist from its own side?

Student: We haven't overcome the cognitive afflictions that make it appear from its own side. We haven't reached omniscience and therefore things appear from their own side.

First of all there is not really a pervasion to your argument, because the bodhisattva on the final uninterrupted path has not abandoned the obscuration to knowledge, and things do not have the appearance of true existence to such a bodhisattva.

The reason that the object appears intrinsically is because it doesn't really appear as if it is posited by the mind, but it appears as if it exists from its own side.

One has to know the mode in which an object appears as truly existing. Of course one can say it appears as existing truly because one hasn't abandoned this or that, but it is also

good to know the mode. For example saying, 'Oh it appears as truly existing because...', and then giving the mode of how it appears, e.g. 'It appears as truly existing because it appears as if it exists from its own side and not posited by the mind'.

The serviette is false, because it appears as if it exists from its own side, even though it actually is posited by the mind. The lack of the existence of the paper from its own side is its ultimate truth. Why is that true? The serviette itself has a discrepancy between appearance and existence and that's why it is false. But the emptiness of the serviette is true, because there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence. Why is it that there is no discrepancy between appearance and the existence of the emptiness of the serviette?

Student: Because it is its true mode of existence, it doesn't exist from its own side.

Geshe-la's question is why is the emptiness of the object true? Why is there no discrepancy between appearance and existence of the emptiness of the object?

Student: Because the emptiness doesn't exist from its own side? The appearance and the existence of the object are the same.

Another student: To the wisdom of emptiness there is no discrepancy between the appearance and the existence.

Does the wisdom realising emptiness not possess true appearance? How does one define whether an object exists the way it appears or whether it doesn't exist the way it appears? That is always decided by its existence relative to its main object possessor. For example, the main object possessors of outer objects such as different forms and so forth are the five sense consciousnesses. If an object doesn't exist the way it appears to its main object possessor, then there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, and the object doesn't exist in the way it appears to exist. Since one can say the main object possessor of emptiness is the wisdom realising emptiness directly, then one can say that emptiness is true, because emptiness appears to the wisdom realising emptiness in exactly the way it exists. But there are different types of wisdom realising emptiness that have the appearance of true existence, such as the inferential cogniser realising emptiness.

The serviette doesn't exist the way it appears. Why? Because it doesn't exist as it appears to its main object possessor, the eye-consciousness. The serviette, for example, exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness. Just because the serviette exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness, doesn't mean to say that the serviette exists in the way that it appears to exist.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
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Edited Version*

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Study Group - *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

1 March 2005

Establish a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice well.

It is important to generate a virtuous motivation, and it is also important to generate the wisdom that can discriminate right actions from wrong actions. With the wisdom that distinguishes right from wrong one is able to purify wrong actions; so one needs to develop this wisdom. It is like having a discussion with oneself about what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to do, and then following that wisdom. By identifying wrong actions then one can also direct the mind to right actions. That is very important.

2.1.2.1. REFUTING THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

Here we have two sub outlines:

2.1.2.1.1. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by direct perception

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by sutras

2.1.2.1.1. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by direct perception

Forms and so forth, those merely perceived directly [6ab]

Through renown, and not by valid cognition.

First of all it is important to understand the view of the Sautrantika school. Realists in general are called that because they assert objects to exist truly. A more literal way of translating the Tibetan word Realist is 'those who assert objects'. They are called Realists because they assert objects to exist truly.

Secondly, you probably remember from the Tenets that for the Sautrantika conventional truth, objects that lack true existence, and generally characterised phenomena are synonymous, and that truly existent phenomena, ultimate truth and self-characterised phenomena are synonymous. Also, the Sautrantika assert that all phenomena exist inherently. So according to them it is not possible to assert an object that does not exist from its own side. For them, if an object exists it has to exist from its own side. This is important to keep in mind.

The **Sautrantika** argue that the objects of the five senses, which are forms and so forth, could not be objects of direct perception if they were to lack inherent existence.

The idea is that if forms and so forth were to lack existence from their own side, i.e. if they were to lack inherent existence, then they could not become the objects of direct perception. Why? Because according to them direct perceptions have to be direct perceptions with regard to the intrinsic nature of the object that they perceive. Hence, if there is no intrinsic nature then the direct perception could not become a direct perception with regard to that object. That is where they are coming from.

According to the **Prasangika** there is no such fault that if objects such as form and so forth were to lack intrinsic existence then they could not become the object of direct perception. This is because forms and so forth are only objects established nominally, through renown, and are the objects of conventional direct perception. And conventional direct perceptions don't become valid cognitions with regard to the ultimate nature of these forms. Forms and so forth, while objects of direct perception, are only a nominal phenomenon that cannot be found at the time of analysis. So these direct perceptions don't become valid cognitions with regard to the final or ultimate nature of these objects.

Conventional direct perceptions don't become valid cognisers engaged in ultimate analysis realising the ultimate nature of forms and so forth. They are only nominal valid cognisers which realise the object that cannot be found at the time of analysis. That is why there is no fault.

As an answer to the same point there is a quote in the *King of Concentration Sutra* where it says, 'Likewise eyes, ears, and nose are not valid cognitions'. As we have said before this means that the valid cognition that understands them does not understand their ultimate nature, and is only a nominal valid cognition.

In answer to the same point *Introduction to the Middle Way* says:

*If worldly perceptions are valid cognisers, [6.30]
Since transitory beings see suchness, what need
For other arya, through the arya path?*

What this means is if the nominal cognitions of ordinary beings realised the intrinsic nature of the object then they would become ultimate valid cognisers. They would become realisers of suchness. Then there would be no need for arya beings any more because every ordinary being would see suchness directly.

The difference between an arya or superior being, and an ordinary individual is posited as realising emptiness directly. A person who realises emptiness directly is regarded as a superior being, and a person who doesn't see emptiness directly is regarded as an ordinary individual. Hence, if ordinary individuals were to see emptiness directly then there would be no need for superior beings.

The **Realists** make this further point. They say that if everything exists only nominally, and since objects are renowned as existing from their own side amongst ordinary transitory beings, then they should actually exist from their own side.

The answer is given in the next two lines which read:

*False, like impurity and so forth [6cd]
Are renowned as purity and so forth.*

The answer is that even though objects are renowned as existing inherently that doesn't mean that they have to exist inherently. For example, for ordinary beings the contaminated aggregates are objects that are renowned to be pure, happiness, permanent, and possessing a self, even though in reality they are objects that are impure, suffering and misery, impermanent, and lacking self.

Objects that in nature are impure, misery, impermanent and lacking a self, specifically the contaminated aggregates, are renowned by ordinary worldly beings to be pure, to be happiness, to be permanent and to possess a self. That is, the popular perception amongst sentient beings is actually the opposite of the truth. Objects are false in this way, and likewise they are also false in the other way. They are renowned for possessing an intrinsic nature but actually lack

that intrinsic nature. But that is not a problem because even though phenomena are false like an illusion, they still exist nominally.

2.1.2.1. Refuting the Sautrantika

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by sutras

2.1.2.1.2.1. Establishing those sutras to be interpretive

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

2.1.2.1.2.1. Establishing those sutras to be interpretive

For the purpose of introducing transitory beings [7abc]

The protector showed phenomena.

They are not momentary in suchness.

The **Realists** say, 'Isn't your position contradicted by the sutras, which teach that functionalities are intrinsically impermanent'. This is actually a very good point, because there are sutras that teach intrinsically impermanent functionalities. It is very good for one's own understanding if one can relate the debates to the sutras, and then identify where the different sutras are coming from. This, for example, is from the third turning of the wheel.

The answer here is that the Protector Shakyamuni Buddha in his great compassion taught intrinsically existing impermanent functionalities for the purpose of introducing different transitory beings gradually to the idea of suchness and emptiness. This is because there are some sentient beings for whom it is not suitable to be immediately shown the final nature. For them it is better to be initially shown intrinsically existing impermanent functionalities. Then slowly, slowly, by meditating and thinking about the path and the views more and more, their view becomes more and more profound and subtle. For the purpose of introducing transitory beings gradually to the concept of emptiness the Buddha taught intrinsically existent impermanent functionalities at different times. In actuality, even though functionalities are momentary, they don't exist inherently or truly.

It is good to apply this concept of a gradual approach to selflessness to one's own practice; one cannot understand subtle selflessness without first understanding coarse selflessness. It doesn't make sense to say that one can immediately jump to subtle selflessness without understanding coarse selflessness.

So rather than thinking, 'Oh, having the Buddha teaching all these different views at different times is all very confusing', one should see the actual purpose behind those teachings as being a gradual path guiding one from coarser views to more subtle views. That the Buddha taught different views actually shows the greatness of the Buddha and his qualities. Being able to teach according to the disposition and ability of different disciples is really only possible when one possesses clairvoyance.

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

This is covered in five outlines

2.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting that objects wouldn't even exist conventionally

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the build up of the accumulations would be invalid.

2.1.2.1.2.3. Refuting that it would be invalid to go to take rebirth

2.1.2.1.2.4. Refuting that it would be invalid to have the distinction between virtue and negativity

2.1.2.1.2.5. Refuting that it would be invalid to ascertain the difference between samsara and nirvana

2.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting that objects wouldn't even exist conventionally

This has five lines:

If said to be contradictory even with the conventional;[7d]

There is no fault because of yogi's convention [8]

It is seeing suchness according to transitory beings.

Otherwise the realisation of a woman's impurity

Would be harmed by transitory beings.

Here the **Realists** argue, 'Well let's not even talk about whether it would be impossible to have ultimate truth. According to your point of view it would not even be possible to have conventional truth. That is because it would not be possible for functionalities to exist in a momentary manner since the popular perception is that earlier functionalities exist later. Therefore according to you it would be impossible to have momentary functionalities'.

The answer of the **Madhyamaka** is, 'Even though the popular perception amongst ordinary transitory beings is that earlier functionalities also exist later, that doesn't make them permanent. It does not take away their momentariness, because these very functionalities are actually realised by certain ordinary transitory beings to be momentary. Therefore your fault does not apply. A yogi's conventional valid cogniser does realise the momentary nature of functionalities'.

To that the **Realists** reply, 'Well, then there is really no need to realise suchness if this yogi's realisation of these four aspects of impurity, impermanence and so forth already realises the nature of the object'.

The answer is that relative to the ordinary being's view that phenomena are pure, happiness, permanent and possess a self one can say that the realisation of the impure, miserable, impermanent selfless nature of the object is the realisation of the actual nature of the object. That does not mean that one has literally realised the actual nature of the object in an ultimate sense. One says one has realised the actual nature of the object when one realises the impure, miserable, impermanent and selfless nature of the object, relative to this misconception of grasping at the object as a pure, happy, permanent and possessing a self. But that does not mean that one has not realised the final nature of the object in an ultimate sense.

When the verse says 'otherwise' that means that if a popular perception were to be valid just because of being a popular perception, then the realisation of impurity would be harmed by transitory beings. The female yogi meditates on the impurity of the man's body, and the male yogi meditates on the impurity of the female's body.

The reason for meditating on the impurity of the other person's body is because there is a popular perception of the body as pure. Through meditating on the impurity one ascertains the impurity of the other's body. That realisation would be harmed by the more popular perception of the body as being pure. If a perception were to become valid just by being a popular perception, or consensus, then that is what would happen. But a yogi can actually ascertain the impurity of the body, and as Nagarjuna says, 'If one wants to know the impure nature of the other person's body the

only thing that one needs to do is to look into one's own body'.

If just being popular makes that perception a valid perception, then it would become a valid perception just because of the consensus. In that case the meditation on impurity would be contradicted by the popular perception of the body as pure.

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the build up of the accumulations would be invalid

Merits from the illusory like conqueror [9ab]
Equal the ones from a truly existent.

Here the **Realists** argue, 'Well if there is no intrinsic existence then it would be impossible to build up the two accumulations.'

The **Madhyamaka** reply, 'If one can accumulate merits by making truly existent offerings to a truly existent Conqueror, then I can also accumulate merits by making offerings to an illusory Conqueror'.

The Conqueror is like an illusion but he taught true existence, because for some it enhances their practice of virtue. By believing in a truly existent Conqueror they make offerings to that Conqueror and accumulate merits in this way. Then Shantideva says here, 'I accumulate merits likewise by making offerings to an illusory Conqueror lacking true existence'.

These two lines refer to the merits that arise from making offerings to an illusory Conqueror. These boundless merits equal the boundless merits that are made towards a Conqueror who is believed to exist truly.

In the second line 'he is truly existent' means that the merits attained from making offerings to an illusory Buddha equal the merits made to a Conqueror who is believed to exist truly.

2.1.2.1.2.3. Refuting that it would be invalid to take rebirth

If sentient beings are like an illusion [9cd]
Then how can they be reborn after death?

These two lines are the objection offered by the **Realists**. If sentient beings are like an illusion, then how could they be reborn? An illusion does not continue after its disintegration.

For as long as the conditions come together [10ab]
For that long even the illusion exists.

The **Madhyamaka** say, 'For as long as conditions come together objects arise that are like an illusion. If an illusion lasts for as long as the collection of its conditions then why shouldn't a sentient being?'

Sentient beings exist because of the accumulation of karma and afflictions, and because of the aggregation of karma and afflictions. For as long as there is this aggregation of karma and afflictions sentient beings will exist. For example, an illusion exists for as long as the conditions for it to arise exist.

At this point it is good to remind oneself of how one takes rebirth in cyclic existence.

1. Initially there is the root cause of ignorance.
2. Because of ignorance one accumulates projecting karma.
3. This projecting karma fades away and its potential is placed on the mind stream. So we have the third link of consciousness.
4. At the time of death the potential of that projecting karma that has been placed on the consciousness is ripened.

5. As one goes through the process one realises more and more that one has to give up the aggregates. As the mind starts to withdraw from the body strong craving is generated in the mind.

6. Because of the concern over losing one's body this craving intensifies into grasping and one then grasps for the particular type of future life.

7. Then comes the establishing karma, the link of becoming or existence.

8. When that happens then one takes rebirth in a rebirth that was projected by the karma.

The first link and the seventh and eighth links¹ are mental afflictions and the second and the ninth links are karma.

Just because of a long continuity [10cd]
Sentient beings are truly existent?

The **Realists** argue that because sentient beings have a much longer continuity than an illusion they are truly existent.

Shantideva then says, 'Well, you cannot really base true existence on the length of time that an object exists, because illusions, dreams and so forth exist for different lengths of time. You would have to say that long dreams exist truly while short dreams do not exist truly. Likewise your assertion basing whether something exists truly or not on the length of time that it exists is not really valid'.

In short one can sum up by saying that regardless of whether something exists for a brief amount of time or whether it exists for a long amount of time it still always will be a false illusory-like phenomenon.

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¹ The twelve links are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ignorance | 7. Feeling |
| 2. Compositional factors | 8. Craving |
| 3. Consciousness | 9. Grasping |
| 4. Name and form | 10. Becoming |
| 5. The six senses | 11. Rebirth |
| 6. Contact | 12. Old age and death |

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

8 March 2005

Please generate a good motivation, thinking 'I have to attain enlightenment to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting the *Sautrantika*¹ (cont.)

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

Here there are five sub-outlines, and last time we completed the objection that illusory-like sentient beings cannot take rebirth.

2.1.2.1.2.2.4. Refuting that it would be invalid to have a distinction between virtue and negativity

The Realists argue that good and bad would not be possible if sentient beings are only like an illusion.

Here we have ten lines:

*The killing and so forth of an illusory being [11]
Does not contain negativity because there is no mind.*

*Relative to those endowed with an illusory mind,
Merits and negativities arise.*

Since mantras and so forth do not possess the power [12]

The illusory mind does not arise.

*The illusion arises from various conditions
And is likewise manifold*

That one condition can do it all Is totally non-existent anywhere. [13a]

All these debates turn around the inherent or non-inherent existence of phenomena. All the objections are based on the assumption that if something does not exist inherently, then it has to be completely non-existent. The **Sautrantika** say that if phenomena don't exist inherently and are merely like an illusion, then killing another sentient being would not create any non-virtuous karma. The objection here is that if sentient beings are like an illusion, then one would not accumulate any negativity if one were to kill, or do other non-virtuous activities to another sentient being. They say one does not create any negativity if one kills an illusion, and therefore one does not create any negativity if one kill an illusory sentient being.

Here **Shantideva's** reply is that if a magician creates the illusion of a human being and if one imagines that illusion to be another human being, then killing that imaginary sentient being would not be the complete action of killing. Although there would not be a complete action of killing, one would, for example, create the

negativity of engaging in the action. But there would be not be the full karma of killing, because for that there needs to be the object of an actual sentient being - something that possesses mind. Because an illusion does not possess any mind, confusing an illusion with an actual sentient being and then engaging in the action of killing that imaginary sentient being would create some non-virtuous karma, such as the karma of engaging in the action of killing. But one would not get the complete karma of killing.

*Relative to those endowed with an illusory mind,
Merits and negativity arise.*

If one engages in a positive action with regard to something that possesses mind, then that will create virtue; if one engages in harmful action with regard to something that possesses mind, then one creates negativity.

How does this difference arise? Even though the illusion as well as the sentient being are the same in lacking true existence, the difference lies in one possessing mind, and the other not possessing mind. Relative to the one possessing mind complete merits and negativities arise.

*Since mantras and so forth do not possess the power
the illusory mind does not arise.*

What this means is that the mantras and the different substances of the magician do not possess the power to create something that possesses mind. Therefore the illusory mind does not arise within an illusion.

*The illusion arises from various conditions
And is likewise manifold.*

*That one condition that can do it all
Is totally non-existent anywhere.*

This shows how the illusion is generated in dependence upon a multitude of causes and conditions and not one single condition. It shows the dependent arising of the illusion. Even though phenomena are like illusions they still fall within the realm of cause and effect, so cause and effect still apply to them. If the causes and conditions arise then the illusory horse and elephant will come into existence. But if the conditions are incomplete, then the illusory horse and elephant won't come into existence.

2.1.2.1.2.2.5. Refuting that it would be invalid to ascertain the difference between samsara and nirvana

Here the **Sautrantika** say that the division into samsara and nirvana would be invalid if everything lacks inherent existence.

*Should nirvana be the ultimate, [13bcd]
And samsara be the relative,*

Then also the Buddha would circle. [14]

*What would be the point of the bodhisattvas
practice?*

*If the continuum of the conditions is not cut off,
Then the illusion will also not be reversed.*

*If the continuity of the conditions is cut-off, [15ab]
Then it won't arise even conventionally.*

This debate is aimed at the Madhyamaka view of natural nirvana. First of all, there is the assertion that nominally samsara is generated from causes and conditions, which are ignorance, karma, consciousness and so forth. The lack of inherent existence of the samsara thus generated is asserted to be **natural nirvana**.

¹ Described last week as Refuting that one's position is contradicted by the sutras

Here the opponent confuses natural nirvana with actual nirvana that is attained through overcoming adventitious obscurations. That's important to know. The Sautrantika say, 'On the one hand you accept the conventional samsara that is generated through causes and conditions. Then at the same time you assert that the lack of inherent existence of that samsara is **ultimate nirvana**. In that case everybody would have attained nirvana, since everybody has natural nirvana'.

Here the opponent confuses natural abiding nirvana with actual nirvana. The same thing applies to the natural abiding perfection of wisdom. By confusing natural abiding nirvana with nirvana, the opponent says, 'Should nirvana be the ultimate nirvana?'

Ultimate nirvana is the natural abiding nirvana, the lack of true existence of samsara. At the same time, the samsara that the relatively existing contaminating aggregates experiences - birth, ageing, sickness and death - comes about through ignorance, the other delusions and karma.

In that case everybody would have attained nirvana, since everybody has natural nirvana. It would follow that even a person like the Buddha who is actually accepted by both schools to be beyond samsara would then circle in cyclic existence.

Is there a problem if one were to posit the natural abiding nirvana as nirvana? Is the natural abiding nirvana, nirvana or not?

Student: No.

What's the reason for it not being nirvana?

Student: Because it hasn't overcome the causes for samsara.

But what is the reason for it not having abandoned the causes for samsara? In general we say that nirvana is the non-affirming negation that is the absence of suffering and its causes and so forth. So why is the natural abiding nirvana not nirvana?

Student: Because the causal chain, cyclic existence, has not been cut.

Why is the cause of samsara not abandoned?

Student: Because the natural abiding nirvana is just a mere lack of an inherently existent suffering, not of a dependent arising suffering.

To give a word commentary to the first verse, it says that if the Buddha circled in cyclic existence there will be no point to a bodhisattva's practice because if there is an existence that is already there, there would be no need to attain it, because it is already there. Actual nirvana needs to be attained through meditating on the path and through engaging in different practices. If the natural abiding nirvana were the actual nirvana then the need to practice the path would fall away.

One should know the difference between natural abiding nirvana and actual nirvana, what the cause of cyclic existence is, and how the causes actually generate cyclic existence and so forth. Then, it is asserted there is no fault - the fault that is pointed out by the Sautrantika is not there.

If the natural abiding nirvana is actual nirvana then ordinary sentient beings would already abide within

nirvana. Then one could also say that a buddha actually abides within cyclic existence. This fault does not exist here.

If the continuity of conditions is uninterrupted, then the illusion does not cease to exist. So therefore as long as the causes and conditions of samsara are not interrupted, then samsara will continue to exist and the experience of birth, ageing, sickness and death will continue to exist.

If the continuity of the conditions is cut, then samsara will not exist even conventionally or nominally. There is no need for samsara to exist in a buddha's mind, because a buddha has cut off the conditions for samsara to arise. Because a buddha has cut the conditions for samsara, then samsara does not exist in that buddha's mind. Apart from not arising ultimately, samsara does not arise in a buddha's mind even conventionally. Because ordinary sentient beings have not cut off the conditions for samsara, then their mind is a samsaric mind and they experience samsara.

2.1.2.2. REFUTING THE MIND ONLY POSITION

2.1.2.2.1. Presentation of the position of the Mind Only

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the position of the Mind Only

2.1.2.2.1. Presentation of the position of the Mind Only

These two lines present the position of the Mind Only:

*When even the mistaken is non-existent [15cd]
What takes the illusion as its object*

The 'When' in the first line refers to all objects lacking true existence and in that way being like an illusion. The Mind Only assert that mind exists truly and ultimately. They assert that all compounded phenomena are truly existent.

Therefore, when all impermanent phenomena exist non-truly, then even the mistaken mind is non-existent. If everything is like an illusion in that it lacks true existence then everything becomes non-existent. In that case the mistaken awareness that ordinarily perceives the illusion would also have to be non-existent.

This would mean that there would be nothing that could perceive the illusion, and one would arrive at this fault. Therefore impermanent phenomena have to have true existence.

The problem for the Mind Only arises because the Madhyamaka completely refute true existence, but in the Mind Only system compounded phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena have to exist truly. They don't assert that all phenomena exist truly; they don't say that mental fabrications exist truly; but they do say that compounded phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena exist truly. Therefore according to them, when one refutes true existence then it is not possible for consciousness to exist. Then there would be no object possessor that could perceive the object.

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the position of the Mind Only

The answer uses the same reasoning, but in reverse. It comes in two parts:

2.1.2.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

2.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting the answer to that debate

2.1.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

This is covered in these two lines:

*When for you the illusion is non-existent, [16ab]
Then at that time, what becomes the focus or the
object.*

The **Mind Only** say the object appears as an outer object, but it doesn't exist as an outer object.

So **Shantideva** says to them, 'If the object actually existed in the way it appears to exist, then it would have to be an outer object. In that case, there would be no illusion and there would be no object possessor. If the object does not exist the way it appears, then it has to lack true existence, because that is the actual meaning of not existing in the way it appears to exist. If there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence then the object does not exist truly. 'If you say that the object does not exist in the way it appears to exist, then it has to lack true existence. If it lacks true existence, then again according to you, the object such as the illusion becomes non-existent, and in that case there would be nothing that could make an illusion its object'.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche says something similar in his explanation of these two lines.

When the object exists in the way it appears to exist, as an outer object, then the object would have to be an outer object. In that case, in your system, illusions and its object possessors would be non-existent. If the object does not exist in the way it appears to exist, then it would lack inherent existence, and according to you, it would have to be completely non-existent. In that case, then it would be impossible to have, for example, an illusion that appears as an outer object. Also there would be no other objects such as a form, sounds or so forth that could become the objects of awareness, and also there would be no mind that could focus on that object.

We can stop here. For now, if you can understand the fundamental position of each side then that's a good foundation. After this more debates between the Mind Only and the Madhyamaka will come.

This is the fourth class, so you will have discussion group next week. It's important to have a fruitful discussion where one just doesn't refute the other person with verbal cleverness. When one actually debates on the basis of understanding, one debates on the basis of having thought about the topic.

Student: What is a compounded phenomena? Is it like an illusory object?

The 'compounded' actually refers to the coming together of the causes and conditions that cause the phenomenon in question. The phenomenon is compounded. Why? Because it arose from this composition of causes and conditions.

Geshe-la holds a glass

The glass is impermanent, it is momentary, it is compounded, it is a cause, it is a result. The Mind Only say that it is an other-powered phenomenon, a functionality. The glass is an effect, because it arose from causes and conditions. At the same time, of course, it has its own effect, for example if the glass breaks. Also the

succession of moments of glass cause each other. The first moment of glass causes the second moment of glass, which causes the third moment of glass and so forth.

Student: So it follows from that it's not an illusory object?

The 'illusory' part refers to its lack of inherent or true existence. The 'illusory' refers to the discrepancy between the appearance of inherent existence and the lack of inherent existence. The glass is said to be like an illusion because, while on the one hand it appears as inherently existent or as truly existent, on the other hand it does not actually exist in the way it appears, because it lacks inherent existence or true existence. So that's why the glass is referred to as 'illusory'. It doesn't mean that the glass is completely non-existent.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright

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Edited Version

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DISCUSSION

BLOCK: 2
WEEK: 5

ASSIGNED: 15TH MARCH 05

1. The first verse of the ninth chapter says "The Able One explained all these different limbs for the purpose of wisdom." What are two ways of interpreting "these different limbs"?
2. Why does one need to realise emptiness to liberate oneself from cyclic existence?
3. What are some common misperceptions about the Two Truths? How does Shantideva and the Madhyamaka Prasangika school present the Two Truths in terms of the object divided, the nature and identity.
- 4- Line three of the second verse reads "the ultimate is not the object engaged by awareness," does this mean emptiness is beyond any type of understanding? Explain.

5. Why is 'transitory and dependent' given as a definition of person in this context?
6. What is the meaning of 'illusion?' On which point do yogis and ordinary beings disagree with regard to an object such as fire?

7. In what hypothetical scenario would there be no need for arya beings?
8. The Realists object to the Madhyamakas position by claiming it contradicts scripture. Why did the Protector Shakyamuni Buddha teach intrinsically existent functionalities at different times in his career?
9. The Realists argue, 'Well if there is no intrinsic existence then it would be impossible to build up the two accumulations. How does the Madhyamaka reply to this refutation?

10. Explain why good and bad deeds are like an illusion, and yet still function perfectly well.
11. Name the two kinds of nirvana, and describe them briefly.
12. Why would someone think that, if the Madhyamaka teaching is true, then the Buddha must also be wandering around in the circle of suffering life?

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EXAM

NAME:

BLOCK: **1**

WEEK: **6**

ASSIGNED: **22ND MARCH 05**

MARK

17.9

1. Outline the subject matter of the 10 chapters of Master Shanti Deva's text. [5]

- Chapter 1 _____
- Chapter 2 _____
- Chapter 3 _____
- Chapter 4 _____
- Chapter 5 _____
- Chapter 6 _____
- Chapter 7 _____
- Chapter 8 _____
- Chapter 9 _____
- Chapter 10 _____

2. '*... all these different limbs for the purpose of wisdom;*' (verse 1). Give a proof for why it is **not** necessary for the first five perfections to come before one has a realisation of emptiness? [1]

3. Beings who seek to establish the meaning of the two truths can broadly be divided into two groups. Name them and describe briefly what they believe. [4]

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4. Name and describe the essential division into two types of beings who result from these two viewpoints. [2]

5. Give an example for when a higher view harms a lower view. [2]

6. State the basic misconception behind the wrong idea that, if things function, then they must be real as we see them. [2]

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7. If everything that the world agreed to was totally correct, then the belief of the world that a woman's body is something pure would have to disprove the perception of a yogi who ascertains correctly that a woman's body is something impure. What argument does this point refute? [2]

8. "... If beings are like an illusion, how can they take a rebirth after they die?" Realists are saying that an illusion and a living being are not the same thing, illusions are fleeting and false, living beings have been around for a very long time, - for time with no beginning in fact, therefore they must exist in truth. How does Master Shantideva answer this objection? [3]

9. Explain why good and bad deeds are like an illusion, and yet still function perfectly well. [2]

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10. Name the two kinds of nirvana, and describe them briefly. [4]

11. Why would someone think that, if the Madhyamika teaching is true, then the Buddha must also be wandering around in the circle of suffering life? [2]
