
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 February 2017

Having just recited the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, it is important to remember that taking refuge is the means to protect oneself from following a wrong path, while generating bodhicitta is the means to protect oneself from the lower paths. Keeping these two essential motivational points in mind, we can now engage in our regular *tonglen* meditation practice.

[Meditation]

As we do regularly, we now generate our motivation for receiving the teachings, which is extremely important. This can be along the lines of: for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned earlier, taking refuge is the optimum means to protect oneself from following a wrong path. In very simple terms this means that dedicating ourselves to following the Buddha's teachings, in particular developing faith in his advice, will naturally protect us from following a mistaken path.

The Buddha is an incomparably kind guide who is free from all mistaken concepts and endowed with all possible good qualities. Recalling the kindness and great qualities of this incomparably kind being will instil a strong aspiration to follow the Buddha's advice. Just thinking about this can bring great solace to the mind.

We also need to have a good understanding of how generating the bodhicitta motivation, the essence of the Mahayana path, protects one from following the lower path. Here, the greater path is where one completely dedicates oneself to the **goal** of achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment for the sole **purpose** of benefiting other sentient beings.

The paths of the hearers and solitary realisers are termed the Lower Path only in relation to the goals of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle. Their primary **purpose** for entering the path is to be free from suffering, which is for one's own benefit. Their **goal**, or aim, is to achieve liberation solely for oneself, which is a state of being free from cyclic existence. So, in comparison with the Great Vehicle's purpose and goal their path is called a lower path.

Of course one needs to be mindful that this does not mean in any way that the hearers' and solitary realisers' vehicle is inferior. In fact, achieving liberation is an incredible achievement. The realisations and the achievements gained on the hearer and solitary realiser paths are astonishing compared to any achievements of ordinary beings. However, when compared to the Great Vehicle, their achievements are less significant. Thus, it is

the bodhicitta motivation which protects one from aiming for these lesser goals.

Those who have entered the path of the Great Vehicle are referred to as bodhisattvas or noble beings. The mind of a bodhisattva is imbued with bodhicitta - the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Their mind is spontaneously imbued with bodhicitta, and their conduct is to engage in the practice of the six perfections. We can see how amazing bodhisattvas are, just from the description of being endowed with these two qualities! Being engaged in the practices of the six perfections means that their practice is solely for the benefit of sentient beings.

The *tonglen* giving and taking practice that we have just done, is, as I have mentioned previously, a very profound practice and not to be taken lightly; when one actually takes it to heart it is really a very profound and deep practice. It is good to remember that this is the very core practice of bodhisattvas.

Thinking about these qualities of the bodhisattvas can really inspire us. As Buddhists, we naturally have strong faith in the Buddha seeing him as an enlightened being. It is important to reflect on the fact that a buddha is none other than the result of the practices done by a bodhisattva. As reflected in the teachings, the Buddha did not suddenly materialise out of nowhere. Rather, he is a supreme being who engaged in all the causes and conditions on the path, beginning with the very basic levels, going through the entire stages of the path and reaching that ultimate state of enlightenment. So the manner in which the Buddha became an enlightened being is a source of great encouragement for us all.

Of course at our level, we may have not yet developed the bodhicitta mind. However, since we are followers of the Mahayana path we need to aspire to follow the Great Vehicle path. So at the very least we must make every endeavour to generate even a similitude of the bodhicitta motivation. Even if it's a contrived bodhicitta motivation, we need to really develop this as strongly as possible. In its simplest form, we should dedicate our practice and teaching - indeed whatever virtue one engages in - towards the benefit of all sentient beings, and then aspire to achieve enlightenment for that purpose. If we generate this mind again and again whenever we do our practice, then through familiarity with this thought, our mind naturally becomes more and more imbued with this motivation and aspiration. It is through familiarity that one actually develops all the realisations on the path. That is what we need to do at our level.

There are other points about going for refuge and generating bodhicitta that we need to reflect upon and understand clearly. Refuge is a practice that is common to all three vehicles - the hearer vehicle, the solitary realiser vehicle, as well as the greater vehicle. Whereas generating bodhicitta is the uncommon practice of the Great Vehicle, the Mahayana Vehicle. There is a form of refuge that is called the Mahayana Refuge that involves a particular formula. However, in general, refuge is common to all three vehicles, while generating bodhicitta is an uncommon practice for those who aspire to follow the Great Vehicle.

Indeed, we can say that taking refuge is common to all religions; all religions have a form of refuge that they practise prior to engaging in any of their practices. Christians go for refuge to Jesus and God whenever they engage in some ceremony or practice. As a spiritual seeker or a follower of religion it's good to understand that taking refuge is common to all spiritual traditions. These are important points to understand, otherwise people might think: "Oh, going for refuge must be unique to Buddhists? Is it only because I'm a Buddhist that I have to take refuge?" In fact it is good to know that all religions have a form of refuge. However, since we aspire to follow the path of the Great Vehicle, it is good to know that as followers of the Mahayana path we have the additional task of generating bodhicitta.

While taking refuge is common to all religious practitioners, taking refuge in the Three Jewels is unique to Buddhism. Having a clear understanding of what the Three Jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha - are, a conviction in the protection the Three Jewels provide, and a heartfelt reliance on the Three Jewels is a unique Buddhist practice. On the basis of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, the principle of non-violence is implemented, which is to refrain from harming any living being. So the practice common to all Buddhists is taking refuge in the Three Jewels, and refraining from harming other sentient beings.

Generating the bodhicitta motivation on the basis of taking refuge and refraining from harming others is what makes Mahayana practice unique. So as followers of the Mahayana tradition, our refuge and other practices become a Mahayana practice, when they are held with - at the very least - a contrived bodhicitta attitude. That is something that we really need to work on as seekers of the Mahayana practice. I have given detailed explanations of this in the past. Because taking refuge and generating bodhicitta are done before every practice, it is really good to have a clear understanding of what they mean.

The most practical and simple way for us, as ordinary beings, to implement the bodhicitta attitude in our daily lives is to follow the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (which I also emphasise again and again), which is to generate the thought: "I will not intentionally harm any living being and I will do my utmost to only benefit sentient beings". Generating this noble thought on a daily basis is, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, a substitute of the bodhicitta motivation for us ordinary beings. So we really need to pay attention to these two lines. I'm not boasting, but I really do pay attention to generating this thought. You can also go a little bit further by spending a few more moments thinking: "I will do everything possible to only benefit sentient beings and I will completely shun and avoid harming sentient beings". Just spending a few moments cultivating this thought can bring great solace to the mind, leading to a genuine sense of calmness and ease. So it's very beneficial.

These points are not all that complicated and they are very easy to contemplate, yet they are very, very profound; they can also help to bring about a great transformation in one's mind. When we think about it, these attitudes are very reasonable. There is no sentient

being who wishes to experience any harm, and there is no sentient being who does not wish for benefit. In other words, all living beings naturally want to experience benefit and happiness and do not wish to experience any kind of harm or suffering.

When we commit ourselves to benefitting others and not harming them, which is what they wish for, then we are actually engaging in the very core practices that the great Mahayana practitioners of the past implemented in their lives. If we can follow their example and generate this thought, then, as mentioned earlier, as we become more familiar with these sentiments and thoughts (which will of course take some effort initially) and we will begin to notice a real transformation taking place in our mind. Because our mind becomes gentler and genuinely kinder, we will naturally become less prone to harming sentient beings and more readily inclined to help other beings. This is the transformation that will naturally take place over time. So this is really a very profound level of practice to adopt.

When the Buddha mentioned these profound words: "If you harm sentient beings, you are harming me; when you benefit sentient beings, you are benefiting me", he was saying that "if you respect me and have faith in me, then benefit sentient beings, and don't harm them". It was through the practice of only benefitting sentient beings and not harming any sentient being that the Buddha reached the state of enlightenment. So the incomparable and kind Buddha has given us some very practical advice. When we generate these thoughts and really commit ourselves to engaging in these practices, then our life becomes much more meaningful, and our practices become much more profound, and much more complete. We might be inclined to engage in Dharma practice, but in order to engage in practice we need to know how to practice. These are the instructions on how to conduct ourselves on a daily basis through our thoughts and actions.

It is good to acknowledge the great fortune that we have at this time. We are engaging in none other than the unmistakable Mahayana teachings of the Buddha, so being part of this gathering is incredibly fortunate. We have met with unmistakable Mahayana teachers and we have these incredible conditions to engage in practice. So it is important for us to really utilise them to the best of our ability, because having all of them at the same time is a rare opportunity.

More specifically, as a human being, we have the eight pleasures, which free us from the eight adverse conditions, and the ten endowments. Possessing these is unique to human beings. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, they are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel. This is a very significant point, when we think about what we can achieve with our present conditions. No amount of money, even hundreds of millions of dollars can buy us our ultimate purpose. But with these eight pleasures and ten endowments of a precious human rebirth, we can achieve our ultimate purpose.

As Lama Tsongkhapa said, we waste our life with meaningless worldly activities if we do not pay attention to the great meaning of our life, which is another very significant point. When we don't think about the

preciousness of a human life, then we naturally fall into a normal pattern of using this life for worldly pleasures, which is how we tend to spend our lives.

Furthermore, the conditions that we have with our precious human rebirth are also rare and very difficult to find. If we didn't think about the rarity and difficulty of acquiring these conditions, then we might relax and think: "Oh, there's no rush to engage in Dharma practices". But as Lama Tsongkhapa mentions, a precious human rebirth is more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel, and we have only found these precious conditions at this time. This indicates that if we were to lose this opportunity, it will be very, very difficult to obtain it again. So these are essential points to contemplate.

The teachings give many examples that explain the rarity of a precious human rebirth. We can think about the rarity of finding a precious human rebirth in terms of the cause. This is another essential point that we need to reflect upon. The cause for obtaining a precious human rebirth is said to be the threefold causes of observing morality as a basis, making aspirational prayers, and finally complementing them with the practices of generosity and so forth. These three factors are the causes for a precious human rebirth.

Another teaching mentions that there is no other cause for obtaining a higher status than morality. This teaching specifically emphasises that morality, or ethics, is the basic cause for obtaining a high status. So we need to really think about the importance of following an ethical life.

We can rejoice in the fact that because of our practice of morality in the past, we have now obtained a precious human rebirth. So we can congratulate ourselves and feel joy in what we have achieved. We made aspirational prayers in the past to engage in good deeds, and dedicated them to obtaining a precious human rebirth such as we have now. The fact that we engaged in practices of generosity and so forth in the past can be seen from our current conditions - we are not lacking for food, shelter and other basic needs such as medicine and so forth. As a result of having engaged in these practices in the past we have obtained these incredibly good conditions now.

However, if we want to secure a precious human rebirth in our future lives, then there is no other way than engaging in the very practices that were the cause for our current precious human rebirth i.e. practising morality, making aspirational prayers, and complementing them with the practices of generosity and so forth. So if we can create these causes now, then we should be in no doubt that we will obtain a precious human rebirth in the next life. It will naturally follow! We have obtained a precious human rebirth now, as a result of previous causes, so if we practise in the same way, we will definitely obtain the good conditions again in the future.

But if we don't practise and engage in the causes now, then that is where it becomes difficult. We need to understand that the great advantage of obtaining a precious human rebirth again in the future is that we will be able to continue with the practices that we have engaged in over this current life. If we continue to do this

from life to life then our conditions will just get better and better, and we will progress to higher and higher levels of achievements and realisations and so forth.

Contemplating the preciousness and the rarity of our precious human rebirth should not be taken lightly. It is a point that is emphasised in many teachings as being an impetus to practice. We should not think of it lightly by saying "oh, this is just a beginners practice". Rather, we need to really contemplate these points again and again, and take them to heart. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, when you think of the rarity of a precious human rebirth, there is no way that you will lie around in a leisurely manner. This is another significant point. If we are lying around leisurely, this means that we are not really contemplating the rarity of our precious human rebirth.

Furthermore, as the teachings emphasise, having thought about the preciousness of the human rebirth, followed by its rarity, we must also contemplate how easily this precious rebirth can end. This means thinking about the fragility of our life. These are all very meticulous and very profound ways of encouraging us to engage in Dharma practice.

If we don't think about the preciousness of a human rebirth, we won't be inspired to use it for a meaningful purpose. If we don't think about its rarity, then we might think: "Oh well, I have a precious human rebirth now, but I can obtain another one at any time. So I don't have to worry about it now". In order to overcome such a misconception, we need to contemplate how easily this precious human rebirth can end. If we don't contemplate that, then again we will fall victim to laziness, thinking, "Yes, I need to use my precious human rebirth in a meaningful way to practice Dharma, but I can do that tomorrow or the day after, or some time in the future". So contemplating death and impermanence is crucial, as it inspires us to not waste our time and opportunity, and to put our good conditions to use.

Lama Tsongkhapa mentions in his work, *Lines of Experience*:

This human existence with its (eight) liberties is much more precious than a wish-granting jewel. Obtained just this once, difficult to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky. Considering how (easily this can happen at any time) and realizing that all worldly activities are as (immaterial as) chaff, you must try to extract its essence at all times, day and night. I, the yogi, have practised just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, by contemplating the precious human rebirth one develops a sense of seeing the affairs of this life as being meaningless, and lacking essence. They are no more than chaff which, like worldly affairs, has no essence.

These are points to reflect upon. If our worldly life had some essence, then because we are so engrossed and busy with these worldly affairs, we should have gained some sort of real satisfaction and happiness by now. But the fact that we have not gained true satisfaction and happiness, shows that whatever we have engaged in so far has lacked any essence, and we have not really achieved anything meaningful so far. So Lama

Tsongkhapa encourages us to really contemplate these points as a way to lessen our engagement with meaningless worldly affairs, and engage our mind in virtue and the Dharma.

I apologise that I have seemingly gone off on a tangent in mentioning these points again. As I consider you all to be really good Dharma friends, I'm just sharing my thoughts as a way to encourage all of us to make our life more meaningful and to practise a bit of Dharma.

When I think about these points made by Lama Tsong Khapa, I feel that being completely immersed in this life's affairs primarily involves engaging in many negativities to please and protect your dear ones, and engaging in many negative deeds to combat your enemies. That's what this life's affairs are mostly involved with, as a result of which they lack any essence. In the end, engaging in such affairs only brings about more frustration and suffering. Perhaps I'm wrong, but that's what I feel. If I am wrong then I apologise.

As Lama Tsongkhapa said, in a very simple way, when there is attachment to one's own side, then instinctively there will be aversion towards anyone who opposes one's own side. Isn't holding on to such sentiments just a cause for more agony?

Again, I want to say how wonderful it is to have this opportunity to gather together again after a gap of a few weeks. You all seem very well and I'm definitely well, and my trip to India was very beneficial and successful.

The one thing that was a bit difficult and challenging was that Indian food somehow doesn't agree with me these days. I don't know what it is, but when I tried the food, it initially seemed quite tasty but then after a while, it didn't really taste nice at all. Then, although I didn't really get sick from it, I just lost my appetite, so I couldn't eat much. Then I resorted to having a clear soup, which seemed to be quite tasty! But after a while I started thinking "I wonder if this taste is because they've used MSG".

We can see here how you can use logic even in these situations. I was being served a clear broth, but because it was very tasty I was thinking, "How could something very clear and bland have so much taste?" So then I asked, and sure enough I found they had used MSG in the soup!

On a more positive note I can definitely assure you that I enjoyed the teachings very much. The teachings were so clear for me and I didn't even have to use my hearing aids at all. It must be the result of some sort of good, virtuous actions that I created in the past that I was able to hear the teachings so clearly, without the hearing aids. Of course His Holiness' speech has the incredible quality of being very clear and very precise. But I was able to really listen to them very easily. I didn't have any difficulty, and I didn't get tired.

However, when the teachings finished, getting back to my accommodation was a bit of a struggle, as there were big crowds to get through. I was very tired, and I had two young monks helping me back to my accommodation. When I had the younger monks helping me, they were just eager to get back home. Later when I had some of the older monks from house number 15 helping me, they said "Oh, Geshe-la, maybe we will stop and have some tea

here". So we stopped on the way, and didn't head straight back.

While I can assure you that my time receiving the teachings was very meaningful and very good, I also would like to acknowledge those who attended the sessions that were streamed here. I was very happy to hear about that, and I want to thank you for coming along.

My intention in implementing this idea was not just to receive the teachings but to gather together, have tea together, bring some biscuits and share the food together. I felt that would be a good way to build a communal feeling. I was told that people really felt good about that and indicated that in the future, it would be good to have more sessions like these.

We can finish our session today on an auspicious note, and return to Shantideva's profound words in our next session.

Maybe I just babble on about certain things, but I do feel there will be some benefit from the points I have shared with you.

Tara said that she found it very easy to follow His Holiness' teachings in Bodhgaya due to having come to the teaching sessions here regularly. That is one indication that our gathering here has definitely had some purpose. His Holiness actually elaborated quite a bit on the close placement of mindfulness, which we have partly covered in our sessions here.

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

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Edited Version*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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

We can now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So, for that purpose, I'll engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and then put them into practice well."

As I've mentioned previously, the meditation practice we engaged in earlier – the *tong-len*, or giving and taking practice – is a core bodhisattva practice that particularly encompasses the practice of the superior intention stage of the sevenfold cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta.

Therefore, we need to really keep this practice in our heart, not only during meditation times, but throughout our lives, as a way to further encourage our development of love and compassion.

We all have the potential to develop love and compassion. Not only do we have this potential, but we also have an understanding from the teachings of how important it is to develop love and compassion.

If we put this understanding aside and start questioning what kind of practice or meditation we are meant to be doing, then we are completely missing the point. We need to actually engage in the practices for developing love and compassion. Although we may not develop these qualities right away, through familiarity, we can definitely achieve significant results. Through familiarity with practices such as the *tong-len*, we will see a transformation taking place. It is important that we keep this in mind.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

2.3.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS (CONT.)

2.3.2.1.3. The close placement by mindfulness on the mind

Under the major heading of the four close contemplations, we have covered the close contemplation on the body and the close contemplation on feelings. Now we will cover the close contemplation on the mind.

The earlier subdivisions analysed, firstly, the close contemplation on the non-inherent existence of the body, and secondly, the close contemplation on the non-inherent existence of feelings. Similarly, here, the close contemplation on mind is the close contemplation of the non-inherent existence of the mind.

This section is further subdivided into two:

2.3.2.1.3.1. Showing that mental consciousness does not exist inherently

2.3.2.1.3.2. Showing that preceding sense consciousness does not exist inherently

Although I've explained this previously I will give a brief explanation of what 'mind' is according to the texts. In the texts on mind and awareness, the Tibetan terms *sem*, *yi* and *nam-shay* which translate in English as 'mind', 'intellect' and 'consciousness', are said to be synonymous and refer to the same entity.

There are six primary (or main) minds or consciousnesses. They are called 'primary' in relation to their functionality. The mental factors are referred to as secondary minds; again, the term 'secondary' is in relation to their functionality. A primary mind or consciousness, serves as the primary factor that cognises the object on which it is focused; it does the primary engagement with the object. The accompanying mental factors or secondary minds, on the other hand, relate to the particular characteristics of the perceived object.

The analogy of the different functionalities or roles of a king and his ministers are used in the teachings to illustrate the difference between the primary mind and the mental factors. In this country, we might use the analogy of the roles of Prime Minister and the ministers. The main point of the analogy is to illustrate how a primary mind or consciousness perceives the mere identity of the object, while the mental factors perceive the particular characteristics of the object – such as the colour, shape and size of a visual object.

There is further explanation on how the primary minds and mental factors are synonymous and arise at the same time. Particular mental factors, such as the omnipresent mental factors, arise at the same time as the primary minds. The difference however is that when the mental factors perceive an object, they don't do so out of their own power. They can only perceive an object in relation to a primary mind, but not from their own accord or by their [needs to be checked as it appears it is referring to the object's own power, not the secondary mind's. Was this intended?] own power. On the other hand primary consciousnesses perceive an object through their own power. So, that is another feature to understand about the mind.

I've explained all of this in detail previously, particularly when we went through the text on Buddhist tenets.

We should note here that the Vaibhashika Buddhist school asserts that main minds and mental factors – or secondary minds – arise simultaneously. The Vaibhashikas assert a unique presentation of a simultaneous arising of cause and effect. While causes and effects are not generally simultaneous, the Vaibhashikas assert that mind and mental factors are simultaneous as well as being causes and effects. So they have this unique presentation of mind and mental factors.

It is good to relate to such explanations as a way of sharpening our reasoning. The reason why the Vaibhashikas say that secondary minds are the effects of a primary mind is that there has to be a primary factor which comes first. They assert that the primary mind

comes first, followed by the secondary mind. This is asserted as cause and effect.

However, mind and mental factors are also said to be simultaneous in relation to the five omnipresent mental factors. The latter are secondary minds that are always present with the primary minds, and thus arise at the same time as the primary mind when it perceives an object.

The Tibetan term for a secondary mind is *sem-jhung* and the Vaibhashikas seem to take that term literally. The literal connotation of *sem-jhung* is 'arising or originating from the mind'. When you take literal meaning of the term in that way, then it implies that a secondary mind arises or originates from a mind that previously existed.

Again, I will not spend too much time on this, as it has already been presented previously and you can do your own research. Understanding mind and mental factors is an essential aspect of Buddhist psychology, as it is a way to understand the function of our mind.

The five omnipresent mental factors – feeling, intention, contact, attention and discrimination – are said to be always present whenever a main mind functions. There is always an associated feeling when an object is perceived by a primary mind, as well as an intention and so forth. Many of you would be aware from previous teachings that the actual definition of karma is intention. We create karma based on the intention at the time of an action. Whenever we engage an object, it is the intention that drives us towards that engagement. When we talk about creating karma, what part of us actually creates it? It is our intention. This has how we need to understand karma on a deeper level.

In relation to omnipresent mental factors, whenever we perceive an object, there is a feeling that arises simultaneously in relation to perceiving that object. As we engage with the object, we are also creating karma, and whether the karma is virtuous or non-virtuous depends on the intention. So, whenever we engage in any object, karma is involved. Discrimination, which perceives the particular characteristics of an object, along with attention and the other omnipresent mental factors, all occur at the same time.

These are important topics to really remember and understand well. Thanks to Margie for remembering the list of the five omnipresent mental factors. That goes to show you've kept them in mind. I'm hoping Margie was speaking on behalf of others who have already studied it. Although Margie doesn't assume an air of knowing much, she actually does remember things well. Whereas there might be others who presume they know a great deal, but I'm not sure how much they would actually remember!

2.3.2.1.3.1. Showing that mental consciousness does not exist inherently

102. *Mind does not abide in the sense powers,
Not on form, and also not in-between,
There is also no mind inside or outside,
And it is also not found elsewhere.*
103. *It is not the body; it does not exist separately,
It does not mix and it also does not stand
alone.*

*Because of not existing in the slightest,
therefore
Sentient beings are naturally gone beyond
misery.*

The commentary presents the meaning of these verses as follows:

Mind does not exist inherently because it does not abide inherently on the six sense powers; it does not abide inherently on the six objects of form, sound, scents, tastes, tactile sensations and objects of mental consciousness, and it also does not abide in between these two or on the collection of these two. Remember the seven-fold analysis of the chariot as explained in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

The mind also does not abide inherently in the internally elaborated

person labelled by the non-Buddhists, not on the outer hands and other limbs, and it cannot be found to abide inherently in another way apart from the inside and outside. It is not the body or truly something else other than the body, the mind is not mixed with the body, and it also does not abide as some inherent object apart from the body. Because it does not exist inherently in the slightest way, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind is naturally gone beyond sorrow.

The explanation starts with the statement *mind does not exist inherently*, followed by the reason. One needs to remember that this does not mean that the mind does not exist at all. Of course the mind, intellect or consciousness does exist, but the point being emphasised here is that it does not exist inherently.

According to the Prasangika Madhyamika or Middle Way School, the mind does not exist inherently, truly or substantially. While some lower Buddhist schools will not assert a truly existent mind, all lower Buddhist schools accept that the mind does exist inherently. So, the unique feature of the Prasangika system is the assertion that mind does not exist inherently.

According to the Prasangika, the main reason for the lack of inherent existence of the mind is that the mind does not exist without depending on an imputation; it does not exist in and of itself, independently, without depending on a label.

By contrast, the lower Buddhist schools would say that if you investigate and don't find anything through your investigation, then that would imply the object does not exist at all. So according to them since it can be found through investigation, it exists inherently.

However, the Prasangika go further, arguing that the lack of inherent existence is not only dependent on whether or not you find the object through investigation, but whether or not it exists independently, without it being labelled or imputed by the mind.

The commentary reasons that mind does not exist inherently *because it does not abide inherently on the six sense powers*. If the question is, 'does the mind exist?', then the answer is 'yes, it definitely does exist'. We cannot deny the fact that the mind exists: our own experience proves it. However, the point here is that while the mind depends on the six sense powers, it does not abide inherently on these six powers.

The eye consciousness, for example, does abide in dependence on the eye sense power. However, the eye consciousness does not abide inherently on the eye sense power. Likewise, the nose consciousness depends on the nose sense power but does not abide on it inherently.

If we go through all of the six sense consciousnesses, we find that none of them abide inherently on the six sense powers. As explained in the commentary, *it does not abide inherently on the six sense objects of form, sound, scents, tastes, tactile sensations and objects of mental consciousness.*

Here again you can refresh your memory. The six primary consciousnesses depend upon the six sense spheres, referred to here as the six sense powers. There are six corresponding types of object perceived by the six consciousnesses – forms by the eye consciousness, sounds by the ear consciousness, tastes by taste consciousness, and so forth.

The point here is that the six primary consciousnesses do abide in dependence on the six sense powers, as well as the six sense objects. Although not specifically mentioned here, when we extend this reasoning, we can see that if the consciousnesses were to exist inherently or independently, they would not have to abide in dependence upon the six sense powers and the six sense objects. The fact that they do depend on these shows that each sense consciousness cannot exist inherently, independently in and of itself.

As the commentary further explains, *it also does not abide in between these two*, i.e. the six sense powers and the six sense objects, *or the collection of these two*. If mind does not abide inherently on the six sense powers and the six sense objects individually, there's no way it could abide on the collection of the sense powers and objects, because a collection is none other than the sum of its individual parts.

The commentary continues: *Remember the seven-fold analysis of the chariot as explained in the Introduction to the Middle Way.*

When I presented this in the teachings on the Middle Way, those of you who attended will recall the reasoning referred to here: the chariot does not exist inherently on its individual parts, such as the wheel, hubs or spokes; and it also does not exist on the shape of the chariot, the collection of all the parts and so forth. Therefore, through this analysis, we come to the conclusion that the chariot cannot exist inherently.

The mind also does not abide inherently in the internally elaborated person labelled by the non-Buddhists... This refers to the different organs within our body, like the liver, gall bladder, intestines, and so forth. So the mind does not abide internally on these organs.

And, as further explained, *...not on the outer hands and other limbs, and it cannot be found to abide inherently in another way, apart from the inside and outside. It is not the body or truly something else other than the body, the mind is not mixed with the body, and it also does not abide as some inherent object apart or separate from the body.*

So, in every instance of what is labelled by some as the person – the very body itself – the mind cannot be found to exist inherently either inside, on the internal organs, or

outside, on the limbs and so forth, or in between, or even outside of the body. This, then, exhausts every possibility for the mind to exist inherently. When the mind cannot be found inside, or outside, or mixed with the body, and does not abide as some inherent object separate from the body, then that exhausts all the possibilities of finding an inherently existent mind.

As the commentary concludes: *Because it does not exist inherently in the slightest way, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind is naturally gone beyond sorrow.* Having exhausted all possibilities for the mind to exist inherently, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind within sentient beings is referred to as that which has naturally gone beyond sorrow. Emptiness itself would not be called liberation, but is referred to as an entity that has naturally gone beyond sorrow.

2.3.2.1.3.2. Showing that the preceding sense consciousness does not exist inherently¹

104. *If consciousness exists before the object of knowledge,*

In reference to which object is it generated?

If consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous,

In reference to which object is it generated?

105ab *However, if it exists subsequently to the object,*

At that time what is consciousness generated from?

The commentary explains:

If the sense consciousness exists before the object of knowledge as it is not preceded by a focal condition, in reference to which focal object is it generated? If the consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous, then in reference to which object is it generated? When the sense consciousness is not generated, the focal condition is not generated, so it cannot be generated, and once the focal condition is generated the consciousness is also generated and does not need a generator anymore.

If, however, the sense consciousness exists subsequently to the object of knowledge, at that time from what condition is the sense consciousness inherently generated?

This is not valid.

If it is generated from the disintegration of the previous moment, then a sprout would also have to be generated from a burnt seed. If it is generated without the disintegration of the preceding, then is it generated with another moment in-between or not? In the first case, it becomes impossible to be generated directly. In the latter case, as there is no interval in relation to its full nature, they become mixed within the one moment. If the interval relates only to one part and not to the whole, then its true existence dissolves, and it becomes non-truly existent.

The commentary begins with the statement: *if the sense consciousness exists before the object of knowledge...*, which is clearly an absurdity. If the object of knowledge was, for

¹ Geshe-la indicated that there may have been a typo in the Tibetan text because the nga (five) here should be spelt la nga-ta nga. In Tibetan, the word could read 'five' or 'preceding' depending on the spelling. So the heading refers to 'preceding' or 'existing before' rather than the 'five' indicated in the printed commentary. This revised heading also suits the explanation of the verse.

example, a form perceived by the eye consciousness, and if you were to then say that the eye consciousness perceiving form existed before the form, then how could it be an eye consciousness perceiving form when form was not around at the moment of perception? It could not be called an eye consciousness perceiving form if it existed before the form.

The reason for the absurdity of this possibility is: *...as it is not preceded by a focal condition, in reference to which focal object is it generated?* Again, taking the example of the eye sense consciousness perceiving form, the focal condition for that eye sense consciousness perceiving form is form – that is the focal condition. So, if form itself didn't exist, because the focal condition is lacking, how could that sense consciousness perceiving form arise? This should be quite clear.

Having dealt with that absurdity, the commentary continues: *If the consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous....* Having just explained that a sense consciousness could not exist before its object of knowledge, the Prasangikas proceed to refute the next possibility – that consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous. A sense consciousness can only arise in relation to an object that it is perceiving. So if they were to be *...simultaneous, then in reference to which object is it generated?* This is yet another absurdity.

The commentary further argues that *when the sense consciousness is not generated, the focal condition cannot be generated; once the focal condition is generated the consciousness is also generated and does not need a generator anymore. If, however, the sense consciousness exists subsequently to the object of knowledge, from what condition is the sense consciousness inherently generated?*

Again, because the arising of a sense awareness or a consciousness requires the condition of an object, if there is no condition, then how could it be generated?

Then another hypothesis is presented: *If a sense consciousness is generated from the disintegration of the previous moment, then that implies that a sprout for example, would also have to be generated from a burnt seed.* Again, the logic is quite clear. If the sense consciousness were to arise because of the disintegration of the previous moment, then you would have to say a sprout could be generated from a burnt seed.

The commentary further argues: *If you say it is generated without the disintegration of the preceding, then is it generated with another moment in-between or not?* In other words, is the sense consciousness generated from another moment, between the two, or is it not? *In the first case, if it were generated in the moment between it would be impossible to be generated directly.* Because there is another moment in-between, you cannot say that it was directly generated from the previous moment.

In the latter case, as there is no interval in relation to its full nature, they become mixed within the one moment. This is arguing that if the interval relates only to one part and not the whole, true existence dissolves and the consciousness becomes non-truly existent.

If you were pay attention and follow the reasoning and logic, it will then become quite clear to you. It might not

become clear from just glancing at it once – you need to read it again and again.

The main point to be understood here is that if we were to simply investigate the existence of the conventional or illusory mind, then this analysis does not adhere to the mode of investigation required to find the meaning of ultimate reality. It is only when you attempt to ascertain whether an inherently existent mind exists or not that you will be adhering to an analysis that will bring you to the understanding of ultimate reality – that the lack of inherent existence of mind is the emptiness of the mind.

So, according to the Prasangika, the main point is that if our research and analysis is based on the existence of the conventional mind, we can all agree there is such a mind; rather we need to analyse and ascertain whether the mind exists inherently or not. In order to get an accurate, unmistakable understanding of the ultimate view asserted by the Prasangika, the investigation must be based upon whether a mind exists inherently or not. And, if it were to exist inherently, how does it exist? Where can you find an inherently existent mind?

This process of analysis, of going through every possibility of finding where an inherently existent mind might exist, and then coming to the conclusion that such a mind cannot be found, leads to the understanding of the ultimate reality of the mind, which is that it does not exist inherently. Since the mind cannot be found to exist inherently anywhere, realising the lack of inherent existence of the mind, is realising the emptiness of the mind.

If we are not careful, it is easy to take a wrong turn. If we were to investigate whether a conventional mind exists or not, and came to the conclusion that a conventional mind cannot be found, then we have actually come to a completely wrong conclusion and fall into the extreme view of nihilism. If we came to the conclusion that a conventional or illusory mind cannot be found, then that would mean the conventional mind does not exist. That would be a wrong understanding.

These are really subtle points that one needs to keep in mind when embarking on process of obtaining the correct understanding of the view.

If it were the case that not finding something is understanding its ultimate reality, then quantum physicists who do research on looking for the smallest particle of an atom, would be gaining the understanding of emptiness. From what I have heard, scientists have concluded that there is no such thing as the smallest particle: they come to a point where they cannot say 'this is the smallest particle'. But have they understood emptiness because they haven't found the smallest particle? I don't think that would be the case. Right?

I think you call this particular branch of science quantum physics. His Holiness mentioned this recently in his Kalachakra teaching at Bodhgaya. Do you recall that?

2.3.2.1.4. *The meditation on the close placement by mindfulness on phenomena*²

The next two lines of the verse relates to this:

105cd. *In such a way the generation of all phenomena
Is not realised.*

The commentary explains:

In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent, because, as it is taught in the *Sutra Requested by the Superior Inexhaustible Discriminating Wisdom*, one should realise all compounded and un-compounded phenomena as non-inherently existent.

In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent. This translation here doesn't convey that the Tibetan word for Dharma, *chö*, and the term for all existent phenomena is one and the same. The definition of *chö* or phenomena in general, is 'that which holds its own identity', which can also relate to the Dharma. So, while *chö* in general would refer to all existing phenomena, when we are referring to *chö* as the practice of Dharma, then it carries the meaning 'that which holds you from falling into a lower existence'.

For example, if we hold onto something to stop us from falling into a precipice, that object or factor would be protecting us from falling. In the same way, the practice of Dharma – for example, observing ethics or morality – is the factor that protects us from falling into the lower realms. So this meaning of 'holding its own identity' can be applied here as 'holding us from falling into the lower realms'. So observing morality is what it protects you from falling into the lower realms.

This is definitely the case. It is said that if you put morality into practice, then this will definitely protect you from falling into the lower realms; you will not be reborn in the lower realms in the next life.

Another way of interpreting the meaning of 'holding its own identity' in relation to Dharma practice is to understand that Dharma holds you back from mistaken or wrong conduct. Any form of practice that involves the abiding in, and accumulation of, virtue will definitely protect you from misconduct. The practice of meditation is exactly that – it protects us from wrong views, mistaken and negative states of minds, and so forth.

Coming back to the general meaning of *chö* as 'that which it holds its own identity', I've explained previously that if we were take a glass as an example of a phenomenon, we can see that it holds its own identity. As soon as we look at the glass, we can identify it exactly and refer to it as a glass. We don't mistake it for something else – say, a book or a table – but instinctively and automatically relate to it as a glass, that is because of the functionality of the glass. It is precisely because the glass continuously holds its own identity, that we don't mistake it for something else.

The commentary continues: *In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent, because, as it is taught in the Sutra Requested by the Superior Inexhaustible Discriminating Wisdom...* In

this particular sutra, the Buddha mentioned that *one should realise all compounded and un-compounded phenomena are non-inherently existent*. So, as the Buddha himself said, all existents included in compounded and un-compounded phenomena are to be seen as non-inherently existent.

We will conclude our session for the evening, and follow with a recitation of the dedication chapter of the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. This is to dedicate our merits to the late mother of Sandup Tsering who passed away recently.

Sandup himself came to visit me just last Friday with a *khatag* and an offering, informing me he was on the way to India to see his mum who was critically ill, in her last stages. So he came with the request for some prayers and made an offering. Then he went to India, and apparently soon after he arrived there, his mum passed away.

Sandup himself is like part of our family. We knew his mother quite well too. Many of the older students would have gone to her home many times, whenever we went to India, for lunch. Sandup would always make sure we were invited to his home. He would hire a small mini-bus – in Indian terms, he had to pay quite a bit to hire it – so that we could go and visit his home and his parents. So we've had many meals with his parents.

It is also good to note that both Sandup and his younger sister Namgyal took the opportunity to really serve their parents well, particularly their mum. This year, Sandup went to India earlier and spent some time with his parents, and last year he went as well. The year before last, Namgyal was there for about three months.

It is good to take note of how they really did serve their parents to the best of their capacity. For example, for Namgyal, staying there three months meant leaving her children here. While she would have had concern for her children, nevertheless she saw the importance of looking after her own mother and went to India, sacrificing her salary for three months. Also, Sandup went last year and this year spent some time with his parents.

These are good examples for us to take note of. If our parents are already deceased, then of course, whenever we do prayers and dedication practice, we dedicate our merits to them. But if we have parents who are still alive, this is a good example for us to serve our parents well, in whatever way we can. While we have the opportunity, we do the best we can.

I understand that when Sandup's mum was taken to hospital in Bangalore for tests and treatment around four years ago, it was actually the first year that His Holiness began Lam Rim teachings there. Her visit to the hospital coincided with His Holiness coming to Bangalore for a day on the way to give teachings at the monastery. So Sandup's mum was able to be brought to the reception of the place where His Holiness was staying. His Holiness stopped and actually came close to her and she had her picture with him. His Holiness advised her that it was good for her to have really good treatment and stay in the hospital for as long as she needed. And if she had any difficulty with the finances, His Holiness said he would ask his office to assist.

² In the enumeration of headings on 22 November 2016, the heading reads The Close Placement by Mindfulness on Phenomena

This again shows the incredible compassion His Holiness has, especially for destitute people. He shows great concern and extends his love and compassion to them.

As for as Sandup's mum, after having that encounter with His Holiness, she commented: "Now I have no regrets. Even if I die I have no regrets."

Sandup's offering consists of one hundred dollars to me. My intention for this is for the Study Group to host the lunch for His Holiness's birthday, as we regularly do. I want to contribute this money towards that. Maybe Margie could keep that for me? Now we can do the prayers for the dedication. *[Group recitation]*

[Serving of tea]

When we recite OM AH HUM three times in the tea offering, the **first recitation** represents purifying all the defilements, such as the bad taste and impurities of the offering, the colour and shape, and so on - all the impurities subside. The **second recitation** transforms the offering substance into uncontaminated nectar. The **third recitation** signifies that the offering, which has now been transformed into nectar, increases expansively. This expanse of nectar is then offered to the gurus and buddhas.

The actual offering occurs when one generates the thought that the offering has been accepted. Accepting these offerings generates unceasing, uncontaminated bliss in the gurus' and buddhas' minds, which is the actual offering. So this is good to keep in mind.

Then we can think about the offering syllables individually. The OM represents the indestructible body of the Buddha Vairochana. The AH is the syllable of the indestructible speech of the Buddha Amitabha. The HUM is the syllable of the indestructible mind of Akshobya.

The HUM represents purifying all the defilements or impurities of the offering substances. There is nothing that cannot be eliminated; there are no defilements or impurities that cannot be eliminated by the indestructible mind of the enlightened being. So the HUM specifically represents that which eliminates all defilements.

The AH represents the transformation of the impure substances into pure nectar. That is because of the indestructible speech of Amitabha. Because AH represents Amitabha, it has mastered all the substances; there is nothing that cannot be transformed by the speech of Amitabha.

The OM is the indestructible syllable of Vairochana, and represents the body of the enlightened being, which represents the body. It is through the enlightened body that innumerable, infinite numbers of manifestations arise and are sent forth. So the OM represents the increasing of the pure substances. To be able to satisfy all sentient beings in accordance to their particular needs - that many bodies of innumerable enlightened bodies are manifested to assist and help each of them. This is how we need to understand the enlightened activities of the buddhas.

So if we can incorporate this understanding when making offerings, it is said that our offering will become highly meaningful.

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

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Edited Version

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Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 February 2017

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

As we have just attempted to do in our short session, it is good to engage in meditation regularly like this. Engaging in meditation is a way to help to subdue the mind and in particular to bring the mind to a more peaceful state. The more we experience a calm and peaceful state of mind, the more it will contribute to a genuine sense of happiness.

Having a clear and bright state of mind is essential to our wellbeing. It ensures that wherever we go, and whatever we do will be of the utmost benefit. Meditation practice helps ensure that, through familiarity, we gradually become more and more accustomed to maintaining a positive and virtuous state of mind. The more we practise in this way, the more likely it is that we will achieve that state of mind.

If, along with a calm and peaceful state of mind, we can willingly accept hardships and difficulties then that will help us to overcome those difficulties. The fact is that we are bound to come across challenges and difficulties at different periods in our life. It's safe to say that a problem of some sort is always around the corner, and the best way to deal with any problem is by willingly accepting it.

We have the great fortune of studying this incredibly profound text. Pdraig recently asked me whether there is a specific text on the study of logic. My response was that there is no better text about logic than this very text we are studying now, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. The logic used by Shantideva is in accordance with the logic of the great masters Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti. All three were very, very intelligent logicians who used very meticulous reasoning as a way to refute the assertions of other great masters such as Shantirakshita, who was also a great scholar. It is good to understand that when great scholars debate with each other they use very refined and subtle logic.

When the lineage masters of the lam rim are traced back, there are those who held the Prasangika-Madhyamika point of view and those who held the Svatantrika-Madhyamika point of view and so forth. This distinction is specifically pointed out

His Holiness the Dalai Lama regularly reminds us that we are following the Nalanda tradition. There are seventeen renowned pandits who were great scholars of this tradition, one of whom is Shantideva. Their analysis of the teachings was done in debate using reasoning and logic. Of course, the incomparably kind Buddha's teachings are the basis; however, they are not accepted at face value. Rather, they are analysed and re-analysed through reasoning and logic. Then, having been thoroughly investigated in this way, they have been established as being the ultimate intention of the Buddha. Through this analysis and debate, those who once held, for example, Mind Only School's views are later converted to the Prasangika or Consequentialist Middle Way school of thought. The way this is done is through logic.

We can use this approach on a practical level in our everyday life. Rather than being gullible and accepting whatever others say, we should only accept what is presented after carefully analysing using logic and reasoning. Investigate and use your reasoning skills to see whether what is being presented to you is valid or not, i.e. whether there is a logical reason to accept it or not. Then you will not be easily misled or influenced by negative friends. If you find yourself being easily influenced by negative friends, then that is a sign that you are not using logic and reasoning.

Some consider monks who are engaged in studies with a lot of debate to be somewhat stubborn. That is only because they do not accept things lightly without sound reasoning. For example, what may seem like a simple assertion such as, 'a vase is impermanent', is not simply accepted by saying 'yes, yes, it is impermanent'. Rather, it is debated for many hours, sometimes up to the early hours of the morning: Why is the vase impermanent? How can it proven to be impermanent? What would the consequence be if the vase were not impermanent? ...and so forth.

In the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva, who holds the Prasangika point of view, asserts that conventional (or illusory) truths lack inherent existence. The lower schools, such as the Realists, use reasoning to assert that things and phenomena do exist inherently, and the Prasangika present logical reasons to refute that.

The process presented in the teachings is that one reaches a final understanding and realisation through the process of first hearing instructions from others; then contemplating the understanding gained from hearing them; and finally meditating on the understanding gained from contemplation.

What one understands initially is based on what hears from others. Then based on the understanding gained from hearing, one uses one's intelligence to further investigate and analyse that understanding. This deeper insight and understanding derived from thorough analysis is unlike the understanding gained from merely hearing the instruction. That is because the wisdom one gains through contemplation and thinking is a wisdom that comes from within. One does not leave it just at that analytical understanding, but through meditation one takes it further to gain a deeper, and more profound level of understanding.

As explained in the teachings, the understanding one gains from hearing an instruction is an understanding based on the power of others, whereas the understanding one gains through contemplating the instruction is gained from one's own side. It is good to understand that distinction.

We can apply this on a more practical level to academic studies. I often hear of people finding it hard to choose a subject to study. If they were to use their reasoning and logic to investigate, say, five possible subjects, then through analysis they will be able to see which one of these five is the best choice.

In very simple terms, the advice is to first listen, from which you will gain some understanding. Don't leave it at that, but analyse that understanding further. Then you can use that understanding gained through analysis and investigation for the practice of meditation.

This is all just a prelude to show how, by paying a bit of attention to this seemingly complicated topic, it will become clearer if we just go through it slowly.

2.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE TWO TRUTHS WOULD BE INVALID

This has three subdivisions:

2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity

2.3.2.2.2. Refuting the consequence of becoming endless

2.3.2.2.3. Showing there is no proof for the true existence of object and consciousness

2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity

Here the proponent is a **Realist** who says that if there is no truly existent illusory truth, then there could be no ultimate truth either. Therefore both truths would cease to exist. That, the Realists say, is the absurd consequence of positing the lack of true existence.

*106ab. In case the illusory does thus not exist;
How could both truths exist on it?*

The commentary begins the explanation of these two lines as an argument.

Previously object and object possessor were refuted as inherently existent, having been labelled as earlier and later. In that case, the same fault would apply to their illusory existence and, as there is no basis for the designation of any phenomenon if inherent existence is impossible, the illusory becomes non-existent. As a result, how can the two truths exist on it? They become non-existent.

Previously object and object possessor were refuted as inherently existent, relates back to the previous verse where the consciousness and the object of knowledge are refuted as being inherently existent on the basis of being labelled as earlier and later. The same fault applies to labelling them as illusory, as there will be no basis for the designation of any phenomena if inherent existence is impossible.

This is the Realists' presentation of what they see as the absurd consequence that would follow if all phenomena were to lack inherent existence. Their conclusion is *how can the two truths* be something that lacks inherent existence? This is a rhetorical question implying that the two truths could not exist.

Simply put, their argument is that if the illusory does not exist then ultimate truth would also not exist, and thus both truths would be non-existent.

A specific example of this logic is that if a vase, which has a conventional existence (and is therefore an illusory truth) were not to exist, then it would be impossible for the ultimate reality of the vase to exist as well. If the existence of the vase is negated then naturally there is no vase, and the ultimate reality or the emptiness of the vase cannot be established because there is no vase. So their logic is that if the illusory truth lacks inherent existence, then by implication it does not exist, and if illusory truth does not exist then ultimate truth could not exist as well.

The commentary continues:

If it is the case that you accept that the objects of form, sound and so forth exist truly to the perception of the illusion that grasps at them as inherently existent, but lack true existence from their side, and exist in an illusory manner.

Basically, the Realists saying to the Prasangika 'following your logic if you were to accept that the objects of form, sound and so forth exist truly to the perception of the illusory, which grasps at them as inherently existent, but they lack true existence from their side and thus they exist in illusory

manner. Then the following assumed absurdity of the Prasangika would arise.

The next two lines read:

*106cd. If it is illusory due to another,
How can sentient beings go beyond misery?*

The commentary explains:

If we look at this, then just as the rope lacks a snake from its side, but exists as snake for the perception of the grasping at the rope as snake, your illusory existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness. If this is looked at, then how can sentient beings go beyond sorrow even conventionally? It follows that liberation becomes impossible – because everything that exists has been established as the mere delusion of a distortion. If this is accepted, then it follows that to comprehend the view for the purpose of liberation becomes meaningless.

In the Realists' arguments against the assumed Madhyamika position *if we look at this* refers to looking from the point of view of the logical consequence (according to the Realists assumption) of why the Madhyamika's assertion of illusory truth is flawed and absurd.

The example used is when under certain conditions a rope appears to be a snake, although in reality there is no snake there at all. To the mind perceiving the rope as a snake, it is as if one is seeing an actual snake and thus fear arises. However, the snake does not exist at all upon the rope.

Similarly *your illusory existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness*. Here the Realists are arguing against the Prasangika position of an illusory existence, saying 'your claim that there is illusory conventional existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness' but actually it does not exist. So *how can sentient beings go beyond sorrow even conventionally?*

It follows that liberation would be impossible, because everything that exists has been established as the mere delusion of a distortion. According to you Madhyamikas, the Realists say, things exist only to a distorted mind, and do not exist in reality. So *if this is accepted* – which is of course is not what the Madhyamikas say – *then it follows that to comprehend the view for the purpose of liberation becomes meaningless*. Here the Realists are using their own form of sound logic saying, 'We both accept that we want to obtain liberation and that the whole purpose of establishing the correct understanding of reality is so that we gain liberation. However, if we follow your assertions that purpose becomes meaningless'.

The next two verses serve as the answer presented by the Madhyamika.

*107. This separate mental superstition
Is not our illusory.
If it is subsequently ascertained, it exists.
If it is not, it is not even an illusion.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Regarding what is referred to as illusory existent accepted by the Madhyamika: that which is merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping by a separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object, is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system. In our system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as the objects of the

view realising the mode of abiding are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes.

The answer presented here by the Madhyamika, specifically the **Prasangika-Madhyamika**, first presents the incorrect view of illusory truth that the Realists assume them to hold, and say 'this is not how we assert the illusory'.

The commentary reads:

That merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping, by separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object, this is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system. In our own system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as 'the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes.

First the Prasangika-Madhyamika present the Realists' assumption of the Madhyamikas' assertion with respect to conventional or illusory truth, which is *that merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping, is a separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object*. Then they reject this presentation saying: *this is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system*. What is being established here is that the illusory truth that the Realists' claim is the Madhyamika view is not accepted in our system.

Then the actual the Madhyamika view of the meaning of *existing in an illusory conventional manner* is presented. *Because all phenomena posited as 'the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner. If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence ceases to exist.*

This is really a very profound presentation that establishes how beings and the environment exist in a conventional or illusory manner while being empty of inherent existence. His Holiness Dalai Lama emphasises this point regularly in his teachings. I have also explained the meaning of this essential point previously.

It is to be understood as presented in this verse of the *Guru Puja*:

Samsara and nirvana lack even an atom of true existence
While cause and effect and dependent arising are infallible.
I seek your blessings to discern the import of Nagarjuna's intent -

That these two are complementary and not contradictory.

The presentation here in the text expresses the ultimate view of the forerunners of the Prasangika view, Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, as well as the great scholars such as Shantideva who followed them. We need to gain a good understating of that which is the crux of the Prasangika view.

The essential point being presented here is that there is no contradiction between appearance and emptiness but rather a union of the two.

More specifically, as presented in the commentary '*the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence*. When phenomena are seen as being empty of inherent existence, that enables the establishment of actions and activities as being generated and so forth in an illusory manner. The point being presented here is that the understanding of emptiness and the understanding of the interdependent nature of phenomena, are not contradictory but rather complementary. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, it is at this point that one's understanding of the ultimate view is thoroughly established.

Understanding the empty nature of phenomena actually relates to subtle illusory or conventional truth. Through not understanding this essential point, other schools take the wrong turn and establish illusory truth as being inherently existent. According to the other schools, if things lack inherent existence then that would negate all existence.

It is essential to have the correct view of emptiness. If one is not able to establish the interdependent nature of all phenomena, and thus the illusory truth or existence of phenomena, then there is a danger of completely negating the existence of all phenomena, and that is where one would fall into the extreme of nihilism. So we really need to understand the non-contradictory relationship between conventional or illusionary phenomena and emptiness. To gain a clear understanding of this, the commentary emphasises this point when it says, *ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner*.

As further explained in the commentary, *if it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence ceases to exist*. The understanding of illusory truth refers here to gaining the understanding of subtle illusory truth.

This point refers to the agent, the action and the activity or karma that is created. The **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** school posits the lack true existence of the agent, action and activity (karma that is created) that is performed, but they are not able to establish the lack of inherent existence of the action, agent and activity.

Only the **Prasangika Middle Way School** is able to establish, through logic and reasoning, that the agent, the action and activity lack inherent existence. There is not even an atom of inherent existence in all three. It is only the Prasangika-Madhyamika School that presents the profound logic and reasoning of how the lack of inherent existence, rather than negating existence, actually establishes the existence of the illusory truth - this is the unique presentation of the Prasangika Middle Way school. It is in this way that one gains an understanding of subtle illusory or conventional truth. As I have presented many times in previous teachings, this has the same meaning as the lines in *The Heart Sutra*

which say, *form is empty, emptiness of is form*. It all comes down to the same point.

When the understanding of interdependent origination dawns upon oneself, it enhances the understanding of emptiness, and when the understanding of emptiness dawns upon oneself, it enhances the understanding of interdependent origination. At that point, one has come to the correct understanding of the Prasangika view.

What this means is that a prime cognition establishes interdependent origination without having to rely on another prime cognition. The right view of emptiness is established when the same primary awareness or cognition that establishes interdependent origination is also able to establish the empty nature of the phenomena and vice versa. When the prime cognition that realises emptiness is also able to establish interdependent origination, one will then have gained the correct and unmistakable understanding of the Prasangika view.

Although elaborate explanations are available to help enhance our understanding, it is good to begin with a simple but correct understanding of what is being presented here. Then, based on that, one can further expand that understanding with a more elaborate explanation. So it is good to begin with this simple understanding, which will shed light on the correct view.

As presented in the teachings we have this mistaken perception of the self as being inherently existent, and existing independently, which is called grasping at an inherently existent self. First, we need to understand what that wrong conception is. What does it mean to grasp at an inherently existent self?

With a good understanding of what that misconception is then, as the teachings present, we can go further. The self that is perceived by the wrong conception of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self does not exist in the way that it is perceived by that wrong conception. What does that mean? If such a self were to exist, then how would it exist? As one begins to understand the absurdity of a self that does not depend on any other factor, existing in and of itself, then the understanding of the lack of an inherently existent self begins to dawn upon oneself. One is getting closer to the correct understanding of selflessness.

When engaging with the explanations in the teachings, we may think, 'Oh, we need to realise selflessness as a way to overcome the misconception of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self'. However, we run the risk of becoming wrapped up in such words. Using these explanations to relate only to other phenomena is the wrong approach.

The proper approach is to relate the teaching to oneself. Setting aside the investigation of other phenomena for the time being, look at how we perceive ourselves, and then try to understand the lack of inherent existence of one's own self. It is essential to understand how grasping a truly existent self, is a misconception that we hold on to at all times. That is what we need to target - overcoming the misconception of grasping at an inherently and truly existent personal self. If we take this approach when contemplating selflessness, then we will reach a point where our meditation practice becomes more meaningful.

We might assume a rigid posture and try to focus single-pointedly on one object, which may have some effect in settling one's mind. But that alone will not help to overcome the afflictions within us, which serve as the very root of all

our misconceptions. Grasping at true existence will not be shattered if we just focus single-pointedly on an object just to calm our mind.

We have access to the teachings, and we have heard them many times, so it is good to actually think about the profound explanations on emptiness again and again. We won't accomplish much of an understanding just by reading the texts just occasionally and glancing at them once in a while. It is only by really contemplating them again and again that we develop a deeper understanding. Of course, emptiness is a difficult topic to understand, and not easy to meditate on.

When I was in India recently, there was a young geshe staying with us. We had quite a few discussions and he commented, 'Oh, there are so many explanations about the right view and so forth. What do you think about it?' I related some points that I understand as the correct view. Of course, I said that this was just my understanding. He is a learned geshe himself, and he was quite interested in what I had to say.

Last year I had a discussion on meditating on emptiness with another geshe, who was from the Gaden Jang-Tse monastery. I commented, that meditating on emptiness might not be too difficult if one has a bit of understanding, however at our level, meditating on impermanence seems to be really difficult. I made the comment that it seems that we really need a good understanding of impermanence to be able to shatter clinging to the worldly affairs focusing merely on this life. One can safely say that without a proper understanding of impermanence, one cannot even practise the Dharma properly. Leaving aside emptiness, we find meditation on impermanence hard enough.

When I responded in that way, the other geshe said, 'I was attempting to dig out some understanding of emptiness from a scholar, but I got only an explanation of how to overcome the eight worldly dharmas'. But then he said, 'Well, of course I agree that it is very difficult to overcome the eight worldly dharmas'. So, he understood my point that without an understanding of impermanence, one cannot overcome the eight worldly concerns.

The main points that I emphasise regularly is that we have this great opportunity now of having access to the Dharma, and we should not waste this incredible fortunate time. The main point of practice, as the great masters of the past have emphasised, comes down to the ways to cultivate love and compassion, and being kind to others. The benefits of this are obvious. You can definitely see that if you are kind and considerate to others, you will receive benefit yourself in return. On the other hand, if you engage in harmful intentions towards others, you will be harmed yourself. This is very obvious. The essential point is developing a sense of genuine concern for others, and then further enhancing that love and compassion. As I often emphasise, this is really the main point of our practice.

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

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Edited Version

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 March 2017

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

As we just did in that short session, it would be good to engage in this *tong-len* practice regularly. When doing so, incorporate in the visualisation that you are surrounded by all living beings in human form who are experiencing all the various types of sufferings. By contemplating the various types of suffering one will then generate the natural wish for them to be free from suffering. This in turn instils the mind of love and compassion towards other sentient beings, wishing them to be free from suffering and to be endowed with happiness.

On this basis, when the wish for them to be free from suffering is further strengthened, one will develop the determination to take their suffering upon oneself. When you develop a mind that is unable to bear their suffering, then at that stage you will be able to willingly accept taking the sufferings of others on yourself and give them your own happiness. When you engage in practice with this visualisation it will help to ensure the practice becomes more meaningful.

Indeed when you contemplate in this way, focussing on all living beings (not leaving any sentient being out) and wishing them to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness, that becomes what is called 'unbiased' love and 'unbiased' compassion. This is the most valuable and most esteemed love that one can extend towards all other sentient beings. There is no doubt that you accumulate extensive merit and also purify heavy negative karmas by engaging in this practice. Thus this is an incredibly powerful practice.

The more we familiarise our mind with unbiased love and compassion, the more readily that sentiment will arise. When we feel an unbiased love and compassion towards others, there is no way for anger towards others to develop in our mind. If we can protect our mind from generating anger, then that's an incredibly powerful practice.

Indeed, when you generate the mind of wishing the other to be free from suffering, then the stronger that mind, the more it will naturally protect the mind from feeling hostility, and causing harm to others. If you don't wish the other to experience any suffering, then you wouldn't in your right mind intentionally go out of your way to harm others. Likewise, the more genuinely you develop the mind of wishing them to be happy, the more natural is your intention to benefit others. 'Benefitting' means engaging in the means and ways to bring happiness to others. So here, you need to see how this is a very crucial practice for developing a really positive state of mind within yourself.

These practices are not to be taken lightly. In terms of your own mental wellbeing, there is no greater practice than to meditate on love and compassion. A lot of unwanted problems and difficulties will naturally subside as you focus on the wellbeing of others. Most of

our problems are actually created by ourselves, to the extent of thinking only about one's own wellbeing. When we focus only on our own selfish needs, our own happiness and wellbeing, then the slightest discomfort becomes a huge problem that is hard to bear.

Most of our problems are actually created by just focussing on 'me, me, me ... my own happiness', and always thinking about oneself. If we were to train our mind to actually focus on others' wellbeing, then naturally our own happiness would no longer be the main focus. Therefore, even when conditions are not so good, you will not feel weighed down, because you are not focussing just on your own happiness. Your own suffering doesn't become a big issue because your main concern would be how to relieve others from suffering and bring them happiness.

You can see these are essential points for your own wellbeing; developing love and compassion actually brings about a more genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness for oneself. On the other hand, when you are obsessed with your own wellbeing all the time, then anything that obstructs your needs will seem like an enemy. The more you focus on your own selfish needs, the more likely it is that there are many who will oppose you, and thus you gain more and more enemies. Whereas when we focus on the wellbeing of others, and develop love and compassion toward them, then they will naturally appear dear and close to you. Then, when you are with others, you'll be at ease, feeling joy and happiness rather than feeling agitated and uncomfortable. That is an essential point to consider for your own wellbeing.

To give a more immediate example, take a relationship between two people. If you adopt an attitude such as, "if it's fine with you, then it's fine with me too", then this brings a sense of ease and harmony to the relationship. But when you hold the opposite attitude i.e. "although it is fine with you, I cannot accept it", then the moment this attitude arises it strengthens the conceited sense of 'me' and 'I'. Then there is much more agitation and unease in one's mind because of the strong sense of self-importance, rather than consideration for the other's needs. These are important points to consider. When we develop a genuine sense of unbiased love and compassion, these negative states of mind, which cause a lot of agony and unrest and even hostility and confrontation, will naturally subside and our minds will be much more at ease. I emphasise that you should try to cultivate, more and more, the attitude of "if it's fine with you, then it's fine with me. I will agree and accept".

It is worthwhile for you to consider what states of mind cause you happiness and what states of mind cause you agony. We all wish for happiness, we all wish for a peaceful mind; no one intentionally wants to have a troubled and agitated mind. So, through this practice, you become aware that the real cause of your happiness is within yourself. And likewise, the real cause for your troubles also lies within yourself. They do not come from an external source; ultimately, the main cause is within.

The main cause that disrupts your own happiness and peace of mind is a mind that wishes harm towards others. This mind of wanting to cause harm towards others comes from none other than only focussing on your own needs, your own personal wellbeing and happiness. This self-cherishing mind focussing just on your own wellbeing at the expense of others' happiness and wellbeing is very tricky because, instinctively, when we think about our own wellbeing, it seems like we are

caring for ourselves. Because we want happiness we think, "I need to take care of my own interests". But because this is an erroneous way of achieving a state of happiness for yourself, in effect it brings you more trouble and more unhappiness. When you exchange that attitude of only cherishing yourself, with focussing on others and cherishing them, then your own happiness is naturally fulfilled on the side.

If we take the teachings literally, they may seem to suggest that by cherishing others we should neglect our own wellbeing and happiness, but actually it is the opposite. If we genuinely cherish others and think about their wellbeing, it contributes to our own happiness and wellbeing. So you are not neglecting yourself, but rather taking care of yourself more holistically and the happiness you gain is much sounder and much more profound. On the other hand, you won't experience true happiness if you focus merely on your own wellbeing with a self-cherishing mind. These are essential points. In our meditation session here, we may focus on these things and do some visualisation, however it is most important to think about these points regularly in our everyday life.

When you go about in everyday situations, really try to contemplate these things, and constantly remind yourself of the value of cherishing other sentient beings and feeling love and compassion towards them. That is how you will regularly be able to protect your mind in everyday life situations.

Another way of protecting your mind from unnecessary angst and unhappiness is in situations where others are doing well. If others are experiencing success and things are going well for them then, depending on your state of mind, these situations can bring you either agony or a sense of joy and happiness. When, through meditation, the mind of love and compassion and the strong wish to benefit the other has taken root, and becomes a core attitude, then seeing others experience success and happiness will bring joy to the mind. If your mind is familiar with wishing beings benefit and happiness, then when they experience success that will naturally contribute to your own joy and happiness. If someone who is not familiar with the wish of benefitting others, particularly with unbiased love and compassion, sees others experiencing success, they can start to feel jealous and that brings agony to their mind.

We can see here that the same situation, depending on our attitude and how we interpret it, can either bring joy or the unhappiness of jealousy. These are essential points to investigate. As I have mentioned in the past, looking at our mind, detecting our states of mind and the follies of our mind, and the tricks that our mind plays, can be quite amusing. We can see what's going on in our mind and that is a more worthwhile investigation rather than investigating what others are doing. Using logic and investigation in the right way is really what practice comes down to. Investigating what brings you and others genuine happiness and adopting that, and investigating what brings misery and suffering for you and others and discarding that, really summarises the essence of Dharma practice.

2.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE TWO TRUTHS WOULD BE INVALID

2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity (cont.)

The verse reads:

108. *Conceptual thought and that imputed
Are both mutually dependent.*

*Just as in dependence on renown
All investigations are expressed.*

The commentary explaining this verse reads as follows:

Regarding the way of positing something as an illusory conventionality in our own system: Both the object-possessor of the conceptual thought and the imputed object are mutually dependent, i.e., they are posited relative to each other, and do not exist in the slightest out of their own nature. This is explained in the *Root Wisdom*:

The actor is produced in dependence on the action.

Just as being renowned to worldly nominal prime cognition, they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name, i.e. all presentations [or categories of existence] are expressed.

The commentary explains that *regarding the way of positing something as an illusory conventionality in our own system, both the object-possessor of the conceptual thought and the imputed object are mutually dependent*. This is basically talking about subject and object being dependent on each other. The object-possessor (subject) is the consciousness perceiving an imputed object, which is the object itself. Being mutually dependent means that they are dependent on each other. If the consciousness perceiving an object were to exist from its own side, then it would not have to depend on the object, and thus could not be called an object possessor.

Without relying on the object, the consciousness perceiving an object would have to exist by itself. Likewise, the object is also dependent on the consciousness that perceives it. If the object were to exist in its own right, then it would not have to depend on the consciousness perceiving it. But the very establishment of an object as dependent on a consciousness perceiving that object shows that they are mutually dependent.

The commentary further elaborates that, *they are posited relative to each other, and do not exist in the slightest out of their own nature*. As a way to back up this point the commentary quotes from *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna: *The actor is produced in dependence on the action, and then explains: Just as being renowned to worldly nominal prime cognition, they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name, i.e., all presentations are expressed*.

What is being explained here is that *all presentations* or the various categories of phenomena are posited as existent, and dependent on how they are expressed and perceived by worldly prime cognition. In other words, the existence of things is not posited through investigations, but they are posited in the way they appear conventionally. That is why Chandrakirti mentioned in his teachings 'I do not posit nominal existence through analysis, but rather posit them as accepted or renowned by worldly conventions'. This is a point I have also mentioned previously.

Again, to emphasise this point, *they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name*' indicates that the Prasangika system posits the way in which things are nominally existent, merely labelled or merely imputed by the mind. That is in accordance with the nominal existence of things. For example, when we refer to a glass, merely saying 'glass' will bring about an understanding of the function of the glass, i.e. it has a specific shape and function to hold liquid, without having to resort to any specific investigation. That specific function and the attributes of the glass need not be investigated; rather they are understood when we hear the mere name or label of the glass. Similarly, the way the Prasangika posit existence is by mere name, by an object being merely

imputed by the mind. Thus, it does not exist in or of itself, from its own side.

When explaining the previous verse, I emphasised a crucial point. Have you given any thought to it?

This verse reads:

**107. This separate mental superstition
Is not our illusory
If it is subsequently ascertained, it exists.
If it is not, it is not even illusory**

The crux of the Prasangika-Madhyamika view is presented right here. Would anyone like to shed some light on the meaning of this verse?

Alan Molloy: Perhaps it's to do with that illustration of the snake and the rope. The snake is basically imputed on the rope, but doesn't exist [inaudible] imputed ...

Geshe-la: That relates to an earlier verse.

Denis Marsh: I haven't studied this well since last week, but I recall that the meaning was that emptiness deepens our understanding of dependent arising and dependent arising deepens our understanding of emptiness.

Geshe-la: The main point that I emphasised is as explained here in the commentary

In our own system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes [or ceases].

I also mentioned this verse from the *Lama Chöpa* (or *Guru Puja*):

Samsara and nirvana lack even an atom of true existence,
While cause and effect and dependent arising are unailing.
We seek your blessing to discern the import of Nagarjuna's thought
Which is that these two are complementary and not contradictory.

Last week I mentioned that I had specifically explained this verse before, and I also explained the meaning, which summarises the essential point being explained here in the commentary. Similarly the passage from the *Heart Sutra* where it says, *form is emptiness and emptiness is form* is what is being explained here in Shantideva's text, and through the explanations of the commentary. All three bring out the same point.

As I have said previously, this is an important verse to understand.

This is another key point mentioned in last week's teaching. Basically, when the independent origination of phenomena dawns upon you, then without relying on another prime cognition, this can bring about an understanding of emptiness, and how, through interdependent origination, you can understand the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, or see the emptiness of phenomena. When you see that things are empty of inherent existence, and through that understand, without relying again on another prime cognition, the interdependent origination of that phenomena, then that is the meaning gaining an understanding of emptiness through the understanding of dependent origination. Therefore,

as the text presents, one sees that they are *complementary and not contradictory*.

[*Geshe la made a comment on Damien's ineffective note taking and then said he was just joking, as friends you would not be offended by things said in jest.* In the monasteries the monks tease each other, and all with a good light-heartedness. When you start teasing each other, if you get upset, then it's not a good gesture. We tease each other because we are friends, and we accept it from each other because of our friendship.

I used to be very good buddies with Geshe Wangchen who recently passed away. In the monastery we played a lot. When we used to play, we used to cut each other's hair with a blade, and once I scratched him with the blade. He announced to the other elder monks in our house that it happened "when we were playing". So he was not accusing me of maliciously cutting him with a blade.

When I was living in Buxa Duar I coughed up some blood. The doctors were very concerned that it was tuberculosis. This incident coincided with some Westerners who were going around checking the health conditions of the monks. Apparently one of them had been to Tibet before, and had come to our camp at Buxa Duar to check on all the monks who had the symptoms of TB. So when he came and checked my condition he said, "We need to be cautious, it could be TB" and then he said, "I think you are quite malnourished". Then he asked me personally, "Would you have an interest in going to a Western country?" And at that time I said, "No, no, I'm not going. I don't have any such intention". Then he said, "Ah well, you need to be cared for well". He took the initiative to bring a lot of good food to me - different kinds of meats, chicken and fish. But I didn't eat fish, so I didn't accept the fish. And when he brought chicken I didn't eat it because I realised it would have been local chickens that had been slaughtered. So I took the initiative to refuse and said "I cannot eat the chicken". He then brought other types of fresh foods. That's when I was segregated. The monks were segregated and it was said, "those who have TB shouldn't be mixing with others". And that's when Geshe Wangchen (who was not a geshe at that time), was asked to help nurse me. Of course I wasn't really sick at that time, I was quite well, but he was there to supposedly nurse me. So we ended up just having fun and playing around and pulling jokes on each other. So maybe he was referring to that time when we were playing around, where I might have cut him with the blade.

We were quite young at the time - I was 24 and Geshe Wangchen would have been 23.

2.3.2.2. Refuting the consequence of becoming endless

The first verse under this heading reads:

**109. When the investigating
Analysis analyses,
When also the analysis is,
Analysed then it has no end.**

The commentary presents the argument:

Argument: When the investigating analysis, which analyses whether phenomena exists truly or not, analyses them to be empty of inherent existence, at that time, as it does not fall under that analysed, does one need to analyse the non-true existence of the analysing awareness or not?

If not, then it is the same for all other phenomena, and their lack of true existence wanes. If yes, then, because the non-true existence of this analysis needs to be in

turn analysed by another analysis, there would be no end to the analysing analysis.

As clearly explained here, the **Realists** first say, *when the investigating analysis, which analyses whether phenomena exists truly or not, discerns them to be empty of inherent existence, then at that time, it does not fall under that analysed.* This explains that the awareness that is analysing, in itself does not fall under the analysed, because it is the analyser. *Does one need to analyse the non-true existence of the analysing awareness or not?* That is the question that is posed.

The commentary continues, *if not, one does not have to analyse it. Then it is the same for all other phenomena, and their lack of true existence wanes.* This is quite clear.

Further, it says, *'If yes, then, because the non-true existence' or the lack of true existence 'of this analysis needs to be in turn analysed by another analysis, there would be no end to the analysing analysis',* which in other words means there would be infinite regression for that analysis.

The commentary presents the **Madhyamaka** response to that, followed by a verse serves as the reason for that.

Madhyamaka: It follows that no other prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence is needed for the prime cognition realising the lack of true existence of all phenomena.

The verse reads:

**110. Having investigated the analysed object
There is no basis for investigation.
Since there is no basis, it is not born.
This is also called going beyond misery.**

The commentary then explains:

That is because when the prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence has analysed the non-true existence of that to be analysed, i.e., all phenomena, no truly existent subject that would be a basis for a repeated analysis of non-true existence, exists in the perception of that awareness for as long as it does not lose that mode of apprehension.

Also, for the person who has realised all phenomena as empty of true existence, and for whom the realisation holds and has not waned, a subject basis that is characterised by an analysis into true or non-true existence, is impossible because immediately upon generating that thought, the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated.

The fault of endless analysis into the non-true existence despite having realised all phenomena as lacking true existence, exists for you, because of the necessity of another prime cognition having to analyse that very awareness. If another analysis were needed, then there would remain a leftover of intellectually acquired true-grasping, despite all manifest intellectually acquired true-grasping being stopped by the earlier prime cognition itself.

Because the subject basis does not exist truly, both the object of negation and that negating are not generated inherently, and are therefore called 'naturally gone beyond sorrow'. Realising this and meditating on it is also called 'attaining the liberation beyond sorrow free from adventitious stains'.

The commentary explains that the reason why the awareness that analyses whether the lack of true existence does not have to be further analysed, is that *when the prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence has analysed the non-true existence of that to be analysed, i.e., all phenomena, no truly existent subject that would be a basis for a repeated analysis of non-true existence exists in the perception of that awareness for as long as it does not lose that mode of apprehension.* This makes the point that for as long as the awareness analysing the lack of true existence of all

phenomena is maintained, then for as long as apprehension does not wane or *as long as one does not lose that mode of apprehension,* it does not need further investigation, since there is no true appearance of any phenomena.

While the earlier part of the explanation was in reference to analysing awareness, the next part is in relation to the person engaged in that analysis. The commentary next presents, *also, for the person who has realised all phenomena as empty of true existence, and for whom the realisation holds and has not waned,* for that individual person a subject basis that is characterised by an analysis into true or non-true existence is impossible, because immediately upon generating that thought, the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated.

For as long as a person holds onto that awareness of the lack of true existence of phenomena, then any doubt about whether it exists truly or not, will not occur. That is the point in relation to the person, because the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated. This mindfulness will be immediately generated because it is still holding onto that awareness.

Then as the commentary explains, *the fault of endless analysis into non-true existence despite having realised all phenomena as lacking true existence, exists for you.* The **Prasangika** are actually saying that for you this fault would exist because of the necessity of another prime cognition having to analyse that very awareness. *If another analysis were needed, then there would remain a leftover of intellectually acquired true-grasping, despite all manifest intellectually acquired true-grasping being stopped by the earlier prime cognition itself.* When the lack of true existence of phenomena is being realised then at that time the manifest intellectually-acquired true-grasping has stopped. According to you, if you still need another awareness to analyse whether that awareness lacks true existence or not, then it would be as if there were a remnant of intellectually-acquired true grasping still left that has not yet been negated. That would be the fallacy.

Emptiness is referred to as *naturally gone beyond sorrow,* or naturally abiding nirvana. *Realising this and meditating on it is also called 'attaining the liberation beyond sorrow free from adventitious stains'.* Because emptiness is naturally free from adventitious stains, it is referred to as 'naturally abiding nirvana'. Although emptiness itself is not actually nirvana, the term 'naturally abiding nirvana' is used because it is beyond or free from the adventitious stains. This is why that term is used.

Although initially this may seem a little bit complicated, if you read through the commentary slowly and well, over a few times, it will become clearer.

2.3.2.2.3. Showing there is no proof for the true existence of object and consciousness

What is being presented under this heading in the following verse is that there is no proof of true existence of object and consciousness, i.e. object and object possessor. Those who assert the true existence of both object and object possessors are the Realists such as the Sautrantika, the Vaibhashika and also the Mind Only (Cittamatra) schools.

The next verse and the first line from the following verse read:

**111. Whichever way one looks at it,
That these two are true is extremely
problematic.
If, 'The meaning is established through the
power**

Of consciousness', what basis exists for mere existent consciousness?

112a. If however, 'consciousness is established from that known'.

The commentary presents the meaning:

Regardless of the way that a Realist looks at it, it is extremely problematic to assert that the two, object and consciousness, exist truly, because there exists no proof.

The **Realists** would then say:

Realist: One can establish the meaning of true existence from the example of truly existent primary cognition consciousness.

And the **Madhyamika** response to this is:

Madhyamaka: What supporting prime cognition is there for the existence of a truly existent consciousness? There isn't any because there is no self-knower, and if it is known by another consciousness, then it would become endless.

The term 'Realist' is used because they posit things as being truly existent. Generally this view is held by the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika, but because it refers to that which accepts true existence, it also refers to the Mind Only school.

The commentary explains that *regardless of the way that a Realist looks at it, it is extremely problematic to assert that the two, object and consciousness, exist truly, because there exists no proof.* This is what the Madhyamika say.

The **Realists** then say *one can establish the meaning of true existence from the example of truly existent primary cognition consciousness.* The Realists accept a truly existent primary cognition which is a consciousness, and then because of that they say because there is a truly existent consciousness that perceives objects, and therefore objects must also be established as truly existent. That is their logic.

As a response to those assertions, the **Madhyamika** say, *what supporting prime cognition is there for the existence of a truly existent consciousness?* which implies that there cannot be another cognition that actually supports prime cognition of a truly existent consciousness. Therefore the Madhyamika say, *there isn't any because there is no self-knower.* Self-knowers have been refuted earlier, so there is no self-knower, *and if it is known by another consciousness, then it would become endless.* So if there were another consciousness that knows, which sees the awareness as truly existent, then there would have to be another consciousness to know that as well, and then another to know that. Therefore the fallacy of infinite regression would apply here, as it did earlier.

The Madhyamika then refute another hypothesis of the **Realists**.

However if you say, consciousness is established through the direct perception of true objects of knowledge and comprehension.

The verse reads:

*112bcd. What basis is there for the existence of the object of knowledge?
Both exist through their mutual power,
Both again are non-existent.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Madhyamaka: What support is there for the existence of object of knowledge? If it is posited by prime cognition, then it is certain: Because both object and consciousness exist through the power of mutual dependence, it is clearly established that again both

do not exist inherently, e.g., like long and short or here and there.

What the **Madhyamika** are presenting here is that if the prime cognition is posited in relation to an object then, *because both object and consciousness exist through the power of mutual dependence it is clearly established that again both do not exist inherently.* If consciousness is posited because there is an object that it perceives, and if the object is also posited because there is a consciousness that perceives it, then they are mutually dependent. This implies that they cannot exist in and of themselves independently. The example given is long and short. As we discussed earlier, 'long' is posited only in relation to 'short', and 'short' is only posited in relation to there being 'long'. Therefore long and short are mutually dependent, which implies they cannot exist in or of themselves.

'Long' is posited in relation to 'short' and 'short' is posited in relation to 'long', therefore they are dependent on each other. This means 'long' cannot exist from its own side and 'short' cannot exist from its own side. Likewise the positions 'here' and 'there' are relative. 'Here' is posited in relation to 'there' on the other side, and 'there', which is on other side, is also posited in relation to being 'here'. Therefore both positions of 'here' and 'there' are mutually dependent on each other, and thus cannot exist in or of themselves.

The next verse reads:

*113. If there is no father without a child,
Then from where does the child arise?
Without a child there is no father,
Likewise these two do not exist.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

If there is no child, then the father is not an existent because that which is defining the father does not exist. As there is no cause if there is no father, then from where does the child arise? And if there is no child because there is no father, then the two are mutually dependent on each other and lack true existence; the two, object and consciousness, lack true existence in the same way.

This is quite clear. Again, the verse presents another example of how what is posited as 'father' is dependent on the child. Without the child, an individual person cannot be labelled as a 'father'. How could someone be a father without a child? So therefore 'father' is posited in dependence on the child. Likewise 'child' is dependent on having a father; without a father a child also cannot be posited as a 'child'. Therefore 'father' and 'child' are mutually dependent, and cannot exist independently in and of themselves. This is yet another example to illustrate how 'object' and 'consciousness' are mutually dependent. If an object were to exist independently and in and of itself, then it could exist without there being a consciousness to perceive it. Likewise if consciousness were to exist independently, in and of itself, then it would not have to depend on an object to be called 'an object possessor', a consciousness.

The next verse under this reads:

*114. The sprout is generated from the seed
And just as the seed is realised through it,
Why should one not realise the existence of
The object of knowledge from the consciousness
generated from it?*

The commentary explains this verse as follows:

Realist: The sprout is generated from an inherently existing seed and the seed can be inferred through the valid reason of that very sprout. Likewise, why should one not realise the existence of truly existent

ultimate object of knowledge through the truly existent consciousness that is generated from the object of knowledge?

This again is quite clear. It is positing the **Realists'** argument, which is that *the sprout is generated from an inherently existing seed and the seed can be inferred through the valid reason of that very sprout*. That is what they are asserting. *Likewise, why should one not realise the existence of truly existent ultimate object of knowledge through the truly existent consciousness that is generated ...*

This absurd assertion is then refuted in the next verse, which reads:

*115. If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised
Through a consciousness apart from the sprout,
From what does one realise the existence
Of the consciousness realising that object of knowledge?*

The commentary clearly explains the meaning:

Madhyamaka: This is not valid. If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised through a prime cognising consciousness that is of different substance from the sprout and sees the sprout, then from what prime cognition is the existence of a consciousness through the realisation of the object of knowledge realised? Self-knowers have already been refuted, and you do not accept any other way of knowing.

The Realists' position is quite clearly refuted by the **Madhyamika**. *If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised through a prime cognising consciousness that is of different substance from the sprout and sees the sprout, then from what prime cognition is the existence of a consciousness through the realisation of the object of knowledge realised? This implies that because self-knowers have already been refuted, you cannot accept any other way of knowing*. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

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

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 March 2017

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

As usual, let us set our motivation for receiving the teachings:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and then put them into practice well, not just merely in words but in actual actions and deeds.

Thinking in this way is most meaningful.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established the selflessness of person (cont.)

2.3.2.3. STATING THE REASONS THAT ESTABLISH THE LACK OF TRUE EXISTENCE¹

This is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason

2.3.2.3.2. The reason of dependent arising

2.3.2.3.3. The reason of refuting generation and cessation of existence and non-existence

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason

This is subdivided into five:

2.3.2.3.1.1. Refuting generation without cause

2.3.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a separate permanent cause

2.3.2.3.1.3. Refuting generation from a permanent principal

2.3.2.3.1.4. Summarising the meaning of generation from no-cause

2.3.2.3.1.5. Refuting generation from both self and other

The main essence of this presentation was presented in the *Madhyamaka* teachings and also in the *Four Hundred Verses* teachings.² It refutes the self as being generated from either the self, other, both and without a cause.

Although I've presented the meaning previously, I'll remind you of the analogy that is used to explain the name 'vajra sliver'. Adamantine is one of the hardest substances in existence. Even a splinter of it is so powerful that it can destroy huge mountainous rocks and so forth. This analogy indicates that the reasoning presented here can completely shatter the very core of the notion of grasping at the self.

¹ This heading was first introduced on 22 November 2016.

² The vajra or diamond sliver reasoning was taught:

In the *Madhyamaka* teachings between 15 April 2003 and 20 April 2003

In the *400 Verses* teachings on 8 April 2008

In the Shantideva teachings of 2005 between 16 August 2005 and 13 September 2005

2.3.2.3.1.1. Refuting generation without cause

We need to note here that *generation without cause* does not refer to generation from all causes. Rather it refers to the specific causes that are presented by the **Hedonists** and so forth, who assert that there is a result that does not have to depend upon a specific cause. That is what is being refuted here.

The commentary first presents their assertion:

Hedonists and others: Because one cannot see the products of the colours of the eye in the peacock's feather and others, and one does not see any creator of the movement of the lotus petals or their smooth shape, or the sharpness of thorns and so forth, therefore they exist out of their own nature.

The Hedonists, and others who follow similar systems of thought, use the example of the different *colours of the eye of a peacock's feathers*, which are very detailed. However we can't observe any immediate cause that created them. So the posed question is 'who creates them'? Another analogy they use is the *movement of lotus petals*, which open at different times: some already open, and some are about to blossom. So, who causes the subtle movements of the petals, as well as their smoothness. Another example is the *sharpness of thorns*. How did the sharp tip of the thorn come about?

What they are saying is that since we cannot see anyone actually creating them, and no other immediate causes are apparent, they must exist of their own nature.

These examples are quite obvious: we can see the results, but we cannot see their causes. For this reason, the Hedonists argue that there is no cause for them, and that they must exist out of their own nature.

The first verse under this heading is:

116. In this instance, the direct perception of worldly beings

Sees all causes.

The different petals of the lotus

Are generated by different causes.

117. If it is asked, 'By which different causes?'

Of course by the preceding different causes.

Why can a cause generate an effect?

From the mere force of that preceding cause.

The commentary explains the meaning of these verses as follows:

Madhyamika: This is invalid. In this instance, the direct perception of worldly beings sees most of the generating causes for the various inner and outer functionalities such as crops and the like. The different results such as the colours of the different lotus petals, their number and the like are generated by different causes. If it is asked, 'By which different causes?', then of course by preceding different causes.

Argument: Why are different causes able to produce different results?

Madhyamika: The fault that they cannot do this does not exist. Through the very force possessed by a preceding cause, different causes have the ability to generate different results.

Thus, these functionalities are not without cause because they are observed as adventitiously generated in relation to place and time.

The *Madhyamika* reply to the Hedonists saying, your argument is *invalid*, because *the direct perception of worldly beings sees most of the causes that generate the various inner and outer functionalities*.

The implication here is that 'although there are inferential reasons that can be used to refute your assertions, I'll begin by using reasons that can be seen by ordinary valid perception'. It is obvious we can see the causes of many of the things that are produced in this world. For example, it is obvious to worldly beings that when you plant barley seeds, they will produce barley sprouts. Thus a farmer who wishes for a crop of barley will sow barley seeds and not any other. Likewise a crop of wheat is dependent on wheat seedlings, and a crop of peas is produced from pea seedlings. It is obvious that the results of particular crops come from their own particular causes, which are the seeds of each. This is something that is readily perceived.

Furthermore, *different results such as the colours of the different lotus petals, their number and the like are generated by different causes*. The different kinds of lotus seedlings produce lotus plants with different types of petals and so forth. That is also readily seen.

The **Hedonists** then ask, if there are *different causes for these different results* then who creates these causes?

The **Madhyamika** answer to that is that the various causes are created by the *preceding different causes*, a fact which is quite obvious. The *Madhyamikas* make this comment to the Hedonist question: *the fault that different causes cannot produce different results does not exist. Through the very power possessed by a preceding cause, different causes have the ability to generate different results. The power of a preceding cause has the ability to produce certain types of results. Therefore different causes all have the ability to generate different results.*

As a concluding remark, the *Madhyamika* say, *these functionalities are not without cause because they are observed as adventitiously generated in relation to place and time*. This reason is very profound. If things were to be causeless then they would have to be generated at all times, regardless of time and necessary conditions. The fact that different results are produced only at a certain time and place indicates that they have particular causes. Do bananas or avocados grow in Victoria? No, because it's not the right place – they grow in Queensland. The point here is that growing crops or flowers or fruit depends on an appropriate time and place. Even if the immediate or substantial cause, the seed, is there, it won't produce a result unless the other factors it is dependent upon are there as well, such as water, fertile soil, warmth and so forth. People say 'it's the cherry season now', 'mango season', or 'strawberry season'. If it's out of season then you won't be able to get a particular crop or fruit; you only get the results when the time is right.

2.3.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a separate permanent cause

The reason for this refutation is because there are some non-Buddhist schools who say, 'yes there is a cause, and that cause is permanent'. So they assert that a result can come from a permanent cause. This section refutes that.

Here we can understand why different schools of tenets have arisen. Each system of tenets comes about as a result of the different ways of investigating things, and each comes to different conclusions based on their method of investigation. Proponents of some religious tenets, for example, would say there is a creator god, and use their own reasons to present that argument. Others, like we Buddhists, say that there's no creator as such, but we believe in karma. And karma is asserted with reasoning and many examples. This section of the text is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1.2.1. Refuting Ishvara with questions to its meaning

2.3.2.3.1.2.2. If it is permanent, it is unsuitable to be the cause of anything arising from conditions

2.3.2.3.1.2.3. Reminder that permanent particles without cause were already refuted

2.3.2.3.1.2.1. *Refuting Ishvara with questions to its meaning*

Prior to actually refuting the assertion that Ishvara is the cause, the Hedonists are asked 'What do you mean by Ishvara? What does Ishvara actually mean?'

So the first line of verse is:

118a. If Ishvara is the cause of migrators,

Then the commentary explains:

The Naiyayika, Enumerators and Particularists that accept Ishvara as divine: The self-arisen all-knowing Ishvara, produced all places, bodies and enjoyments with a preceding movement of his mind, and is therefore the cause of migrators.

The implication of the *Naiyayika* (or Logicians), *Enumerators and Particularists who accept Ishvara as divine* is that there are some non-Buddhist schools that do not accept Ishvara as a divine creator. There are other non-Buddhist schools that assert the fundamental principal as the cause of all existence. They say that their classifications of causes and effects are due to the various manifestations of the fundamental principal. However all these non-Buddhist schools are the same in asserting a cause that is a permanent substance. The difference between the two lies in the fact that one accepts Ishvara as a divine creator, and the other does not.

As the commentary explains quite clearly, their assertion is that Ishvara the divine creator is a *self-arisen and all-knowing*, i.e. he has arisen as an omniscient being by his own accord, without depending on any other causes. This self-arisen all-knowing entity called Ishvara *produces all places* such as the environment, *bodies* such as the beings or migrators who live in the environment, and *enjoyments*, which are all the objects of the sense enjoyments. These are all created by a *preceding movement of Ishvara's mind*. It is Ishvara's movement of the mind or thought that creates the things and events in the environment. This is negated in the later verses.

The relevant lines of verse read:

118bcd. First, declare what is Ishvara?

*If you say, 'the elements,' that may be, but
Why stress yourself over a name?*

The **Madhyamika** reply:

Madhyamika: First, declare what is posited as the meaning of Ishvara.

Upon being asked that question: If you say due to the increase and decrease of the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind the results also increase or decrease.

That may be so. However we also accept that from the increasing and decreasing of the elements, the results also increase or decrease, why stress yourself over a difference in name of the same meaning out of a great attachment to establish Ishvara? That it is unsuitable to be Ishvara if there is a big difference in reality whether if it is permanent or impermanent and so forth, is shown in the lines '[However....] and so forth.

Furthermore:

Because the four elements are in the nature of different substances, are impermanent and producing generation and disintegration, are not moved in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness or mind, are not divine and is the very ground that is walked upon, and because they are impure, they are not Ishvara. Ishvara is permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with awareness, is accepted to be divine, not to be the very ground walked upon and not as impure.

Having been asked what Ishvara is, the reply from the **opponent** is *due to the increase and decrease of the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind the results also increase or decrease*. So they argue that if there's an increase in the four elements, then the result will also increase, and if there's a decrease in the four elements then the results will also decrease, and that the cause of this is Ishvara.

To that the **Madhyamika** reply, *we also accept that*. If that is what you mean by Ishvara then *why stress over a name?* You may call it Ishvara but if it is in fact relating to the increase and decrease of the elements, then it is the same as we posit.

The commentary then explains, *that it is unsuitable to be Ishvara if there is a big difference in reality whether if it is permanent or impermanent and so forth is shown in the following verse*.

119. *However, since earth and so forth are many,
Impermanent, not moved and not divine,
Since they are the very ground walked upon and
impure
They are not Ishvara.*

The explanation in the commentary is:

Because the four elements are in the nature of different substances, are impermanent and producing generation and disintegration, are not moved in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness or mind, are not divine and is the very ground that is walked upon, and because they are impure, they are not Ishvara. Ishvara is permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with awareness, is accepted to be divine, not to be the very ground walked upon and not as impure.

The refutation by the **Madhyamikas** is that *if the four elements are in the nature of different substances* then they could not be a unitary divine being Ishvara.

The opponent posits that Ishvara is permanent, which our system refutes by pointing out that the four elements are *impermanent* as they are generated and disintegrate.

Since the opponent posits that Ishvara produces things with a preceding awareness, there would have to be a

movement of the mind that produces the four elements. Yet they *are not moved* in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness. It is not necessary for there to be a movement of the mind in order for the elements to be produced.

Furthermore, the opponents say that Ishvara is divine, but the four elements *are not divine*. For example ordinary beings walk on the earth.

Also the earth and other elements have unclean aspects, so *they are not Ishvara*.

In summary, you assert Ishvara as being permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with an awareness, is accepted to be divine, and so therefore is not the very ground to walked upon and is not impure. Because the elements do not fit your description of what Ishvara is, they could not be Ishvara.

Having refuted the four elements as being Ishvara, the next argument by the **non-Buddhists** to be refuted is that space is Ishvara.

Argument: Space is Ishvara.

The next verse is:

120. *Space is not Ishvara because it does not move.
That the self is not Ishvara has been proven
earlier.
Also, a creator beyond thought,
What good is it to describe that beyond
thought?*

As the commentary explains, the **Madhyamika** presentation is:

Madhyamika: Take the subject 'space': it is not Ishvara—because it does not move for the purpose of a result. A permanent self is also not Ishvara—because this has been refuted earlier both from the point of view of matter or consciousness.

The commentary quite clearly explains this with a syllogism. *Take the subject 'space': it is not Ishvara* (which is the predicate)—*because it does not move for the purpose of a result* (which is the reason). According to the assertion of these non-Buddhist schools, Ishvara produces things through the movement of the mind, or with the thought to produce. Space doesn't have any movement to produce things.

Furthermore, *a permanent self is also not Ishvara because this has been refuted earlier both from the point of view of matter or consciousness*. This is as was presented previously.

Then a further argument by the **non-Buddhists** is presented:

Argument: Because Ishvara is a creator beyond thought these faults do not apply.

The **Madhyamaka** refute this by saying:

Madhyamaka: What is the point of taking something that is beyond thought as the creator? In addition, you cannot know who Ishvara is as he is beyond thought.

If Ishvara is beyond thought as you say, then how could you even possibly describe Ishvara? How would you even begin to conceive of him?

2.3.2.3.1.2.2. *If it is permanent, it is unsuitable to be the cause of anything arising from conditions*

What is being refuted here is that if something is considered as permanent then it cannot be a cause of

anything, because anything that arises from a condition has to have an impermanent cause.

Then these lines of verse are presented:

121. *Also what does it desire to create?
Aren't the nature of the self,
Earth and so forth and Ishvara permanent?
Consciousness is generated from the object of
knowledge,*

122ab. *And beginningless happiness and sufferings
from karma.
Tell, what is generated by him?*

The explanation in the commentary begins with a question from the **Madhyamika**:

If the feelings of happiness, suffering, equanimity and other functionalities are generated from previous karma and other causes, then what is the result that the Ishvara asserted by you desires to create?

The **non-Buddhist** replies:

Argument: It is the self.

Then the **Madhyamika** refutation follows:

Madhyamika: It follows that it is not valid – because it follows that this self, the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, and also subsequent similar types of Ishvara are not produced by Ishvara – because aren't the self, the particles of the four elements and Ishvara permanent?

Following this rhetorical question the commentary continues:

So because you accept them to be permanent they are invalid as that which is generated and the generator.

Thus, because the different sense consciousnesses to which blue and so forth appear are generated from the objects of knowledge blue and so forth, and because the feelings of suffering and happiness are generated from virtuous and non-virtuous karma, therefore state the result that is generated by Ishvara. The result generated by Ishvara does not exist.

This explanation is quite clear. There is however one important point. The point that *feelings of happiness, sufferings, and equanimity, and other functionalities are generated from previous karma* is mutually accepted, and the question posed by the **Madhyamika** is 'what causes that?'

The counter argument here is that if the feelings of happiness, suffering, equanimity and other functionalities are generated from previous karma and other causes, *then what is the result that the Ishvara asserted by you desires to create?* In other words, if we both accept the results of karma, then what does Ishvara create?

The **opponents** say that *it is the self* that is created by Ishvara.

The **Madhyamika** say that *this is not valid – because this self, the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, and also subsequent similar types of Ishvara are not produced by Ishvara*. If there's a first Ishvara then that implies that there must be a similar subsequent Ishvara. The self, the four elements (earth, water, fire and air) and subsequent similar types of Ishvara, could not be *produced by Ishvara – because, according to the opponent, the self, the particles of the four elements and Ishvara are permanent*. If you accept them as being permanent they cannot be both the

generated and the generator. If something is permanent then how can it be both the generated and a generator?

The **Madhyamika** refutation refers to *the different sense consciousnesses, to which blue and so forth appear, as they are generated from the objects of knowledge blue and so forth*. In other words, the consciousness perceiving blue is generated in dependence on an object that is blue, and the consciousness perceiving yellow is dependent on an object that is yellow. Each consciousness is generated in relation to a particular object.

The next part of the refutation begins by acknowledging that we both accept that *feelings of suffering and happiness are generated from virtuous and non-virtuous karma*. So the **Madhyamikas** state the result that is generated by Ishvara. Can you actually say that they are created by Ishvara? There is not much left that you can claim is created by Ishvara. Therefore, *the result generated by Ishvara does not exist*, and you have to conclude there is no result created by Ishvara.

The next lines of verse under this heading are:

122cd. *If there is no first cause,
How could there be a first result?*

123. *Why should he not always produce?
He does not rely on others.
If there is nothing other that is not produced by
him,
How could he rely on these?*

As the commentary explains:

Because the causal Ishvara is a permanent functionality, if he were to exist since beginningless time, then how can there be a first of his resultant feelings and other results? The direct cause of the feeling generated today possesses its ability since beginningless time.

As he produces all results without depending on other conditions, why would he not produce all results on a continual basis? It follows it is like that – because if there is no other separate result that is not created by Ishvara, then in dependence on what condition does this Ishvara generate these results? That asserted as simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him.

Again the explanation in the commentary is clear. You state that *the causal Ishvara is a permanent functionality*. So if he were to have existed since beginningless time, then how can there be a first of his resultant feelings and other results? The absurdity is that if the cause existed from beginningless time, then the results would also have to also exist from beginningless time. The feeling that you have today would have been there perpetually. If, for example, you were feeling happy today, then because the cause was beginningless, that happy feeling would have to have been a perpetual happy feeling from beginningless time. If the causes exist from beginningless time then the results also have to have existed from beginningless time. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

Then as the commentary explains, *as Ishvara produces all results without depending on other conditions, why would he not produce all results on a continual basis?* That is the logical conclusion of your argument, *because if there is no*

other separate result that is not created by Ishvara, then in dependence on what condition does this Ishvara generate these results?

As explained here, having posed that rhetorical question, then that asserted as *simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him*. The generation of something depends on another condition. The question, then, is what condition does Ishvara depend on? The conclusion would have to be that the *simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him*. This is saying that the other condition that Ishvara depends on is Ishvara himself. That is what you would have to conclude from this argument.

What is being as clarified in the next two verses is that for anything to be produced it needs both a substantial cause and a simultaneously acting condition. There has to be the substantial cause as well as a simultaneously acting condition for something to be produced.

124. *If he relies, then the aggregation
Is the cause and not him.
If there is aggregation, he is powerless to
prevent generation.
If there is no aggregation, he has no power to
generate.*
125. *If he creates despite not wishing to do so,
Then he is under the power of others.
Although wishing, it depends on the wish.
Although creating, how can it be Ishvara?*

The commentary explains:

With regard to Ishvara generating a result, if it is in dependence on the simultaneously acting condition, the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition becomes the cause, then it follows there is no cause that Ishvara controls – because once the causes and conditions are complete Ishvara has no power to prevent the result, and if they are not complete, then he does not have the power to generate the result.

If the results of suffering of the lower realms and the like are generated from karma against Ishvara's wish, then it follows that Ishvara is controlled by other conditions, and the position that he is independently the creator of all is lost.

Even if Ishvara creates results upon wishing to create the result, the result would depend merely on the wish, and also if the wish is creating the result, how can that be Ishvara? The wish is impermanent.

As presented here, *if Ishvara generates a result in dependence on a simultaneously acting condition, the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition would become the cause*. For anything to be produced there has to be a *substantial cause, and a simultaneously acting condition*. For example, when a seed produces a sprout, the four elements serve as *simultaneously acting conditions* in that: the earth holds the seed so that it doesn't fall through; by gathering the essence of the nutrients in the earth the water causes the seed not germinate; fire or warmth ripens the seed; and the wind element expands the growth of the seedling. So the four elements work together as a *simultaneously acting condition*.

In other words, *the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition becomes the cause*. From that it follows that there is no cause that Ishvara controls. For a result to be produced, there has to be a combination of both the substantial cause as well as the simultaneously acting condition, therefore Ishvara does not have control over the production of a result. Once the causes and conditions are complete, Ishvara has no power to prevent the result. When the causes and conditions are complete and intact, they will definitely produce a result without Ishvara. And if the substantial cause and the simultaneously acting conditions are not complete then Ishvara does not have the power to generate a result. Therefore, claiming that Ishvara is the cause for everything that is produced is spurious.

Next comes the refutation of *the result of the suffering of the lower realms and the like are generated from karma against Ishvara's wish*. Although Ishvara does not wish for the sufferings of the lower realms and so forth, these sufferings are still produced by karma. If that is the case then it follows that *Ishvara is controlled by other conditions, and the position that he is independently the creator of all is lost*, is not tenable.

What is also implied here is that if Ishvara is a divine being with compassion for all beings and so forth, then why would he create the hell realms and allow beings to experience the sufferings there? This is yet another absurdity.

The next refutation is that *even if Ishvara creates results upon wishing to create the result, the result would depend merely on the wish, and also if the wish is creating the result, how can that be Ishvara?* If Ishvara has to depend on a wish in order to produce things, then it is not Ishvara who is the sole cause, i.e. he is dependent on a wish. Once again, it is not tenable to hold that Ishvara is the primary cause for everything.

2.3.2.3.1.2.3. *Reminder that permanent particles without cause were already refuted*

The relevant verse reads:

*126ab. Those asserting permanent particles
Also they have been refuted earlier.*

The commentary explains:

The position of the Particularists that permanent particles create migrators was refuted earlier with the reasoning refuting partless particles, and there is no need to add anything to that which has already been said.

As the commentary itself comments, there is no need for further explanation.

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

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