

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་མཁའ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 June 2016

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I will need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose, I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well to further develop my meditation practice".

When one generates such a motivation, whatever positive action one engages in will actually become a cause to benefit other sentient beings.

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. *The fault of being deluded (cont.)*

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.2. *Deluded with regard to what is high and what is low*

The verse relating to this is:

182. *Angry when derided due to something
And happy when praised due to something;
But if it has no awareness of this,
For what does one exhaust oneself?*

The commentary explains:

One becomes angry when this body is criticised due to a fault, and one is happy if it is praised due to a quality. But if the body has no awareness of this praise and criticism, mind, to what end do you exhaust yourself with attachment and anger? It is pointless.

The point here is that, when the body is criticised it makes one's mind unhappy, so one becomes angry. When the body is praised, due to attachment one's mind becomes happy and elated. Therefore, being overly attached to the body makes the mind either angry due to criticism, or makes the mind elated due to strong attachment.

However, the body itself has no awareness of the praise and criticism that the mind experiences. Because the body itself is not a consciousness, it is not able to have this distinct awareness: basically the body itself is an inanimate object which does not experience praise or criticism. So why unnecessarily strain the mind with anger or attachment when the body is criticised or praised? When the mind is unhappy, that is when it is most prone to becoming angry. Whereas, when the mind is feeling elated and joyous - by experiencing worldly pleasures - that's when one is most vulnerable to developing attachment.

The teachings on equalising and overcoming the eight worldly dharmas explain that, when difficulties arise, one should welcome them so that one's mind does not become unhappy. This prevents anger from arising. And when good conditions arise, one should be wary and not

become too elated, because that will cause attachment to arise.

The practice of equalising and overcoming the eight worldly concerns is, in fact, a profound practice. Some of you may take it lightly and think 'Oh, the eight worldly dharmas. That's a common teaching'. In fact, I personally consider the practice of counteracting the eight worldly dharmas as very important, the pith of one's practice.

As I have explained previously many times, the way to counteract the eight worldly dharmas is by 'equalising and exchanging'. So when you experience conditions that would normally cause you to feel happy and elated, you practise not being joyous; and when you experience problems that cause you distress, you actually welcome those problems and become happy with that situation. This is how you counteract the eight worldly concerns; this is what you need to understand. Indeed as the Lam Rim explains, until one has overcome the eight worldly dharmas, one will not be able to practise the Dharma purely.

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.3. *Refuting arguments in this regard*

The verse which relates to this heading is:

183. *If, 'I desire this body
And I am friends with it.'
As everybody likes their body
Why does one not like them as 'mine'?*

[While we see the terms *argument* and *answer* here in this translation, they are not in the actual Tibetan text. I think the translator has put them there for emphasis.]

Argument: Although the body itself does not understand this, I desire this body, and find it attractive because we are both friends. Therefore I like it.

The next part of the commentary serves as the answer:

Answer: As all sentient beings desire their body, why does one not regard the body of others and its happiness as mine? It is unsuitable to be attached to one's body and deride the body of others.

As mentioned earlier, the body itself has no way of comprehending or understanding praise and criticism. After we accept that point, the commentary offers a further rationale as to why one would desire the body: *I desire this body, and find it attractive because we are both friends. Therefore I like it.* This is how we normally think and relate to our body; we consider it as a close friend and good companion. So, our worldly mind works to find excuses for attachment to the body.

As the commentary further explains, *why does one not regard the body of others and its happiness as mine?* Since you say you desire and like your body because it is your friend, then since all sentient beings similarly desire and like their bodies, so why do you not consider their bodies as mine as well? If one finds a reason to be attached to one's body because one likes it, then it would be reasonable to cherish other's bodies as well and not deride it.

This reasoning relates to the earlier presentation of the practice of exchanging self with other. When one takes up the practice of equalising and exchanging self with other, one carries the attitude towards others' bodies that one previously had towards one's own body. There's no

difference. If one finds one's body attractive, by that same reason, one should find others' bodies attractive as well and cherish them. Thus, since one engages in the practice of equalising and exchanging oneself with others, *it is unsuitable to be attached to one's body and deride the body of others.*

3.2.1.3.2.3.4. *Although craving for the body is the source for many faults, it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments.*

It is good to derive the meaning from the heading itself, as clearly presented here. *Although craving for the body is the source of many faults* – one should overcome desire and attachment to one's body because it is the source of many faults – however, *it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments.* Because of the great purpose – of what we can achieve having obtained this body with the *freedoms and endowments* – one has to protect it.

The verse relating to this outline:

184. *Therefore, without attachment
I shall give up this body to the purpose of
migrators.
Then, although it has many faults,
I shall protect the body in its actions.*

As the commentary explains:

Therefore, as it is unsuitable to have attachment for one's body, without attachment I shall practise generosity with my body for the purpose of migrators.

From the *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

One views the body of course as an enemy,
Yet one looks after it.
From living long according to the rules
Many merits will be generated.

Since one achieves a lot of the purpose of others in dependence on this body, although it has many faults, it needs to be protected for the purpose of others, just like worldly beings grasp on to a chariot and use it to carry a burden.

As presented in the commentary, while overcoming attachment to one's body, one sees the purpose of benefiting others, so one needs to protect one's body and engage in the practices of generosity, and so forth.

As I have said before, whenever we nurture our body by partaking of food and drink, we can practise generosity by always first offering it to one's gurus and the Three Jewels. When partaking of food and drink and so forth, we need to always remember: *By nurturing my body, I will use it for the benefit of the Buddha's doctrine and of sentient beings*". Furthermore, we can utilise this body to engage in the practices of great purification, such as doing prostrations and so forth; and in the practices of collecting merit, such as making extensive offerings and so forth.

The meaning of the verse from *Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas* is quite clear. When one uses one's body as a means to accumulate merit and avoid non-virtue – such as avoiding the ten non-virtues and engaging in the ten virtues, and thus benefiting sentient beings – then this body serves a purpose.

In my personal practice, I always think of how, by nurturing this body so that it can be used to benefit other

sentient beings, it will be worthwhile for me to live as many years as possible by sustaining and feeding it, but without the mind of attachment. As soon the mind of attachment arises, whatever one does to nurture one's body becomes a non-virtue. But if one can constantly remind oneself that the purpose of nurturing and sustaining the body is to benefit sentient beings then, as mentioned in the teachings, whatever actions one does, accompanied by the bodhicitta attitude, will become an optimum means to accumulate merit.

The line in the *Four Hundred Stanzas* that refers to living *according to the rules* basically refers to observing morality. Observing morality serves as the ground or basis for our spiritual development. Just as we need fertile ground to grow crops, one needs to observe morality as a way to generate all the other qualities and realisations. If one leads an ethical life by practising morality and has a long life, one can accumulate a lot of merit and benefit other sentient beings.

The commentary further explains that this body *needs to be protected for the purpose of others, just like worldly beings grasp onto a chariot and use it to carry a burden.* In this analogy, the chariot itself may not have much actual value, but because it is useful for carrying and transporting a burden, human beings will value and look after it. Similarly, while the body itself may not have much value, as a way to benefit other sentient beings, it can be utilised to achieve a great purpose.

3.2.1.3.2.4. Taking control of one's mind

3.2.1.3.2.4.1. Reversing the obstacles to virtue

3.2.1.3.2.4.2. Generating the method of striving in the antidote

3.2.1.3.2.4.3. Placing the mind in single-pointed equipoise on a virtuous object

3.2.1.3.2.4.1. *Reversing the obstacles to virtue*

185. *Therefore, being fed up with childish actions,
I follow those proficient.
Mindful of the advice on conscientiousness
I stop sleep and fogginess.*

As the commentary reads:

Therefore, being fed up with the actions of the childish, who engage in the obstructing conditions for calm abiding such as craving for sense objects, covetousness, harmful intent and the like, I follow the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are proficient in what has to be done and what has to be abandoned. Mindful of the advice to be conscientious of virtuous dharmas I strive in pacifying and abandoning the obstacles to calm abiding such as sleep, fogginess and the like, as explained in the *Letter to a Friend*:

Mental excitement, regret, harmful intent and
fogginess,
Sleep, aspiration for sense objects and doubt,
These five obscurations are the thief that robs
The wealth of virtue.
Hence know them well.

As explained clearly here, having reflected on the earlier points, one generates a sense of disenchantment for *the actions of the childish* or worldly beings *who engage in obstructing conditions for calm abiding, such as craving for sense objects, covetousness, harmful intent and the like*, so *I follow the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are proficient in what*

has to be done and what has to be abandoned. One develops this mind of completely overcoming such cravings. So mindful of the advice to be conscientious of virtuous dharmas I strive in pacifying and abandoning the obstacles to calm abiding such as sleep, fogginess and the like.

The need for being conscientious was explained extensively in Chapter Four. The advice here is a way to further overcome the obstacles to calm abiding, such as sleep, fogginess and the like – one practises as explained in [Nagarjuna's] *Letter to a Friend*.

3.2.1.3.2.4.2. Generating the method of striving in the antidote

As a way to overcome these obstacles, one needs to generate the mind of applying the antidote. The verse relating to this heading is:

**186. Like the great compassionate ones
I shall start suitable actions.
If I do not practise continuously day and night,
Then when shall I leave suffering behind?**

As the commentary explains:

Think: Like the great compassionate ones I shall start suitable practices that generate the power of the antidote. If I do not practise continuously day and night, then when shall I leave suffering behind?

One should strive in meditating on the common and uncommon kinds of calm abiding.

This is clearly presented, so there is no need for further explanation. 'Think' here means one makes the resolve: like the great compassionate ones I shall start suitable practices that generate the power of the antidote for overcoming all the obstacles to developing calm abiding.

If I do not practise continuously day and night, then when shall I leave suffering behind? This rhetorical question implies that if one wishes to leave suffering behind, one needs to practise continuously, day and night.

Then, one should strive in meditating on the common and uncommon kinds of calm abiding – 'common' here being the calm abiding practices common to some of the non-Buddhist schools and tenets, while the uncommon ones belong specifically to the Buddhist presentation.

3.2.1.3.2.4.3. Placing the mind in single-pointed equipoise on a virtuous object

**187. Therefore, to eliminate the obscurations
I take the mind away from wrong paths
And place it continuously in equipoise
On a correct object.**

The commentary explains:

Therefore, in order to eliminate all afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, one needs to generate superior insight. Before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. By way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object.

Having contemplated the reasons presented earlier, one strives to eliminate both the afflictive obscurations – which include the six root delusions of attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views and doubt, and the seeds of those delusions, as well as the obscurations to knowledge,

which are the latent imprints of the obscurations.¹ To do that one needs to generate superior insight in order to overcome the seeds of the delusions, as well as their imprints. Before that, one needs to in turn achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths.

The point here is that one needs to generate superior insight, which is to be presented in the next chapter, and before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding. So, having been presented with all the conditions for developing calm abiding, I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects.

Further, one turns one's mind away from all wrong paths, such as the disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. The actual method for developing calm abiding is referred to here; by way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object. The eight abandoning recognitions are as presented in the Lam Rim.² As I have presented earlier, the definition of calm abiding is: a concentration that is able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, and which is combined with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Then Gyalsab Rinpoche advises:

In short: How to attain the common calm abiding is explained extensively in the Hearer Grounds and the way of attaining the uncommon calm abiding is explained in this text and in Master Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation*. Understanding the method from these texts and by contemplating the benefits of meditating on calm abiding and the disadvantages of not meditating on calm abiding, one should strive in meditating on calm abiding by way of the eight stages of calm abiding and so forth.

The eight stages of calm abiding and so forth are presented very clearly in Lama Tsong Khapa's great and medium Lam Rim texts.

Indeed, many years ago [when I taught on the extensive Lam Rim], I presented in detail what calm abiding means, its definition, and how to develop it, as well as what special insight entails. Of course, if I were to repeat those presentations it might serve some purpose, especially to refresh the mind of the older students, and for the newer students. However, since it has been presented earlier, you can refer to that. I will not go into further detail here.

In fact, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches he often says, "I will repeat this point again, even if you have heard it before". His intention is for the newer students to be able to comprehend and understand it, and for older students not to just go to sleep thinking they've heard it already! These are important points His Holiness is mentioning; there is always a need to hear these points again, so this repetition serves a purpose.

Basically, as presented here it is the three higher trainings that are the basis for our development. Morality, which includes the precepts we take, is the very basis, like the ground or foundation. The next training is meditation, specifically the development of calm abiding. Finally, the

¹ Also known as obscurations to omniscience

² *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp. 653-66

training in wisdom enables us to develop special insight. Again, we will not go into much more detail now.

The summarising verse by Gyaltsab Je himself succinctly presents these points.

SUMMARISING VERSE

The destruction of the two obscurations from the root
With superior insight to which reality is obvious,
Depends in turn on immovable concentration.
Hence, one should first become proficient in attaining
calm abiding.

Here, *the two obscurations* refer to the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience. To completely overcome them *from the very root*, we need to develop *superior insight to which reality is obvious*; with superior insight one obtains the direct perception and realisation of emptiness. Thus, developing superior insight becomes the ultimate means to destroy the two obscurations. Achieving that, in turn, *depends in turn* on developing *immovable concentration*, or indestructible concentration. Hence, *one should first become proficient in attaining calm abiding*. So this is the point of this pith instruction.

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the eighth chapter called Explaining Mental Stabilisation from the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.

This is the commentary on the eighth chapter called Explaining Mental Stabilisation from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

This concludes the Eighth Chapter. In the next sessions, we will continue with the Ninth Chapter. I think the Ninth Chapter is a bit longer than the Eighth Chapter, with a few extra verses, but otherwise almost the same length. I have also taught on the Ninth Chapter, as many of the older students are aware.

So far we have done very well with going through the text, and my intention is to try to complete the text this year. If we can do that, it would be good.

The exam we can leave for August, when I'm doing a retreat. It will be good to do the exam at that time. Also, there's the seminar coming up in August, so it's good for you to do your preparation for that now.

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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Tara Institute Study Group 'Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara' Homework Answers

| Block | Week | Teaching Date | Assigned |
|-------|------|---------------|-------------|
| 2 | 12 | 28 June 2016 | 5 July 2016 |

1. Why is it pointless if 'One becomes angry when this body is criticised due to a fault, and one is happy if it is praised due to a quality'.

2. Explain verse 184

184. *Therefore, without attachment
I shall give up this body to the purpose of migrators.
Then, although it has many faults,
I shall protect the body in its actions.*

3.a Before one can generate superior insight, what does one need to do?

3.b What is the definition of calm abiding?

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1. Why is it pointless if 'One becomes angry when this body is criticised due to a fault, and one is happy if it is praised due to a quality'.

The point here is that, when the body is criticised it makes one's mind unhappy, so one becomes angry. When the body is praised, due to attachment one's mind becomes happy and elated. Therefore, being overly attached to the body makes the mind either angry due to criticism, or makes the mind elated due to strong attachment.

However, the body itself has no awareness of the praise and criticism that the mind experiences. Because the body itself is not a consciousness, it is not able to have this distinct awareness: basically the body itself is an inanimate object which does not experience praise or criticism. So why unnecessarily strain the mind with anger or attachment, when the body is criticised or praised? When the mind is unhappy, that is when it is most prone to becoming angry. Whereas, when the mind is feeling elated and joyous – by experiencing worldly pleasures – that's when one is most vulnerable to developing attachment.

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From the *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

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Yet one looks after it.
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Many merits will be generated.

Since one achieves a lot of the purpose of others in dependence on this body, although it has many faults, it needs to be protected for the purpose of others, just like worldly beings grasp onto a chariot and use it to carry a burden.

As presented in the commentary, while overcoming attachment to one's body, one sees the purpose of benefiting others, so one needs to protect one's body and engage in the practices of generosity, and so forth.

As I have said before, whenever we nurture our body by partaking of food and drink, we can practise generosity by always first offering it to one's gurus and the Three Jewels. When partaking of food and drink and so forth, we need to always remember: By nurturing my body, I will use it for the benefit of the Buddha's doctrine and of sentient beings". Furthermore, we can utilise this body to engage in the practices of great purification, such as doing prostrations and so forth; and in the practices of collecting merit, such as making extensive offerings and so forth.

3.a Before one can generate superior insight, what does one need to do?

The commentary explains:

Therefore, in order to eliminate all afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, one needs to generate superior insight. Before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. By way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object.

Having contemplated the reasons presented earlier, one strives to *eliminate* both the *afflictive obscurations* – which include the six root delusions of attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views and doubt, and the seeds of those delusions – as well as the *obscurations to knowledge*, which are the latent imprints of the obscurations. To do that, one needs to generate *superior insight* in order to overcome the seeds of the delusions, as well as their imprints. *Before that, one needs to in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths.*

The point here is that one needs to *generate superior insight*, which is to be presented in the next chapter, and before that, *one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding*. So, having been presented with all the conditions for developing calm abiding, *I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects.*

Further, one turns one's *mind away from all wrong paths, such as the disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding*. The actual method for developing calm abiding is referred to here – *by way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object*. The eight

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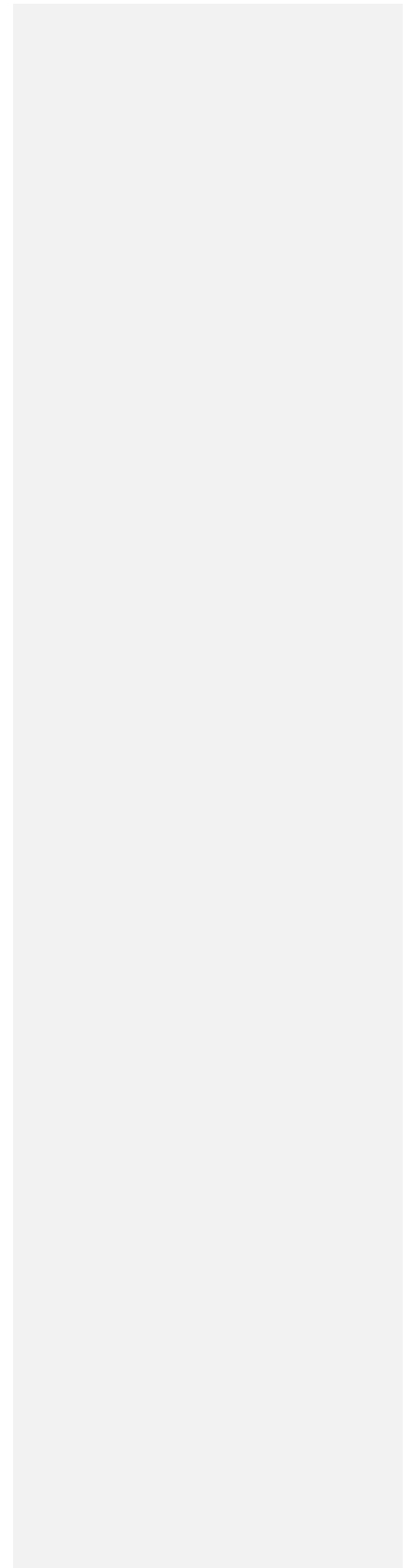
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abandoning recognitions are as presented in the Lam Rim.

3.b What is the definition of calm abiding?

The definition of calm abiding is: a concentration that is able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, and which is combined with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.



Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 July 2016

As usual, let us spend some time in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

As done regularly, we can generate the motivation for receiving these teachings along these lines: 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.

Familiarising our mind with the wish to benefit others is indeed a very noble intention, which serves a great purpose. To do this one can generate the very strong intention “I will not harm any living being, and I will extend benefit to any living being that I come across”. As we familiarise our minds with this intention, our way of thinking becomes more and more imbued with that sentiment. Then it is definitely possible to reach a stage where we actually embrace the quality of only benefiting others and not harming others in the slightest.

Leaving aside the fact that this noble intention is a cause for enlightenment and buddhahood, just on a human level how wonderful it would be to be someone who does not harm any living being, and whose only intention is to benefit other sentient beings! And it is definitely possible to become such a person. Through familiarity, this motivation will carry on from one life to the next. As we progress through each life, familiarising ourselves more and more with this noble intention, we will definitely become an embodiment of love and compassion.

The reality is that we will not live forever. In fact we are getting closer by the day to the end of this life, which means getting closer to our next life. At death we don't disappear into nothingness; we will actually take rebirth again. So if we ensure familiarity with this noble intention through our practice, then we can secure being reborn as human again with these noble intentions. If we have this inborn quality in our next life then that will be wonderful. This is how we can prepare for our next life, which will come much sooner than we think. It will also ensure that our practice becomes a pure Dharma practice.

As explained in the presentation on refuge, there are two types of refuge: causal refuge and resultant refuge. The resultant refuge is the future states of one's own liberation and enlightenment. No-one else can bestow these resultant states of liberation and enlightenment on us; we have to create the causes to achieve that resultant state ourselves.

Although aspiring for enlightenment in order to benefit sentient beings is a noble intention in itself, that aspiration has to be in relation to one's own resultant state of enlightenment. The significant point here is that one aspires to achieve the resultant state of enlightenment oneself in order to benefit other sentient beings.

[To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. *The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections*

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections:

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The way of training in patience⁵

2.2.2.2.2.3.2. The way of training in enthusiasm⁶

2.2.2.2.2.3.3. The way of training in the common and uncommon mental stabilisations that are contained in calm abiding⁷

2.2.2.2.2.3.4. The way of training in wisdom that is the nature of superior insight

CHAPTER 9: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN WISDOM THAT IS THE NATURE OF SUPERIOR INSIGHT

What is the nature of superior insight? More specifically, what is the entity of superior insight? What does it actually mean?

We have just completed the chapter with the presentation on calm abiding. What is the nature or entity of calm abiding? As presented earlier, the entity or nature of calm abiding is a concentration that is obtained by relying on the nine stages of developing mental stabilisation, and which is able to focus on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, accompanied with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

The nature of special insight is, based on calm abiding, an analysis on the focused object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Some mistakenly refer to special insight as a state of mind that sees something more or extra than calm abiding. This is a wrong interpretation. Both focus on the same object: calm abiding is merely stabilising the mind single-pointedly on the object and that single-pointed focus on the object induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy; while abiding on the object single-pointedly special insight is able to simultaneously analyse and investigate the object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

The chapter has two parts

I. Explanation of the chapter

II. Explanation of the title

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014

⁴ Covered in chapter 5, introduced on 20 May 2014

⁵ Covered in chapter 6, introduced on 23 September 2014

⁶ Covered in chapter 7, introduced on 12 May 2015

⁷ Covered in chapter 8, introduced on 29 September 2015

I. EXPLANATION OF THE CHAPTER

The explanation of the chapter is subdivided into three:

1. Showing that those wishing to attain liberation need to generate the wisdom realising suchness
2. The method of how to generate the wisdom realising suchness
3. Therefore an advice to strive in generating this wisdom

1. SHOWING THAT THOSE WISHING TO ATTAIN LIBERATION NEED TO GENERATE THE WISDOM REALISING SUCHNESS⁸

This is subdivided into two.

- 1.1. General meaning
- 1.2. Auxiliary meaning

1.1. General meaning

In the Tibetan version of the text the verse is not quoted directly under this heading, and the words 'argument' and 'answer' are not specifically used in Tibetan text. These have been added by the translator of the text. We need to pay careful attention to the material in this heading as it explains a succinct point.

Argument: Because we need to attain enlightenment, to pacify all suffering in the continuum of others, we need to realise suchness. But if one wonders why would one need to realise suchness to merely pacify the sufferings in one's own continuum?

The answer to that hypothetical query is:

Answer: The protector Nagarjuna said,
For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.

This, of course, is a well-known quote from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, which we studied some years ago. As I explained at the time, it is used in many teachings, and we see it here again. It is a very important point.

As the commentary explains, Nagarjuna is saying that:

For as long as there is true-grasping at [or grasping at the true existence of] the aggregates, for that long one will not stop the transitory view grasping at inherent 'I' and 'mine'.

Nobody here asserts that hearer and self-liberator arhats have not completely abandoned the transitory view, but as one needs to stop true-grasping at the aggregates to that end, it is asserted that they realise the non-true existence [some translations use the term 'lack of true existence'] of the aggregates.

This master [referring to Shantideva] also asserts as well that one needs to realise suchness in order to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence, which is explained further below.

As explained here, *for as long as there is true-grasping at the aggregates*, which is grasping at the true existence of phenomena, one will have the *transitory view grasping at the inherent existence of 'I' and 'mine'*, which basically refers to grasping at the inherent existence of the individual self. What is being explained is that without overcoming the wrong conceptions of holding onto the inherent existence or the true existence of phenomena, one cannot possibly overcome the wrong conception of grasping at the inherent existence of the individual self or 'I'.

Grasping at true existence of the aggregates is the misconception that perceives the aggregates as being truly existent. This is our normal perception of the aggregates. Rather than seeing the aggregates as being an entity that is dependent on many parts, their causes and conditions, we perceive them as being independently existent, existing from their own side, without depending on anything else for their existence.

As the aggregates appear to us in this way we apprehend the aggregates as being truly existent without depending on causes or conditions or parts and so forth. Believing in that perception is called true-grasping at the aggregates. Grasping at the aggregates as being truly existent then leads onto grasping at the self and 'I' and what belongs to me as 'mine'.

The complete verse from *Precious Garland*, part of which was quoted earlier reads:

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.
For as long as there is grasping at the 'I'
One creates the karma.

We need to understand how grasping at a truly existent 'I' produces grasping at 'mine'. From 'mine' comes my friends and my enemies and strangers. Strong grasping at my friend then produces the state of mind of attachment, and through that strong attachment a lot of negativities are created. Thoughts of 'my enemy' give rise to anger or aversion, and out of that aversion or anger one also creates a lot of negativity. In relation to strangers one generates a mind of indifference and lack of interest for their wellbeing.

As the commentary further explains

Nobody here asserts that hearer and self-liberator arhats have not completely abandoned the transitory view, but because one needs to stop true-grasping at the aggregates, to that end it is asserted that they realise the non-true existence [or lack of true existence] of the aggregates.

In order to overcome grasping at the true existence of the 'I', one has to overcome grasping at the true existence of the aggregates. As indicated in the commentary, arhats have definitely overcome grasping at the true existence of the aggregates. One needs to try to understand this explanation as best as one can, because this really is the pith of the unique presentation that makes the Buddhist tenets different from non-Buddhist tenets.

In Buddhist doctrine **the view is selflessness** while the **conduct is non-violence**. Other doctrines practise non-violence, but the view of selflessness is unique to the Buddhist tenets, and within Buddhism there are different presentations of this view of selflessness. There was no presentation of the view of selflessness before the Buddha's time in this world.

The way to understand selflessness is that all things that are produced can be understood as having causes. Most would understand that the suffering that everybody experiences must have its causes; there must be reasons and causes for suffering. Some might assert random suffering without a cause, but most logicians and realists would accept that there are causes for suffering.

⁸ The numbering recommences with the new chapter
Chapter 9

As presented in the Lam Rim, the suffering that one experiences depends on karma, karma depends on afflictions, and afflictions in turn depend on the ignorance of grasping at true existence. So when we look into the causes of suffering we find that the root of all suffering is grasping at a self.

Having identified the root cause of suffering, which is grasping at a self, what then needs to be examined is whether grasping at a self can be eliminated. If grasping at the self can be eliminated, then by default the product of that grasping at the self, which is suffering, will also naturally cease. This is how it should be understood.

In this investigation, one investigates whether this state of mind of grasping at a self is a correct perception, or whether it is a false perception. The way to understand that this grasping at a self is a faulty perception - and thus is not based on any truth - is that it is not supported by reality. Once it is understood that the self does not exist in the way that it is perceived by the self-grasping mind, then it can be asserted as being a faulty perception. Then one comes to understand that the grasping at a self is a faulty state of mind, or false perception, because what it perceives does not exist in that way.

When one understands that what is perceived does not exist as perceived then, at that point, one is coming to an understanding of selflessness. The self that is perceived by the self-grasping mind does not exist, and therefore it is void of a self.

One thus comes to understand that the wisdom realising selflessness is what destroys the faulty mind of grasping at a self. When that realisation of selflessness and emptiness becomes very vivid and strong, then that becomes the antidote that overcomes this false perception of grasping at a truly existent or inherently existent self. When that faulty perception of grasping is completely eradicated, then the very root cause of our sufferings is completely eradicated. Then the negativities, afflictions and so forth that arise from that misconception will all cease as well. This is how one needs to understand the view of selflessness and emptiness as being the ultimate antidote for overcoming the afflicted states of mind and all that they produce i.e. suffering and so forth.

One needs to actualise this understanding of selflessness and emptiness in relation to one's own grasping at one's own individual self. Grasping at a truly existent self needs to be overcome on a personal level. Thus the selflessness and emptiness of one's individual being has to be understood. Gaining just a mere intellectual understanding may have some weight, but it does not really serve as means to completely eradicate and overcome the erroneous view of grasping at a self. In order to overcome the erroneous view of grasping at a self, one needs to fully actualise and realise selflessness in relation to oneself. That then becomes the ultimate antidote for overcoming all the mental afflictions. This is the uniqueness of the Buddha's presentation of the ways and means to overcome suffering.

In this way one can understand how suffering is something that can be overcome, because it depends on causes and conditions. When those causes and conditions are overcome, then suffering naturally subsides. If

suffering were to occur randomly without any causes and conditions there would not be much one could do to avert it. But because it depends on causes and conditions, which can be identified, one can apply the antidotes for overcoming those causes. Then one can eradicate suffering. So this is how it should be understood.

Of course the logical assertions for establishing selflessness and emptiness will be presented further on. As the commentary presents:

Those that wish to understand this presentation more extensively should do so in dependence on the great commentary by the great divine omniscient Lama Tsong Khapa, who is the guide of all the worlds, on the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

Of course, we studied *Introduction to the Middle Way* in previous classes.

Please dedicate the recitation of the Tara Praises recitation to David Hope, an old student and Member who worked very hard for Tara Institute in its early years. Apparently he is going to be having surgery soon.

Because of his connection with Tara Institute, the students of Tara Institute and myself, when we dedicate our prayers for the successes of his treatment, it can definitely be of benefit. Keep that in mind.

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

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Homework

Block: 2 Week: 13 (5July 2016) **Assigned: 12/7/2016**

1. a) What is the nature or entity of calm abiding?

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b) Describe the relationship between calm abiding and special insight.

2. The complete verse from *Precious Garland*, part of which was quoted earlier reads:

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.
For as long as there is grasping at the 'I'
One creates the karma

Explain this verse?

3. Explain the way to understand selflessness and how this helps to understand suffering and the cessation of suffering?

.

4. Explain how one investigates whether this state of mind of grasping at a self is a correct perception, or whether it is a false perception. How does this overcome suffering?

Homework Answers

Block: 2 **Week:** 13 (5 July 2016) **Assigned:** 12/7/2016

1. a) What is the nature or entity of calm abiding?

We have just completed the chapter with the presentation on calm abiding. What is the nature or entity of calm abiding? As presented earlier, the entity or nature of calm abiding is a concentration that is obtained by relying on the nine stages of developing mental stabilisation, and which is able to focus on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, accompanied with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

b) Describe the relationship between calm abiding and special insight.

The nature of special insight is, based on calm abiding an analysis on the focused object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Some mistakenly refer to special insight as a state of mind that sees something more or extra than calm abiding. This is a wrong interpretation. Both focus on the same object: calm abiding is merely stabilising the mind single-pointedly on the object and that single-pointed focus on the object induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy; while abiding on the object single-pointedly special insight is able to simultaneously analyse and investigate the object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

2. Explain this verse from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*:

**For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.
For as long as there is grasping at the 'I'
One creates the karma**

Grasping at true existence of the aggregates is the misconception that perceives the aggregates as being truly existent. This is our normal perception of the aggregates. Rather than seeing the aggregates as being an entity that is dependent on many parts, their causes and conditions, we perceive them as being independently existent, existing from their own side, without depending on anything else for their existence.

As the aggregates appear to us in this way we apprehend the aggregates as being truly existent without depending on causes or conditions or parts and so forth. Believing in that perception is called true-grasping at the aggregates. Grasping at the aggregates as being truly existent then leads onto grasping at the self and 'I' and what belongs to me as 'mine'.

We need to understand how grasping at a truly existent 'I' produces grasping at 'mine'. From 'mine' comes my friends and my enemies and strangers. Strong grasping at my friend then produces the state of mind of attachment, and through that strong attachment a lot of negativities are created. Thoughts of 'my enemy' give rise to anger or aversion, and out of that aversion or anger one also creates a lot of negativity. In relation to strangers one generates a mind of indifference and lack of interest for their wellbeing.

3. Explain the way to understand selflessness and how this helps in understanding suffering and the cessation of suffering?

The way to understand selflessness is that all things that are produced can be understood as having causes. Most would understand that the suffering that everybody experiences must have its causes - there must be reason and cause for suffering. Some might assert random suffering without a cause, but most logicians and realists would accept that there are causes for suffering.

As presented in the Lam Rim, the suffering that one experiences depends on karma, karma depends on afflictions, and afflictions in turn depend on the ignorance of grasping at true existence. So when we look into the causes of suffering we find that the root of all suffering is grasping at a self.

Having identified the root cause of suffering, which is grasping at a self, what then needs to be examined is whether grasping at a self can be eliminated. If grasping at the self can be eliminated, then by default the product of that grasping at the self, which is suffering, will also naturally cease. This is how it should be understood.

4. Explain how one investigates whether this state of mind of grasping at a self is a correct perception, or whether it is a false perception. How does this overcome suffering?

In this investigation, one investigates whether this state of mind of grasping at a self is a correct perception, or whether it is a false perception. The way to understand that this grasping at a self is a faulty perception, and thus is not based on any truth, it is not supported by reality. Once it is understood that the self does not exist in the way that it is perceived by the self-grasping mind, then it can be asserted as being a faulty perception. Then one comes to understand that the grasping at a self is a faulty state of mind, or false perception, because what it perceives does not exist in that way.

When one understands that what is perceived does not exist as perceived then, at that point, one is coming to an understanding of selflessness. The self that is perceived by the self-grasping mind does not exist, and therefore it is void of a self.

One thus comes to understand that the wisdom realising selflessness is what destroys the faulty mind of grasping at a self. When that realisation of selflessness and emptiness becomes very vivid and strong, then that becomes the antidote that overcomes this false perception of grasping at a truly existent or inherently existent self. When that faulty perception of grasping is completely eradicated, then the very root cause of our sufferings is completely eradicated. Then the negativities, afflictions and so forth that arise from that misconception will all cease as well. This is how one needs to understand the view of selflessness and emptiness as being the ultimate antidote for overcoming the afflicted states of mind and all that they produce i.e. suffering and so forth.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 July 2016

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

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

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

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

It is essential that we regularly pay attention to the noble intention to benefit others, uphold this intention as most essential at all times, and not be separated from it. One should even resolve that 'I will not allow the noble intention to benefit others to ever degenerate; I will never allow my mind to be separated from this intention'. This approach would be most beneficial.

When we ensure we uphold this noble intention at all times, and make every attempt to strengthen and maintain it, that in itself becomes one way of fulfilling the purpose of studying this text on the bodhisattvas' deeds. The text presents profound ways of practising this noble intention and generating bodhicitta. If we can put time and effort into studying these profound instructions, it can actually help us generate this noble intention, maintain it, and provide a purpose for studying this text.

To adopt a practical approach to generating a virtuous mind, and as a means to accumulate extensive virtue, consider the example of saving money. If we took the initiative to save one dollar a day, by the end of the month we would definitely have saved thirty dollars. Think about accumulating a stock of virtues in the same practical way by undertaking small virtuous deeds daily. If we can ensure we put effort into accumulating *some* virtue daily, then after some time that will accumulate to become a great stock of virtuous merit.

The buddhas and great masters have given very practical advice as a means to accumulate virtues and shun negativity. The Buddha said: 'Don't neglect small virtues thinking that there is no benefit; don't adopt small misdeeds thinking that there is no harm'. One should not discard small deeds, good or bad. If we think 'Oh, that's such a small positive deed there's no point adopting it', or 'Oh, it's such a small negative deed there's no problem adopting it', then we are disregarding the power of good deeds, and the gravity of negative deeds.

An analogy presented by the Buddha is drops of water filling a container; where one drop at a time will fill even a large container. This analogy reinforces the point that the small virtues we accumulate can become great virtue in the end. An analogy to illustrate how even small harms can cause great destruction is the way a tiny spark can cause a

huge fire. Even though a spark may be very small, when placed on a stack of hay it can ignite and very soon large flames can completely burn down a stack of hay as huge as a mountain. This is a practical example used to caution us not to underestimate the power of even small good deeds, or the destruction of small negative deeds.

This is how the incomparably kind Buddha gave advice so we can achieve these goals. If we pay attention we can see how significant and beneficial this approach is for us. I'm sharing these points to encourage you to put into practice whatever you have learned, beginning with adopting small virtues and shunning small misdeeds. The very purpose of studying the Dharma is to use it as a means to subdue our minds. If that is the purpose, then without practising the Dharma there is no way to subdue the mind.

When we actually pay attention and start practising what we know, we will definitely begin to see a significant change over time. Contemplating the great value of virtue, and the need to acquaint ourselves with virtue again and again, becomes a means to remind oneself to protect whatever virtuous positive mind one has at any cost. This is essential.

1.1. General meaning (cont.)

The commentary reads:

While various commentaries on this text present it to teach that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, this being a mistaken meaning of the text is clearly cognised and shall be explained.

As I have presented this previously, as a way to reflect on the meaning of this point, I'd like you to present the reason why it says here that it is a mistake to assert that *hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena*. In other words, why do hearers and self-liberators definitely need to realise the selflessness of phenomena? Majola, you can give an explanation.

Majola: One has to realise both - the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena - not only selflessness of person.

Geshe-la: But this doesn't relate to the main point. The text isn't referring to the selflessness of person; it's talking about the selflessness of phenomena. This is reflected at the start of the text. Damien, you can try to explain the reason? So, basically why do the hearers and self-liberators need to realise selflessness of phenomena? This is the main point.

Damien: Because they conceive the aggregates to be inherently existent it's not possible to realise the selflessness of the 'I'. They have to realise the selflessness of phenomena because if they adhere to conceiving that phenomena are inherently existent or truly existent, then they cannot possibly realise the selflessness of person.

Geshe-la: This doesn't relate to the main point being presented here either! I've explained many times previously why hearers and self-liberators definitely have to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Why is that so? This is the main point here. It is stated here in the commentary that other commentaries mistakenly present that the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* teaches that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, is mistaken. In other words, it is saying that they have to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Right?

Damien: Because they are liberated.

Geshe-la: It is not referring to those who have attained liberation; it is referring to hearers and self-realizers in general!

I have worked hard to explain these points to you in the past but you seem to have not retained any of the points that I have explained previously! I've mentioned many times – over 100 times – that grasping at the self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration. So is this clear; do you understand the point? It seems that you still haven't understood the point! Perhaps Denis would be better at explaining it!

Denis: In answer to the question I would say that the antidote to ignorance is the realisation of emptiness, which is the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena.

Geshe-la: That is a much better explanation.

The grasping at the self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration, and in order to overcome it one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Without realising the selflessness of phenomena one cannot possibly overcome the deluded obscurations. So, according to the Prasangika, grasping at a truly existent self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration.

What is being presented in this phrase is that *while various commentaries on this text, i.e. the Bodhisattvacharyavatara, teach that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, this being a mistaken meaning of the text is clearly cognised. This means that it is clearly understood that this is mistaken, which will be explained.* It is clearly saying that hearers and self-liberators definitely have to realise the selflessness of phenomena.

The first line in the verse reads, *the Able One explained all these different branches for the purpose of wisdom.* The commentary explains:

These branches can refer merely to calm abiding which is explained in the eighth chapter, or it can refer to all the remaining perfections starting with generosity. There are these two systems, and although the first system is feasible from the point of view of the relation of the earlier and later chapters, here it is better to follow the second system.

So these branches can specifically refer to how to develop calm abiding (as explained in the eighth chapter), but it can also refer to all the other perfections. What is being presented here is that it is better to follow the system which relates it to all the other perfections. Prior to explaining the meaning of the whole verse, the commentary first explains what 'these branches' refers to.

Having said that, it is good to relate these branches to the other perfections such as generosity and so forth, this doubt is then raised:

The doubts with regards to, 'the branches of generosity and so forth were taught for the purpose of wisdom' are eliminated as follows.

The commentary continues:

In general generosity and the other perfections do not need to precede the realisation of suchness by way of listening and contemplation ...

This is quite clear. Then it further explains:

because although one needs to build up merit to realise emptiness, the practices of a bodhisattva, such as explained here, do not have to be preliminaries.

The commentary clearly says that in order to realise emptiness one definitely has to accumulate merit, but the perfections of generosity i.e. generosity accompanied with

bodhicitta, and so forth, do not have to be the specific preliminaries.

As further explained:

This is similar to the two modes of realising suchness through listening and contemplating as explained by the master Shantarakshita.

The commentary then goes on to explain that:

One also does not need them as preliminaries to generate a mind-transforming experience of emptiness, because then they would also have to precede other realisations such as an experience of impermanence. One also does not need them as a preliminary for the generation of superior insight realising emptiness from meditation, because although they do not first engage in the practices of a bodhisattva, hearers and self-liberators realise suchness in the way that was mentioned earlier.

Next a hypothetical doubt is presented:

If you say: They were taught for the purpose of wisdom, because the wisdom realising emptiness is the substantial cause for the dharmakaya, and the methods of generosity and the other perfections are the simultaneously acting conditions, and one needs the benefit of generosity and the other perfections to achieve the result of wisdom.

Although one does need these causes and conditions to obtain the *dharmakaya*, (a buddha's truth body) the hypothetical doubt raises the issue as to whether the branches of generosity and so forth were taught specifically for the purpose of wisdom for this reason.

The answer encapsulates why this not the case:

Answer: In that case one could also turn it around and say that wisdom was taught for the purpose of the other perfections.

Because the other perfections are also needed to achieve the *rupakaya*, (a buddha's form body) one could say that wisdom was taught for the purpose of the other perfections. When you turn it around it should also apply, but that is clearly not the case.

Having refuted the earlier hypothetical assertions that the branches of generosity etc. were taught for the purpose of wisdom, now the commentary explains the actual reason.

Thus, without the wisdom realising emptiness one cannot exhaust the seeds of either of the two obscurations, and although one does not need to be adorned with infinite merit to eliminate merely the seeds of the afflictive obscurations, one does need infinite merit to eliminate the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge. As this text is mainly from the point of view of eliminating the obscurations to knowledge it says, 'these branches are taught for the purpose of wisdom'.

The purpose of presenting wisdom here is because it serves as a means to overcome the obscurations to knowledge. In order for wisdom to become a means to eliminate the obscurations to knowledge, it definitely has to be backed by the other perfections based on bodhicitta. In this way we need the practices of the perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, and so forth.

While the realisation of emptiness is needed to overcome both the deluded obscurations as well as the obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, one does not need the backing of extensive merit such as the six perfections to overcome the deluded obscurations. The main emphasis presented here is

that the wisdom realising emptiness is not specifically the means to overcome the deluded obscurations, but rather to abandon the obscurations to omniscience. Therefore, the branches, i.e. the perfections of generosity and so forth, are definitely needed as a way to accumulate the extensive merit to overcome the obscuration to omniscience.

The deluded obscurations are, for example, grasping at the true existence of self and phenomena. The imprints of these the delusions, including these misconceptions of grasping to the self of person and phenomena, are said to be the obscurations to omniscience.

The Prasangika specifically explain that due to the imprints of the delusions one still has the appearance of true existence, and these mistaken appearances are actually the obscuration to omniscience.

Let's clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience. With every delusion, such as attachment, there is a distinction between the seed of the delusion and the imprint of the delusion. The seed of delusion is defined as that which serves as a cause for a similar delusion to occur in the next instance. Given the definition of a seed, then for as long as one has the seed of attachment, that attachment will be perpetually generated until the seed of attachment is completely abandoned.

Although one has abandoned the seed of attachment, one still has the imprint of attachment. This is also true for all the other delusions, and it is the imprints of the delusions that cause the mistaken appearance of true existence. Even when one has abandoned the seeds of delusions, there's still an appearance of true existence, up until the point that one completely abandons the imprints of all delusions.

So according to the Prasangika view, all sentient beings' sense faculties will necessarily have this mistaken appearance of true existence because, by definition, a sentient being is a being who has not overcome the imprints of the delusions.

An illustration of when the sense faculty itself is influenced by a mistaken perception of true existence, and how this causes a mistaken appearance, can be seen on a grosser level with the mind of sleep. During sleep we have what is called the sleep consciousness to which all dreams appear. In the dream state we see horses, elephants, houses etc. which are mistaken appearances because they do not really exist. In dreams they appear to the mind as actually existing, but in fact they do not really exist as they appear; they are non-existent.

In syllogisms, the example used for things lacking true existence is that they are like a dream. Things in a dream appear to be real but they actually don't exist. Likewise, truly existent phenomena do not exist.

It is said that it is only a buddha's mind that does not have any mistaken appearances, because a buddha has completely eliminated the very imprints of all the delusions. Thus, for a buddha's mind there is no mistaken appearance whatsoever. For example, an arhat who has overcome the seeds of delusions still has mistaken appearance of true existence, because they have not yet abandoned the imprints of the delusions. So until one achieves buddhahood one has not overcome the mistaken appearances.

Further, the commentary explains that:

It is master Nagarjuna's position that true-grasping is an afflictive obscuration, and this master asserts the same.

It is just as explained.

Next there is a presentation further explaining why calm abiding, in this context, is also a specific prerequisite (or means) to develop special insight.

The commentary explains:

From the *Sutra Perfectly Condensing Dharma*:

If one places the mind in equipoise one knows the absolute, just the way it is.

Also from the *Compendium of Trainings*:

The Able One said, 'in equipoise one knows the absolute, just the way it is'.

From these quotations we can see the specific reference that the way of obtaining special insight in order to know existence *just the way it is*, is dependent on having first developed calm abiding. So we can see why there are commentaries that take this literally and thus don't refer to the other perfections as a cause for developing special insight.

The commentary concludes:

'Equipoise' refers to calm abiding, and 'knowing just as it is' refers to superior insight, and therefore the perfection of meditative stabilisation explained in the eighth chapter is a causal branch for the wisdom explained here.

1.2. Auxiliary meaning

In the text, verse one comes under this heading:

1. *The Able One explained all these branches For the purpose of wisdom; Therefore, those who wish to pacify suffering Need to generate wisdom.*

The commentary explains:

As one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to generate the wisdom realising selflessness. The earlier explained branches of generosity and the other perfections, that is, all the collection of causes, was taught by the Buddha for the purpose of generating the wisdom realising emptiness.

In the first sentence, the word 'selflessness' relates specifically to the selflessness of phenomena. Of course it also covers the selflessness of person, but here it specifically relates to the selflessness of phenomena, as explained previously. When one gets the main point, from then on one can relate to the rest of the explanations in the text and derive the essential meaning. That's the way to study the text; first understand the main point then the rest will follow logically.

According to this system, the wisdom realising selflessness relates to the wisdom realising emptiness. Thus, the selflessness mentioned here relates to the way grasping at an inherently existing self is the root cause for all the delusions and sufferings. Because it is the root cause of all delusions it is the root cause of all sufferings. Is this understood? So if *one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to definitely generate the wisdom realising selflessness*. Why? Because one needs to overcome grasping at an inherently existing self.

When the commentary refers to *the earlier explained branches of generosity*, it is referring to the earlier chapters e.g. chapter three and four onwards. In summary, the *branches of generosity and the other perfections* refers to all the collections of causes, which was taught by the Buddha for the purpose of generating the wisdom realising emptiness.

Having eliminated the presented doubts, one can now gain a clear understanding that while, in general, it is not necessary for the perfections of generosity and so forth to precede gaining the wisdom realising emptiness, they are presented first here, because the ultimate intent of this text is to generate the wisdom realising emptiness that serves as an antidote to the obscurations to omniscience.

We can see how the commentary meticulously presents the meaning of the first verse by providing a comprehensive and complete approach; first eliminating any doubts that may arise in understanding the point being presented here, followed by the actual explanation of the verse.

It is good for us to have gone through this process to uphold an accurate understanding of what is presented here. If we allow various personal doubts to surface then there's no end to it, but to eliminate specific doubts as means to get a clearer understanding of the meaning presented here is really good. The main point is thus emphasised: *As one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to generate the wisdom realizing selflessness.* All these branches were explained by the Able One for the purpose of wisdom. So this is clear.

2. THE METHOD OF HOW TO GENERATE THE WISDOM REALISING SUCHNESS

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1. The presentation of the two truths
- 2.2. Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness
- 2.3. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established emptiness

2.1. The presentation of the two truths

This has two subdivisions:

- 2.1.1. Actual
- 2.1.2. Refuting objections of the no-need and no ability regarding emptiness

Again we can see the meticulous way the text is presented with these headings to clarify the structure.

2.1.1. Actual

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1.1.1. The division of the two truths
- 2.1.1.2. The definition of the two truths
- 2.1.1.3. Identifying the person who has understood both

2.1.1.1. THE DIVISION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The first two lines of the next verse come under this heading:

*2ab. The illusory¹ and the ultimate
These are asserted as the two truths;*

The commentary reads:

The *Compendium of Trainings* quotes the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*,

The Tathagata comprehended thus the illusory and the ultimate and exhausted the possibilities for that to be known into illusory truth and ultimate truth.

Because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests as well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom.

As the commentary presents, *that to be known*, refers to objects of knowledge i.e. all existence, since whatever exists

has to necessarily be perceived by an awareness. That which is to be known is understood by the Tathagata, the all-knowing one, *as illusory truth and ultimate truth*. The Tathagata has, *exhausted the possibilities for that to be known*, meaning that he sees that there is no other way for something to exist than either as an illusory truth or an ultimate truth. There is no possibility of a third way of existence for objects of knowledge.

It further mentions, *because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom*. The reason the Buddha is posited as omniscient or all-knowing is because he directly and simultaneously perceives the illusory truths and ultimate truths that encompass all existence or objects of knowledge. Only a buddhas' mind is able to perceive both truths directly and simultaneously at one time. So that's why a buddha is omniscient.

[A part missing from the translation of the commentary, which explains the meaning of these quotations, is inserted here.]

The commentary reads:

From the above quote *comprehended thus* indicates the basis for division of objects of knowledge. *Exhausted*, indicates the definite division into two truths. And because the Tathagata fully comprehends both truths, he is posited as *all-knowing*.

The quote says, *the Tathagata comprehended thus*, which indicates the basis of the division of objects of knowledge. This means that when objects of knowledge are divided, they are divided into two; *illusory truth and ultimate truth*. And the object of knowledge itself is the basis of the division of the two truths.

Thus, the explanations stating that the intention of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Deeds* is that ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge or that it cannot be known by any awareness are wrong explanations.

The meaning here is quite clear. Then it further explains:

The nature of the division is into a twofold division of illusory truth and ultimate truth.

An example of the two divisions of the two truths would be the aggregates and the person itself. The aggregates and person are examples of illusory truth and the lack of true existence of the aggregates and person are examples of ultimate truth.

It continues:

Although there can be different connotations to a division, here, it is to be of one nature but to be of a different isolate.

And explains:

As both have a nature, it is impossible for them not to be of one or different nature.²

Both illusory truth and ultimate truth *have a nature*, and because of this they have to be in relation to each other, they have to be either *of one* or of a *different nature*.

² Trans: There is a difference between saying *one nature* and *of one nature*. For two phenomena to be of one nature they need to have two different natures, or entities. The two truths are not only two different natures, but two clearly distinct mutually exclusive natures, which are yet of one nature.

Ed2: It is difficult to find an exact translation for the Tibetan term *ngo-wo*, translated as 'nature' in the commentary. Other translations use the word 'entity' rather than 'nature'.

¹ See the discussion of the use of this term in the Translator's Introduction to the commentary.

The commentary further explains:

If the subject is of different nature from the lack of true existence, then the faults outlined in the *Elucidations of the Thought* apply; such as that it would become truly existent. Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.

The aggregates, and the lack of true existence of the aggregates, for example, are of one nature.

The next point explains, *Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.* Using the example of the aggregates, if the aggregates and their lack of true existence were to be the same, to be one and not separate, then there is falsity there because each has distinct terms.

If we say 'one nature' it may sound like they are actually the same, but this is not saying that they are exactly one.

The commentary explains:

Therefore, they are of one nature but of different isolate, just like produced and impermanent.

The conclusion is that they are of one nature, *but of different isolates*, just like produced phenomena and impermanence.

This sheds light on *The Heart Sutra* when it says, 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form'. It is presenting exactly the same point; that they are of one nature but of different isolates. There are different terms for form and emptiness because they are different isolates, however they are of the same nature. That is why *The Heart Sutra* explains that form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

Likewise produced phenomena and impermanence. When you say something is produced, it also implies it is impermanent. When you say something is impermanent it also implies it is produced. Again, both are of the same nature, but are different isolates.

The commentary continues:

So, the basis for division, object of knowledge, is comprehensively divided into the two truths. The nature of the two divisions is that the meaning found by a nominal prime cognition is illusory truth, and the meaning found by an ultimate prime cognition is ultimate truth.

Before our next session please read a bit and try to go over the points I've mentioned this evening, because I will test you again in the next session.

The point of the presentation is that you start to accumulate understanding, so that when this is taught next time, it is readily accessible to you. If the earlier explanations have not sunk in, then it has not served its purpose.

A classic example of this is presented in the teachings with a saying 'Like a yeti catching marmots!' Apparently a yeti, which is an ape-like creature, attempts to catch and eat marmots. These small animals always look around, then hide under the ground as soon as something comes along. So when the yeti tries to catch marmots for its meal, it goes to the marmot nest and attempts to catch the young ones. After catching one, the yeti sits on it, but then gets up to catch another one. When it stands up the first one escapes. So the yeti keeps catching one marmot after another, but at the end, there is only one left. Let's hope this example doesn't apply to your retaining the meaning of the teachings, letting go of an earlier understanding each time a new one is presented. If

you employ mindfulness on the teaching, you will be able to remember the points.

Let it also not be like the example of a leaky vase as presented in the Lam Rim teachings, where when you have a leak in the vase, then no matter how much water you put in, it just goes out the hole.

Another example from the Lam Rim is to be free from faults like a stained or dirty vase. If you put a nice substance like delicious food into the vase it will be contaminated by the stains. This analogy illustrates how one should be free from the fault of stained motivations, which are basically negative intentions. This means that while one is receiving the Dharma, if one's motivation is stained, or one has negative intentions, then although the presentation is a cause for liberation and enlightenment, because of the stained intentions it misconstrues that information and uses it in an incorrect way, and so actually prevents it from becoming a cause for liberation and enlightenment; that is because it is stained by negative intentions.

A third example from the Lam Rim is not to be like an upturned vase. You cannot pour anything into an upside-down vase. As much as you pour, nothing goes in. This is analogous to being at a teaching place but with one's mind completely distracted outwardly. When in meditation, the mind is going on the market, on friends, on home, on many things. The mind completely goes outside. Completely empty; not emptiness but just empty like the leaky and upturned vase with nothing inside. The main point again is to read the text and prepare yourselves.

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

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

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Homework

Block: 2 Week: 14 (12 July 2016) Assigned: 19/7/2016

1. 'As I have presented this previously, as a way to reflect on the meaning of this point I'd like you to present the reason why it says here that it is a mistake to assert that *hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena.*'

2. 'Having refuted the earlier hypothetical assertions that the branches of generosity etc. were taught for the purpose of wisdom, now the commentary explains the actual reason.'

Give this reason.

3. a) Clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience.

b) Give an illustration

4. What are the two truths? Explain the two divisions of the two truths with examples.

Homework

Block: 2 Week: 14 (12 July 2016) Assigned: 19/7/2016

1. As I have presented this previously, as a way to reflect on the meaning of this point I'd like you to present the reason why it says here that it is a mistake to assert that *hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena*.

Denis: In answer to the question I would say that the antidote to ignorance is the realisation of emptiness, which is the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena.

Geshe-la: That is a much better explanation.

The grasping at the self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration, and in order to overcome it one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Without realising the selflessness of phenomena one cannot possibly overcome the deluded obscurations. So, according to the Prasangika grasping at a truly existent self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration.

2. Having refuted the earlier hypothetical assertions that the branches of generosity etc. were taught for the purpose of wisdom, now the commentary explains the actual reason.

Give this reason.

Having refuted the earlier hypothetical assertions that the branches of generosity etc. were taught for the purpose of wisdom, now the commentary explains the actual reason.

Thus, without the wisdom realising emptiness one cannot exhaust the seeds of either of the two obscurations, and although one does not need to be adorned with infinite merit to eliminate merely the seeds of the afflictive obscurations, one does need infinite merit to eliminate the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge. As this text is mainly from the point of view of eliminating the obscurations to knowledge it says, "these branches are taught for the purpose of wisdom".

The purpose of presenting wisdom here is because it serves as a means to overcome the obscurations to knowledge. In order for wisdom to become a means to eliminate the obscurations to knowledge, it definitely has to be backed by the other perfections based on bodhicitta. In this way we need the practices of the perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, and so forth.

While the realisation of emptiness is needed to overcome both the deluded obscurations as well as the obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, one does not need the backing of extensive merit such as the six perfections to overcome the deluded obscurations. The main emphasis presented here is that the wisdom realising emptiness is not specifically the means to overcome the deluded obscurations, but rather to abandon the obscurations to omniscience. Therefore, the branches, i.e. the perfections of generosity and so forth, are definitely needed as a way to accumulate the extensive merit to overcome the obscuration to omniscience.

3. a) Clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience.

The deluded obscurations are, for example, grasping at the true existence of self and phenomena. The imprints of these the delusions, including these misconceptions of grasping to the self of person and phenomena, are said to be the obscurations to omniscience.

The Prasangika specifically explain that due to the imprints of the delusions one still has the appearance of true existence, and these mistaken appearances are actually the obscuration to omniscience.

Let's clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience. With every delusion, such as attachment, there is a distinction between the seed of the delusion and the imprint of the delusion. The seed of delusion is defined as that which serves as a cause for a similar delusion to occur in the next instance. Given the definition of a seed, then for as long as one has the seed of attachment, that attachment will be perpetually generated until the seed of attachment is completely abandoned.

Although one has abandoned the seed of attachment, one still has the imprint of attachment. This is also true for all the other delusions, and it is the imprints of the delusions that cause the mistaken appearance of true existence. Even when one has abandoned the seeds of delusions, there's still an appearance of true existence, up until the point that one completely abandons the imprints of all delusions.

So according to the Prasangika view, all sentient beings' sense faculties will necessarily have this mistaken appearance of true existence because, by definition, a sentient being is a being who has not overcome the imprints of the delusions.

b) Give an illustration

An illustration of when the sense faculty itself is influenced by a mistaken perception of true existence how this causes a mistaken appearance, can be seen on a grosser level with the mind of sleep. During sleep we have what is called the sleep consciousness to which all dreams appear. In the dream state we see horses, elephants, houses etc., which are mistaken appearances because they do not really exist. In dreams they appear to the mind as actually existing, but in fact they do not really exist as they appear – they are non-existent.

In syllogisms, the example used for things lacking true existence, is that they are like a dream. Things in a dream appear to be real but they actually don't exist. Likewise truly existent phenomena do not exist.

It is said that it is only a buddha's mind that does not have any mistaken appearances, because a buddha has completely eliminated the very imprints of all the delusions. Thus, for a buddha's mind there is no mistaken appearance whatsoever. For example, an arhat who has overcome the seeds of delusions still has mistaken appearance of true existence, because they have not yet abandoned the imprints of the delusions. So until one achieves buddhahood one has not overcome the mistaken appearances.

4. What are the two truths? Explain the two divisions of the two truths with examples.

**2ab. The illusory and the ultimate
These are asserted as the two truths;**

The commentary reads:

The *Compendium of Trainings* quotes the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*,

The Tathagata comprehended thus the illusory and the ultimate and exhausted the possibilities for that to be known into illusory truth and ultimate truth.

Because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests as well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom.

As the commentary presents, *that to be known*, refers to objects of knowledge i.e. all existence, since whatever exists has to necessarily be perceived by an awareness. That which is to be known is understood by the Tathagata, the all-knowing one, as *illusory truth and ultimate truth*. The Tathagata has, *exhausted the possibilities for that to be known*, meaning that he sees that there is no other way for something to exist than either as an illusory truth or an ultimate truth. There is no possibility of a third way of existence for objects of knowledge.

It further mentions, *because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom*. The reason the Buddha is posited as omniscient or all-knowing is because he directly and simultaneously perceives the illusory truths and ultimate truths that encompass all existence or objects of knowledge. Only a buddha's mind is able to perceive both truths directly and simultaneously at one time. So that's why a buddha is omniscient.

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The commentary reads:

From the above quote *comprehended thus* indicates the basis for division of objects of knowledge. *Exhausted*, indicates the definite division into two truths. And because the Tathagata fully comprehends both truths, he is posited as *all-knowing*.

The quote says, *the Tathagata comprehended thus*, which indicates the basis of the division of objects of knowledge. This means that when objects of knowledge are divided, they are divided into two; *illusory truth and ultimate truth*. And the object of knowledge itself is the basis of the division of the two truths.

Thus, the explanations stating that the intention of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Deeds* is that ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge or that it cannot be known by any awareness are wrong explanations.

The meaning here is quite clear. Then it further explains:

The nature of the division is into a twofold division of illusory truth and ultimate truth.

An example of the two divisions of the two truths would be the aggregates and the person itself. The aggregates and person are examples of illusory truth and the lack of true existence of the aggregates and person are examples of ultimate truth.

It continues:

Although there can be different connotations to a division, here, it is to be of one nature but to be of a different isolate.

And explained further:

As both have a nature, it is impossible for them not to be of one or different nature.¹

Both illusory truth and ultimate truth have a nature, and because of this they have to be in relation to each other, they have to be either of one or a different nature.

The commentary further explains:

If the subject is of different nature from the lack of true existence, then the faults outlined in the *Elucidations of the Thought* apply; such as that it would become truly existent. Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.

For example, the aggregates, and the lack of true existence of the aggregates, are of one nature.

The next point explains, *Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.* Using the aggregates example again, if the aggregates and their lack of true existence were to be the same, to be one and not separate, then there is falsity there because each has distinct terms.

[It is difficult to find an exact translation for the Tibetan term *ngo-wo*. Some translations use 'entity' but I'm not sure if this term can be used in this context.] If we say 'one nature' it may sound like they are actually the same, but this is not saying that they are exactly one.

The commentary explains:

Therefore, they are of one nature but of different isolate, just like produced and impermanent.

The conclusion is that they are of one nature, *but of different isolates*, just like produced phenomena and impermanence.

This sheds light on *The Heart Sutra* when it says, 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form'. It is presenting exactly the same point, that they are of one nature but of different isolates. There are different terms for form and emptiness because they are different isolates, however they are of the same nature. That is why *The Heart Sutra* explains that form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

Likewise produced phenomena and impermanence. When you say something is produced, it also implies it is impermanent. When you say something is impermanent it also implies it is produced. Again both are of the same nature, but are different isolates.

The commentary continues:

So, the basis for division, object of knowledge, is comprehensively divided into the two truths. The nature of the two divisions is that the meaning found by a nominal prime cognition is illusory truth, and the meaning found by an ultimate prime cognition is ultimate truth.

¹ There is a difference between saying *one nature* and *of one nature*. For two phenomena to be of one nature they need to have two different natures, or entities. The two truths are not only two different natures, but two clearly distinct mutually exclusive natures, which are yet of one nature.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 July 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good to generate a motivation for receiving the teachings. As everyone already has some understanding of the bodhicitta attitude, reaffirm the altruistic thought of bodhicitta: In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It is very important that we put into practice what we already understand. We are familiar with generating such positive motivations, and we have familiarised our mind with the bodhicitta attitude. When we put it into practice regularly, then we start to become more and more accustomed to it, which is how we begin to embody that sentiment.

Conversely we could put that understanding aside thinking, "Oh, I've understood that" or "I've already learned that so now I want to learn something different, perhaps something more profound". Of course, there's nothing wrong with practising something new and become familiar with it. However, putting aside what we already know and jumping into something completely new, thinking that it is more profound, is a shortcoming. Often when people hastily engage in something more advanced they are not able to maintain or keep up with it. Then, after a while they become discouraged and put all practice aside! This shows the danger of neglecting what one already knows well, while trying to achieve something grander.

We can gain an understanding of the process of how to progress in Dharma practice from the very title *Lam Rim*, which means the *graduated path* to enlightenment. What does graduated mean? It implies actualising the path to enlightenment step by step.

The way to approach personal practice is encapsulated in advice that the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la once gave to Jampa Ignyen (Dr Ian Coghlan) when Geshe-la was in Sydney. Jampa Ignyen had apparently approached Geshe-la for some advice about practising calm abiding. As Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey mentioned to me later, his advice to Jampa Ignyen was "Well, it is good to endeavour to understand and practise something that you are not yet familiar with. However wouldn't it be better to actually work on maintaining what you already have?" Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la was referring to his ordination vows. Others, having heard that advice later, commented that it was very relevant and practical advice that was right to the point. Venerable Fedor also mentioned that this was really good advice. Indeed, upholding vows and commitments is the very foundation of one's practice and an integral part of it.

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

It is essential to understand the two truths, as they are the basis for understanding the entire structure of the teachings. This is the second time that we have covered the ninth chapter in our study group. This is the second time we have studied the entire *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* teaching. As you will recall, I taught chapters one to eight on Wednesday evenings.¹ Then, because it was perhaps a little too advanced for some newer students who might be coming on Wednesday evenings, the ninth and tenth chapters were presented to study group.² When we think about it, we have been incredibly fortunate to have been able to go through this incredible and profound text, not just once, but twice! I feel that having the opportunity to present and cover such a profound text serves my purpose for being here. Likewise, being able to listen to the teachings and study the text is your great fortune.

We covered the two truths when we studied the *Madhyamaka*³, Middle Way text, and we have also mentioned them in the previous nine chapters. For those who are studying this text for the second time, it is good to recall the explanations that are given in the *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way) text and compare that with the explanations given here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

You will also recall that the entire text of the *Four Hundred Verses*, which presents the intent of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, explains the stages of the path based upon the two truths.⁴ The first eight chapters are on the stages of the path based on conventional or illusory truth and the ninth and subsequent chapters are an explanation on the stages of the path based on ultimate truth. The *Madhyamaka*, which also presents the intent of the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, explains the *extensive teachings* based on illusory truth, and the *profound teachings* based on ultimate truth.

It is good to have an understanding of the unique structure of the entire path leading to enlightenment:

- ∞ The **basis** is the two truths,
- ∞ The **path** encompasses method and wisdom and
- ∞ The **result** is the two bodies of a buddha.

Through gaining an understanding of the two truths, and by cultivating method and wisdom, one obtains the two resultant bodies of a buddha. The entire structure can also be understood on the basis of the Four Noble Truths. I feel that studying these texts to gain this understanding is one of the best ways to accumulate extensive merit and purify negative karma. Indeed, what better way would there be for accumulating merit and purifying negative karma than contemplating the entire path to enlightenment? It will also leave an exceptionally profound imprint on one's mental continuum.

As mentioned earlier, the definitions and explanation of the two truths are presented in the *Madhyamaka* in detail. You already have the transcripts and it's good to revise them and familiarise yourself with the presentations there. Incorporating the explanation from the

¹ These teachings finished in June 1996

² In 2005

³ Presented from 2002 to 2004

⁴ Presented in 2006 and 2007

Madhyamaka into the explanation presented here is a good way to gain a deeper understanding of these two truths. It is incredibly meaningful to gain a good understanding of the two for use in one's own practice and meditation, and for explaining and presenting it to others.

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The definition of the two truths in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, is presented in the second two lines of verse 2.

2cd. The ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, Awareness is stated to be illusory.

Before we go further, how would you interpret these lines? Is it sufficient to take the meaning literally as presented, *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, awareness is stated to be illusory*, or is there another interpretation?

Student: It's saying that the ultimate is not an object of a mistaken awareness. This refers to the normal dualistic awareness which cannot engage in ultimate reality.

That was a good and accurate explanation. To make it clearer, you need to add that a mistaken dualistic awareness is not able to directly perceive the ultimate.

If we were to take these lines *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, and awareness is stated to be illusory* literally, then it would sound as if the ultimate cannot be engaged by any awareness, because awareness itself is illusory. So interpreting the meaning literally is incorrect.

The explanation of the two truths is covered in two parts:

2.1.1.2.1. The refutation of the school of others

2.1.1.2.2 The presentation of our school

2.1.1.2.1 The refutation of the school of others

This refutation of the other schools is quite clear:

Opponents such as the Red Ones from Toelung, using the first line "the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness" as a statement, and the later line as a reason, have asserted that ultimate truth is unsuitable to be the object of conceptual or non-conceptual consciousness, because if it is awareness of the object of awareness, then there is a pervasion that this object is illusory truth, as shown in the lower lines. This is completely unsuitable, because if one accepts the non-existence of awareness in the meditative equipoise of a superior, then one supports the texts of *Those Putting Themselves Afar*.⁵ They posit that while there is consciousness up to the point of death, the continuity is severed upon death, and you would accept likewise that while there is awareness up to and including the last moment of the path of preparation, that it does not exist while in meditative equipoise on the mode of abiding.

Further, if one does not accept a directly cognised meaning, an object of knowledge that can purify stains, then the elimination of stains becomes impossible, and one will become somebody that singularly or completely denies that a person can be posited as a buddha or bodhisattva.

If one accepts such a phenomenon, then to have ultimate truth as phenomenon but to not have an awareness that realises it, becomes a contradictory

illusory phenomenon. If one asserts that the ultimate is never comprehended, then, since the ultimate cannot comprehend itself, it has nothing that understands it, and thus becomes baseless. If it is like that, then what is the purpose of positing the division of the two truths?

Further, if the illusory is empty of being true, then there is nothing to harm the acceptance that the truth of emptiness is ultimate truth, but lacking that, illusory truth becomes truly existent.

From the *Refutation of Arguments*⁶:

If the mere lack of nature is reversed,
Then it is established as existing in this very nature.

What is being refuted here is the misinterpretation of the lines *the ultimate is not the object of awareness, and awareness is illusory*. If it is understood to mean that because awareness itself is illusory the ultimate cannot be perceived, then that is completely wrong. These are actually the words of Lama Tsong Khapa, from notes that Gyaltsab Je made when he received teachings from Lama Tsong Khapa. So they are very profound.

It is good to read the text by yourselves, trying to derive an understanding by going through it slowly, reading it and re-reading it to familiarise yourself with it. If you always have to rely on someone else to explain the text to you, then that would deprive you of the opportunity to gain an understanding for yourself. Try not to be discouraged and daunted if you don't understand the meaning the first time you read it, because every time you read it you will get a deeper and more profound understanding. It is quite normal not to gain a complete understanding the first time you read a text. But if you read it many more times, each time you will gain a deeper understanding. This is the proper approach for studying a Dharma text.

Now we come to the actual presentation of our own system or school.

2.1.1.2.2 The presentation of our school

The commentary reads:

The first line shows the definition of ultimate truth and the second line shows the definition of illusory truth.⁷

[Here the translator of the commentary has translated the Tibetan term *kun-dzob denpa* as illusory truth. The literal translation of the Tibetan words *kun-dzob* is all-obscuring or concealing and *denpa* is truth. I personally feel that the usual translation - conventional truth - does capture the intended meaning i.e. truth by mere convention but ultimately not true. However illusory or deceptive truth can also carry that meaning.]

The commentary continues:

Both the earlier and later awareness are dualistic awareness, and not mere awareness, which is from the point of view of the way of comprehension.

⁶ Nagarjuna

⁷ ed2: Here the translator of the commentary has translated the Tibetan term *kun-dzob denpa* as illusory truth. The literal translation of the Tibetan words *kun-dzob* is all-obscuring or concealing and *denpa* is truth. I personally feel that the usual translation - conventional truth - does capture the intended meaning i.e. truth by mere convention but ultimately not true. However illusory or deceptive truth can also carry that meaning.

⁵ Those that put themselves afar from a happy rebirth: the Hedonists.
Chapter 9

Thus it has to be related like this: The examples, the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates, exemplify ultimate truth, and the awareness that is a prime direct perception comprehending them does not engage in the object explicitly by way of them appearing in a dualistic manner but are known by the prime direct perception comprehending them.

This point, both the earlier and later awareness are dualistic and not mere awareness, which is from the point of view of the way of comprehension, is as explained previously.

Then the commentary gives the actual explanation of ultimate truth. Persons and the aggregates are illusory truths and the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are examples that exemplify ultimate truth. As further presented here, the awareness that is a prime direct perception comprehending them does not engage in the object explicitly by way of them appearing in a dualistic manner but are known by the prime direct perception comprehending them. Basically what is being explained here is that the lack of inherent existence of a person and the aggregates as perceived directly by an awareness without any dualistic appearance is ultimate truth.

So, the definition of **ultimate truth is: that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor that realises it directly.**

And the definition of **conventional truth is: that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor realising it directly.**

In the past I presented the differences between the definitions of conventional and ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.⁸

According to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, both ultimate truth and the conventional truth are presented as being directly perceived by an awareness, and the significant criterion for both conventional and ultimate truth is that they are cognised directly.

According to the *Madhyamakavatara* the definition of a conventional truth is: **the meaning found by valid cognisor engaged in a nominal analysis, as well as being a nominal cognisor with regard to the found meaning.**

The definition of ultimate truth is: **the meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis which becomes a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to that object.**

So the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is presenting a more general meaning of the two truths, but that explanation is not pervasive. Whereas the definition presented in the *Middle Way* text is more inclusive, as it includes all of the elements of the actual definition of conventional and ultimate truth.

As mentioned earlier, according to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the definition of conventional and ultimate truth is that they are both related to a direct perception, whereas the definition in the *Middle Way* text includes both conceptual and direct perceptions.

In order to understand the differences between the definitions and explanations it is good to refer to the teachings in the *Madhyamaka* text.⁹

Before I go onto the explanation of dualistic appearance perhaps Damien could explain what lack of dualistic appearance means.

Damien: Not having dualistic appearance means the object and the mind cognising the object are not one.

What about conventional appearance? Does that mind seeing the object and subject as being one have conventional appearance?

Damien: With all conventional appearances the object is seen as different to the mind.

The Tibetan term *nyi-nang-nup* basically means lacking dualistic appearance. There are three types of dualistic appearances:

1. The appearance of conventional or illusory truth
2. The appearance of true existence
3. The appearance of the subject and object as being distinct.

For an arya being in meditative equipoise it is said that all three types of dualistic appearances have completely ceased. In other words, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness lacks all three types of dualistic appearances. Therefore, as I have explained many times, to the meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness the lack of a vase, for example, is the emptiness of the vase. The lack of a dualistic appearance of subject and object is actually the perception of ultimate truth or emptiness.

This reminds me of the time when Tara Institute was located in St Kilda and I was walking on the pier with Ven. Gyatso one day, someone came up to us and said that he was meditating on emptiness. He said, "Oh, I meditate on nothing. In my meditation I have nothing in mind". He also said, "That makes me feel very happy and very joyful". In fact, although nothingness is not actually emptiness, this would be similar to the state of where all dualistic appearance - i.e. conventional appearance, true appearance, and object and subject being distinct - has completely ceased, and only ultimate truth or emptiness is apparent to that awareness.

This is further explained in the commentary with a quote from the *Madhyamaka* text:

It is like stated in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*
Mistaken identities such as hairs, etc. [6.29]
Imagined due to defective faculties,

Due to the affliction of disease such as a high fever there is a *defective faculty* that perceives *hairs* falling out and so forth. These defective faculties are an example of something that is false and not actually existent. The *Madhyamaka* verse continues:

Similarly to pure eyes seeing their nature
One should know suchness here.

Just like the mistaken appearance of falling hairs and so forth do not occur to pure eyes that have not been affected by an illness, and which see the nature of the object unmistakably, similarly, the pure awareness (i.e.

⁸ See teaching of 15 February 2005.
Chapter 9

⁹ See teaching of 10 June 2003.

the wisdom directly realising emptiness) of an arya being who is in meditative equipoise, sees suchness or the true nature of phenomena just as it is. Then, as Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

The examples of the person and the aggregates are called illusory truths because the awareness that is a prime direct perception realising it explicitly has to do so in a dualistic manner.

Here we see the meaning of the illusory truth actually being presented. This is exactly as explained earlier.

Thus the line *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness* presents the definition of ultimate truth, and the line *awareness is stated to be illusory* presents the definition of illusory truth.

The commentary explains that:

The examples of the person and the aggregates are called illusory truths because the awareness that is a prime direct perception realising it explicitly has to do so in a dualistic manner.

This is an explanation of illusory truth in accordance with the line *awareness is stated to be illusory*.

Then:

One should become acquainted with a more elaborate analysis of this from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Middle Way* composed by Je Rinpoche himself.

Therefore, the need to know thus in detail the detailed definitions of the two truths pervades also the two transcendental wisdoms of a buddha. This is so because although the transcendental wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness understands the world of multiplicity, and the transcendental understanding of the world of multiplicity understands suchness, the understanding of suchness is like water into water, and the understanding of the world of multiplicity is in a dualistic manner.

These explanations have been presented in the past.

What does *the wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness* and *that which understands the world of multiplicity* relate to?

Student: Is it the world of multiplicity conventional reality?

Geshe-la: And knowing suchness?

Student: Ultimate reality

That is indeed the case. *The wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness* relates to knowing ultimate truth, and *understanding the world of multiplicity* relates to conventional or illusory truth. So as explained here, a buddha's mind that knows suchness also understands the world of multiplicity, and the transcendental understanding of the world of multiplicity understands suchness. *The understanding of suchness is like water into water and the understanding of the world of multiplicity is in a dualistic manner.* Even though they understand that a buddha's awareness perceives the world of multiplicity and vice-versa, the way of understanding it is slightly different.

Next:

An argument by an opponent who does not understand the meaning of the commentary on the *Introduction to the Middle Way* at all: It is illogical to

assert that a buddha's transcendental wisdom appears to itself as there are only two ways for it to appear.

The argument here is that it is not possible for a buddha's awareness to appear to itself. If *a buddha's transcendental wisdom* were to *appear to itself* then *there are only two ways for it to appear* – either as being one with each other or separate. As explained here:

If it appears as different, then, since it is impossible for a buddha's transcendental wisdom to be mistaken with regards to the appearing object, one would need to accept that it is different from itself.

If the transcendental wisdom that appears to a buddha's mind were to be separate from the buddha's transcendental wisdom itself, then that would be absurd. That is because it implies that a buddha's transcendental wisdom is not a buddha's transcendental wisdom, because it is separate to itself.

Furthermore,

If it appears as water into water, then it would irrefutably be ultimate truth.

Gyaltsab Je's explanation, which serves as an answer, is:

A buddha's transcendental wisdom realises everything that is established as one entity with itself but is of different isolate on the basis of appearance, and regardless of whether it realises the name implicitly or not, it realises itself although not appearing to itself.

The explanation is that a buddha's *transcendental wisdom realises everything that is established as one entity with itself but is of different isolate* (similar to the aspects of being produced and impermanent) realised *on the basis of appearance. Regardless of whether it realises the name implicitly or not, it realises itself although not appearing to itself.*

What is being established is that a buddha's transcendental wisdom does appear to itself. But you cannot say that things appear implicitly to a buddha's mind, because whatever appears in the buddha's mind has to appear directly. There is no implicit appearance for a buddha's mind. Therefore it has to be established that all objects of knowledge, i.e. all existence, appears to a buddha's mind directly.

The way to establish this is that the transcendental wisdom i.e. a buddha's mind, appears directly to a buddha's transcendental wisdom or mind, however it appears as being separate. It appears directly but as being separate to the buddha's transcendental wisdom. But it's not actually separate because, as presented in the earlier argument, if it appears to be separate then it has to be separate. So, the conclusion is that while the Buddha's mind is not separate from itself, it does however appear as if it is separate. This is the point to be understood. For example, the characteristics of impermanence and production, although being of one nature, are different isolates and so they appear as being separate.

A further explanation to establish one's own system, is presented:

If it is the prime direct perception apprehending blue of an ordinary individual, then it does not appear to itself, as it is impossible for it to be a self-knowing direct perception.

In this system a *self-knowing direct perception* is not being accepted. It is established that when the colour blue appears, the impermanence and the characteristic of being produced and all of that also appear to that same perception.

As further explained:

It is also unsuitable to be posited as realising, on the basis of appearance, the other parts that are established as being of one entity with it. It is singularly an implicit realisation in dependence on the explicit realisation of blue, and one should know that such an implicit realisation is impossible for a buddha.

As mentioned previously, for a buddha there is no implicit realisation – everything is realised directly. In relation to the awareness perceiving blue: it is said that for an ordinary person the awareness perceiving blue perceives that blue directly, and the awareness itself indirectly. Of course you cannot say that a buddha perceives it indirectly, because there is no indirect or implicit realisation for a buddha.

These, of course, are points that I presented earlier in the *Madhyamaka* teachings, so it is good to refer to them.

2.1.1.3. IDENTIFYING A PERSON THAT HAS UNDERSTOOD BOTH

This is referring to both conventional or illusory truth and ultimate truth, and is sub-divided into two:

2.1.1.3.1. Divisions from the point of view of a person that wishes to understand the two truths

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness

2.1.1.3.1. Divisions from the point of view of a person that wishes to understand the two truths

The lines relating to this are:

*3ab. Regarding this, two aspects of transitory beings are seen,
Yogis and ordinary beings.*

Then the commentary reads:

A person who wishes to comprehend the two truths is a transitory being, i.e., a person labelled in dependence on the aggregates. This is again seen in two aspects: a yogi with the concentration of the union of calm abiding and special insight, who realises all phenomena as being empty of inherent existence, and ordinary beings asserting real existence. This is from the point of view of emphasis. Those that realise emptiness through listening and contemplating, and those whose minds have not been affected by a tenet are included in these classes.

As explained here *two aspects of transitory beings are seen. A person who wishes to comprehend the two truths is a transitory being.* In the Tibetan word *jig-ten*, *jig* is 'transitory'. While *ten* is translated here as 'being' the literal translation of '*ten*' is 'dependent'. Thus, a person is characterised as an entity who is *transitory* i.e. that changes from moment to moment, and is *dependent* upon the five aggregates.

Therefore **the definition of a person is one who is labelled in dependence on the aggregates.** And as further presented there are two different types of beings:

∞ *yogis, who, with the concentration of the union of calm abiding and special insight, realise all phenomena as being empty of inherent existence.*

∞ *ordinary beings* are beings who assert real existence, where *real* refers to functionalities, and *existence* refers to those functionalities and so forth as existing truly, or having true existence. This includes those asserting real appearance, i.e. actually establishing true existence, such the lower schools – the Vaibhashika and so forth.

As further explained in the commentary, *this is from the point of view of emphasis* on how it is defined or categorised: *those who realise emptiness through listening and contemplating, and those whose minds have not been affected by a tenet are included in these classes.*

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness.

We can leave this for our next session.

In preparation, it is good to familiarise yourselves with the explanations in the commentary and complement that with the explanations in the *Madhyamakavatara*. It is good to refer to the notes you have and the transcripts of the *Madhyamaka* teachings. When you refer to both texts the explanations will help to enhance your understanding of the main meaning.

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

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Edited Version
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Homework

Block: 2 Week: 15 (19 July 2016) Assigned: 26/7/2016

1. *cd. The ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness,
Awareness is stated to be illusory.*

How would you interpret these lines?

2. Give the definition of conventional truth and the definition of ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*. (In order to understand the differences between the definitions and explanations it is good to refer to the teachings in the *Madhyamaka* text.¹)

3. What are the three types of dualistic appearances?

4. 'The argument here is that it is not possible for a buddha's awareness to appear to itself. If a *buddha's* *transcendental wisdom* were to *appear to itself* then *there are only two ways for it to appear* – either as being one with each other or separate.'

Give Gyaltsab Je's explanation, which serves as an answer to this argument.

5 a) What is the definition of a person?

b) And as further presented what are two different types of beings:

¹ See teaching of 10 June 2003.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 July 2016

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

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well." Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

2.1. The presentation of the two truths

2.1.1. Actual

2.1.1.3. IDENTIFYING A PERSON THAT HAS UNDERSTOOD BOTH (CONT.)

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness

This is quite straightforward, and should be quite easy to understand. The verse under this heading is the second line from the earlier verse and the next two lines:

3cd. *The ordinary transitory being*

Is outdone by the yogic transitory being,

4ab. *And yogis are outdone as well through distinctions*

Of awareness by the one above.

The commentary explains:

Ordinary transitory beings who assert partless particles, partless moments of consciousness and functionalities as existing truly are transitory beings, as well as yogis. The yogic person who realises the transient world as lacking inherent existence outshines the lower tenets that propound realism, and among the yogis who have attained a union of calm abiding and special insight, the higher ones outdo the lower ones. With reasoning the Madhyamikas refute the Cittamatra's assertion of truly existing mind, which is in turn refuted with reasoning the assertion of partless particles by the Sautrantikas.

Here, *ordinary transitory beings* refers to the Realists, such as the Sautrantika. They assert *partless particles* i.e. particles which cannot be divided, *partless moments of consciousness* (i.e. consciousness that cannot be divided into earlier and later moments), and *functionalities, as existing truly*.

The verse and commentary further state that the ordinary transitory being is outdone by the yogi or *yogic transitory being*. And *yogic transitory beings* such as the Madhyamikas, who realise the transient world lacking inherent existence, outshine the lower tenets that propound realism. This is quite straightforward.

Where the commentary next says that *among the yogis who have attained a union of calm abiding and special insight, the higher ones outdo the lower ones*, the literal translation of the

Tibetan word is to 'harm' the lower ones. The context of 'harm' here should not be misinterpreted: it does not refer to any malicious intent. Rather, the intended meaning here is that the assertions of the lower schools are harmed i.e. outshined by the higher schools through logic and reasoning.

The commentary thus explains that the higher ones harm, i.e. outdo, the lower ones through logic and reasoning: *with reasoning the Madhyamikas refute the Cittamatra's assertion of truly existing mind, which [referring to the Cittamatrins] in turn refutes with reasoning the assertion of partless particles by the Sautrantikas*. Thus, through reasoning and logic, the assertions of proponents of the higher schools, that is the Madhyamikas, outshine those of the Cittamatrins, and the Cittamatra proponents, in turn, outshine those of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools.

Next, a hypothetical doubt is raised and resolved:

If one wonders whether the yogis who realise emptiness outdo each other or not: Also among the yogis who have realised emptiness, those on the higher grounds such as on the second ground and so forth, harm, i.e., outshine, those on the lower grounds, such as on the first ground and so forth, due to a distinction of their awareness.

Thus, what is being explained is that because of their qualities, *those on the higher grounds naturally outshine those on the lower grounds*. For example, bodhisattvas on the first ground are said to have twelve hundred qualities, and bodhisattvas on the second ground have twelve thousand qualities. The qualities of each of the grounds above are multiplied by a thousand times. This was covered in detail when we were doing the Madhyamaka teachings. Thus, bodhisattvas on higher grounds, because of their significant extra qualities, naturally outshine the bodhisattvas on the lower grounds.

Those who recall the explanations in the Madhyamaka will be able to immediately understand the presentation here. With that earlier understanding what is presented will not be new and complicated, but for those who have not done that study it will be something completely new. So it is important to refresh what you had learned by reading your notes from the Madhyamaka teachings. For example, as I presented in detail during the Madhyamaka teachings, those on the first ground have hundred-fold qualities such as being able to see a hundred fields of the buddhas, being able to ripen the minds of one hundred disciples, taking a hundred births and so forth.

The second ground is multiplied by a thousand, so being able to see a thousand fields of the buddhas, being able to ripen the minds of one thousand disciples, and so forth. These qualities are progressively multiplied on each of the higher grounds. This is how, with the extra qualities obtained on the higher grounds, these bodhisattvas naturally outshine the beings on the lower grounds.

If we were to think about it in terms of the paths, then bodhisattvas on **the path of accumulation** are outshined by bodhisattvas who have reached **the path of preparation**. Then bodhisattvas on the path of preparation would be outshone by those who have obtained the **path of seeing**, and are outshined by the bodhisattvas on the **path of meditation**, and they in turn

are outshined by bodhisattvas on the **path of no-more-learning**. For each ground and path, the later bodhisattvas outshine the ones on the lower grounds and paths. This is how we need to understand how the higher ones outshine the lower ones.

What follows next in the commentary are the actual words of Lama Tsong Khapa, which would have been taken down as notes by Gyaltzab Rinpoche. So these are very profound points being presented here:

In addition, one should understand the implicit meaning, that also from the point of view of one continuum, an increased awareness through meditation of the higher grounds can harm the seeds that are to be abandoned, whereas the lower grounds cannot harm them.

So, while the earlier context of 'outshining' referred to beings of different continuums, or higher beings outshining lower beings, here the text clarifies that this principle applies even within the mental continuum of one individual being. We can understand that, as the qualities gained as one's realisations of *meditation* increase, and as one gains *higher grounds*, one is able to *harm the seeds that are to be abandoned* on that particular ground, which cannot be abandoned whilst on the *lower grounds*.

For example, the uninterrupted path of seeing can harm the seeds that are to be abandoned on the path of seeing, but cannot harm the seeds that are to be abandoned on the path of meditation, which has not been obtained yet. Thus, within the mental continuum of one individual being, the seeds that are to be abandoned on that particular path cannot be abandoned whilst abiding on a lower path.

The significant point of the statement, *whereas the lower grounds cannot harm them*, is that while the qualities obtained on the higher grounds would outshine the qualities obtained on the lower grounds, the qualities obtained on the lower grounds cannot possibly outshine those obtained on the higher grounds. In other words, by explicitly presenting here that the qualities of the higher ground outshine those of the lower, the implicit meaning is that the qualities of the beings on the lower ground cannot possibly outshine the qualities of the beings on higher grounds.

The commentary further explains:

The purpose of stating these scriptures is to gain the certainty that awareness is divided into awareness that realises the illusory and awareness that realises the ultimate. If an awareness realising the ultimate is not harmed by a prime cognition realising the illusory, then what need is there to mention it being harmed by the grasping at partless particles?

As explained clearly, what is to be realised by awareness falls into the category of either illusory truth or ultimate truth. So what is being explained here is that if it is an awareness that is a prime cognition realising a truth, then it has to be either an awareness realising illusory (or conventional) truth or an awareness realising ultimate truth. But of course awarenesses do not necessarily have to realise either of the two truths. For example the mind grasping at true existence is an awareness, but it doesn't realise either of the truths.

Then it further mentions *if an awareness realising the ultimate is not harmed by a prime cognition realising the illusory, then what need is there to mention it being harmed by the grasping at partless particles?*

A concluding statement is then presented:

The purpose [of presenting all this] is to understand that the awareness realising the ultimate harms all extreme views.

This is the main point: the awareness realising the ultimate completely extinguishes all extreme views.

The commentary then explains:

Further, it is to understand that a mistaken assertion by the lower is refuted with logic by the higher.

This has been presented previously.

Through the distinction of their awareness, yogis of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika harm with logic the assertion of permanent functionalities accepted by the non-Buddhist schools, the acceptance of partless particles by the two Asserting Meaning¹ is harmed with logic by the Mind Only, and the acceptance of truly existent mind by the Mind Only is harmed with reasoning by the Madhyamaka.

Here, we are succinctly reminded of the incredibly skilful means by which the Buddha taught his disciples, leading them from views of the lower tenets up to the highest tenets. The main point here *is to understand that a mistaken assertion by the lower is refuted with logic by the higher*.

To give an example of overcoming wrong views and assertions with reasoning and logic, some proponents of non-Buddhist schools would accept sound as being permanent. Thus a logical syllogism to prove that this is incorrect would be: The subject 'sound' is impermanent – because it is produced". For someone who initially had the wrong view of sound being permanent, when the reasoning of that syllogism becomes apparent to their mind, they would be able to replace that mistaken view with the understanding that sound is impermanent, because of the reason that it is produced.

In this way, each misconception, such as grasping at permanence in general and grasping at true existence, can be overcome with correct reasoning to prove that it is a mistaken conception. When logical syllogisms are presented in the teachings, we need to study them and get an understanding of them. Then we must utilise this understanding to overcome the wrong conceptions that we personally hold, rather than just using them for theoretical debate. It is much more meaningful for one to apply this understanding to one's own misconceptions; we all grasp at permanence, holding things as being permanent, and likewise we all grasp at true existence.

When these reasons are applied to one's own mental continuum as a way to overcome misconceptions, they act as antidotes. For example, we can all relate to the shortcomings of anger. That which serves as an opponent or antidote to anger is patience. The more we practise patience, the weaker our anger becomes.

So if, when we engage in study, we relate it to our own mental continuum, we will really begin to taste the true

¹ Euphemism for the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika i.e. those who assert external meaning.

essence of the teachings. This will not be apparent to one right away; when we read the text, the understanding will not dawn upon us immediately. However gradually, time after time, if we are persistent, things will become clearer and clearer. Then we can apply our understanding to our practice. That would be the proper way.

The explanation ends here with:

The earlier explanation is the view of the *Great Commentary*.

2.1.2. Refuting objections of no-need and no ability regarding emptiness

That is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.1. Actual

2.1.2.2. Defending one's position

2.1.2.1. ACTUAL

The verse under this heading is preceded by the argument:

Argument: If you say, it is not valid that the yogi who realises that all phenomena lack inherent existence harms ordinary tenets, because there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence. If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment.

Then the first two lines of the verse are presented as the answer:

*4cd. Through examples asserted by both,
There is no investigation towards a result.*

Answer: It follows that it is not the case that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence, because for both Madhyamaka and Realists, the lack of inherent existence is established in dependence on examples that were well known and accepted as being false, such as dreams and illusions.

Further:

If there is no inherent existence, it does not follow that training in generosity and the other perfections is pointless. Although generosity and so forth, which are practised in order to attain the result of enlightenment, are not truly established, one engages in them without investigation or analysis while holding them with the wisdom realising them to be false, like an illusion. If the remaining perfections are not held by the wisdom realising the lack or absence of inherent existence, then they do not gain the name 'having gone beyond' [which is another term for perfection] and they, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment.

What is being presented here in the commentary, which serves as the answer to the earlier argument, is that basically it is not true that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence. What the Madhyamikas are saying is that for both we the *Madhyamikas* and you the *Realists*, it follows that it is not the case that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence because for both *Madhyamika* and *Realists* the lack of inherent existence can be established in dependence on examples which we both accept as being false, such as dreams and illusions.

So the lack of inherent existence can be established by examples, such as dreams and illusions. Since we both [i.e. the *Realists* and *Madhyamikas*] agree that these are

examples of falsity, these examples can be used as reasons to prove the lack of inherent existence.

The second part of the earlier argument said: If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment.

However this is not the case. As explained here, *although generosity and so forth, which are practised in order to attain the results of enlightenment, are not truly established, one engages in them without investigation or analysis while holding them with the wisdom realising them to be false, like an illusion*. Using the example of an illusion, one can establish the lack of inherent existence of the training in generosity and so forth.

If, without going into specific investigation or analysis, *the remaining perfections are not held by the wisdom realising the lack or absence of inherent existence, then they do not gain the name 'having gone beyond' [or do not bear the name 'perfection'] and they, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment*.

The point here, as I've explained previously many times, is that not only the perfection of wisdom, but all the earlier perfections need to also be combined with wisdom – otherwise it would be as if they were blind. The earlier practices such as generosity, morality and so forth cannot, in themselves, become a means to achieve full enlightenment without the wisdom realising emptiness. Without the wisdom realising emptiness they are like a blind person who cannot go to a faraway destination by themselves. Thus, the earlier practices of generosity and so forth, need to be complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, whereby they become the perfection of generosity and so forth.

For example, when generosity is complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, it is practised with the understanding that all three – the individual who is being generous, the substance that is being given, and the recipient of the generosity – are empty of inherent existence. With that realisation, generosity becomes a perfection of generosity. These particular characteristics are similarly applied to the rest of the perfections. The reason the perfections practised in this way are referred to as practices that are 'gone beyond' is that they lead to the state of enlightenment which is to go beyond samsara. *They, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment*.

The point here is that when we really pay close attention to what is being explained and really contemplate it, the meaning will become clearer and clearer as we read through the text.

As part of an argument, the commentary further says:

Argument: If also you accept that fire, that which can perform the function of cooking and burning, and other functionalities and their functions, are established by direct perception, then our debate is pointless, because we both call that truly existent. If you do not accept this, then you receive the harms of being contradicted by direct perception and the like.

This argument is from a lower school, the *Realists*, who are proponents of true existence. They argue, *if you – meaning the Madhyamikas – accept that functionalities like*

fire, which can perform the function of cooking and burning, and other functionalities and their functions, are established by direct perception then our debate is pointless. Here, the Realists are saying that the true existence of a fire is demonstrated by the fact that it can cook, burn and so forth, which is established by direct perception. The Realists argue *we both call that truly existent. If you do not accept this, then you receive the harms of being contradicted by direct perception and the like.*

However, that which serves as part of the answer here is:

Answer: This argument is based on the view that the two truths contradict each other, i.e., if functionalities do not exist inherently, they become completely non-existent, and if they do exist, then they have to exist inherently.

In other words, it is because you fail to know this subtle distinction, that you raise your argument.

The next verse under the earlier heading is:

5. *Transitory beings see objects
And think they exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here
The yogi and the transitory being disagree.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Both Madhyamika and Realist worldly beings² see fire and the like with prime cognition and accept them, but the Realists think of and accept them as being wholly perfectly established objects, and do not comprehend them as being illusory-like and lacking true existence. The Madhyamikas do comprehend them as such, and therefore also in this regard do the Madhyamika yogis and the Realist worldly beings have a dispute.

While the commentary says that *both Madhyamika and Realist worldly beings see fire and the like with prime cognition* i.e. the eye consciousness *and accept them*, it points out that the difference is that the Realists don't comprehend them as being like an illusion and as lacking true existence. On the other hand, *the Madhyamikas do comprehend them as such*, meaning that the Madhyamikas comprehend fire and the functions of fire and so forth as being like an illusion, and lacking true existence.

And therefore also in this regard do the Madhyamika yogis and the Realist worldly beings have a dispute, meaning that this is where the actual debate or disagreement in perceiving the fire lies.

2.1.2.2. DEFENDING ONE'S POSITION

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.2.1. Refuting realists such as the Sautrantika in general

2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only in particular

2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the argument that the path realising emptiness has no use or purpose for a Madhyamika

2.1.2.2.1. Refuting realists such as the Sautrantika in general

This is further subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.1.1. Refuting harm through direct perception

2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting harm through quotations

2.1.2.2.1.1. Refuting harm through direct perception

The argument presented here under the heading first is:

Argument: If you say, if the five sense objects are not established inherently, then it would contradict them being seen with direct perception.

The argument is that if the five sense objects are not established inherently, this would contradict them being seen with direct perception.

The first two lines of the next verse are:

*6ab. The mere direct perception of forms and so forth
Exists through renown and not by prime
cognition.*

The commentary then provides the answer to this argument:

Answer: This is not valid. The prime direct perception of form and the other objects is merely a prime cognition of the renowned illusory aspect. It does not establish their suchness, and does not become a prime cognition in relation to their suchness. In that case, as even ordinary individuals would see suchness, there would be no need to generate a superior path. Also, the quote from the *King of Concentration Sutra*, "the eye, ear and nose are also not prime cognition" is to be understood as refuting them being prime cognitions of suchness.

As clearly explained here, the earlier argument is *not valid* because *the prime perception of form and the other objects is merely a prime cognition of the renowned illusory aspect*, meaning that they're accepted as prime cognition of conventional appearance, but this *does not establish their suchness*.

Further, *and does not become a prime cognition in relation to their suchness* means that, if it were the case that prime cognition of form and other objects related to the object's suchness, then *as even ordinary individuals would see suchness*, or emptiness, *there would be no need to generate a superior path*. If, through their prime cognition, ordinary beings could realise the ultimate nature of things — suchness or emptiness — there would be no need for the superior path. That is what is being presented quite clearly.

The commentary then shows how one should understand the quote from the *King of Concentration Sutra* in its proper context. The quote itself reads: *the eye, ear and nose are also not a prime cognition*. If one were to take that literally, it would sound as if the sutra is saying that the eye, ear, nose and remaining five sense faculties are not prime cognitions. But, as the commentary explains, *this is to be understood as refuting them to being prime cognitions of suchness or emptiness*.

A further explanation of the next verse is presented again with the argument from the Realists:

Argument: If forms and the other objects do not exist inherently [as the Madhyamikas assert] then how can they be renowned, and although being renowned, how are they false?

This argument is presented to contradict the Madhyamikas. It posits that if objects *do not exist inherently* (as the Madhyamikas assert) but are renowned conventionally, then how can they be false? If they're

² Gyaltsab Je: Or one relates the earlier worldly beings only to the Realists.

renowned as conventionally existent, how can they be false at the same time? That's what the Madhyamikas assert: while objects are true conventionally, they're called illusory truths, because ultimately they do not exist in the manner in which they appear.

The next two lines are presented:

**6ab. They are false, just as impurity and so forth
Are renowned as purity and so forth.**

These two lines of verse serve as an answer to the argument that if an object is renowned, how can it be false?

The meaning of these two lines is presented in the commentary:

Answer: Functionalities are false in the same way as the impure body of a woman, among other things, is renowned to be pure and so forth.

What is renowned in the world, or known conventionally, is that the body is pure and thus desirable. But in reality the body is not pure; there are many impure substances within the body. So, although the body is perceived as pure by worldly people, this perception is false, because the body is not pure. Other functionalities are false in the same way. This is the point emphasised here.

2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting harm through quotations

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Showing the sutras which state that compounded phenomena are impermanent and so forth to be interpretative

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting them to be definitive

2.1.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting that one is in contradiction

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1. *Showing the sutras which state that compounded phenomena are impermanent and so forth to be interpretative*

The argument presented here is:

Argument: If you say if forms and other objects are not established inherently, then it is contrary to the sutras stating that they are impermanent.

The next two lines that serve as an answer to this:

**7ab. For the purpose of introducing transitory beings
The protector showed functionalities.**

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines that serve as an answer to the argument:

Answer: There is no contradiction as the Protector showed forms and the other functionalities to be impermanent in order to lead the transitory beings gradually to emptiness.

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. *Refuting them to be definitive*

The line from the verse:

7c. They are not momentary in suchness.

From the commentary:

These functionalities are not momentary in suchness because in suchness they are not established as one or many.

Here, the older students will recall the presentation in the *Madhyamakavatara*, which I've covered numerous times, of the reasons that prove the lack of inherent existence. It is said that inherent existence has to be either established as being inherently one or inherently separate. The

reasoning that I've presented previously is presented here.

This reasoning is presented in the *Madhyamaka* text, as well as in *The Four Hundred Verses*, and *Precious Garland*, which we have also studied. These texts have presented this reasoning, so you can refer to them.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3. *Refuting that one is in contradiction*

This has five divisions:

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.1. Refuting that they are not even established as illusory

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

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.3. Refuting that taking rebirth would be invalid

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.4. Refuting that the division into virtue and negativity would be invalid

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.5. Refuting that the distinctive individual realisation of samsara and nirvana would be invalid

We will conclude here. You'll be aware that the next session will be a discussion?

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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Discussion**Block 2**

1. (10 May 2016)

Why is it inappropriate to look angrily at sentient beings after having committed to benefit other sentient beings?

2. (17 May 2016)

Are degenerated ethics the fault of the individual? Explain what these faults are due to.

144ab. Ethics, view and faults

Are out of our control as they are powered by the afflictions.

3. (24 May 2016)

Explain verse 148

148. I shall make my qualities clear

By any means to all the transitory worlds,

And I shall take care

That nobody hears about his qualities

4. (31 May 2016)

a. In order to engage in exchanging self with other what is the way of checking the mind that the *bodhisattvas* advise themselves?

b. And what is the way of putting that into practice?

5. (7 June 2016)

Explain how we can implement our understanding of karma in a profound way?

6. (14 June 2016)

Respond to the hypothetical argument/question "Since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving".

7. (21 June 2016)

a. What is the way to familiarise one's mind with love and compassion.

b. What is the value or importance of developing love and compassion.

8. (28 June 2016)

a. Before one can generate superior insight what does one need to do?

b. What is the definition of calm abiding?

9. (5 July 2016)

Explain this verse from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*:

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,

For that long there is grasping at 'I'.

For as long as there is grasping at the 'I'

One creates the karma

PTO

10. (12 July 2016)

a. Clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience.

b. Give an illustration

11. (19 July 2016)

Give the definition of conventional truth and the definition of ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.¹

12. (26 July 2016) Page 3 column 2

If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment. How do the Madyamika answer this argument from the Realists?

Exam

Block: 2

Week: 18

Assigned: 9/08/16

1. Why is it inappropriate to look angrily at sentient beings after having committed to benefit other sentient beings?

2. Are degenerated ethics the fault of the individual? Explain what these faults are due to.

*144ab. Ethics, view and faults
Are out of our contrc*

3. Explain verse 148

*148. I shall make my qualities clear
By any means to all the transitory worlds,
And I shall take care
That nobody hears about his qualities*

4.a. In order to engage in exchanging self with other what is the way of checking the mind that the *bodhisattvas* advise themselves?

b. And what is the way of putting that into practice?

5. Explain how we can implement our understanding of karma in a profound way?

6. Respond to the hypothetical argument/question “Since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving”.

7. a. What is the way to familiarise one's mind with love and compassion.

b. What is the value or importance of developing love and compassion?

8. a Before one can generate superior insight what does one need to do?

b. What is the definition of calm abiding?

The definition of calm abiding is: a concentration that is able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, and which is free from distraction and complacency.

9. Explain this verse from Nagarjun

**For as long as there is grasping
For that long there is grasping
For as long as there is grasping
One creates the karma**

10.a. Clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience.

b. Give an illustration

11. Give the definition of conventional truth and the definition of ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.¹

12. If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment. How do the Madyamika answer this argument from the Realists?

Exam

Block: 2

Answers

Week: 18

Assigned: 9/08/16

1. Why is it inappropriate to look angrily at sentient beings after having committed to benefit other sentient beings?

When one has entrusted oneself as a servant to other sentient beings, one should not mistreat them, for example, by looking inappropriately at them: 'it is unsuitable to look angrily at sentient beings with the eyes that belong to them'. In other words, having dedicated oneself to benefiting others, one does not use one's eyes to give them dirty looks, or use one's limbs, arms or legs to make inappropriate gestures, by hitting, pushing or kicking others and so forth. If one has taken to heart the commitment to cherish other sentient beings, these ways of mistreating others are totally inappropriate.

2. Are degenerated ethics the fault of the individual? Explain what these faults are due to.

**144ab. Ethics, view and faults
Are out of our control as they are powered by the afflictions.**

*The commentary answers the hypothetical question saying:
Answer: The degenerated ethics and view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth, i.e., degenerated view and action, are due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power. As explained here very precisely, degenerated ethics i.e. behaviour and so forth and faulty view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth, are due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power. We need to remind ourselves of these essential points again and again in relation to both others and ourselves. It is not individual being who is at fault, rather the faults are due to the influence of the mental afflictions. It is the afflictions that that are at the fault rather than the individual person, whether it is oneself or others. This is in line with the explanation in Aryadeva's Four Hundred Verses where it indicates that the Buddha does not see other individual beings faulty; rather he sees the delusions within their mind as the fault. These are essential points. When one reprimands oneself one needs to understand that, 'It is due to the delusions in my mind that I'm engaging in such negative behaviours, or holding faulty views. So if I overcome these delusions, then all will be rectified, and all will be good.*

3. Explain verse 148

**148. I shall make my qualities clear
By any means to all the transitory worlds,
And I shall take care
That nobody hears about his qualities**

a. The commentary explains the meaning as follows: I shall proclaim and make clear our qualities by any means to all the transitory worlds and further I shall take care that nobody hears about the qualities of this bodhisattva. Again, having exchanged oneself with the other, in relation to others one should proclaim their qualities and hide their faults, and in relation to oneself, one should proclaim one's faults and hide one's qualities. This practice highlights that as ordinary beings, we make our qualities clear to the whole world, while do everything possible to hide our faults. But when a bodhisattva exchanges themselves with the other, they proclaim their own

faults and hide their qualities. The practice of proclaiming others' faults whilst hiding one's qualities and proclaiming one's own qualities whilst hiding one's faults, seems a common practice in Australian politics. We can see that even if the opposition has a good project, it is not mentioned, but criticised in every way.

We can see that the practice of ruining another's reputation or proclaiming their faults, especially in politics, becomes a real cause for dispute and confusion. We can see it really confuses people's minds because they are left not knowing who to believe any more. In Australia we are very fortunate that people are generally goodnatured and quite intelligent, so it doesn't bring such chaos. However there are many instances in other countries where this behaviour can cause chaos; not only confusion but chaos because people get really upset and angry. When they hear about the faults of the opposition they believe it is all true, and this causes a lot of angst, which can cause protests or retaliation etc. So we can see this is a malevolent practice that can cause distress in people's minds.

b. As a way of putting that into practice, one snatches away whatever desired objects one observes on one's body. This indicates that one snatches away from oneself one's possessions, clothing and food, and uses them to benefit other sentient beings. In other words, not feeding and clothing one's body just to maintain oneself, but rather using it for the purpose of others. Furthermore, one gives up grasping at mine and puts them to use for others. When one has a strong self-cherishing mind, then one considers possessions such as food and so forth as mine. Giving away these possessions means giving up strong self-cherishing, and using these possessions for the purpose of benefitting others.

4.a. In order to engage in exchanging self with other what is the way of checking the mind that the bodhisattvas advise themselves?

What one checks is whether one is harming others or not. This means checking 'Am I harming others or am I benefitting them?', and then constantly maintaining that awareness of how one is conducting oneself.

b. And what is the way of putting that into practice?

As a way of putting that into practice, one snatches away whatever desired objects one observes on one's body. This indicates that one snatches away from oneself one's possessions, clothing and food, and uses them to benefit other sentient beings. In other words, not feeding and clothing one's body just to maintain oneself, but rather using it for the purpose of others. Furthermore, one gives up grasping at mine and puts them to use for others. When one has a strong self-cherishing mind, then one considers possessions such as food and so forth as mine. Giving away these possessions means giving up strong self-cherishing, and using these possessions for the purpose of benefitting others.

5. Explain how we can implement our understanding of karma in a profound way?

..... although others commit faults such as harming one, bodhisattvas should make these their own faults and carry the burden of experiencing the results themselves. This is a profound way of implementing the understanding of karma. If one experiences harm from anyone, that harm is none other than the result of one's own previous karma. If we had not created the karma to experience harm, then no one would be able to harm us. If one implements that understanding of karma, then one can take harm from others upon oneself as being one's own fault: that is, if someone harms us, it is basically the ripening of our own previously created negative karma, thus we experience the harm.

6. Respond to the hypothetical argument/question "Since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving".

Answer: This is unsuitable. However much we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it that much through craving, while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering. It will be very hard to support it because one falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that

makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings. This hypothetical argument is a continuation of the dialogue with the self-cherishing mind. Here the 'self-cherishing' mind is saying that since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving'. In other words, it is saying that craving and providing oneself with beautiful clothes, nice food, and taking care of one's every need desire is good, because it supports one; providing one with beautiful clothes, nice food, and taking care of one's every need to in benefitting others. This is a strategic move from the self-cherishing in saying 'oh, I'm being considerate. There's a reason why I'm craving these good things, such as nice food and clothing etc., . – it is to help others.' This perspective does occur to us. We may start thinking that if it's for the benefit of others then it must be fine to crave good things. The answer of course is that this is unsuitable, to crave things in order to take care of the body. The commentary explains that it is unsuitable because, however much we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it that much through craving, . This meaning means that we will strive to support the body with the most pleasant food one can possibly acquire, the most tasty, the most nicely presented, nice smelling, nice tasting and with clothing that looks nice, and feels soft and pleasant on one's body, while all the time the mind of craving just wants the best for the sake of gratification. So while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering. The point here is that, when the mind of craving desires the best of everything (food, clothing, dwelling etc.) whilst it does not achieve even the slightest of its wishes, and one will instead experience great suffering. This is the point emphasised here, . And it is very true that through the mind of craving we are so used to wanting the best for oneself, and when the slightest thing goes wrong, it causes so much discomfort and unhappiness in the mind. To further emphasise the point the commentary explains that it will be very hard to support it, meaning support the body with craving, because one falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings. So as a consequence of craving the best for oneself, when the slightest thing goes wrong, we immediately cannot bear it and so experience great suffering. Then, when something goes well we feel elated, . So we go through these extremes of either elation or disappointment and unhappiness when things don't go well. The state of going through these extremes comes from the strong craving we have for sustaining ourselves

7. a. What is the way to familiarise one's mind with love and compassion.

The way to really familiarise our mind with love and compassion is by constantly investigating how best to further develop these states of mind. How does it develop and how is it expressed? How does love increase? How can compassion increase? Investigating in this way, we need to find the best conditions to increase the mind of love and compassion within ourselves. How is it received by others? How does it make oneself feel? The more we investigate along these lines, the more we will see the core value of love and compassion, and the more we will be inclined to embrace and develop it further.

b. What is the value or importance of developing love and compassion?

The reason why I emphasise these points again and again is so that we can all see the value of love and compassion. However the most important thing is to actually put it into practice. Indeed, for us who consider ourselves practitioners, there is no more important practice than developing love and compassion, not to mention it being the essence of the Mahayana practice. If one wishes to subdue one's mind there is no greater practice than acquainting one's mind with love and compassion. If one wishes to overcome delusions, to purify negativities and accumulate merit, there is no greater practice than developing love and compassion. If you wish for the your Dharma studies to serve as a means to subdue your own mind, then it essential to embrace the importance of developing love and compassion and treat it as your core practice. But if you treat the Dharma like a normal academic study for grades and qualifications, as a means to further increase pride, and a sense of competitiveness with others, to increase anger, jealousy, attachment and so forth, then you need not develop love and compassion. If one's Dharma study becomes a means to further increase the delusions, then rather than overcoming them, then it completely defeats the real purpose of that Dharma study. We need to really understand the crucial benefits of love and compassion – if there was no one with love and compassion, then there would be no one to provide help in times of real difficulty and strife. Indeed the only person who does come to one's aid is someone who has a genuine concern for one's wellbeing, and thus genuine love and compassion. Those who lacked love and compassion will not come to one's aid. So we can see how love and compassion serves as the basis for the wellbeing of all.

8. a Before one can generate superior insight what does one need to do?

The commentary explains: therefore, in order to eliminate all afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, one needs to generate superior insight. Before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore i turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. By way of the eight abandoning recognitions i shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object. Having contemplated the reasons presented earlier, one strives to eliminate both the afflictive obscurations – which include the six root delusions of attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views and doubt, and the seeds of those delusions – as well as the obscurations to knowledge, which are the latent imprints of the obscurations. To do that, one needs to generate superior insight in order to overcome the seeds of the delusions, as well as their imprints. Before that, one needs to in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore i turn my mind away from all wrong paths. The point here is that one needs to generate superior insight, which is to be presented in the next chapter, and before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding. So, having been presented with all the conditions for developing calm abiding, i turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects. Further, one turns one’s mind away from all wrong paths, such as the disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. The actual method for developing calm abiding is referred to here – by way of the eight abandoning recognitions i shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object. The eight abandoning recognitions are as presented in the lam rim.

b. What is the definition of calm abiding?

The definition of calm abiding is: a concentration that is able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, and which is combined with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

9. Explain this verse from Nagarjuna’s *Precious Garland*:

**For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at ‘I’.
For as long as there is grasping at the ‘I’
One creates the karma**

Grasping at true existence of the aggregates is the misconception that perceives the aggregates as being truly existent. This is our normal perception of the aggregates. Rather than seeing the aggregates as being an entity that is dependent on many parts, their causes and conditions, we perceive them as being independently existent, existing from their own side, without depending on anything else for their existence.

As the aggregates appear to us in this way we apprehend the aggregates as being truly existent without depending on causes or conditions or parts and so forth. Believing in that perception is called true-grasping at the aggregates. Grasping at the aggregates as being truly existent then leads onto grasping at the self and ‘I’ and what belongs to me as ‘mine’.

We need to understand how grasping at a truly existent ‘I’ produces grasping at ‘mine’. From ‘mine’ comes my friends and my enemies and strangers. Strong grasping at my friend then produces the state of mind of attachment, and through that strong attachment a lot of negativities are created. Thoughts of ‘my enemy’ give rise to anger or aversion, and out of that aversion or anger one also creates a lot of negativity. In relation to strangers one generates a mind of indifference and lack of interest for their wellbeing

10.a. Clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience.

The deluded obscurations are, for example, grasping at the true existence of self and phenomena. The imprints of these the delusions, including these misconceptions of grasping to the self of person and phenomena, are said to be the obscurations to omniscience.

The Prasangika specifically explain that due to the imprints of the delusions one still has the appearance of true existence, and these mistaken appearances are actually the obscuration to omniscience.

Let's clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience. With every delusion, such as attachment, there is a distinction between the seed of the delusion and the imprint of the delusion. The seed of delusion is defined as that which serves as a cause for a similar delusion to occur in the next instance. Given the definition of a seed, then for as long as one has the seed of attachment, that attachment will be perpetually generated until the seed of attachment is completely abandoned.

Although one has abandoned the seed of attachment, one still has the imprint of attachment. This is also true for all the other delusions, and it is the imprints of the delusions that cause the mistaken appearance of true existence. Even when one has abandoned the seeds of delusions, there's still an appearance of true existence, up until the point that one completely abandons the imprints of all delusions.

So according to the Prasangika view, all sentient beings' sense faculties will necessarily have this mistaken appearance of true existence because, by definition, a sentient being is a being who has not overcome the imprints of the delusions.

b. Give an illustration

An illustration of when the sense faculty itself is influenced by a mistaken perception of true existence how this causes a mistaken appearance, can be seen on a grosser level with the mind of sleep. During sleep we have what is called the sleep consciousness to which all dreams appear. In the dream state we see horses, elephants, houses etc., which are mistaken appearances because they do not really exist. In dreams they appear to the mind as actually existing, but in fact they do not really exist as they appear – they are non-existent.

In syllogisms, the example used for things lacking true existence, is that they are like a dream. Things in a dream appear to be real but they actually don't exist. Likewise truly existent phenomena do not exist.

It is said that it is only a buddha's mind that does not have any mistaken appearances, because a buddha has completely eliminated the very imprints of all the delusions. Thus, for a buddha's mind there is no mistaken appearance whatsoever. For example, an arhat who has overcome the seeds of delusions still has mistaken appearance of true existence, because they have not yet abandoned the imprints of the delusions. So until one achieves buddhahood one has not overcome the mistaken appearances.

11. Give the definition of conventional truth and the definition of ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.¹

Then the commentary gives the actual explanation of ultimate truth. Persons and the aggregates are illusory truths and *the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are examples that exemplify ultimate truth*. As further presented here, *the awareness that is a prime direct perception comprehending them does not engage in the object explicitly by way of them appearing in a dualistic manner but are known by the prime direct perception comprehending them*. Basically what is being explained here is that the lack of inherent existence of a person and the aggregates as perceived directly by an awareness without any dualistic appearance is ultimate truth.

So, the definition of **ultimate truth is: that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor that realises it directly.**

And the definition of **conventional truth is: that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor realising it directly.**

In the past I presented the differences between the definitions of conventional and ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.²

According to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, both ultimate truth and the conventional truth are presented as being directly perceived by an awareness, and the significant criterion for both conventional and ultimate truth is that they are cognised directly.

¹

According to the *Madhyamakavatara* the definition of a conventional truth is: **the meaning found by valid cognisor engaged in a nominal analysis, as well as being a nominal cognisor with regard to the found meaning.** The definition of ultimate truth is: **the meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis which becomes a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to *that* object.**

12. If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment. How do the Madyamika answer this argument from the Realists?

The point here, as I've explained previously many times, is that not only the perfection of wisdom, but all the earlier perfections need to also be combined with wisdom – otherwise it would be as if they were blind. The earlier practices such as generosity, morality and so forth cannot, in themselves, become a means to achieve full enlightenment without the wisdom realising emptiness. Without the wisdom realising emptiness they are like a blind person, who cannot go to a faraway destination by themselves. Thus, the earlier practices of generosity and so forth, need to be complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, whereby they become the perfection of generosity and so forth.

For example, when generosity is complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, it is practised with the understanding that all three – the individual who is being generous, the substance that is being given, and the recipient of the generosity – are empty of inherent existence. With that realisation, generosity becomes a perfection of generosity. These particular characteristics are similarly applied to the rest of the perfections. The reason the perfections practised in this way are referred to as practices that are 'gone beyond' is that they lead to the state of enlightenment which is to go beyond samsara. *They, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment.*

However this is not the case. As explained here, *although generosity and so forth, which are practised in order to attain the results of enlightenment, are not truly established, one engages in them without investigation or analysis while holding them with the wisdom realising them to be false, like an illusion.* Using the example of an illusion, one can establish the lack of inherent existence of the training in generosity and so forth.

If, without going into specific investigation or analysis, *the remaining perfections are not held by the wisdom realising the lack or absence of inherent existence, then they do not gain the name 'having gone beyond' [or do not bear the name 'perfection'] and they, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment.*