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# Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

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As usual it would be appropriate to have a good motivation, such as, ‘In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings.

In the last session we left off with an explanation of how the antidotes to anger and desire must be applied separately.

## 1.2.1.1. GENERAL EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON THE THREE POISONS (CONT.)

### 1.2.1.1.4. HOW TO TREAT STUDENTS HAVING DESIRE AND ANGER

Earlier we described how the antidotes to desire and anger have to be applied individually, because anger and attachment do not arise simultaneously. This next topic explains how a teacher who guides students, having understood how antidotes must be applied separately, must individually guide students to overcome their delusions.

It seems that one method is to ask students with strong desire to do prostrations in order to use up their physical energy.

*Desire should be driven like a slave* 130  
*Because severity is its cure,*  
*And anger looked upon as a lord*  
*Because indulgence is its cure.*

As the commentary explains:

Understanding the characteristics of desire and anger and how they function...

Earlier when the definitions of desire and anger were explained, both the nature and function of desire and anger were described.

...a spiritual teacher engaged in forming students makes those with desire work like slaves. This is because severity and lack of deference cure desire.

What this refers to is a way of curing students from having strong desire. Although the words ‘slave’ is used it can also be used in the sense of a servant or what is known here as a civil servant. In other words it can refer to those who work from morning to evening, and who are like servants to their boss. Because they are preoccupied with work, there is no time for self indulgence. Likewise, a teacher will give those with strong desire extra virtuous activities, in order to distract them from objects of desire. Thus desire is prevented from arising, because students are not given the opportunity to engage with objects of desire.

As the commentary reads:

The angry should be looked upon as lords. By treating them with indulgence and serving them

respectfully their anger will not arise; thus indulgence cures it.

As explained earlier, one of the main reasons for anger to arise, is not meeting with the objects of desire, or lacking the necessities. But, as explained earlier, and again here, when you provide someone with basic needs it reduces their manifest anger and prevents anger from arising. If the teacher treats the students for whom anger is a problem like lords, paying them respect and giving them what they need, their manifest anger will be reduced. What is being described here are the manifest delusions.

Understanding these explanations and applying them in our daily lives, can help us to understand and deal with others who may also have manifest delusions.

### 1.2.1.1.5. HOW TO APPLY THE ANTIDOTES ON UNDERSTANDING THE SEQUENCE IN WHICH DISTURBING EMOTIONS ARISE

Having recognised delusions, and further recognised the sequence in which they arise, the next point to understand is that delusions are prevalent at particular times. This refers to the delusions that are present in the morning, during the day, and at night.

*First there is confusion,* 131  
*In the middle there is anger,*  
*And later there is desire,*  
*In three stages during the day.*

As the commentary explains:

At night sleep and lethargy increase and because phlegm predominates, first in the morning there is confusion.

This is as explained. During the night when we sleep the mind is in a state of stupor and then we wake up that state is still prevalent. So it is very difficult to wake up, because the residue of stupor is still prevalent in the mind. In the morning this hangover of stupor leads to the mind being in a very dull state. If we want to engage in an early-morning activity then having a dull mind is an obstacle that causes unease and suffering.

As the commentary goes on:

In the middle of the day one rides on the wheel of suffering caused by the frustrations of making a living, and anger arises because one is plagued by hunger and thirst.

After we have properly woken up, we begin to engage in major activities such as going to work. As we engage in these activities during the day there may be a lot of obstacles that will result in anger arising. As we work we also experience hunger and thirst, which also leads to agitation. During our normal activities there are many instances where things go wrong, so there are lots of situations where anger arises.

After work we come home, wash up and apply nice smelling perfumes and go out and that is when attachment starts to arise.

As the text identifies, there are three times when particular delusions are more prevalent. Along with understanding how we are influenced by the three delusions at all times, we must also understand this sequence of the particular times when particular

delusions are more prevalent than others. For example in the morning there is a dullness stemming from ignorance. As stupor and dullness can be recognised, one can then apply the antidote to overcome dullness. As an antidote to this morning dullness, young monks in the monastery are taught to recite the mantra of Manjushri (OM AH RA PA TSA NA DHI) as soon they wake up. During the day anger is more prevalent so we can apply the antidote to that. In the evening there are more conditions for attachment to rise so one can apply the antidote to attachment then.

Relating this to earlier explanations we can apply the understanding of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance, we can apply love to overcome anger, and we can meditate on the ugliness of objects as a means of overcoming attachment.

### 1.2.1.2. INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATION

This has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.2.1. How to abandon desire
- 1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred
- 1.2.1.2.3. How to abandon confusion

#### 1.2.1.2.1. HOW TO ABANDON DESIRE

This is subdivided into two:

- 1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it.
- 1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

##### 1.2.1.2.1.1. Desire being hard to recognise as something to discard, exertion is required to abandon it

Desire is hard to recognise as being a fault and therefore it is very hard to discard it.

*Desire is no friend, but seems like one, 132  
Which is why you do not fear it.  
But shouldn't people particularly  
Rid themselves of a harmful friend?*

Desire masquerading as a friend deceives ordinary people.

Since that is so:

you must pay special attention to getting rid of it.

As explained in the commentary it is extremely hard to recognise desire as a delusion to abandon, because we are so influenced by it. Desire manifests within us very cunningly in the aspect of a friend who wishes benefit us. Though it is harmful, it disguises itself as a friend. Because desire seems to be a friend it is therefore very hard to recognise it as something to be discarded. When we allow ourselves to follow attachment or desire there is a pleasurable feeling as well, so that makes it even harder to see desire as something to be discarded.

As the commentary explains:

Ultimately it produces suffering, so it is not a friend, but looks like one because it seems benevolent. Therefore you do not fear it.

When desire or attachment arises it arises in the aspect of a friend, so rather than fearing it we trust it.

Shouldn't people make a particular effort to rid themselves of a harmful friend?

Even in worldly terms if one sees that a friend is harmful, we will distance ourselves from them out of common sense, even if they have been a friend for a long time. That is because they are harming us. In fact attachment is not a friend, because it definitely harms us. So shouldn't any wise person distance themselves from attachment, just as in the analogy of worldly friend who harms oneself.

Similarly one should get rid of desire.

If we look to the explanation in the teaching with our own deeper common sense and experiences we come to recognise that attachment brings us more suffering in the long run. So we learn not to completely rely on attachment. Then one can start to gradually overcome and abandon attachment. However I agree that it is not easy to recognise attachment as something to be abandoned. Even ordained people say that the very source of enjoyment comes from one's attachment. So if ordained people find it hard to give up attachment it must be even harder for lay people.

Not realising that attachment is a source of suffering and therefore not pleasurable is the source of many problems. It leads us into so much suffering. Attachment is really suffering rather than real pleasure, and the real source of attachment is ignorance.

As it is difficult to recognise attachment, we must use many different reasonings and antidotes to overcome attachment.

To further describe the severity of attachment Lama Tsong Khapa gave the analogy of attachment as being like the drop of oil on a piece of paper. That one drop begins to permeate and stain the thickness of the paper while it also spreads out on the surface of the paper. It can create a very dark obvious stain that is impossible to get rid of. When we are attached we are immersed in the object. With anger it is easier to distance ourselves from the object of our anger, because we can actually distance ourselves physically from that object. However with attachment even if we distance ourselves physically, the mind does not give it up. Put in a position of choosing to give up life or give up the object of attachment some people will even choose to give up life. With attachment we become completely immersed in the object.

Furthermore, the reason that we find anger is easier to overcome is because of the obvious suffering that anger causes in our mind. But with attachment, the more desire we have the more we want to hold onto the object. We don't see the disadvantages as easily and don't even recognise it as suffering.

##### 1.2.1.2.1.2. Having understood the differences regarding causes and conditions, it should be abandoned

*Desire arises from causes and 133  
Also arises through circumstance.  
Desire arising, through circumstance  
Is easy to deal with; not the other.*

The commentary explains:

Never give desire a chance to arise!

There are two ways in which desire arises.

It arises in two ways: some forms of desire arise from

a cause of a similar type created by repeated familiarity in the past.

All desire arises from a cause, the difference arises in relation to some having immediate causes and others not having an apparent cause. Attachment is often a cause of a similar type. This refers to the lack of immediate apparent conditions that cause attachment to arise.

When attachment seems to arise spontaneously, without having to think about or see a particular object, it is said to be attachment of the first type. Such attachment arises continuously from the past, which includes past life times. So this kind of attachment results from having a continuum with spontaneous desire arising.

Some arise adventitiously through the circumstance provided by the proximity of an object.

The second type is a strong attachment arising as result of contact with a beautiful object. Of the two types of attachment this second type is relatively easier to overcome, because once the object causing the desire is removed and is out of sight the particular attachment will subside.

The first type of attachment that arises through strong familiarity is not as easy to overcome. As the commentary states:

The other is not like that, since a strong antidote is needed to get rid of it.

This refers to the more common example of desire that arises through acquaintance or familiarity, which is very strong and difficult to overcome. It is very much like trying to overcome the habit of drinking or smoking; the longer you have had the habit the more difficult it is to overcome.

The previous discussion has concentrated on the negative side of desire or attachment. In a sense there is a positive side, which is that it is associated with love and kindness. For someone with a strong affinity for love and kindness, attachment is very difficult to overcome, and is not easily removed. That is because of the strong imprint of love and kindness that is due to familiarity.

The kind that arises through circumstance is like the following: a bird cannot fly without one of its wings.

The second type of attachment is like finding a bird with one wing - it cannot fly without both of its wings. The reason why it is easier to overcome this type of adventitious attachment is because circumstantial desire arises from the object. If the object is removed desire is not maintained for very long. Just like a bird needs two wings to fly, desire needs an external condition, which affects the internal condition of desire.

As the *Abhidharma* text mentions, when all three conditions for desire are prevalent it is extremely hard for desire not to be present. These three conditions are

1. One has not abandoned attachment
2. One is in close proximity to the object of desire
3. One has the faulty state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of the object.

When these conditions are present there is definitely room for us to be influenced by attachment.

Is important to understand the circumstances in which desire arises in order to eventually overcome it. So understanding the profundity of how desire arises is very useful. As explained earlier, all three conditions have to be present for desire to arise at both a subtle and a manifest level. If there was just one condition, such as meeting the object of desire, and we then concluded that anyone who comes into contact with objects of desire would have desire, then that would not be true, because those who have overcome desire are not influenced by it. Thus just meeting with an object is not a sufficient cause in itself for desire to arise. To go into it more deeply, the very basis of the condition for attachment to rise is the grasping at the self. That is the real culprit, grasping at the self.

#### 1.2.1.2.2. How to abandon hatred

*Anger is lasting and certainly  
Makes one do grave non-virtue.  
Thus constant awareness of their distinctions  
Will bring to an end disturbing emotions.* 134

Anger is a fault more grave than desire, and therefore one should strive to get rid of it.

This verse is explaining that anger is a fault so one should get rid of it.

Since anger, which is made to last and held fast by resentment...

The actual word for resentment in Tibetan is *tro-wa*. Resentment is a mental factor which induces anger to last longer. That which makes anger long-lasting is another type of delusion, which causes resentment.

...certainly burns one's own and others' mindstreams and causes others harm, it is totally non-virtuous.

If one does not overcome anger when it initially arises, it becomes resentment, which is holding on to the initial cause of anger and thus harbouring agitation and anger towards that object.

When one does not retaliate, one might say that one is practising patience, but in fact that may just lead to more resentment. Not retaliating is called patience, but one may fall into the state of mind of holding on to resentment. One may seem very cool and calm but still be agitated. For as long as we harbour anger it harms ourselves and others and destroys our virtues.

Unlike attachment anger has no benefit either for oneself or others - it is totally non-virtuous. With attachment one can benefit others and there is some kind of pleasure in that. The disadvantage is that as the attachment is more difficult to recognise, it is more difficult to overcome. However with anger there is no benefit for either oneself or others. Because attachment is not totally non-virtuous, attachment in the desire realm is non-virtuous, but in the form and formless realms it is not non-virtuous.

The disadvantage or faults of anger are very obvious. We can see how there are so many grave misdeeds. As we see in the news, there are even those who kill their parents in anger, and other grave misdeeds are also performed out of anger.

As the commentary explains:

It makes one do serious misdeeds such as the five

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heinous crimes.

If one were to harbour anger and not engage in overcoming anger or overcoming the imprints of anger, it will result in the sufferings of the lower realms. If we engage in the practice of purification, however, our anger can be purified.

As the commentary further explains:

Through consistent awareness of their different faults, disadvantages, causes and the means to eliminate them, disturbing emotions will be brought to an end. Thus, once their specific antidotes are known, one must get rid of them.

What is being summarised is that through having a constant awareness of how there is no benefit for oneself or others, and how it destroys virtue and puts non-virtuous imprints on our mind, and how it leads us to engage in heinous crimes, and knowing the causes of anger attachment and ignorance, and knowing the means of eliminating them, one must apply the antidotes.

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