

Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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Without allowing the mind to be distracted externally, find a good and comfortable posture that is appropriate for setting a motivation for receiving the teachings. Then generate a motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and try to put them into practice as best as I can'.

1.1 Why disturbing emotions can be abandoned (cont.)

1.1.2. Showing how it is possible to abandon disturbing emotions, or delusions

This is subdivided into four.

1.1.2.1. Disturbing emotions can be abandoned because their focal basis is not definitive

1.1.2.2. Causes giving rise to the disturbing emotions do not exist truly

1.1.2.3. Refuting proof that disturbing emotions cannot be abandoned

1.1.2.4. Lack of contradiction in seeing many who have not abandoned disturbing emotions

1.1.2.1. DISTURBING EMOTIONS CAN BE ABANDONED BECAUSE THEIR FOCAL BASIS IS NOT DEFINITIVE

Some are attracted to it, 177
Some are averse to it,
Some feel confused by it:
Thus desire has no object.

The text has already explained how desire itself can be reduced by seeing the faults of the object in quite a bit of detail. However here it shows more specifically how seeing the object of desire as lacking inherent existence will help to overcome actual attachment to the object.

As the commentary explains:

Desire depends on and operates in relation to the desired thing which, moreover, does not exist by way of its own entity...

What is being explained here is that because the object of desire exists in the first place it serves as a basis for one's desire to arise. As explained in an earlier session there are three main conditions for desire to arise: first, there is an object of desire; secondly, the person who is viewing or perceiving the object has not abandoned desire; and thirdly, that they have an incorrect mental approach. Due to these three conditions desire arises.

Due to an incorrect mental approach, the object of desire is perceived as being inherently existent. If an object were to be inherently attractive, the qualities of attractiveness would exist inherently within the object. If that were the case, it would be feasible to say that one could not overcome desire for the object because of its inherently existing attractiveness. However that is not the case: one reason why one can overcome desire is because the object does not exist inherently.

Furthermore:

...for some are attracted to that object, some have aversion to it and some are confused by it. If the desired object existed by way of its own entity, only desire should arise towards it.

This is in accordance with the earlier explanation in the text: the same object can be an object of attachment for some, an object of aversion for others while for a third group ignorance will be increased. The converse is that if an object were an entirely attractive object, causing only desire to arise, then whoever perceived that object would have to experience desire, which could not be stopped. However that is not the case.

As the commentary further explains:

Since this is not inevitable, focal objects are only imputed by conceptuality, and that which is desired does not exist by way of its own entity. Therefore, from the point of view of the basis too, disturbing emotions can be abandoned.

Everything in relation to the object, its attributes and so forth, is merely conceptually imputed. It is merely conceptualised, meaning that the objects do not exist from their own side, but are merely labelled by the mind. That being the case, it is also possible to overcome desire and other delusions in relation to the object itself, because of the very nature of the object.

The analogy given in the commentary describes how one object can be viewed differently. A man has two wives: when the one who is a mother sees her daughter, due to attachment, she feels love and concern for her daughter. Whereas when the other wife, who doesn't have a daughter, sees the daughter of the first wife she actually feels aversion towards the girl, because it is not her own child. A servant in the house would view the daughter with indifference i.e. with neither strong attachment nor aversion. The reason why the younger wife feels aversion towards the daughter of the older wife is because there is a bit of jealousy there, and because of that mind of jealousy aversion can arise in the mind.

The main point of the analogy is to illustrate that any given object is not inherently existent, and thus it is possible to overcome misconceptions in relation to the object. If the object of desire were to be inherently existent, then one couldn't overcome any misconception in relation to it, because it and its attributes would actually exist in that way. However, because it does not exist in the way that it appears to exist, one can overcome misconceptions about it.

It is also good to understand how the object and the subject, meaning the conceptual mind that perceives the object and the object itself, are interdependent. The attributes of an object depend on the conceptual mind that conceives it, and the conceptual mind that perceives an object depends on the object in order to be able to attribute any qualities or demerits to it. Therefore the object and the subject (or the mind that perceives the object) are interdependent and interrelated. Thus neither of them exist inherently, and conceptions that arise in relation to them can be altered.

1.1.2.2. CAUSES GIVING RISES TO DISTURBING EMOTIONS OR DELUSIONS DO NOT EXIST TRULY

Not only can disturbing emotions be abandoned because their focal objects lack true existence, but also because their causes do not have true existence.

Apart from conceptuality, 178
Desire and so forth have no existence.

*Who with intelligence would hold [that there are]
Real things imputed by conceptuality?*

At this point the commentary quotes from another text:

Desire, anger and confusion are explained
To arise through conceptuality.

Here conceptuality refers particularly to an incorrect mental approach, which is a wrong conceptual mind or a faulty conceptual mind that exaggerates either the qualities or faults attributed to an object. It is due to an incorrect mental approach that the mind sees inherent existence itself. That is explained further on in the text.

However here the text is describing the function of the incorrect mental approach, which is a wrong conceptual mind that exaggerates the attributes of the object. It sees it as being either attractive or repulsive, and as a result desire and attachment and aversion arise respectively. So different emotions arise in the mind in relation to the object. The main point is that strong desire and strong anger are dependent on an incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the qualities and attributes of the object.

As the commentary explains:

The existence of disturbing emotions such as desire cannot be found apart from the conceptualizations of an incorrect mental approach and imputation by conceptuality, as a snake is imputed to a mottled rope.

This relates to the verse about desire, anger and confusion arising through conceptuality that was quoted above. The text calls that conceptuality an incorrect mental approach. In relation to an object, there can be an incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the positive qualities of an object, which then causes desire to arise. There is also the incorrect mental approach that exaggerates the faults of the object, which then causes anger or aversion to arise. An incorrect mental approach of indifference towards the object causes ignorance or stupidity to arise in the mind. Thus the three types of delusions arise in the mind in relation to three types of incorrect mental approach. The main point is that the qualities or faults of the object, or any aspect of indifference to it, are only due to a misconception, which is an incorrect mental approach of a conceptual mind.

As it further explains in the commentary it is like the analogy of a mind imputing a snake upon a rope. Even though the mind imputing the snake on the rope will totally believe that there is a snake there, you cannot find a real snake on the rope in any way. There is not a single atom of reality of a snake on the rope, as it is only the faulty mind that perceives the snake.

The commentary explains:

Their existence is simply reliant existence and they do not exist by way of their own entity. If they did, who with intelligence would hold they are imputed by conceptuality, which means the opposite in existence in terms of their own reality? Imputation by conceptuality and existence by way of a thing's own entity are contradictory.

That which appears to exist upon the object is merely imputed by an incorrect mental approach, and thus does not exist from its own side, by its own entity. As a counter measure the commentary explains that if that which appears to exist upon the object actually did exist, then the intelligent would hold the same view. Here 'the intelligent' means those who have understood reality and who see it as being mentally imputed rather than inherently existent. That is how those who have an intelligent mind perceive reality or

emptiness. It would be contrary to the actual reality, if they didn't perceive things in that way.

As the commentary further explains:

When the snake is imputed to a rope, neither the parts of the rope, that which possesses its parts, its continuum, nor that which possesses the continuum appropriately illustrate a snake. Similarly neither do the collection of the aggregates, that which makes up the collection, its continuum, nor that which possesses the continuum is appropriate as the person.

The main point is that a true snake does not exist in any part in any way upon a rope; it is only perceived as a snake by a wrong conceptual mind. Similarly a person is merely imputed upon the aggregates and within the aggregates you cannot find a person, nor does a person inherently exist in any one of the five aggregates. So the conclusion is that a person is merely imputed on the basis of the five aggregates.

The main point is that the root text is identifying the causes of the disturbing emotions or delusions as being an incorrect mental approach, or the conceptualising mind. These points were also explained in chapter 7, but this chapter is being more specific about those causes. Gyaltsab-je also quotes Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*:

The world is caused by ignorance—
The Fully Enlightened One said so.
Therefore why is it not feasible
To say the world is conceptuality.

The main point is that everything is imputed by the conceptual mind.

1.1.2.3. REFUTING PROOF THAT DISTURBING EMOTIONS CANNOT BE ABANDONED

Some may doubt whether, even though we know they are bad, disturbing emotions can be abandoned. This section refutes such thoughts.

Assertion: Since men and women are bound together by mutual desire, one cannot give up women and thus cannot give up desire.

This is definitely a common worldly view.

Answer:

*None is, as it were,
Bound to another.
It is unfeasible to separate
That which is bound together.*

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As the commentary explains:

No man is intrinsically bound to a woman. Since anything inherent is irrevocable, whatever is intrinsically bound together should not be separable. Yet the case of that which should not be separable, separation is seen.

The point is elucidated very well here. Neither the man nor the woman is inherently existent therefore there cannot be any inherently existent bond between the two. If the bond between a man and a woman were to be inherently existent then that would imply that it is irrevocable and that they cannot be separated. However separation does take place—we all know of instances of it.

With a clear understanding of emptiness, and having meditated on it, we can see how it can really benefit the mind if we are able see the real nature of things and how they exist in reality. A person who is acquainted with viewing actual reality, and the actual nature of things, will not experience strong emotions of desire and anger in relation to changes in objects and so forth, because they have that understanding. The main point here is that bonds are

not inherently existent bonds to begin with. In this case the bond between a man and a woman is not itself inherently existent, nor are the factors that bind the man and the woman together inherently existent. Thus there cannot be an everlasting non-separable relationship, because the possibility of separation is always there, which is obvious.

We don't have to use much logic as we see separation all around us. The fact that there is separation is because there was never an inherently existent bond to begin with. Of course when one fails to see that, strong attachment arises for each other. Then later other emotions such as aversion and sadness and depression may arise if there is separation. If one were to have that understanding to begin with and contemplate it, then that can help to avoid such extreme emotions. This is a really important point for us to consider and contemplate. As the text explains 'that which should not be separable, separation is seen'. Even though the separation from a loved one is not desired, separation takes place, which of course no one likes.

The analogy given in the commentary is that it is like using one black and one white ox for ploughing. They are seen as being bound together because of the yoke and the harness that they share. But in reality the oxen are not bound together. Similarly, with relationships it appears that the couple are bound together. However the binding factor is only attachment and desire, and there is no truly or inherently existent bond there.

1.1.2.4. LACK OF CONTRADICTION IN SEEING MANY WHO HAVE NOT ABANDONED DISTURBING EMOTIONS.

Assertion: If the disturbing emotions are stopped by analysing in this way, why do most people appear not to have abandoned them.

A doubt may arise in some minds that as there are so many who have not abandoned disturbing emotions or delusions, then that might be a reason why disturbing emotions or delusions cannot be abandoned. This outline shows that there is no contradiction there.

A common doubt that some may have is in relation to a person who has been practising and studying the Dharma for a long time, but who still gets angry and seems to have attachment in their mind. Seeing such a person one may think that maybe it is not possible to overcome anger at all. These are all reasonable doubts, and the text explains how to overcome them in relation to our way of thinking. It is very good to ponder and pay attention to the points that are made here, as they help to pave the way to the understanding of emptiness—as they make the mind ready for understanding emptiness.

Answer: It is because they lack a strong belief in the profound teaching, [which refers to the teaching on emptiness].

The answer is the essence of the following verse.

Those with little merit 180
Do not even doubt this teaching.
Entertaining just a doubt
Tears to tatters worldly existence.

This verse points out that until and unless one gains an actual realisation of emptiness one cannot possibly overcome and uproot the delusions in the mind.

As the commentary explains:

Those with little merit do not even have a doubt regarding the two truths as asserted by Nagarjuna: that while dependent arising is empty of inherent existence, actions and agents are feasible. Since they do not wonder

whether this is so or not, how can they attain the liberation of having abandoned all disturbing attitudes and emotions?

'Those with little merit' refers to ordinary beings in cyclic existence, who from beginningless time have been acquainted with the wrong conceptual mind of grasping at the self. Being entirely dependent on that misconception, they don't even have a doubt about emptiness as illustrated by Nagarjuna, which as mentioned here is that while dependent arising is empty of inherent existence, actions and agents are feasible. What is being explained here is that while things are dependent arisings they are empty of inherent existence. Beings of little merit, as explained earlier, will not even begin to doubt whether that is the case or not. If they do not even have a doubt about that, then the possibility of being liberated from samsara is out of the question.

As the commentary further explains:

When emptiness is taught, simply entertaining the positive doubt that it might be so tears worldly existence to tatters...

One may have a strong misconception that person, things and phenomena exist inherently, and that they do have an inherently existent self. When the teachings of emptiness are first heard and then analysed, one may develop the doubt, 'Oh maybe they are inherently existent, but then again they may not be inherently existent'. That is an even-handed doubt that leans to both sides. That equal doubt leads on to a correctly assuming doubt, which is that persons and other phenomena don't seem to be inherently existent. There is still no certainty yet, but when one comes to that correctly assuming doubt, it is said that one has a conceptual understanding of emptiness. That correctly assuming doubt then leads on to an actual understanding that things do not exist inherently. What is called a positive doubt in the text is a correctly assuming doubt, that things may not be inherently existent. Even that doubt, as mentioned here, will shatter cyclic existence. It is referred to as the tattering of cyclic existence because it shatters the misconception in one's mind that grasps at the self. So it is that ignorance which is being shattered, and thus it is a means of shattering cyclic existence.

The commentary further explains that:

...since to some extent the fundamental nature of the existence has become the mind's object.

This refers to the correctly assuming doubt or conceptual understanding of emptiness, or selflessness. The fundamental nature of existence of person and other phenomena has not entirely become the object of the mind, to the point that it is seen clearly and directly perceived, but the acquaintance the mind has with this understanding serves as a means to tear to tatters, or shatter, worldly existence.

As the commentary further explains:

Someone who has such a positive doubt will seek certainty, and by ascertaining the correct view through scriptural citations and reasoning, will attain liberation when disturbing attitudes and emotions come to an end.

The whole process is explained here. From a state of not even having a doubt through to accepting the fact that things may not be inherently existent, through to developing an equal doubt, which then further leads to a correctly assuming doubt (called a positive doubt here in the commentary), which can also be referred to as a conceptual understanding of emptiness.

We gain further understanding through the scriptural citations (meaning what is being explained in the scriptures), receiving teachings on emptiness, and then reflecting on them using the logical reasons as explained in the teachings. By using these logical reasons to understand emptiness a true seeker will find certainty, and having found certainty that all existence lacks inherent existence and is thus empty of inherent existence, one comes to the correct view of emptiness. Through that one will attain liberation, when all the disturbing emotions or delusions have been completely abandoned. 'When it comes to an end' means when it is completely abandoned. To reiterate, they 'will attain liberation when disturbing attitudes come to an end', refers to how liberation is actually attained.

1.2. Explaining extensively how to abandon disturbing emotions

This is sub-divided into four.

- 1.2.1. Advice to understand the meaning of emptiness
- 1.2.2. Advice to strive for liberation
- 1.2.3. Stages leading to the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence
- 1.2.4. Advice that disturbing attitudes and emotions can certainly be brought to an end

1.2.1. Advice to understanding the meaning of emptiness

This has five sub-divisions.

- 1.2.1.1. Advice to take an interest in the meaning of the fundamental mode of existence
- 1.2.1.2. Showing the need to understand emptiness in order to attain liberation
- 1.2.1.3. Showing the means to turn away from cyclic existence
- 1.2.1.4. Giving up fear of emptiness
- 1.2.1.5. Giving up strong attachment to ones position

1.2.1.1. ADVICE TO TAKE INTEREST IN THE MEANING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MODE OF EXISTENCE

According to the Tibetan text the heading refers more to 'having respect for' rather than 'taking an interest in'.

The Subduer says of this teaching 181
There will be increase until liberation.
Anyone who lacks interest in it
Clearly has no sense.

As the commentary reads:

The Subduer said that from the first moment on the path of seeing until liberation there will be no decline, only increase in the direct perception of emptiness, concerning which even a doubt tears worldly existence to tatters

The second part of this is explained first in the Tibetan version of the commentary. It refers to the earlier point that even having a doubt about emptiness will tear worldly existence to tatters, and says that this was explained by the Subduer, or the Buddha.

The first part of the quotation from the commentary says that from the first moment of the path of seeing until liberation there will be no decline. This refers to the earlier point that from the first moment of generating a positive doubt, until the moment of gaining the direct realisation of emptiness (which is gained on the path of seeing) the understanding of emptiness will only increase further.

Furthermore as the commentary explains:

The practices of giving and so forth, conjoined with it will only increase.

The realisation of emptiness itself as well as the practices that are conjoined with that understanding, such as the practices of generosity and so forth, will only increase from that time onwards until liberation is reached.

Anyone who lacks interest in [or, as indicated in the Tibetan version, respect or veneration for] the meaning of emptiness clearly has no sense, and shows how very foolish he or she is.

This is also referred to in earlier parts of the text, and here it says that there could be no one more foolish than the person does not pay attention to, or respect, such a profound and worthy realisation as the understanding of emptiness, which will lead to the freedom from all bondage, and sufferings, and thus liberation. That is the definition of being wise.

It is further explained that:

Worldly practices come to an end once they have yielded their fruit...

This means that worldly practices bring only temporary results to be experienced here in cyclic existence.

...but an understanding of emptiness leads to the practice of giving and so forth to the city of omniscience.

This means that practices done with an understanding of emptiness, will lead one to complete enlightenment.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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