
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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As usual it is appropriate to set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings, such as generating the thought, 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

As you know, the importance of generating a positive motivation is normally stressed. The reason for that is, when one develops a good motivation, there definitely seems to be a difference in the approach to whatever activity one engages in, whether it is a teaching or a practice. For example, with a teaching, it seems that when one generates a positive motivation (both from the teacher's side as well as from the listener's side), then whatever is covered in the teaching becomes less dry. Somehow the teaching material becomes a little bit more effective in bringing about some transformation in the mind. Conversely if the teaching is approached in a very casual way, then it might be taken only as an academic study. One may gain some intellectual understanding and knowledge from studying the text, but because one lacked a proper motivation in the beginning, whatever one learns doesn't really seem to bring about a transformation in the mind.

Because it seems to make a real difference when we have a positive motivation, it is really important to ensure that we have a good motivation. Developing a positive motivation also serves as a means to further familiarise our mind with generating a kind attitude. Basically having a positive motivation is generating a kind attitude. So, reminding ourselves to have a kind attitude again and again helps to maintain such a kind attitude, which is most essential in our life. It is something that we need to protect all the time, as it would be a really great loss if we were to lose a kind attitude. Whatever activity we engage in, it is really essential that our mind is imbued with a kind attitude.

There is another practical note about the importance of a kind attitude. When we are living with someone, the ups and downs of life are weathered as long as both sides try to maintain a kind attitude towards each other. Somehow that mutual respect, understanding, support and concern is maintained, because of the kind attitude that one has for the other. The real strain on the relationship comes about when that kind attitude diminishes or is lost. Even if one lives alone, if we maintain a kind attitude, somehow that permeates one's life, and one's associations with others becomes much more fruitful.

Whereas, if we lose a kind attitude, that will really bring a sense of loneliness, and an empty feeling. When we lose that kind attitude, we feel burdened and wherever we go we feel uncomfortable. When we begin to notice that, then we also begin to recognise that a real sense of well-being, happiness and contentment is something that has to be cultivated within ourselves.

The conditions for having a happy life, come from within oneself. When one recognises that it has to come from within, then one can begin to see the significance of practice

and the need to maintain a good attitude and so forth. If one is constantly focussing outward in the belief that the conditions for a happy life comes from external means, then for as long as one has that attitude one will experience disappointment over and over again.

1.2.3. Refuting permanent time

This is subdivided into five categories:

1.2.3.1. If permanent time is accepted as a cause, it should also be accepted as an effect

1.2.3.2. Reason for this

1.2.3.3. The contradiction between undergoing change and being permanent

1.2.3.4. The contradiction between something coming into existence of its own accord yet depending on causes

1.2.3.5. The contradiction between arising from something permanent yet being impermanent

1.2.3.1. IF PERMANENT TIME IS ACCEPTED AS A CAUSE, IT SHOULD ALSO BE ACCEPTED AS AN EFFECT

Assertion of Vaidantikas and others:

Since time exists, functional things

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Are seen to start and stop.

It is governed by other factors;

Thus it is also an effect.

The non-Buddhist Vaidantikas and others schools assert that time is permanent. The text explains their reasons thus:

Since permanent time exists the beginning and growth of things like a sprout are seen, while in winter and so forth, although other conditions are present, this is seen to stop.

The Vaidantikas assert that there are certain plants which sprout in the summer, but which do not sprout in the winter. Because there is difference in time between the time of sprouting and the time of not sprouting, they say that time itself serves as a cause for the seed to sprout. Thus:

One can thereby infer the existence of time which, moreover, is permanent because of not depending on a cause.

So the Vaidantikas assert time as a cause, and furthermore they assert that time is permanent. The Buddhist definitions of 'permanent' and 'impermanent' are as follows. That which is a phenomena that changes from moment to moment, therefore which is subject to momentary change, is an **impermanent phenomenon**. Whereas something that doesn't change from moment to moment, i.e. not subject to momentary changes, is a **permanent phenomenon**. These definitions of permanence and impermanence are also asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. However here, they assert that as time does not depend on a cause, it is therefore a permanent phenomenon, while it also serves as a cause for the sprouting of seeds and so forth.

The answer that the Buddhists give to this assertion is:

Answer: Then it follows that sprouts and so forth are constantly produced and there is never a time when they are not produced, because of being produced by a permanent cause.

Is this explanation in the text something that you can relate to? Is it something that you understand?

The non-Buddhist school asserts that time is the cause for seeds and so forth to sprout, and that time itself is permanent. The counter-argument is that if time is considered as a permanent cause, and if it is a cause of something which produces, then it must produce all the time.

To that the Vaidantikas further assert:

Assertion: Their production depends on other factors.

When the Buddhist school advances their counter-argument that if you assert that time is a cause, and furthermore that it is permanent, then it would have to produce all the time, this goes against the original assertion of the non-Buddhists, which is that there are certain times when seeds don't sprout, such as in the winter. So the non-Buddhists cannot accept that time produces all the time. Therefore in order to counter the Buddhists counter-argument the Vaidantikas assert that production depends on other factors. This means that in winter sprouts are not produced because time has to depend on other factors or conditions in order for sprouts to be produced.

The Buddhists respond by saying:

Then it follows that time, too, is an effect, for the intermittent production of sprouts is governed by other factors, being dependent on conditions like heat and moisture.

If you assert that though time is a cause, it is permanent, then the first counter-argument of the Buddhists is, 'If it is permanent, then would it produce all the time which goes against your own earlier assertion'.

Then the non-Buddhist schools say, 'Well, the reason why it doesn't produce all the time is because it has to depend on other factors'.

The Buddhists counter that with, 'Then in that case, is time an effect as well, because it depends on other factors for the seed to sprout?' Thus', the Buddhists conclude, 'you can not assert that time is non-existent either, as it does exist'. To support this assertion the text quotes from a sutra:

The actions of the embodied do not
Go to waste even in a hundred aeons.
When conditions assemble and the time is ripe
Their fruit will mature.

This passage is often quoted in the Lam Rim teachings to provide an authentic backing from a sutra to explain how once created, karma will not dissipate, and its effects will come to fruition at an appropriate time. As the sutra says, the actions, or the karma of the embodied (meaning sentient beings) do not go to waste, even in a hundred aeons.

This means that if other factors such as anger do not destroy the imprints of positive karma, then the fruition of that positive karma, will definitely come about, even after a hundred aeons. Similarly once a negative karma is created, if other factors such as purification do not take place to alter the imprints, then its fruition will definitely take place even after a hundred aeons. As the sutra says, when conditions assemble and the time is ripe, their fruit will definitely mature.

What one should derive from this passage as personal advice is that when one creates any positive karma such as practice, or whatever positive deed one engages in, one must try to secure that by dedicating it at the end to secure the imprints of that positive deed. Whereas with whatever negative karma one may find oneself creating or engaged in, one should purify it as soon as one notices it. So as one recites these lines, it is good to reflect on this main meaning and then try to engage in one's practice with it in mind.

1.2.3.2. REASON FOR THIS

If proponents of time as a cause accept it as such, they should also accept it as an effect.

*Any cause without an effect
Has no existence as a cause.
Therefore it follows that
Causes must be effects.*

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As the commentary explains:

Without the effect it produces, a cause lacks that which establishes it as a cause, for the establishment of a cause depends on its effect.

What makes a cause? The very fact that it produces an effect. A **definition of a cause** is a facilitating factor. A **definition of an effect** is a factor that is produced, or a production. Therefore cause and effect are inter-dependent. As the text further explains:

Thus since it follows that all causes must be effects, one should not accept causes that lack effects.

This indicates the interdependent nature of a cause and an effect. If something produces something, then it must also be a production itself. If something is a production then it must also have the inherent nature of being a producer as well. That interdependent nature of cause and effect is true for all causes and effects. The *dura* text, which is the elementary Buddhist text that is studied in Buddhist philosophy, states that cause and effect are synonymous. That is what this line refers to.

In general, cause and effect are synonymous, which means that if it is an effect there has to be a cause, and if it is a cause there has to be an effect. But when you refer to a particular object, then cause and effect are not synonymous; one has to come after the other. It is good to train in understanding how this logic works.

1.2.3.3. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN UNDERGOING CHANGE AND BEING PERMANENT

Anything accepted as a cause should be accepted as facilitating an effect.

*When a cause undergoes change
It becomes the cause of something else.
Anything that undergoes change
Should not be called permanent.*

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This verse refers to causes. There is also another definition of cause, which is that which assists the effect, which is what is being explained here.

As the commentary explains:

A cause such as a seed acts as the cause of something else such as a sprout, through a change from before in its potency.

This explains how from the moment a seed is sown in the ground, it begins to germinate, causing the sprout to slowly grow after the seed breaks up, and it begins to emerge from the soil. Thus from very early on, the seed assists the growth of the sprout.

The commentary further explains:

Any functional thing which changes so that its former and later moments are unlike should not be called permanent.

Here, in explanation of the verse, the commentary explains that anything accepted as a cause should be accepted as facilitating an effect. As mentioned earlier, that which facilitates an effect is one of the definitions of a cause. The manner of how it facilitates an effect, as explained later in the commentary, is that the seed always carries the potential to facilitate its cause.

Its actual facilitation is seen from the moment the seed is sown in the ground, from that very first moment, carrying onto the next moments, all the way until the sprout grows

up to a healthy plant and gives fruit. From the first moment until its very end, the seed continues to facilitate the later moments. Each change that takes place helps to facilitate the next change, the next moment and so on, until the fruition of the ultimate effect. Each second moment is the effect of the earlier moment, and the earlier moment facilitates the next moment to change and give effect. Change where the cause produces an effect is seen only in functional phenomena, which are impermanent phenomena. Because there is an obvious change that we see, we call it impermanent and thus cannot say it is a permanent phenomenon.

The conclusion is:

Thus one should not accept permanent time and so forth as causes.

If we refer back to the outline heading, The contradiction between undergoing change and being permanent, we see that it suggests what is being explained. The verse and the commentary have negated that time and so forth are permanent by indicating the contradiction between something undergoing change yet being permanent. In other words something cannot be both permanent and undergo change.

1.2.3.4. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN SOMETHING COMING INTO EXISTENCE OF ITS OWN ACCORD YET DEPENDING ON CAUSES

*A thing with a permanent cause is produced
By that which has not come into being.
Whatever happens by itself
Cannot have a cause.* 210

As the commentary explains:

If one does not accept that time, too, changes, it follows that a functional thing, such as a sprout whose cause in unchanging permanent time, has come about of its own accord because of being produced by a cause that has not come into being.

This is an argument that the Buddhist school uses to counter the assertions of the non-Buddhist school.

'If one does not accept that time, too, changes' (referring back to the original assertion that time does not change, and is permanent), then 'it follows that a functional thing, such as a sprout whose cause in unchanging permanent time', as has been asserted earlier, 'has come about of its own accord'.

If you assert that time is the cause of the sprout and that time itself is unchanging and permanent, then you have to assert, by default, that sprouts and so forth come about of their own accord. The phrase 'by its own accord' means that it does not depend on anything else. The Buddhist point here, is showing the absurdity of the assertion that time is permanent while it is also a cause for sprouts. If time is asserted as permanent, and therefore unchanging, then a functional phenomenon such as a sprout would, by default, have to be asserted as having been produced of its own accord. And that cannot be accepted. Furthermore:

Whatever happens by itself cannot have a producing cause, since its dependence on a cause is inadmissible.

1.2.3.5. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN ARISING FROM SOMETHING PERMANENT YET BEING IMPERMANENT

*How can that which is produced
By a permanent thing be impermanent?
Never are the two, cause and effect,
Seen to have incongruent characteristics.* 211

As the commentary explains:

How can functional things such as sprouts be impermanent? It follows that they are not, because of being produced by that which is permanent. This

entailment follows because cause and effect are never seen to have incongruent characteristics in that one is permanent and the other impermanent.

What the Buddhist school is pointing out, is that if you were to accept that the cause is permanent then by default you would have to assert that the effect is permanent.

However the non-Buddhist schools don't assert that. They assert that while the cause, which is time, is permanent, the effect such as a sprout, is a functional phenomena. That is the absurdity which the Buddhist school is pointing out: cause and effect have to have concurrent characteristics. Thus if the cause is permanent then it must follow that the effect is also permanent. However, it is proven that, because it changes, the effect is a functional phenomena and thus impermanent. So the cause must also be impermanent.

Actually, this line of reasoning should be quite logical and not be too much trouble for you to understand and accept. What is being pointed out here implicitly is that if the effect is accepted as being impermanent, changing from moment to moment, while the cause is considered as being a permanent phenomenon, not changing from moment to moment, then that would be absurd. The Buddhist point of view is showing the absurdity of having an unchanging, stagnant cause that produces an effect which changes.

We can also use the analogy of seeds and their sprouts to show this absurdity. If you plant seeds of grain and wish for peas as a result, that will never come about, because the cause and the effect are incongruent. In order to have an effect of a particular type, that effect has to be congruent with the cause. Thus if you sow a grain like wheat, the effect will be wheat; You cannot have peas. It would be absurd to think, 'I'll plant grain and pray for peas to grow'. It doesn't work that way! As much as you pray and make your wishes, you will not get peas as a harvest if you have planted grain.

To take this further into the broader perspective of our practice, the real meaning of this explanation and line of reasoning is when we use it with karma. If we wish for pleasant, good results, and good experiences in our life, we must create the causes, which is virtuous karma. The causes would have to be congruent with virtuous karma. If we constantly engage in non-virtuous karmas and then wish and pray for good results, and good experiences and so forth, we will never have those pleasant experiences, because of the incongruence between the cause and effect.

There are two different categories of causes. **Substantial causes** are where the very substance from the cause transforms, or is passed on to the effect. **Indirect causes** facilitate a result, such as the conditions for an event to occur.

The seed is said to be the substantial cause of the sprout, because the substance of the seed is transformed into the sprout. It becomes a direct cause because the very substance of the cause is passed on and then the transformation into an effect, which is the sprout, takes place.

Whereas the indirect causes are the fertilisers, the soil, the water, the warmth and so forth. These are not the direct causes. They are not the substantial causes because it is not as if the water, or the earth itself or the warmth transforms in the sprout. These factors do serve as conditions for the sprout to grow, but the actual substance is from the seed.

It works in the same way with virtue and pleasant results and non-virtuous actions and unpleasant results. From the next moment that we engage in virtuous karma, the actual action will pass away because it has already been performed. However what is left behind is the imprint; and the imprint

of this virtuous karma remains on our mental continuum. Of course it will undergo continuous change within itself. However the continuation of that imprint remains in one's mental continuum. Then, when the conditions are right, that imprint will result in an effect, which is a pleasurable result.

Similarly with negative karma, once a negative karma is created, the action is gone. But what is left after that negative action is the imprint, which is left upon the mental continuum. That negative imprint is what remains and the continuation of the negative imprint will go on and when the time is right, it will mature into a negative result. Thus you can see here the congruent characteristics in the cause and the effect. Because the congruent characteristics remain, they have to have an effect. Thus you can not expect a positive result if you engage in negative karmas and *vice versa*.

It shouldn't be too difficult to understand this line of logical reasoning to see how the cause and effect process works. However what is difficult to grasp, is exactly when those effects take place. Once karma has been created, there is no certainty as to when the effects will take place. Because there is no certainty, one cannot predict when a result will occur. Thus one cannot see the obvious process of the effect taking place at a certain time. That is something which is hard for us to grasp. It is hard for anyone ordinary being to pinpoint, except for the Buddha.

Only an omniscient mind can specify in detail when a particular karma was created, how it was created, when the effects will take place, how they will take effect and in what manner they will take effect. All of these specific details are said to be known only by an omniscient mind, but not by the minds of ordinary beings. To give an example of how difficult it is for our mind to perceive the causes of certain things, let us take our own present life as an example. Our present precious human life is definitely an effect of virtuous causes that were created in the past. That is something we can definitely assert and understand through logical reasoning. However what we cannot understand and discern is when exactly we may have created those causes, at what time, and what kind of individual being in the past life created the particular causes to obtain such a precious life now.

1.2.4. Refuting permanent particles

This section refers to earlier assertions of the non-Buddhist schools, where they accept permanent particles. The three sub-divisions under this category are:

1.2.4.1. Refuting permanent particles

1.2.4.2. Unfeasibility of yogic awareness perceiving partless particles

1.2.4.3. Why Buddhas do not mention the existence of permanent particles

1.2.4.1. REFUTING PERMANENT PARTICLES

This is sub-divided into three:

1.2.4.1.1. Unsuitability of that which has parts as a permanent functional thing

1.2.4.1.2. Unfeasibility of an accretion which is a separate substantial entity forming through the coalescence of homogeneous particles

1.2.4.1.3. Refuting that particles are partless prior to the formation of a composite

1.2.4.1.1. UNSUITABILITY OF THAT WHICH HAS PARTS AS A PERMANENT FUNCTIONAL THING

Vaisesika assertion: Permanent particles of the four elements activated...

The Vaisesika assertion is basically that particles are permanent and partless. Furthermore, they are not perceived by the sense faculties, but they multiply due to previous karmas of beings, and are composite. They become a mass due to the coming together of previous karma and thus produce the environment, the world and so forth. As indicated in the text:

... by the force of karma form the substantial entity of a composite, producing the environmental world and so forth.

What is being explained here is that how, as explained earlier, even though the particles are not something that can be perceived by the sense faculties, nevertheless they do exist and due to the previous karma of sentient beings, they start to form by gathering together thus producing a composite. As the mass is produced, it becomes the environment and so forth.

Answer: That is incorrect, for it follows that when particles coalesce and form a composite, an increase in size is impossible if there is total interpenetration. If some parts coalesce, those that do are causes while those that do not are not the causes.

That of which some sides are causes

While other sides are not is thereby

Multifarious. How can that

Which is multifarious be permanent?

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The Buddhist school refutes the Vaisesika assertion that 'an increase in size is impossible if there is total interpenetration'. According to the Vaisesikas if the particles are totally merged, there cannot be an increase of size.

However the Buddhists say that some parts do coalesce and serve as a cause, and there are also certain parts which do not coalesce, and those are not causes. 'This again', say the Buddhists, 'is an absurdity because you are basically asserting that some particles serve as a cause to form a mass or composite and some don't. That is an absurdity, and cannot be the case. Basically then, by default you assert that there are 'partless particles which is an absurdity'. From the Buddhist schools' point of view particles do have parts, thus there is not a total interpenetration and thus the masses are produced. As explained here:

It therefore follows that the smallest particle has parts, because some of its sides are causes while others are not.

Being multifarious, it follows that it cannot be a permanent functional thing because of having diverse parts.

When it says, 'that it cannot be a permanent functional thing because of having diverse parts' this means that it has many parts to it. Thus particles are not partless, but have parts.

Basically the main point being made here is the absurdity of the non-Buddhist school asserting that particles are partless and permanent. The Buddhist schools assert, 'If you say that when the particles come together certain parts coalesce, or meet, and form into a mass, or a composite, but others do not, then you would be implying that certain parts meet and certain parts don't meet. That would be absurd. Saying that certain particles serve as cause, while others don't is an absurdity'. From the Buddhist point of view when particles meet, they are diverse and they do have parts and so thus they are not permanent. Then when they meet, the coming together of the particles serves as a means to produce a composite, a mass which is called an impermanent phenomenon. Of course, there will be further detailed explanation of this in the later verses.

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