

## Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

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As we do normally, it would be good to generate a positive motivation to receive the teaching, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, 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.'

### **1.2.4.1.2. HAVING AN ACCRETION THAT IS A SEPARATE SUBSTANTIAL ENTITY FORMING THROUGH THE COALESCENCE OF HOMOGENEOUS PARTICLES IS NOT FEASIBLE**

The non-Buddhists assert that a composite is formed by the coalescence of homogeneous particles. So an ox cart, for example, is a composite resulting from the coalescence of homogeneous particles. That is how they assert that the composite of a cart comes into existence. Further explanation on this will be given later on, but in essence the non-Buddhist schools assert that a composite comes about from the coalescence of partless particles.

The partless particles themselves cannot be perceived by the sense consciousnesses, for example, the visual consciousness. It is the divine eye of a yogic being that asserts the existence of partless particles. This divine eye is very subtle and is similar to a clairvoyant state of mind. Due to this divine eye, a yogic being can assert the existence of the partless particles.

What ordinary beings can see, however, is a composite formed by the coalescence or coming together of these partless particles, which is then called 'gross matter'. It is this gross matter that can be perceived by ordinary faculties. If we take the clock as an example, we can see it is a result of the coalescence of many atomic particles, which form the composite to bring about this clock. The particles are asserted by the non-Buddhists to be partless, and permanent, and not able to be perceived by ordinary perception. Furthermore the non-Buddhists assert that partless particles are truly existent phenomena.

Now, let us compare that assertion with the Buddhist perception of how particles exist. Firstly, are dust particles of earth permanent or impermanent?

*Students: Impermanent.*

Are they a truly existent phenomenon?

*Students: No.*

Is it a particle which has parts or is it a partless particle?

*Students: It has parts.*

Having distinguished clearly between the assertions of the non-Buddhist school and the Buddhist school, we have to now distinguish between the different assertions of the four Buddhist schools. All four Buddhist schools assert that there are no partless particles. However the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika Buddhist schools assert that even though there are no partless particles, there are certain particles that have no parts. The coalescence of

particles that have no parts produces composite forms. Although there is a deeper explanation than that, that is the way the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika Buddhist schools assert particles.

The Vaibhashika, Sautrantika as well as the Cittamatrix schools assert that particles are truly existent phenomena. Thus they accept that things do truly exist; that there are truly existent phenomena. This is where they differ from the Middle Way schools. The Prasangika-Madhyamaka school does not assert truly existent phenomena, so particles cannot be truly existent phenomena according to them.

Why do the Sautrantika Buddhist schools assert that particles are truly existent?

*Student: So the less gifted students have a chance of understanding.*

Of course the general explanation is that the teachings are given in accordance with the mental capacity of the students. Truly existent phenomena are explained on that level, as a means to slowly bring them to an understanding that phenomena do not have true existence. That is true. But there is a specific reason why they have to assert truly existent phenomena.

*Student: By virtue of it being truly existent it has to be partless, i.e. one justifies the other.*

As explained when we covered the tenets, the Vaibhashikas particularly assert both general characteristics and inherent natural characteristics of phenomena. All phenomena have both general characteristics and their own particular characteristics.

The Mind Only (or Cittamatrix) have another classification of phenomena into imputed phenomena (wholly labelled phenomena or conceptual fabrications), other powered phenomena, and thoroughly established phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Within these three types of phenomena, the Cittamatrix assert that other powered phenomena, which are impermanent phenomena, and thoroughly established phenomena, which is emptiness are truly existent, and that all imputed phenomena are not truly existent.

Higher up than the Cittamatrix school is the Madhyamaka school. A proponent of the Madhyamaka does not accept any true existence, not even nominally. So not even nominally asserting that there is any true existence is the definition of a proponent of the Madhyamaka. The Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools differ from the higher schools because they assert that the coalescence of particles which do not have parts forms a composite.

This section is sub-divided into two:

1.2.4.1.2.1. Actual meaning

1.2.4.1.2.2. The contradiction in asserting that particles do not interpenetrate completely

### **1.2.4.1.2.1. Actual meaning**

As Buddhists it is appropriate that we actually study this

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<sup>1</sup> Taught 12 April 2005 and 17 July 2001. In 2001 the term 'wholly labelled', while in 2005 'conceptual fabrications' was used for imputed phenomena.

material about particles, not only because it is a Buddhist teaching, but also because in a general sense it seems that from a scientific point of view there is a lot of investigation into particles and atoms and so forth. Non-Buddhist schools like scientists really investigate particles in a lot of detail. I don't know if the scientists would conclude that particles are partless as such. What seems to be the case, however, is that in their investigation, they have come to a point where they seem to assert that when you further analyse and try to separate particles, you come to a point where you cannot separate any further. Thus it seems that it is just an imputation and that you are labelling something or imputing something that you cannot find when you try to search and analyse further.

This section explains how it is not feasible for there to be an accretion that is a separate substantial entity formed through the coalescence of homogeneous particles. The result is a composite, and what the non-Buddhists say is that a composite forms from particles that are partless. That being the case, what is being pointed out here, is the contradiction in a composite being formed from partless particles.

*Assertion:* Although particles interpenetrate completely because they are partless, a separate accretion of coalesced particles forms, which produces the composite.

*The cause which is spherical* 213  
*Is not present in the effect.*  
*Thus complete interpenetration*  
*Of particles is not feasible.*

To explain the literal meaning of the verse, 'The cause which is spherical' refers to the partless particles themselves, which are asserted as the cause. The second line, 'Is not present in the effect', refers to the coalescence of the partless particles bringing about the effect, but not being seen in the effect, which is the composite. 'Thus complete interpenetration of particles is not feasible', points out the contradiction from the Buddhist point of view.

What the non-Buddhists are asserting is that the particles interpenetrate, which means that when they come together, the particles merge, or in other words, touch on every side. That word 'interpenetrate' means that they come together and integrate completely, and the reason for that is that they are partless. Because they are partless, they will merge naturally when they come together, and thus as mentioned here they interpenetrate. However 'a separate accretion of coalesced particles forms'.

This is where they explain that even though particles are partless and interpenetrate, what produces the composite is 'a separate accretion of coalesced particles'. So the non-Buddhist schools assert that even though the particles themselves are partless and interpenetrate, there is a separate accretion of coalesced particles, which then produces a composite.

*Answer:* It follows that it is not feasible for particles to interpenetrate completely when composites form. If they merge completely there will be no gradual increase in size from the first to the second composite and so forth.

The refutation of the non-Buddhists' assertion is that if

the particles themselves are partless and interpenetrate when they coalesce, then they would merge completely. Because they merge completely, there could not be a gradual increase in size, as we would see in a composite. In the gradual process of being made things become larger: a seed sprouting, for example, grows to become larger and bigger. However that could not occur if the particles themselves completely merged: in fact if they did merge then the result would have to be similar to the original. Thus there could not be an increase in the size.

What is being pointed out is that the result of partless particles coalescing together would have to be similar in nature to the cause. Just as they assert that the partless particles cannot be perceived by ordinary perception and can only be seen by the divine eye of yogic perception, the result, which is the composite, should be similar, and that is an absurdity.

Furthermore as the commentary reads:

Also the causative sphere with the characteristic of appearing to the mind as partless and spherical is not present in the resultant substantial entity, the composite.

What is being further emphasised here is that the non-Buddhist assertion that the causative sphere (which is the partless particles) has the characteristics of appearing to the mind (meaning the divine eye of the yogic perception) as partless and spherical

... is not present in the resultant substantial entity, [which is] the composite.

Taking the ox cart as an example again, it is the composite of the coalescence of particles. The absurdity being pointed out here is that if you assert that the particles that coalesce to bring about the composite of an ox cart are partless and interpenetrate, then the result (which is the ox cart) would also have to be of that nature, because the particles completely merge. As mentioned earlier, the result, the composite itself, would have to be something which is so obscure and subtle, that is could not be seen by ordinary perception. But that goes against our normal experience, because we can see an ox cart. Therefore the absurdity of seeing what could not be seen earlier is pointed out. That is the contradiction.

**1.2.4.1.2.2. The contradiction in asserting that particles do not interpenetrate completely**

*One particle's position is not* 214  
*Asserted as also that of another.*  
*Thus it is not asserted that*  
*Cause and effect are the same size.*

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary:

Where complete interpenetration does not occur, one particle's position will not be asserted as also that of another.

This is explaining that how, whenever one particle takes a position in a space, no other particle, such as the particles of a composite, can take the place of that one particle. That being a fact:

Thus since the causal particles and resultant composite are not asserted to be equal in size, the absurd consequence that the composite is not an object of the senses is avoided.

What is being explained here is the obvious point that the causal particles and resultant composite are not asserted to be equal in size, which has to be accepted on an obvious level.

The result is a composite, which is formed by the coalescence of partless particles, and the partless particles are only the object of the divine eye and not an object of the senses, as asserted earlier. So the resultant composite would have to be like that. By pointing out the obvious, which is that the resultant composite is not the same in size as the causal particles, that consequence is avoided here.

Nevertheless since particles have parts, their consequent unfeasibility as permanent functional things remains.

What is being pointed out here is that you are accepting the particles as being permanent functional things. However that is not feasible.

#### **1.2.4.1.3. REFUTING THAT PARTICLES ARE PARTLESS PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF A COMPOSITE**

Again the non-Buddhist schools say, 'We assert that particles are partless, not all the time, only prior to the formation of a composite'. This is the assertion that is being negated here.

This section is again sub-divided into two:

1.2.4.1.3.1. Actual meaning

1.2.4.1.3.2. The contradiction in particles forming composites when movement from one position to another is not feasible for partless particles

##### **1.2.4.1.3.1. Actual meaning**

*Assertion:* The problem of their having parts occurs when the resultant substantial entity is forming, but prior to that the smallest particles do not have parts.

*Answer:* That is incorrect. If a particle has no sides, it cannot be surrounded by [partless] particles on its four sides.

*Whatever has an eastern side* 215  
*Also has an eastern part.*  
*Those whose particles have sides admit*  
*That they are not [partless] particles.*

What is being pointed out here is the obvious logical assumption that if a particle has no sides, then it cannot be surrounded by particles on its four sides, because it does not have sides to begin with. So it cannot be surrounded by particles.

The commentary explains that:

If [the particle does have sides], such as an eastern one, it definitely must have parts ...

What is being explained here is that if a particle does have sides, an eastern, western, northern and southern side, then it must also have parts to those sides, i.e. if they have a directional side, then they must also have parts. So the refutation commences by asking the non-Buddhists whether they would accept whether particles have directions or not.

... since any particle with an eastern side must also have an eastern part. For that reason any opponent who holds that particles have sides prior to the formation of a composite admits those particles are

not partless ones, because of accepting that they are located within the ten boundless directions.

The main point here is that having sides means 'accepting that they are located within the ten boundless directions'. The counter-argument from the Buddhist side is that if you accept that there are sides to a particle, then it must have parts as well. Thus there cannot be partless particles because the particles are located within the ten boundless directions. This means that any composite or particle will have sides. Because each side will have its own four sides, there will be boundless sides to each particle. Thus you cannot say that they do not have parts, because each particle has its sides and each other particle that connects to it will also have its sides. Thus it will form boundless directions, and there is no room for it to be partless. So one cannot find a partless particle.

#### **1.2.4.1.3.2. The contradiction in particles forming composites when movement from one position to another is not feasible for partless particles**

*The front takes up, the back relinquishes –* 216  
*Whatever does not have*  
*Both of these [motions]*  
*Is not something which moves.*

Basically this is explaining that if there are partless particles, then we cannot say that anything moves. As explained in the commentary:

It follows that such particles would not move from one place to another. When a thing moves from one place to another, its front takes up a position ahead while its rear relinquishes the rearward position, but partless particles neither take up nor relinquish a position. If it is asserted that they do not move, it is contradictory for partless particles to form the substantial entity of a composite.

The conclusion from the Buddhist point of view is:

Thus truly existent particles should never be accepted.

Having pointed out the absurdities that would follow if there were to be a partless particle, the Buddhist then concludes, 'Thus truly existent particles should never be accepted'.

Whereas if one were to follow the non-Buddhist schools, which assert that they are partless particles, which in turn indicates that they are particles that do not rely upon anything else, that they are directionless and partless and permanent, then that implies that a composite (which is a coalescence of such particles) would be an independent particle - a composite which exists from its own side. That would then imply that things can never exist independently from their own side. From the Buddhist point of view that is what is being ultimately refuted.

Also what is being pointed out in relation to this verse is that if one were to assert partless particles, then that would negate a possibility of a composite that moves from one place to another. When a movement takes place there is an action of taking space in front and leaving a space behind. That sort of action could not take place if particles were partless and interpenetrated.

#### 1.2.4.2. IT IS NOT FEASIBLE TO POSIT A YOGIC AWARENESS PERCEIVING PARTLESS PARTICLES

This section is sub-divided into two:

##### 1.2.4.2.1. Actual meaning

##### 1.2.4.2.2. Refuting belief in the existence of permanent particles because there are coarse things

###### 1.2.4.2.1. ACTUAL MEANING

*Assertion [by the non Buddhists]:* Permanent particles do exist because adepts perceive them by virtue of the divine eye.

*Answer:* What adept [or yogi] sees such a permanent particle? [implying that there is none]

*That which does not have a front, 217  
Nor any middle,  
And which does not have a rear,  
Being invisible, who will see it?*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

[Seeing such a partless particle, as they assert] is not feasible because such a form [as it is asserted as being a phenomenon, which is a form]—a particle which firstly has no front, nor any middle, and finally does not have a rear portion—is not evident to any kind of perception.

Let alone such a particle being a perception of the divine eye, no one could see such a particle because they do not even exist. What is there to be seen in a particle that does not have any front, nor any middle, nor any rear? No one can see that!

###### 1.2.4.2.2. REFUTING BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF PERMANENT PARTICLES BECAUSE THERE ARE COARSE THINGS

What is being explained is that we can perceive coarse things such as a composite. So this section is showing the contradiction between accepting coarse things, which are functional phenomena, and not accepting the cause, which is permanent particles.

We begin with the assertion of the non-Buddhists.

*Assertion:* Since coarse things would have no cause if particles did not exist, particles do exist and, moreover, are permanent because of being causeless functional things.

*Answer:*

*The effect destroys the cause; 218  
Therefore the cause is not permanent.  
Alternatively, where the cause  
Exists the effect does not.*

The logical assumption of the assertion of the non-Buddhists, which is seen as an absurdity by the Buddhist school, is that:

Since coarse things would have no cause if particles did not exist, particles do exist ...

They assert that particles do exist because of the obvious result of a coalescence of particles which is a composite, or a coarse thing. However:

... moreover, [they] are permanent because of being causeless functional things.

So they assert the absurdity of the composite being permanent while at the same time being a causeless, functional phenomena. In order to refute the assertion

that particles are permanent, the commentary explains:

It follows that causal particles are not permanent, for just as the seed changes and disintegrates when the sprout is produced, the causal particles are destroyed by the production of the resultant composite.

The Buddhist school answers using the analogy of a seed: you can see that the seed changes when it begins to germinate. The seed breaks up and as it germinates it begins to sprout. So a transformation takes place and the earlier seed does not exist as it did earlier. There has definitely been an obvious change that we can see and relate to. This proves that the seed was not permanent, because if the seed was permanent then it could not change. However we do see the obvious change.

Likewise with particles in the composite. When particles coalesce and thus form a composite, they change to form the composite and therefore just as the seed disintegrates the particles also disintegrate. Thus particles cannot be permanent.

Then the non-Buddhist school raises the following:

*Objection:* This is not established, for they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity.

Of course this seems to be contradicting their own view at an obvious level, because they are saying that the earlier cause disintegrates, and is thus impermanent. However the non-Buddhist school is also saying that, 'they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity'. So they are saying that the causal identity does not lose its identity when it brings about the result.

The second two lines of the verse serve to explain the response to that objection:

Alternatively, since the presence of the causal particles in a place precludes that of the resultant composite, it follows that they are not cause and effect because of being simultaneous and occupying individual positions, like a pot and a woollen cloth in their respective places.

In their objection the non-Buddhist school posits or asserts that, 'they produce a separate effect without giving up their causal identity'. This is suggesting that the cause does not lose its identity and that it produces a separate effect. What this assertion implies is that there is a cause which, because it does not lose its identity, does not transform and change, and thus a separate sort of effect is produced. If that is the case, then the effect and the cause would be unrelated and separate.

One fault of this argument is that cause and effect would exist simultaneously, which is absurd. A cause and effect cannot exist simultaneously, and saying that such is the case fails the test of the interrelationship of cause and effect.

Furthermore, the cause and effect would occupy individual positions. The example in the text is that it is like a pot and a woollen cloth, which are completely separate objects. Thus a pot and a woollen cloth have their own identity; they have their own space that they occupy completely separately and they are unrelated. It is absurd for a cause and effect to be separate and unrelated.