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

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As usual it is appropriate to set the correct motivation.

### 1.2.4.3. WHY BUDDHAS DO NOT MENTION THE EXISTENCE OF PERMANENT PARTICLES

For the following reason, too, particles are not permanent: particles are obstructive in that they cannot be penetrated completely by other particles. That which is obstructive cannot be permanent.

*A permanent thing that is obstructive* 219  
*Is not seen anywhere.*  
*Therefore Buddhas never say*  
*That particles are permanent.*

What is being explained here is that particles cannot be called permanent because of the reason that they are obstructive. Here the word 'obstructive' has the connotation of that which is tangible. It also has the connotation of that which has friction, and also obstructing something from being perceived, e.g. if we hold our hand in front of an object we cannot see the object, because our hand obstructs our view. To give another analogy if we hold a book in front of us it obstructs our vision, and we cannot see beyond it. It hinders our vision because it is an obstructive thing.

Space is not obstructive because it expands everywhere, and there is nothing that can hinder its existence as nothing can destroy space, thus it is a permanent phenomenon. Whereas clouds in the sky are obstructive, which is something we can notice when we are flying in an aeroplane that goes through the clouds. There is a turbulence, which indicates that clouds are obstructive phenomena and impermanent. The verse indicates that the reason that particles cannot be permanent is because they are obstructive. Thus, the Buddha has said, 'that which is obstructive can not be permanent'. This is also a reason why the Vaibhashika school assert that the sense faculty is actually a valid cognition. They say that it's a valid cognition when something is seen directly, and not a valid cognition when it cannot be perceived directly

For the time being we'll skip the Cittamatrin assertions that are mentioned in the text.

### 1.2.5. Refuting substantially established liberation

This is sub-divided into two:

1.2.5.1. Refuting the substantially established liberation of our own sectarians

1.2.5.2. Refuting the other sectarians liberation identified with the self

#### 1.2.5.1. REFUTING THE SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED LIBERATION OF OUR OWN SECTARIANS

Here 'our own sectarians' refers to the Vaibhashika Buddhist school. As explained previously, this school asserts that everything which is established to be existent

is substantially existent, and thus things are also truly existent. They also further assert that all things are functional phenomena. Functional phenomena are divided into two, permanent functional phenomena and impermanent functional phenomena. Thus, the Vaibhashika schools assert, liberation or cessation is a permanent functional phenomenon.

This heading is sub-divided into two:

1.2.5.1.1. Substantially established cessation is not feasible<sup>1</sup>

1.2.5.1.2. It contradicts the explanation that all suffering is abandoned in the sphere of nirvana

#### 1.2.5.1.1. SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED CESSATION IS NOT FEASIBLE

Assertions of our own sectarians who do not understand uncompounded phenomena as merely nominal:

This is indicating the nature of the assertions that the Vaibhashika abide by, which is that they do not understand compounded phenomena as being merely nominal.

Although it is true that Buddhas do not mention permanent particles, they say uncompounded phenomena are permanent. Thus there is substantially existent cessation, which is like a dam. If this were not so it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth.

*If liberation, which is other than* 220  
*What binds, is bound and the means existed,*  
*It should not be called liberation*  
*Since nothing is produced from it.*

The Vaibhashika's are asserting that just as the truth of suffering, the truth of origination and the truth of the path are all substantially existent, so, too, cessation (being one of the Four Noble Truths) also has to be substantially existent. Thus they are asserting that all of the Four Noble Truths have to be of similar type.

As indicated in the commentary, the Vaibhashikas assert that cessation is a substantially existent phenomenon. They use the analogy of the truth of cessation as being like a dam. They explain that the function of cessation is that just as a dam keeps the water at bay and prevents it from flowing down into the valley below, cessation functions to prevent delusions from arising again once they have been overcome. Cessation is an entity with the function of preventing delusions from arising again in the mind. That is how the Vaibhashikas explain cessation, and for them it is also a substantially existent phenomenon.

As mentioned previously the Vaibhashika assertion is that cessation is an entity which prevents the ever-afflicted phenomena (all delusions) from reoccurring again. This explanation of cessation implicitly seems to suggest that there is a danger of the delusions arising again. They explain cessation with the analogy of a dam, and their assertion as to the nature of cessation is that it is that which prevents delusions from arising in the future.

The last assertion of the Vaibhashikas is, 'If this were not

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<sup>1</sup> Given in the text as Unfeasibility of substantially established cessation.

so it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth'. They claim that if the function of the truth of cessation was not as explained earlier, then it would be inappropriate to speak of the third noble truth. In other words they are saying that the third noble truth is basically to prevent delusions from arising, i.e. cessation is both the cause and the effect preventing the various delusions from arising in the mind.

As the commentary explains:

True sources bind to cyclic existence, true sufferings are that which is bound, and true paths are the means [or method] which liberate one from sufferings and their sources.

'True sources bind to cyclic existence', refers to the second noble truth which is the truth of origination. So true origins, which are basically delusions and karma, is that which binds sentient beings to cyclic existence. 'True sufferings are that which is bound' refers to the first noble truth, which is that sufferings which are a result of true originations, is what sentient beings are bound by in cyclic existence. 'True paths are the means which liberate one from suffering and their sources' refers to the third noble truth, true paths, which is the method that liberates one from suffering and its sources.

Having explained the entities of these three truths, true cessation is explained thus: true paths lead you to be free from the true sources and true sufferings and that entity of being free from the delusions is true cessation. As the commentary further explains:

If liberation which is other than these were a functional phenomenon it should facilitate an effect, but it does not produce any effect and not the slightest facilitation occurs. Thus it is inappropriate to call such a substantially existent cessation, "liberation".

In order to understand the refutation of the Vaibhashika's assertions, one must first of all understand their assertions. The Vaibhashikas explicitly assert a substantially existent cessation. However with the analogy that cessation is like a dam they are implicitly implying that there is a possibility that the delusions could reoccur again.

The assertion of the Vaibhashikas is refuted by explaining the actual entities of the four noble truths. By explaining the three noble truths, the fourth truth, which is cessation, is understood. As explained here in the commentary, true sources are that which bind one to cyclic existence, true sufferings are that which is bound, and true paths are that which liberate one from suffering and its sources. Thus liberation is a state of having completely overcome the true sources. The result is that suffering is completely overcome so that it cannot reoccur ever again. There could not be another kind of liberation besides that mere negation, or the mere overcoming, of the true sources and the sufferings. 'Thus there cannot be a substantially existent cessation where the delusions reoccur again, as you have asserted'.

As it further mentions, the refutation is that the very establishment of the true paths implicitly establishes true cessation. The true paths are established as a means to overcome true sources, and true sufferings. Thus by

engaging in the path one eventually completely overcomes the true sources and true sufferings. When that state has been obtained then that is liberation: there is no other liberation other than obtaining that cessation of true sources and true sufferings.

Thus cessation cannot be asserted as being substantially existent, because if it were to be a substantially existent phenomena, one would also have to imply that it produces an effect. But there is no effect as such, as true cessation is a state of a mere absence of true source and true sufferings and nothing more than that. Thus as it says here in the commentary, 'One should therefore accept liberation as a mere term, a mere imputation, and not as substantially existent'. 'Mere term' and 'mere imputation' implies that the cessation is a mere imputation. As such it is a mere overcoming or cessation of true sources and the true sufferings.

To quote from the commentary:

It contradicts what the Teacher [Buddha] said: "Monks, these five are only names, past time, future time, space, nirvana and the person". One should therefore accept liberation as a mere term, a mere imputation and not substantially existent.

As this sutra explicitly states, cessation, or nirvana, is a mere imputation and a mere term. This means that there is no substantial or true existence in them, and that they are mere imputations.

#### **1.2.5.1.2. IT CONTRADICTS THE EXPLANATION THAT ALL SUFFERING IS ABANDONED IN THE SPHERE OF NIRVANA**

*In nirvana there are no aggregates* 221  
*And there cannot be a person.*  
*What nirvana is there for one*  
*Who is not seen in nirvana?*

The text says

The Subduer said [referring to the Buddha], "That which is the complete abandonment, removal and extinction of this suffering ... the abandonment of all the aggregates, the end of worldly existence and separation from attachment, is cessation and nirvana".

According to proponents of functional things as truly existent, this citation means the aggregates are entirely non-existent in the sphere of nirvana. Nor can there be a person imputed on dependence upon them, for neither the reliance nor reliant exist.

The Vaibhashikas say that when a person reaches nirvana the aggregates become totally non-existent. So if the aggregates become totally non-existent then the person who is dependent on or related to the aggregates would also become non-existent.

Thus, according to this interpretation, there cannot be a person imputed in dependence upon the aggregates, for neither the reliance (meaning the aggregates) nor the reliant (meaning the person, the one who relies upon the aggregates) can then exist in nirvana.

As the commentary further reads:

Neither the aggregates nor the person are seen as a truly existent reliance which reaches nirvana through the ending of disturbing attitudes and rebirth. What truly existent nirvana reliant upon that is there? Not

the slightest, thus one should accept liberation, too, as a mere imputation.

The Vaibhashika assert that when nirvana with remainder is obtained, the being who obtains that nirvana still possesses the physical aggregates, which are in the nature of suffering. Thus the physical aggregate, their body, is still within the nature of suffering. Thus, the Vaibhashikas assert, Buddha Shakyamuni's body is in the nature of suffering. It is only when an arhat attains the liberation nirvana of non-remainder that they discard that body (which is the product of delusions and karma). Then they attain a state of cessation or nirvana where their continuum ceases to exist. Their aggregates cease to exist and the person ceases to exist. That is how the Vaibhashika assert the state of nirvana of non-remainder.

The way this is refuted is that if there are no aggregates, then how can there be a person who is reliant upon those aggregates. So how could there ever be a cessation if there is no one to attain that cessation? How could you ever establish that there is cessation? How could you establish nirvana? This is pointing out the absurdity, of asserting that the continuum of the aggregates completely cease when nirvana is obtained.

Thus as the commentary concludes:

What truly existent nirvana reliant upon that is there?  
Not the slightest, thus one should accept liberation,  
too, as a mere imputation.

#### **1.2.5.2. REFUTING OTHER SECTARIANS LIBERATION IDENTIFIED WITH THE SELF**

This is sub-divided into three:

1.2.5.2.1. Refuting the permanent liberation consisting of a consciousness imputed by the Samkyas

1.2.5.2.2. Refuting permanent liberation consisting of the potential for the existence of consciousness

1.2.5.2.3. Suitability of the complete abandonment of conceptions of a selfless liberation

##### **1.2.5.2.1. REFUTING THE PERMANENT LIBERATION CONSISTING OF A CONSCIOUSNESS IMPUTED BY THE SAMKYAS**

*Samkya assertion:* According to us there is no flaw that nirvana is not liberation because of lacking a reliance. When an adept understands that the principal and the person are different the process of involvement in cyclic existence such as the great one and so forth stops. When everything subsides into the latent state of the principle the conscious person remains alone. Thus there is a liberated self.

*When free from attachment at [the time of] liberation*  
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*What good is the existence of consciousness?  
Also to exist without consciousness  
Is clearly the same as not existing.*

The earlier assertion of the Vaibhashikas was that if you assert that the aggregates do not exist, then there would not be a reliant person at the time of attaining nirvana. Thus you cannot assert nirvana.

However the Samkyas say that there is no flaw in nirvana not being liberation because of lacking reliance. What is being asserted by the Samkyas here is that what is left at the time of obtaining nirvana is the primary nature. There are no aggregates or anything else left when nirvana is

attained, only the primary or principal nature, which is the conscious person.

The Samkya assertion is that everything in cyclic existence is a mere manifestation of what is called the primary principle. So once the adept, or the practitioner, realises that everything is just a manifestation of this principle of the primary cause then everything fades away.

According to the Samkyas the process of obtaining liberation is when, through the instructions of their masters or teachers, an adept (or practitioner) engages in a meditative practice of seeing how everything is just a manifestation of the principle cause, which is just a manifestation of nature. In meditation that understanding becomes clearer and clearer.

Having obtained certain levels of concentration they obtain clairvoyance, and as a result they overcome manifest desires. With their realisation of how all existence is a mere manifestation of that principle cause, then it is as if the primary cause flushes with embarrassment, just as a naked woman would if she were to be seen. The principle cause flushes with embarrassment, so to speak, and for to the adept everything is seen to subside back into the latent state of the principle, which is nature. What remains is only the consciousness. So, they assert, what remains of the person is the mere consciousness.

The Samkyas assert that the state of liberation is, 'when everything subsides into the latency of the principle, the conscious person remains alone'. The Samkyas, through their meditative practices, obtain a certain level of meditative concentration, through which they also obtain certain level of clairvoyance. As a result of that they overcome the manifest levels of delusions, particularly in relation to the desire realms.

Thus they are able to attain a state of meditative concentration that is actually calm abiding. Because they can obtain a single-pointed state of concentration we state in our Buddhist texts that the attainment of the state of calm abiding is not unique to the Buddhist practice, as even non-Buddhists can obtain those states of concentration. The Samkyas assert that reaching that state in itself is the subsiding of the delusions, which they assert as being liberation.

As an answer to that. it says in the commentary:

It follows that it is illogical to accept existence of a conscious person at that time of liberation when there is freedom from attachment to objects, because you assert that that intellect makes known to the person objects to which there is an attraction.

The main point of the Samkyas assertion is refuted by pointing out the absurdity of establishing that everything subsides into the latent state of the principle, leaving only the conscious person. However that goes against their own assertion which, as mentioned earlier, establishes that there are five different features of a person: that which possesses things, that which consumes food, and also that which has a consciousness able to cognise things. According to the Samkya assertion, when the state of liberation is obtained, everything subsides into the

latent state, which means that no external phenomena remains. So how could there be a person who possesses, if there is nothing to possess? How can there be a possessor? That is one absurdity.

Also, there is nothing to cognise as there is nothing that remains, because everything has subsided into a latent state. It is as if all existent phenomena go into that latent state, and that nothing is existent anymore. Thus how can a consciousness perceive anything if there is nothing to be perceived. These are the two main points that refute the Samkya assertion.

What is the value of accepting the existence of consciousness during liberation? There is not the slightest value, because while accepting the conscious person as the experiencer of objects, the transformations which are experienced no longer exist, having subsided into latent state.

The answer to the question, 'What if the person remains without consciousness at liberation?', is explained in the last two lines of verse 222. Accepting the existence of a liberated person without consciousness clearly amounts to accepting the non-existence of the person. That is because of accepting that the person with the consciousness is of one nature with being either equally existent or non-existent. The analogy given in the commentary, but which has been left out of the translation is that it is like fire and heat. Since fire and heat are of one nature, if there is fire there has to be heat, and if there is heat there has to be the element of fire; they are mutually inclusive. Similarly a person and its consciousness are mutually inclusive — if one doesn't exist then you cannot expect the other to exist.

Thus the absurdity of the assertion is pointed out: they say that a person possesses certain qualities including a consciousness, but on attaining liberation only a consciousness exists. That is an absurdity because how can there be a consciousness without the person who possesses that consciousness?

Asserting that on obtaining liberation what remains is a consciousness of a person is absurd, because they say that there is no other existence at that time. The absurdity is that if there is only a consciousness there is no person to possess that consciousness. So how can a consciousness exist by itself? Furthermore because the very function of a consciousness is to perceive things, if there is nothing to perceive how can that consciousness be established? This leads to the point of where it becomes difficult for the Samkya to assert a person at all, or a consciousness by itself.

#### **1.2.5.2.2. REFUTING PERMANENT LIBERATION CONSISTING OF A POTENTIAL FOR THE EXISTENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

If you remember, at the beginning the Samkya assertion is that they don't have a problem with there being no person, because they can establish that only a consciousness remains at the time of liberation. We have refuted that by pointing out the absurdity of having only a consciousness remaining. As they realise that they may be left without anything suitable to establish as a person, they now attempt to establish as follows:

*Assertion:* There is a self during liberation, for though there is no actual consciousness, the potential to be conscious of objects exists.

*Answer:* That too is illogical.

*If at liberation a self existed*

*There could be a seed of consciousness.*

*Without it there is no such speculation*

*With regard to worldly existence.*

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Because the Samkyas are having a hard time trying to establish a person, they have to establish something that obtains liberation. It is hard for them to pinpoint this, because each time they assert something that obtains liberation, it is being refuted.

Actually, as far as the non-Buddhist schools are concerned, the Samkyas are said to have the most advanced system of tenets. They have seemingly reasonable assertions about the nature of a person. The case is that if liberation is attained, then who is attaining the liberation? That a person does so, has been refuted. Then they asserted that consciousness remained, but that too has been refuted. Now they are asserting that there is no consciousness but the potential of consciousness, the potential to cognise things. That too is illogical.

If at liberation a self existed, there could be such a potential seed of consciousness, but at that time there is no consciousness.

They try to establish that there is a potential consciousness, but if there is no liberated self there is no liberation. What is being pointed out here is that for there to be a potential consciousness there has to be a consciousness to begin with. But if there is no consciousness to begin with, how can you state that there is a potential or seed or consciousness. So the Samkya raise this objection:

*Objection:* If there is no liberated self, there is no liberation and thus cyclic existence is indestructible. Many such unwanted entailments arise.

The response to this is:

It is irrelevant to speculate whether, because there is consciousness, [people would or would not enter liberation] or whether, because the seed is truly existent, people would or would not enter worldly existence. It would be relevant if a self as reliance existed, but there is no liberated self.

In order to understand the assertions from the non-Buddhist schools and the different assertions within the Buddhist schools it would be good to read texts on tenets, and particularly *The Precious Garland*, which is quite easy to follow. When I taught the tenets earlier it was actually in relation to *The Precious Garland*, so that would be a good text for you, as you are already familiar with it.

Some of these non-Buddhist schools are actually quite advanced thinkers, so it is not so easy to refute them.

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*Edited Version*

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