# Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses ১৯ বিশ্বর্তিশ্বরূতিশ্বর্তিশ্বর্তিশ্বরূতিশ

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As usual it would be most appropriate to set a motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

#### 1.1.4. Explaining other refutations like that of the attributes and so forth

This section is subdivided into three:

1.1.4.1. Asserting that though the principal is matter it is the creator of everything, amounts to madness

1.1.4.2. Contradiction of asserting that it creates virtue and non-virtue but does not experience their maturation

1.1.4.3. Refuting that a permanent self is the agent of actions and experiencer of their maturation

## 1.1.4.1. ASSERTING THAT THOUGH THE PRINCIPAL IS MATTER IT IS THE CREATOR OF EVERYTHING, AMOUNTS TO MADNESS

Samkhya assertion: The great one, a synonym for the intellect, evolves from the principal which is matter and a balance of pleasure, pain and equanimity. The three I-principles evolve from the great one. Eleven faculties evolve from the I-principle associated with lightness: five mental faculties, five faculties for action and the speculative faculty. From the I-principle associated with motility come the five mere objects from which the five elements evolve. The I-principle of darkness acts as the basis for the other two I-principles.

There is no difference between The insane and those for whom The attributes are the creator But are never conscious. 240

The non-Buddhist Samkhyas assert twenty five categories of phenomena. Except for the person, the rest of the twenty four categories of phenomena are asserted to be aggregates of particles and therefore matter.<sup>1</sup>

The twenty five categories of phenomena are:

The *principal*. The Samkhya assert that the principal, generality and nature are synonymous.

This principal has six attributes that are brought about causelessly. These are:

- $\sum$  It is permanent
- $\Sigma$  It is single and so without parts
- $\Sigma$  It is a creator of actions
- $\sum$  It is pervasive
- ∑ It is a mere object, i.e. it is not a consciousness that perceives things

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed exposition of the Samkya tenets can be found in *Precious Garland of Tenets*, as translated in *Cutting Through Appearances*, pages 158-167.

qualities.

Samkhya assert that the principal is not an effect

 $\Sigma$  It is stabilised, with an equilibrium of the three

The Samkhya assert that the principal is not an effect, but is a cause for everything else to be produced. It is a cause but not an effect.

There are seven mere objects consisting of:

- $\sum$  The *five sense objects*
- The *great one*, which is synonymous with *intellect*
- ∑ The *I-principle*, (the Tibetan term *nga-gyal* is also translated as ego, the sense of 'me' or 'I')

These seven mere objects are both causes and effects.

The *person*, is neither a cause nor an effect.

The eleven faculties consisting of:

- The *five physical* or *action faculties*, which are speech, hands, feet, anus, and genitalia
- The five sense faculties, which are eye sense faculty, nose sense faculty, ear sense faculty, taste sense faculty and body or skin faculty
- \( \) The mental or speculative faculty

The *five elements,* which are earth, water, fire and wind plus space element.

These eleven faculties and five elements are said to be effects only and not causes.

Thus there are twenty five categories of phenomena, the primary cause which is the principal or the nature, and twenty four remaining phenomena that are caused by the principal.

This assertion of phenomena is considered as being like an assertion by an insane person, in that it doesn't make any sense at all.

There is a listing of 'pain, pleasure, and equanimity' in the assertion. In some texts equanimity refers specifically to ignorance, pain to anger, and pleasure to attachment, thus it can also refer to the three delusions as well.

'The three I-principles evolve from the great one'.

- The I-principle of lightness, which also has a literal translation of courage or bravery, is associated with the eleven faculties.
- The I-principle associated with motility gives rise to the five faculties for action, the five mere objects, and the speculative or mental faculty.
- ∑ The I-principle of darkness acts as the basis for the other two I-principles.

As the commentary further reads in explanation:

It follows that it is contradictory to assert, as do the Samkhyas, that the principal which is a balance of the three attributes is the creator of all manifestations but is never conscious. There is not the least difference between those who assert the like and the insane whose perception is distorted.

The Samkhyas assert that the principal is the one who manifests everything, and that one of its attributes is that it is never conscious. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out. Thus, as the text says, 'There is not the least difference between those who assert the like and the insane whose perception is distorted'. This is indicating that only a person who does not have a clear understanding of reality would assert phenomena to exist in this way.

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## 1.1.4.2. CONTRADICTION OF ASSERTING THAT IT CREATES VIRTUE AND NON-VIRTUE BUT DOES NOT EXPERIENCE THEIR MATURATION

What is more illogical 241
Than that the attributes should always
Know how to construct homes and so forth
But not know how to experience them?

As the commentary explains:

Since such a contention contradicts reason and conflicts with worldly convention, it is utterly incorrect. What is more illogical than to claim that the attributes whose nature is pleasure, pain and equanimity know how to construct homes and so forth but do not know how to experience these amenities? It contradicts both reason and convention.

This quite vividly and clearly explains the absurdity of the Samkya assertion. They assert that it is the motility I-principle that allows the person associated with the I-principle to be able to stretch out, to sit down and to feel heaviness in the body and so forth. This I-principle that provides the motility allowing the person to for example sleep and relax lay back and so forth is due to the attributes of darkness. However they also assert that the I-principle doesn't experience the actions. Thus what is being asserted here is an absurdity that goes against not only logic but also conventional perception. So their assertion is contradicted even on a conventional level.

### 1.1.4.3. REFUTING THAT A PERMANENT SELF IS THE AGENT OF ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCER OF THEIR MATURATION

This relates to an assertion by the Vaisesika non-Buddhist school that there is a self, who is the one who initiates actions, but there are actions where there is no doer of the action.

*Vaisesika assertion*: The self alone is the doer of actions and the experiencer of their maturation.

Answer: If that is so, the self cannot be permanent.

The active is not permanent. 242
The ubiquitous is actionless.
The actionless is like the non-existent.
Why do you not prefer selflessness?

Here the Vaisesika assert that the self is a doer of actions. But they also assert the self as being permanent. So if they accept the assertion that the self is a doer then they cannot also assert the self as being permanent.

If the self is an agent it must be accepted as causing action. If it does not perform actions it is unsuitable as an agent. If they assert the self to be the doer of an agent, then it could not be permanent. If it does not perform the action then it cannot be called an agent. If it is an agent then because it performs action, 'You could not assert it as being permanent'.

#### Furthermore:

That which performs actions like coming and going is not permanent since one must admit that it differs from before.

This is pointing out how it cannot be permanent if there are actions of coming and going, as that indicates that there is a change taking place.

When an action is performed then there has to be a change due to that action. There should be a difference between the latter part of an action and the earlier part, because that is the very notion of an action - what was not done earlier is done later. 'That indicates that there is a change from the earlier to the later, thus you cannot claim it to be permanent', is the refutation.

As the commentary states:

Something the whole of which is everywhere all the time does not perform activities such as coming and going, since there is no place or time it does not occupy.

That is how the earlier assertion is refuted. Then Vaisesikas reply:

Assertion: Well then, an actionless self exists.

With this assertion that there is a self which is actionless this further refutation is presented:

Since an actionless self is as non-existent as a sky flower, why do you not prefer selflessness? It is worth doing so, for understanding it frees one from all fears.

Following the earlier refutations of their assertion the Vaisesika come to a point of saying that a self exists and that it is an actionless self.

From the Prasangika point of view there is no such thing as an actionless self - it is the same as a sky flower. The analogy of a sky flower is that no flower grows in the sky, so it is a non-existent phenomena. It is far better to assert, as we do, that there is the selflessness of a person rather than asserting that there is a self that is actionless. While asserting an actionless self is meaningless, the assertion of selflessness will free one from all fears and lead one to liberation.

#### 1.2. General refutation

This is sub-divided into four:

- 1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists
- 1.2.2. Impossibility of liberation from cyclic existence for a permanent self
- 1.2.3. Inappropriateness of asserting the existence of a self during liberation
- 1.2.4. Refuting a substantially established liberated [person] without a self

#### 1.2.1. Erroneousness of thinking a personal self exists

The implied assertion is:

It follows that the conception of a personal self is erroneous. Since the self, if it existed, would do so by way of its own entity, it should appear without differences.

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Some see it as ubiquitous and for some The person is the mere [size of the] body. Some see it as a mere particle. The wise see it as non-existent.

If a self exists in of itself, or was inherently existent, or truly existent, then whoever sees it would have to see it in that way. It would have to appear exactly in the same way to who ever saw it. However that is not the case.

As the commentary explains:

Some such as Vaisesikas and Samkhyas see the self as existing in each body and as being ubiquitous like space.

As explained earlier these two non-Buddhist schools assert a self that is all pervasive, and pervasive means as expansive as space.

Others such as Nirgranthas see that which has a body as proportionate to the size of that body, such as an ant's or an elephant's.

This non-Buddhist school asserts that the self is related to body size: those of small size like an ant have a small self and those as large as an elephant have a large self. If a body is as small as a particle or an atom then the self will be that small as well.

Thus, the commentary reads:

Others, unable to accept this, see it as a mere particle.

These assertions are made because of the misconception of the self. If the self were to exist in and of itself then these different misconceptions would not arise in relation to it. That there are these different kinds of perceptions of the self indicates that the perception of an inherently existent self that exists in and of itself is a distorted point of view, which is a misconception. Thus the conclusion is:

Those with the wisdom that perceives the suchness of functional things without distortion see the self as non-existent. Indeed, if the self existed by way of its own entity, the Forders' views would not differ.

The non-Buddhists share a common view of the self as being inherently existent, or existing in and of itself, so if the self were to actually exist in that way, all the misconceptions in relation to the self would have to be the same. But as mentioned previously there are different misconceptions about the self.

### 1.2.2. Impossibility of liberation from cyclic existence for a permanent self

How can what is permanent be harmed, 244
Or the unharmed be liberated?
Liberation is irrelevant
For one whose self is permanent.

As the commentary explains:

For an opponent who asserts a permanent self, attaining liberation is irrelevant. How can that which is permanent be harmed by dangers and so forth in cyclic existence, and how can that which is unharmed in cyclic existence be liberated by subsequent meditation on the paths? It cannot for these very reasons.

This explains clearly that if a self is asserted to be a permanent entity then because of its very definition of permanence it cannot be changed. A permanent entity would be devoid of being harmed, and if something cannot be harmed then how can one say that they experience any suffering If no suffering is experienced then the wish to be free from that suffering will not occur. Thus liberation is not sought. The conclusion is that if a self is permanent then there could never be a liberated self and so the absurdity being presented here is that there would be no point in engaging in meditation on the

path and so forth, because liberation would not be sought.

#### 1.2.3. Inappropriateness of asserting the existence of a self during liberation

If the self exists it is inappropriate 245
To think there is no self
And false to claim one attains nirvana
Through certain knowledge of reality.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

If the self exists by way of its own entity, it follows that thinking there is no self is inappropriate and that attainment of liberation is not feasible...

This line of reasoning should be quite obvious just by reading it.

...since the basis for conceptions of a self is intact.

We recall that the attainment of liberation is not feasible since the basis of conception of the self is intact. As the text continues:

Moreover the contention of these amazing people [which can be also read as weird or strange people] [who assert that the self exists but claim] that through ascertaining knowledge of suchness one abandons conceptions of a self and thereby attains nirvana would be false. Therefore those who seek liberation should accept selflessness

The main point here is that if one were to assert a personal self that exists in and of itself, then by adhering to that conception one could not obtain liberation. If one wishes to attain liberation one must acquire the realisation of selflessness.

#### 1.2.4. Refuting a substantially established liberated [person] without a self

The point of this heading can be clearly understood from the following explanation:

Fearing the absurd consequence that conceptions of a self would occur in the liberated state if the self exists, one might assert that though there is no self, there is a truly existent liberated person.

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If it exists at liberation
It should not be non-existent before.
It is explained that what is seen
Without anything is its nature.

The refutation of the view expressed above is:

It follows that there must be such a truly existent liberated person previously too during cyclic existence, because its entity, isolated from any associated factors, as perceived by unmistaken awareness, is said to be its nature. If there is no self during liberation, it should not be asserted as existing during the cycle of rebirths either.

A self is an interdependently arisen entity associated with many other factors for its existence. Basically the nature of a self is that it exists in relation to, or is dependent on, other factors or aggregates and so forth. That is how the self exists. The summary here is that if there is no self during liberation, then it should not be asserted as existing during the cycle of rebirths either. It would be absurd to assert that there is no self during liberation, while at the same time asserting that there is a self during

cyclic existence, because during liberation the liberated self is basically a continuity of the self of cyclic existence.

### 1.3. Eliminating any fault of annihilation with regard to selflessness

In our system we assert selflessness the objection might arise that if there is selflessness then there will be annihilation. The refutation of annihilation in regard to selflessness is sub-divided into four:

- 1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing
- 1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]
- 1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things
- 1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

### 1.3.1. Although there is no self, there is no danger of the composite and transitory discontinuing

This point was brought up earlier. If we assert selflessness then the doubt may arise that there is a discontinuation of the transitory collection, which is the aggregates and the self. However there is no such fault as that.

Assertion: If there is no self, composite things whose nature is to disintegrate moment by moment would discontinue because of disintegrating as soon as they are produced.

Answer:

If the impermanent discontinues 247
How could there be grass at present?
If, indeed, this were true,
No one would have ignorance either.

The non-Buddhist schools assert that the self is permanent. Their contention is that if we were to assert the self as being impermanent then it would have to discontinue, because the moment that it is produced it changes and disintegrates. The refutation to that assertion is:

Understanding impermanence to mean discontinuation is unacceptable. If it did, how could there today be fields and grass whose continuity is beginningless? There should not be any, for if impermanence meant discontinuation, then whatever is impermanent would have the defect of discontinuing. If the view that whatever is impermanent discontinues were true, it follows that no one would have ignorance because it is impermanent. It also follows that pleasure and desire would not occur either.

### 1.3.2. Even if a self exists, it is unsuitable as the cause that starts and stops [production]

Even if the self exists 248
Form is seen to arise from other [causes],
To continue by virtue of others
And to disintegrate through others.

The meaning of the verse is explained in the commentary thus:

It follows that even if the self exists, it is not acceptable as the initiating cause of things which are seen to arise exclusively from other causes. Fire arises

from the contact between sunlight and a fire-crystal, water from the contact between moonlight and a water-crystal, the sprout from the seed, and forms such as the sense organs from an earlier stage of the fetus. They continue because of other factors: fire keeps burning because of fuel and so forth and just as it does not burn when there is insufficient fuel, they disintegrate through other factors. The self cannot exist for if it did, it alone should produce all effects.

### 1.3.3. Producers and that which is produced exist in relation only to impermanent things

Just as the sprout which is a product Is produced from a product, the seed, Similarly all that is impermanent Comes from the impermanent. 249

An effect cannot arise from something permanent and thus, just as the sprout, a product, arises from the seed which is a products all that is impermanent comes from impermanent causes. Therefore composite things, undergoing production and disintegration moment by moment, can never be permanent nor discontinue.

The main point here is that if something was permanent then it could not produce anything, nothing could arise, and no effects could be produced. The interdependent relationship between a cause and an effect exists only within impermanent phenomena and cannot exist within permanent phenomena.

### 1.3.4. Showing briefly how permanence and annihilation are avoided in terms of the conventional

The thunderbolts of permanence and annihilation which strike and destroy the relationship of cause and effect between composite things are driven off to a distance by the wise with the mantra of dependent arising.

Since functional things arise There is no discontinuation And because they cease There is no permanence. 250

Since resultant things like sprouts arise and are produced, the cause's continuum is not in danger of being annihilated. Since the seed ceases once the sprout has been produced, the cause is not in danger of being permanent.

There is no danger of either annihilation or permanence in instances of a cause and effect sequence.

This is of course a refutation of the non-Buddhist assertion that the reason why they assert a person to be permanent is because they fear the annihilation of the person. Thus they assert a person as being permanent. However according to the Buddhist school there is no danger of annihilation. With the external cause and effect of the seed and the sprout the first moment of the seed remains in the continuation. We can obviously see that with external phenomena. Likewise establishing the person as being permanent phenomena will not bring about the fault of the person or the self discontinuing or being annihilated.

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The Fundamental [Treatise Called] Wisdom says: Whatever has arisen depending on something Is firstly not [one with] it

and so forth.

In brief this shows how permanence and annihilation are avoided in relation to the conventional.

The summarising stanza from Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

Through familiarity with meditating on The impermanence suffering and uncleanness of cyclic existence,

Abandon the limitless views of the self, Both innate and those imputed by tenets.

The meaning of this verse is quite clear. Through familiarity with meditating on impermanence, suffering and the uncleanliness of cyclic existence as explained earlier, one abandons the limitless views of the self. 'Limitless views of the self' indicates the innate views and those views imputed by tenets. The 'views imputed by tenets' relates to the distorted views of the self that were presented earlier with the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools. 'Innate views' refers to the innate grasping at the self that we have had from beginningless times, and our ignorance of the innate grasping at the self that we have. So both innate grasping at the self, as well as the self that is imputed by tenets are overcome through meditation.

#### 2. Presenting the name of the chapter

This is the tenth chapter from the Four Hundred on the Yogic Deeds, showing how to meditate on refuting the self.

I think we can cover chapter 11 in about two sessions and then we can spend more time on chapter 12.

The practical benefit that we can derive from studying texts like this is that their complexity shows how the Buddha taught the true path by firstly overcoming all the different misconceptions. Studying and trying to gain an understanding of these texts is worthwhile, because they will help to generate strong faith in the Buddha. The Buddha taught the right view by negating the many other distorted views. In this way he established the right view, which once established becomes very firm and stable, and can lead us to our ultimate goals. So it is very useful for us to really gain some understanding of how the Buddha's teachings are presented and thus gain a strong faith in the skilful means the Buddha used in leading us disciples onto the virtuous and righteous path.

In that way it is good for us to make strong aspirational prayers such as, 'While striving for the right view in following the righteous path, may I never encounter the wrong views of the mistaken path, and may I never be influenced by these wrong views'.

We can also make the strong aspiration, 'May I never separated from such a perfect unmistaken path such as the Buddha's teachings. It is amazing that I have this opportunity now to be able to study and practice such a pure path, and it is definitely the result of numerous

previous merits that I have created in the past'. While one appreciates the great opportunity one has now, one makes strong aspirations to never be separated in the future from this pure path, and to be continuously able to engage in practice and further study, and gain more and more understanding and knowledge of the unmistaken pure path leading to liberation and enlightenment. It will definitely benefit us, if we make such aspirational prayers.

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Edited Version

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