

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

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As usual, sitting in a comfortable and appropriate position one sets one's motivation such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and practise it well.'

One must understand the meaning behind the words, 'having listened to the teachings, I will practise it well'. The connotation of these words is that practice or meditation has to be preceded by contemplation or analysis, which in turn has to be preceded by hearing the teachings. That should be a reminder of the intricate process of first listening to the teachings, which are then analysed and finally put into practice.

### 1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting our own sectarians

It is good to remember that the essential point in this chapter is contained in the first verse. It is good to keep the meaning of that verse in mind and contemplate it again and again, as it actually summarises the very profound meaning of the entire text.

This section of the chapter has two sub-divisions:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.2. Briefly refuting that though there are many components, the composite is a truly existent single unit

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1. Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit

It is useful to remind ourselves of the essential points of the headings themselves. When this heading says 'Extensively refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit', it is good to ask, 'What does that mean?'. If things were truly existent, how would they exist? This brings to mind what the actual object of refutation is.

This section has five sub-divisions:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference, where difference also refers to being one or separate

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.1. Refutation by examining for oneness or difference

The ideas in this section were also covered in earlier sections.

*Sautrantika assertion:* The pot and its eight substantial particles are one truly existent entity.

*Because the pot is not separate  
From its characteristics, it is not one.* 332ab

The assertion of the Sautrantika is that that the pot and its eight substantial particles are one, and are a truly existent entity.

A pot or vase is an entity that is an accumulation of the eight substantial particles. As mentioned previously, these are the four elements along with form, smell, taste and touch, which are tangible, and the accumulation of these eight substantial particles is what makes up a vase or pot. The refutation of partless particles was mentioned earlier in the text<sup>1</sup>. Our own system accepts that a vase is an entity that is made up of the eight substantial particles. What the Sautrantika assertion is basically saying is that the eight substantial particles that make up a vase or pot, as well as the pot itself, are truly existent; that is what is being refuted in this section.

The refutation is presented in the first two lines of the verse, and explained thus in the commentary:

It follows that the pot would not be a truly single unit, because it is, by way of its own entity, one with and not separate from its eight substantial particles which have diverse characteristics.

What is being refuted is that the pot is a truly existent single unit. If that were to be the case, then the text implies that the pot could not be a truly existent single unit, because it is made up of eight different substantial particles, each of which has diverse characteristics. That in itself shows the falsity of a vase or pot being a single independent unit.

Even though it is not explicitly mentioned here in the commentary, what is implied from earlier and later refutations of this point is that since both the Sautrantika and the Prasangika accept that the vase is an entity that is made up of eight substantial particles, then what the Prasangika are refuting is that the pot is a truly existent single entity or unit. If the pot were to be a single entity, or a single unit, then either there would have to be eight pots, because there are eight diverse substantial particles that make up the pot, or all of those eight particles would have to be one and the same, not having diverse characteristics. Both of these options are absurdities. That is what is implied in the refutation presented here.

*If there is not a pot for each,  
Plurality is not feasible.* 332cd

If it is stated that the pot is a plurality, meaning that there are many pots, because there are many separate characteristics of the particles that make up the pot, then, as the commentary suggests, there should be a pot for each of the eight substantial particles. Since there is no pot for each, it is not feasible to describe the pot as a plurality.

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting the composite as a truly existent single unit through the coming together of its constituents

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation

1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

##### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Actual refutation

*Assertion:* The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

This heading explains how the vase itself is referred to as a composite, while the eight particles are the components that make up the entity to become a vase. Thus the components (like branches of a tree) are the different characteristics of different particles that make up the composite vase. Thus that what we call a vase is, in reality, a composite that is made up of its constituents or components, which are the eight particles.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 9, specifically the teachings of 7 and 14 August 2007

*Assertion:* The pot is a single unit through the coming together of the eight substantial particles.

What is being further asserted is that the pot is a single unit. Even though it has eight substantial particles, those eight substantial particles come together to make a single unit.

*The tangible and the intangible* 333  
*Cannot be said to coalesce.*  
*Thus it is in no way feasible*  
*For these forms to coalesce.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

The pot's composite can in no way be a truly existent single unit due to the coalescence of the eight substantial particles such as visible form and so forth, because the four elements which are tangible, and visible form, smell and so forth which are intangible cannot touch and coalesce.

This is not refuting that the eight substantial particles are the constituents that make up the composite. Rather, what is being refuted is the pot's composite as being a truly existent single unit. The refutation explains that if you assert that the coalescence of the eight particles makes a single unit, then the assertion that the eight particles coalesce is, in itself, not feasible. This is because within the eight substantial particles, the four elements of water, fire, air and earth are tangible because we can touch and feel them, whereas the remaining four substances of form, smell, taste and touch are intangible. For example smell, taste and touch itself is not tangible, as we cannot feel it through our sensation of touch. Thus it is not feasible for tangible and intangible substances to be united into the one single entity or unit. That is how the assertion is refuted.

One should understand from the verse and the explanation given in the commentary that what is being refuted is that a composite is a truly existent single unit. What it seems to imply is that, as it says here, there cannot be a complete coalescence of the eight substances in itself. That is because you would have to be able to establish there being a single truly existent unit, which there isn't.

Here we can also refer to the analogies and examples that are given in other texts such as the *Madhyamikavatara* or the *Middle Way* text where there are seven refutations of such an interdependent, inherently existent composite such as a chariot<sup>2</sup>. Other schools consider a chariot as independently or inherently existent, since when its parts are put together they make up a cart or a chariot. This implies to them that it is an inherently existent chariot that you can find. That is refuted in the *Madhyamikavatara*. The same sort of refutation is presented here, which is that the parts of the composite (here, the pot) come together, implying the existence of an inherently existent, or as specifically mentioned here, a truly existent unit, or single unit, or entity. That is not feasible.

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the rejoinder

*Assertion:* Even though there is no mutual contact, their combination is the "truly existent" pot.

This is related to the earlier refutation that it is not possible for the tangible and intangible to touch and thus coalesce, and form a single unit.

*Form is a component of the pot* 334  
*And thus, for a start, is not the pot.*  
*Since the compound does not exist,*  
*Neither do the components.*

In other words this is saying 'I agree that they cannot touch, but not being in mutual contact does not negate substantial particles coming together to form a truly existent pot'.

The first half of the verse is a refutation of this assertion. As the text explains:

The pot's visible form is a component or part of the pot and thus, for a start, is not the pot, just as smell and so forth are not.

What is mutually accepted is that there are components that make up the pot, and that visible form is one of the components of the pot. Thus to assert that the components coming together in combination forms a truly existent pot, implies that each of the components are also truly existent components that make up a truly existent pot. What this further implies is that the components that make up the pot would have to be a pot as they are truly existent, and one with the pot. However the component form, for example, is not a pot to begin with, just like smell and so forth. In other words each of the components is not a pot, so you cannot assert that their combination forms a unity of a pot.

A further assertion is that since a compound reliant upon its components exists, then that is the pot. The second half of the verse is the refutation of this assertion, and is explained in the commentary thus:

Since visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. The components, too, therefore do not exist by way of their own entity, because they have parts.

What they are asserting is that a compound is reliant upon its components, which in this case is called a pot, and that pot, they assert, is a truly existent pot. The refutation is that as visible form, smell and so forth do not each have a pot, the compound pot does not exist by way of its own entity. What is being presented is that as each of the components is not a pot, therefore the compound pot itself does not exist by way of its own entity. Similarly the components too, have to rely on other components. So they do not exist by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. That is how the refutation to the assertion is made.

To understand this refutation, one must take it a little further, with an understanding of how it is presented in other teachings. What is being refuted is a truly existent pot that consists of components called substantial particles. It is the accumulation of substantial particles that make up a unity to form the pot, which they say is truly existent.

What one should understand as the implication of the refutation made here is that if the coming together of the components establishes a truly existent pot, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot either in the composite or in its components, which are the eight substantial particles. If you were to search in either of the eight particles, you would have to be able to find a truly existent pot within each of the particles, which include form. What is being explained here is that form is not a pot. But if a pot was truly existent, then since form is a component of the pot then you would have to find a truly existent pot in the form.

This same reasoning and logic is used again when one refers to other teachings and other instances such as the self. What we call the self is the accumulation of the five aggregates. If the self were to be a truly existent self, then you would have to be able to find a truly existent self either in the composite of the five aggregates, the 'I', or in the components which are the individual aggregates. Thus with analytical and logical

<sup>2</sup> There are seven refutations in the teaching of 13 July 2004.

reasoning one asks, 'Does a truly existent self exist in the form aggregate, or the feeling aggregate, and so forth?' When you exhaust the possibility of finding a truly existent self either in the accumulation of the five aggregates or in the individual aggregates, then that exhausts all possibilities of there being a truly existent self. That is how a truly existent self is refuted. The same line of logic and reasoning is used here in refuting a pot as being a truly existent pot.

Thus the refutation in the commentary is that just as the component (the pot itself) is not truly existent, i.e. does not exist by way of its own entity, the components too do not exist by way of their own entity, and the reason given is because they have parts. One must understand how the logical reasoning is used here. If there were to be a truly existent pot then that would mean that the pot would have to exist without depending on any other factors, constituents, or components for its existence. It would have to be an entity that exists from its own side inherently, without depending on any other factors. So a pot cannot be truly existent because it has parts, or constituents, which in itself is very logical. Similarly the constituents such as the four elements, along with form, smell and so forth, in themselves cannot be truly existent or existent by way of their own entity, because they also have parts. So what is being established is, anything that has parts cannot be truly existent and independent because it is dependent on other factors for its existence.

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3. Showing other reasoning which refutes the composite as a truly existent single unit

This is sub-divided into two:

##### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

This means that if the pot has true existence then the consequence would be that everything is a pot, as all of the substantial particles would have to be a pot as well.

##### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

This refers to the consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot would have to be one if the composite were truly existent.

##### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.1. Consequence that everything is a pot if the pot has true existence

Why are some things that have form pots, and other things that have form not pots?

This is a hypothetical question referring to the consequences if there were to be a truly existent pot.

*Answer:*

*If the definition of form* 335  
*Applies without incongruity*  
*To all forms, for what reason*  
*Is one a pot and not all others?*

The initial question is explained by the commentary as:

It follows that all should equally be pots [referring to all that has form], for if the definition that (form is simply that which is appropriate as form) applies without any incongruity to all forms such as smell, taste and so forth as well as pots and woollen cloth, truly existent things with form should be the same in all respects.

Even though this seems a little bit ambiguous, this is again refuting that there is a truly existent pot. The manner of refuting it in this instance is by showing the absurd consequence that would occur if a pot were to be truly existent. What is being implied here is that if there is a truly

existent pot then the components of the pot would also truly exist, which would mean that the component form, would be truly existent. Now, if form, which is a component of the pot, were to be truly existent then the truly existent form and the truly existent pot would have to be one and the same—they would be indistinguishable. As mentioned here in the commentary, the definition of form is that which is appropriate as form, and that definition of form applies to everything else that has the substance of form, such as the pot itself, woollen cloth and so forth. Since all other substances also have form as one of their components, then if form were to be indistinguishable from a pot, the absurd consequence would be that everything else that has the component of form would also be a pot.

It is commonly accepted that all substantially existent phenomena are made up of their components, in particular the eight substantial categories. Thus, for example, a pot is made up of the eight substantial constituents or components, one of which is form. However the constituents that make up the composite pot are not truly existent constituents of the composite. If they were to be truly existent then the absurdity is that because the attribute or constituent form is inherently or truly one with the pot, then there would have to be a pot wherever there is form.

Another example, is a pillar, which is also made up of its own unique eight substantial particles, however that doesn't mean that they are truly existent. Just as a pot is comprised of its own unique or uncommon eight substantial particles, so too a pillar is composed of its own uncommon eight substantial particles. However the uncommon substantial particles are not inherently one with their composite. Thus the absurd consequence is that if the composite is inherently one, then the components will naturally have to be inherently or truly one with composite as well.

##### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.3.2. Consequence that the eight substantial particles of the pot are one

*If you assert that form is distinct from* 336  
*Taste and so forth but not from the pot,*  
*How can that which does not exist*  
*Without these not be distinct from form?*

Again, what needs to be understood here is if the eight substances were to be inherently existent or inherently one with the pot, then the substances would have to be the same entity as the pot. Other texts explain that there are certain things which are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they have to be one. For example, products and impermanence are said to be of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one and the same entity. They have the same nature, but they are not one. Generally, when the texts say that two things have the same nature, it doesn't imply that they have to be one and the same entity. Here, the assertion is that the composite is truly existent, so if the composite is truly existent then the constituents have to also be truly existent. If that was the case then pot and its constituents would have to be one and the same entity. That is the absurd consequence presented here—that the constituents of the pot and the pot itself are actually one entity.

If two things were to be inherently one, then that would mean that they would have to be independently one, as being inherently one means that they do not depend on any other factors. Being one from its own side would imply that they are completely indistinguishable, i.e. one and the same in every aspect. They would not be separable at all because of being one entity. That's how it would have to be if it were

to be truly existent, existent by way of its own entity, or inherently existent. The absurd consequence of this is mentioned here:

It follows that form, smell and so forth would also be one, because of being one with the pot.

*Objection:* Form, smell and so forth are different.

The very fact that the sound 'form' and 'smell' are different indicates that they are different. Form, smell, taste and so forth have different terms, which also shows that there is a difference, and that they are not inherently one.

Furthermore, they also have specific and different functions. Form is perceived by visual consciousness, while smell is perceived by the nose consciousness and so forth. Thus they are perceived and experienced in different ways. That also indicates the difference between the substances. If they were to be one with the pot, then the substances would also have to be completely one and exactly the same; being one entity with the pot would imply that they are not different from one another. To return to the earlier example of products and impermanence: they are of the same nature, but that doesn't mean that they are one. One is called impermanence, and the other is called product and so forth. So being of one nature doesn't necessarily mean that they are one and entirely the same in every aspect. The fact that the very term is different indicates that they are different. There are many different ways of differentiating between the different characteristics, and if they were to be truly one or inherently one, then they would have to be one in every aspect, which is absurd.

Then the explanation presented in the commentary is:

You assert that smell, taste, and so forth are distinct from visible form because they are objects apprehended by different senses, but that visible form is not distinct from the pot. Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form? it follows that it should be, because the pot is different from form, smell and so forth by way of its own entity.

This is presenting the absurd consequence of their assertion. You assert that smell, taste and so forth are distinct from visible form because their objects are distinguished by different senses. The implication that was presented earlier is that visible form is not distinct from the pot. If visible form, which is an attribute or a constituent of the pot, is not distinct from the pot, then that would imply that the other constituents would also have to be the same.

Yet how can the pot that cannot be posited without taste and so forth, which are distinct from form, not be distinct from form?

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.4. Refuting truly existent production of the pot from its causes

*The pot has no causes* 337  
*And is itself not an effect.*  
*Thus there is no pot at all*  
*Apart from form and so forth.*

This is something that we have covered in earlier sections<sup>3</sup> as well as in other texts and other explanations, so it should be quite straightforward. As the commentary explains:

Since form and so forth are not the pot's causes by way of their own entity, the pot is not an effect existent by way of its own entity.

Refuting the cause as being truly existent implies that the effect also lacks true existence.

Thus there is nowhere a pot that exists by way of its own entity apart from its components like visible form and so forth.

Because of the reasons given earlier, there is no possibility of a pot existing by way of its own entity, not relating to its components. A pot cannot exist by way of its own entity and separate from its components, like visible form and so forth.

Since a pot cannot be isolated from its components, a pot that is a different entity from them does not exist. That is how a truly existent pot or a pot that exists by way of its own entity is negated.

#### 1.1.2.1.2.2.1.5. Refuting truly existent production by virtue of dependence on parts

*Assertion:* The pot is the effect of its components, such as clay, and they are its causes.

This assertion is, of course, is accepted by our own system as a general statement.

*Answer:*

*If the pot exists by virtue of its causes* 338  
*And those causes by virtue of others,*  
*How can that which does not exist*  
*By virtue of itself produce something disparate?*

The commentary presents the meaning of the verse thus:

If the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes exist by virtue of other causes, [which is accepted in our own system, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity [implying that because the pot exists by virtue of its causes, and those causes also exist by virtue of other causes, then] how can that which does not exist by virtue of its own entity produce a disparate effect?

What is being established here is that that what is produced from causes and conditions cannot be an independent, truly existent entity. Thus:

Anything, therefore, that needs to rely on causes does not exist by way of its own entity. If it existed by way of its own entity, it follows that it would be causeless.

As the commentary explains:

This reasoning which refutes the existence of a pot by way of its own entity should be applied to all effects [meaning all other products].

What one should understand here is that even though both sides accept that a pot is produced by causes, the difference lies in the interpretation of that. For the Sautrantika it means that because a pot is produced by causes, it is truly existent. Whereas for the Prasangika, the very fact that it is produced by causes serves as a reason for it to be not truly existent. Because it is dependent on other causes and conditions it cannot be truly existent, and by implication it cannot be inherently existent.

Following the normal tradition of our Study Group classes, you would be aware that our next session is the discussion session, and the following week will be the exam. That of course should not imply that you need not come to those sessions. As I don't come to the discussion, I am not fully aware of how many attend the discussion sessions, but I do come to the exam session, and I noticed last year that the attendance at the exam is much less than at the normal

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, 17 July 2007.

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teaching sessions. So I would like to request that as those who come to these Study Group sessions are dedicated students, meaning that you want to study from your own side and thus you have committed yourselves to do the study, then coming to the exam is part of the study program. So taking it as a personal responsibility, it would be in one's best interest to come to the discussion, which will further enhance one's understanding of the teachings, while doing the exam is a way to help to formulate one's understanding by recapitulation and so forth. Thus my request is not to be lax about this, and to take it upon yourselves as a responsibility to come to the discussion and exam sessions as well.

Unlike any other discussion, the Study Group discussion is about the topics in the text, which are all topics about how to gain an understanding of emptiness. The mere formulation of a doubt about emptiness is said to be incredibly meritorious. A mere doubt about emptiness, and any attempt to try to remove doubts and to further enhance one's understanding of emptiness, is said to be incredibly powerful in purifying one's negative karma and accumulating merit.

It is said that any time and energy we spend in enhancing our understanding of emptiness is incredibly meritorious and powerful. Every attempt we make to enhance our understanding by raising questions and doubts, and trying to clear away those questions and doubts establishes a very strong imprint of that in our mind. That is the relevance of doing reading in general, and discussions on the teachings.

Just as the teaching is relevant, likewise the discussions and the exams and any attempt to enhance one's understanding are all relevant. One must understand that that is as much as we can do in our present capacity and circumstances. For us ordinary beings to be able to try to really develop renunciation, let alone understand emptiness and bodhicitta, is incredibly difficult. For it to occur in this lifetime is a mere possibility, and for it to actually happen is very, very difficult.

Without developing renunciation it is said that gaining an understanding of emptiness is quite impossible, and without an understanding of emptiness, it is also very difficult to develop bodhicitta, and vice versa. Bodhicitta and emptiness go hand in hand, and without the basis of renunciation, they are very difficult to obtain. But what *is* possible is to gain an understanding and leave an imprint on our mind. That is something that we have the capacity to do. It is within our capacity to leave as many imprints on our mind as possible, by receiving the teachings, doing the discussion and so forth. That is the relevance of the time that we spend together in the teaching itself, and also the discussions and so forth.

As mentioned in sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, reading, contemplating, and expounding even one word on emptiness is so incredibly meritorious that it cannot be really measured. As many of you would be voluntarily reading the sutras such as the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, you would be aware of that. If we take advice at face value, then we can see the relevance of spending any time and energy in furthering our understanding on emptiness.

As further mentioned in the sutras, either reading, understanding, or propounding even a mere stanza on emptiness, not only purifies very heavy negative karmas that one has created from the past, but also becomes a cause to accumulate a sense of great merit that becomes a cause for one's enlightenment.

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